

Edward W. Said: Resistance, Knowledge, Criticism

by

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Abstract

The prodigious output of the controversial Palestinian-American public intellectual, academic, and political activist, Edward W. Said (1935-2003), continues to polarize the academic, intellectual, and political worlds, not least because of the inflammatory nature of his relationship to the vexed issue of Israel/Palestine. It is a contention of this thesis that this polarization has resulted in what are often less than critical examinations of Said's work. In short, because Said and his work remain relevant and influential, a new method of reading is required, one which not only takes account of Said's resolutely secular, 'worldly' approach to the issue of knowledge and its production, but applies the same rigour and method to the Palestinian's work in all its literary-critical, political, and personal varieties. This thesis attempts to meet that aim by testing Said's oeuvre within the rubric of his stated ambition to create a critical location from which the production of 'non-coercive knowledge' was attainable. In the context of his opposition to political Zionism and wider Western imperialism, whether Said produced, or even intended to produce, knowledge that was 'non-coercive' is an extremely important question, and one that will be answered in this thesis.

Formed by an introduction and three main chapters, the scope of the thesis is broad. Following an exposition of the biographical 'facts' of Said's life, Chapter One engages his late work, *Out of Place*. Ostensibly a memoir, *Out of Place* is subjected to the discipline of Said's own critical concept of 'worldliness' and placed within the much broader political context of the author's oeuvre. From this location it is possible to see *Out of Place* as one of a number of narratives competing in the political sphere. Chapter Two deals with the issue of Said's relationship to some of the key thinkers and schools of thought that seemed to inform his work, questioning whether Said resisted inculcation in powerful concepts like humanism, structuralism, post-structuralism, and Marxism or, in fact, permitted these influences to disrupt his desired critical location of homelessness. The final part of the thesis engages with Said's secular, provisional approach to knowledge. First, weaving through the tautly balanced concepts of beginnings and origins in *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, much of the chapter addresses Said's attack on Western knowledge production in *Orientalism*, where

perversely he produces his own counter-monument to Western colonialism. The chapter ends with a Saidian reading of Said's three principal modes of criticism: secular, contrapuntal, and democratic.

The conclusion that emerges from a Saidian, 'worldly' reading of Said is perhaps both surprising and, yet, exactly as one might expect. Said was a human being, and human beings are flawed. Two lines emerge. The first intellectual line out of Said creates a restless critical and philosophical framework with the potential to undermine the second intellectual line out of Said, the political pragmatist always ready to produce coercive knowledge.

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According to the aphorism, it takes an entire village to raise a child. A similar sentiment might be attached to the making of a doctoral thesis. Certainly, the terrific support of two distinct communities – family and friends, and academia – has been essential in bringing this project to maturity.

I am extremely grateful to all those friends and family who have endured, and more often than not encouraged, my obsession with writing this thesis about a Palestinian intellectual. Almost all had not heard of Said. They have now. In particular, two people are owed a special mention. David Smith, a good friend, provided a restless critical eye and boundless enthusiasm. Above all, though, I am deeply indebted to my wife, Lorraine, who has sacrificed so much to keep me going to the end whilst receiving very little in return. Without Lorraine's commitment to the cause this thesis would not exist. Thank you, for everything.

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Introduction

For in the main – and here I shall be explicit – criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse; its social goals are non-coercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom.¹

These words, taken from the 1983 work, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, crystallize a key aspiration held by the influential Palestinian-American academic, intellectual, and political activist, Edward Said (1935-2003). The goal is laudable and characteristically ambitious. Said's other principal ambition was to witness a resolution to the Israel/Palestine conflict, one in which the Palestinian nation once again had a state they could call 'home', which was something they have not been able to do since the inception of the state of Israel in what was the British Mandate of Palestine on May 14th, 1948. Needless to say, the two ambitions mentioned here are not unconnected. Said did not live to see a reconstituted Palestinian state; whether he achieved his other ambition is one of the subjects of this thesis.

It is easy and perhaps even fashionable to be cynical about phrases such as 'life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination and abuse', and concepts like 'non-coercive knowledge', particularly when they are associated with academics and intellectuals. It is safe to speculate, perhaps, that in Britain neither academics nor intellectuals are generally thought of as valiant defenders of personal or political freedoms. In the higher echelons of academia there is little sign of interaction between the 'gatekeepers' of knowledge and the wider public outside the institutions in which they work; at least, perhaps, until they are required by those in political power to bring their knowledge to bear in support of one policy or another. The situation is scarcely better in the United States. Said argued that,

the literary academic has no worldly political status to speak of. I would say that a literary professional whose main base of operation is the university must realize that he or she exists in a condition of institutionalized marginality, so far as the system of political power is concerned.²

¹ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge; Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 29.

² Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. by Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 19.

In Edward Said's view, cultural and literary criticism – the core of his professional work – hardly troubled those outside the academy. Commenting on the thoughts of the American sociologist, Alvin Gouldner, Said argued that 'intellectuals were no longer people who addressed a wide public; instead they had become what he called a culture of critical discourse'.³ Once neatly contained, and perhaps muzzled if not completely silenced, inside the Academy, resistance to things like domination or tyranny seem unlikely propositions. Resistance to what Antonio Gramsci defined as 'traditional intellectuals, those who seem to be unconnected with social change and who occupy positions in society designed to conserve the traditional processes by which ideas are produced – teachers, writers, artists, priests, and the like', is one of the qualities Said recognized in his archetypal intellectual, the Irish writer and pamphleteer, Jonathan Swift (1667-1745).⁴ One of the threads running through Said's work is the idea that it is the duty of the intellectual – and he included all academics in this category – to resist this sort of institutionalized repression of intellectual activity. That, of course, is a task that is easier to perform when you are, like Said, an extremely influential figure.

One of the reasons that Edward Said and his work must continue to be objects of study is that, despite some of the privileges of influence and education that facilitated the intellectual space in which he voiced dissent, his life and work clearly challenges the gross characterization of the academic intellectual outlined, above. Said was, or consistently attempted to be, an intellectual who, in Sprinker's terms, had a 'programmatic commitment to disseminating the fruits of his scholarship beyond the restricted audience of academic specialists and intellectual elites'.⁵ Said's typically nuanced position was that 'there is no such thing as a private intellectual...Nor is there only a public intellectual'.⁶ The key point here is that Said attempted to bring his academic training into the public arena in order to address political issues face to face with 'the world', a task to which neither the purely 'private' nor the 'public' space in isolation was adequate. *Orientalism* (1978), a book about Western representations of the East is unquestionably Said's best known work. It is read,

³ In 'Representations of the Intellectual', Lecture 1, *BBC Reith Lectures 1993*, Said reflected on Alvin Gouldner's, *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class: A frame of reference, theses, conjectures, arguments, and an historical perspective of the role of intellectuals and intelligentsia in the international class context of the modern era* (London: Macmillan, 1979).

⁴ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 82.

⁵ Michael Sprinker, *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 3.

⁶ Said, 'Representations of the Intellectual', *BBC Reith Lectures 1993*.

cited, and fought over both inside and outside of the Academy in almost every corner of the world. It is perhaps telling that Said chose to originally publish the book with Pantheon, a mainstream as opposed to an academic press. As Said was seen to state, above, his aim as a literary and cultural critic was to produce criticism whose 'social goals were non-coercive knowledge' produced not for elites or exclusive cohorts, but rather in the interests of a collective 'human freedom'.

In this context, two main arguments will be developed in this thesis. The first contention is that although Said was perpetually in the process of struggling against the coercive influence of others – assorted individuals, schools of thought, and critical, philosophical, or political dogma, he nevertheless *did* at times intend to produce knowledge that was itself coercive – an instrument to enforce submission to a worldview that pivoted on the ideal of non-coercive knowledge. It will be argued that the root of Said's contradictory production of coercive knowledge was political pragmatism; that is, the overriding imperative of challenging forms of 'domination' and 'tyranny' sometimes necessitated going against the grain of his philosophical and critical intentions. For political and historical reasons that pitted a dominant 'West' against a militarily and economically weaker East, I will argue that it was frequently Said's intention to attempt to counter this grossly unequal situation by producing knowledge that was divisive, sometimes one-sided, and perhaps even polemical.

My second major contention is that, even as Said produced a strategically coercive knowledge, the most striking example of which was probably *Orientalism*, this knowledge was shaped within and by a philosophical framework that began to dismantle it. I will argue that primarily because Said attached himself to certain aspects of humanism - not in the sense of a person who wants to bomb people on 'humanitarian grounds', the likes of which have been seen in the recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan - but in the sense that he was possessed of a total belief in the idea that anything which human beings have made, can be unmade. This, of course, includes any aspect of knowledge and criticism. It was always Said's intention that there should be no theoretical closures in his work, no perfect theses, no dogmatic statements that could not be resisted, chewed over, adapted or improved. At the moments when Said appeared to slide into modes of constraining thought, it should not be forgotten that this was only one part of the equation. On the other side of this equation

was a philosophical underpinning and political conviction which demanded that, simultaneously, there must always be questions, challenges, and if necessary opposition even to Said's knowledge itself. In other words the 'coercive' elements of Said's knowledge production exist in a symbiotic relationship with his philosophical and political positions. This is not the same as saying that his humanist credentials allow Said the freedom to wilfully produce knowledge that was designed to constrain opposition. I will argue instead that Said *did* intend to coerce others into his worldview, but, if he is read in the round, it becomes clear that everything he wrote could only ever be provisional.

Imbricated with the strands of these arguments will be a further contention that although the basis of everything Said did was premised on the secular, on the human genealogy of knowledge production, one of his traits was to resist what can casually be referred to as the 'human condition', a problematic term which has no biological or psychological foundations whatsoever. By using this term I simply mean that, arguably, human beings have a taxonomic tendency to want to categorize and classify peoples and things, a process that is logical but which can constrain thought and reduce the complexity of the individual or the idea. An example of this tendency would be the American Jewish academic Edward Alexander's outrageous and dangerous labelling of Said as the 'Professor of Terror', a term which is as misleading as it is reductive and dangerous.⁷ My intention in Chapter Two is to analyse the ways in which, as Said took in and learnt from the ideas of various thinkers and schools of thought, he resisted the human temptation to belong to or affiliate himself with associations or schools of thought which might constrain his thoughts. The basis of this argument is that a combination of attachment and dislocation, of going in *and* out of things, made Said a 'worldly' intellectual, if also at times an imperfect human being. Furthermore, it indicates that Said was always in the process of exercising the human will to choose. Paradoxically, the times when he was most 'human' were the times when he was attempting to evade the human tendency to classify, categorize, and simply belong, all of which discourage the urge to think outside of, or against, the opinions or wishes of the collective. Said was a committed thinker who sought to resist domination and injustice, but he did not always resist attempting to coerce others into his worldview, especially when it pertained to the Palestinian/Israeli conflict.

⁷ Edward Alexander, 'Professor of Terror', *Commentary*, August 1, 1989.

The main aim is to develop a way of reading Said in the round, in a way that acknowledges his intellectual resistance, his prodigious talent, *and* his flaws. This process involves, prior to analysis, an intention to appreciate what is happening both on the pages of Said's texts, and outside, taking in the words on the page and the underlying philosophical structures which inform them. This is the same as acknowledging the complexity of human beings, which, I suggest, was the way that Said approached the difficult political issues of Palestine/Israel and the concomitant issues of knowledge production in the West that support Western domination. Whatever else he may have been, Said was an academic and intellectual who tried to bring his skills and knowledge to bear on political issues. Some of the opinions that Said voiced were not always perfect, and could even be irresponsible. These should not be overlooked because of his stance on the political injustice of the Palestinian issue. A striking example of his occasionally irresponsible attitude is the notorious 'stone throwing' incident. On July 3rd, 2000, Said, on a summer visit to Lebanon with family and friends, was captured on film by a French news agency *Agence France Presse*, reportedly throwing stones at Fatma Gate, in an Israeli occupied area.⁸ More worrying than this incident, which was at worst a symbolic gesture of resistance on Said's part, were the comments he made in an interview which raised the stone throwing issue. Said described how in Lebanon he had met with a Hizballah spiritual leader, Sheikh [Hassan] Nasrallah, who he described as being 'a remarkably impressive young man'.⁹ This 'remarkably impressive young man' relayed to Said how the only way resistance could be effective would be to 'make them [the Israelis] feel it in body bags'.¹⁰ In the interview, Said makes no attempts to criticize this valorization of political violence, which might be construed as an implicit condoning of the violent deaths of Israelis. If this was his intention then it was an extremely callous viewpoint to take and an unexpected departure from his oft professed core humanist values. Said's imperfections and inconsistencies can and will be threaded into a quite deliberate way into one of the themes of this thesis: that Said was a human being who was inconsistent, sometimes duplicitous, and always argumentative. There was an underlying dichotomy in Said's intellectual project between the deeply

⁸ Sunnie Kim, 'Edward Said Accused of Stoning in South Lebanon', *Columbia Daily Spectator*, 19-7-2000. <http://www.columbiaspectator.com/2000/07/19/edward-said-accuse-stoning-south-lebanon>. [Accessed 21-8-2015]

⁹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 445.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

philosophical thinker in search of a utopian strain of pure and non-coercive knowledge, and the dogmatic, politically-driven activist. This dialectical tension is implicit in Said's revealing response to criticism of *Orientalism*, when he noted how his interest in Orientalism 'as a cultural phenomenon...derives from its variability and unpredictability'.¹¹ Variability and unpredictability are limitations which one can readily discern in Said's knowledge production and his development of different modes of criticism which, I will argue, were never intended to function as perfect, otherworldly structures that could not be challenged and dismantled. As the ending of each and every empire demonstrates, structures always fall. This is inescapable in individual lives and collective history, and is one of Said's foundational thoughts. How else, after all, could he approach the task of challenging Western imperialism? It means that the things Said wrote were created with the unconscious intention that they can and should be challenged, even if the antagonist in question is a die-hard advocate of political Zionism.

Definition of Terms

As I use the term 'resistance' above and in the course of this thesis it signifies the act of opposition in a variety of ways. In Said's case it has come to mean opposition to the status quo in society and in academia, and particularly to political power. 'Knowledge' is defined in this thesis as what we know, which is implicitly connected to how and why we, as human beings, come to know things. Knowledge is associated with the academic sphere and particularly perhaps with a sense that what academics produce 'must be right', that it is learned, and particularly that it is non-political. There are different sorts of knowledge associated with this concept such as 'pure' and 'political' knowledge which will be dealt with in the body of the text below. For the purposes of this thesis my contention is that there is no production of knowledge without a concomitant intention to persuade. This is not quite the same as saying that all knowledge is meant to coerce, which is a more sinister notion and one which is often connected to the operation of power and the will to dominate. Coercion implies a certain amount of figurative arm-twisting, a will to oppress, or a desire to shut down counter-argument. By 'non-coercive' knowledge I mean knowledge produced

¹¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 340.

with the intention of attempting to persuade people of a particular view whilst being open to challenge and question.

The term 'criticism' is perhaps more problematic. I am drawn to Janmohamed's delineation of what he in turn understands to be Said's definition of the term. Janmohamed proposes that criticism 'denotes an oppositional socio-political attitude as well as a method and procedure [that] can be seen to emanate from...'Homelessness.'"'.¹² In this definition, criticism is located at a point that takes its point of reference as the status quo and sets out to oppose it. One of the problems with this course of action is that criticism must always stand apart from the comfortable setting of 'home' and yet it functions in a position that might also be described as 'home' – 'Homelessness'. How Said copes with this paradox will be examined further in the course of the thesis. 'True' criticism cannot be achieved if it is accompanied by a conscious will to coercive knowledge.

The fact that, as Sprinker has noted, Said was both 'the product of a complex historical juncture' and a man whose main site of political conflict was the production of 'knowledge' means that his life and work are especially suited to the analysis undertaken in this thesis.¹³ By this I mean that although I will argue that knowledge is produced in a relationship with one or other mode of power, I believe that this relationship is most acute when 'power' (political, academic, cultural) is challenged. At this point, the relationship between knowledge and power becomes more visible and a struggle begins. I will show, then, that because of the circumstances of Said's life as he migrated from the British Mandate of Palestine just prior to the replacement of Palestine by the state of Israel in 1947, then to Egypt, and on to the new 'imperial power', the United States in 1951, and because of his pro-Palestine, anti-colonial views, and because of his intellectual opposition within academia, 'resistance', 'knowledge', and 'criticism' combine and collide in dramatic ways.

Although this thesis addresses Said's relationship to resistance, knowledge, and criticism, I will argue that it also has a wider significance. Whether or not Said's ambition of attaining a mode of non-coercive criticism was successful is less important than the fact that his struggle on the site of knowledge production is a universal theme. I come back to the

¹² Abdul J. Janmohamed, 'Worldliness-Without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual', in Sprinker, p. 110.

¹³ Ibid., p. 2.

question of Said's two, dynamically conjoined intentions. Said argued that a contributory factor to Palestinian dispossession was the Zionist colonial narrative; he believed that the same relationship between knowledge and power supported not only Western colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries but what he argued were the contemporary imperialist tendencies of the United States. The relationship between knowledge and power is certainly not confined to those sites to which Said was drawn. The rise of the so-called *Islamic State* is predicated on an extreme re-interpretation of the *Koran* and a violent counter-Western narrative. If you currently live in areas controlled by *Islamic State* it is very wise not to question what, how, or why those in power produce these modes of 'knowledge'. The difficult part of the equation is acknowledging that knowledge comes from somewhere, for particular reasons, at particular times. Knowledge is unequivocally the product of human beings. Earlier than most, perhaps, Said became conscious of this fact and the consequential instability and provisionality of knowledge. This makes him an interesting and propitious focus of investigation.

Because of Said's unusually close relationship with knowledge production and power, it is my contention that he provides what is perhaps an unrivalled site on which to analyse the relationship between resistance, knowledge, and power which are at the heart of this thesis. To view the world through the prism of the life and work of Edward Said is to meet head on the conjunction of these three essential human activities. Perhaps more than most academics, as a Palestinian and a supporter of their cause, Said lived at the sharpest of ends in the political struggle between power and knowledge. A vast range of essays, newspaper articles, and academic papers have been written on, around, or about Said, so many in fact that it can seem as if there is little left to uncover, and certainly nothing 'new'. I strongly challenge this idea. If we are to oppose the sort of coercion of knowledge that was clearly present in and pivotal to Western colonialism, is currently at work in the United States and elsewhere and is most definitely present in *Islamic State*, then the shutting off from analysis of Said's struggle with, about, and for knowledge is a retrograde step. Whether or not we believe in the specifics of Said's political cause, his philosophies, or his academic theory is of less importance than that we continue to explore and re-interpret it. I would go a step further: the problem with much of the critical work on Edward Said is that it *is* coerced by the seductive arguments of standing, at the beginning, either intractably for or against

Palestine and Israel. This belies the fundamental position sketched briefly, above, that if Said is to be understood we must understand what is happening both on and off the pages of his work. With this in mind I draw attention to McCarthy's *Edward Said: A Critical Introduction*, a wide-ranging, well-informed text, but one that begins from a position of relatively passive acceptance of Said's self-representation.¹⁴ As will be shown, there has been a great deal of antagonism and argument between academics and others over the details of Said's early life in Palestine. In a life of such complexity and in a conflict that is so important to the region and beyond, McCarthy's extensive and learned exegesis of Said permits only one small quote in opposition to Said's own self-authoring version. McCarthy has demonstrated, perhaps, that we read a persuasive figure like Said at our critical peril. This argument will, I hope, become clearer in Chapter One, when in the interests of critical homelessness the unseemly struggle over the biography of Said's life is discussed in some detail.

Lest I am accused of overlooking the obvious, I should state from the outset that Said stood intractably for Palestine, and that this position must have been inflected into his relationship with the three themes of this thesis: resistance, knowledge, and criticism. Said offered a similar sentiment in his introduction to *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays*, where he reflected on the fact that in his book 'Palestine appears from time to time as a theme...although its influence is felt earlier, often in an incompletely grasped and formulated way'.¹⁵ This was another way of saying what McCarthy would later argue, that 'there is a strong case to be made that his interest in Palestine influenced his entire *oeuvre*'.¹⁶ To say that there is 'a strong case' is, I think, an understatement. Palestine is everywhere in Said's work. He often prevaricated on the issue, seeming to situate other worries, issues, or conflicts as primary: for example, the role and responsibilities of intellectuals, the function of academics. They are all linked, of course, but there is always a hierarchy of interest at work. Said once argued that 'one's work as a scholar is always inflected with one's background, with one's non-academic concern. In my case, for example, it's always been inflected with experiences like exile, like imperialism and the

¹⁴ Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), p. xxxiii.

¹⁶ McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, p. 3.

problems of empire'.¹⁷ These monumental issues were connected with, but were always subsidiary to, the main event of Palestine. When Said noted how 'we all know how concerns from one area of life impinge silently and unasked on others', he was speaking of the hierarchical presence in his mind of Palestine.¹⁸ With Palestine's unparalleled influence on Said already confirmed in this thesis, it would seem that there is little point arguing over whether, if he was coerced by the idea that the Palestinian resistance narratives are correct, he could then produce 'non-coercive' knowledge. Where I would differ with the tenor of this statement is that although Said was intractable on the issue of Palestinian self-determination he was not, I think, *against* Israel so much as against political Zionism.

Having for the sake of clarity briefly noted what I believe was Said's position on the subject of Palestine, it would be remiss not to mention my own thoughts on the matter, as these will undoubtedly colour what is written in this thesis. I believe, but cannot of course prove definitively, that I have no particular bias on either side. I can say with some conviction that I am concerned that the issue should be treated for what it is: a human tragedy. This outcome can only be assured if polarization of opinion on the matter does not occur and analysis of 'knowledge' related to the conflict is approached in a disinterested manner. I am not sure if this is possible, but the intention must at least be present at the beginning. It should always be possible for critics and intellectuals to approach an issue with an open mind. Whether they always do this is a matter of conjecture, of historical moment, and of individual persuasion.

Materials

One major difficulty I encountered as I approached the idea of writing, or reading, Said's vast oeuvre was deciding what to include and what to omit. If we add to this to the avalanche of essays, papers, books, and commentaries written about him and his work, the task becomes insurmountable within the remit of a PhD and possibly as a lifetime's work.¹⁹

¹⁷ Edward W. Said, 'On Defiance and Taking Positions', in *Beyond the Academy: A Scholar's Obligations*, American Council of Learned Societies, Occasional Paper, 31 (1996). Also published in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, pp. 500-506.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.

¹⁹ A search for 'Edward + Said' in the Literature Online database returns 27554 results.

In order to cope with this difficulty I deferred to the thoughts of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, a figure who will figure prominently in Chapter Two. Saussure devised a methodology for just such a problem, which was to 'delimit' the vast quantity of material. I did not want this thesis to be only 'about' the works deemed by scholars as seminal, yet, of course, there is no way of getting around them; nor should we attempt to do so. Resistance to this occurrence is difficult, but possible. As I will show, it has not been possible for the scholarly Orientalists to get past *Orientalism*. Neither do I want the finding of this thesis to be interpreted as my own, definitive account of Said's relationship to resistance, knowledge, and criticism. If that is the case, then I will have failed in my efforts to learn from Said and to represent that learning on paper. Everything is provisional.

Two particular forms of writing will appear in this thesis more than others: essays and interviews. The reason for this is that these are the two forms of expression that Said found to be most suited to his intellect and to his idea of resistance. Said argued that 'form is the reality of the essay, and form gives the essayist a voice with which to ask questions of life'.²⁰ To Said the essay was the perfect form with which to move in and out of subjects and themes. The power of the form lies in its brevity, its capacity to begin discussion, to move the issue further. Many of Said's works were anthologies of essays because with this form he could respond quickly. The interview form was equally important to Said's professional life as a literary critic and to his political strategy. Said conducted many interviews for different purposes. He argued that '[i]n many ways, interviews are sustained acts of discovery, not only for the person being interviewed but for even the well-prepared interviewer'.²¹ What they enabled Said to do was to keep the conversation alive, to test it in another context, to see where it could develop. The interview form was not, for Said, inferior to the essay or the book, but rather it was complementary. The interview is a fact of the 'modern' world. Said, I would argue, understood better than most the benefit of communication and its dissemination, the power of discourse, of turning pernicious statements into 'truth'. It was, after all, the bedrock of Western colonialism.

A combination of Said's essays, interviews, and books will thus provide the material for this thesis. I do not wish to devote too much space to one form over the other because

²⁰ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 52.

²¹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. ix-x.

of the danger that in doing so the wider context of Said's work will be obscured. Nevertheless, of Said's major books *Out of Place* will form the spine of Chapter One, and *Beginnings: Intention and Method* and *Orientalism* the spine of Chapter Three.²² This is not because they are more relevant or are superior to the other major works, the essays, or the interviews, but because they represent major critical and perhaps even political events. In addition to these materials I will draw on a wide range of commentary on, and critique of Said, the activity of which has become almost an industry in its own right. Of these, I have tried to draw in some of the 'lesser' known academic voices who, perhaps, are sometimes constrained by the presence of the academic 'elite'. Said was possessed of a not inconsiderable ego, but he would not, I think, have enjoyed the development of a Saidian school. Hero worship is very un-Saidian, but it does show how difficult it is to control what happens after knowledge is produced.

Structure and Method

The thesis consists of an introduction, three main chapters and a conclusion. The current introduction is self-evidently an attempt to set out the aims, arguments, structure and method. It also begins the task of outlining who Edward Said was, as well as discussing two historical-political contexts which inform Said's intellectual work, and particularly as they relate to the question of non-coercive knowledge. The first context is Western colonialism, Western imperialism, and neo-colonialism; the second context is Palestine.

The thesis is structured in three parts. The first part is concerned with setting out the basis and terms of the thesis, and developing an understanding of Edward W. Said, what he stood for and against. It will include the introduction and Chapter One, 'How out of Place was *Out of Place*?' Chapter One will argue that, for two reasons, Said's memoir, *Out of Place* was very much in place in Said's oeuvre. The first potential reason is that Said's memoir demonstrates how, because of his relationship to the issue of Palestine, knowledge of Said's life had been and was always likely to be a very contentious issue. I will argue that the second reason that the memoir is not out of place is that Said uses the metaphor of

²² Edward W. Said, *Out of Place* (London: Granta, 1999); Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta, 1975).

being out of place as a strategic device with which to situate himself, quite wrongly, outside the influence of the Palestine-Israel conflict.

The second part of the thesis will focus on spheres of influence, their effects, and Said's attempt to extricate himself from them in the pursuit of an ideal critical 'homelessness'. The three philosophical and theoretical influences I have identified as crucial components of Said's project are Vico and humanism, structuralism and post-structuralism, and Marxism. I will develop the argument that these influences can be traced in Said's work, that they contribute greatly to that work, but never to the point that they constitute a constraining force in his critical theory. There is, in this regard, a noteworthy difference between Said's theory and practice.

The third part of the thesis deals with the key and complex issues of 'knowledge' and 'criticism'. If the second part of the thesis provides an insight into the philosophical underpinning of Said's critical and philosophical theory, this section will argue that in practice Said set himself the political task of challenging Western power, particularly as it related to Palestine. The argument will be developed that in addressing this task Said frequently by-passed his own ideas of critical detachment, of viewing the world as a complex, multi-faceted body. This is not to say that his production of knowledge and criticism was pernicious, but rather that it was conceived for particular purposes at particular times and sometimes included a strategically coercive component. Said's production of knowledge and criticism was, of course, available for scrutiny within the parameters of his *ideal* notions of what knowledge and criticism ought to be in the interests of 'human freedom'.

Who is Edward Said?

My intention is that as the thesis progresses and it becomes clear who Edward Said was, where he came from, and where he lived and practised his craft, his very 'worldly' attitude to knowledge and criticism will, I hope, become evident. Surprisingly, given the prodigious quantity of critical ink spilled on the subject, getting to 'know' Edward Said is no simple task.

The bare biographical bones of Edward W. Said are as follows: he was born in Talibiyah, West Jerusalem, in the British Mandate of Palestine on 1st November 1935. He died on 25th September 2003, of leukaemia, while undergoing treatment at a hospital in Manhattan, New York, in the United States. Married twice, Said left a wife, Miriam Cortas, and two children, Wadie and Najla. After moving to the United States in 1951 to complete his secondary education, Said studied history and English at Princeton, graduating in 1957, and subsequently at Harvard 'where he read comparative literature under Harry Levin'.²³ In 1964, Said completed his doctorate on the subject of the interior life of the Polish émigre writer, Joseph Conrad, a thesis that formed the basis of his first major published book, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. A gifted scholar, Said took up the post of assistant instructor in the English Department at Columbia University in 1963, becoming a full professor in 1970. Apart from brief spells in the Middle East, and short periods teaching at Harvard, Said remained at Columbia until his death. A committed supporter of the Palestinian cause and of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the mandated representative of the Palestinian people, between 1977 and 1991 Said was an unaffiliated member of the PNC (Palestinian National Council), the putative Palestinian government in exile, a stance which placed him in opposition to the powerful Israel lobby in the United States. Said wrote over twenty books, the most famous of which was the controversial text, *Orientalism* (1978), which dealt with the relationship between Western representations of the Orient and Western colonialism and imperialism. *Orientalism* was a paradigm-shifting event that is generally considered to have inaugurated the academic field of postcolonial theory and studies. Said published hundreds of essays and took part in numerous interviews, by correspondence, on television, radio, and at live events. Although frequently called upon to comment as an 'expert' on peoples and events in the Middle East, Said never taught anything but the Western humanities.

These are relatively uncontroversial facts, yet putting flesh on these bare bones to determine who Edward W. Said was or what he has come to embody is not a simple proposition. Said's identity is inevitably a matter of interpretation, and this interpretation depends very much on individual perspectives on the Palestinian issue. The main reason for the polarization of representations of Said's identity is that his work was deliberately

²³ Sprinker, p. 2.

channelled through the self-representation of himself as a Palestinian, and simply being a Palestinian who opposes the dispossession of Palestinians from what is now the state of Israel is an extremely controversial and potentially life-threatening act. The problems that pertain to simply trying to define Said are highlighted by two of the key terms in this thesis: resistance and knowledge. There is almost always resistance to the production of knowledge concerned with *representing* Said. One of the reasons for this resistance is that, like most of us, Said signifies different things to different cohorts. However, unlike most of us, the construction of Said's identity is inextricably entangled with the on-going conflict between Zionist Israel and Arab Palestinians. Even in death, in some quarters he remains a living symbol of resistance to political Zionism. Equally, to many of the faithful of political Zionism he retains a status as a despised symbol of Palestinian misrepresentations of the historical narrative concerning the inauguration of the state of Israel on May 14, 1948. In sum, any production of knowledge connected to the theme of Said – and by this I mean such things as simply expressing an opinion of what 'sort' of person he was or where he spent his formative years – is to enter that political debate on one side or another. The deeper causes of the polarizing effect of discussing Said, will, I hope, become clear in Chapter one, 'Stories are Not just Stories', which deals with the relationship between Said's 1999 memoir, *Out of Place*, knowledge, and power.

One indicator of the polarization of opinion that Said seemed to attract can be found in the obituaries following his death, which were starkly divided on geopolitical lines. As Salaita has argued, 'when the rare American professor known widely outside of the Academy dies, his or her death usually is reported with the type of respect and nostalgia that is afforded any celebrity whose life has ended'.²⁴ However, it was '[n]ot so with Said. His death occasioned a barrage of polemical attacks by Zionists and neoconservatives, usually ignorant of Said's actual politics and resorting to distortion and slander'.²⁵ *Tikkun* magazine, a liberal-left publication edited by Rabbi Michael Lerner, declared that '[w]e often wished Said could sympathize with the plight of European Jews and the ways that their returning to the place they perceived to be their ancient homeland was not an act of

²⁴ Steven Salaita, 'Eulogizing Edward Said', *Minnesota Review*, 61-62 (2004), 247-251 (p. 247), in *Project Muse* >http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/minnesota_review/v061/61.salaita.pdf< [accessed 14-6-2015]

²⁵ *Ibid.*

Western colonialism'.²⁶ The *Washington Post* announced Said's death with the heading 'Palestinian Spokesman Edward Said Dies', which Salaita describes as 'a misleading statement that, given the prominence of anti-Arab racism in the United States, surely insinuated to most readers that Said was a vocal advocate of suicide bombing'.²⁷ Harvey Blume, in the *Jerusalem Report*, damned Said with faint praise, commenting that he 'cannot subscribe to the theory of Edward Said as a thug'.²⁸ Salaita notes how, in contrast,

the *Irish times* and various British publications (*The London Review of Books*, *The Guardian Unlimited*, *The Economist*) ran nuanced and sophisticated obituaries. Arab American publications such as *Mizna*, *al-Jadid*, and the *Electronicintifada* printed reverent, nostalgic eulogies.²⁹

One point that becomes clear from the polarization of definitions is that it has little to do with Said's talents as a scholar. In the obituaries, at the point at which they are most divergent and divisive, what we are told about Said's qualities as a human being is based on where the commentary originates and what the political viewpoint of the writer is with reference to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Knowledge, in the sense of how, even in death, Said is represented, is intractably connected to issues of power.

Put simply, Said, like any other person, meant different things to different people. My understanding of him is as Edward W. Said, an Arab- Palestinian-American academic, writer, literary critic, political campaigner and activist whose principal ambition was to realise Palestinian self-determination. As a non-combatant in this enduring political cause and a person who spent his working life in the 'cultural sphere', this aim placed him alongside other notable Palestinians of similar ilk, such as the poet Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) and the cartoonist Naji al-Ali (1938-1987). Each of these oppositional 'cultural' Palestinian figures - Said, Darwish, and Naji - through words or pictures rather than violence, resisted what they viewed as Zionist, and indeed Arab, political domination. Said went further, setting himself in opposition to what he perceived as the lingering presence of Western colonialism and imperialism in its iterations of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism. This is not to say that Said wanted to wash away the overlaps, the histories, or the new cultures that had developed because of colonialism. He was, after all, a living

²⁶ Michael Lerner, 'Edward Said', *Tikkun*, November/December 2003, p. 3. Quoted in Salaita, p. 247.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 249.

example of hybridity. Rather, Said's aim was to eradicate the pernicious parts of the equation, the continuation of domination in other forms. Although Palestinian political self-determination was not achieved in their lifetime, Said and his contemporaries demonstrated that political conflicts are fought across many sites, one of these being the domain of knowledge in which we contest the what, how, and why of belief in certain 'truths'. Said and his contemporaries were interested in developing and contesting knowledge of Palestine and its people, but they were also motivated by the concept of 'knowledge' itself, and putting it to use in the name of humanity and freedom.

Two Contexts: One Viewpoint

There are two social, cultural, historical, and political contexts without which even a rudimentary understanding of Said is hard to achieve. In order to understand his thoughts on resistance, knowledge, and criticism, we have to try to see the world as he might have done. Perhaps surprisingly, considering the case I have already made for the centrality of Palestine to Said's thoughts, it was not the most important historical context in his work. That place was occupied by Western colonialism and imperialism. For Said, Israel was a subset of this structure. Said was born into a relationship with Western power, into a system of Western domination in the British Mandate of Palestine. He attended St. George's College in Cairo, a school run on British colonial lines, he spoke the English language, he studied English literature, lived for most of his life in the new imperial power, the United States. He was named after the Prince of Wales. Western colonialism and imperialism is simply the most overwhelming global factor of the last two centuries. I make no apologies for discussing it in some detail, below, as I make no apologies for stating that in my opinion there is a case to be made for the persistence of Western domination into the modern 'postcolonial' era. Regardless of whether the United States' Administrations of the two Bushes, Clinton, or Obama interpret their actions as imperialism (they do not) there *are* or have recently been occupying forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya. Britain, though considerably less powerful than the United States, has retained the vestiges of its old colonial 'gunboat' mentality. Sugirtharajah has argued, correctly I think, that the '[then British Prime Minister] Tony Blair came out with his own version of moral imperialism in the

face of global terror through a reordering of disastrous unsuccessful and wretched parts of the world by force if necessary'.³⁰ Žižek argues that subjective violence frequently eclipses 'the systemic violence...the violence inherent in a system: not only direct physical violence, but also the more subtle forms of coercion that sustain relations of domination and exploitation, including the threat of violence'.³¹ We might refer to the current historical moment as 'post-colonialism' or 'post-imperialism', or 'neo-colonialism', but the terms are perfunctory.³² The effects of European colonialism and American imperialism – in both negative and positive ways - are felt every day in nearly every area of the world.

The important point to make is that Said's perception of world history was often Euro-centric. He left no room for the sort of counter-narrative to the historical narrative of the Rise of the West proposed by the American academic and historian, Peter Gran. In two works, *Beyond Eurocentrism* (1996) and *The Rise of the Rich* (2008), Gran has argued against the prevailing Euro-centric view of world history, one which takes no account of the indigenous rich in non-Western regions.³³ In *Orientalism*, Said was clear about the correlation between imperialism and domination: Britain and France *dominated* the Orient, they were *imperial* powers. The concept of imperialism is never far away, then, from the idea of domination. Domination in the context discussed here does not necessarily require the colonization of other lands. Imperialism and colonialism are often used synonymously. However, they are not the same thing and therefore one can exist without, or after the other. The Latin origin of imperialism is *imperium* meaning 'command' or 'power'.³⁴ Imperialism is an abstract term describing 'a particular kind of reality, even though it is not

³⁰ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Refigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2003), p. 97.

³¹ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections* (London: Profile Books, 2009), p. 8.

³² A fierce debate rages in the academic and political world about whether globalization is equivalent to US imperialism, or constitutes a new phase in socio-economic development. Hardt and Negri's influential book *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) suggests that the US is simply one, albeit powerful, part of a transnational network. However, Herfried Münkler's *Empires: The Logic of World Domination from Ancient Rome to the United States* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), argues that there is no reason to maintain that there are no comparisons with earlier empires. Both theories posit forms of domination, but this discussion perceives US imperialism as belonging to a continuum of imperial dominance. Certainly, Edward Said frequently referred to the US as 'imperial'.

³³ Peter Gran, *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996; *The Rise of the Rich: A New View of Modern World History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2008).

³⁴ Richard Koebner, *Empire* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966), p. 19.

the kind that can be statistically weighed and measured'.³⁵ Although its meaning is shifting and difficult to pin down, it can be pushed a shade further to indicate, as Said suggests, the idea of domination. So, whereas European powers seized overseas lands, or, as in the case of Russia, annexed lands on the same continent, the occupation of land is not a prerequisite of an imperial power. The most notable example of this type of 'informal' empire, where power is exerted from the centre to the periphery without (almost) colonization or the will to recreate the culture of the 'centre' overseas is, depending on the analysis used, the United States, which 'has succeeded Britain in all those places where the British were pushed out after the Second World War – not least in the Middle East, recently a major focus of US political attention and military potential'.³⁶ Kiernan reminds us from a Marxist perspective '[h]ow little the meaning of imperialism can be confined to direct colonial rule is most forcibly evident from the annals of the United States'.³⁷ The durability and mutability of imperialism is exemplified in its current incarnations as a form of economic exploitation and cultural imperialism.³⁸ Whereas in the nineteenth-century and for much of the twentieth-century imperialist powers were quite happy to describe themselves in those terms, on the whole this is no longer the case. However, in Said's view there are connections between the 'old' colonial world and the new 'post-colonial' situation. Chomsky's claim that the so-called 'War on Terrorism' helped to 'draw support from a reservoir of bitterness and anger over U.S. policies in the region, extending those of earlier European masters' seems to support this assertion.³⁹ Said's view was that the United States was an imperial power which had taken over where the established European colonial powers had left off. He argued that

[t]his seems to me of extraordinary interest for people who live in this country, where we have this idea that we are going to do things differently...our culture as Americans is in many ways similar to the culture of nineteenth-century Britain and nineteenth-century France.⁴⁰

At this juncture we ought to remind ourselves that Said was a former British colonial subject. Europeans were hugely successful in their attempts to colonize other lands. The

³⁵ George Lichtheim, *Imperialism* (London: Penguin, 1971), p. 4.

³⁶ Münkler, p. 3.

³⁷ Victor Kiernan, *Marxism and Imperialism* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1975), p.ix.

³⁸ Herbert I. Schiller, *Communication and Cultural Domination* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1976).

³⁹ Noam Chomsky, *9/11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), p. 13.

⁴⁰ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 196.

word colonialism ‘comes from the Roman ‘colonia’ meaning ‘farm’ or ‘settlement’, and referred to Romans who settled in other lands but still retained their citizenship’.⁴¹ In the process of summing up the European expansion into and violation of overseas territories, Grimal offers an insight into the enduring ideas that supported this conquest:

The expansion of Europe, from the time of the first great voyages of discovery until the beginning of the twentieth century, has been one of the most important phenomena in the history of the human race...This expansion took place either through the occupation of uninhabited or thinly populated territories in which sizeable communities of Europeans had settled, or through the exercise of political or economic power over peoples brought into subjugation by peaceful or military means.⁴²

The important words to note here are ‘subjugated’, ‘uninhabited’, ‘race’, ‘peaceful’, ‘military’ and ‘political’. Although a useful summary of the entire, awful process, it is shot through with romantic notions of innate European superiority and a complex dichotomy of incompatible ideas. For Grimal, the expansion of Europe is cloaked in mystifying images of ‘voyages of discovery’, as if a territory comes into existence only when Europeans ‘discover’ it is there. In the novella, *Heart of Darkness* (1899), Joseph Conrad at least partially manages to critique from within the dark interiors of the European imaginary of exploration. The character of Marlow contemplates the world, which, as a white man, is his to discover and if necessary rule. Marlow notes that ‘when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in the exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth’.⁴³ What this alludes to, and what an important aspect of Said’s resistance was concerned with, is that the network of ideas underpinning imperialism is often more durable than the brutal material facts of colonization.

A few brief statistics related to the most ‘successful’ of the colonizers, Great Britain, offers a fleeting but nonetheless illuminating glimpse into the immense magnitude of the events we are considering here, and in the process rather support Said’s Euro-centric perspective. Fieldhouse has argued that there were

⁴¹ Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 1.

⁴² Henri Grimal, *Decolonization: The British, French, Dutch and Belgian Empires 1919-1963* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p. 1.

⁴³ Joseph Conrad, ‘Heart of Darkness’, in *Heart of Darkness and Other Tales*, ed. by Cedric Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 142.

[t]wo primary features [that] differentiated the modern British Empire from any other and from its own past. At its peak in 1933 it covered some 12.2 million square miles – 23.85 of the world's land surface – with a population of nearly 502 million.⁴⁴

The colonial process was huge in scale, uneven in execution and remarkably durable. Although geography was immensely important, colonialism was a complex system that was not solely concerned with the acquisition of land. In addition to simply taking land there was the impetus of economic gain, colonial rivalry, and a sense of civilizational superiority. Marxist thought locates a crucial distinction between two types of colonialism:

whereas earlier colonialisms were pre-capitalist, modern colonialism was established alongside capitalism in Western Europe...Modern capitalism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries.⁴⁵

The precise reasons behind the different forms of colonialism are too complex to define with absolute certainty. However, what can be said with some degree of confidence is that when it came, 'decolonization' was

[o]ne of the most momentous changes to take place in the post-1945 world...[and resulted in] the dismemberment and almost complete removal of the European colonial or maritime empires set up in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.⁴⁶

The numbers are staggering: '[w]hen the Second World War broke out in 1939, roughly a third of the world's entire population lived under imperial or colonial rule: today less than 0.1 per cent of the global population lives in dependent territories.'⁴⁷ The process was often – but not always – a violent affair. Depending on the ideological worldview, two main explanations for the process are usually offered: nationalist and international; sometimes known colloquially as 'push' or 'pull'. The anti-colonialist and 'nationalist' explanation argues that the process originated at the periphery. In this context, the work of indigenous resistance and 'anti-colonial nationalism' was the key factor in the removal of the colonial

⁴⁴ David K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 242.

⁴⁵ Loomba, p. 3.

⁴⁶ John Springhall, *Decolonization since 1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

master.⁴⁸ According to this model, power is exerted at the margins by the colonized and the colonialists are 'pushed' out. In contrast, 'international' theory argues that the colonizing forces 'pulled' out and 'granted' independence. The main reason for the urge to 'grant' independence, it is argued, lay with the rise of the post-war superpowers, the United States and the USSR, an imperial giant which has itself become the 'victim' of decolonization. The superpowers, ironically, were 'avowedly anti-colonial in outlook, while the ideological struggle against German fascism and Japanese militarism had made the assertion of pre-war racist and imperialist attitudes much less in vogue among the victorious Western allies'.⁴⁹ As it was in the historical process of colonization, withdrawal was a fitful, untidy affair. However, if withdrawal by whatever strategy or method seemed to signal the end of the relationship between colonizer and colonized, this was an illusion. What Gramsci called 'the inventory of traces' could not be 'de-colonized'.⁵⁰ Colonization forged new cultures within the colonized and colonizing nations, peoples flowed from one continent to another, identities merged and mutated. The results of this are conspicuous on every piece of land touched by colonial expansion. Moreover, because in many respects knowledge is more durable than land ownership, de-colonization – the exodus of the colonizer from the *land* – did not necessarily uproot the deeply entrenched ideologies cultivated during European and Western expansion.

Nevertheless, a momentous and messy sequence of physical de-colonization took place, one in which the European powers – at varying speeds – retreated from their geographical empires. There were some important anomalies to the whole process. Perhaps the most striking of these, and the one without which the question of Said's relationship to the production of knowledge would be purely academic, is the state of Israel. While much of the colonial network was beginning to unravel, in Said's view another act of colonization was taking shape which was to have enormous, far-reaching and long-lasting effects: the creation of Israel as a homeland for the Jewish peoples. Zionist attention has long fixed on the issue of a Jewish homeland, and on a piece of land in the Middle East called the British Mandate of Palestine. This land had been promised to the Jewish people by the British government in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. The fact that the Arab-

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁵⁰ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 25.

Palestinians had not been consulted on the matter was deemed irrelevant by the powerful decision-makers. Although Jewish nationalists had long been agitating for a new state in the British Mandate of Palestine, rightly or wrongly justification for the new state of Israel was at hand in the shape of the terrible genocidal events that came to be known as the Holocaust. The background to this problem was that

[a]fter the [Second World] war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved - namely, by means of a colonized and then conquered territory – but this solved neither the problem of minorities nor the stateless...the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs.⁵¹

The background to Said's interpretation of the fallacious nature of the term 'post-colonial' world was an unswerving belief that Israel was created in 1948 by 'Jewish colonists'.⁵² In the main these 'colonists' were European Jews. To Said, this represented a continuation of western colonialism. In short, one set of Western colonialists (the British) had been superseded by another (European Jews). Today, although there is an assorted collection of people who are dispersed across many parts of the world and who would recognize themselves as 'Palestinians', there is no such legal entity as Palestine. In Benedict Anderson's terminology, these people represent a nation that is 'imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.⁵³ Further evidence in favour of Said's argument that there has been a line of continuation from the period of Western colonialism to the present day is the fact that Israel has received almost unwavering support from the United States. This fosters the conviction that Israel is a colonial nation supported by an imperialist power.

Said's attitude toward the issue was typically pragmatic. He did not advocate the 'decolonization' of Israel, only that Palestinians be assured their rights to self-determination and to one form or another of a Palestinian state. In a wider sense, even without the example of Israel, it could be argued that total decolonization has not, and will never be achieved. For example: the issue of *deep settler colonization* has not been resolved. In the

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 290. Quoted in Said, *Orientalism*, p. xxxix.

⁵² Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 11.

⁵³ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), pp. 6-7.

process of European colonization several countries were colonized and their inhabitants deprived of their legal rights. Although these countries acquired formal independence from their colonial masters, metropolitan control over the peripheral colony was in some instances merely shifted to the colony itself. Among these, argues McClintock, '[t]he United States, South Africa, Australia, Canada and New Zealand remain, in my view, break-away colonies that have not undergone decolonization, nor, with the exception of South Africa, are they likely to in the near future'.⁵⁴ The fact that these countries, with the exception of South Africa, are close allies of the United States, itself considered the most pre-eminent and powerful imperial power, surely has something to do with their continued status as 'independent' nations. On a different level, but pertinent to the settler nations that retain the English language, the Nigerian writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o has argued that it is necessary to decolonize the mind if decolonization is to be properly achieved. Perhaps unaware of how significant to the global economy the English language would become, Ngugi argued that decolonization involves a renunciation of the colonizer's language, because the world is constructed through language: '[l]anguage carries culture, and culture carries, particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and our place in the world'.⁵⁵ These issues are perhaps best articulated by the term 'neo-colonialism'. Williams and Chrisman argue that '[t]he persistence of neo-colonialist or imperialist practices in the contemporary world is a very obvious, perhaps the most serious, obstacle to any unproblematic use of the term post-colonial'.⁵⁶ In some ways, Said's understanding of the persistence of Western imperialism was simply a continuation of an existing anti-colonial resistance. The suspicion that de-colonization did not equate to the end of empire was first mooted by the Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, in 1961. Nkrumah argues that

[t]he essence of neocolonialism is that the State which it is subject to is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international

⁵⁴ Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism'', *Social Text*, 31/32, *Third World and Postcolonial Issues* (1992), 84-98 (p. 88).

⁵⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Currey, 1986), p. 16.

⁵⁶ Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, eds, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 3.

sovereignty. In reality its economic system and thus political policy is directed from outside.⁵⁷

Instances of neocolonialism in the contemporary world are not difficult to find. Chrisman argues that

[t]he fact that the major imperialist nation, the United States, can intervene militarily in the Gulf against a country which it continued to arm and encourage up to the brink of hostilities, or under the guise of humanitarianism in Somalia...the fact that articles and editorials in respectable newspapers such as the *Sunday Telegraph* can call for the West to go back to Africa...all of these indicate how many of the attitudes, the strategies and even how much of the room for manoeuvre of the colonial period remain in place.⁵⁸

The core of Said's colonial discourse analyses - 'the variety of textual forms in which the West produced and codified knowledge about non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under colonial control' - was that political, economic and military action does not occur in isolation from the social and the cultural spheres.⁵⁹ As the discussion of *Orientalism* will illustrate, imperialism and colonialism are fed, supported – and indeed resisted - by networks of ideas, fantasies and dreams. In the so-called 'postcolonial' era, one of these networks emerged in the shape of a sphere of academic enquiry that arguably had its origins in Said's *Orientalism*: postcolonial theory. Young has argued that

[a]lthough the genealogy of postcolonial theory is historically complex...it was Edward Said's critique in *Orientalism* (1978) of the cultural politics of academic knowledge, from his own experiences of growing up as an 'Oriental' in two British colonies, that effectively founded postcolonial studies as an academic discipline.⁶⁰

Said, then, not only possessed a vision of an all-encompassing Euro-centric view of world history, but was partly responsible for disseminating it whilst ostensibly aiming to spread the means of dismantling the system from within. There are, as we can see, some problematic issues, double binds, and Gordian knots attached to this field. One of the most pernicious of these is the risk that counter-knowledge produced for, by, or in support of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism has already been neatly contained in, by, and for, the 'West'. This type of analysis has, of course, enabled some interesting lines of inquiry into

⁵⁷ Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1965), p. ix.

⁵⁸ Chrisman and Williams, p. 3.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁰ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 383.

the persistence of Western imperialism because, after all, if Western imperialism is extant so too must be its organs of knowledge production. The two components exist in a symbiotic relationship. Regardless of the blind spots in Said's historical vision, the idea of colonial discourse enables some very crucial critical analysis connected to relevant issues of power and domination. Ayotte and Husain have argued that '[i]n the wake of the "war on terrorism," feminist analyses of international relations must broaden the concept of security to consider forms of violence beyond the statist security framework of *realpolitik*'.⁶¹ The 'framework' they refer to is neo-colonial epistemological violence: the production of knowledge in the West for the purposes of domination in the East. They argue that 'the image of the Afghan woman shrouded in the burqa has played a leading role in various public arguments seeking to justify U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan'.⁶² Moreover, they conclude that '[t]he neo-colonial notion of Islam as a marginal Other to the West is particularly evident in the fact that "the women of Islam" are all portrayed as Middle eastern or Asian, despite the enormous and growing Muslim population in North America and Europe'.⁶³ In effect, Ayotte and Husain argue that 'this rhetorical construction of Afghan women as *objects* of knowledge legitimized U.S. military intervention under the rubric of "liberation" at the same time that it masked the root causes of structural violence in Afghanistan'.⁶⁴ The wider point raised by Ayotte and Husain is that Western domination, which was established and reinforced over many years, is hardly likely to just slip quietly away, and may well continue to exist in various forms of hard and soft power as exercised by the United States. This was Said's view, and one that is supported by the military 'interventions' carried out by the U.S. since they emerged as the foremost world power after 1945. Knowledge is a crucial component of their power, and Said was a gatekeeper of knowledge in that country. There is a dilemma, then, between Said's all-encompassing, Euro-centric world historical vision of colonialism and imperialism, which cares little for alternative accounts such as those proposed by Gran, and his ideal protestations of 'non-coercive' criticism. The Euro-centric worldview, which at best must surely be modified by the possibility of alternative views, seems to be required by Said as a platform on which to

⁶¹ Kevin J. Ayotte and Mary E. Husain, 'Securing Afghan Women: Neocolonialism, Epistemic Violence, and the Rhetoric of the Veil', *NWSA Journal*, 17 (2005), 112-133 (p. 120).

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

pursue the 'freedom' denied to many by the very ideological and discursive structure he seeks to dismantle. The critic of imperialism is required both to stand on and pull the magic carpet of imperialism from under his own feet. Where Palestine was concerned he was most concerned with the latter action.

Whether Israel is an example of a 'new' state, of neo-colonialism, or is a continuation of Western colonialism is a vexed issue, and still arguably one of the single most contentious political issues in the modern world. If Said's work is to be analysed it is crucial to understand a few fundamental facts about the political situation in this conflict. It is also important to understand that Said stood implacably for Palestine. The problem with this particular knowledge is that we can effectively rule out the criteria of 'un-biased' analysis. There is no critical detachment in Said's perspective on the Palestinian situation. Of course, every person speaks from a particular social, cultural, or political viewpoint, but the question of Palestine attracts more partisanship than most. I will entrust an account of some of the events to the U.S State Department. How impartial they are on this matter can, I imagine, be left to the reader's speculation:

[o]n November 29th 1947, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 181 (also known as the Partition Resolution) that would divide Great Britain's former Palestinian Mandate into Jewish and Arab states in May 1948...The United Nations Resolution sparked conflict between Jewish and Arab groups within Palestine...After Israel declared its independence on May 14, 1948, the fighting intensified with other Arab forces joining Palestinian Arabs in attacking territory in the former Palestinian mandate...fighting continued into 1949.⁶⁵

The British colonial territory of Palestine, which was only British as a result of colonial policies, had erupted into a civil war between, first, the Palestinian Arabs and the Palestinian Jews, and thereafter between what were now Israeli Jews and Arabs from within Israel and the surrounding region. The Zionists, with the support of the United States were victorious. The result was a 'peace' whereby,

[u]nder separate agreements between Israel and the neighbouring states of Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan, and Syria, these nations agreed to formal armistice lines. Israel gained some territory formally granted to Palestinian Arabs under the United Nations Resolution in 1947. Egypt and Jordan retained control over

⁶⁵ 'The Arab-Israeli War of 1948', *US Department of State: Office of the Historian*.
<http://www.history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952creation-israel> [accessed 22-10-2015]

the Gaza Strip and the West Bank respectively. These armistices held until 1967.⁶⁶

The War of 1947/48 caused a huge wave of Arab Palestinians to exodus from Israel/Palestine. In sum, 'between 200000 and 300000' Palestinians were driven out by the Jewish victory.⁶⁷ Rogan argues that they 'intended to return when peace had been restored. They were never allowed back'.⁶⁸ The first Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, informed his cabinet in June 1948 that '[w]e must prevent at all costs their return'.⁶⁹ On 11 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations passed Resolution 194. Part 11 of this resolution,

Resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live in peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date, and that compensation should be paid for the property of those choosing not to return and for loss of or damage to property which, under principles of international law or in equity, should be made good by the Governments or authorities responsible.⁷⁰

The 'right to return' is an article of faith for the Palestinians. The Israeli Government has never adhered to Resolution 194. *Unrwa*, the United Nations relief and works agency for Palestinian refugees in the Near East defines them as 'persons whose normal place of residence was Palestine during the period 1 June 1946 to 15 May 1948, and who lost both home and livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict'.⁷¹ The relief agency estimates that there are currently 5 million Palestinians eligible for relief aid.⁷²

So far as Said was concerned the 1967 Arab-Israeli war was possibly of equal importance to the events of 1948. This short six day war took place between the 5th and 11th of June and, as will be shown in a later chapter, formed the basis for Said's politicization. Until the 1967 War, Said claimed that 'I had been two people: on the one hand teaching at Columbia...and on the other going back and forth to the Middle East,

⁶⁶ 'The Arab-Israeli War of 1948', *US Department of State: Office of the Historian*.

⁶⁷ Eugene Rogan, *The Arabs: A History* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), p. 262.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶⁹ Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 141. Cited in Rogan, p. 262.

⁷⁰ '194 (III). Palestine – Progress Report of the United Nations Mediator, *United Nations General Assembly*, 11 December, 1948. <http://www.unispal.un.org> [accessed 21-10-2015]

⁷¹ 'Palestine Refugees', *unrwa*, <http://unrwa.org/palestine-refugees> [accessed 21-10-2015]

⁷² *Ibid.*

where my family lived'.⁷³ The outcome of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War was a resounding defeat for the Arab armies of Jordan, Egypt, and Syria. Israel expanded their territories to include the whole of Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. A further mass exodus of Palestinians occurred, many of whom fled to Jordan. The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 242, which ordered the 'withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict'.⁷⁴ The full withdrawal of Israeli troops has not occurred, and is perhaps the single most inflammatory territorial issue in the world today. The Arab defeat, known in Arabic as *an-naksah* (The Setback), represented a defining moment, or low point, in the Arab national consciousness, and certainly in Said's.

⁷³ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 164.

⁷⁴ Resolution 242 of 1967 United Nations Security Council. <http://www.unispal.un.org> [accessed 17-8-2015]

Chapter One: Stories Are Not Just Stories

How Out of Place is *Out of Place*?

In his 1999 memoir, *Out of Place*, Said established a narrative of his life up until leaving Harvard in 1963.¹ There is nothing unusual about the writing of a memoir which, as opposed to the 'autobiography', is a form in which the author is usually permitted a degree of impressionistic license. In Said's case this general rule did not apply. So sensitive was the narrative of his life, and so closely was it aligned with his critical practice and his political activism on behalf of the Palestinian cause of self-determination, that the details have been fiercely contested. Said's memoir, as he surely anticipated, immediately found itself at the centre of a combative cultural site where even the most mundane details of his personal account were fiercely contested. So fractious was his association with power that even at the level of personal recollection and reflection, Said's self-representation entailed a relationship with knowledge that became a nexus for his antagonists. When, in *Orientalism*, Said had challenged the entire basis of 'knowledge' produced by Western Orientalists, he was arguing that we should question their intentions and not simply take their representations as 'facts'. The same criteria have to be applied to Said's production of knowledge; even the act of self-representation in his memoir. As the Palestinian academic, Alon Confino, has pointed out, it may be a memoir, but *Out of Place* is

an autobiographical act [which]...makes Said the shaper of his own image. At the same time, it was written by one of the premier political intellectuals of his generation, whose professional work has been fundamental to unmasking narratives of power and authority.²

It would be out of place for any serious analysis, or even a casual reading, not to suspect that Said's intentions in *Out of Place* were much more than a leisurely stroll down memory lane. The main purpose of this chapter is to highlight how and why, even in the genre of the memoir, Said's production of knowledge – because that is what it was – produces and encounters resistance. This will be approached by scrutinising why and for what reasons Said wrote *Out of Place*, and how, why, and for what reasons there was resistance to it.

¹ Edward W. Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (London: Granta Books, 1999).

² Alon Confino, 'Remembering Talbiyah: Edward Said's *Out of Place*', *Israel Studies*, 5 (2000), 182-198 (p. 182), in *Project Muse* ><http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/israel-studies/israel-studies/v005/5.2confino.pdf> [accessed 8-9-2015]

It will be argued that Said had at least three intentions in the writing and publication of *Out of Place*. The first intention was personal: to represent the tone, spirit, and detail of his early life, and to recapture whatever sense of 'home' was important to him. Said's second intention was to consolidate a continuing personal narrative which supported the wider argument of an historical Arab-Palestinian presence in what is now the state of Israel. By definition, this aim was a form of Palestinian national narrative. Its function was therefore partly to resist Zionist nationalist narratives that deny the idea and the 'fact' of a Palestinian homeland. Said's third intention was, through a strategy of self-representation, to construct a person who was always 'out of place', a status which tied in with the motif of the modern, exilic intellectual. In Said's case, one of the corollaries of confirming this status was to lend authority to his support for Palestinian self-determination. Determining whether these three intentions mean that *Out of Place* was a text that produced a body of 'coercive knowledge' - a narrative that was meant to compel the reader uncritically to acquiesce with Said's representation of his life journey and the ethico-political baggage he took along the way - is the hermeneutic imperative of this chapter.

The three intentions will be discussed using the interconnected tropes of 'home', 'exile', and the 'intellectual'. The analysis will begin with a degree of 'scene setting' which tests one of the basic tenets of the argument in this thesis: namely, that all knowledge is to some extent an act of persuasion and sometimes an attempt at intellectual coercion.

Competing Narratives: A Hostile Site of Knowledge Production

Out of Place was published in London, in 1999, the book winning the 1999 *New Yorker* Book Prize for non-fiction. Said began work on *Out of Place* in May 1994, whilst recovering from early treatment for leukaemia at the Ambulatory Chemotherapy and Transfusion Unit, at Long Island Jewish Hospital. *Out of Place* was therefore a text that came very late in Said's life and at a time when he was acutely aware of his mortality. In a précis of his intention in the memoir, Said wrote in the preface to *Out of Place* that because of the medical diagnosis he had received in 1991, 'it struck me as important to leave behind a subjective account of the life I lived in the Arab world, where I was born and spent my

formative years, and in the United States, where I went to school, college, and university'.³ The book therefore had a particularly acute relationship to Said's personal life, being 'written mostly during periods of illness or treatment, sometimes at home in New York, sometimes while enjoying the hospitality of friends or institutions in France and Egypt'.⁴ The fact that the text was to be his own and perhaps his final, and therefore his definitive version of his early life, might be seen to lend it considerable authority. However, these bibliographical details do not remove the text from what its worldly actualities. As Said spent most of his professional life analysing the relationship between language, representation, and power, it would be wholly uncritical to discuss *Out of Place* without reference to these contexts. It would also be uncritical and therefore decidedly un-Saidian to reason that a scholar of Said's abilities could resist shaping every word with a particular intention in mind. If by calling it a 'memoir' Said's intention was to smuggle this particular body of 'knowledge' into the world uncontested, this cannot, and indeed was not, allowed to happen.

For reasons pertaining to its 'lateness' in his life, *Out of Place* is a text that was informed by almost all of what would become Said's completed oeuvre. Although the title of the book might suggest otherwise, it was not out of place in the Said canon, but an essential part of it. Despite his description of the memoir as 'a subjective account', Said verified its authenticity with the claim that he recalled the events that occurred between the early 1940s and 1963, 'in often minute, startlingly concrete, detail'.⁵ All acts of memory are at one-remove from the actual event, and what occurs in memory is a re-presentation of that event through language. This is both a barrier and a tool. The act of re-presentation is not the same as the actual event; at best it achieves fidelity to an already partly fabricated memory, and therefore a degree of inaccuracy needs to be allowed for by the reader. However, by drawing attention to the concrete (fixed, solid, immovable) 'detail', the implication is that *Out of Place* was a serious attempt to present the memoir as indisputable 'facts' whilst cloaking it in a 'subjective' form.

³ *Out of Place*, p. xiii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

Although Said insisted on delineating it in terms of the 'subjective' nature of the memoir form, this was counter-balanced by references to the worldly actualities that were present in the writing and publication of the text. Said noted three further elements that 'must surely have fed into this memoir surreptitiously'.⁶ These were his political writings about the Palestinian situation, his studies of the vital relationship between politics and aesthetics, specifically opera and prose fiction, and his fascination with 'late style', an allusion to his interest in the German Marxist, Theodor Adorno (1903-1969).⁷ Said was therefore surreptitiously establishing connections between the 'subjective' memoir form, his early life in the Middle East and his entry into American society, and his political position.

In fact, the 'surreptitious' political elements that fed into *Out of Place* were concerned with pressing issues to do with Palestine. Said wrote the book between 1993 and 1999, shortly after a major fissure opened up between himself and the Palestinian political elite. His involvement in Palestinian political life had been very intense. Between 1977 and 1991 he had been a member of the Palestinian National Council, 'proscribed as an enemy organization by Israel'.⁸ Said noted that he 'had played a visible role in Palestinian advocacy in Europe, the United States, and the Middle East'.⁹ This period was punctuated by his estrangement in 1993 from any official connections with Palestinian political organizations. As he began to formulate the book, Said had become an outright critic and opponent of the *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*, an agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the state of Israel that gave the Palestinians 'autonomy' over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, but in effect provided the Israelis with a puppet administration.¹⁰ This event, brokered by the United States, occurred on September 13th, 1993, very close to the point at which Said began work on his memoir. Said viewed the *Declaration* as 'an instrument of capitulation' by the Palestinian authorities.¹¹ Said was therefore 'out of place' with the Palestinian political elite, the general consensus in the wider United States, and wider global opinion on the matter. The *Arrangements* were

⁶ Ibid., p. xiii.

⁷ Ibid., p. xiii.

⁸ Edward W. Said, 'Return to Palestine-Israel', *The Observer*, October 25-November 1, 8, 1992. Also published in Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 176.

⁹ Ibid., p. 176.

¹⁰ See *Israel-Palestine Liberation Agreement: 1993*, The Avalon Project, Yale Law School, at http://www.avalon.yale.edu/20th_century/isrplo.asp [accessed 13-9-2015].

¹¹ Edward W. Said, *Peace and its Discontents: Gaza-Jericho 1993-1995* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. xxv.

roundly praised. However, as Said predicted, the arrangement proved unworkable. The dissolution of the agreement was confirmed by the Second Intifada, which began in September 2000.¹² The issue of a Palestinian uprising was intrinsic to Said's political and intellectual life. In response to the First Intifada, or Palestinian uprising, on December 9th, 1987, Said had written that because 'the occupied territories had already had twenty years of a regime designed to suppress, humiliate, and perpetually disenfranchise Palestinians...[a]n intensification of resistance therefore seemed required'.¹³ Said's resistance was therefore not solely concerned with high-level governmental negotiations, but with the entire sphere of Palestinian resistance. His estrangement from the PNC was not a signal that he intended to be in any way cut off from the central issue of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation. The idea, then, that Said's resistance could suddenly be detached from an act of representation as personal as a memoir, is at the very least improbable. In this context, far from being a conventional memoir innocent of political intent, *Out of Place* takes at least partly the shape of a covert act of radical resistance.

Said had consciously woven *Out of Place* into the political landscape of his life and it rightly attracted much attention based on this premise. One of the most hostile responses to *the memoir* appeared in an article by the Israeli academic and human rights lawyer, Justus Reid Weiner, published in the right wing *Commentary* magazine.¹⁴ Weiner, who Said labelled a 'right-wing Zionist', was suspicious of the Columbia University professor's depiction of the 'facts' of his early life.¹⁵ He was suspicious enough, in fact, to claim that Said's narrative of his own life had been '[a]n artful lie'.¹⁶ A mark of the significance to Weiner of Said's memoir was the extraordinary effort he had expended on a three-year investigation into the Palestinian's early life. Weiner's investigation 'found' that

¹² The English translation of Intifada is 'resistance'. The First Intifada occurred between December 1987 and March 1991. Said called the First Intifada 'one of the great anticolonial insurrections of the modern period', in *The Politics of Dispossession*, p. xxvii.

¹³ Edward W. Said, 'Intifada and Independence', in *Intifada: The Palestinian Uprising against Israeli Occupation*, eds., Zachary Lochman and Joel Beinin (Washington DC: South End Press, 1989), pp. 5-22; p. 5.

¹⁴ *Commentary* is a journal established in the United States, in 1945, by the American Jewish Committee.

¹⁵ Edward W. Said, 'Defamation, Zionist Style', in *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 26th August, 1999.

<http://www.ahram.org.eg> [accessed 7-12-2014].

¹⁶ Justus Reid Weiner, 'My Beautiful Old House' and other Fabrications by Edward Said', in *Commentary*, 01-09-1999, <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/articles/my-beautiful-old-house-and-other-fabrications-by-edward-said/> [accessed 27-11-2014].

[c]ontrary to his pose as a Palestinian refugee, he did not grow up with his family in Jerusalem, and was not driven from there to Cairo by a Zionist sound truck in mid-December 1947. Rather, he spent his childhood in Cairo, the son of a wealthy businessman with American citizenship, living in luxurious apartments, enrolled in private English and American schools, playing tennis at the exclusive Gazira Sporting Club, and travelling first-class to visit relatives in Jerusalem and elsewhere.¹⁷

Weiner made a point of emphasising Said's middle class upbringing, his private education, and his cosmopolitan lifestyle, all of which seemed to work against any notion that he was a genuine 'refugee'. At stake in this delineation was the question of authority, of precisely who Said was, and ultimately the implication that he was not really a Palestinian at all. The phrases 'Palestinian refugee', 'Zionist sound truck', and 'mid-December 1947' situated Weiner's article in a much wider context than the pretext for *Out of Place*, which was, in Said's terms, 'a record of an essentially lost or forgotten world' that was his childhood in the British mandate of Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt. The context for *Out of Place* spanned out to incorporate the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, a dispute that had been on-going since the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. In response to *Out of Place*, a competing narrative had emerged, one that was interested more in the 'facts' of Said's account than in its merits as a work of general non-fiction.

There were a number of potential causes both for the substance of Weiner's narrative and the positioning of his statements in an American periodical. At the time, in the United States and perhaps beyond, Said was one of the most influential advocates of Palestinian self-determination, a person perhaps accurately described as being for many years 'the main spokesperson for the Palestinian cause in the United States'.¹⁸ In political and intellectual terms, then, Said stood diametrically opposed to political Zionism, the financial fulcrum of which lies in the United States, and by extension he was also in conflict with Weiner. More troubling for Weiner and the Zionists was Said's standing in the intellectual community. Even Weiner argued that '[t]here can be no doubt that a great deal of the moral authority accruing to Edward Said derives as much from his personal as from his

¹⁷ Justus Reid Weiner, 'Exile's Return', in *The New York Review of Books*, February 2000 Issue. <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2000/feb/24/exiles-return/> [accessed 8-9-2015].

¹⁸ David Barsamian and Edward W. Said, *Culture and Resistance: Interviews with Edward W. Said* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. ix.

intellectual credentials'.¹⁹ The disparities between the positions of Weiner and Said were exacerbated by the fact that *Commentary* magazine was, and indeed is, by its own admission,

consistently engaged with several large, interrelated questions: the fate of democracy and of democratic ideas in a world threatened by totalitarian ideologies; the state of American and western security; the future of the Jews, Judaism, and Jewish culture in Israel, the United States and around the world; and the preservation of high culture in an age of political correctness and the collapse of critical standards.²⁰

In Weiner's version of events, and standing against Said's personal depiction of his own life, was a narrative presented in, and approved by, a publication which tied together issues of American and western security, Jewish culture in Israel, the future of the Jews, Judaism, high culture, democracy, and democratic ideas, each connected to one another and each pitched against something labelled and lambasted as 'political correctness'. It was a straightforward conflict, then, between an Israeli academic and lawyer writing in a magazine that claimed to represent the interests of Jewish people, setting out the Zionist case in the on-going question of Palestine/Israel, and a Palestinian-American advocate of Palestinian self-determination protected by a shield of 'political correctness'. Two lines of 'knowledge' were intractably opposed, and at stake was the momentous question of land ownership and political determination. Weiner had situated the lines of the contest within the framework of Said's memoir, the erroneous nature of which, according to Weiner, simply destroyed his authority to act as a spokesperson.

Setting aside for a moment the overtly polemical nature of *Commentary's* ethos, which seems to be acting as the self-appointed moral guardians of Western democratic values and its connection to the future of Jewish culture in Israel, another important reason for Weiner's provocation appears. Weiner does not refer to it in his rebuttal of Said's version of his own life, but embedded in the argument is a much wider theoretical framework. Said's political strategy, to be found at work across his oeuvre, but noticeably in such works as *Orientalism* and *The Question of Palestine*, had been to situate the Palestine/Israel problem within the much wider context of Western colonialism and imperialism. In *The Question of Palestine*, for example, he had argued that the Palestinian

¹⁹ Weiner, 'Exile's Return', p. 2.

²⁰ 'About Us', in *Commentary*, at <http://www.commentarymagazine.com>, 19-7-2015 [accessed 19-7-2015].

‘actuality is today, was yesterday, and most likely tomorrow will be built upon an act of resistance to this new foreign colonialism’.²¹ The context for the *Commentary* article, then, was not only the immediate question of Palestine/Israel, but the wider issue of Western colonialism and imperialism, a phase in history that many thought had ended with the wave of de-colonization that swept across the globe during the twentieth century alongside the explosive proliferation of the term ‘post-colonial’. Said and Weiner were, in effect, only the latest protagonists in a much wider and longer running conflict; Said aiming to affirm the place of Palestine/Israel within the on-going context of colonial conflict and Weiner to disaffirm it.

The crux of Weiner’s argument was that Said’s depiction of his time spent in Jerusalem before 1948 had largely been exaggerated, which if correct would dent the personal, intellectual, and political integrity of the Palestinian-American. In this case Said could not, argued Weiner, justify the intellectual principle that he had expounded in the 1993 *BBC Reith Lectures*, namely to ‘speak truth to power’.²² The main substance of Said’s narrative of his life in Palestine prior to 1948, was the significant time he had spent there as a child. Weiner’s claim was that Said had long argued that ‘I was born in Jerusalem and had spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt’.²³ This, Wiener argued, was ‘the standard version’, by which he meant the iteration approved by Said’s supporters.²⁴ Weiner was perhaps correct to describe it as the ‘standard version’, given that few commentators who could loosely be classified as belonging to the Said side of the dispute had questioned the veracity of his account. McCarthy, for example, in his 2010 work on Said, simply recycles Said’s account of his own time in Palestine before 1948, and then in Cairo, failing to consider the details or contextual contingencies. McCarthy acknowledged the significance that Said attached to the recovery of ‘his narrative’, but little beyond that point seemed to be of interest. Instead, McCarthy noted only that, in its obituary of Said, the *New York Times* had under pressure from the powerful Zionist lobby in the United States, later changed the details in their original article:

²¹ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 8.

²² Weiner, ‘Exile’s Return’.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

they had 'misidentified the city that was [Said's childhood] home'.²⁵ Said was born in Jerusalem in 1935, the article acknowledged, but 'his family's home was Cairo; they did not move from Jerusalem'.²⁶ This alteration, McCarthy argued, was 'an echo of the attack by Justus Reid Weiner, in *Commentary*, an American Zionist magazine, on Said's patrimony in 1999, just as he published his memoir *Out of Place*'.²⁷ The 'standard' version of Said's early life had a long lineage. In his 1992 anthology of essays on Said, the American academic and literary critic, Michael Sprinker (1950-1999) casually noted how 'Said's family fled Palestine in 1947-8 for Egypt'.²⁸ Whatever the rights or wrongs of Weiner's attack on Said, Weiner had good grounds to question the uncritical stance of Said's supporters, and indeed the veracity of some of the details in the Palestinians memoir.

Weiner pointed out that Said's account of his early years, on which his intellectual resistance had at least partially been promulgated, seemed to shift considerably after news escaped of the 'investigation' into his story. Said had altered his position on his relationship to Palestine, Weiner argued, and was now claiming that 'Cairo [was] one of the places where I grew up'.²⁹ In truth, Said had never actively discouraged the story that his family had 'fled' Palestine. In fact, Said had begun to alter the tenor of his narrative as early as 1996. In an interview with the Canadian broadcaster, Eleanor Wachtel, Said noted that 'when I was born in 1935, my parents were commuting between Palestine and Egypt. I didn't spend a huge amount of time in Palestine or, for that matter, anywhere really; we were always on the move'.³⁰ Said's response to Weiner's accusations came not from his home in the United States but in the Egyptian magazine *Al-Ahram*, where he noted the systematic nature of the assault, pointing out that it was 'the third such attack on me by *Commentary* in 20 years'.³¹ 'Weiner', argued Said 'is a propagandist who, like many others before him, has tried to depict the dispossession of Palestinians as an act of ideological

²⁵ Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Michael Sprinker, ed., *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 2.

²⁹ *Out of Place*, p. 5.

³⁰ Edward W. Said, 'Between Two Cultures', an interview with Eleanor Wachtel, in Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. By Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), pp. 233-247; pp. 233-4.

³¹ Edward W. Said, 'Defamation, Zionist Style', in *Al-Ahram*, August 26 1999. Between 1998 and 2003, Said wrote over one hundred articles and essays for the Cairo based *Al-Ahram* magazine.

fiction'.³² In Said's view, the process of destroying his integrity was a microcosmic mirroring of a collective strategy to write the Palestinians out of history. This, of course, may not have been the situation, and it may be true – if unlikely – that Weiner was simply addressing what he considered a series of 'untruths', although one might suggest that a three-year investigation into a memoir seems an instance of rather excessive diligence. What was quite clear was that the personal knowledge displayed in *Out of Place* had entered a cultural space in which it could no longer be considered – if it ever had been – a purely personal issue. Said's memoir had ruffled Weiner's feathers, and he had brought it in from the realms of a 'good read' to the centre of a sometimes violent, and always turbulent, political issue. This was, perhaps, the location to which Said had intended it should return.

One of the things that probably troubled Weiner was the fact that *Out of Place* was written by a Palestinian-American academic with an extremely influential voice, an elite intellectual who represented an unsettling presence to the Zionist movement in the United States. Sprinker argues that in the fervid media arena of the United States, where the Palestinian cause was directly pitted against the dominant Zionist ideology, Said 'tirelessly contested the standard caricature of the politically engaged Arab as terrorist, barbarian, maniac'.³³ The Iraqi Jewish academic Ella Shohat has described this strategy in terms of 'the politics of style', arguing that there was a space in the United States where '[s]okespersons such as Said, Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, James Zogby, and Rashid Khalidi defy the stereotype Arab look of thick moustaches, hooked noses, or halting English and heavy Arab accent'.³⁴ As photographs in *Out of Place* show, the young Said's style had, in fact, been one which he had self-consciously cultivated almost from his arrival in the United States. Shohat has argued that the suave, cultured appearance of Said was 'threatening from a Zionist perspective', a viewpoint which projected an 'us' (Israeli/Western/cultured) against 'them' (Palestinian-Arab/Eastern/uncivilized).³⁵ In short, Shohat's argument centred on the idea that Said's media style disrupted the 'long-established paradigm of East versus West with regard to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, particularly within the Western media context'.³⁶ It was not just the type of knowledge produced that was important, but the manner and

³² Said, 'Defamation, Zionist Style'.

³³ Sprinker, p. 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ella Shohat, 'Antinomies of Exile: Said at the Frontiers of National Narrations', in Ibid., pp. 121-143; p. 128.

³⁶ Sprinker, p. 131.

appearance of those individuals who produced and disseminated it. Had *Out of Place* been written in Arabic and published in the Middle East, its reception and the reaction to it may well have been very different, as might have been the content. Whatever Said's intentions were in writing *Out of Place*, he had little or no control over how and for what reasons his memoir would be interpreted; yet he could shape it in particular ways that were appropriate to his aims. Said was a skilled writer and a shrewd political operator, a man who understood the precepts of knowledge and was adept at channelling it into particular places and situations. As the enormous reaction to *Orientalism* had demonstrated twenty-one years previously, Said was very effective in this regard, so much so that Weiner had been forced to confront Said on what had long been the Palestinian's 'home' territory of the American media. As Sprinker had noted,

[d]uring the melancholy and frustrating months leading up to the Persian Gulf War and even more insistently during the war and its aftermath, no voice dissenting from the Anglo-American consensus was more prominent or persuasive than Edward Said's. He was quite literally the most frequently cited, interviewed, and published oppositional figure in Britain and the United States.³⁷

A strategy to counter this Arab-American figure and this unusual style of Palestinian resistance was required. Sprinker argues that '[t]he standard line now is that he [Said] is seductive; wariness – rather than shrill denunciation – is the new order of the day for supporters of Israel'.³⁸

In a wider sense, but barely beneath the surface, the participants in this particular episode of the colonial struggle were the state of Israel and a Palestinian resistance movement, of which in this instance the self-appointed representatives were Justus Reid Weiner and Edward Said. In Weiner's corner, or at least not in opposition to him, stood two considerable forces. In the United States, any support for the establishment of a Palestinian state will collide head-on with the 'Israel lobby'. Mearsheimer and Walt have described the lobby as 'a loose coalition of individuals and organizations that actively works to move U.S. policy in a pro-Israel direction'.³⁹ They argue that the lobby 'has gradually become one of the most powerful interest groups in the United States', and the direction of that group is to

³⁷ Ibid., p. 1.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁹ John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 5.

influence U.S. policy in the interests of Israel and not Palestine.⁴⁰ In addition to the Israel lobby, stood at least one arm of the formidable Federal Bureau of Investigation, a powerful state institution which had long since taken an interest in the direction of Said's political sympathies. Drawing from information obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, Price disclosed that,

[t]he FBI's first record of Edward Said appears in a February 1971 domestic security investigation of another unidentified individual...Said's "International Security" FBI file was established when an informant gave the FBI a program from the October 1971 Boston Convention. Said merited a 238-page file at the FBI (147 pages have been acknowledged), and the majority of the FBI files are classified 'under the administrative heading of "Foreign Counterintelligence," category 105. Most of the records are designated as relating to "IS Middle East," the Bureau designation for Israel.⁴¹

The American academic and author, Barbara Harlow, argues that Said's support for Palestinian self-determination ensured that '[he] was targeted and rejected as a politically and academically unacceptable participant in "dialogue" – either academic or political'.⁴² Nevertheless, Said continued his 'dialogue' - and was able to continue his dialogue - in *Out of Place*, a location where the FBI was relatively ineffectual in establishing resistance to his right to speak.

By the terms of Said's own theoretical position, he could hardly dismiss the relevance of the conditions under which his story was to be told, nor deny the right of others, like Weiner, to challenge it. One of the central tenets of Said's exegesis of Western colonialism and imperialism had been the importance of stories in the process of first colonizing and then holding sway over other peoples and lands. As Said argued in *Culture and Imperialism*, 'stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history'.⁴³ In the first clause, Said was referring to the function in the Western imperial project of cultural forms such as the realist novel, historical accounts, or travel writing. However, in the second clause he acknowledged a

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp., 6-7.

⁴¹ David Price, 'How the FBI Spied on Edward Said', in *Counterpunch*, January 13, 2006.

><http://www.counterpunch.org/2006/01/13/how-the-fbi-spied-on-edward-said/>< [accessed 17-12-2011].

⁴² Barbara Harlow, 'The Palestinian Intellectual and the Liberation of the Academy', in Sprinker, *Edward Said*, p. 188.

⁴³ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. xiii.

symbiotic relationship between power and resistance, and therefore also acknowledged the counter-function of narratives in the process of resistance to colonization and imperialism. Cementing his ideas on the relationship between knowledge and power, Said argued that '[t]he power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them'.⁴⁴ In one sense *Out of Place* is simply a text by a Palestinian exile in the United States attempting to recover his past, the early part of which was spent in a part of the world which had been for a very long time the symbol of the West's Other, the place against which it defined itself. In another sense, but equally related to the issue of power, it can be read as Said in the process of exercising the power to narrate, the intention of which was to ultimately influence an on-going political process.

The idea that in Said's case the minute details of an author's life should be so entwined with 'external' political issues says much of the fraught, contentious, and sensitive nature of the Palestinian issue. In his particular situation, questions of who Said claimed to be, what he may have been trying to achieve in the ways that he recounted his own story, and the political, moral, or geographical position from which he wrote, have been the cause of scrupulous interrogation; as, indeed, counter-narratives should also be open to the same rigorous analysis. This is not because of any particular adherence to a literary theory which demands that a text be considered within the material conditions of its production, or because, as Said once argued, 'texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society – in short, they are in the world, and hence worldly', but predominantly because of the extremely sensitive issue of Palestine and Said's place within its continuing story.⁴⁵ This is a 'story', after all, and one that influences the lives of thousands of people. It is most definitely not just scribbles on a page. Wiener was simply testing the 'worldliness' of Said's narrative, which was, without doubt, connected to an intention of one sort or another. For, if Said's memoir had been inflected by the 'surreptitious' elements of his political sympathies and experiences, the idea that this process could then bypass the question of intention is implausible. The task, then, is to examine how and in what ways the texts represent what we know about Said, in

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. xiii.

⁴⁵ Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press), p. 35.

order to tease out the intention[s] that informed the making. What is revealed from this procedure is a protean and unstable relationship between Said's self-representations and alternative available accounts of the man.

No Place like Home

In *Out of Place* Said places great emphasis on the theme of displacement. The book is not overtly concerned with the mass exodus of Palestinians from Palestine, but rather with the way that prior to the inauguration of the state of Israel in 1948 the Said family roamed almost continually between Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon. The sketch drawn is of a transient Said family, a narrative that is counter-balanced by Edward Said's insistence that '[o]ur family home was in Talibiyah [West Jerusalem]'.⁴⁶ Said's conception of home is framed within the geographical homeland of Palestine, and specifically Talibiyah, and this is allied to a sense of a long family history on that land. One member of the family seems not to have shared Edward Said's affiliation to Palestine. Said notes how his father, Wadie Said, although born in Palestine in 1895, was adamant that he 'hated Jerusalem'.⁴⁷ Despite this apparent loathing, Wadie still considered Palestine as 'home'.⁴⁸ Said consolidates his notion of Palestine as 'home' in other ways. He constructs a genealogy whereby as a boy he 'assumed the existence of a longish family history in Jerusalem'.⁴⁹ This was 'based on the way my paternal aunt, Nabiha, and her children inhabited the place, as if they, and especially she, embodied the city's rather peculiar, not to say austere and constricted, spirit'.⁵⁰ In Said's narrative the Said 'family' is entwined with his notion of 'home'. In turn, the Said family are seen to represent the essence of Palestine. Implicit in the narrative is the idea that however far the Suids travel from Palestine, by genealogy and by intangible things like 'spirit', they embody the land and by extension the nation. Yet, elsewhere in

⁴⁶ *Out of Place*, p. 21.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

works such as *Orientalism*, essentialism was one of the politico-philosophical formations that Said vigorously contested.⁵¹

Said's relationship with the idea of a Palestinian home was important to him for two reasons. Firstly, it was significant because the concept of 'home' is fundamental to most human beings and Said was no exception to this transhistorical truism. The political connotations of the book should not detract from the simple truism that when Said wrote *Out of Place* he was referring to the place he had long thought of as home. Palestine was the place where he felt he belonged, it was the land of his birth, and he spent a great deal of his life thinking, talking, and writing about it. This was rather unusual in the sense that for most of his life although the land was still there, 'Palestine' no longer existed. One of Said's aims was to re-establish, in one form or another, a state of Palestine. Therefore, his allusions to Palestine in *Out of Place*, a land he left when he was twelve years old after spending very little of that time actually within the nation's borders, cannot be entirely separated from his political intentions. Nevertheless, one would hope it is reasonable to propose that Said should be afforded the respect due to anyone who has been forcibly excluded from what they consider to be their 'home'. The details of his experiences may be in dispute, but Said was exiled from Palestine, which, in legal terms, has not existed since the creation of Israel on May 14th, 1948.

The second reason why the concept of home was important to Said involves a conflation of the personal and the political. The Palestinian cause is premised on self-determination and the eventual 'return' to a state, in whatever form, of 'Palestine'.⁵² Weiner's exhaustive investigation and subsequent assault on Said's narrative of a Palestinian 'home' was based on the political ambition that this eventuality must never take place. The Palestinian academic, Alon Confino, has argued that Weiner's real aim was 'the delegitimization, among some sectors of Israeli society, of Palestinian memory and identity'.⁵³ Furthermore, Shohat has argued that

[t]he question of victimization is crucial for the representation of Jewish experience and identity and for the liberationist Zionist project. The suggestion

⁵¹ In Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 97, Said refers to the ways in which Orientalists 'adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations, and peoples of the Orient under study'.

⁵² At various times Said advocated a one-state and two-state solution to the Palestine-Israel situation.

⁵³ Confino', p. 190.

that a history of other victims might be told, that there might be victims of Jewish nationalism, leads to violent opposition, or, in the case of liberals, to epistemological vertigo.⁵⁴

If there is no such thing as a historical Palestinian homeland, then clearly the grounds for a new Palestinian state would seem to be greatly diminished. As Shohat argues, '[t]he imagination of the territory – the Land of Israel or Palestine – attempts to recuperate identities, to construct them in relation to a Motherland, indeed the same homeland for both national imaginations'.⁵⁵ There is a case for detaching the Zionist narrative from the everyday experiences of Jewish immigrants to Palestine, and possibly a case for differentiating between the ideals of American Zionism and the reality of everyday Israeli life on the ground. Miller notes the

perception that Zionist rhetoric suggesting a seamless process by which Jews could “return” to their roots and feel at home must be understood as the outcome of a complex historical process in which the everyday, very difficult experiences of immigrants were often subordinated to a larger historical project whose meaning was created primarily by Labor Zionists.⁵⁶

An unstable notion of ‘home’ emerges, which is a troubling situation both for Palestinians and Zionists. Said’s response to the Zionist narrative of the non-existence of Palestinians or Palestine is implicit in *Out of Place*, where he writes of recuperating ‘A RECORD OF AN ESSENTIALLY LOST OR FOR-gotten world’.⁵⁷ Said argued that ‘[f]rom the moment I began to write on behalf of Palestinian rights and self-determination, the apprehension that as a people we still had no sovereignty over any part of the land of Palestine has dominated my efforts’.⁵⁸ Whilst the words ‘sovereignty’ and ‘Palestine’ suggest that Said’s ambitions were linked to the soil, to the political act of recovering land, he, like the American Zionists, had far less purchase on the quotidian reality of the ‘homeland’ than those who actually live there.

The act of recovering a world through memory and writing was tied to this broader

⁵⁴ Ella Shohat, ‘Antinomies of Exile: Said at the Frontiers of National Narrations’, in Springer, p. 134.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 135.

⁵⁶ Ylana Miller, ‘Exiled in the Homeland’ (review), in *The Middle East Journal*, 64 (2010), 495-496 (p. 495).

⁵⁷ *Out of Place*, p. xiii. I have quoted the extract exactly as it appears in my copy of *Out of Place*, with the capital letter intact. This may be an editing error, or it may be that Said wanted to emphasize that the book was primarily about keeping Palestine alive through memory.

⁵⁸ Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. by Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. xvi.

aim of land ownership, but it was also a way of constructing and consolidating the Palestinian identity, without which there could be no sense of exile. In this sense, *Out of Place* can be yoked with the picture-narrative, *After the Last Sky* (1986), and the equally political work, *The Question of Palestine* (1979), as both are texts that attempt to consolidate the actual presence in the world of people who call themselves 'Palestinians'.⁵⁹ The motives behind Weiner's opposition to Said's narrative become more intelligible when considered in the framework of stories of exile and home, a binary that is fundamental to the history of the Palestinian resistance. In the tradition of Said's historical 'recovery', two Palestinian women, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Sarah Ihmoud, have narrated in essay form their 'yearning and right to return home, even when present-absentees'.⁶⁰ As Kassem has observed, home is 'the one place where history and memory are transmitted, thereby preserving the continuity of cultural and national identity'.⁶¹

It is difficult to reconcile Said's emphasis on maintaining and re-constructing a Palestinian identity with a statement he made in an interview with Jacqueline Rose. Here, Said admits that

I've become very, very impatient with the idea of and the whole project of identity: the idea, which produced great interest in the United States in the sixties and which is also present in the return to Islam in the Arab world and elsewhere, that people should really focus on themselves and where they come from...What's much more interesting is to try to reach out beyond identity to something else. It may be death. It may be an altered state of consciousness that puts you in touch with others more than one normally is.⁶²

The 'project of identity' is entwined with the perilous presence of nationalism, an ideology of which Said was rightly sceptical. In 'Reflections on Exile', Said first argues that '[n]ationalism is an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs; and, by so doing, it

⁵⁹ Edward W. Said and Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (London: Faber, 1986).

⁶⁰ Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, N., and Sarah Ihmoud, 'Exiled at Home: Writing Return and the Palestinian Home', *Biography*, 37 (2014), 377-397 (p. 377) in *Project Muse* <<http://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/567904/pdf>> [accessed 5-5-2015]. 'Present Absentees' refers to the Absentees Property Law established in 1948. This law enabled the confiscation of Palestinian land and property, and created a category of (Palestinian) people who were expelled from their homes but remained within the Israeli state. For the purposes of the law they were considered as absent, yet present, hence the term present absentees. Cited in Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud, p. 381.

⁶¹ Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2011), p. 190. Cited in Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud, p. 381.

⁶² *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. 430-31.

fends off exile, fights to prevent its ravages'.⁶³ Significantly, then, Said revises the first statement, which is basically a summary of the Palestinian position. 'In time,' argues Said, 'successful nationalisms consign truth exclusively to themselves and relegate falsehood and inferiority to outsiders'.⁶⁴ Said had first-hand experience of nationalism. As he argued in an interview with Edmundson,

I grew up in that very same world of postwar Third World nationalism. You see, these are my two worlds: the world of the West and the world of the Third World. Nationalism, which is necessary to combat imperialism, then turns into a kind of fetishization of the native essence and identity.⁶⁵

The conundrum for Said was that the narration of a national identity is a prerequisite of a Palestinian state, but that this can so easily slide into another type of story which in its hostility to the Other and to difference would become an inverted version of the Israeli master narrative. It is hard to agree, then, with the logic of Rose's argument that although 'Palestinian national aspirations were wholly legitimate [Said] had no time for nationalism in its most obdurate forms'.⁶⁶ Of course, he did not, but neither could he entirely do without it. To be a 'Palestinian' is not the same as shouldering a desire to return to Palestine; yet, as Fanon wrote in *The Wretched of the Earth*, when nationalism is invoked what one desires or intends can quickly alter course.⁶⁷ A nation can be forged without common land ownership (the Jewish nation, for example, survived without a homeland although clearly it eventually obtained one), but this is not what the Palestinian cause is concerned with. There is a sense in which to be a Palestinian is to be at 'home' in that identity, in which case a geographical 'return' might be secondary to the notion of simply belonging to a collective. Said's aim was to connect Palestinian identity with a homeland. It was the 'land' part of the equation that troubled Weiner and other Zionists, and in some ways it troubled Said, who was never quite at home with the thought of a return to Palestine.

Said's sense of where 'home' was is considerably more fluid than it initially appears, and seems to have been split between Palestine and the United States. In fact, Said spent the majority of his life in the United States. Apart from a few brief sojourns, between the

⁶³ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2001), p. 176.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 175.

⁶⁶ Jacqueline Rose, 'Edward Said', *History Workshop Journal*, 57 (2004), 244-246 (p. 244).

⁶⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

11th of July, 1951, when Said and his parents departed from Beirut Airport (then called Khaldé), in Lebanon, until his death on the 25th September, 2003, Said's physical home was the United States. He returned to Israel-Palestine only twice, in 1992 and 1998. Nevertheless, Said disputed both the idea that New York was his 'home' and hegemonic versions of the concept of 'home' itself:

it does not seem important or even desirable to be 'right' and in place (right at home, for instance). Better to wander out of place, not to own a house, and never to feel too much at home anywhere, especially in a city like New York, where I shall be until I die.⁶⁸

At times like these Said and his 'worldliness' seem very far apart, as does his relationship to the displaced Palestinians in refugee camps. Most of these fellow Palestinians would never enjoy the sort of comfortable home enjoyed by Said in New York. Unlike these refugees, Said could tether this philosophical ideal of wandering and displacement to the rupture from his 'old life' in the Middle East without experiencing the actual pain of a refugee camp. Nevertheless, the displacement had helped to reveal 'the self beneath or obscured by "Edward," [and which] could only have begun because of that rupture'.⁶⁹

Given the specific nature of Said's experience, the authority informing his version of the scale of the rupture is perhaps somewhat compromised. The Said family left or fled Palestine, where Edward had not spent 'much time', and travelled to the familiar terrain of Egypt. It is true that in 1951 Said's father sent him to the United States. Ostensibly, the young Said had been exiled to America to continue his education and to improve his attitude, both of which had fallen below his father's expectations at the Egyptian 'Eton', Victoria College, in Alexandria, which he attended between 1948 and 1951. However, there was a strong Said family connection with the United States, which supports the idea that this was not quite the dramatic rupture that he described in *Out of Place*. In 1911, his father had travelled first to Liverpool and then to New York, where he worked as a salesman for ARCO, a Cleveland paint company. He fought for the Americans during the First World War and was awarded a Cross of Lorraine.⁷⁰ He had impressed on his son the idea that 'America

⁶⁸ *Out of Place*, p. 294.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

was his [Said's father's] country'.⁷¹ Edward Said's voyage into the United States was enabled by the fact that his father held an American passport, which he had obtained by virtue of his military service. Wadie Said's time in the United States had been the catalyst for a period of self-making, and he returned to Palestine in many ways a paradigmatic image of the entrepreneurial American. The man who had left Palestine as Wadie Ibrahim Said, had returned from his 'American decade' in 1920, somewhat changed by the experience.⁷² He was now 'William A. Said...sober pioneer, hard-working and successful businessman, and Protestant'.⁷³ For him, America had become '[m]y country, right or wrong'.⁷⁴ Wadie Said's 'turn' to the United States cannot be detached from his subsequent decision to educate all four of his children there. Edward Said was less sure that there was a connection between his forced exile to the United States and his father's newfound love for that country. Said offered a more complex theory, speculating that he may have been sent to the United States because his father believed that 'the only hope for me as a man was in fact to be cut off from my family'.⁷⁵ In effect, this was another form of being out of place, of exile. If his father's intention was for him to be 'cut off' from the family, he could have done that elsewhere. We can therefore ask why he should be sent to the United States and not closer to home. It seems fairly certain that Said's father intended that he should *become* in a cultural sense of the word an 'American' which, in many ways, is what happened. In his statements on this matter he may not quite have accommodated these wishes, yet after 1951 Said consciously made the United States and specifically New York City his place of residence.

The important question is whether the *fact* that Said eventually elected to permanently settle in New York undermines the basic premise of his approach to knowledge, and by definition to his criticism: that homelessness is the ideal critical, intellectual, and philosophical location. New York City occupied a special status for Said as the place where he *chose* to put roots down, a condition that sounds very much like, perhaps, 'home'. Said described New York as 'an immigrants' and exiles' city', with 'Ellis

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 294.

Island, as the immigrant location par excellence'.⁷⁶ Whereas the memory of life in Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt was a memory, New York was in Said's terms 'concrete'. In Israeli law, Said had no legal right of return to Palestine. As a person of considerable means and opportunity, however, he was not compelled to stay in the United States. Said was inconsistent on this point. He maintained that after thirty-seven years of residence in New York he still felt that he was 'away from home', that he was living there with 'a sense of provisionality'.⁷⁷ Said was once asked if, should it become possible, he would choose to return to Palestine, to make it his home. He replied that '[f]or me to disconnect myself from New York would be difficult'.⁷⁸ New York and the United States were not for Said, perhaps, quite as provisional in practice as in theory.

Feeling at Home in Being Out of Place

Said makes much of the theme of being out of place, which seems to have permeated just about every aspect of his life in Palestine. Said notes how 'it took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, "Edward," a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said'.⁷⁹ In this respect, Edward Said was not quite out of place; his sister Rosemarie (known to Said as 'Rosy'), born in Cairo in 1937, and who came to be regarded 'one of the foremost academic historians of the Gulf States', also had an Anglicized name.⁸⁰ Palestine was predominantly Muslim, but the Said family resided in a part of West Jerusalem, Talibayah, in an area 'lived in exclusively by Palestinian Christians like us'.⁸¹ Said carries the metaphor into the realms of language. He argued that 'I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond doubt'.⁸²

⁷⁶ *Reflections on Exile*, p. xii.

⁷⁷ *Out of Place*, p. 222.

⁷⁸ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 453. First published as an interview with Ari Shavat, *Ha'aretz Magazine*, Tel Aviv, 2000.

⁷⁹ *Out of Place*, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Brittain, Victoria, 'Obituary', Rosemary Said Zahlan: Historian of the Gulf States whose Heart was in Palestine', 2006 <<http://www.theguardian.com>> [accessed 17-5-2015].

⁸¹ *Out of Place*, p. 21.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

To be permanently 'out of place', as Said's narrative suggests he was, may be stretching credulity and points to a wider strategy which consolidates his status as an exilic intellectual. Confino has argued that in *Out of Place* '[a] constant property links young Edward with the adult Said: the notion of out of placeness, of exile, as changeless permanent features of his personality that existed before he could have known what the future had in store for him'.⁸³ This, however, does not quite fit with some of Said's other descriptions in the book. Aside from the trauma of leaving Palestine, Said's upbringing there and in Egypt had been one of relatively harmonious cultural and ethnic plurality. Said alludes to this diversity in the early pages of *Out of Place*, noting how 'I was delivered at home [in Jerusalem] by a Jewish midwife, Madame Baer'.⁸⁴ There seems to have been almost no room for a sense of 'Otherness' or 'out of placeness' to develop in this environment; yet if there was one, Said found it. The political and existential metaphor of being out of place is very powerful, but it should not be casually conflated with every aspect of Said's lived experiences.

His sense of being 'out of place' was not reserved for Palestine and the Middle East. Although for the majority of his time spent at Mount Hermon College in the United States Said thought of himself as 'colorless', a fissure seems to have opened up as he was preparing to leave at the end of his studies.⁸⁵ At his graduation ceremony, Said was overlooked in favour of a less accomplished student in the race 'to be salutatorian and Byrne's valedictorian'.⁸⁶ Said correlated this personal slight both to his ethnicity and his background in the Middle East. A rationale developed in Said's mind that the root of this institutional prejudice was geographical: 'coming from a part of the world that seemed to be in a state of chaotic transformation became the symbol of what was out of place about me'.⁸⁷ Said linked this assertion to his nascent political thoughts, which had been triggered by the recent Suez crisis and the rise of Arab nationalism under the leadership of Gamel Abdel Nasser (1918-1970).⁸⁸ In Said's narrative, even this seismic political development seemed to entail feelings of being out of place, this time within his own family. On the one

⁸³ Confino, p. 188.

⁸⁴ *Out of Place*, p. 20.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁸⁸ For an account of Nasser, see Mansfield, Peter, *Nasser's Egypt* (London: Penguin, 1969).

hand, even at a distance from Egypt, and viewing events through the prism of his cloistered life in the United States, Said 'felt the great power of his [Nasser's] appeal and did not much question his ability to liberate and unify the Arab world'.⁸⁹ On the other hand, Said's capitalist father and the rest of his family in Cairo became the unfortunate targets of 'the Nasserite assault on the privileged classes'.⁹⁰ As Weiner observes, perhaps because of their associations and affiliations with the United States, the Said family were viewed with some suspicion in Egypt, where 'the flagship Cairo store as well as a local branch store of the Standard Stationery Company in Cairo was burned down by 'a revolutionary mob' in 1952'.⁹¹ If, because of the 1956 crisis, Said had sensed the underlying discriminations of the West-East conflict, it did not materialize in his PhD thesis on Joseph Conrad. Rather than focus on Conrad's associations with colonialism – best displayed perhaps in *Heart of Darkness* and *An Outpost of Progress*, Said contemplated the Polish writer's interior life.

The ambiguities between Said's professed sense of discomfort and the style and content of his prose in *Out of Place* continues into the narrative of his early years in the United States. Said was accepted as a boarder at Mount Hermon preparatory school in Gill, Massachusetts, an institution which is currently one of the most expensive schools of its type in the country.⁹² It was ironic, perhaps, that the sober and prosperous businessman should choose to send his son to Mount Hermon, one of two academies founded by the 19th century evangelist Dwight Lyman Moody, the main purpose of which was to 'educate young people who had limited access to education because they were poor'.⁹³ Said's father was a talented entrepreneur who created the largest stationery business in the Middle East. The Suids were certainly not poor, nor did they have limited access to education. However, one of the characteristics of Mount Hermon was its ethos that the students should follow a strict work ethic, and Said's father seemed to have been keen that his son should adopt it. A second 'benefit' was that the school was Christian. Although Edward Said would become a resolute secularist, by birthright he belonged to one of the oldest minority Palestinian

⁸⁹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. xiv.

⁹⁰ *Out of Place*, p. 289.

⁹¹ Weiner, 'Exile's Return', p. 8.

⁹² The current annual fees for Mount Hermon (2015) are \$66 695. 'Tuition, Fees & Expenses', <<http://www.nmhschool.org>> [accessed 4-1-2015]

⁹³ 'NMH's History' <<http://www.nmhschool.org>> [accessed 15-12-2015]. Moody founded the Northfield Seminary for Young Ladies in 1879, and Mount Hermon School for Boys in 1881. Apart from his philanthropic wish to provide education for the poor, Moody hoped to provide good Christians to society. In 1971, the two schools became one coeducational establishment, Northfield Mount Hermon.

Christian communities in the world. By definition this provided him with some important personal, cultural, and religious ties in the United States.

It is true that few of the students at Mount Hermon possessed similar ethnic and cultural backgrounds to Said. He noted that Mount Hermon was 'primarily white: there were a handful of black students', but these students seem to have won their places only because 'they were gifted athletes and one rather brilliant musician and intellect, Randy Peyton'.⁹⁴ However, Said was a very capable student, usually finishing first or second in every class he took. He notes in *Out of Place* that he performed well in his academic subjects and excelled in sport, notably so in swimming and tennis. Said was also a gifted pianist, developing a love of music which would never leave him and which would inform some of his later critical theory.⁹⁵ In his own words, he claimed that 'I had done brilliantly in my academic work, I had become a pianist of distinction...I was known as someone with a powerful brain'.⁹⁶ A mark of his accomplishments at Mount Hermon is that they inspired his father to travel from Cairo 'at enormous expense' for his son's graduation ceremony.⁹⁷ Although the dynamics of adolescent alienation can be notoriously difficult to fathom, these hardly seem like the accomplishments of a student who was traumatised by feelings of being 'out of place'. As a reward for his efforts, the younger Said, his father, and two of Edward's cousins, embarked on a tour of New England in a 1951 Ford.⁹⁸ The secondary stages in what we might legitimately refer to as the Americanization of Edward Said – the foundational stages had been completed in the Middle East through his father's acculturation process - were not entirely without their hardships. Said was forced to endure what he described as the 'repressive' regime of Mount Hermon.⁹⁹ It was not an idyllic existence, but the gentle cadence of Said's prose points to a considerable degree of fondness for that period in his life.

⁹⁴ *Out of Place*, p. 248.

⁹⁵ Said was for several years the music critic for *The Nation* magazine. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) Said developed the idea of 'contrapuntal' criticism, a musical term suggesting concert and order from the polyphony of apparently discordant sounds. In the interpretation of historical sources concert can be reached by considering discrepant experiences together. See Said, *Reflections on Exile*, pp. 59-60.

⁹⁶ *Out of Place*, p. 246.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Said received two acceptances for undergraduate study: Princeton and Harvard - hardly destinations that signify material privation. He was nonplussed about Harvard, noting that 'I had never visited [Harvard] and had little idea what it represented other than the smoothly genteel impression made on me by Skiddy von Stade, the visiting Harvard admissions gentleman'.¹⁰⁰ In the autumn of 1953, Said became an undergraduate of Princeton University, the fourth oldest college in the United States.¹⁰¹ It was, in Said's view, still an intellectual backwater. He was particularly struck by the fact that Princeton was weighed down with 'wretched clubs', it was 'provincial...small-minded [and not the] genuine university' it would later become.¹⁰² The intellectual malaise confronting and affronting Said was not confined to one sector of the university. He noted 'the casual, pipe-smoking, tweedy anti-intellectualism of many teachers and students alike'.¹⁰³ His reasons for accepting the offer from Princeton had been as frivolous as those that he had for rejecting Harvard. Said had visited Princeton only once before, in the summer before Mount Hermon, and seems to have been drawn in by a 'leafy pleasant afternoon of tabbouleh and stuffed grape leaves'.¹⁰⁴ The move from Mount Hermon to Princeton was largely a case of business as usual for Said. There were some similarities between Mount Hermon and Princeton, one of the main ones being that '[t]he student population around me was largely homogeneous. There wasn't a single black, and most of the foreign students were graduate students, among them a handful of Arabs whom I occasionally spent time with'.¹⁰⁵ The implication in *Out of Place* is that Said spent time with the Arab students at Princeton because he was also an Arab. However, his sense of commonality with Arab classmates seems to have stretched no further or deeper than that, and certainly not into the political sphere. Moreover, there seems to have been a damping down of the feelings of Otherness aroused by the authorities at Mount Hermon, and he does not seem to have been perturbed by his own ethnic and cultural 'differences' from most of the other students at Princeton. A photograph of Said wearing a casual leather jacket and standing in front of Howard Johnson's restaurant in New York, in March 1951, gives a strong impression that he

¹⁰⁰ *Out of Place*, p. 246.

¹⁰¹ 'Princeton's History', <<http://www.princeton.edu>> [accessed 15-12-2015]. Princeton was chartered in 1746 as the College of New Jersey.

¹⁰² *Out of Place*, p. 277.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 278

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 246.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

was, even in the early years in the United States, rather in tune with, and even enjoying, at least some aspects of American culture.

There were, whoever, nascent signs of Said's political awakening at Princeton. In *Out of Place*, Said argues that it was whilst 'at Princeton [that] I first approached the political currents and issues not only of the period but which in one way or another were to influence my outlook intellectually and politically for the rest of my life'.¹⁰⁶ The main strands of these currents seem to have been the Arab point of view and 'the great battle between East and West', though, as discussed, these appear to have been retrospective reflections rather than first-hand emotions.¹⁰⁷ The issue of Palestine was largely dormant in Said's awakening political consciousness, submerged beneath the wider issues of Arab nationalism and the East-West conflict. Said was beginning to acknowledge a sense of his fractured identity. Thus, although in *Out of Place* Said argued that '[d]uring the last part of my time at Princeton, the sense of myself as unaccomplished, floundering, split into different parts (Arab, musician, young intellectual, solitary eccentric, dutiful student, political misfit)' was emerging, it still did not include the essence of Palestine that was to so dominate his later life.¹⁰⁸ At Princeton, it was mainly Arab sentiments that were beginning to develop in Said's thoughts. In subordination to these thoughts was the conflict between East and West, and somewhere in the distance only a thin sense of Palestine and being Palestinian. Because they are noted so much later, in 1999, too much, perhaps, should not be made of these interests.

The rather 'romantic' descriptions of Princeton in *Out of Place* draw a picture of a well-balanced, if politically naive, young man who, considering his later political activism, had been rather less affected by the loss of Palestine in 1947-48 than might have been expected. This self-portrait of the young Said contrasts sharply with the received idea promulgated by the older person, that Palestine informed all aspects of his professional and political life. If Palestine did indeed become an integral part of his life, it was a long time in the making. Weiner's argument – that the Said family had not been in any way permanent residents in Palestine and were thus not actually displaced in any meaningful sense of the

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 280.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

term – is thus strengthened by the underlying lack of tension in Said’s narrative of his early days in the United States. Despite his protestation about his solitude and his sense of himself as a ‘misfit, there are firm grounds for believing that Said seems eventually to have felt quite at home in his new life in the United States.

Exile is What Makes Me an Intellectual

The idea of being permanently ‘out of place’ is coterminous with the idea of ‘exile’. Although Said legitimately points to the reality of Palestinian exile from the land of Israel, his use of metaphorical exile is more problematic. As Confino argues, the concept of exile requires a concomitant concept of home. This was a problem because Said was philosophically opposed to the idea of ‘home’. On the one hand, for political and personal reasons Said must posit Palestine as his home, yet on the other hand ‘provisionality’ is his preferred location. Provisionality is a status that could certainly be applied to the *nation* of Palestinians and this palpably was not Said’s situation in the United States, where he lived in permanent exile, which, it will be argued, is a problematic concept.

By cutting the narrative time-line off in 1963, Said connects his early life to his ‘exile’ in the United States. In ‘Reflections on Exile’, Said noted the irony of the Jewish-Palestinian situation, that of ‘the most extraordinary of exile’s fates: to have been exiled by exiles – to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles’.¹⁰⁹ There can be no greater example of a mode of social and political behaviour that is so out of place with what one might expect from ‘victims’. The Palestinians and the diasporic Jews not only fit this category but have fought over the rights to it. In one sense, exile is fundamental to Said’s sense of self-identity, both a political persuasion and a cornerstone of his sensibility. Thereafter, Said’s metaphorical exile links in multiple ways with his definition of the intellectual as someone who must be in ‘permanent exile’.¹¹⁰ Yet, the true exile is always committed to return home, because without that fundamental desire there can be no exile.

The metaphor of exile (out of placeness) in *Out of Place* situates Said within a popular contemporary mode. Confino argues that ‘Said consciously builds his arguments on

¹⁰⁹ *Reflections on Exile*, p. 178.

¹¹⁰ Confino, p. 187.

a common trope in modern discourse on intellectuals. Theodor Adorno thus observed, while living in exile in Los Angeles during the Second World War, that, for a man who has lost his homeland, writing becomes a place to live'.¹¹¹ The genealogy of Said's interest in the exilic intellectual began with his 1963 PhD thesis, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. Conrad, the Polish exile, was the only writer to whom Said devoted a single book-length work. Conrad was born Josef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, in what is now part of the Ukraine, in 1857, the son of Apollo Korzeniowski, a writer, translator and political activist. Conrad left Poland to escape Russian imperialism. However, Edward Garnett, Conrad's friend and the 'publisher's reader' responsible for recommending Conrad's first published novel, *Almayer's Folly* (1895), wrote that '[o]f himself Conrad spoke as a man lying under a slight stigma among his contemporaries for having expatriated himself'.¹¹² Said did not, perhaps, suffer from the same feelings of stigmatization, clinging instead to the fact of his legal exile. Alongside Conrad, Said also demonstrated an affinity with the Jewish German philologist, Erich Auerbach, who was for a period during the Second World War an exile in Istanbul, Turkey. It was there, in geographical exile, that Auerbach wrote his masterpiece of Western literature, *Mimesis*, the influence of which is felt powerfully in *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Said argued that 'the book owed its existence to the very fact of Oriental, non-Occidental exile and homelessness'.¹¹³ Said was an admirer of the intellectual qualities of both men, with whom he shared a common bond of exilic experience. Said wove the theme of being 'out of place' into his memoir. It was, however, part of a much longer thread woven from imaginary sources for strategic purposes. Whilst the Palestinian exile was real, Said's exile was to some extent tailor made for particular purposes.

The metaphor of exile was crucial to Said's philosophical worldview. He argued that

[an] advantage to what in effect is the exilic standpoint for an intellectual is that you tend to see things not simply as they are, but as they have come to be that way. Look at situations as contingent, not as inevitable; look at them as the result of a series of historical choices made by men and women, as facts of

¹¹¹ Confino, p. 188.

¹¹² Edward Garnett, ed., *Letters from Joseph Conrad 1895-1924* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1928), p. 6.

¹¹³ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 8.

society made by human beings, and not as natural or god-given; therefore unchangeable, permanent, irreversible.¹¹⁴

Humanism and Democratic Criticism (2004), re-states the crucial importance of metaphorical exile for the intellectual:

the intellectual's provisional home is the domain of an exigent, resistant, intransigent art into which, alas, one can neither retreat nor search for solutions. But only in that precarious exilic realm can one first truly grasp the difficulty of what cannot be grasped and then go forth to try anyway.¹¹⁵

The interconnection of the personal and the public, of being out of place, in exile, and as an intellectual, is designed to cultivate Said's authoritative voice. Said is stating in a covert, rhetorical way that he is someone who has experienced the physical pain of exile but who nonetheless understands that the exilic state is an ideal intellectual location. In *Out of Place* the concept of exile is entwined with Said's sense of being 'between' things, such as Arabic and English, or 'Edward' and 'Said'. This strategy can be traced to the trauma of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, an event described by Said as 'a shattering experience for me', and after which he started to play with the idea of his place within a multiplicity of identities.¹¹⁶ In effect, Said attempted to exile himself from the chains of any static and intractable philosophical positions. In a series of essays that included titles such as 'The Palestinian Experience' (1968-1969) and 'Who would Speak for Palestinians' (1985), Said developed not only a sense of his Palestinian identity, but the space in which to impress his authority to speak for Palestinians *as* a Palestinian.¹¹⁷ This potential strategy of empowerment can also be set within the context of his 'awakening' to his identity as an Arab. Within this Arab-Palestinian context, Said worked hard to 'manufacture' what could be argued was the political strategy of the exilic Palestinian, publishing an anthology of previously published essays entitled *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays*.¹¹⁸ Moreover, Said continued to impress on his readership the idea of his enforced exile, that '[d]uring the early

¹¹⁴ Edward W. Said, *Reith Lectures 1993: Representations of an Intellectual*, Lecture no. 3., June 30th, 1993. http://www.downloads.co.uk/rmhhttp/radio4/transcripts/1993_reith2.pdf

¹¹⁵ Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 144.

¹¹⁶ 'Wild Orchids and Trotsky', in Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 164. Originally an Interview with Mark Edmundson, *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from American Universities*, New York, 1993.

¹¹⁷ Chapter One of Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1999* (London: Vintage, 1995) is a series of previously published essays on various issues to do with Palestine and Palestinian identity.

¹¹⁸ Edward W. Said, 'Between Worlds', in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 556. First published in *London Review of Books*, May 7, 1998.

months of 1948 all of them [Said's family] became refugees'.¹¹⁹ Strategy or not, of course, Said *was* in a strictly legal sense of the term an exile from Palestine, not least because Palestine no longer existed. It is within this complex network of identities, then, that Said's narrative of his early years in Palestine was set, and which were the subject of Weiner's criticism, which, almost certainly by intent, attacked Said's authority to ventriloquise the voice of the colonised.

If Said were truly the metaphorical exilic intellectual, then he would arguably have banished all sense of 'home', which would have to have included the Palestinian homeland. However, the 1998 BBC film, *In Search of Palestine*, written and narrated by Said, was essentially a vehicle for him to project the idea of a Palestinian homeland.¹²⁰ In the film, Said re-visits his childhood home in Talibyah with his son, Wadie, and fellow Palestinian academic Ibrahim Abu-Lughod. Said speaks of the motivating influence of distance – the distance from Palestine he has had to endure. He connects this distance with his determination to support the Palestinian right to self-determination. This is the exilic Said, but it is also the Said who was in many ways no longer the Palestinian who left the country in 1947. The Edward Said seen in the documentary is in tone, style, language, and appearance the epitome of the educated American academic. This is not to suggest that Said was 'one of the imperial agents', such as T.E Lawrence (*aka* Lawrence of Arabia 1888-1935) - of whom he writes about in *Orientalism* - or that he had 'gone native', yet it highlights an important tension in regard to his authority to speak on behalf of the Palestinians.¹²¹ The Indian critic, Aijaz Ahmad, has been critical of Said's position in the Western metropolis, and the way that in *Orientalism* he 'panders to the most sentimental, the most extreme forms of Third-worldist nationalism'.¹²² To take on the position of exile, as Said did, is a double-edged sword.

The main purpose of this chapter has been to highlight how the knowledge produced by Said was, and is, subject to intense scrutiny and at times outright resistance, and how coercion on either side was part of the process. The main reason for the intensity of the reaction is Said's relationship to power, which, because it involved the Palestine-Israel issue,

¹¹⁹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 11.

¹²⁰ *In Search of Palestine*, Dir. Charles Bruce. BBC. 1998.

¹²¹ *Orientalism*, p. 196.

¹²² Aijaz Ahmad, 'Orientalism and After', in Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, eds, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 165-166.

was always likely to be fractious. Scrutiny of *Out of Place* reveals that Said's memoir was not simply a narrative about his early life. *Out of Place* was a conscious attempt by Said to connect his early years in what was then the British mandate of Palestine with his political ambitions for contemporary Palestinians. This met with resistance from Justus Reid Weiner, who had his own ambitions for the state of Israel. *Out of Place* was not out of place in a body of coordinated work with particular aims and ambitions. Said resisted the temptation to lift his memoir out of its political context, and in that sense it is not a text in which the authorial voice occupies a position of critical homelessness, or exile. Whether or not Said managed to attain that elusive location – where 'non-coercive' knowledge might be produced - is the subject of the next chapter. In that particular location his ability to avoid inculcation in the methods and thoughts of some very powerful thinkers and schools of thought will be analysed.

Chapter Two: The Anxiety of Influence

Dodging the Bullets

In the introduction it was shown how a sequence of events led to a critical point at which, in 1967, Said could no longer separate two of the most significant parts of his life: as an academic at Columbia University in New York City, and as a Palestinian with an active interest in the political situation of Palestinians. Said attributed the catalyst for this rupture to the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the detrimental effects that this event had on him as an Arab living in the United States. If, as Said described it, the 1967 War was the catalyst for change, then it ought to be possible to identify an inventory of the traces of this rupture on the two side of his life that were affected. One of the outcomes of this rupture was that Said began to try to recapture the Arab parts of his identity, many aspects of which seemed to have been set aside since his arrival in the United States in 1951. The immediate process of recuperation was manifest in the writing and publishing of essays about the Arab experience, and in his frequent visits to the Middle East, where he attempted to retrieve those aspects of the culture and language he had forgotten or ignored.¹

As profound as the effects of the 1967 War undoubtedly were for Said and other Palestinians and Arabs - and, of course, for Jews and Israelis - it would be wrong to attribute the entire shape and texture of his subsequent resistance to that single event. The 1967 War affected the way that Said began to order his life; it forced him into a period of self-analysis from which the dichotomy of political pragmatism and philosophical homelessness developed. Notwithstanding the continuing political implications of the War, it was, then, a critically important event in Said's personal, political, and intellectual development. It was not, though, the only influence on the ways in which Said began to think, act and write. By 1967, Said was already an accomplished scholar who had led an eventful and at times cosmopolitan life; he was widely read in Western literature; because of the transient circumstances of his own life and on account of his interest in the Polish émigré writer, Joseph Conrad, he had developed at least some sense of affiliation with the notion of

¹ Edward W. Said, 'The Arab Portrayed', in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, ed., *The Arab-Israeli Confrontation of 1967: An Arab Perspective* (Evanston, IL.: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

'exile'.² In a consideration of 'influence' on Said, then, the 1967 War was one amongst many influences, and these influences ought to be mapped on to each other.

The aim of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, to identify some of the traces of these influences on the form, style, and content of Said's critical theory, as his worldview turned in a more overtly political direction after 1967. Secondly, to note the ways in which Said attempted to avoid entrenchment in these influences, so that his capacity to exercise the homeless, un-situated style of thought that he claimed was at the heart of his philosophy would not be constrained. It will be argued that one of the outcomes of Said's 'turn' towards the political world was that he began to draw in some elements of the various philosophical and critical theories of humanism, structuralism, post-structuralism, and Marxism, and that these informed his philosophical worldview. There are two Saims. The first Said develops a philosophical and critical position that informs all of his work, if not his practice. The second Said is a political pragmatist who is willing, in the course of these political aims, to compromise some of the basic tenets of his own critical approach. As we shall see in his engagement with Marxism, Said was not averse to overlooking the political contingencies of the influences that persistently inform his work.

Before we begin, a word about the nature of 'influence' on Said. To be 'informed' by something is not the same as being in thrall to it. The extent to which one is influenced is never certain. What is more certain is that influence leaves traces and there are many of these in Said's work. However, for almost every trace of influence there is a concomitant point of departure, a moment at which Said seems to leave one behind and turn to another. The argument will be developed that it is this strategy – the ebb and flow, the endings and the beginnings - which ensures that the philosophical and political knowledge produced by Said was never intended to close off or constrain counter-thought. A refusal to be in the thrall of influence always left room for the inadequacies, inconsistencies, and flaws of Said himself. Because of the human dimension of Said's thoughts, all influences, all 'knowledges' became, like human beings, provisional. Said, then, was always in the process of dodging the metaphorical bullets of dogmatic thought. There is, after all, always another side to things.

² Said wrote his PhD thesis on the subject of the interior life of Joseph Conrad. As Conrad has become noted for the relationship of his work to imperialism, the absence of this theme in Said's PhD is noteworthy.

Said – Vico - Humanism: A Port in a Storm

I believed then, and still believe, that it is possible to be critical of humanism in the name of humanism and that, as schooled in its abuses by the experience of Eurocentrism and empire, one could fashion a different kind of humanism.³

In the subsequent parts of this chapter much will be made of the manner in which ideas that are fundamentally connected to systems of thought and intellectual traditions such as structuralism or Marxism affected Said's relationship to knowledge and criticism, yet pass almost unacknowledged by him as defining influences. It can be deduced from this that Said was always in the process of a restless form of critical enquiry, which he attempted to execute without ever consciously affiliating with any sphere that might be called a singular tradition or 'movement'.⁴ Whilst this strategy might produce a healthy and potentially productive state of critical restlessness, it has its drawbacks, one of which is intellectual isolation; to act on one's own without the benefit of a community rarely equates to a powerful scholarly or political presence. Said found one such community in 'humanism', the only strand of philosophical thought that he unstintingly acknowledged as his particular 'ism'. When he had denied affiliation to all other schools of thought, humanism remained Said's perpetual port in a storm. However, because humanism is at base about a fundamental and overriding concern for human beings, who are always in the process of change (heading towards the inevitable biological destiny of death), humanism could not constrain Said's thoughts.

The humanism outlined, above, is not precisely the same humanism which is a Western body of thought, and which has other and quite precise connotations attached to it. Western humanism is on one level entangled with the issue of Western imperial ventures into other lands reaching back to British colonialism's early 'voyages of discovery', and now premised on concepts such as 'humanitarian intervention', the description for 'NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999'.⁵ Indeed, the *Jerusalem Post* is currently calling for a humanitarian intervention in Syria.⁶ If, as Radakrishnan has argued, '[t]he abuses that were committed in the name of humanism, contrary to Said, I would argue were very much in the

³ Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 10-11.

⁴ It could be argued that Said was influenced by Anthony Collins' (1676-1729) ideas on free thought. See <http://www.plato.stanford.edu/win2014/entries/collins/> [accessed 27-1-2015].

⁵ Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 7.

⁶ Lewis Barber, 'The Urgent Case for Humanitarian Intervention into Syria', *The Jerusalem Post*, 22-7-2015.

spirit of humanism', there is a problem.⁷ The questions that must be answered are these: did Said's relationship to humanism compromise his apparently otherwise restless critical practice? Was Said blind to the problems of Western humanism? Why, also, is it an act of critical consciousness to attach oneself to humanism but not to any other 'ism'? There is a strong case for siding with Abraham, who has argued that Said 'established an ambivalent relationship toward humanism throughout his life and work'.⁸ However, the argument in this chapter is that Said's relationship to humanism was not as nuanced as Abraham suggests. For Said, there is always the possibility that the humanism used to justify bombing in the Middle East can be redeemed from its perversions. One of the arguments that will be developed below is that Said's humanism was fundamentally connected to the ideas of the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico 1668-1774. Through the prism of Vico's influence, it is possible to define Said's humanism, how it was fundamentally shaped, and how its basic tenets remained intact. Said's humanism was a deeply personal, individual affiliation which at root was consistent with the inconsistencies, flaws, and intricacies of the individual.

When the term 'humanism' is used in relation to Said it means two things. Firstly, it is connected to Said's professional life as a scholar of comparative literature and as a teacher of the humanities. As Said described it, with his tongue we might imagine firmly located in cheek, '[m]y own formal and professional designation is that of "humanist", a title which indicates the humanities as my field and therefore the unlikely eventuality that there might be anything political about what I do in that field'.⁹ The things that Said was concerned about as a humanist teaching the humanities were the secular world, the world as made by men and women in all of its varieties and complexities (including politics), and its perpetual provisionality. For one who aspires to a stance of critical disinterest, the immediate problem posed here is that Said taught only the Western humanities (English, history, geography, etc.), a sphere of practice that was informed by the context of Western power, of colonialism and imperialism.

⁷ Rajagopalan Radakrishnan, 'Edward Said's Literary Humanism', *Cultural Critique*, 67 (2007), 13-42 (p. 17), in *Project Muse* <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/223190/pdf>> [accessed 15-5-2015]

⁸ Matthew Abraham, 'Edward Said and After: Toward a New Humanism', *Cultural Critique*, 67 (2007), 1-12 (p. 1), in *Project Muse* <<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/223181/pdf>> [accessed 15-5-2015]

⁹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 9.

Said's relationship to humanism in the professional sphere can be summarized in a simple example. Said noted how he challenged the tradition of running a course entitled 'The Humanities', which had been taught at Columbia since 1937, and which was so named in order 'to distinguish it from a parallel offering called "Eastern" or "Oriental" or "non-Western Humanities"'.¹⁰ Ever alert to the dangers of slipping into a dogmatic nationalism, Said recommended, unsuccessfully, to Columbia University 'that easy equations between "our" tradition, "the humanities," and "the greatest works" be abandoned'. The reason for this was unambiguous: '[t]here are "other" traditions and, therefore, other humanities'.¹¹ In short, Said recognized that the West does not have a monopoly on human life and history. The repercussions for knowledge of cloaking the truth that these 'other traditions' are not also constituent parts of the world are profound. One of the consequences to emerge is the binary oppositions of 'ours' and 'yours' or 'us' and 'them' framed in terms of 'Occident' and 'Orient'. There was always a tension between Said's profession and his philosophical worldview as a humanist who recognized the diversity and interconnectedness of the world. This tension can be seen in terms of its productiveness as well as its constraints. By remaining within the sphere of Western humanities, Said could potentially help to question this rigid system, which, far from isolating the humanities in the academic sphere, disseminated the political idea of 'us' and 'them'.

The second element of Said's humanism was philosophical. His relationship to Vico is crucial and instructive in this regard. Said was drawn, amongst other things, to Vico's sense of displacement, his 'out of place-ness'. Born to a bookseller and the daughter of a carriage maker, from relatively humble beginnings Vico graduated from the University of Naples in 1694 as Doctor of Civil and Canon Law.¹² He was trained in jurisprudence, widely read in the classics, and spent the majority of his professional life as Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Naples. Although he was relatively little known in his time, from the eighteenth-century onwards Vico's works became widely influential in the European humanities. His most celebrated works are the 'autobiography', the two-part *Vita di Giambattista Vico scritta da se medesimo* (*Life of Giambattista Vico Written by Himself*),

¹⁰ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, pp. 2-3.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² See, Timothy Costello, 'Giambattista Vico', in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 edition), Edward, N. Zalta, ed. <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/vico/>> [accessed 21-4-2015]

published in 1725 and 1731, and *Scienza Nuova (New Science)*, published in 1725, both of which provided Said with foundational philosophical ideas that would shape his worldview. The influence of Vico can be found at work in Said's work as early as the 1967 essay, 'Vico: Autodidact and Humanist', as late as 2003 in the posthumously published work, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, and at regular intervals in the interim.¹³

Vico's influence is widespread in Continental Europe. In Italy, 'Vico's impact on aesthetics and literary criticism is evident in the writings of Francesco de Sanctis and Benedetto Croce', in Germany there is 'Johann George Hamman...J.G. von Herder and Johann Wolfgang Goethe', in France 'Jean-Jacques Rousseau', and in Britain Samuel Taylor Coleridge.¹⁴ Vico is generally considered to be 'a precursor of philology', the field of learning concerned with the study of European languages and literature, and one with genealogical connections to Said's own field of expertise, comparative literature. A distinction can be drawn between the influence on Said of philology as a field of study and the visceral connection to Vico's individual thoughts. Whereas philology and other fields of scholarship have sometimes, Said argued, been complicit, if not always knowingly with strident nationalism, inasmuch as 'when most European thinkers celebrated humanity or culture they were principally celebrating ideas and values they ascribed to their own national culture, or to Europe as distinct from the Orient, Africa, and even the Americas', Vico – as an individual thinker – seemed in Said's eyes to remain above such criticism.¹⁵ Perhaps of all of the writers, critics, and intellectuals that Said invoked in his long career – and there were many – it was Vico who he seemed to enthusiastically elevate above all suspicion of harbouring affiliations with power. The question is whether Said unwittingly became *uncritical* towards Vico.

Whilst Said was drawn to Vico as a relatively obscure and perhaps oppositional scholar in Naples, his real value to him rested in two foundational philosophical ideas, both of which, with remarkable regularity, informed his secular worldview. The first idea is that the world - or what Vico called the 'world of nations' - is made by human beings, and because it is the product of human invention and activity it is the only world we can truly know. Vico's theory,

¹³ The essay first appeared in *Centennial Review*, 11 (1967), 336-352.

¹⁴ Costello, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

¹⁵ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 51.

known as the *verum/factum* equation, was most unorthodox at that historical point in time. It argues 'that as human beings in history we know what we make, or rather, to know is to know how a thing is made, to see it from the point of view of its human maker'.¹⁶ This viewpoint was the basic principle by which Said defined his own humanism. He did not waver from this affiliation and it opened up a multitude of possibilities for knowledge. In the humanities, for example, Said could see that the institutional un-interest in 'other' traditions was a human decision to disconnect the world into different parts according, perhaps, to relationships of power. Said argued that

the core of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, and not by God, and that it can be understood rationally according to the principle formulated by Vico in *New Science*, that we can really know only what we make or, to put it differently, we can know things according to the way they were made.¹⁷

The idea that 'we [human beings] know what we make', is at the core of Said's humanism. This idea is fundamental to the development of 'worldliness' - the idea that culture, literature, and everything else made by human beings can be traced to beginnings.

The method inaugurated by Vico's theory was, for Said, centred on rational thought that could support a mode of rigorous, secular analysis. In *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, Said refers to Vico's meticulous twenty years search for the secular beginnings of nations:

[This Science] must begin where its subject matter began, as we said in the Axioms. We must therefore go back with the philologists and fetch it from the stones of Deucalion and Pyrrha, from the rocks of Amphion, from the men who sprang up from the furrows of Cadmus or at the hard oak of Vergil. With the philosophers we must fetch it from the frogs of Epicurus, from the cicadas of Hobbes, from the simpletons of Grotius; from the men cast into this world without care or aid of god, of whom Pufendorf speaks, as clumsy and wild as the giants called 'Big Feet' who are said to be found near the Straits of Magellan...To discover the way in which this first human thinking arose in the gentile world, we encountered exasperating difficulties which have cost us the research of a good twenty years. We had to descend from these human and refined natures of ours to those quite wild and savage natures, which we cannot at all imagine and can comprehend only with great effort.¹⁸

¹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (London: Granta, 1997), p. 349.

¹⁷ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 11.

¹⁸ *Beginnings*, p. 348. Taken from *New Science* (par. 338).

In Said's view, Vico is 'the prototypical modern thinker who...perceives beginning as an activity requiring the writer to maintain an unstraying obligation to practical reality and sympathetic imagination in equally strong parts'.¹⁹ This 'unstraying obligation' was carried through in Said's political project. In the Palestinian/Zionist conflict, one of Said's aims was to reinstate the reality that Palestinians actually exist, when for quite a long period of time after the inauguration of Israel in 1948, political Zionism had insisted that they did not. The Israeli Prime Minister 'Golda Meir had set the general tone in 1969 by denying that we [the Palestinians] existed at all'.²⁰ Said was, after all, a living embodiment of their presence, an argument he expounded in *The Question of Palestine* with careful attention to historical documentation and narratives. It was Vico who had provided a philosophical structure that enabled Said to begin to deal with the seemingly intractable 'fact' of Israel and the non-presence of Palestine, a task he achieved by re-tracing the process that had led to Palestinian dispossession and the beginnings of the state of Israel. In short, Said was able to attempt to recover, or re-make Palestine, because, as Vico had also understood, we can only know what we have made, or, indeed, we can only know what we have un-made.

The connection between Vico's idea and Said's political project is extremely important. If the argument is accepted that we can only know what we have made, then it must be accepted that 'knowledge' and 'history' are also made by men and women, and are therefore open to scrupulous, rational analysis. It will be argued, below, that the idea of discourse as promulgated by the French philosopher Michel Foucault was crucial to Said's understanding of the epistemological and ontological fields of Orientalism. It has been less widely noted that Vico's ideas were equally crucial to his theorization of the relationship between knowledge and power. Said notes in the introduction to *Orientalism* that

[w]e must take seriously Vico's great observation that men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made, and extend it to geography: as both geographical and cultural entities – to say nothing of historical entities – such locales, regions, geographical sectors as "Orient" and "Occident" are man-made.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., p.349.

²⁰ Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. xvi.

²¹ *Orientalism*, p. 4.

If 'what they [men] can know is what they have made', then it is also possible to 'know' that for various reasons human beings produce knowledge, under specific conditions of constraint, in the form of history, which is quite different from what Vico, and then Said, call 'sacred history'.²² The 'world of nations' is

complex, heterogeneous and "gentile ...[it] develops in various directions, moves toward a number of culminations, collapses, and then begins again – all in ways that can be investigated because historians, or new scientists, are human and can know history on the grounds that it was made by men and women."²³

Sacred history, on the other hand, 'is made by God and hence cannot really be known'.²⁴ In the literary-critical sphere Said relates this shift away from the knowable, to the 'religious' criticism of the poststructuralists. The deployment of knowledge in the name of 'sacred history' was anathema to Said's secular approach. In the conclusion to *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, Said noted the

dramatic increase in the number of appeals to the extrahuman, the vague abstraction, the divine, the esoteric and secret', which played on 'impossibly huge generalizations like the Orient, Islam, Communism, or Terrorism [and] play[ed] a significantly increased role in the contemporary Manichean theologizing of "the Other".²⁵

The second important strand to come out of Vico, also from the *New Science*, is that the starting point for analyses of intellectual problems is not the intellectual problem at hand, but the self. Vico's axiom, that '[d]octrines must take their beginning from that of the matters of which they treat', permeates all of Said's work.²⁶ As Vico before him, Said was an autodidact. Everything Vico learned, Said argued, 'he learned for and by himself: he seems to have been convinced of his individuality and strength of mind from his earliest days, and most of the time his *Autobiography* is an account of this self-learning'.²⁷ Vico's influence was so pervasive in Said's thoughts to lead to the proposition that *Out of Place* was at least partly the author in the process of self-learning, self-creation, or an act of self-empowerment. Quoting the German-Jewish philologist, Erich Auerbach, whose work he

²² Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge; Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 291.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 290-291.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 291.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 291.

²⁶ *Beginnings*, p. 347.

²⁷ Edward W. Said, 'Vico: Autodidact and Humanist', *The Centennial Review* (1967), p. 340.

greatly admired, and who was himself a student of Vico's work, Said argued that 'the simple fact [is] that a man's work stems from his existence and that consequently everything we can find out about his life serves to interpret the work'.²⁸ The important point to emerge out of this correlation between *Autobiography* and *Out of Place* is that while 'a man's work stems from his existence', both Said and Vico were convinced of the determining imprint of the human being. The practice of self-teaching therefore 'resides completely in an exercise of will', and consequently to both Vico and Said human agency is at the core of the autodidact.²⁹ Said never doubted that 'under the influence of [the Italian historian] Vico, I saw that people make their own history. That history is not like nature. It's a human product. And I saw that we can make our own beginnings. That they are not given, they are acts of will'.³⁰ Just as men and women make their own histories, then, Said argues, so we must continually 'make our own beginnings'. How, though, to make beginnings away from the thoughts of Vico?

As a colonial 'subject' whose identity had been determined by domination, there was a special significance in Said's work about the idea of establishing one's own beginnings or making one's own history. In the particular situation of discrimination and subjugation that besets the colonial subject, it is necessary to peel away the layers of knowledge that have suppressed the individual consciousness and made the colonized person an object to be dominated. To achieve the beginning point, Said argued, 'one really has to understand and respect the structures of knowledge that over the years have been contributed to by men and women'.³¹ 'Understand' is the key word; Said was not interested in dismissing the accumulated layers of knowledge. As a political and a personal strategy, knowledge must be confronted, analysed, challenge and where necessary superseded. In keeping with his humanism, Said had therefore to confront knowledge in a particular way, to

use humanistic critique to open up the field of struggle, to introduce a longer sequence of thought and analysis to replace the thought-stopping fury of

²⁸ Erich Auerbach, *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton; NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 12. Quoted in McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, p. 25.

²⁹ Said, 'Vico: Autodidact and Humanist', p. 340.

³⁰ Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W Said*, ed. by Gauri Viswanathan (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 456.

³¹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 262.

popular culture and the mass media whose goals often appear to be the creation of collective passion rather than understanding and genuine disclosure.³²

As his strategizing in *Out of Place* demonstrated, for Said to make his own history could never be purely an academic exercise. Rather, it was concomitant with a problem that was central to his entire life: the issue of not being able to return to Palestine. Said's inflection of Vico's thoughts on self-knowledge involved the invocation of the Latin word, *invention*, 'to find again'.³³ However, although Vico could take Said this far along the route to self-knowledge, it would be Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937), who would provide the theoretical machinery necessary to complete the journey. Said noted that '[i]n the *Prison Notebooks* Gramsci says: "[t]he starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory".³⁴ The process of the autodidact that began for Said with the humanist scholar Giambattista Vico in seventeenth-century Naples, was thus continued by another Italian – this time a twentieth-century Marxist revolutionary – Antonio Gramsci. The outcome of this relationship was the development of a consciousness of 'what one really is' by a process of self-teaching which culminates in critical elaboration. There were points, then, when even the influence of Vico was subsumed to the deeper philosophical framework that Said began to develop. For in Vico he not only recognized a supreme influence that could facilitate his own requirements, but a powerful structure that must be to some extent discarded. Always, of course, leaving its traces in his thoughts.

There is a curious paradox in Said's enduring faith in Vico-inspired humanism. On the one hand, to adhere to a particular school of thought is to constrain one's critical perspective. On the other hand, Vico's tenets enable the adherent to trace the flaw in individual humanism back to human beginnings, the result of which is the capacity to locate the constraints. If humanism is tainted by its political association with Western ideological programmes from the March of Civilisation to contemporary humanitarian interventions involving the deployment of Cruise missiles, and by its relationship to the academic humanities in the moments they turn towards 'tradition' and dogmatic binaries of 'us' and

³² Edward W. Said, 'Orientalism 25 years later: Worldly Humanism v. the Empire Builders', *Counterpunch*, 4-8-2003 < <http://www.counterpunch.org/said08052003.htm>> [accessed 7-9-2011]

³³ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 262.

³⁴ *Orientalism*, p. 25.

‘them’, then how was it that Said could remain ‘faithful’? The point is, perhaps, that Said did not adhere to the distortions by others of Vico’s maxims, and certainly not the fallacy of ‘humanitarian intervention’. In this sense, as practised by Said, philosophical humanism was a hugely enabling and productive force in his relationship with knowledge, which is, after all, made by human beings. What humanism could not provide was access to the structural foundations which human beings create. For this, Said would have to look closer to his own historical moment.

Said, Saussure, and the Beginnings of Structuralism

One of the consequences of the enormous impact of Said’s best known work, *Orientalism*, since its publication in 1978, has been that his critical ideas are more usually associated with the development of post-colonial theory than with their relationship with structuralism. There is unquestionable merit in the narrow focus on this putative association. Williams has argued, for example, that *Orientalism* ‘single-handedly inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse theory or colonial discourse analysis’.³⁵ This assertion is not quite correct. To begin with, it discounts the work of anti-colonialists like the French-Algerian Frantz Fanon. Fanon’s seminal anti-colonial work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), not only predated Said’s work, but could arguably be described as a mode of colonial discourse analysis.³⁶ Williams’s comment is testament to one of the important consequences of the huge influence of *Orientalism*: it sometimes has the effect of directing analyses about Said towards the themes of Palestine and resistance to colonialism and imperialism. One of the outcomes of this diversion is to overlook the fact that his attempts at counter-knowledge and criticism are mostly concerned with undermining or destabilizing structures. These structures came in the form of colonialism, imperialism, or political Zionism. The idea that the world is constituted by networks of structures became fundamental to Said’s relationship with knowledge. This worldview was sometimes at odds with his humanism. As a Humanist with some very powerful structures

³⁵ Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 5.

³⁶ Fanon’s *Les damnés de la Terre* (1961) was published in the English language as *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970).

to dismantle, Said's problem was finding a way out of the conundrum of seeing the world as implacably determined by intractable structures.

The argument will be developed that structuralism is a mode of philosophical thinking and critical theory that has largely been overlooked in relation to its imprint on Said, and specifically in regard to his relationship with the ideas of the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). To some extent this omission has occurred because of the historical convergence of Said and the so-called 'poststructuralists' - philosophers including figures such as the French thinkers Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, whose ideas Said critiqued in works such as *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, whose influence has been generally extensive, and who were integral to the academic and intellectual environment of the late 1960s and 1970s. Although Said's equally important relationship with 'poststructuralism' will be discussed in this chapter, it is first necessary to define the influence of Saussure, whose ideas were central to the evolution of all modes of thought connected with the term 'structuralism'. The purpose of examining Saussure is to deepen an understanding of the significance of structures to Said's resistance, and the difficulties of overcoming what was a humanist critical approach centred on the individual subject.

In the interest of clarity, a certain amount of demarcation is necessary when dealing with Saussure, structuralism, and poststructuralism. The lines between the ideas of Saussure and the various modes of structuralism and poststructuralism are often blurred, and some of the classifications ascribed to the practitioners of these fields unsatisfactory. Mills has argued that although Foucault's concepts have been described as developing from a structuralist to a post-structuralist position, '[t]he idea of discussing the development or progression of his career would have horrified Foucault'.³⁷ However, seepage between the various terms is unavoidable. To avoid disappearing in a mire of terminology, it is necessary to deal, where possible, with Saussure separately from poststructuralism and structuralism. One of the reasons for this is that whereas structuralism and poststructuralism merge in the 1970s, the origins of both are in Saussurian linguistics, which dates back to 1911. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter refers to the origins of 'structuralism': the field

³⁷ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2004), p. 22.

of structural linguistics that dates to the work of Saussure. Saussure's mode of structural linguistics pre-dates the emergence of post-colonial theory by a considerable margin. It will be argued that Saussure's ideas on underlying structures were instrumental to Said's approach to the discourses of Orientalism, and were therefore contingent with the emergence of post-colonial theory.

Saussure did not use the term 'structuralism' to refer to his linguistic theory, nor did he live to see the publication, in 1915, of a collection of his notes gathered together by his pupils in Geneva from lectures undertaken between 1906 and 1911 under the title of *Course in General Linguistics*. In the *Course in General Linguistics* Saussure proposed a 'general science of signs' founded on his theory of language.³⁸ Prior to Saussure, the study of language 'was predominantly diachronic, in the sense that it was predominantly interested in the way languages change through time'.³⁹ Saussure was more interested in the underlying relationships (structures) between signs (words) than in 'tracing the history of individual linguistic facts across the centuries', a process that had been followed by nineteenth-century philology.⁴⁰ Saussure's '[s]ynchronic study...considers how a language functions as a system at a given moment in time, analysing the simultaneous relationships between its constituent parts: it examines how a language works, not how it develops'.⁴¹ Consequently, calling this new science 'semiology', Saussure argued that the language system was only one amongst many systems and that the science could subsequently be applied to a breadth of cultural phenomena. It is not surprising, then, 'that some of the leading figures in structuralism have ranged across disciplinary boundaries, including 'Claude Lévi-Strauss (anthropology), Jacques Lacan (psychoanalysis), literary criticism (Roland Barthes), Marxist philosophy (Louis Althusser), and the history of ideas and disciplinary practices (Michel Foucault)'.⁴²

Saussure's linguistics probably underpins all subsequent structural, 'scientific', or indeed, any literary theory. In particular, those thinkers in the poststructuralist 'tradition'

³⁸ Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. W. Baskin (London: Collins, 1974)

³⁹ Ann Jefferson and David Robey, eds. *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*, 2nd edition (London: B. T. Batsford, 1987), p. 49.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Conor McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 47.

whose ideas Said would both challenge and sometimes commandeer had at one time or another passed through the sphere of Saussure's influence. There was therefore a radical edge to Saussure that belied its 'scientific' rationality - one that could be traced through to literary theory. Saussure presented a weightless view of human existence in which, as Said argued, 'the sheer oppressive mass of historical, biological, or psychic determinism is first lifted, then frittered away, then brought back as weightless gamelike rules or protocols'.⁴³ The American political scientist, Francis Fukuyama, would later contend that the world was at 'the end of history', but historical narratives were central to Said's project.⁴⁴ With Saussure's insights, Said could confidently argue that 'history need not be viewed as the burden of the past; it need only be considered the manner in which other arbitrary connections between sound and sense were first made and then conventionalized into common use'.⁴⁵

If, as Said stipulates, history is not a 'burden' and ought not to be erased from critical analysis, structuralism itself can be shown to have undergone a radical beginning. Saussure's ideas about structures were connected to his anxieties about events in the world. Noting this connection, Eagleton has argued that in his work on linguistic theory, Saussure was in fact 'seeking a toe hold of certainty in a particular world where certainty seemed hard to come by'.⁴⁶ Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* was 'delivered in the heart of Europe between 1907 and 1911, on the brink of an historical collapse which Saussure himself did not live to see'.⁴⁷ It has been noted how 'Saussure considered the manifest appearance of phenomena to be underpinned and made possible by underlying systems and structures'.⁴⁸ There was certainly a great deal of 'phenomena' with which to contend, and Saussure was not alone in the struggle to find answers to the question of historical 'realities' and what kinds of forces made them possible. Eagleton argues that [t]hese were precisely the years in which Edmund Husserl was formulating the major doctrines of phenomenology, in a European centre not far from Saussure's Geneva'.⁴⁹ Moreover,

⁴³ *Beginnings*, p. 323.

⁴⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamilton, 1992).

⁴⁵ *Beginnings*, p. 323.

⁴⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 2nd Edition (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 95.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh, eds. *Modern Literary Theory* (London: Arnold, 2001), p. 15.

⁴⁹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, p. 95.

[a]t about the same time, or a little later, the major writers of twentieth-century English literature – Yeats, Eliot, Pound, Lawrence, Joyce – were developing their own closed symbolic systems, in which Tradition, theosophy, the male and female principles, medievalism and mythology were to provide the keystones of complete ‘synchronic’ structures, exhaustive models for the control and explanation of historical reality.⁵⁰

The crux of Eagleton’s argument is not that Saussure and the disparate band of what came to be called ‘Modernist writers like Yeats and Eliot were actors in a great symphony of critical theory bursting across Europe. It is more an argument leading to the conclusion that critical theory, far from existing in a vacuum or a university, is an inescapably historical phenomenon. There is cohesion, then, between the Saussure of 1911, seeking the certainty of structures in an uncertain world, and Said, who was at pains to attribute at least one of the causes of his subsequent critical theory and political direction to the Palestine-Israel issue.

There is a strong philosophical link between Said’s thoughts on the relationship between knowledge and power, and Saussure’s idea that underlying structures both enable and constrain meaning in the use of language. Consider the following statements, the first one from *Orientalism* (1978), the second from *The Question of Palestine* (1979), both of which describe the relationship between particular types of system, structure, and power. Said is not only writing about the ‘idea’ of power, but its implementation in the shape of Western imperialism and political Zionism, both of which are systems contingent with the acquisition and accumulation of land and resources,

[the]Orient that appears in *Orientalism*, then, is a system of representations framed by a whole set of forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness, and later, Western empire.⁵¹

Most of all, I think, there is the entrenched *cultural* attitude toward Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient. This attitude, from which in its turn Zionism drew for its view of the Palestinian, dehumanized us, reduced us to the barely tolerated status of a nuisance.⁵²

At the root of Said’s ideas about the relationship between knowledge - which is represented in the passage quoted above as ‘entrenched *cultural* attitude’ - and the exercise

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Orientalism*, pp. 202-203.

⁵² Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. xi.

of power, is the raw material of 'representation'. The 'system of representations' referred to by Said appear in various forms. He was perhaps most interested in verbal and written language. When Said spoke of 'representations', he was positing a gap between an event and a subsequent representation of it, or the re-presentation of 'reality'.

In his description of a web of underlying structures of knowledge that he argued were required in order to sustain and perpetuate imperialism, Said was essentially performing a mode of 'structuralist' analysis. In a circularity of dependence, Culler argues that all modes of structuralism lead to a 'linguistic foundation':

The notion that linguistics might be useful in studying other cultural phenomena is based on two fundamental insights: first, that social and cultural phenomena are not simply material objects or events but objects or events with meaning, and hence signs; and second, that they do not have essences but are defined by a network of relations, both internal and external. Stress may fall on one or other of the propositions – it would be in these terms, for example, that one might try to distinguish semiology and structuralism – but in fact the two are inseparable, for in studying signs one must investigate the system of relations that enables meaning to be produce.⁵³

Using elements of Saussure, Said could attempt to unpick the relationship between sign systems and power. For Said, one of the far-reaching aspects of Saussure's theory of semiology was the arbitrariness of the signifier. In Saussure's theory, '[l]anguage is a system of signs, the sign being the basic unit of meaning. The sign is constituted by two elements: a signifier and signified. The signifier is the "word image" (visual or acoustic) and the signified the "mental concept". Thus the signifier *tree* has the signified *mental concept* of a tree'.⁵⁴ Robey argues that Saussure's theory 'rests on the idea of an essential disjunction between the world of reality and the world of language. Words articulate our experience of things, they do not just express or reflect it'.⁵⁵ Saussure argued that the relationship between the word or sound used to signify the tree (the signifier) and the mental concept of the tree (the signified) is arbitrary. The meaning, or value, of the signified (the mental concept of the tree) rests instead in the conventions of the society that agrees to use a particular word or signifier as opposed to another, in order to signify the 'tree'. This seems fairly

⁵³ Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 5.

⁵⁴ Rice and Waugh, p. 15.

⁵⁵ David Robey, 'Modern Linguistics and the Language of Literature', in Jefferson and Robey, *Modern Literary Theory*, p. 46.

straightforward and logical, because if societies do not consent to use the same sign systems, disorder – the anathema of structuralism – would ensue. For structuralists, meaning is obtained only through the difference between signs at a given moment, within closed systems which function by a diachronic as opposed to a referential relationship. There are, then, only negative signifiers in Saussure's theory: a tree is only a tree because it is not a 'cat' or a piece of 'cake'. One of the most important aspects of Saussure's theory of the relationship between sign and signified is that meaning or value is determined by a 'system' of conventions or underlying structures. In the *Course in General Linguistics* Saussure argued that '[t]he value of just any term is accordingly determined by its environment; it is impossible to fix even the value of the word signifying 'sun' without first considering its surrounding: in some languages it is not possible to say 'sit in the sun'.⁵⁶ Rather than present a stable, static system which the term 'structure' seemed to imply, Saussure was, arguably, opening the door to the idea that language systems are inherently unstable. The crucial link between Saussure and Said is that in *linguistics* the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary. There is no fixity to language and therefore no knowledge that is endlessly stable. With the notion of the fixity of language removed, Said could potentially challenge some of the 'certainties' that Saussure had, paradoxically, sought in 1911. This opened up another avenue of inquiry: if representations are delivered through the sign systems of language, then these too must be arbitrary. In *Orientalism*, Said, quoting Nietzsche, argued that any 'truths' delivered by language are unstable, because what is the truth of language but

a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.⁵⁷

In Saussure's ideas, Said detected a potential challenge to the orthodox relationship between knowledge and power. In his critique of French structuralism in *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, Said noted how 'Ferdinand de Saussure's predicament in trying to find a beginning for the scientific study of language is exemplary for me'.⁵⁸ The nature of

⁵⁶ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1915), in Rice and Waugh, p. 37.

⁵⁷ *Orientalism*, p. 203.

⁵⁸ *Beginnings*, p. 36.

this 'exemplary' attempt at finding a beginning rested partly on Saussure's novel way of viewing language. For Saussure, '[o]ther sciences work with objects that can be considered from different viewpoints, but not linguistics... Far from being the object that antedates the viewpoint, [in linguistics] it would seem that it is the viewpoint that creates the object'.⁵⁹ The crux of Saussure's statement is that there is no essential meaning that predates language. In Saussure, there is no transcendental signifier, a philosophical thesis that would form the beginnings of *Of Grammatology*, an assault on structuralist orthodoxy by Jacques Derrida.⁶⁰ Saussurean linguistics proposed that meaning is produced only by the difference between signs. In effect, Saussure provides one element of the framework for Said's secular approach to critical theory, encapsulated in his examination of the difference between beginnings and origins, between 'a gentile (as opposed to a sacred)' meaning.⁶¹ As Said argued, '[t]o begin is first of all to know with what to begin. Language is both the medium of study and – since *beginning* has a meaning primarily in and regarding language – its object'.⁶² For Said, then, it is Saussure – even before the 'structuralists' – who provided the most foundational of all human beginnings: language.

As mentioned above, the extent to which Saussure's scientific approach to the study of language informed Said's critical methodology is often overlooked. Said argued that '[t]he chief rule of procedure all of them [the structuralists] seem to have learned from Saussure...is that every problem, no matter how small, requires explicit delimitation'.⁶³ By this, Said means that 'Saussure's rule of delimitation is used to reduce, in order to render manageable for scrutiny, a very large body of phenomena'.⁶⁴ Said defers to this critical methodology as it is utilized by the structuralists, because when '[f]acing an awesome mountain of detail, the critic's mind becomes a confident David going straight for the vulnerable spot in Goliath's forehead'.⁶⁵ Detail is not simply washed away. Said argues that a 'submerged assumption' of structuralist *découpage* 'is that detail is not merely a matter of quantity, but has become a qualitative feature of every human discipline'.⁶⁶ Said's

⁵⁹ Quoted in *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Derrida, Jacques, *De La Grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967).

⁶¹ *Beginnings*, p. 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

commentary on ‘the structuralist *découpage*’, which he attributes to ‘the work of every structuralist – Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, Foucault, Lucien Sebag, and Louis Althusser included’, was inflected in his own methodology.⁶⁷ This discipline of order and method imparted by Saussure was taken up by Said in *Orientalism*, albeit via the delimitation permitted by Foucault’s model of ‘discourse’.⁶⁸ It can also be detected in Said’s attitude to the mass of written language and ideas facing him as he approached the Palestinian question, which was a seemingly insurmountable obstacle. The structuralist *découpage*, ‘that assertive cutting-down to tractable size of intolerable detail’, that ability to constrain the problem, traces a line through to *The Question of Palestine*. In this work, four chapters, ‘The Question of Palestine’, ‘Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Victims’, ‘Toward Palestinian Self-Determination’, and ‘The Palestinian Question after Camp David’, delimit the quantity and diversity of ‘a very large body of phenomena’ into a recognizable and manageable shape.

The problem with all this for Said’s humanist critical approach is that the rational – and perhaps radical - foundation of Saussure’s ideas is offset by the way in which it diminishes the agency of the human subject. The dilemma for Said is how to resist reducing the human being to no more than a ‘detail’. Saussure’s linguistics is concerned primarily with systems, with *how* sign systems mean rather than *what* they mean. Saussure’s theory thus privileges the autonomy of the system over the agency of the individual. It is potentially, then, an attempt to subdue or even erase the will of the human subject, to initiate what Roland Barthes (1915-1980) would describe in a literary context as ‘the death of the author’.⁶⁹ There are two main problems with these aspects of Saussurean structuralism for Said’s intellectual/political project. Firstly, the human subject was at the centre of Palestinian resistance and was therefore sacrosanct to Said’s project. The Zionist project, he argued, was a ‘contest between an affirmation and a denial’, between the actual Palestinian, *human*, presence in Israel/Palestine, and the Zionist denial of it.⁷⁰ Secondly, although useful, it was not enough for Said to only discover *how* sign systems create meaning. In a practical project of political resistance concerned with the relationship

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ This line of analysis will be discussed in greater detail in the chapter on *Orientalism*.

⁶⁹ ‘The Death of the Author’, in Roland Barthes, *Image-Music-Text*, trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), pp. 142-148.

⁷⁰ *The Question of Palestine*, p. 8.

between knowledge and power, Said's task was surely to unravel *why* and for what purposes structures obtain meaning.

A further impediment in Saussurean linguistics to what, for Said, was the coveted centrality of human agency in literature, is the concept of binary oppositions. Binary oppositions are central to structural linguistics and are a perfect example of a theory of meanings obtained by absolute difference. As established above, the signified 'tree', for example, only 'means' tree because of its difference from another sign. Although in Saussure signs are thought to be arbitrary, linguistic structuralism tends to reinforce the notion of fixed binary oppositions. At the very least, the binary oppositions seem to always privilege one term over another, thus revealing the presence of conventions. In the trivia of everyday life this may not seem to be of great importance; the binary oppositions of, for example, cat/dog or night/day do not appear to be inherently 'wrong'. However, even in a binary opposition like night/day there is a sense in which 'day' is privileged over 'night'. In opposition to the hopefulness of the 'day', the 'night' has certain romantic associations yet these are overwhelmed by the more powerful connotations of darkness and danger. At some point, these 'arbitrary' connotations became connected by convention with 'blackness'. In one sense, therefore, the apparently innocuous binary opposition of night/day functions as a mode of racial ideology whereby the blackness of a person is 'naturally' coterminous with the evil. A person who is moody or spiteful, for example, is often said to have a 'dark side'. To return to Said's critique of Saussure, the conventions of the European colonial systems were so entrenched as to seem to refer back to the idea of an 'Origin' which was prior to language. The constructed binary oppositions were effectively naturalized; that is, they began to *not* be seen as human constructs. In political terms, what becomes the fixed positional superiority of one half of the binary opposition over another obtains an obvious and potent ideological modality and valence. In the language system of European imperialism there is always a privileging of white over black, and a stubbornly persistent correlation between this particular binary opposition and those of 'savage/civilized', 'East/West', 'colonized/colonizer'. In analyses of systems by the structuralist method there is a built-in paradox: in order to dismantle the structures which perpetuate the uneven relationships between peoples it is first necessary to identify those binary oppositions which form the centre and the periphery. However, in identifying binary

oppositions there is an almost inevitable constriction of the signifier within an ideological straitjacket. The binary oppositions identified by structural linguistics are, however, no more (and no less) than simple and arbitrary human constructs. There is nothing in Saussure's linguistics to suggest that the relationship between sign systems should be coterminous with the ideologies that may become attached to them. Rather, binary oppositions emerge first through the arbitrary use of signs that register difference and thereby produce meaning, and subsequently by convention. The Saussurean process effectively returns language to the weightless condition described above, thus removing the historical and ideological dimensions of the sign, a method that was antithetical to some modes of Marxist theory and also, indeed, to Said. One of the effects of this process is that in structural linguistics binary oppositions eventually *assume* the condition of natural phenomena. This was problematic for Said, in that his project was concerned with the historical process of imperialism and colonialism mapped on to present-day Palestine/Israel, a situation he found to be the result of human effort as opposed to natural phenomena.

Despite their theoretical shortcomings, Saussure's ideas tapped into the radical potential of language, insinuating that language could function as a mode of liberation from the chains of the essentialist idea of a definitive set of 'truths' or 'facts'. If, as Said argued, '[t]he adjective "Arab" in Israeli parlance is synonymous with dirty, stupid, and incompetent', these putatively unchanging 'facts' which had become enshrined in the linguistic system of 'The West' could only ever be provisional.⁷¹ It was Saussure, then, in Geneva in 1911 whose ideas on structures opened up a channel, which, for Said, would become a 'beginning' point for political resistance. Said appropriates the radical elements of Saussure – the beginning point of language – and the prosaic method of delimiting vast quantities of 'information', and threads them through the prism of 'history'. In addition, Saussure's thesis that meaning in language is governed by systems of underlying structures and internal codes was shown to have been channelled into Said's anti-colonial political philosophy, where one of his main focusses was the function of language as a colonial and imperial tool in various modes of representation. There is a clear, and not always acknowledged, line of thought therefore from Saussure to Said. Said was indebted to Saussure's radical ideas on the relationship between language and meaning, which

⁷¹ *The Question of Palestine*, p. 172.

represented a paradigm-shifting moment across a number of disciplines. This is not meant to suggest that Said was a disciple of Saussure. He was not. Saussure's thoughts presented a considerable danger to Said's humanistic relationship with knowledge: how, whilst maintaining the primacy of the human subject and at least an intention to create knowledge which avoided entrenchment in political dogma, intellectual tradition, and academic schools of thought, could Said resist entrenchment in the extremely influential thoughts of the thinkers, and one in particular, who were to expand in anti-authoritarian ways on Saussure's ideas?

Foucault, Structuralism, Post-Structuralism: Radical Beginnings and Intellectual Disappointment

When, in the introduction to *Orientalism*, Said connects to the line of Michel Foucault's *Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, he is not concerned about becoming a faithful Foucauldian or entrenching himself and his writing in this or that position on the structuralism versus poststructuralism debate. He is doing so because he walked with Foucault for a certain distance – he listened to him, he studied the path Foucault took him on, he admired it, he loved some parts of it, hated others, learned some lessons, and then proceeded to answer to his one and only “master”: walking. And so he walked another line, bringing with him elements from Foucault's line that he chose to keep.⁷²

When Ayyash alludes, above, to Said's ‘master’ being the activity of ‘walking’, he is clearly not writing about the physical exercise of putting one foot in front of another but rather, figuratively referring to Said's intellectual mobility: the ability to move from one set of ideas or influences to another, learning from them, discarding some elements, but always taking with him on his journey only what ‘he chose to keep’. Of course, influence is more fluid and difficult to pin down than this. Nevertheless, this is Ayyash's way of defining the mysterious space and method that Said called his ‘exilic’ position, a recurrent motif in his work but one that is not without its methodological problems. Ayyash is adept enough to realise that exile is a more problematic philosophical position than might be imagined. He is astute enough to differentiate between Said's exile from Palestine and his attempt to find a critical location like the one being discussed in this thesis, the one that can enable the production of ‘non-coercive’ knowledge.

⁷² Mark Muhannad Ayyash, ‘Edward Said: Writing in Exile’, *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 30 (2010), pp. 107-118 (p. 109).

Ayyash's walking metaphor provides a useful method for analysing Said's relationship to the philosophical currents of 'structuralism' and 'poststructuralism', and in particular to one of the thinkers associated with these 'movements', the French historian and philosopher, Michel Foucault (1926-1984). As an academic and a politically committed intellectual, Said's thoughts passed through each of these spheres. Without recourse to Foucault, whose concepts pervade *Orientalism*, it is difficult to navigate the wider themes of structuralism and poststructuralism. The three strands - Foucault, structuralism, and poststructuralism - are distinct yet connected elements in Said's work. Coursing their way through this line of thought is the influence of Saussure and, at a sub level, Vico. Because, as Ayyash has pointed out, some of Foucault's ideas were pivotal to Said's inquiry into the relationship between colonial power and knowledge, the analysis below will focus mainly on their relationship. Whether Said was able to simply walk with Foucault, take what he needed, and stroll merrily on to another location without the thoughts of the Frenchman forever invading his own, is one of the conundrums posed by this subchapter. It will be argued that Said did not develop a sustained theoretical affiliation with Foucault, structuralism, or poststructuralism. The 'walk' with Foucault and his contemporaries - those Continental thinkers, some of whom became mainly associated with the philosophical idea of 'structuralism' and 'poststructuralism', was a fitful affair that involved a convergence of various ideas on the formulation of language and knowledge, and a diversion on the question of intellectual responsibility. But first, it is necessary to trace the course of their arrival in Said's thoughts.

In the late 1960s a cluster of thinkers emerged in continental Europe whose main line of theoretical influences took in the ideas of Saussure, and whose attitudes to language and politics were decidedly 'radical'. In Said's view, the most notable of these 'new' thinkers was Foucault. In his obituary of Foucault, Said described their emergence as

the most noteworthy flowering of oppositional intellectual life in the twentieth century West. Along with [Jean-Paul]Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Georges Canguihelm, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Lucien Goldmann, Althusser, [Jacques] Derrida, [Claude]Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes, Gilles Deleuze, and [Pierre]Bourdieu himself, Foucault emerged out of a strange revolutionary concatenation of Parisian aesthetic and political currents, which for about thirty

years produced such a concentration of brilliant work as we are not likely to see again for generations.⁷³

The 'brilliant work' will be addressed shortly, but what this 'current' brought forth was a wave of oppositional, committed, 'revolutionary' intellectualism that was 'rooted in the political actualities of French life, the great milestones of which were World War II, the response to European communism, the Vietnamese and Algerian colonial wars, and May 1968'.⁷⁴ These academics and intellectuals were neither a concerted movement nor unified by a single thread of philosophical or political dogma. Indeed, Foucault was 'part of the generation who reacted against Sartrean existentialism, and who always, on a personal, political and philosophical level, had great difficulties coming to terms with Sartre'.⁷⁵ Foucault and the other 'canonized' intellectual, Jacques Derrida, 'engaged in quite violent arguments, which resulted in Foucault dismissing Derrida's work as "a minor pedagogy" which privileged the authority of the critic'.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, despite their differences there was a wave of politically progressive academics that emerged from continental Europe, whose thoughts were focussed on language and various forms of political opposition. They began to pervade the Anglo-American intellectual world and were related, if not directly affiliated, to a wider political context that surfaced at a particularly febrile moment in the broader scene of global political unrest. The Marxist historian, Chris Harman, argues that the student demonstrations in Paris in 1968 were contingent with an international resistance movement:

1968 was a year in which revolt shook at least three major governments and produced a wave of hope among young people living under many others. It was the year the peasant guerrillas of one of the world's smaller nations stood up to the mightiest power in human history. It was the year the black ghettos of the United States rose in revolt to protest at the murder of the leader of non-violence, Martin Luther King. It was the year the city of Berlin suddenly became the international focus for a student movement that challenged the power blocs which divided it. It was the year teargas and billy clubs were used to make sure the US Democratic Party convention would select a presidential candidate who had been rejected by voters in every primary. It was the year Russian tanks rolled into Prague to displace a 'Communist' government that had made

⁷³ Edward W. Said, 'Michel Foucault', in *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*, 4 (1984). Also published in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, pp. 187-197; pp., 187-188.

⁷⁴ In May 1968, confrontations between police and students resulted in a General Strike which nearly resulted in the collapse of the French Government.

⁷⁵ Mills, p. 21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

concessions to popular pressure. It was the year that the Mexican Government massacred more than 100 demonstrators in order to ensure that the Olympic Games would take place under 'peaceful' conditions. It was the year that protests against discrimination in Derry and Belfast lit the fuse on the sectarian powder keg of Northern Ireland. It was, above all, the year that the biggest general strike ever paralysed France and caused its government to panic.⁷⁷

Mills has included Harman's rhetorical sketch in her analysis of Michel Foucault in order to highlight both the cohesion between different political events in various parts of the world and Foucault's function as a theorist who was engaged in a wider political struggle. Harman's projection of a mass, widely dispersed, but somehow unified protest is precisely what one would expect from a Marxist critic. Yet, Foucault's political resistance was largely provincial, and he never developed a definitive political stance. In a notable omission, Harman's narrative of an emerging international oppositional movement did not include any reference to the burgeoning resistance of the Palestinians or the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. These constituencies were problematically invisible to and marginalised by the continental revolutionary current.

The emergence of the French academics allied to the 'revolutionary' events of 1968 provided at least some impetus for Said's development of his role as a 'public intellectual' in the United States.⁷⁸ As Said later argued, as an intellectual he was at a geographical disadvantage because whereas '[i]n the French-speaking domains, the word "*intellectual*" unfailingly carries with it some residue of the public realm in which recently deceased figures like Sartre, Foucault, Bourdieu, and Aron debated and put forward their views for very large audiences', this sort of tradition was, and is, very different in the United States.⁷⁹ In Said's view, the role of the intellectual in the United States has been appropriated by the 'policy intellectual [who] can feel that he or she surveys the entire world'.⁸⁰ This, of course, presents all sorts of problems for the exilic intellectual, whose thoughts, by definition, must not be confined to specialisms and whose position must not be affiliated to governments, guilds, states, or institutions.

⁷⁷ Chris Harman, *The Fire Last Time: 1968 and After* (London: Bookmarks, 1998), p. vii. Cited in Mills, *Michel Foucault*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁸ I think it is reasonable to argue that the 'public intellectual' was alive and thriving in France long before Said started to perform this role through his various appearances on American television in the 1970s.

⁷⁹ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 122.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

Said's public role as an intellectual can be at least partly traced to the influence of thinkers from other cultures like Foucault, and to this specific moment in time. Said was partly responsible for introducing Foucault and Derrida to the American academy. The impetus for Said's interest in the French 'structuralists' was perhaps as much driven by the appeal of their apparent intellectual engagement and political commitment as the undoubted originality of their thoughts. Racevskis argues that Said's subsequent shift to an 'anti-Foucault' position was at least partly due to his assessment that the Frenchman had lost interest in politics, whereas the Frenchman's disinterest in the plight of the Palestinians was a greater worry.⁸¹

Said's status as a 'solitary', politically engaged Palestinian in the United States should not be confused with his part in this wider intellectual landscape, which was at best limited. In fact, he was a rather parochial academic figure in the mid-1960s, one who was relatively unconcerned with wider global struggles. This situation altered following the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, albeit initially in a fairly limited way. At this point Said became enmeshed in the Palestinian struggle, yet he was rarely concerned at that time or later with wider political issues in other countries which did not touch on Palestinian matters. For his part, in his description of a global intellectual current, Harman did not allude to the 1968 Palestinian National Charter that negated Israel's right to exist and affirmed the 'right' to an armed struggle for Palestine. This omission is surprising, perhaps, because although the Palestinian struggle for self-determination in 1968 remained effectively silenced by a powerful Zionist discourse and was not generally within the purview of European intellectuals, it had by the time of Harman's 1998 writing transformed into an effective political and intellectual cause. Said was also largely an ineffectual observer of the student protests that broke out at Columbia University in the spring of 1968. Said, who was at the University of Illinois on a fellowship at the time, noted that he received a telegram about a meeting at Columbia, so that

in the spring of '68, when the revolution broke out [at Columbia]...I flew to New York. The meeting was being held at the Law School, and I got to 116th Street and Amsterdam, where the entrance to the Law School is, and I noticed that

⁸¹ Karlis Racevskis, 'Edward Said and Michel Foucault: Affinities and Dissonances', *Research in African Literatures*, 36 (2005), pp. 83-97 (p. 85).

there was a police barrier. I could not get through because I didn't have a valid I.D.⁸²

There was, however, some common ground between Said, the French intellectuals, and the growing critique around the world of the United States. Mills argues that,

[d]uring the early 1960s, there was an anti-authoritarian tendency in much political thinking of the time among those who found themselves opposed to the status quo or to the current political regimes, and these ideas gained currency among a wider group of people and began to be drawn on in a general critique of American neo-imperial policy abroad.⁸³

Despite his narrow, and perhaps belated, focus on Palestine it is too strong to say that Said was part of the wider oppositional current of the late 1960s. In Said's view, the insularity of Foucault and some of the other French intellectuals limited their claims to universality. Foucault's resistance was not, as Said's was, focussed on imperialism, but was 'largely concerned with the relation between social structures and institutions and the individual'.⁸⁴ In *The History of Sexuality* (1978), *Power/Knowledge* (1980), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973), and *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault 'focussed on the effects of various institutions on groups of people and the role that those people play in affirming or resisting those effects'.⁸⁵ Walzer, unfairly perhaps, has characterized Foucault's politics as that of 'infantile leftism...that is less an endorsement than an outrunning of the most radical argument in any political struggle'.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, Foucault had a deep interest not only in trying to bringing change to the French prison system which he developed in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), but in the wider relationship between power and knowledge, an issue close to Said's own project.⁸⁷

Given the differences in the scope of their political interests, it would be too much to state that Foucault was precisely the model for Said's intervention as a 'public intellectual'. Nevertheless, Said's affiliation to the idea of metaphorical exile coincided with Foucault's

⁸² *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 166.

⁸³ Mills, p. 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Michael Walzer, 'The Politics of Michel Foucault', in David Couzens Hoy, *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), pp. 51-69. Quoted in Mills, p. 16.

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977).

work on exclusion, which Eribon has argued ‘stemmed from elements of his own life’.⁸⁸ In *Madness and Civilisation* (1967) Foucault, who suffered from frequent bouts of depression, analysed how and why certain people in society were constructed as ‘insane’ or ‘sane’, the social consequences of which were exclusion or inclusion. Whereas Said’s ‘outsider’ status was channelled through the prism of his identity as an Arab-Palestinian, Foucault’s exclusion was centred round the fact of his homosexuality, a sexual identity that was hugely problematic in parts of France at that time. Foucault had joined the French Communist Party in 1950, although ‘he left the party soon after, along with many others who were disillusioned by the party’s doctrinaire stance and also by its support for the Soviet regime after its invasion of Hungary in 1956’.⁸⁹ The real reason for Foucault’s defection may have been connected to the fact that ‘the Party also condemned homosexuality as a bourgeois vice’.⁹⁰ When Said ‘walked’ with Foucault, then, certain mutual interests materialized. Spanos has argued that the two men shared the responsibilities of

the worldly intellectual who emerges from one of the historically specific constituencies – the working class, women, homosexuals, racial or ethnic minorities, and so on – as an alienated (exilic) identity and who, for that reason, is more capable than the general or universal intellectual of understanding the particularity of his or her oppression.⁹¹

This affiliation can be pressed further. In his obituary for Foucault, Said wrote that ‘[there is no such thing as being at home in his writing, neither for reader or writer’ and here he was affiliating with Foucault’s dogged resistance to be pinned down, to give structure or classification to his work, to remain in ‘exile’.⁹² That this should represent an affiliation seems somewhat paradoxical. Ayyash notes the correlations between Foucault’s resistance to the ‘standing still’ and Said’s exilic approach to philosophical problems that culminated in his sense of

frustration over his inability to reconcile his love for his American line (which is largely connected with freedom of expression, speech, and so on, more or less received through the American academy, with limitations of course) and his love

⁸⁸ Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. by Betsy Wing (Cambridge; MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 27. Quoted in Mills, p. 98.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ William V. Spanos, *The Legacy of Edward W. Said* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), pp. 76-77.

⁹² *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays*, p. 191.

for his Palestinian line, particularly his constant fighting for Palestinian rights and justice for the Palestinian people.⁹³

Without pressing the connections between Said as the emerging public intellectual and Foucault the restless but politically committed intellectual too far, Ayyash's metaphor helps to reveal a genuine thread of intellectual interchange from the latter to the former, which in many ways was external to the more specific issues about language and knowledge. Of course, it was only because Foucault and the continental thinkers produced original thoughts about language and knowledge, and that these thoughts were generally to the Left of the political spectrum, that the question of their mutual intellectual responsibilities was of any interest to Said.

To return to the question of language – to the themes of structuralism and poststructuralism – is to widen the discussion and to include how Said walked amongst the thoughts of the wave of continental thinkers who came to constitute these putative schools of thought, or disciplines. In Said's view, there was a seismic shift from what he considered to be 'an exemplary rational and contemporary recognition in explicit critical terms of the need to make a beginning'.⁹⁴ The ensuing situation was one in which, trapped in questions about language, the French theorists were simply 'maintaining a kind of loyalty to their readers, who expected more of the same'.⁹⁵

In general terms, and in the early stages of what Said perceived was their evolution from radicalism to political quietism, and *prior* to the emergence of what came to be termed 'post-structuralism', French thought was constitutive of a mode of criticism which can broadly be termed as 'structuralism'. Along with the French critics Roland Barthes, the early Foucault, and Gérard Genette, the academics that were most associated with structuralism were figures who, like Said, had complex national identities. These included Tzvetan Todorov (Bulgarian-French), A.J. Greimas (French-Lithuanian), and Jacques Derrida (Algerian-French). Barthes (1915-1980) became concerned with the issue of narrative structure in literature, and how meaning was obtained through a system of already existing conventions. In one of his best-known works, *S/Z*, Barthes proposed that there was no inviolable correlation between the events in a novel and events in the 'real' world, and

⁹³ Ayyash, p. 110.

⁹⁴ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 167.

⁹⁵ Said, *Beginnings*, p. 281.

therefore that 'realism' is a fallacy.⁹⁶ Barthes proposed that critical analysis should be concerned entirely with the relationship between the various codes and conventions, and not with the pseudo-empirical details of the text. The Saussurean influence that charts its way through the anti-humanism of these thoughts throws Said's Vichian, humanist orientation into sharp relief. This mode of analysis is only anti-humanist because by the terms of Saussurian linguistics the analysis itself is also subject to a constructed series of underlying codes and conventions.

Said identified this group of continental thinkers in collective terms, but it was Foucault's ideas which found their way most tellingly into his work. Foucault's early work can be understood in terms of a mode of 'archaeology' that can be glossed as 'structuralist', and the later work as a mode of 'genealogy' that can be characterized as 'post-structuralist', although he would have resisted both these labels and any suggestion of a smooth transition between the two.⁹⁷ An archaeological analysis is concerned with what Foucault called the 'archive': 'the unwritten rules which lead to the production of certain types of statements and the sum total of the discursive formations circulating at any one time'.⁹⁸ In *The Order of Things* (1970), he performed 'an analysis of the impersonal determining forces inherent in discourse'.⁹⁹ The term 'discourse' is explored by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972) and again in *The Order of Discourse* (1981). 'Discourse' refers to 'the general domain of all statements, sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements'.¹⁰⁰ The circulation of these statements forms what Foucault called the 'épistémè', and the space in which the statements circulate, the 'library'. He intended to 'uncover the workings of discourse over long periods of time'.¹⁰¹ The early Foucault was largely unconcerned with humanist notions of the agency of the individual or with notions of 'truth', and, indeed, he was sometimes openly hostile to such notions. In the manner of Saussure, Foucault's emphasis was on the formal mechanisms by which meaning was produced rather than in the content of meaning itself.

⁹⁶ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Cape, 1975).

⁹⁷ Mills, p. 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1972), p. 80.

¹⁰¹ Mills, p. 27.

Said borrows from Foucault's notion of discourse and applies it to situations that are of interest to him. The 'structuralist' Foucault is indispensable to Said's working-out of the relationship between western colonialism/imperialism and the cultural forms that sustain, or in some instances help to produce it. Hence, Said notes in *Orientalism*

that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.¹⁰²

The friction between Said's humanism and Foucault's impersonal focus on discourse is that the human subject is no longer at the centre of language, but is, rather, a creation of it. This aspect of structuralism is counter to the core humanism at the heart of Said's philosophy. Nevertheless, the pragmatic elements of Said are unaffected by Foucault's anti-humanism. In an interview in 1987, Said maintained that in *Orientalism*, 'I was already aware of the problems of Foucault's determinism, his Spinoza quality, where everything is always assimilated and acculturated'.¹⁰³ Said drew from Foucault's structuralism in order to create in *Orientalism* 'a kind of non-coercive knowledge [which was] deliberately anti-Foucault'.¹⁰⁴ In fact, as will be shown in chapter three, there is much in *Orientalism* that can be construed as coercive knowledge.

Said and Foucault again converge as the French thinker shifts towards 'poststructuralism'.¹⁰⁵ For many of the other French thinkers such as Derrida and Kristeva, this meant a move towards inquiry into the fundamental instability of language, and a shift towards the sort of formal criticism that, because of its ways of detaching text from world, Said so abhorred in its inculcations in the American academy. For Said, this represented a decline from exemplary radical beginnings to a sort of 'other worldly' intellectual disappointment. If the archaeological structuralism of Foucault was influential in Said's work because of the appeal of its methodology, the parts that can be termed the 'genealogical' aspect were important because of their interest in power. In 'Criticism Between Culture and System', Said argued that

¹⁰² *Orientalism*, p. 3.

¹⁰³ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Again, I should stress that Foucault would not have acknowledged the term 'poststructuralism'.

[a]ll of Foucault's work since *The Order of Things* has been a rephrasing of the question "how, when, and why did language and discourse disappear," turning it into a political and methodological question of the greatest urgency.¹⁰⁶

This 'turn' in Foucault's thoughts and method connect with Said's interest in the relationship between knowledge and power. In order to uncloak the relationships between discourse and power, Said notes how

Foucault's most interesting and problematic historical and philosophical thesis is that discourse, as well as the text, becomes invisible, that discourse began to dissemble and appear merely to be writing or texts, that discourse hid the systematic rules of its formation and its concrete affiliations with power, not at some point in time, but as an event in the history of culture generally and of knowledge particularly.¹⁰⁷

The turn to 'power' by Foucault, which Said takes up in *Orientalism* and subsequently in a slightly different way in *The Question of Palestine* as he traces the genealogy of Zionist power to western colonialism, confirms a powerful Foucauldian imprint on his methodology, although at base it is never sufficient to constrain his focus on the individual. The individual subject may at times be subsumed in the anti-humanism of Foucault, but always, perhaps, in a provisional manner. If Foucault is always present in Said's work, he is only present when it is pragmatic for him to be so.

Said found some aspects of Foucault's theory to be a limited historical phenomenon. In *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, he argued that

[o]ur ideas today of archive and discourse must be radically modified and can no longer be defined as Foucault painstakingly tried to describe them a mere two decades ago. Even if one writes for a newspaper or journal, the chances of multiplying reproduction and, notionally at least, an unlimited time of preservation have wrought havoc on even the idea of an actual, as opposed to a virtual, audience.¹⁰⁸

The idea that Said could 'walk' with Foucault as he explored the structuralist and poststructuralist phases of his resistance, appropriate the elements that were necessary, and use them in his own project of resistance whilst retaining an exilic critical location is theoretically flawed. Without Foucault there is no *Orientalism*, but Said's project was much wider than one book. Said argued that one of the reasons for the theoretical

¹⁰⁶ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 219.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁰⁸ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 30.

inconsistencies of *Orientalism* was that 'I didn't want Foucault's method, or anybody's method to override what I was trying to put forward'.¹⁰⁹ This was a wonderful intention, but perhaps no more than that. Foucault's imprint on Said is premised on Saussure's original thoughts, which have passed along the line through the thinkers who engaged with structuralism and poststructuralism. Does this make Said a Saussurean, structuralist, poststructuralist, or Foucauldian intellectual? If Foucault and his contemporaries inspired Said's burgeoning interest in the critical performance of the public intellectual they could not define what he did when he arrived at that point. Foucault's theory and his restlessness was inflected in Said's notion of exile, as was the relationship between personal experiences and critical approach. On his way to attempting to produce 'non-coercive' knowledge, Said passed through the thoughts of Foucault and the wider influence of structuralism and poststructuralism which, like every other 'ism' came and went, leaving behind indelible traces. Whether these constitute a threat to what Ayyash called Said's metaphorical 'exile' is debatable. In his relationship with knowledge, Said was not a disciple of Foucault. As Marxism would demonstrate, the French thinkers were not the only individuals, schools of thought, or academic disciplines that Said needed to manage in his independent thoughts, if he was to retain a secular position somehow outside and semi-autonomously detached from these powerful intellectual and political apparatuses.

Said: A Marxist Project?

I don't want to belong to any club that that will accept people like me as a member.¹¹⁰

Said enjoyed Groucho Marx stories, but in keeping with the American comedian he claimed to have no compunction to belong to a club.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Said frequently drew

¹⁰⁹ Imre Salusinszky, *Criticism in Society: Interviews with Jacques Derrida, Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, Frank Kermode, Edward Said, Barbara Johnson, Frank Lentricchia, and J. Hillis Miller* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 137.

¹¹⁰ Groucho Marx, *Groucho and Me* (London: Virgin, 2008), p. 321.

¹¹¹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 308. In a debate on November 23, 1986, subsequently published in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1987), 85-104, and in *Power, Politics, and Culture* as 'Scholars, Media, and the Middle East', pp. 291-312, Said remarked on Groucho Marx's stories. The debate arose from issues raised in *Orientalism* and marked the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Middle East Studies Association of North America. The debaters were Said, Christopher Hitchens, and the British Orientalist, Bernard Lewis. The debate was chaired by William H. McNeil.

inspiration for his own work from the thoughts of Marxist writers. The question is whether despite his frequent denials, Said's project was at least in part 'Marxist'. If, when it came to his denying his affiliation to Marxism, Said perhaps protests too much, this would have serious consequences for his professed proclivity for a 'detached' relationship with knowledge and critical inquiry.

There were signs in Said of an ambivalent relationship with Marxism, a connection that bordered on much more than just passing influence. To extend Ayyash's Said-Foucault metaphor, above, Said never denied walking with Marxism, but it is hard to locate at what point he stopped holding hands as a fellow traveller. In fact, Said almost admitted a wider susceptibility to 'influence' when he confessed that 'I have been more influenced by Marxists than by Marxism or any other *ism*'.¹¹² He conditioned this quasi-affiliation with the argument that '[t]he protestations or the affirmations of belonging or not belonging to a Marxist tradition seem to me to be interesting only if they are connected to a practice, which in turn is connected to a political movement'.¹¹³ In an interview in 1989, Said claimed that 'Marxism, in so far as it is an orthodoxy, an ontology, even an epistemology strikes me as extraordinarily insufficient'.¹¹⁴ One of the reasons for Said's dismissal of Marxism was what he viewed as its irrelevance as a political movement in the United States. In Said's analysis there is no significant Marxist tradition in the United States, and given the fact that the USA is the most powerful nation on earth there is scant reason to take Marxism seriously either as a prism through which to view the world as a body of 'knowledge', or as a political movement. Said had a number of 'blind spots', and this, clearly, was one of the more significant. Whilst, as Davis has shown, a mass party for the working classes has never taken root in the United States, the story of Marxism is more nuanced and certainly not a political irrelevance.¹¹⁵ Buhle has comprehensively charted the enduring but complicated pattern of socialist movements in the United States since the nineteenth century.¹¹⁶ Socialism was, and is, alive in the United States. Said was either misinformed or he had chosen to overlook the existence of the organized Left in the United States. Howe has

¹¹² *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 29.

¹¹³ Sprinker, p. 259.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the Working Class* (London: Verso, 1986).

¹¹⁶ Paul Buhle, *Marxism in the United States: A History of the American Left* (London: Verso, 1987).

argued that the term 'Marxism' matters 'more or in different ways in some contexts than in others, and Said operated in an unusually diverse set of such contexts'.¹¹⁷ In effect, he infers that in North America, Marxism in the European sense is ineffectual. Howe argues that there is a strong political intellectual movement whose equivalent term in the United States is the 'East Coast Counter-Establishment' which includes 'Noam Chomsky, Richard Falk, and Eqbal Ahmad'.¹¹⁸

In fact, Said independently advocated the *need* in the United States for radical social transformation from the bottom up. Indeed, Said articulated an argument that was commensurate with his own status as an immigrant, writing that

[i]t seems to me that there are, given the peculiar structure of an immigrant society such as this, which has nevertheless transformed itself into a society of domination, of class and privilege with astonishing kinds of economic and social imbalances and distortion [that] there's more scope for an intellectual project.¹¹⁹

Said did, however, leave a space into which a 'new' mode of Marxism might filter, a mode which might be 'sufficient', a position commensurate with his open, provisional approach. After all, the phrase 'extraordinarily insufficient' is clearly not meant to close off Said's interest in Marxism, but rather to indicate a sense of what might be, what might be 'sufficient'. Why Said should choose to blot out the history and relevance of the American Left may have more to do with his own philosophical dogmatism and political pragmatism than with his interest in the Left. In the interests of closing off this history, Said resists his own pretensions to critical openness and reveals a concentrated political strategy.

Said developed a fairly inconsistent and at times confusing line of commentary on Marx, Marxism, and Marxists which seemed to confirm and refute its influence on his own thoughts, and his membership of the 'club'.¹²⁰ Karl Marx was accused of Orientalism when he 'succumbed to thoughts of the changeless Asiatic village, or agriculture, or despotism'.¹²¹ Marxist intellectuals also came under fire: after first noting that there had been 'a vast

¹¹⁷ Stephen Howe, 'Edward Said and Marxism: Anxieties of Influence', in *Cultural Critique*, 67 (2007), 50-87 (p. 52).

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Sprinker, p. 262.

¹²⁰ Sprinker, p. 259.

¹²¹ *Orientalism*, p. 182.

standardization of taste in the region [the Middle East], symbolized not only by transistors, blue jeans, and Coca-Cola but also by cultural images of the Orient supplied by American mass media', Said argued that 'the Western market economy and its consumer orientation have produced (and are producing at an accelerating rate) a class of educated people whose intellectual formation is directed to satisfying market needs'.¹²² Said noted that 'surprisingly enough' some of the intellectuals in question had taken their mode of Marxism 'wholesale from Marx's own homogenizing view of the Third World'.¹²³ It was not surprising, given his assertion that Marxist intellectuals in the West had relinquished their association with Marxism as a revolutionary, emancipatory force, that in his 1983 essay 'Secular Criticism' Said argued that '[r]ight now in American cultural history, "Marxism" is principally an academic, not a political commitment'.¹²⁴ In an interview in 1999, Said was adamant that he was 'a free and independent intellectual' who was not interested in membership of the Marxist party, or any other.¹²⁵

On the other hand, Said frequently adopted a positive attitude towards Marxism and its advocates. In *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975), in the chapter 'Abecedarium *Culturae*' - a response to the emergence of the French structuralist/post-structuralists - Said argued that in his book, *Pour Marx*, the French philosopher Louis Althusser (1918-1990), had understood the potential of Marxism.¹²⁶ In fact, Said argued, Althusser had conducted a 'great structuralist rereading' of Marx that 'allows us to see how society formulates itself for itself'.¹²⁷ In *The Question of Palestine*, during a discussion of the problem of the 'hopelessly patriarchal, authoritarian, and atavistic family structure' of Arab society, Said argued that the Spanish anarchist movement between the 1860s and 1936 had provided a mode of 'expression' to the Spanish poor.¹²⁸ Clearly impressed by the Spanish resistance, and using their plight as an example to Palestinians, Said noted how it had been 'related to all those movements in the West that were influenced by utopianism and Marxism'.¹²⁹ These were tentative affirmations of affinity with philosophical and political Marxism that suggested

¹²² Ibid., p. 325.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 28.

¹²⁵ 'Orientalism, Arab Intellectuals, Marxism, Myth', an interview with Nouri Jarrah, *Al Jadid*, Los Angeles, 1999, in Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. 437-442; p. 441.

¹²⁶ Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx* (Paris: Francois Maspero, 1965).

¹²⁷ *Beginnings*, p. 329.

¹²⁸ *The Question of Palestine*, p. 187.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

that Said, Marxism, and Marxist thinkers were not in fact polar opposites, but were, potentially, engaged in a more intimate critical and political relationship.

One of the overall features of Said's professional life was his Euro-centrism, an approach he carried into his complex relationship with non-Western Marxism. Howe has noted how Said

engaged with a specifically Western Marxism, both in Perry Anderson's (1976) sense of a western European intellectual tradition focused mostly on philosophical and aesthetic questions, and in the later configuration of a mainly Anglophone academic milieu.¹³⁰

The situation, however, was more complex and contradictory than it first appears. Said was also a critic of the British historian and Marxist 'Perry Anderson's implicit premise that Western Marxism is the norm by which one judges the progress or failure of Marxism', citing Anderson's exclusion of 'Marxism in the Caribbean' as an example of its lack of scope.¹³¹ Whilst Howe was correct to point out that Said did not engage at length with the ideas of non-western Marxist writers and academics, in the post-*Orientalism* era he had become curious about the insurrectionary potential of 'the appearance of groups from Subaltern Studies', a loose collective of South Asian Marxist-inspired academics who attempt to practise a 'bottom-up' form of socialism.¹³² The Subalterns included respected academics such as Ranajit Guha, a former student of Said's, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who, despite their own critique of the Euro-centrism of Marxism, could well be open to accusations of becoming part of the Anglo-American academic milieu and thus detached from the voices they aimed to recover. This was not her intention in perhaps her best known work, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', where she attempts to challenge the Western intellectual 'desire to conserve the subject of the West, or the West as subject'.¹³³ Whilst most of Said's work does indeed edge towards keeping the West as subject, an interest in non-western Marxism was, to a lesser degree, still present. However, his curiosity turned increasingly away from the economic and class struggles pivotal to classical Marxism and 'toward celebrating or emphasizing recuperation of the voices of the colonized, the

¹³⁰ Howe, p. 51.

¹³¹ Sprinker, p. 258.

¹³² Ibid., p. 234.

¹³³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271-313; p. 271.

anticolonialist, the postcolonial'.¹³⁴ Again, the voices Said 'recuperated' tended to be those of the Western metropolitan elite, at which point he diverged quite dramatically from the original insurrectionary interests of Marxism. What this reveals is both that Said was not interested in *all* spheres of resistance connected to Marxist writers and that there is no monolithic Marxism. It also reveals a tension between Said's philosophical position that supposed a world in which every domain is linked to every other one, and his neglect of an important non-western tradition of Marxism.

This body of striking contradictions have been aptly described by Parry as one of 'the tensions in a significant body of work that is haunted by but resistant to Marxism'.¹³⁵ Parry's 'contradictions' highlight some of the tensions that are at the centre of what McCarthy has described as 'the developing debates about the relationship between Edward Said's work and various strands of Marxism'.¹³⁶ These strands were many; Marxists to whom Said was drawn include the early twentieth-century contributions to the insurrectionary theory of Lukács and Gramsci, and the work of Theodor Adorno. These debates dovetail with the current intellectual environment in which, as Parry has noted, '[t]he vigor of current discussion on Marxism and communism is evident in the distinctive and nonuniform writings of such as Alex Callinicos, Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, Slavoj Žižek, Peter Hallward, and Bruno Bosteels'.¹³⁷

Said's place in this sphere has traditionally attracted less critical attention than his profound interest in 'humanism' or his vexed relationship with 'structuralism' and 'post-structuralism'. The Said-Marxism debate represents one of several important and contested strands in Said's inter-disciplinary project as 'various constituencies of the academic and public intellectual community, both in the United States and abroad, have begun to reassess the writings of this powerful contemporary oppositional intellectual, seeking to determine the nature of his legacy'.¹³⁸ No one has argued seriously that Said was a dyed-in-the-wool Marxist, but it would be hugely problematic to overlook the significance of Marxism to the ways in which Said produced knowledge. It is also slightly problematic to dismiss out of

¹³⁴ Howe, p. 72.

¹³⁵ Benita Parry, 'Edward Said and Third-World Marxism' in *College Literature* 40 (2013), 105-126 (p. 106).

¹³⁶ Conor McCarthy, 'Said, Lukács, Gramsci: Beginnings, Geography, and Insurrection' in *College Literature*, 40 (2013), 74-104 (p.74) in *Project Muse* <<https://muse/jhu/edu/article/523591/pdf>> [accessed 30-4-2015]

¹³⁷ Parry, 'Edward Said and Third-World Marxism', p. 123.

¹³⁸ Spanos, p. 1.

hand the idea that an intellectual can draw so much from a particular body of thought into his own work, and still claim to remain outside that school of thought's sphere of influence.

In this context the following sub-chapter attempts to answer two main questions. Firstly, what was the scope and depth of Marxism in Said's project? Secondly, with this in mind, was Said really able to produce knowledge and criticism that can be said not to have been intellectually coerced by his relationship with Marxism? The method will be to establish a genealogy of Marxist-related thought in Said's teaching and writing, and then to assess both the productive and disabling tensions that emerge in the course of this genealogy. The argument will be developed that Said's fairly consistent engagement with various modes of Marxism constituted more than simply *influence*, even if it was perpetually in tension with the intellectual and ethical substratum of his philosophical humanism.

As discussed, above, there are many sides to Said's humanism, a feature of his approach that helps to disentangle him from some of the imperial connotations of this tradition. Perhaps the best way to explain what is meant by 'humanism' in this instance is to repeat Said's own definition in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*. Shaped as it must have been by its late appearance in his oeuvre, during a long bout of severe illness when he was acutely conscious of his mortality, Said noted that 'the core of humanism is the secular notion that the historical world is made by men and women, and not by God...we can really know only what we make or, to put it differently, we can know things according to the way they were made'.¹³⁹ This description situates human agency at the centre of 'history' – as the makers of history - re-stating the intractability of 'the individual *cogito*'.¹⁴⁰ In fact, Said's description resonates vibrantly with Marx's statement that '[m]en make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'.¹⁴¹

There is not, perhaps, an irreconcilable conflict between Said's humanism on the one hand and 'the existence of systems of thinking and perceiving [which transcend] the

¹³⁹ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) <<http://www.marx.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm>> [accessed 17-8-2014].

powers of individual subjects who were inside those systems...and therefore had no power over them, only the choice either to use or be used by them'.¹⁴² One of the principal points of Said's worldview was that the human subject cannot ever be irrecoverably reduced to one element of a 'system', one striking proof of which is that even the most powerful systems such as Western colonialism can be at least partially dismantled. Only 'partially', because systems, like human beings, can exist in other forms after they appear to be moribund. Said once described himself as 'temperamentally and philosophically opposed to vast system-building or totalistic theories of human history', a philosophical position he more or less maintained but one which because of the ways in which he sometimes succeeded in maintaining the 'West' as subject, he was never able to adhere to fully.¹⁴³ Unlike humanism, Marxism is not principally interested in the individual subject, but rather in the collective notion of the 'class'. As the term 'Marxism' is used in this sub-chapter it refers to a broad, complex, and contested socialist, anti-capitalist 'tradition' which encompasses Marxist political theory and Marxist literary criticism. Although Marxism developed into many different modes, in its original and classic form, as Stoker and Marsh describe it,

[t]here are four related 'isms'...economics, determinism, materialism and structuralism. Marxism is economist to the extent that it privileges economic relations and determinist to the extent that it argues that economic relations determine social and political relations.¹⁴⁴

On the surface, the philosophical differences between Said and Marxism are dramatic. However, there was a fairly constant and certainly dynamic exchange between certain components of Marxism and particular parts of Said's work that reach beyond the parameters of 'influence'. These will be considered in detail below.

Genealogy of Marxism: Teaching and Writing

There is a powerful thread of Marxism in Said's work that is camouflaged behind his denials of its influence in his work. Elements of the personal narrative that cloaks the Marxist aspect of Said's identity include his conservative English colonial education and his

¹⁴² *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴³ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 4.

¹⁴⁴ David Marsh and Gerry Stoker, *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 154.

elite schooling in the United States. The idea that Said was a thoroughgoing Marxist is offset by the huge intellectual presence of *Orientalism*, his support for Palestinian self-determination, and his expressed denial of the influence of Marxism in his theory and practice. Certainly, Said did not write any major essays or books concerned solely with the topic of Marxism. He never described himself as a 'Marxist'. There were certain elements of the capitalist system that came into Said's purview as he focussed on the relationship between the accumulation of territory in *Culture and Imperialism*, but he did not 'weigh in on capitalism'.¹⁴⁵ The situation was not, as McCarthy has argued, that 'Said showed deep interest in the Western Marxist philosophical tradition all of his working life', yet when he began to recognize the importance of Marxist writers to his own oppositional ideas he quickly appropriated key aspects of their thinking into his own project.¹⁴⁶

In fact, Said's relationship with Marxism was considerably more complicated than this overview might suggest. In his academic teaching, Said demonstrated a passionate interest in the work of writers who in varying degrees had engaged with the ideas of Marxism. Between 1974 and 1983, as his political commitment to Palestine was beginning to consolidate itself and flourish, 'Said twice offered a popular seminar entirely devoted to the work of Lukács and Gramsci'.¹⁴⁷ The central texts for discussion in these seminars were Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) and Gramsci's unfinished essay, 'Certain Aspects of the Southern Question' (1926), powerful works which would become influential in the development of Said's approach to colonialism and imperialism. Said's interest in Marxism, or to be exact in Marxist writers, was present 'as early as 1966, [and] in one of his first published essays, we find Said drawn to the work of Lucien Goldmann, a Marxist literary theorist and former student of [Georg] Lukács'.¹⁴⁸ The essay, 'A Sociology of Mind' was a review of Goldmann's *The Hidden God: A Study of Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascale and the Tragedies of Racine*. Although a modern-day student of politics or literary theory would be hard-pushed *not* to confront either *The Southern Question* or *History and Class Consciousness*, when Said taught these works in the early 1970s they were by no means 'standard' texts on the university teaching curriculum.

¹⁴⁵ Timothy Brennan, 'Edward Said as a Lukácsian Critic: Modernism and Empire', *College Literature*, 40 (2013), 14-32 (p. 21), in *Project Muse* <<http://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/523588/pdf>> [accessed 5-3-2015]

¹⁴⁶ McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, p. 26.

¹⁴⁷ Brennan, p. 15.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Said demonstrated an early affiliation to Marxism which is at odds with his denial of its determining imprint on his thoughts. As Ahmad has noted, the academic training of the 'younger literary theorists in Britain and North America who had come out of the student movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s' had involved a stark choice between New Criticism on the one hand and structuralism in the shape of 'Fry and Bloom, and Paul de Man' on the other'.¹⁴⁹ Said, on the other hand, chose to engage in quite a serious way with Marxism. Although *History and Class Consciousness* was not translated into the English language until 1971, Said was quick to integrate it into his teaching. Given that the later Said insisted that Marxism was largely an irrelevance to the Palestinian political cause, that with regards to the Palestinian movement Marxism has 'always struck me as more limiting than enabling in the current intellectual, cultural, political conjuncture', one of the first questions to ask is why Said felt compelled to conduct a seminar on these highly political texts which had gone relatively unnoticed in the West.¹⁵⁰

With the benefit of hindsight that allows us to view the development of Said's criticism as to some extent determined by the material conditions of his social and political life, it is possible to view his enthusiastic interest in Lukács and Gramsci in part as an act of intellectual solidarity. At the expense of more formalist approaches such as pure structuralism, which he suspected of attempting to deflect attention away from experience, Said's critical and philosophical methodology privileged the relationship between critic and material conditions, hence the development at times of the frustratingly nebulous notion of 'worldliness'. 'Worldliness' is best described by Said as 'the kind of omnicompetent interest which a lot of us have which is anchored in a real struggle and a real social movement'.¹⁵¹ Setting aside for a moment the potential influence of the content of *The Southern Question* and *History and Class Consciousness* on Said, Lukács and Gramsci represented not only examples of erudite academics engaged in intellectual resistance, whereby philosophical theory is contingent with social and political commitment, but also a current of left-wing intellectual opposition which correlated in tone if not always in content with Said's mode of political opposition.

¹⁴⁹ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Nations, Classes, Literatures* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 158.

¹⁵¹ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. 140-141.

The exemplary location he ascribed to the exilic intellectual cuts through Said's interest in Lukács. Born in Budapest to a wealthy Jewish banking family, Georg Lukács (1885-1971) was a Hungarian Marxist philosopher, aesthetician, literary historian, and critic, as well as a 'directly involved militant'.¹⁵² After the First World War, Lukács joined the Communist Party of Hungary. Following the defeat of the brief Hungarian Soviet Republic in August 1919, Lukács fled to Vienna, where he continued to agitate on behalf of the Hungarian Communists. In his 'pre-Marxist phase', Lukács wrote one of his two best-known works, *The Theory of the Novel* (1914). In his 'Marxist phase' following the First World War and Russian Revolution, Lukács produced his collection of essays, *History and Class Consciousness*. Lukács' ideas became an extremely influential force in the development of Western Marxism, a mode concerned with aesthetics and culture as vital components in the political transformation of society.

Although Said was a great admirer of Lukács' theory, he also remained an ardent critic. According to Said, Lukács' 'involvement with politics throughout his career never had the focus of, say, Gramsci's until 1930'.¹⁵³ Instead, Said argues, 'Lukács was intermittently in and out of Hungary, Hungarian, German, Germany, the Soviet Union, and numerous journals, institutes, and academies all over Eastern and Western Europe'.¹⁵⁴ He practiced a form of Marxism that was concerned, as Said was, with 'history'. Said described Lukács' Marxist approach as akin to a 'Bulldog', by which he meant that Lukács saw everything through the Marxist prism and therefore '[n]o political or cultural or literary instance after his conversion [to Marxism] in the early 1920s that was too subtle or recondite for him to draw a Marxist lesson from it'.¹⁵⁵ If this statement was meant to be a criticism of the way that Lukács arguably manipulated everything into the shape of Marxism, Said countered it, arguing that Marxism was capable of more elasticity. Said once questioned why 'it [is] always assumed that Marxism is rigidly stupid, or that Marxism is (as it was not for Lukács) only a crude *imprimatur* on some aspects of culture?'¹⁵⁶ The implication of Said's query was probably that a more flexible vision of Marxism could potentially encompass his own –

¹⁵² Said, *The World, The Text, and the Critic*, p. 234.

¹⁵³ 'Between Chance and Determinism' in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 66. Originally published in *Times Literary Supplement*, February 6th, 1976.

¹⁵⁴ *Reflections on Exile*, p. 64.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

frequently denied - affiliations with it. Despite Said's denial of his own inculcation of Marxism, then, Lukács was a committed intellectual with whom he seemed to have sensed certain critical and methodological affinities. Said's interest in Lukács was a precursor to his interest in Foucault and the Continental intellectuals emergence in the early 1970s, and his evolving focus on the role and responsibilities of the intellectual, the subject of his 1993 *Reith Lectures, Representations of the Intellectual* and to a lesser extent an important theme in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*.¹⁵⁷ There is perhaps more than a grain of truth in Brennan's assertion that one of the connections between Lukács and Said was

with the personal matters of how to survive in hostile political surroundings; to know what it was like to write (like Kafka) in a borrowed language; to be born in a backwater (from the US point of view), and to forge a poetics of anti-indulgence that was largely misunderstood by his contemporaries.¹⁵⁸

There may even be some mileage in the assertion that if Said was so closely aligned with Lukács the committed Marxist intellectual, then he must also have been aligned with some components of Marxism.

In line with the general tenor of his analysis of 'Marxist' critics, Said was reluctant in his dealings with Lukács to attribute his critical and philosophical ideas to the fundamental influence of Marxism: to call it a form of Marxism. For a dogged advocate of 'worldliness', this omission was incongruent with his theory, particularly when set in the context of his essay 'Travelling Theory'. What happens, Said wrote, when a theory 'moves from one place to another[?]'.¹⁵⁹ Deferring to Lukács, the answer, he suggests, is that 'theory must never lose touch with its origins in politics, society, and economics'.¹⁶⁰ Said did not dismiss the fact that the concept of reification was 'originally developed in the context of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, during its brief life in 1919, and was conceived as a contribution, at the level of theory, to that revolutionary moment', but neither does he attribute the determining force to Marxism.¹⁶¹ Instead of theory being determined and developed within a Marxist paradigm, Said argued that for Lukács, theory 'was what consciousness produced, not an

¹⁵⁷ Edward, W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The Reith Lectures* (London: Vintage, 1994). First broadcast in six episodes by the BBC on Radio 4, beginning on the 23rd of June, 1993.

¹⁵⁸ Brennan, 'Said as a Lucásian Critic', pp. 14-15.

¹⁵⁹ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 230.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

¹⁶¹ McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, pp., 32- 33.

avoidance of reality but as a revolutionary will completely committed to worldliness and change'.¹⁶² Rather than accept the worldly circumstances that produced Lukács' Marxism, Said attempted to appropriate parts of the vocabulary without taking satisfactory account of the context.

If Said continually disavowed his affiliation to Marxism, he could not refute using some of its concepts in his work. In *History and Class Consciousness*, Lukács 'laid out a wide-ranging critique of the phenomenon of "reification" in capitalism and formulated a vision of Marxism as a self-conscious transformation of society'.¹⁶³ Marx had argued that in the capitalist system workers are alienated from the products of their labour and come to 'regard their fellows as object or things', a process which reaches its zenith in slavery and the radical dispossession of the colonial subject.¹⁶⁴ At a point of 'crisis' where the consciousness acknowledges reification and identifies its place in the process that established this relationship, the moment of theory begins. In some ways, Said's exegesis in *Orientalism* of the knowledge produced about the Orient (or the Orient produced by the knowledge) was theory produced by one such moment of crisis, the consequence of which was that he attained consciousness of his own situation as a Palestinian 'Other' to the imperial West's 'Self'. In Lukács, then, theory is not simply an academic exercise but an insurrectionary moment, one in which Said recognized the potential for an act of intellectual beginnings, a moment of 'criticism'.¹⁶⁵ Said deflected Lukács' theory into his preferred form of secular criticism, whereby the reification, or in other words the disconnection, of criticism from critics and texts could potentially be resisted.

Lukács was certainly influential in Said's thoughts and practice, but he was not the only Marxist thinker to whom he turned. The influence of the Italian Marxist, philosopher, and anti-Fascist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) 'is widespread throughout the Western Marxist tradition', and he was not less significant to Said.¹⁶⁶ A founding member of the Italian Communist Party in 1921, Gramsci was a politically committed opponent of the Italian fascist regime under Benito Mussolini. By virtue of his opposition to Mussolini,

¹⁶² Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 234.

¹⁶³ Titus Stahl, Titus, 'Georg [György] Lukács', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Summer 2016, in *Project Muse* <<http://www.plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/lukacs/>> [accessed 4-4-2015].

¹⁶⁴ McCarthy, *The Cambridge Introduction to Edward Said*, p. 30.

¹⁶⁵ *Beginnings*, p. 11.

¹⁶⁶ Stuart Sim, *Post-Marxism: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 4.

Gramsci was confined as a political prisoner in 1926, before dying in captivity in 1937. Whilst in prison, in 1929 Gramsci wrote the fragments that would become his *Prison Notebooks*, notable amongst other things for being the source of his concept of 'hegemony'.¹⁶⁷ Said describes this as a concept whereby '[i]n any society not totalitarian...certain cultural forms predominate over others, just as certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*'.¹⁶⁸ Hegemony 'for Gramsci implies continually reasserting dominant ideas in the face of challenges to those ideas, as well as negotiating and modifying those ideas in order to gain consent'.¹⁶⁹ The concept of hegemony became a crucial tool for Said in his theorization of the relationship between culture and the production of knowledge in *Orientalism*, where he argued that hegemony is 'an indispensable concept for any understanding of cultural life in the industrial West'.¹⁷⁰

Whilst Said was attracted to the intensity of Gramsci's commitment to political and social change, their paths diverged on some important philosophical and indeed political points. Brennan has noted, for example, how 'it is significant that Said rarely addresses himself to the Gramsci who liked to talk about a "conformism from below"'.¹⁷¹ He argues that the problem with conforming 'from below' is that it 'is basically a socialist or communist notion – the act of identifying with the "spirit" of a class, of losing oneself in its historical movement, of sacrificing on its behalf, of taking the measures necessary to achieve freedom for it and in it', all of which sounds very much like Said's Palestinian project.¹⁷² As suggested above, Said had failed to adequately account for Marxism in the United States. In overlooking Gramsci's 'conformism from below', Said could attempt, but not succeed, in detaching himself from the idea and practice of an affiliation to a 'system' or dogma that could potentially compromise both his intellectual rigour and his ideal mode of critical detachment.

¹⁶⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections of Notes from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2007). 'Hegemony' will be discussed below.

¹⁶⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Ashley Dawson, 'Edward Said's Imaginative Geographies and the Struggle for Climate Justice', *College Literature*, 40 (2013), 33-51 (p. 37) <<http://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/523589/pdf>> [accessed 9-1-2015].

¹⁷⁰ *Orientalism*, p. 7.

¹⁷¹ Timothy Brennan, 'Places of Mind, Occupied Lands: Edward Said and Philology', in Sprinker, p. 86.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

Whatever his protestations about the nature of his own relationship to Marxism, the territorial emphasis in Gramsci's resistance became a crucial factor in the theorization of Said's political project for Palestine. Said was adamant that '[f]rom the moment I began to write on behalf of Palestinian rights and self-determination, the apprehension that as a people we still had no sovereignty over any part of the land of Palestine has dominated my efforts'.¹⁷³ If colonial projects are concerned with the accumulation of land, anti-colonial projects like Said's are naturally concerned with repossession. Whether Said was discussing Zionism's hunger for accumulating the land of Palestine or the territorial ambitions of the colonial empires of the West, the relationship between geography and imperialism was at the core of his political ambitions for Palestinians, and therefore at the centre of his intellectual-political project. It is no surprise that although Gramsci was articulating his thoughts and resistance in an entirely different cultural and political context, and for very different reasons to the ones on which Said's project was premised, there was common ground on the issue of land and territory. Gramsci's essay on *The Southern Question* provided a striking geographical dimension to Said's analysis of the ways in which power and domination are disseminated and maintained. As Said describes it in *Culture and Imperialism*,

in *The Southern Question*, Gramsci not only is at pains to show that the division between the northern and southern regions of Italy is basic to the challenge of what to do politically about the national working-class movement at a moment of impasse, but is also fastidious in describing the peculiar topography of the south.¹⁷⁴

In an echo of the current and indeed growing debate about the global disparities in wealth between global North and South, there was in Italy (and continues to be) a 'striking contrast between the large undifferentiated mass of peasants on the one hand, and the presence of "big" landowners, important publishing houses, and distinguished cultural formations on the other'.¹⁷⁵ Gramsci's idea was nothing less than revolutionary: to challenge the hegemony of the cultural formations that maintained the projection of the 'backward' south, and to instead attempt to connect 'the northern proletariat with the southern

¹⁷³ *The Politics of Dispossession*, p. xvi.

¹⁷⁴ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 56.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

peasantry'.¹⁷⁶ The 'working-class' may not have been central to Said's intellectual project, but as he demonstrated in *Culture and Imperialism* the theorization of the relationship between cultural forms, imperialism, and colonialism in geographical or territorial terms most certainly was.

In an attempt to demystify what he called the 'consolidated vision' of empire, Said argued that,

the history of such fields as comparative literature, English studies, cultural analysis, anthropology can be seen as affiliated with the empire and, in a manner of speaking, even contributing to its methods for maintaining Western ascendancy over non-Western natives, especially if we are aware of the spatial consciousness exemplified in Gramsci's 'southern question'.¹⁷⁷

In that Said neglects the inevitable resistance of some cultural forms to empire, the position may well be over-determined. However, the 'spatial consciousness' exemplified in Gramsci's fundamentally Marxist position was clearly indispensable to his working-out of the potential functions of culture in imperialism. Only 'potential', perhaps, because surely not all modes of 'culture' produced in or by imperial nations are necessarily complicit with imperialism. The conjunctive in the title of his study *Culture and Imperialism* is instructive in this regard, and Said would certainly have argued that his mode of cultural production was not complicit. Nevertheless, when Said writes of how 'cultural forms can be taken out of the autonomous enclosures in which they have been protected, and placed instead in the dynamic global environment created by imperialism', he remains resistant to situating his own work within the dynamic environment of Marxism.¹⁷⁸

What cultural modes, then, were concomitant with the territorial dimension at the root of colonialism and imperialism, two modes of domination that were absolutely central to Said's anti political-Zionism project?¹⁷⁹ In *The Question of Palestine*, Said brought together what he argued was the European Zionist discourse of Palestine as an empty space for a people without land, with various cultural-imperial tools, one of the most effective of which was the realist novel. Said was particularly interested in George Eliot's *Daniel*

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁷⁸ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 59.

¹⁷⁹ When I say 'anti-Zionist' I do not mean that Said was opposed to Zionism, only the effect it had on Palestine.

Deronda (1876).¹⁸⁰ There is a sense in which Said regards Eliot less as an out-and-out imperialist than a misguided liberal. Said argued that 'Zionism for her was one in a series of worldly projects for the nineteenth-century mind still committed to hopes for a secular religious community'.¹⁸¹ In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot reflects that

a human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that earthly home a familiar, unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge.¹⁸²

There was no 'tender kinship' intended, of course, towards the native Arab inhabitants of Palestine. With the assistance of Gramsci's insights, perhaps, Said was able to proceed a step further in delineating the 'consolidated vision' of Western imperialism. Not only is territory being accumulated in a symbiotic relationship between culture and power, there is, he argues,

a complete agreement between the Gentile and Jewish versions of Zionism: their view of the Holy Land as essentially empty of inhabitants, not because there were no inhabitants...but because their status as sovereign and human inhabitants was systematically denied.¹⁸³

In *The Southern Question* and extrapolated through Said's teaching, then, was not so much an analysis of a Marxist intellectual fulfilling his own particular local agenda, as a profound theoretical and critical insight which could stretch further than the parameters set out in the text; as far, in fact, as Palestine.

Gramsci and *The Southern Question*, and Lukács and *History and Class Consciousness*, respectively, as touchstones in Said's seminars, dovetailed neatly with a rather fertile period of his intellectual life that was taking place both exterior to and also alongside his teaching. This was the moment when Said's 'two lives', the personal and the political, began to merge. With this social and political convergence it was odd, perhaps, that in his analyses of Gramsci Said should choose to more or less overlook the fact that he was a committed Marxist. Ahmad has drawn attention to the way that Said 'refuses to acknowledge the full

¹⁸⁰ George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹⁸¹ *The Question of Palestine*, pp. 60-61.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

import of the fact that Gramsci was a communist militant, so that the word “Marxist” would quite accurately describe the nature of his undertaking’.¹⁸⁴ The ‘full import’ of Said’s refusal to acknowledge the Marxism in Gramsci, is that in his proclivity to remain forever provisional vis-a-vis his critical position, his critical eye is at times suspect. For a critic whose critical practice was centred on ‘worldliness’ this is a major oversight.

As Said’s work is analysed further the depth of his interest in Marxism becomes more pronounced, and it becomes clear that his interest in the ideas of Continental European Marxist writers and academics went hand-in-hand with a specifically British flavour to his teaching at Columbia University. Brennan argues that in his appropriation of the British Marxists, Said actually enjoyed a ‘Marxist-tinged, left social-democratic apprenticeship’ that was resplendent with Marxist figures, who he later ‘struggled to reinsert into this now-altered landscape’ of postcolonial studies.¹⁸⁵ In a reminder of the fact that Said was part of the Anglo-American intellectual milieu, he notes that,

[i]t would not generally be known, for instance, that in 1980, two years after *Orientalism’s* publication, Said’s focus in his graduate teaching at Columbia University was the postwar British Left – not the *New Left* that would emerge through the “Sixty-Eightist sympathies of the Althusserian turn, but the old left of former Communist Party members and public scholars, who between 1950 and 1975 had altered the landscape of historical inquiry in Britain and who had laid the groundwork for what would later become known as “cultural studies”.¹⁸⁶

Said’s Leftish leanings were bolstered by the fact that he ‘featured a seminar that year that explored...Raymond Williams’s *Marxism and Literature*; E.P. Thompson’s famous polemic against Althusserian Marxism, *The Poverty of Theory*; [and] Perry Anderson’s qualified defence of Althusser in *Arguments within English Marxism*’.¹⁸⁷ Williams (1921-1988), Thompson (1924-1993), and Anderson (1938-) were, for different reasons, pivotal figures on the Left of the British academic intelligentsia. Thompson and Anderson became part of the ‘New Left’, a movement incorporating left wing British intellectuals and Communists against the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, and one that was critical of the British Labour Party. The ‘New Left’, in part through their flagship publication *New Left Review*, thus rejected

¹⁸⁴ Ahmad, p. 218. In Chapter Five of this book, Ahmad produced a wide-ranging and fairly negative analysis both of Said’s *Orientalism* and his metropolitan intellectualism.

¹⁸⁵ Brennan, ‘Edward Said as a Lukásian Critic’, p. 17.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Stalin and Soviet Marxism, and established their own mode of 'Western Marxism'. However, Anderson and Thompson quickly began to diverge on the direction that Western Marxism ought to take. Anderson's *Arguments within English Marxism* was an exhaustive analysis of Thompson's approach to Marxism, as well as a response to Thompson's polemic in *The Poverty of Theory*, a dispute with its roots in the early 1960, in the formative years of contemporary Western Marxism.¹⁸⁸ In Althusser, Thompson had detected 'a manifestation of a general police action within ideology, as an attempt to reconstruct Stalinism at the level of theory'.¹⁸⁹ Whether Thompson's view was correct or not, Stalin had been completely discredited in the West. Anderson's reputation was tainted, through his defence of Althusser, by a tacit association with Stalinism.

Of the New Left British Marxists it was perhaps Thompson whose world-view most coincided with that of Said. The point of contact between the two was an emphasis on what Said dubbed as 'worldliness', one aspect of which was to shift theory towards, rather than away, from direct experience. Thompson's most famous work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, was not only an effort to reinstate a disenfranchised cohort into the 'making' of history – and in the process to 'make' themselves - but was part of Thompson's commitment to free Marxism from the misdeeds of Soviet Stalinist communism.¹⁹⁰ Said perhaps became more willing to close off his misgivings with Marxism as a system that occluded the primacy of human agency. He foresaw that Thompson's mode of historical Marxism should not automatically be viewed in opposition to his own mode of humanism, but was, he argued, constitutive of 'a much longer tradition of the two feeding off each other'.¹⁹¹ One of the main reasons for Said's rationale was that in *The Making of the English Working Class*, Thompson had elicited 'example after example of people like [William] Blake, of poets and writers, of the radical movements' use of Shakespeare' that corresponded to Said's critical approach to culture, and was Gramscian in the sense of its relationship to power.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London: Verso Editions, 1980).

¹⁸⁹ E. P. Thompson, *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin, 1978), p. 323.

¹⁹⁰ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963).

¹⁹¹ 'Orientalism and After', in Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. 208-232; p. 215. Also published as an interview with Anne Beezer and Peter Osborne in *Radical Philosophy*, 63 (1993), 22-32.

¹⁹² *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 15.

Said was particularly drawn to the ideas of Raymond Williams, and notably at the points where the geographical and territorial nature of Gramsci's thoughts intersected. Said enjoyed a close personal and intellectual relationship with Williams, whom he described as a 'good friend and critic', and whose ideas, he argued, 'suffused many parts' of *Culture and Imperialism*, notably Said's analysis of *Mansfield Park*.¹⁹³ Said noted how Williams' *The Country and the City* 'is about how English culture has dealt with land, its possession, imagination, and organization'.¹⁹⁴ A shared interest in the relationship between culture and society, and thus between culture and power, connects Said to Williams. This connection is grounded in empirical evidence. The cultural critic, Stuart Hall (1932-2014), the first editor of *New Left Review*, argued that in one of Williams' best known works, *Culture and Society*, he 're-drew' the map of English culture by challenging the idea that culture belonged exclusively to the ideas of the conservative tradition in the form of significant, and usually male, writers and politicians such as Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and Edmund Burke (1729-1797).¹⁹⁵ Said noted that the crux of Williams' argument was that the dissemination of ideas through cultural forms such as the novel, ideas which 'are actually invested in geographical distinctions between real places', have shaped the 'interplay between rural and urban places in England'.¹⁹⁶ Thus, Said argues, there has been 'the most extraordinary transformations – from the pastoral populism of Llangland, through Ben Jonson's country-house poems and the novels of Dickens's London, right up to visions of the metropolis in twentieth-century literature'.¹⁹⁷ From *The Country and the City*, which he described as Williams' 'richest book', Said gleaned the spatial concept of 'interplay between rural and urban places', central to the development of contrapuntal analysis with which he connected the wealth of Mansfield Park to colonial domination in the West Indies.¹⁹⁸

However, Williams' failure to attend to the relationship between culture and imperialism was problematic for Said. Williams' influence is perhaps most notable in Said's

¹⁹³ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxxi.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98. Said was referring to Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

¹⁹⁵ Stuart Hall, 'The Life of Raymond Williams', in *The New Statesman*, 5th February, 1988.

<http://www.newstatesman.com> [accessed 19-3-2015]. Hall was referring to, Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961).

¹⁹⁶ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 98.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

post-colonial analysis of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*.¹⁹⁹ Indeed, Said challenged what he considered was Williams' provincialism, a trait characterized by his almost total exclusion of 'the imperial experience' in *Culture and Society*.²⁰⁰ Said's reluctance to contextualize Marxism in the works of Marxist writers was matched by classical Marxism's theory of imperialism, which viewed it as the highest stage of capitalism and thus a necessary step towards communism. Williams slotted into what Parry has argued is the situation whereby

Marxist scholars have of course been major producers of theoretical work on the economics and politics of imperialism [but] many of these studies are debilitated by an existentially impoverished perspective in which overseas empire is held as inessential to the dynamics of western capitalism, or where the trajectory of Europe's penetration into pre-capitalist societies is perceived as progressive and in the final analysis ameliorative, both analyses occluding the colonial world's experience of subjugation as well as reinstalling the West as the sole agent of world-historical change.²⁰¹

These were important – and personally felt – omissions for Said, ones that exposed his misgivings over the intellectual limitations of Williams' critical approach. To compound the problem further, Parry has argued that the dissonance between Said's expansive geographical approach and Williams' provincial limitations amounted to a fundamental clash of identities. Said, Parry argues, 'in discussing liberationist thinkers, commends their commitment, sustained even in the heat of struggle, "to abandon fixed ideas of settled identity and culturally authorized definition"'.²⁰² However, as Parry points out, Williams had an attachment to 'deeply grounded...formed identities of a settled kind', which 'is precisely a mode of "identitarian thought" mistrusted by Said'.²⁰³ Yet, despite the seductiveness of the 'homeless' critical position, one of the principal tasks for Said in his political activism was to construct a fixed notion of a Palestinian identity, for without that form of national identity there could never be a state of Palestine. As Parry argues, this seemingly irreconcilable difference was not one that prevented Said from utilizing Williams's thoughts, because

¹⁹⁹ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park* (Peterborough; Ont: Broadway Press, 2001).

²⁰⁰ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 77.

²⁰¹ Benita Parry, 'Overlapping Territories, Intertwined Histories: Edward Said's Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism', in Springer, pp. 19-47; p. 23.

²⁰² Parry, Benita, 'Overlapping Territories, intertwined Histories: Edward Said's Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism', in Springer, p. 22. Parry is quoting from Said's *Representing the Colonized: Anthropology's interlocutor*, in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, pp. 293-316.

²⁰³ Springer, p. 22.

[w]hat Williams's censure overlooks is that such a stance not only advances the urgent political need for oppressed peoples to construe an insurgent subjectivity, but it also, in anticipating how on the attainment of conditions not based on domination and coercion this constructed collectivity will perform its own abolition, inscribes an aspiration to a global solidarity of heterogeneously positioned subjects which in no way erases the diversity of culture, gender, and sexuality.²⁰⁴

Setting aside the early stages of what would become a significant interest in Marxist writers, Said's late work returned to Continental Europe and was in part indebted to the work of the Marxist philosopher and cultural theorist, Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1902-1969). A Jew, Adorno had been forced to flee Nazi Germany to the United States, where he eventually took up an academic post at Columbia University. Like Said, Adorno was a passionate musician, and it was in this sphere that Said began his explicit harmonisation with his work. Said's *Musical Elaborations*, published in 1989, was indebted to Adorno, as was his shift to a 'late style' of philosophy.²⁰⁵ Apart from 'late style', Adorno's influence on Said was centred mainly on an extension of Lukács concept of reification. As Said began to appropriate elements of Adorno's Marxism, he further developed a restless intellectual style that precluded the definitiveness of critical, political, or intellectual closure. In fact, Adorno's was an unusual style of Marxism which foreclosed the classical Marxist position in which the proletariat, after realising that they belong to a 'class', moves inexorably towards a defined social and political position. In this sense, Adorno's mode of Marxism was a development of classical Marxism into an entirely different sphere than the one intended by Marx. This development within Marxism was more amenable to Said's sense of critical homelessness, even if it was less contingent with political Marxism. In Adorno, there was a blurring of philosophical standpoints that shifted Marxism from a collective position to one more akin to the isolated, exilic position that Said aimed to propagate. Said's late 'discovery' of Adorno represents a further strand of his wider, developing, but also fickle relationship with Marxism.

It is glaringly obvious that the scope of Said's engagement with Marxism was not only wide but extensive in its dealings with Western Marxist critics and academics, not all of whom agreed with each other on issues of Marxism, and most of whom would not have

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ The title of Said's essay was taken from Adorno, Theodor, 'Late Style in Beethoven', in Richard Leppert, ed., *Essays on Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 564-568.

viewed Said the humanist as a convincing fellow traveller. Said's engagement was, however, limited in its relationship with non-Western Marxism, further evidence of a significant thread of Euro-centrism that seemed to permeate his work. The important point is that taken as a whole, Marxism, or the thoughts of Marxist writers were inflected in Said's thoughts by a process that spanned almost the entire length of his engagement with oppositional politics. This does not mean that Said was in any way a Marxist, a position that requires a fixed political commitment. Said refused to view the world solely through the prism of Marxism. Nevertheless, substantial elements of his resistance were indebted to Marxism. This was, perhaps, the school that nearly - but not quite - persuaded Said that being a member of a club might well be a positive intellectual decision.

As we have seen, Said could not avoid powerful and influential currents of intellectual thought such as Marxism, structuralism, poststructuralism, or humanism; nor did he attempt to. In his political resistance Said pitted himself against Western colonialism and imperialism, of which he viewed Israel as a constituent part. In his intellectual resistance Said's strategy was to retain independence and to avoid the trope of intellectual colonisation and ideological imperialism. Said's freedom to retain his own thoughts and not to become entrenched totally in the ideas of others was one aspect of his vision of a paradigmatic intellectual. As always in a politically driven project this strategy involved compromise. In his engagement with Marxism he comes very close to a position of affiliation, but always distances his own thoughts from the likes of Gramsci and Lukács by refusing to acknowledge the political context of their concepts as they impinge on his own. In his relationship to structuralist and poststructuralist thinkers Said was extremely acquisitive, but never uncritical. Forever a strategist, Said takes what he requires for his own project without getting trapped in Theory. There were more important political issues seeking Said's attention.

Humanism occupies a somewhat different position in Said's work. It is Said's foundational philosophy and he does not waver from his faith in the determining imprint of the human subject. This is not quite the same as belonging to the school of Western humanism tainted by its associations with Western liberal democracy and neo-colonialism. Said's humanism was indebted to the influence of Vico. Said applied Vico's principle of situating the human subject – all human subjects - at the centre of our world. In some ways,

this can probably be construed as an affiliation. Yet, this would imply that Said's humanism was static. It was not, because if Vico taught him anything it was to continually seek beginnings. This is the approach ostensibly taken by Said in his production of knowledge, which is where the discussion will now proceed.

Chapter Three: Knowledge, in all its Provisionality

Beginnings: Intention and Method

If it can be argued that Said was always dodging the bullets of all-encompassing influence, he still had time to launch some major critical events, designed as much to draw attention to himself as to pick away at other schools of thought. The first major event came in 1975 with *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, as Said was developing, or beginning, to accommodate the academic strands of his project with the concept of worldliness.

Beginnings: Intention and Method was published in volume form, consisting of six chapters, crisscrossing - in what can now be identified as a typical Saidian structure - between interrelated topics and concepts. Unlike *Orientalism* which appeared three years later but which had largely been written by the time *Beginnings* was published, and which, for reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter, was the only book written by Said 'as one continuous gesture, from research, through several drafts, to final version, each following the other without interruption or serious distraction', the structure of *Beginnings* is marked by thematic and temporal discontinuity.¹ The published work endured a particularly long gestation period, between the original essay 'Beginnings' (1968) and the published book, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. During the period in which *Beginnings: Intention and Method* came to fruition, Said developed his scholarly career in the direction of a public intellectual, a journey which took him from a role as a relatively little known university professor to an oppositional, and because of his support for Palestinian self-determination, in some ways a 'radical' intellectual.²

Although *Beginnings* has not been the subject of a great deal of scholarly analysis, its publication in 1975 represented a major critical event. One of the reasons for the significance of the book's appearance was that although Said had not yet achieved the huge prominence that *Orientalism* entailed, he was still a notable figure in the academy, both for his 'expertise' on the subject of Joseph Conrad and his controversial political affiliations with the Palestinian cause. His work therefore attracted serious attention amongst his peers, and notably amongst the cutting edge literary theorists of the day, such as J. Hillis Miller and

¹ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 329.

² *Ibid.*

Paul de Man, academics who had come increasingly under the Influence of Derrida's critical methods.

The causes of the book's relative obscurity at the current time are complex. Each of Said's major works in some way suffers from the political blanket effect of *Orientalism*. Although *Beginnings* represents Said's major encounter with some aspects of literary and critical theory that, at the time of writing, and notably as a result of the dissemination of the ideas of Foucault and Derrida into the United States, were viewed in the academy as 'new' and innovative, these discussions may seem somewhat outmoded, displaced by later theories and critical events. This is to overlook the point that *Beginnings* provides a snapshot of the direction of Said's critical enquiry immediately prior to *Orientalism*. In particular *Beginnings* reveals Said's interest in - and nascent challenge to - what he had begun to view as an excessive focus in literary criticism on the workings of language at the expense of the worldly circumstances and affiliations of texts. *Beginnings* is also an interesting example of Said's propensity to move in and out of 'schools' of thought, thus ostensibly at least, avoiding dogmatic entrenchment. As his denial of the political connotations and constraints of Marxism in the ideas of the Marxist writers he incorporated into his own showed, however, this strategy required Said to compromise some aspects of his ideas on the concept of worldliness.

It would be pushing the argument too far to suggest that Said belonged to a current, and perhaps radical school of critical thought. However, *Beginnings* formed part of a series of critical books purporting to practise what J. Hillis Miller has termed 'uncanny criticism'. In Said's words, the term 'uncanny criticism' refers to 'criticism not primarily based on the traditions, common-sense conventions and, we should add in honesty, pieties (as opposed to the practice) of historical or philological scholarship'.³ Whereas 'canny' criticism is to some extent governed by protocols, structured by formalized rules, and therefore exists in order to serve institutional ends, 'uncanny' criticism 'interrogates the motives of criticism, the assumptions and limitations of focus prescribed by "canny" criticism'.⁴ Culler argues that 'uncanny post-structuralism arrives to waken canny structuralism from the dogmatic slumbers into which it was lulled by its "unshakeable faith" in thought and "the promise of a

³ Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (Granta: London, 1985), p. xvii.

⁴ Literary Theory Definitions, <http://www.academic.regis.edu> [accessed 17-4-2015].

rational ordering” ’.⁵ Said was interested in the process of investigating alternative ways of approaching a sphere of academic enquiry – literary criticism informed by philological scholarship – that had been both in a professional and a personal sense important to him, but which now seemed inappropriate to his intellectual-political project. In place of the ‘pieties’ of historical or philological scholarship, which Said was already beginning to question, he attached himself to ‘a relatively new critical departure – particularly in its correctly placed emphasis on the importance of rigorous attention to rhetoric and language’.⁶ On the surface, then, this new form of criticism promised a textual emphasis that might focus on questions of language rather than ‘value’, or as exponents of structuralism might describe it, these modes of criticism would attempt to determine ‘how’ language produces meaning, rather than ‘why’. Miller, who in his early career had been part of the influential Geneva Group and later the Yale school that was influenced by Derridean deconstruction, was one of its most influential proponents. He described the work of the uncanny critics as ‘a labyrinthine attempt to escape from the logic of works...into regions which are alogical, absurd...where it resists the intelligence almost successfully’.⁷ Yet, if Said was willing to attach himself to the intellectual resistance of uncanny criticism because of its emphasis on language and rhetoric, it was its over-emphasis on language at the expense of ‘worldliness’ that marked his point of departure. Said noted this dissonance in his Preface to the 1985 edition of *Beginnings*, where he argued that

in isolating *beginnings* as a subject of study my whole attempt was precisely to set a beginning off as *rational* and *enabling*, and far from being principally interested in logical failures and, by extension, ahistorical absurdities, I was trying to describe the immense effort that goes into historical retrospection as it set out to describe things from the beginning, *in history*.⁸

Said was engaged with, but certainly not interested in belonging to, the school of ‘uncanny critics’, particularly at the moments in which their focus turned to ‘ahistorical absurdities’. This departure was too far removed from Said’s Vichian understanding of the world. *Beginnings* was only a work of uncanny criticism to the extent that its primary focus seemed to be the question of the relationship between language, the history of literary

⁵ Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), p. 24.

⁶ *Beginnings*, p. xvii.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii-xviii.

criticism, and 'rational', and hence 'worldly', beginnings. It was Said's emphasis on humanly produced 'beginnings' which connected *Beginnings* with much wider political issues than those simply concerned with abstract contemplations of language and rarefied rhetoric.

Said's interest in the concept of 'beginnings' had been present much earlier than the appearance of *Beginnings*. Starting with the conception and publication of the essay, 'Beginnings', in 1968, Said developed a preoccupation over an extended period of time with the concept of 'beginnings', specifically in its relationship to 'origins'. Although *Beginnings: Intention and Method* was written and published in the United States, its own beginnings derived from two interconnected issues. *Beginnings* was very much tied to developments in the academic world. The issues with which it deals – literary criticism, philosophical beginnings, textual analysis, French structuralism, Vico's humanism - are, or at least appear to be, exterior to what might be called the general public realm, but very much interior to a specialized space in the cultural realm. In particular, *Beginnings* was a participant in a conversation that was most likely precipitated by the growth of structuralism, and specifically as it was being shaped, practiced and contested in the Anglo-American academy by the influence of the Continental philosophy of Foucault and Derrida.

Wood has summarized the fervid academic atmosphere within which the book appeared:

[b]etween 1967, when Said was working on the earliest parts of this book, and 1975, when it was published, the study of literature entered what came to be seen as a crisis, notably in Britain and America, but in many other countries too...By 1967, Roland Barthes had published *Writing Degree Zero*, *Mythologies*, and *On Racine*, but not *S/Z, A Lover's Discourse: Fragments or Camera Lucida*. Michael Foucault had published *Madness and Civilization* and *The Order of Things*, but not *Discipline and Punish* or *The History of Sexuality*. Jacques Derrida published *Of Grammatology* in 1967, but for a long time was known to the English-speaking world almost exclusively through his essay "Structure, Sign and Play." Structuralism was either a great intellectual adventure or a colossal fraud...There was no post-structuralism; and post-modernism, although flickering in the air, was far from the centre of anyone's consciousness.⁹

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

In fact, '[t]he crisis in literary study...grew out of the long consensus that preceded it'.¹⁰ The consensus 'allowed for many divergences, for approaches that saw themselves as textual, biographical, formalist, historical...But the high value of literature itself was taken for granted by all parties'.¹¹ The crux of Said's interest in rupture was, as Wood argues, the fact that '[l]iterature was unfailingly serious and carefully segregated from other forms of cultural activity'.¹² If the study of literature had long been segregated from other forms of human activity, it was clearly not open to a form of critical analysis that knitted 'other forms of cultural activity' together. Said's great philosophical interest was in connecting modes of human activity, first to each other, and then to the social and political world. Without these connections, criticism risked becoming little more than a technical pastime, unable or unwilling to examine the political issues to which Said was committed. The prevailing sense of disconnection in this institutionalised version of literary criticism was a line in the sand for Said, and it represents, perhaps, one of the major points of resistance in his project.

The concepts explored in *Beginnings* were inextricably connected to Said's interest in events in the political sphere. Said argued that 'the book [*Beginnings*], I suppose, has an autobiographical root, which has to do with the '67 war'.¹³ As mentioned above, until the 1967 war, Said claimed that 'I had been two people: on the one hand teaching at Columbia...and on the other going back and forth to the Middle East, where my family lived'.¹⁴ As a result of the 'shattering experience' of the War, Said 'hit upon the importance of beginnings, which, as opposed to origins, are something you fashion for yourself'.¹⁵ This was a significant rupture in the way that Said approached the difficult political, philosophical, and critical problems that confronted him. One of the outcomes of this radical change of emphasis was that Said began to connect the two spheres of his life. Said noted that 'above all, intellectually, it was very important because it allowed me to break

¹⁰ *Beginnings*, p. xii.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Edward W. Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, ed. Gauri Viswanathan (Bloomsbury: London, 2005), p. 164.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

out of this rigid double structure that I had found myself in and to think in terms of new, and above all, *intellectual paths*'.¹⁶ Said maintained that

I started to accommodate myself to the somewhat repressed or suppressed part of my history which was Arab. I did several things: I got married in the Middle East to a Middle Eastern woman; and then in 1972-3 I took a sabbatical year in Beirut, and for the first time in my life undertook a systematic study of Arabic philology and the classics of the Arab tradition.¹⁷

Beginnings can thus be read as a work of critical exploration that had taken root in a period of serious political conflict. Said explained that 'the notion of beginning...meant...the beginning of a fairly deep political and moral affiliation with the resurgence, after 1967, of the Palestinian movement. It happened altogether...between '67 and...'71 and '72, and led to the publication, in 1975, of *Beginnings*'.¹⁸ In sum, *Beginnings* was an outcome of political and personal events that precipitated a focus on beginnings rather than ends, although inevitably one entails the other. The idea of beginnings thus becomes a foundational concept in Said's philosophy. This new focus on beginnings entailed a preoccupation with the capacity of the human will to begin things, and in this, Said argued, 'the great influence was Vico'.¹⁹ There was a determination on Said's part not to exclude on philosophical grounds what he could learn from the humanism of Vico *and* the purported anti-humanism of the French thinkers, whose thoughts were novel and potentially at least an opportunity for beginnings. Therefore Said 'took up the criticism that was coming out at the time [mid-1970s], especially Derrida and Foucault'.²⁰

Several conclusions can be drawn from this chain of events. First, that the trauma of the 1967 War produced in Said a conviction that radical change was required in the political situation of Palestine and Palestinians. The crisis was a seminal moment for Said. It revealed that a point had been reached whereby only a novel way of approaching the situation could address a seemingly intractable geopolitical problem. Secondly, Said determined that the cultural sphere was a crucial battleground in the Palestinian predicament, and from this he deduced that the sphere of literary criticism was interconnected with the concept of beginnings and ultimately with the political world. In some

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 237.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 167

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 165.

²⁰ Ibid.

ways, *Beginnings* was a response to overly arcane and technical criticism, an effort to push literary criticism back towards 'the world'. Thirdly, that in order to inaugurate a radical change he needed to understand what beginnings were, what they entailed, and how he could enact them in the various spheres that had begun to compel his attention. This, of course, is a long way from the initial critical point of departure of the book, the emergence of 'uncanny criticism'.

Said's assault on the 'absurdities' of uncanny criticism, begins with an intensive analysis of the historical and critical significance of beginnings. The overall theme of *Beginnings* is précised in the title and is introduced in detail in the opening chapter, 'Beginning Ideas'. The beginnings of *Beginnings* are described by Said as an 'inaugural meditative essay [that] sets forth an intellectual and analytical structure for beginnings, a structure that moreover enables and *intends* a particular philosophical and methodological attitude towards writing'.²¹ The subsequent chapters consist of already published essays, and therefore resisted a cohesive narrative structure in their book form. They refer frequently to the historical world as one that human beings make, discussing the development of the European novel from the eighteenth to the twentieth century; the difficulties entailed in locating the (then fairly new) school of French critical thought as the beginning of a new approach to critical theory as opposed to a continuation of the old New Criticism which isolated the text from the circumstances of its worldly production, and in particular seemed to remove the presence of the author from the text. In Chapter Three, 'The Novel as Beginning Intention', Said - as he had demonstrated in his PhD thesis *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*, and would continue to do throughout his career - flags his abiding fascination with imperialism and colonialism through allusions to the work of the Polish émigré and writer. In Chapter Two - which he describes as the 'real' beginning of the book - Said concentrates on the exigencies of beginning to write, although he omits to contextualize the piece in historical terms. In Chapter Five, 'Abecedarium Culturae: Absence, Writing, Statement, Discourse, Archaeology, Structuralism', Said undertakes an extended analysis of the ideas of structuralism and in particular those of Michel Foucault. In the final chapter Said expands and updates an earlier essay, 'Vico: Autodidact and Humanist', accentuating Vico's significance to his work as a whole. Although each chapter

²¹ *Beginnings*, p. 13.

focuses on individual themes, the overall structure is underwritten by the fact of the originating essays that introduce a sense of discontinuity, change, and renewal. At the core of these themes is the pivotal concept of 'beginnings'.

The book received a decent critical reception, yet as Said himself failed to do in his encounter with Marxist thinkers, few commentators seemed to take account of the political genealogy. *Beginnings: Intention and Method* was awarded the prestigious (and inaugural) Lionel Trilling Memorial Award by Said's own university, Columbia.²² *Diacritics*, the key journal of the poststructuralist movement in America, devoted an entire extended issue to the book and its author. One of the first signs in the *Diacritics* interview of Said's shift to a more adversarial role in the academic sphere was his hostility towards the role and function of the literary theoretical 'avant-garde'. On the one hand, Said argued that 'the distinctions between present avant-garde critics and "other" critics are invidious, and don't serve any purpose except to stir up a little excitement' - a comment probably influenced by the fact that his own critical theory was beginning to develop in a line away from the sort of technical criticism practised by the 'French-influenced' critics in the Anglo-American academy.²³ Said categorized scholars such as Harold Bloom, Paul de Man, and Geoffrey Hartman as the current avant-garde. In a curt dismissal of their relevance to intellectual issues, to 'worldliness', Said argued that,

the French-influenced group [who are] likely to be East Coast critics and middle-aged, they get high salaries at famous universities, they are prolific writers of essays on other critics, they either write about unfashionable authors (Pater, Shelley, Emerson) or about a handful of very fashionable ones (Rousseau, Nietzsche, Freud), they use words like deconstruction and demystification, they are less likely to refer to Empson than to Barthes; their prose does not resemble Edmund Wilson's, and so forth; listing their attributes can be done as a sort of parlour game, and one need only do it as a higher form of gossip.²⁴

From Said's philosophical and political vantage point there were danger signs in the concept of the 'avant-garde' which, once embedded, would take a great deal of shifting. He dismisses the current avant-garde by establishing a dichotomy between avant-garde criticism (non-worldly), and scholars he is 'drawn to' (worldly): the former, because it is not interested in the material facts of a text's production, is not really criticism; the latter,

²² Said was also awarded the Trilling prize in 1983 for *The World, the Text, and the Critic*.

²³ *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 8. Originally published in *Diacritics*, 6.3 (1976), 30-47.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

because it definitely is.²⁵ The crux of the distinction, Said argued, is that '[i]f you read a critic like Harry Levin on Shakespeare or on the novel you are getting a learned and sharp intelligence that can use much of what needs to be used (including Lukács, Bachelard, Barthes, Freud, etc.) because it serves a serious critical aim'.²⁶ In a rather sweeping statement Said claimed that in contrast to critics like Levin, the current avant-garde lacked a serious intellectual purpose.²⁷

Said's purpose was made startlingly clear in an interview the following year with the poststructuralist journal, *Diacritics*. Almost at the end of the interview, Said declared that 'I am an Oriental writing back at the Orientalists'.²⁸ Set as it was in such stark, binary terms, Said seemed to be referring to the location of the textual authority in his forthcoming book, *Orientalism*. Most telling was the fact that by defining himself as 'an Oriental', Said had apparently departed from the provisionality he attached to the ideal critical position.

In an early review of *Beginnings*, Miller professed the difficulty he found in classifying both Said's convoluted Palestinian/American identity and *Beginnings*, which he argued (with deliberate irony), 'represent...to some degree the scandal of the unclassifiable, the *sui generis*'.²⁹ Miller suggested that it would not have been 'easy or indeed possible, for me at least, to predict on the basis of *Beginnings* that Said's next book would be the impressively learned and yet polemical study of one aspect of modern Western intellectual and political history, *Orientalism*'.³⁰ Miller failed to recognize that prior to the publication of *Beginnings*, Said had published a number of essays on pressing political issues, and particularly on the question of Palestine/Israel and the fate of the Palestinian diaspora, a strange anomaly considering the volatile issues at hand. Said's political awakening after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War had come to early fruition with essays such as 'The Palestine experience' (1968–1969) in which he formulated his concept of 'Palestinianism', a strategy of developing the Palestinian identity - with the explicit aim of a 'full integration of the Arab

²⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Harry Levin (1912-1994) was a professor of comparative literature at Harvard University. He was one of two supervisors on Said's PhD thesis on Joseph Conrad, the other being Munroe Engels. The work referred to by Said, above, is Harry Levin, *Shakespeare and the Revolution of the Times: Perspectives and Commentaries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

²⁸ Said, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, p. 38.

²⁹ J. Hillis Miller, 'Beginning with a Text', in *Diacritics*, 6 (1976), pp. 2-7.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

Palestinians with lands and, more importantly, with political processes that for twenty-one years have either systematically excluded them or made them more and more intractable prisoners'.³¹ Miller might have noted that Said's political focus had broadened considerably since the 'Beginnings' essay in 1967. In 'U.S. Policy and the Conflicts of Powers in the Middle East' (1973), for example, Said attempts to define the network of power relationships that have developed as a result of the fact that 'Western powers have been a major factor in political life from the very beginning of the twentieth-century struggles for national independence'.³² In his defence, however, Miller did point out that *Beginnings* 'is political, even Marxist, in the sense that its ultimate intention is to change the social, political, even intellectual worlds, not merely to describe them'.³³ On more technical linguistic issues, White lamented what he deduced to be the theoretical inconsistencies in *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, arguing that Said 'wishes to make valid statements about a host of entities, problems, movements, ideas, and above all texts that exist beyond the confines of his discourse'.³⁴ The crux of White's comments was that Said was not correctly versed in the language of structuralism and hence the language of its nemesis, 'deconstruction', a point belied by the interest taken in the book by *Diacritics*. Neither, it seems, was White aware of Said's critical approach, which was conterminous with 'theoretical inconsistencies'.

Not all critics read *Beginnings: Intention and Method* as a challenge to the 'anti-structuralism' of the uncanny critics. Riddel 'contrast[ed] Said's affirmation of a problematized version of historical thinking as the triumph of the modern [sic] with Derrida's deconstruction'.³⁵ Riddel's argument centred on a coalescence between Said and the disciples in the American academy of Derrida's deconstructive techniques. As illustrated above, Said's intention in *Beginnings* was precisely the opposite. The purpose of *Beginnings* was to enable rational thought, not to disappear into a mire of terminology or 'absurdities'. For Said, this entails connecting the social, political, and critical spheres. Said distances his

³¹ Edward W. Said, 'The Palestinian Experience', in *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 3-23. Also published in Herbert mason, ed., *Reflections on the Middle East Crisis* (The Hague: Mouton & Co, 1970).

³² Edward W. Said, 'U.S. Policy and Conflict of Powers in the Middle East', in *The Politics of Dispossession*, p. 204. First published in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 2 (1973), pp. 30-50.

³³ Miller, 'Beginning with a Text', p. 2.

³⁴ Quoted in Abdirahman A. Hussein, *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (London: Verso, 2002), p. 59.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

own intellectual path from that of the uncanny critics. In Said's view this is a version of 'tradition because in time, like all avant-gardes, they morph into the status quo. This process leads inexorably to criticism which is neither restless, nor in Said's terms continually seeking to inaugurate beginnings. Bové has summarized the domestication of a once radical mode of literary analysis in the following terms:

[t]here can be no denying that the representation of 'crisis' in criticism in the late 1960s is the work of deconstruction and those it influenced...Careers have been made, books published, journals begun, programs, schools, and institutions founded, courses offered, reviews written, and conferences held. The point is simple: no matter which 'side' one takes in the battle, the fact is that deconstruction effectively displaced other intellectual programs in the minds and much of the work of the literary avant-garde.³⁶

Perhaps because of the complexity of its themes, the ways in which it has naturally been superseded by other modes of criticism, and, as Miller noted, the difficulty in classifying the book as a whole, *Beginnings* has become a relatively neglected publication, a fact that serves to hide some important points. In contrast to early reviewers, Hussein was, in his 2002 analysis of Said's work, astute enough to recognize a much deeper political strategy behind *Beginnings*. He argued that '[a] broader implication can also be teased out of these early evaluations of the text: Said's unconventional methodology is as much an act of self-empowerment as it is an instrument of (unintended) self-subversion'.³⁷ The act of self-empowerment was certainly an aspect of Said's strategy. To move in and out of themes, to flirt with but never attach himself to the avant-garde, and to continually revisit and subvert both the avant-garde's and one's own ideas is empowering because, for Said, power is always exercised from a position of exile or displacement.

Said had begun to exercise self-empowerment in the political sphere, yet *Beginnings* may have marked a juncture that was nearly as important to him as the '67 War: an acknowledgement that a series of new directions were required if he was to surmount the huge critical and political obstacles with which he was confronted and tethered to a growing belief in the idea that the two spheres are interconnected. In this sense, then, although one aspect of *Beginnings: Intention and Method* was to address the problem of what happens

³⁶ Paul A Bové, *The Yale Critics: Deconstruction in America*, ed. J. Arac, W. Godzich and W. Martin (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 6.

³⁷ Hussein, p. 60.

when one begins to write, either in the form of narrative or criticism, the entire notion of beginnings was germane to Said's wider intellectual-political project. To sum up, then: one outcome of Said's resistance to what he diagnosed as a sort of wilful academic blindness in the avant-garde towards the relationship between the cultural sphere and 'the world, was to develop an analysis of beginnings; the other was to acquire sense of critical empowerment. In turn, as the vitriolic criticism of *Orientalism* would demonstrate, this process of acquiring power led to a swell of conservative counter-resistance from scholarly Orientalists and political neo-conservatives in the United States.

Beginnings Are Not Perfect

Said defined beginnings as a process, and a result, of a sequence of thought leading to a human activity or action. He argued that 'the beginning is the first point (in time, space, or action) of an accomplishment or process that has duration and meaning'.³⁸ By definition, '[t]he beginning, then, is the first step in the intentional production of meaning'.³⁹ Tied as it is to the notion of human agency, Said places a great deal of stress on the importance of the concept of intention in the process of beginnings. This runs counter to the intellectual backdrop of structuralism and poststructuralism that tends to deny or at least severely delimit human agency, and there is no greater symbol of human presence than 'intention'. Trees or cars cannot have intentions, but human beings must; yet how can they ever be truly known? In 'The Intentional Fallacy' (1946), Beardsley and Wimsatt argue that 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art'.⁴⁰ In relation to intention, Janmohamed has flagged up an important conceptual flaw in Said's delineation of beginnings. He argues that the concept of 'intention' has two important implications. The first of these is that, as Said argued, intention 'is the link between idiosyncratic view and the communal concern'.⁴¹ Second, as Said describes it, intention 'is a notion that includes everything that later

³⁸ *Beginnings*, p. 5.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ William K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Intentional Fallacy', in *The Sewanee Review*, 54 (1946), pp. 468-488 (p. 468).

⁴¹ *Beginnings*, p. 13.

develops out of it, no matter how eccentric the development or inconsistent the result'.⁴² What is implicit in these declarations, argues Janmohamed, and this is made explicit by Said, is that 'beginning is a way of grasping the whole project'.⁴³ Therefore, 'a study of beginnings implies a scrutiny of the entire project of a given culture or a given historical period'.⁴⁴ As Janmohamed suggests, the logic that derives from this proposition is that if intentions 'must be studied teleologically, and if they link the individual and collective cultural subjects (i.e., the idiosyncratic view and the communal concern), then a thorough scrutiny of beginnings necessarily involves an analysis of economic, political, social, ideological, and psychological relations'.⁴⁵ This is a task that Said resolutely refused to take on. In essence, Said 'explicitly refuses an analysis of the socio-political circumstances of beginnings, and he avoids any sustained comparisons of beginnings in Western and non-Western cultures'.⁴⁶ His explanation for this anomaly seems to be that despite the fact that beginnings are the product of human invention and cannot exist without there also being an 'intention', they are also somehow 'unworldly'. Said argued that 'beginning is a creature with its own special life, a life neither fully explained by analyses of its historical-political circumstances nor confinable to a given date in time called *the beginning*'.⁴⁷ Moreover, he argues that '[w]hile these circumstances cannot be detached from socio-historical time in the widest sense, they do have a coherence and even a history of their own'.⁴⁸ If beginnings cannot be explained by their 'historical-political circumstances', nor pinned down to 'a given date in time', what is left of Said's rational, 'enabling' analyses? Perhaps the only explanation for this betrayal of his own secular approach is that, as he was formulating the collection of essays that became *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, Said had not quite entered the realm of thought that by instinct connected philosophical thought with historical-political circumstances, and which was clearly evident in the *Diacritics* interview.

In Said's hands, the term 'intention' is heavily invested with human agency. Intention is followed by 'method'. In each of these terms, Said is not only stressing the

⁴² *Beginnings*, p. 12.

⁴³ Quoted in Abdul J. Janmohamed, 'Worldliness-without-World, Homelessness-as-Home: Toward a Definition of the Specular Border Intellectual', in Michael Sprinker, *Edward Said: A Critical Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 106.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Beginnings*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

central position of human beings in the creation of beginnings but also distancing beginnings from 'origins', which are not always traceable to the process explained above. Said notes that

[b]y *intention* I mean an appetite at the beginning intellectually to do something in a characteristic way - either consciously or unconsciously, but at any rate in a language that always (or nearly always) shows signs of the beginning intention in some form and is always engaged purposefully in the production of meaning.⁴⁹

Perhaps because of the influence of Vico, Said naturally attaches great significance to the idea of beginnings. He argues that '[t]he beginning as first point in a given continuity has exemplary strength equally in history, in politics, and in intellectual disciplines'.⁵⁰ Said further argues that '[t]o have begun means to be the first to have done something, the first to have initiated a course discontinuous with other courses'.⁵¹ He moves swiftly on to give examples of these exemplary beginnings:

[c]onsider the founders of dynasties, empires, nations (Aeneas, Cyrus, Washington), creators of traditions, realms of inquiry, methods of study (Moses, Luther, Newton, Bacon), explorers and discoverers of every kind from Archimedes to Scott, the instigators and achievers of revolution (Copernicus, Lenin, Freud).⁵²

However, Said differentiates between these exceptional beginnings and 'such figures [as] the originals or eccentrics, like Dr. Johnson, who, while remembered for doing something in a characteristically eccentric way, nevertheless have not totally altered the framework of life in so decisive a manner'.⁵³ Said places terrific emphasis on the power of the individual to inaugurate change on a macro-level. The way that he jumps from the idea of inaugurating a beginning to the notion that the beginning *begins* at a particular place and time through the auspices of an individual is a striking feature of his faith in the idea of human agency; it is also far removed from the dismal picture of the human subject conjured up by structuralism, a situation which Said needs but also attempts to challenge in *Beginnings*. The humanly-produced beginnings that Said posits stand in stark contrast to the position taken, as he views it, in structuralism, whereby '[i]n achieving a position of mastery over

⁴⁹ *Beginnings*, p. 12.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

man, language has reduced him to a discursive function'.⁵⁴ However, although man may not be a 'discursive function', neither is woman. In Said's analysis it is usually 'man' and not 'woman' who seems to be at the centre of his thoughts. There is also the problem of nuance, hybridity and human complexity, which was otherwise central to Said's understanding of the world. In *Beginnings*, beginnings seem to be inaugurated by the 'gifted' individual and not the group. This emphasis pushes Said's concept of beginnings away from the Marxist sympathies evinced elsewhere in his work.

In what seems to be a contradiction of his earlier comments, Said later argues that 'a root is always one among many, and I believe the beginning radically to be a method or intention among many, never *the* radical method or intention'.⁵⁵ It is strange, then, that whilst the concept of joint or multi-agency does not fit comfortably with Said's theory of these radical beginnings, he does not mention at all the network of interests surrounding each beginning, but, rather, chooses to pursue a 'grand narrative' that may or may not withstand scrupulous scholarly examination.

Beginnings or Origins?

At the centre of Said's project is the Vichian desire to examine the world as it is made and un-made by human beings. This is articulated in *Beginnings* in Said's battle to install secular 'beginnings' over divine 'origins'.⁵⁶ Referring to the changed historical context in attitudes to knowledge, Said argued that 'a major shift in perspective and knowledge has taken place. The state of mind that is concerned with origins is, I have said, theological. By contrast, and this is the shift, beginnings are eminently secular, or gentile, continuing activities'.⁵⁷ Situating this distinction in the context of literary criticism, Said argues that 'a beginning intends meaning, but the continuities and methods developing from it are generally *orders of dispersion, of adjacency, and of complementarity*'.⁵⁸ The idea of anti-dynastic methodology concerned with 'adjacency' was, for Said, coterminous with a

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 288.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 380.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. xiii-xix.

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 372-373.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 373.

rupture in society and in writing. Said argued that the real crux of the matter is that 'whereas an origin *centrally* dominates what derives from it, the beginning (especially the modern beginning), encourages nonlinear development'.⁵⁹ So, whilst Said seems to be arguing that because it is in some ways a theological concept and therefore cannot ever truly be known, an origin will always act as a barrier to rational thought. The beginning on the other hand produces 'a logic giving rise to the sort of multileveled coherence of dispersion we find in Freud's text, in the texts of modern writers, or in Foucault's archaeological investigations'.⁶⁰ Said thus makes a connection between a beginning and the mode of enquiry being undertaken by Foucault.

In Said's view Foucault was engaged in an attempt at 're-thinking and thinking-through the notion of beginning, and in this sense he was also in the process of dismantling the power of the Origin'.⁶¹ The chapter '*Abecedarium Cultararum*' represents Said's early encounter with the work of the French structuralists. It was Foucault who perhaps offered him the most effective mode of beginnings. Bearing in mind the earlier discussion about the great 'originators', it is not surprising to find Said declaring that it is as 'the founder of a new field of research (or of a new way of conceiving and doing research) that he [Foucault] will continue to be known and regarded'.⁶² In short, Said views Foucault's research in the special terms he reserves for exceptional beginnings. This is a problem inasmuch as Foucault was thoroughly unconvinced of the power of the human subject to overcome structures and discourses; yet it is not incongruent with Said's methodology to acquire what philosophical underpinning is required and thence to move on.

For Said, this exceptional mode of beginnings begins at a crucial conceptual space in Foucault's work, the 'episteme', a concept developed in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.⁶³ Said argues that 'Foucault [as with most of the structuralists] must presume a conceptual unity – variously called historical a priori, an epistemological field, an epistemological unit, or épistémè – that anchors and informs linguistic usage at any given time in history'.⁶⁴ Referring again to the 'modern period', which has, Said argues, been subject to radical

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1972).

⁶⁴ *Beginnings*, p. 284.

changes in education and knowledge that have resulted in a situation in which ‘words lose the power to represent their interconnections – that is, the power to refer not only to objects but also the system connecting objects to one another in a universal taxonomy of existence’, he notes that it is Foucault who provides the methodology to overcome a linguistic environment that has developed into something akin to Lukács’ Marxist theory of reification. Like Said, Foucault posits a major rupture between the Classical and modern period that resulted in ‘new ways of classifying and ordering information’.⁶⁵ Whilst Said argues that ‘[t]he world of activity and human experience stands silently aside while language constitutes order and legislates discovery’, it is ‘Foucault [who] has been trying to overcome this tyranny by laying bare its workings’.⁶⁶ Foucault’s method, then, is to perform the activity of “‘archaeology,” a term he uses to designate both a basic level of research and the study of collective mental archives as well, that is, epistemological resources that make possible *what* is said at any given period and *where* in what particular discursive space – it is said’.⁶⁷ For Said, the *most* important of Foucault’s methodological tools is surely the development ‘of a new habit of thought, a set of rules for knowledge to dominate truth, to make truth as an issue secondary to the successful ordering and wielding of huge masses of actual present knowledge’.⁶⁸ In the work of Nietzsche and Foucault, of course, the notion of ‘Truth’ has more to do with the intricacies of language than with the world that language attempts to describe and construct. In this sense, ‘Truth’ is perhaps correlative with the mystifying theological term ‘origin’, whilst ‘knowledge’ – however gross or irrelevant – can always be traced back to a human beginning and intention.

Foucault’s pursuance of his archaeological investigations into the workings of ‘knowledge’ was not, however, without some fairly serious problems for Said’s humanistic project. In *Beginnings*, Said argues that in the *New Science* ‘[w]hen Vico speaks of a mental language common to all nations, he is, therefore, asserting the verbal community binding men together at the expense of their immediate existential presence to one another’.⁶⁹ A problem arises for humanism because

⁶⁵ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), p. 28.

⁶⁶ *Beginnings*, p. 288.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 289.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

[s]uch common language –which in modern writing has appeared as Freud’s unconscious, as Orwell’s newspeak, as Lévi-Strauss’s savage mind, as Foucault’s *épistémè*, as Fanon’s doctrine of imperialism – defers the human center or *cogito* in the (sometimes tyrannical) interest of universal, systematic relationships.⁷⁰

Now, contrary to the faith Said places in the capacity of the human will to triumph over system, he nevertheless argues that ‘[p]articipation in these relationships is scarcely voluntary, only intermittently perceptible as participation in any egalitarian sense, and hardly amenable to human scrutiny’.⁷¹ Said then alludes to the implications of the proliferation of these systems in the United States and France ‘over the last decade’, which situated it in the period of ‘crisis’ in the humanities referred to earlier. He argues that

[t]he general line of French New Criticism has been entirely to doubt and subsequently nullify the constitutive, authorizing powers of the human subject in the so-called human sciences. Instead of maintaining an unexamined core of ‘humanism’ as an original validating center of the humanities (the ‘old critical’ position, generally speaking), such writers as Barthes, Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan have contested that view with intricate and proliferating rules that account for human reality without recourse to an originating, privileged human subject.⁷²

Furthermore, Said claimed that ‘[t]hese writers have sought to show that literature, psychology, philosophy, and language are too independent of direct and constant human intervention to be reduced to the traditional creeds of humanism for explanation or understanding’.⁷³ The question is: as far as the agency of the human subject is concerned did Said concur with this pessimistic assessment of the power of those academic spheres of learning and research which, the French thinkers argued, ‘have acquired rule-governed lives of their own that include man while never being subordinate to or dominated by him, nor, moreover, accessible to him by retrospection’?⁷⁴

The answer comes quite swiftly:

[t]here are systems, distributions, and structures that by virtue of sheer variety and number supersede the power of a dominating, permanent human center to activate them; a whole new array of disciplines, concepts, and orientations have

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 373.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., p. 374.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

appeared more adequate than the individual *cogito*, and these have been contained by difficult technical disciplines that proceed internally by discontinuous steps, not humanistic beliefs.⁷⁵

Said recognizes that the efforts of the French New Criticism in the form of Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, albeit by very different means, were directed at undermining the 'systems, distributions, and structures' that 'supersede the power of a dominating, permanent human center'. Foucault and Derrida were, for the reason that neither of them intended their ideas to be taken up and turned into 'schools of thought', the unwitting founders of what Said has described as 'difficult technical disciplines'. In consideration of their connections with social and political issues, it would be ill-conceived to imagine that either of them were unconcerned with the 'human center'. Said's criticism was aimed, then, not at Foucault, Derrida or Lacan, but at the inheritors of their thoughts which in this instance were the 'uncanny critics'.

There is no terminal incongruence between Said's criticism of the French thinkers and the fact that Foucault's archaeological investigations became the source and foundations of his methodology in *Orientalism*. These aspects of Foucault's methodology were central to Said's intellectual-political project and his delineation of beginnings. Said was perhaps unfairly uncritical of Foucault when it came to the subject of his role as an intellectual. His appropriation of some elements of Foucault's 'poststructuralism' points, though, to a moment of convergence in attitude between the two thinkers: both, albeit from different angles of vision, were concerned with the de-mystification of language for different but ultimately political purposes. Spanos has argued that the root of Said's rejection of origins in favour of beginnings was not in fact Foucault's ideas, but Vico, 'the revolutionary eighteenth-century Italian philologist who bracketed God's providential Creation in favour of the idea that humans make their own world, who became the model for his antistructuralist notion of the human inquirer'.⁷⁶ As the influence of Foucault and Saussure has shown, his project was equally indebted to structuralism as to the subversive core of deconstruction or poststructuralism.

On the theme of beginnings and origins, the relationship between Said and the structuralists/poststructuralists continues to attract attention. Spanos argues that despite

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 374.

⁷⁶ William V. Spanos, *The Legacy of Edward W. Said* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), p. 9.

Said's severe criticism of their political quietism in essays such as 'Reflections on American "Left" Literary Criticism' and 'Travelling Theory', Said and the poststructuralists were

engaged in the revolutionary task of finding an alternative idea of being (the Origin), of humanity, and of inquiry, to the teleological/identitarian One that had dominated in the West since the rise of modernity in the Enlightenment, if not from the beginning of Western civilization.⁷⁷

In this case, the Origin, Spanos argues, 'the teleological/identitarian One' was challenged by the leading poststructuralists, notably 'Heidegger, Lacan, Derrida, Lyotard, Lacou-Labarthe, Althusser, Spivak, Deleuze, [and] Foucault', who 'in varying degrees [were] inaugurating a revolutionary effort to delegitimize the truth discourse of the Occident that culminated in "modernity"'.⁷⁸ Spanos further argues that

[t]o recall what the new generation of oppositional academic critics seems to have forgotten since those early days, this was the tradition the poststructuralists identified as a geographic/cultural space in a larger world that, under the aegis of a secularized transcendental eye (I), coerced or (in its modern phase) accommodated the singular phenomena of this entire world to an unworldly (universal) principle of identity; the essence of which was the idea the West had of itself. This tradition was fundamentally and polyvalently imperial.⁷⁹

The situation described by Spanos (an avowed poststructuralist) is an attempt first, to present poststructuralism as anti-imperial, and, second, to characterize the relationship between Said and the poststructuralists on philosophical and political levels. However, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* was in part at least an analysis of structuralism rather than poststructuralism, the latter specialization not yet having been 'defined'. Nevertheless, in *Beginnings* Said does, as Spanos noted, find some common ground with Deleuze's thoughts on the question of the Origin:

It is therefore pleasant that good news resounds today: meaning is never principle or origin, it is always something produced. It is not something to be discovered, restored, or re-employed, it is to be produced by new mechanisms. Not that meaning lacks depth, or height, but rather that height and depth lack surface and lack meaning...We no longer ask if the "original meaning" of religion exists in a God betrayed by human norms, nor do we ask if man contains that meaning, lost now because he has alienated himself from God's image.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Spanos, p. 277.

If as Spanos argued, Said's interest in separating beginnings from origins was concerned with the issue of the West and its forays into imperialism, it seems likely that Palestine would operate at the *fixed* centre of this nexus. What emerges from Said's exploration of beginning, then, is that Said's thoughts on knowledge could never completely occupy a position of homelessness.

Orientalism: A Monument of Counter-Knowledge

Given that Said had defined his critical worldview in terms of its restlessness, its urge to inaugurate beginnings, its faith in the human subject and human agency, its opposition to anti-humanist determinism, and its capacity to dismantle political and epistemological structures, *Orientalism* was something of a surprise. It is a text with which, in the name of political pragmatism, Said intended to indiscriminately tear down the enormous edifice of Western Oriental knowledge. Perhaps few would argue that the European colonial mission to bring civilization to the ungrateful Other was an act of barbarism; yet in some ways so was *Orientalism*. It was certainly a civilizing act on Said's part to challenge one of the great epistemological edifices of European colonialism and imperialism and, as Behdad has argued, to shift 'the focus in literary and cultural criticism from textuality to historicity, and from the aesthetic to the political'.⁸¹ It was, perhaps, an act of incivility to accuse the entire fraternity of Western Orientalists of producing knowledge shaped by the interests of imperial power.

Three lines of thought will be developed below in relation to Said's magnum opus. The argument will be made that in *Orientalism* Said knowingly created a huge structure of counter-knowledge to Western Orientalism that was also in important regards counter to his own critical and philosophical worldview. In *Orientalism* Said creates a structure which is anti-humanist in the sense that whilst the real subject is the structure of Western Orientalism, the Oriental is hardly more than the passive object. With reference to this anomaly and noting Said's obsessive interest in 'Great' Western literature, Ahmad has questioned *Orientalism's* 'High Humanism'.⁸² One of the net effects of Said's method was

⁸¹ Ali Behdad, 'Orientalism Matters', in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 56 (2010), 709-728 (p. 709).

⁸² Ahmad, p. 166.

that anti-colonial resistance – which was ever present during the colonial period - is strangely absent in his great work of intellectual resistance, effectively written out of Said's counter-history. Said creates a powerful, and what has proven to be a durable, structure centred on the idea that for the chronological span of Western colonialism there was a coercive relationship between nearly all Oriental scholars, the knowledge they produced, and Western domination. *Orientalism*, then, was a curious outcome of Said's bid to 'confront orthodoxy and dogma'.⁸³ The discourse created by Said was so emphatic in its cloistering together of the diverse sets of knowledge produced by writers in the name of colonial power that it is hard to disagree with Varadharajan's argument that in *Orientalism* Said created a 'monument'.⁸⁴ Monuments are objects of worship. In time they can take on a mysterious quality that camouflages their reality as human constructs. This runs counter to Said's humanistic worldview, and was certainly anathema to his philosophy of exile and beginnings.

A further argument will be developed that *Orientalism* represents one of the pivotal moments when Said's political strategy and his philosophical and critical worldview came into sharp contact with 'knowledge'. The outcome of this meeting was that Said produced a body of 'coercive knowledge' that was designed to constrain or even to destroy the existing sphere of Western Oriental knowledge. Said's 'act of civilization' was designed to challenge the entire edifice of what Spencer has called a sphere in which 'Orientalists peddle distortions that evoke images of a dependent and powerless place, an ageless canvas for the realisation of the west's economic objectives, strategic plans and cultural fantasies'.⁸⁵ This sounds like a very un-Saidian intention, yet there are certain moments when a moral dilemma occurs, and when perhaps the potential ends justify the means; and which right-minded person, let alone intellectual, could now reasonably argue that breaking down the edifice of Western colonial and imperial domination was not one of them? For Said, such a time had materialized in the stubborn persistence of Western colonialism and imperialism beneath the camouflage of a supposedly 'post-colonial' world. As always, Said was mostly, but not entirely, concerned with one aspect of Western power - the effect it had on the

⁸³ Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, p. 11. Quoted in Asha Varadharajan, 'Edward Said and the (Mis)fortunes of the Public Intellectual', in *College Literature*, 40 (2013), pp. 52-73 (p. 56), in *Project Muse* ><https://muse.jhu.edu/article/523590/pdf> > [accessed 4-2-2015].

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56

⁸⁵ Robert Spencer, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', *New Formations*, 59 (2006), 52-62 (p. 53).

Palestinian issue. It will be argued that the latent intellectual barbarism in Said's monumental book was his attempt to account for the entire sphere of Western Orientalism instead of merely the pieces of the whole that utilized their craft, their societal positions, and their production of 'knowledge', in the causes of power and domination. This argument is premised, contrary to Spencer's monolithic interpretation of Western knowledge about the Orient, on the common sense approach that suggests that not all Orientalists were, or are, driven by a sense of innate Western superiority. The latter approach is coterminous with the basis of Said's philosophical worldview whereby human life is actually constituted by nuance and complexity.

The third line of thought is that Said's all-encompassing discourse of the scope of Western Orientalism's relationship with colonialism was not incongruent with his restless critical style or his strand of humanism. It will be argued that Said's 'monument' had a sort of in-built obsolescence. Great craftsmen, as Said undoubtedly was, always build on solid foundations. Yet Said constructed the structure of *Orientalism* with several theoretical flaws. The most obvious of these is Said's admission that *Orientalism* 'is a partisan book, not a theoretical machine'.⁸⁶ It therefore has to be assumed that *Orientalism* is theoretically unsound, and deliberately designed that way. Said had a sound reason for this strategy. He was attempting to challenge Western imperialism, no small matter for a professor at a University in the United States, especially one who had decided to speak through the mask of an 'Oriental' in a nation that was so scarred by the recent disasters in Indo-China.⁸⁷

Orientalism: The Colonial Subject Writing Back to the Empire

Orientalism, 'a work about [Western] representations of "the Orient"' was written by a Palestinian-American who had recently, in an interview with the *Diacritics* journal, declared that he was writing from the perspective of an 'Oriental'. In the United States in 1978, a nation still in shock from the disaster of their military defeat in South East Asia, this was a dramatic and provocative statement. It can be assumed that Said intended that *Orientalism* should function as a critical event in every sense of the word.

⁸⁶ *Orientalism*, p. 340.

⁸⁷ I refer here to the withdrawal of US troops from Viet Nam on April 30, 1975. For an analysis of the War see Fredrik Logevall, *The Origins of the Vietnam War* (Harlow: Longman, 2001).

Orientalism was the first of a trilogy of works that included *The Question of Palestine* and *Covering Islam*, each of which spoke both to Said's own theoretical work, *Beginnings: Intention and Method*, and to the political essays that had emerged out of the 1967 War. *Orientalism* was mostly written during 1975-1976, which 'I spent as a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California'.⁸⁸ It was published in New York in 1978 by Routledge and Kegan Paul, an event that was quickly followed by a UK edition in 1979 and further revised editions in 1995 and 2003.⁸⁹ The book, divided into three chapters, was some 329 pages in length, and to some extent an analysis of the emergence and rise of the scholarly field of Oriental studies, focussing particularly on the relationship between the scholarly production of knowledge in the West and Western colonial and imperial expansion from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day. Said's analysis of the Orientalist discourse took in a wide range of cultural forms such as opera, theatre, travel writing, novels, and television programmes. His notion of the role of Orientalists in Western domination was total, his discourse on the discourse of Orientalism impressively comprehensive.

The concept was flawed, deliberately so, perhaps with the intention of provoking discussion about the complicity of Western Orientalists in Western colonialism and imperialism *and* to dismantle scholarly Western Orientalism. As Confino has argued, '[t]his notion did not allow for contrasting counter-hegemonic narratives [and] suffers from a hegemonic concept of hegemony'.⁹⁰ The main focus of Said's thesis was the academic sphere, and the idea that knowledge produced by the academic discipline of Oriental studies was profoundly ideological. The purpose – or outcome – of this ideology was that these modes of knowledge had helped to create, support, and sustain Western domination of the East.

In this world created by Said, the network of Orientalism can be divided into two spheres. In the first is the wider, what might be called the 'popular', sphere of such forms as the novel, poetry, and opera. In short, those cultural forms that are generally thought to be

⁸⁸ *Orientalism*, p. xxv.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p 26.

⁹⁰ Alon Confino, 'Remembering Talbiyah: Edward Said's *Out of Place*', *Israel Studies*, 5 (2000), 182-198 (p. 185), in *Project Muse* ><http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/israel-studies/israel-studies/v005/5.2confino.pdf> [accessed 8-9-2015].

non-political are in Said's thesis imbricated in a relationship with the discriminatory concept of Orientalism. In the second sphere is the scholarly field of Oriental studies, or what is now generally known by such terms as Near Eastern or Middle Eastern studies. There is some overlap between the two spheres, but in Said's view the Oriental imaginary has been a constant since the early 19th century, at around the time of the rise of British and French colonialism. The discourse of Orientalism is defined by Said in terms of three inter-connecting modes that cover almost every aspect of thought and practice in the relationship between Occident and Orient. The first, and perhaps as far as the book is concerned the most important, is academic or scholarly Orientalism. Said argues that '[a]nyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism'.⁹¹ The second mode is Orientalism as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident"'.⁹² The third mode is Orientalism 'as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient...in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient'.⁹³

To enable his theory of cultural domination in *Orientalism*, Said drew on two main theoretical devices that do not necessarily connect well: Foucault's 'discourse' theory and Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Describing how a 'discourse' functions, Said argued that 'such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In such time knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse'.⁹⁴ In the mode of knowledge production that Said signified 'Orientalism', various bodies, individuals, and institutions produced statements that over time become accepted as obvious and incontrovertible 'truths'. These truths always confirm the relative superiority of the West over the East, and are enabled by the actual disparity of power between imperial West and those faraway lands it has, or seeks, to dominate. These statements 'correspond to the term Ideology, as used by the Marxist philosopher Louis

⁹¹ *Orientalism*, p. 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

Althusser'.⁹⁵ Discourses, then, are practices of power. However, although they constrain what can be said in any given society, if they are constitutive of power then they must in Foucault's terms also stimulate resistance, producing the possibility of counter-discourses. Hegemony functions in a similar way. Said argued that '[i]n any society not totalitarian [...] certain ideas are more influential than others; the form of this cultural leadership is what Gramsci has identified as *hegemony*'.⁹⁶

Although there appears to be a cosy fit here, Porter has argued that the dual use of Foucault and Gramsci is problematical. He has drawn attention to 'the incomparability of the thought of Said's two acknowledged *Maitres*, Foucault and Gramsci, of discourse theory and hegemonic theory'.⁹⁷ Ahmad is similarly sceptical, arguing that there is an 'impossible reconciliation which Said tries to achieve between that humanism and Foucault's Discourse Theory'.⁹⁸ However, Young has noted that Said does not draw his theory entirely from Foucault. This, he reasons, produces a result that is 'too determining and unequivocal a notion of discourse, too restrictive and homogenizing'.⁹⁹ In Gramsci's theory, hegemony 'has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and altered'.¹⁰⁰ To Foucault there are 'epistemological breaks between different periods'.¹⁰¹ Said, on the other hand, 'asserts the unified character of Western discourse on the Orient over some two millennia'.¹⁰² Despite Said's insistence that the individual leaves a 'determining imprint', his 'stress on hegemony...remain[ed] unqualified by any account of counter-hegemonic resistance'.¹⁰³ In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said acknowledged and deals with anti-colonial resistance but this crucial element is lacking in his delineation of Western Orientalism. One of the main flaws with *Orientalism* is that Said fails to acknowledge resistance within the colonizer, colonized, or even within Orientalism itself. However, in a challenge to Said's reading of T. E. Lawrence's *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Porter argues that there *is* inherent resistance within Orientalism, and that a more rigorous reading reveals contradictions and

⁹⁵ Chris Horrocks and Zoran Jevtic, *Introducing Foucault* (Duxford: Icon, 1997), p. 89.

⁹⁶ *Orientalism*, p. 7.

⁹⁷ Dennis Porter, 'Orientalism and its Problems', in Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 151.

⁹⁸ Ahmad, p. 164.

⁹⁹ Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 386.

¹⁰⁰ Porter, p. 152.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Young, p. 387.

ambivalence. Moore-Gilbert, on the other hand, argues that ‘Said’s recognition of the divided nature of Orientalism is already apparent from the beginning of his text’, which suggests that ‘European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient’.¹⁰⁴ Each of these criticisms challenges the foundations of Said’s thesis but had little real impact on the reception of *Orientalism*. The monument remains intact and it might be naïve to assume that Said was oblivious to some of the theoretical inconsistencies within Orientalism.

In Said’s view, Orientalism functions in two main ways, both of which create a universally encompassing mode of discourse. Borrowing terminology from Freudian dream theory, Said argued that Orientalism is articulated through two structures: ‘latent’ and ‘manifest’. Latent Orientalism gives Orientalism its durability and ‘an almost unconscious (and certainly untouchable) positivity’.¹⁰⁵ It is a blanket of dreams and fantasies and desires about the East that are ‘more or less constant’.¹⁰⁶ Manifest Orientalism, on the other hand, is less stable, mutating in different eras, sporadically erupting to the surface of social and historical consciousness. It ‘connotes the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literature, history, sociology, and so forth’.¹⁰⁷

In Said’s view, Orientalism constructs a world of binary divisions, perhaps the most important and influential being: East/West, ‘us’ and ‘them’, self/other, Occident/Orient, superior/inferior, civilized/barbarian. It is always an unequal dichotomy, based on fantasy rather than lived experience. In these binaries the West is always constructed in a position of superiority in relation to its ‘Other’. Nevertheless, Said argues that although it *is* a fantasy the ‘regular constellation of ideas...[is the] pre-eminent thing about the Orient’.¹⁰⁸ Ideas about the Orient and Oriental are disseminated through political, scientific and academic institutions. These institutions legitimate and perpetuate Orientalism as a series of discursive practices and ideological constructions. They are extremely productive, formulating stories, manuals and theories about the Orient. Orientalism feeds on stereotypes such as the ‘timeless Orient’ or the ‘sly Arab’. Said refers to any number of

¹⁰⁴ Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London: Verso, 1997), p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ *Orientalism*, p. 206.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

examples. For example: Lord Cromer, formerly England's representative in Egypt, and writing in the early twentieth-century, claimed to know that, '[w]ant of accuracy, which easily degenerates into untruthfulness, is in fact the main characteristic of the Oriental mind'.¹⁰⁹ These generalizations and stereotypes persist. Resting on the shelf at the Pilkington Library at Loughborough University, for example, a century or so later, is a 1985 publication *Know the Middle East*. On the rear of the book jacket is the statement,

[u]nlike some other books about the Middle East this one is not partisan; it simply seeks to tell the truth about matters which affect foreigners and for this reason alone is the perfect companion for all who need to know the Middle East and its people.¹¹⁰

As if to echo Lord Cromer, Laffin reiterates the 'truth', this time in a sweeping generalization of the Arab psychology, and one which is supported by the 'integrity' of the publication: '[t]he Arab means what he says at the moment he is saying it, but five minutes later he may say the exact opposite. He is neither a vicious liar nor, usually, a calculating one; he lies naturally and "normally"'.¹¹¹ In *Orientalism*, Said produced a Foucauldian discourse with hardly any room for ruptures, breaks, or dissenting colonial voices. Said's comment that 'unlike Michel Foucault, to whose work I am greatly indebted, I do believe in the determining imprint of individual writers upon the otherwise anonymous collective body of text constituting a discursive formation like Orientalism' must, then, be taken with a healthy dose of scepticism.¹¹² Said's purpose, perhaps, was to invite others to follow him, to improve on what he had written, or to explore new avenues of inquiry. *Orientalism* was not intended to be the final word on the issue of Western representations of the Orient. And nor was it.

Although *Orientalism* created a terrific stir in Western academia and elsewhere, its central thesis was not wholly original. The gross distinction between Occident and Orient and the relationship of that dichotomy to questions of power had been raised before. Said

¹⁰⁹ *Orientalism*, p. 38.

¹¹⁰ John Laffin, *Know the Middle East* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1985).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹¹² *Orientalism*, p. 23.

would argue that Foucault's 'Eurocentrism was almost total', but in regard to Orientalism the Frenchman had arrived at a similar juncture as early as 1960.¹¹³ Foucault argued that

[i]n the universality of Western reason, there is no partition, which is the Orient: the Orient, thought of as origin, dreamt of as the vertiginous point from which are born nostalgias and promises of a return, the Orient, offered to the West's colonizing reason yet indefinitely inaccessible, because it remains forever the limit: night of the beginning in which the West formed itself but in which it drew a dividing line, the Orient is everything for it that it is not, even though it still must try to find its own primitive truth in it.¹¹⁴

At the time of *Orientalism's* emergence, the place of the Orient in the Western consciousness was substantially different from today's context. European colonialism had largely been dismantled, but the United States in particular, and the West in general, remained the preeminent global economic and military powers. There was not, perhaps, as Huntington's later essay would predict, a 'clash of civilizations', simply because at that time the 'East' was not ever-present in the thoughts of most people in the West.¹¹⁵ The disjunction in power between East and West was real and had been so for two centuries, even if it had become naturalized and therefore in some ways absent in Western minds. Two Gulf Wars, the destruction of the Twin Towers by *Al Qaeda*, and the rise of 'Islamic State' with the concomitant video beheadings on *YouTube* has meant that the East/West relationship is unequivocally present in the general Western consciousness.¹¹⁶ Franz has noted how quite recently

IS flags could be seen at protests in Paris and Brussels and...a flag was spotted flying outside a home in New Jersey...On busy Oxford Street in London, Islamists were handing out leaflets about IS, rejoicing in the creation of the caliphate and calling for people to migrate to it.¹¹⁷

This form of 'resistance' to Western power – and the term is used here very advisedly - was not the situation in 1978. Perhaps because of the absence of the Orient's presence in Western consciousness in the form of citizens with backgrounds in the Orient (the Near

¹¹³ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), p. 196.

¹¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), Volume 2, pp., 161-162.

¹¹⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations?' *Foreign Affairs*, 72 (1993), 22-49.

¹¹⁶ For an account of the issues of Islamic 'terrorist' groups, see Daniel Byman, *Al Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹¹⁷ Barbara Franz, 'Popjihadism: Why Young European Muslims Are Joining the Islamic State', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, Volume 26 (2015), 5-20 (p. 6).

East) who support organizations like IS, Said's book had modest if not innocuous beginnings. Said noted that as he formulated *Orientalism* he,

had very little in the way of support or interest from the outside world...[and] it was far from clear whether such a study of the ways in which power, scholarship and imagination of a two-hundred-year-old tradition in Europe and America viewed the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam *might* interest a general audience.¹¹⁸

It was certainly of interest to Said, and in subsequent editions of *Orientalism* he continued to press the relevance of the relationship between Western power and Western knowledge of the Orient. *Orientalism*, he argued, 'is very much tied to the tumultuous dynamics of contemporary history'.¹¹⁹ In 1995, whilst giving little room for the internecine conflicts of Islam and the Wider 'East', Said wrote of 'the apparently unending conflict between East and West as represented by the Arabs and Islam on one side and the Christian West on the other'.¹²⁰ In the 2003 edition, Said was wont to comment that,

I wish I could say, however, that general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam in the United States has improved somewhat, but alas it really hasn't. For all kinds of reasons, the situation in Europe seems to be considerably better. In the US, the hardening of attitudes, the tightening grip of demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché, the dominance of crude power allied with simplistic contempt of dissenters and 'others,' has found a fitting correlative in the looting, pillaging and destruction of Iraq's libraries and museum.¹²¹

Contrary to Said's expectations, the themes in *Orientalism* were of huge interest to a wider audience and the book became an instant publishing sensation. *Orientalism* has subsequently been translated into at least thirty-six different languages including Hebrew, Vietnamese, and Japanese.¹²² *Orientalism* has remained in print since its publication in 1978, with new editions of the English language original containing prefaces by Said published in 1985 and 2003. The evolving series of books was a huge commercial success

¹¹⁸ *Orientalism*, p. 329.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 335.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.

¹²² For an interesting account of the reception to *Orientalism* in Japan, in 1986, see 'Said, Orientalism, and Japan' by Daisuke Nishihara, in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*, 25 (2005), 241-253. See <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4047459>> [accessed 21-6-2015].

and is understood to have sold several millions of copies in diverse geographical and political settings.¹²³

If the impression given by Said was that the book emerged out of a quiet period in his life, one in which he contemplated philosophical and theoretical issues on a sunny university campus in California, this idea can be dispelled immediately. *Orientalism* was in fact a text that spoke to, and of, migration and exile. The first pages of *Orientalism*, for example, are almost literally embedded in the soil, in Lebanon where Said had many family connections and had spent a great deal of his early life. In the opening lines Said wrote that '[o]n a visit to Beirut during the terrible civil war of 1975-1976 a French journalist wrote regretfully of the gutted downtown area that "it had once seemed to belong to...the Orient of Chateaubriand and Nerval"'.¹²⁴ If it was true that Lebanon had once been a colonial outpost, it had, in fact, never stopped belonging to the people who had always lived there, just as the Said family had once resided in Lebanon.

On a much wider level, the historical relationships between the great power of Western imperialism and colonialism were, at least in part what made Said write *Orientalism*. Assisted by the theoretical thread of the 'inventory of traces' taken from Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, Said noted how

[m]uch of my personal investment in this study derives from my awareness of being an "Oriental" as a child growing up in two British colonies. All of my education, in these colonies (Palestine and Egypt) and in the United States, has been Western, and yet that deep awareness has persisted. In many ways my study of Orientalism has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals.¹²⁵

The combination of inseparable traces, then, of Western education, Western domination of Oriental cultures and lands, and of course the experience of living in both worlds, but particularly in Palestine, permeate *Orientalism*. Each of these, both apart and together, to some extent produced the conditions out of which *Orientalism* burst forth. If in *Orientalism*, as he had been in *Out of Place*, Said was in the process of self-making, then he was to some extent creating the colonized self who had journeyed into the imperial centre.

¹²³ The exact number of copies sold worldwide was not available from Random House publishers.

¹²⁴ *Orientalism*, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Notwithstanding its scholarly rigour or otherwise, a major part of *Orientalism's* success has been its proclivity to provoke controversy, to become a structure of and monument to counter-resistance to Western knowledge. The book quite literally *made* Edward Said's career. From this point in time Said had a global stage, which was apt because *Orientalism* was amongst other things a performance. Such has been the effect of *Orientalism* that even one of his most vitriolic critics, Aijaz Ahmad, has noted that 'I can scarcely find my own thought without passing through' Said's.¹²⁶ Not surprisingly, Said elicited a barrage of vitriol from one of its principal targets, the community of scholarly Western Orientalists. Malcolm Kerr, whilst arguing that Said 'writes imaginatively and perceptively' maintained that once Said was armed with the conviction that 'the projection by the Orientalist of the Oriental reflect[s] the dominating colonial interest of Western governments and economic and cultural establishments', he 'turns from an imaginative critic to a relentless polemicist'.¹²⁷ The British Islamic scholar, Bernard Lewis, was at the sharp end of Said's critique in *Orientalism* and responded in kind. Lewis noted that 'Mr Said's attitude to the Orient, Arab and other, as revealed in his book, is far more negative than that of the most arrogant European imperialist writers whom he condemns'.¹²⁸ Lewis, whose relationship with Said would prove to be particularly caustic, went on to comment that one of the outcomes of *Orientalism* was that 'the term Orientalism is now...polluted beyond salvation'.¹²⁹ The point of Lewis's comments were twofold. First, although Said critiques Western figures as diverse as Arthur James Balfour (1848-1930), the former British Prime Minister and architect of the notorious 1917 'Balfour Declaration' which promised 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people', and the Anglo-Indian writer, Rudyard Kipling, probably best known for his narratives set in India, such as *Kim*, there are few references to non-Westerners.¹³⁰ With this in mind the American historian, Peter Gran, has argued that *Orientalism* has left a stubborn legacy of a Eurocentric view of history.¹³¹ It is hard to dispute this criticism. *Orientalism* is a book about the East in which the main characters are Westerners. Second, Lewis lamented the damage done by

¹²⁶ Ahmad, p. 159.

¹²⁷ Malcolm Kerr, 'Edward Said, *Orientalism*', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 12 (1980), 544-547.

¹²⁸ Bernard Lewis, 'The Question of Orientalism', *The New York Review of Books*, June 24th, 1982.

<http://www.amherst.edu> [accessed 12-7-2015].

¹²⁹ Lewis, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Malcolm E. Yapp, *The Making of the Modern Near East 1792-1923* (Harlow: Longman, 1987), p. 290.

¹³¹ Gran made this remark at a conference entitled '*Orientalism: 30 Years Later*', at the University of York on 1-11-2008.

Said to Oriental studies, whose claims to scholarly impartiality had been sullied, perhaps permanently. Lewis noted the factual inaccuracies in *Orientalism*, taking Said to task on his knowledge of the field. He explains that

[t]o prove his thesis, Mr Said finds it necessary to date the rise of Orientalism from the late eighteenth century and place its main centers in Britain and France. In fact, it was already well established in the seventeenth century – the chair of Arabic at Cambridge, for example, was founded in 1633, and had its main centers in Germany and neighboring countries.¹³²

Lewis was incandescent. In defence of Orientalists and his own ‘expertise’, he argued that ‘[m]any of the Orientalists most violently attacked by the Saidian and related schools have taught generations of Arab students and have been translated and published in Arab countries’.¹³³ This had no bearing on the context of Lewis as a Western scholar writing ‘facts’ about the Orient and its peoples and cultures from a position of Western dominance over the East, a position of power over which, admittedly, he had no control. Said noted how ‘Lewis’s verbosity scarcely conceals both the ideological underpinnings of his position and his extraordinary capacity for getting nearly everything wrong’.¹³⁴ As Lewis was probably the foremost Western scholar of Islam and Arabs, Said had found his target very effectively. Propping up Said’s commentary was the simple fact that in *Orientalism* he had rattled, and perhaps radically altered, the ancient structure of Western Orientalism.

This transformation occurred in quite public ways, and thereafter a number of scholarly institutions in Britain and the United States changed course, and even department, titles. Whereas the University of Oxford still supports a Faculty of Oriental Studies, the University of Cambridge undergraduate Oriental Studies course ‘is no longer open to new students’, who are referred instead to the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies web page.¹³⁵ Part of the University of London, The School of Oriental and African Studies (founded 1916, motto: ‘knowledge is power’) retains its old name. In the United States, Princeton University’s Department of Oriental Studies (founded 1927) ended their association with the term in 1967, pre-dating *Orientalism* by a decade, a move which suggested that the term ‘Orientalism’ had developed pernicious connotations prior to Said’s

¹³² Lewis, p. 10.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 16.

¹³⁴ *Orientalism*, p. 343.

¹³⁵ <http://www.ames.cam.ac.uk> [accessed 2-9-2009].

involvement. To change a name, of course, is far easier than changing the ideological structures which support the process of interpellation.

The connections between Western scholarly Orientalism and political power always leave an inventory of traces. The trajectory of 'Oriental' studies has varied somewhat between the U.S. and Britain, with Britain belatedly reinvigorating policies towards the acquisition of knowledge of the areas in question in the wake of 9/11 and 7/7. Post- World War II, in the context of the loss of colonies and the relative decline of British military power on the world stage, there was a decline in the UK in the popularity of these courses and the amounts of public money committed to them. In the *Hayter Report* (1961), set up by the University Grants Committee to examine Oriental, Slavonic, East European and African areas of study, Sir William Hayter found the situation in 'British universities was not altogether encouraging. With one or two exceptions, notably the School of Oriental and African Studies in London [they] seemed to be in a depressing condition'.¹³⁶ Hayter's recommendation was for an on-going improvement programme, noting the 'powerful effect' that a visit to North American universities had on his subsequent proposals. Nevertheless, despite Hayter's proposals, there was a relative decline in these study areas in the 1970s, partially as a result of a 'brain drain' to the United States where academics prospered in an environment of relatively generous funding provisions. In a much cited example, the services of renowned historian and anti-Saidist, Bernard Lewis, Islamic expert, and some-time advisor to President Bush, who had taught for thirty years at The School of Oriental and African Studies, London, were acquired by Princeton University in the U.S. This burgeoning interest in Middle East or Near East studies in the U.S. was nurtured by the continued involvement of U.S. forces in those regions, and the necessity to acquire the 'knowledge' to deal with the resultant problems.¹³⁷ Mearsheimer and Walt argue that the United States has three strategic interests in the Middle East: oil; preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and reducing anti-American terrorism. The question of the existence of Israel, they argue, is moral, not strategic. After September 11, 2001, there was a renewed impetus and urgency and the United States authorities pumped

¹³⁶ William Hayter, "The Hayter Report and After", *Oxford Review of Education*, Vol 1, No 2, 1975. www.jstor.org/pss/1050223 [accessed 17-10-2009]

¹³⁷ Mearsheimer and Walt, pp. 337-338.

'millions of dollars' into existing Middle East centers'.¹³⁸ In the U.K, September 11, 2001, also galvanized the correlation between knowledge and power: a commission, chaired by Professor Anoush Ehteshami, Vice-President and Chair of Council and Director of IMEIS, University of Durham, recommended that Britain should follow the American model of increased provisions, arguing that '[a] modest investment in Middle Eastern studies...[of] £40 million (the amount proposed) is a small sum of money compared with the national interests at stake'.¹³⁹ Whilst the putative relationship between scholarship and 'national' interests undermines the possibility of 'pure' knowledge – a concept which this thesis has been seeking to challenge - it is difficult to imagine how a responsible state apparatus would not, for a variety of social, cultural, economic, and political reasons, wish to understand other parts of the world. A glance at the state of Middle Eastern Studies in the United States reveals a deep division between some neo-conservatives and the more left-leaning academics. Joel Beinin, Professor of Middle East History at Stanford University, explained his version of the hysteria in the aftermath of 9/11 and the implications for the relationship between knowledge and power:

[t]he first post-September 11 expression of the link between the neo-conservative political agenda and the attack on critical thinking about the Middle East was a report issued by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA) in November 2001 entitled 'Defending Civilization: How Our Universities Are Failing America and What Can Be Done about It'. As the title suggests, ACTA maintained that criticism of the Bush administration's war on Afghanistan on campuses across the country was tantamount to negligence in "defending civilization"¹⁴⁰

Said's creation of a monolithic structure in *Orientalism* intended to counter another such structure, such as the one described, above, yet the law of unintended consequences obtains.

The counter-knowledge that was *Orientalism* could not be contained. Although Lewis and Said conducted their squabble in the West, outside this sphere the impact of *Orientalism* was felt in unusual directions. Said noted, for example, how 'one aspect of the

¹³⁸ 'Middle Eastern Studies in the United Kingdom', *The Middle East Quarterly*, 10 (2003), 79-86.
<http://www.meforum.org/article/544>[accessed [accessed 3-9-2009]

¹³⁹ <http://www.dur.ac.uk/brimes/report> 'Report - Middle Eastern Studies in the United Kingdom- a Challenge for Government, Industry and the Academic Community' [accessed 6/11/08]

¹⁴⁰ Joel Beinin, 'The New American McCarthyism: Policing Thought about the Middle East', www.stanford.edu [accessed 22-9-2009]

book's reception that I most regret and find myself trying hardest now (in 1994) to overcome...is the book's alleged anti-Westernism'.¹⁴¹ Said lamented the idea that had taken root, that

Orientalism is a synecdoche, or miniature symbol, of the entire West as a whole...therefore the entire West is an enemy of the Arab and Islamic or for that matter the Iranian, Chinese, Indian, and many other non-European peoples who suffered Western colonialism and prejudice.¹⁴²

In other contexts *Orientalism* had a more positive effect. The subaltern studies scholar, Partha Chatterjee, recalled the profound impact of reading *Orientalism* in Calcutta, in November or December of 1980. He noted how as a 'child of a successful anti-colonial struggle, *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'.¹⁴³ *Orientalism* unleashed a potent centrifugal pressure pushing it outwards from the imperial centre; yet a powerful centripetal force has always remained, drawing attention towards criticism that emanates from the Western metropolitan centre. This highlights, perhaps, in ways that might not have occurred had it been written and published elsewhere, how, despite its geographical spread, *Orientalism* is thoroughly anchored to the Western sphere. It is a book that was meant to subvert knowledge production in the West. It is a monument built for Western eyes, hearts, and minds, but one that has travelled far beyond Said's original vision.

None of the vociferous criticism, however, could reduce the effectiveness of *Orientalism*. If the centre of gravity is shifted away from the likes of Lewis and Kerr, and even Said, it is clear that *Orientalism* has affected how the entire question of how and for what purposes knowledge of the Other is created. *Orientalism* has penetrated a cluster of academic fields. It is generally credited with the inauguration of the academic field of postcolonial studies. It has also found its way into the field of art history, inasmuch as representations of the Orient have, since *Orientalism*, been subject to scrutiny concerning their relationship to imperial power. MacKenzie has attempted to re-situate the term 'Orientalism' 'to its prior usage as an art historical term that could be deployed without

¹⁴¹ *Orientalism*, p. 330.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 331.

¹⁴³ Partha Chatterjee, 'Their own Words? An Essay for Edward Said', in Sprinker, p. 194.

suggestion of a broader political or ideological critique'.¹⁴⁴ He argues that 'there is little evidence of a necessary coherence between imposition of direct imperial rule and the visual arts'.¹⁴⁵ Little has analysed the pervasion of Orientalism in popular American cultures, arguing that

[f]ew parts of the world have become as deeply embedded in the U.S popular imagination as the Middle East. The puritans who founded 'God's American Israel' on Massachusetts Bay nearly four centuries ago brought with them a passionate fascination with the Holy Land and a profound ambivalence about the 'infidels' – mostly Muslims but some Jews – who lived there.¹⁴⁶

Little has noted how '[d]espite protests from Arab Americans, at the end of the twentieth century the film industry continued to offer orientalist fare like *Executive Decision* (1996) or *The Mummy* (1999), with Arabs depicted as airborne fanatics or feckless and foul-smelling opportunists'.¹⁴⁷ *Orientalism* has consolidated one of the underlying arguments in this thesis: once published, authorial intentions have no influence on subsequent trajectory.

Orientalism as Monolithic Counter-Structure

A number of factors point to the idea that Said pushed his career-long philosophical and critical principles to one side, and intended to create a monolithic structure of counter-knowledge in opposition to Western Orientalism. Firstly, his characterization of Orientalism was over-determined and left little or no room for nuance, deviation, or local conditions. Said defined the Orient in two ways. In the first sense – and this is not the Orient with which he deals in *Orientalism* – Said defined an Orient that was, in his view, completely distinct from the Orient of the Orientalists in the sense that '[t]here were – and are – cultures and nations whose location is in the East, and their lives, histories, and customs have a brute reality obviously greater than anything that could be said about them in the West'.¹⁴⁸ As the structuralists demonstrated, there is a distance between language and the

¹⁴⁴ Behdad, p. 710.

¹⁴⁵ John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory, and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 51. Cited in Behdad, p. 710.

¹⁴⁶ Douglas Little, *The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴⁸ *Orientalism*, p. 5.

events it represents. Moreover, Said's theory takes no account of Western Orientalists who may well have travelled to the East.

The second definition of the Orient includes the geographical locations cited above but although it is dependent on the raw fact of the existence of the geography, this is less important than the ideas and representations that accompany it. The crux of Said's argument is that the geographical Orient or East was produced in the Western consciousness by a network of interests, memories, stories, representations, and statements that were enabled by the huge disparities in power between East and West. The sheer knitted-togetherness of the web meant that the Orient as it appeared in Western consciousness could not be thought of without recourse to these preconceptions, fantasies, and institutions, which take in such things

as the imagination itself...a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable 'experts' and 'hands,' and Oriental professoriate, a complex array of 'Oriental' ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelty, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use – the list can be extended more or less indefinitely.¹⁴⁹

The premise upon which Said wrote *Orientalism*, then, was that there was little, or indeed no, correspondence between the 'real' Orient and the Orient that existed in the Western imagination, but was purely a projection of Western power. The former Orient is simply a geographical location in which various and diverse cultures and peoples go about their lives, perhaps unaware that they are constituted by the West in binary oppositions that compose the two sides as 'us (West)/them (East)', 'superior/inferior'. About these people, neither Said nor (according to him) the Orientalists, have little to say or write. The Oriental imaginary, however, belongs to the Western consciousness. In Said's view this is secured by an all-encompassing discourse that constrains the ability of people in the West to think independently about the Orient. It is important to note that Said was not challenging the fact that there are many cultural, racial, and societal differences between the West and the East, as indeed there are many differences within and between the constitutive parts of East and West. In the 2003 Afterword to *Orientalism*, Said stressed that

¹⁴⁹ *Orientalism*, p. 4.

[m]y aim...was not so much to dissipate difference itself – for who can deny the constitutive role of national as well as cultural differences in the relations between human beings – but to challenge the notion that difference implies hostility, a frozen reified set of opposed essences, and a whole adversarial knowledge built out of those things.¹⁵⁰

Intention is one thing, outcome another. Said erected a huge structure of counter-knowledge that in some ways reinforced the East/West binary. The standardization of taste as a result of globalization may well have reduced these differences, as indeed it may have weakened the effectiveness of Said's theory of Orientalism. In *Orientalism* Said creates two distinct Orients, neither of which in his theoretical and philosophical framework could ever be 'a real or true Orient'.¹⁵¹ The point was that neither could ever be more than representations, but one – the imaginary Orient – was connected to the will of the West to dominate the East. This Orient required a good deal of help from those, like Lewis, charged in the West with the production of 'knowledge', and the compliance of those who are not.

As a way of attacking the Orientalists, Said draws a fundamental distinction between 'pure' and 'political' knowledge. As mentioned before, he summarized 'pure knowledge' in terms of its relationship to his own 'formal and professional designation...of "humanist", a title which indicates the humanities as my field and therefore the unlikely eventuality that there might be anything political about what I do in that field'.¹⁵² This is a disingenuous statement in the sense that Said does not view the knowledge produced by the humanist as innately non-political. On the other hand, the production of 'political knowledge' might concern

[a] scholar whose field is Soviet economics in a highly charged area where there is much government interest, and what he might produce in the way of studies or proposals will be taken up by policymakers, government officials, institutional economists, intelligence experts.¹⁵³

Said refined this distinction with the idea that the

former's ideological color is a matter of incidental importance to politics (although possibly of great moment to his colleagues in the field, who may object to his Stalinism or fascism or too easy liberalism), whereas the ideology of

¹⁵⁰ *Orientalism*, p. 352.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 322.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

the latter is woven directly into his material – indeed, economics, politics, and sociology in the modern academy are ideological sciences – and therefore taken for granted as being ‘political’.¹⁵⁴

The distinction feeds into the earlier discussion about the general assumptions made about the relationship between the production of knowledge and its individual and institutional ‘gatekeepers’, namely that ‘the determining impingement on most knowledge produced in the contemporary West...is that it be non-political, that is, scholarly, academic, impartial, above partisan or small-minded doctrinal belief’.¹⁵⁵ Said qualifies this distinction by arguing that despite the laudable ambition of achieving pure knowledge

in practice the reality is much more problematic. No one has ever devised a method for detaching the scholar from the circumstances of life, from the fact of his involvement (conscious or unconscious) with a class, a set of beliefs, a social position, or from the mere activity of being a member of a society.¹⁵⁶

The outcome is that if no production of knowledge in the human sciences can ever ignore or disclaim its author’s involvement as a human subject in his own circumstances of his actuality, then Said’s actuality also bears on his own production of knowledge. Said’s argument was that the Orientalist,

comes up against the Orient as European or American first and as an individual second. And to be a European or an American in such a situation is by no means an inert fact. It meant and means being aware, however dimly, that one belongs to a power with definite interest in the Orient, and more important, that one belongs to a part of the earth with a definite history of involvement in the Orient almost since the time of Homer.¹⁵⁷

Said is dogged in his assertion that the Orientalist is fully implicated in a relationship between knowledge and political power. Indeed, a constant stream of ‘experts’ on the politics, cultures and societies of far-away lands were called upon by the press, or, perhaps more importantly, governments, to advise on what ‘we’ should make of ‘them’. In Said’s view, the pernicious relationship between knowledge and power had contributed to the Allied invasion of Iraq in the early hours of March 20th, 2003:

[i]t is surely one of the intellectual catastrophes of history than an imperialist war confected by a small group of unelected US officials (they’ve been called

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

chickenhawks, since none of them ever served in the military) was waged against a devastated Third World dictatorship on thoroughly ideological grounds having to do with world dominance, security control, and scarce resources, but disguised for its true intent, hastened and reasoned for by Orientalists who betrayed their calling as scholars. The main influences on George W. Bush's Pentagon and National Security Council were men such as Bernard Lewis and Fouad Ajami, experts on the Arab and Islamic world who helped the American hawks to think about such preposterous phenomena as the Arab mind and centuries-old Islamic decline that only American power could reverse.¹⁵⁸

Said was, of course, re-stating his own thoughts on the Allied military invasion of Iraq, the disastrous effects of which are even now being felt in the rise of the so-called, and undeniably brutal, Islamic State. More importantly, Said had once again rounded on the gatekeepers of knowledge, scholars who, in his opinion, were at least partly responsible for the war, because,

[w]ithout a well-organized sense that these people over there were not like 'us' and didn't appreciate 'our' values – the very core of traditional Orientalist dogma as I describe its creation and circulation in this book [*Orientalism*] –there would have been no war.¹⁵⁹

Bernard Lewis was an advisor to President George W. Bush in the aftermath of the attacks on the United States by *Al-Qaeda* on September 11, 2001.¹⁶⁰ Taking his lead from a report on *USA Today*, Lamis Andoi argued that

Lewis participated in a special meeting for the Defence Advisory Board, led by the leader of the warmongers, Richard Perle, on 19 September, 2001...Lewis's meetings with...President Bush...were crucial to promoting [Paul] Wolfowitz's [then American Deputy Secretary of Defence] agenda of refocusing the administration's attentions on a war against Iraq.¹⁶¹

Said's characterization is at least in part suspect. He fails to account for the nuances of 'the Orientalist' in question: are all Orientalists 'European or American, first'? The thrust of his

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. xiv-xv. Fouad Ajami (1945-2014) was a Lebanese scholar. See, Douglas Martin, the *New York Times* Obituary, 'Fouad Ajami, Commentator and Expert in Arab History, dies at 68', 23rd June, 2014, at <http://www.newyorktimes.com> [accessed 20-6-2015].

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. xv

¹⁵⁹ For an informed overview of *Al-Qaeda* see Jason Burke, *Al-Qaeda: Casting a Shadow of Terror* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

¹⁶⁰ 'Bernard Lewis: in the Service of Empire', *The Electronic Intifada*, December 16, 2002. Reported on <http://www.campus-watch.org/article/id/4755>. [accessed 11-11-08]. Campus Watch is a notorious website set up by the far-Right US academic, Daniel Pipes. The website is sometimes accused by more left-leaning intellectuals of McCarthyism.

argument is correct: there is a relationship between knowledge, identity, and power. It is also clear that when Said addresses political issues, he is not afraid to compromise his exilic approach by introducing polemic. The question, then, is what this means for Said's own production of knowledge, coloured as it was by his partisan declaration in *Diacritics* that in the writing of *Orientalism* he was speaking as, and for, 'Orientals'. The question of how a politicized scholar like Said could create – if it is possible to do so - 'pure knowledge', whilst at the same time producing the statement that his major critique of the field of Oriental studies in *Orientalism* is 'a partisan book, not a theoretical machine', provides an interesting point of tension in a project of resistance founded on non-coercive knowledge.¹⁶²

The form of the text adopted by Said in *Orientalism* suggests an underlying strategy that is outside the parameters of his exilic critical location. Written as a counter to the epic work of European comparative literature, Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, Said adopted an equally epic writing style. However, whereas Auerbach had written *Mimesis* while in, and perhaps because of, exile in Istanbul, *Orientalism* was written by a Palestinian in a contentiously metaphorical exile in the United States. Auerbach and Said each wrote about various aspects of Western literature, but the similarities cannot be pushed any further. If Auerbach's critical consciousness was sharpened by his distance from the West, Said's was not. The sustained writing style in *Orientalism* was anomalous in Said's oeuvre. He was by compunction and conviction a writer who favoured the essay form and enjoyed the stop-start of rupture, beginnings, and renewal. All of this indicates that *Orientalism* is a book that was meant to stand apart from the rest of Said's oeuvre and was designed with different aims in mind. These aims were no less than to challenge the foundations of Western knowledge about the Orient by dissemination both inside and outside the academic sphere.

Orientalism is arguably the only of Said's extended works in which he is willing, in the cause of the anti-colonial struggle, to compromise his philosophical humanism and critical perspective. Because of this strategy of self-positioning and self-representation, *Orientalism* has to be mapped onto *The Question of Palestine* which appeared a year later. In *Palestine*, Said argued that the state of Israel was the 'new foreign colonialism'.¹⁶³ Anything pertinent

¹⁶² *Orientalism*, p. 30.

¹⁶³ Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 8.

to the history of Palestine is experienced by Said in extremely sensitive and emotive ways. This is not the same as saying that *Orientalism* was a book that intended to throw direct light on that particular sphere of conflict. It was not. That challenge was confronted by *The Question of Palestine*, and in a constant way by Said's involvement as a public intellectual dedicated to raising the profile of the Palestinian presence in Palestine/Israel. It indicates that *Orientalism* was both part of Said's wider political strategy and intrinsic to his Vichian style of self-making. These elements collide at the point at which Said argues that 'I would accept the overall impression that *Orientalism* is written out of an extremely concrete history of personal loss and national disintegration'.¹⁶⁴ One of the safest assumptions of this thesis has been that Palestine was always central to Said's thoughts and worldview. For the moment, though, the centrality of Palestine was deferred in order to make possible a wider study of Western Orientalism. If the real source of Said's agony was Palestine, the pain was sometimes displaced to other geographical locations and conflicts.

In sum, then, Said positioned *Orientalism* as an assault on a body of scholarly tradition that had begun in Britain and France, had spread by virtue of power relations to the United States, had consolidated itself in wider cultural forms, and had resulted in a situation where even in his own environment in America,

[t]he web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. It has made matters worse for him to remark that no person academically involved with the Near East – no Orientalist, that is, - has ever in the United States culturally and politically identified himself wholeheartedly with the Arabs.¹⁶⁵

Said was correct in his thesis that Orientalism in its various forms is able to function alongside and perhaps as a constituent part of Western power. However, because of its over-determinism, Said's account of Orientalism is theoretically and empirically unsound, as he intended it should be so. In Said's thesis, the creation of the imaginary Orient was an all-encompassing cultural and political affair in which dynamism and change is unaccountably absent. Said presents a world in which there has always been a static relationship between

¹⁶⁴ *Orientalism*, p. 338.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Western knowledge and power. In his valiant compromise, though, did Said enable or constrain beginnings, change, or rupture?

Said's Paradigm: Platform or Prison?

Whatever Said's intentions, one of the outcomes of *Orientalism* has been to create a discourse which homogenizes an entire field of study. His reluctance to acknowledge resistance and his recourse to generalizations and stereotypes has led to a certain theoretical impasse. Nevertheless, I will contend that the legacy of *Orientalism* – with conditions - is a positive one.

With regard to postcolonial theory and the field of postcolonial studies, the impetus provided by *Orientalism* has been hugely productive, if only because so much inquiry has been produced *against* Said's ideas. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to place too much emphasis on Said's contribution to postcolonial theory, which, although immense, was part of a longer genealogy of resistance. Stam and Shohat argue that '[i]n our view, the various "questions" – the Jewish, Muslim, "Indian," Black, and African questions – have been interwoven for centuries'.¹⁶⁶ They argue that the trajectories of postcolonial theory can be traced back 'to the events associated with the cataclysmic moment summoned up by the various "1492s" – that is, the conquests of the "new" world, the expulsion of the Moors, and the Inquisition'.¹⁶⁷ Said is not entirely absent from their configuration. Stam and Shohat argue that

[t]he events summed up in the date 1492 suggest that the history of nineteenth-century European imperial discourses, including Said's highlighting of post-Enlightenment Orientalism, could be narrated differently, in terms of the twinned beginnings of both colonial and Orientalist discourse.¹⁶⁸

Stam and Shohat's point is that what became known as colonial discourse analysis because of Said's *Orientalism* was simply another chapter – albeit a profound one - in anti-colonial resistance. If Said's effort was a beginning of the sort he attached to huge ruptures in the

¹⁶⁶ Robert Stam and Ella Shohat, 'Whence and Whither Postcolonial Theory?', *New Literary History*, 43 (2012), 371-39 (p. 372).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 372-373.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

ways that human beings see the world, it was also the critical catalyst for a renewed exploration of old issues.

Three examples of recent scholarship inspired by *Orientalism*, and which come under the general rubric of postcolonial theory, exemplify this point. Firstly, in a challenge to the received sense of the relationship between imperialism and Orientalism, Landry argues that the discursive paradigm outlined by Said works to illuminate pre-1800 writings which expose 'certain tendencies that emerge before the fact of British imperial might or colonial administrative experience'.¹⁶⁹ Secondly, in a similar vein, Rajeshwari Mishka Sinha utilizes the constraining parameters of Said's paradigm, focusing specifically on Indian philosophy and philology, and Sanskrit and Buddhist texts.¹⁷⁰ Where in *Orientalism* Said seems to suggest that American Orientalism responds and develops primarily in response to post-war interests in the Middle East, Sinha examines what she argues is evidence of an American Orientalism in the nineteenth-century that is closely linked to spiritualism, alternative religion and heterodox cults from the mid-nineteenth century. Moreover, Sinha argues that American Orientalism influenced American modernist literature, drawing a line through to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). Sinha also highlights the influence of German Orientalism, an omission for which Said was reproached by British scholar and editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*, Robert Irwin.

Thirdly, the propensity of the paradigm of *Orientalism* to address contemporary issues comes to fruition in the work of Yonatan Mendel, who writes on the subject of Orientalism and Israeli society, a theme at the core of Said's work.¹⁷¹ Mendel has argued that Israeli production of 'knowledge' is quite similar to that of the classical Orientalists. The Arab is constructed by Israeli Zionists who control the sources of the distribution of knowledge. The outcome of this process is that Arabs are represented as 'not ready for peace', as people who live in villages, not cities; as fundamentally and irrevocably 'Other'. This knowledge, argues Mendel, has become part of a discourse that excludes Arabs from

¹⁶⁹ This citation was taken from a paper, 'Said before Said', presented at a conference at the University of York on November 1st, 2008, entitled *Orientalism: 30 Years Later*. Subsequently revised and published as Donna Landry, 'Said before Said', in Ziad Elmarsafy, Anna Bernard, and David Atwell, eds., *Debating Orientalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 1992), pp. 55-72.

¹⁷⁰ This citation derives from a paper presented at the conference, above, by Rajeshwari Mishka Sinha, 'American Orientalism in the Nineteenth Century'.

¹⁷¹ This citation derives from a paper presented at the conference, above, by Yonatan, Mendel, 'How does an Arab Think? Orientalism and Israeli Society'.

Israeli society, thus perpetuating social, cultural, political and economic conflict. Mendel uses various sources of statistical information to support his claims, and clearly these need to be verified. However, Orientalism is a framework within which to address issues that lie slightly outside the 'normal' remit of Said's original paradigm. By utilizing Orientalism, it is possible to view Israel as a geographical part of the East, but not actually within it. To view Israel in that way is a very dangerous development and not one, perhaps, that contributes much to the peace process, such as it is.

The relationship between knowledge and power is ever-present. Arguably one of the first books to offer 'postcolonial theory' in the Western world was *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), written by Australians and dealing with the plethora of literature emanating from the 'ex'- colonial countries.¹⁷² The field was quickly appropriated by the broader Western academy. For a field that deals with the effects of Western colonialism and imperialism to be located in the West presents difficulties, not least because ownership of the relationship between knowledge and power reverts to the colonial metropolitan centre. In this sense, the field of postcolonial studies has always been susceptible to accusations that it perpetuates the systems of knowledge production it claims to expose and is therefore 'politically complicit with the dominant neo-colonial regimes of knowledge'.¹⁷³ In the main, 'such attacks are most notoriously associated with one of Said's chief intellectual opponents, Aijaz Ahmad'.¹⁷⁴ Moore-Gilbert argues that postcolonial theory 'is shaped to a significant degree, by methodological affiliations to French 'high' theory, notably Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Michael Foucault. In practice this will mean the work of...Said...Spivak...and Bhaba'.¹⁷⁵ This is a generalization, because only in its 'humanist' elements is Said connected to Foucault, and he was certainly not affiliated to French 'high' theory'. Nevertheless, in appearance at least, this renders the field of postcolonial theory as Eurocentric. How, then, to reconcile Said's location within the Western academy with his claim to attack it through an examination of colonial discourse? It has been argued that that there are 'worrying questions of the relation of post-colonial studies to neo-colonial

¹⁷² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Studies* (London: Routledge, 1989).

¹⁷³ Moore-Gilbert, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

economies of power/knowledge'.¹⁷⁶ Citing the experience of Russian Orientalism, Khalid has argued that a much broader geographical framework is needed to 'rescue post-colonial studies from its basic Eurocentrism that comes from having generated the vast bulk of its literature from the experience of just two empires'.¹⁷⁷ A starting point for Said might have been to follow the lead of Indian postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak, who 'consistently and scrupulously acknowledges the ambiguities of her own position as a privileged Western-based critic of (neo-) colonialism, and draws attention to her "complicitous" position in a "workplace engaged in the ideological production of neo-colonialism"'.¹⁷⁸ So, while *Orientalism* possibly spawned and has proven extremely productive within the field of postcolonial theory and colonial discourse, its lack of self-reflection, its refusal to acknowledge its own part in the possible production of neo-colonial knowledge has been damaging. Said, unwittingly or not, provided the impetus for a serious swell of resistance to the modes of domination emanating from the European and Anglo-American worlds over a considerable period of time. It is very difficult to imagine what the world would look like had *Orientalism* never been published. Surely, it is always right to draw attention to forces that sustain domination.

This is partly what occurred in Palestine/Israel, where Said provided the impetus for the emergence of a new wave of radical scholarship. Noting the effect of Said's 1979 work, *The Question of Palestine*, the Israeli-Jewish scholar Ilan Pappé has argued that '[his] intertwined interest in the world of the subalterns and in Palestine explains why Said influenced the academic scene in Israel'.¹⁷⁹ Pappé argued that the outpouring of revisionist historical scholarship in Israel has been greatly influenced through the work undertaken by Said from within the United States. 'His methods,' argues Pappé, 'meshed well with the emergence in the 1990s of what I term elsewhere the "post-Zionist" movement and decade', and his influence can be found in post-Zionism's 'postcolonialist deconstruction of

¹⁷⁶ Chrisman and Williams, p. ix.

¹⁷⁷ Adeeb Khalid, 'Russian History and the Debate over Orientalism', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 1 (2000), 691-699 (p. 693).

¹⁷⁸ Moore-Gilbert, p. 78.

¹⁷⁹ Ilan Pappé, 'Edward Said's Impact on Post-Zionist Critique in Israel', in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation*, ed. by Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (London: University of California Press, 2010), pp. 321-332; p. 321. See also Pappé, "The Post-Zionist Critique; Part 1: The Academic Debate," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 26 (1997), 29-41.

the present reality'.¹⁸⁰ As Said adopted Fanon's critical eye for the realities of 'liberation' from colonialism, so the post-Zionists 'shared Said's critique of the "new Middle East" scenario that accompanied the Oslo Accords and the pax Americana of the 1990s'.¹⁸¹ In line with Said, the Post-Zionists saw the process 'as new, softer, and nicer, clothing for the self-presentation of Israel as an Orientalist country in the area'.¹⁸²

Closer to his home in the United States, Said's influence can be found in the swell of radical scholarship whose central concern is the issue of Israel/Palestine.¹⁸³ Stein and Swedenburg, whose focus is popular culture, have argued that Said is an important figure in 'the history of this radical scholarly agenda as it pertains to the U. S. academy'.¹⁸⁴ They argue that 'the question of popular culture in Palestine and Israel is fundamentally one of politics and power'.¹⁸⁵ These scholars have developed Said's work on colonial discourse and considerably expanded its reach.

In addition to the work of scholars like Mendel, Said's most well-known intellectual successors are Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. In a display of the productive force of Orientalism, Spivak 'more characteristically focuses on various manifestations of counter-discourse'.¹⁸⁶ In her seminal essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' Spivak attempts to recover the voice of the subaltern that has been virtually effaced by Western discourse.¹⁸⁷ Spivak moves towards a persistent, less homogenizing critique than the one offered by Said. Bhabha seeks to 'emphasize the mutualities and negotiations across the colonial divide'.¹⁸⁸ In accord with Said's discourse, Bhabha 'assumes a relationship of continuity rather than rupture between the eras of colonialism and the contemporary present'.¹⁸⁹

One of *Orientalism's* legacies has been to encourage public and scholarly scepticism towards forms of apparently authoritative and unassailable knowledge, an activity

¹⁸⁰ Pappé, 'The Post-Zionist Critique; Part 1: The Academic Debate', p. 33.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Any challenge to Israel's authority is generally deemed to be 'radical' in the United States.

¹⁸⁴ Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg, eds., *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Moore-Gilbert, p. 75.

¹⁸⁷ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp. 271-313.

¹⁸⁸ Moore-Gilbert, p. 116.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

embodied in the perhaps irreversible 'fact' that the relationship between scholarly Orientalism and political power is now open to serious scrutiny. There has always been a relationship between the field of 'Oriental studies' and political power and Said brought it to public attention in a very forceful way. The relationship between Western knowledge of the Orient and political power holds true and is unlikely to change, whether the field is called Oriental Studies or Middle East Studies. Scrutiny of this relationship has become relevant in the contemporary world, which has experienced a renewed polarization of the concepts of 'East' and 'West' since the bombing of the World Trade Center in 2001. Hirsh argues that the European powers are complicit in the neo-colonialism of an 'American power that guarantees...[their] freedom'.¹⁹⁰ In the same way that neo-colonialism connects with but does not signal the end of colonialism, there are continuities in the relationship between power and knowledge.

As Intended, Three Flawed Modes of Criticism

It has been shown how Said struggled against one of the sites of knowledge production approved by Western power, scholarly Orientalism, and attempted - with considerable success - a critical deconstruction of wider Western Orientalism. This strategy suggests that he was able, within the parameters of his training in comparative literature, to resist knowledge produced, unwittingly or not, in support of Western imperialism. Said was yet, though, to create his distinct modes of literary and cultural criticism. This situation was gradually rectified in the next fifteen years or so, as he began to increase the scope and density of his efforts in the academic sphere. Said produced three modes of idiosyncratic criticism: 'secular', 'democratic', and 'contrapuntal'. Why, it might be asked, when *Orientalism* had been so effective in forcing the issue of the relationship between knowledge and Western imperial/colonial power into the mainstream, should he choose to retreat back into the relatively narrow and specialised regime of the academic sphere? The argument will be developed that his general intention in these modes of criticism was to resist the disconnection of literary and cultural criticism from the political world, and therefore from 'power', and to instead demonstrate the connections between them. At

¹⁹⁰ Michael Hirsh, *At War with Ourselves: Why America is Squandering its Chance to Build a Better World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 250-251.

base, Said was an academic. In short, the three disparate modes of criticism were informed by Said's wider strategy to combat Western imperialism on the site of knowledge production, *as an academic* using the skills available to him. If this strategy of connecting the cultural sphere with power gave Said the appearance of a profoundly political cultural critic, this perception is correct; the perception, however, is in itself a normalization of the practice of disconnecting culture and 'world'. It might be more accurate to describe Said as simply a 'critic'. By connecting culture with its worldly actualities – which always include power - Said was simply 'doing' criticism as it should be done. The underlying argument is that Said produced three modes of criticism that were not intended to enact theoretical closures, or to be his final word on criticism. The three modes constitute powerful forms of inquiry that are nevertheless intrinsically flawed. It would be quite wrong to fix on one mode of criticism or another and to forget that they were intended to be provisional forms.

Secular Criticism

'Secular Criticism' was the first of Said's modes of criticism, and the title of the introductory essay to *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, published in conventional book form in 1983.¹⁹¹ In fact, secular criticism was the term given by Said to a series of principles – a framework – set down precisely to deal with the disconnections between culture and 'world'. Such was the significance of secular criticism to Said's project that, according to Mufti, it

is the concept that unifies, or brings into articulation, such aspects of insistence on the 'worldliness' of language and text, the insistence on the connections between criticism and exile, and the seemingly paradoxical attempt to save the world of art for an ultimately individual and isolated aesthetic contemplation.¹⁹²

Secular criticism was presented in Said's fifth major book and represented a return to the sphere of literary criticism and theory after his diversion into a trilogy of overtly political, and certainly controversial, works: *Orientalism* (1978), *The Question of Palestine* (1979), and *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the*

¹⁹¹ For a history of this institution see Max Hall, *Harvard University Press: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

¹⁹² Aamir R. Mufti, 'Critical Secularism: A Reintroduction for Perilous Times', *boundary 2*, 31 (2004), 1-9 (p. 2).

World (1981). The study consisted of an introduction, twelve chapters and a conclusion, which covered a wide variety of themes and interests. Several of the chapters were revisions (usually slight) of previously published essays that appeared in a variety of publications and journals. The title of the book was derived from the essay, 'The World, the Text, the Critic', published in 1979 in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*.¹⁹³ It emerged 'at a time when the world of humanistic knowledge was coming to be shaken to its core, its basic assumptions about the possibilities of knowledge seemingly washed away'.¹⁹⁴ It was a moment when Said began to question, but not break from, his affiliations to humanism and attempted to direct his critical consciousness at 'new', post-modern 'knowledge'. Mufti argues that in Said's hands the term 'secular' can be seen to challenge humanistic knowledge; it is 'a practice of unbelief [directed] at all those moments at which thought and culture become frozen, congealed, thinglike, and self-enclosed – hence the significance for him of Lukács's notion of reification'.¹⁹⁵ The publication of Said's essay in *Textual Strategies* was both of an indication of the strength of French influence on contemporary Anglo-American criticism and his on-going relationship with structuralism and poststructuralism. The conjunctive 'and' was removed from the amended original, with the purpose perhaps to underline that Said viewed the three terms as interdependent. Said observed that '[w]ith two exceptions, all of the essays collected here were written during the period immediately following the completion of my book *Beginnings: Intention and Method*'.¹⁹⁶ *The World, the Text, and the Critic* was a critical success, and was awarded the 1984 René Wellek Prize of the American Comparative Literature Association. It was, then, a book rooted in the Anglo/American academy even if one of its aims was to disrupt what Said argued was the normalization in this sphere of disconnection between the cultural and political realms.

To reinforce a point made above: the fact that in the year before the publication of *The World, the Text, and the Critic* one of the worst atrocities in recent Palestinian history occurred - namely the 1982 Sabra massacre of at least 2000 Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Christian Militia - begs the question of why Said should appear to turn away from

¹⁹³ Josue V. Harari, ed., *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 161-88.

¹⁹⁴ Mufti, p. 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁶ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 26.

the public political sphere and return to ostensibly more localised questions of literary theory and criticism.¹⁹⁷ In fact, Said was not so much turning away from the political sphere as attempting to re-connect literary and cultural criticism and critics to it. His thoughts were focussed in the direction of a situation where ‘we can best understand language by making discourse visible not as a historical task but by a political one’.¹⁹⁸ The position occupied by Said was broadly characteristic of the one he had detected ‘in Foucault’s thoughts in 1968 – after *Les Mots* and before *L’Archéologie...*the one reconceiving the problem of language not in an ontological but in a political or ethical framework, the Nietzschean framework’.¹⁹⁹ The critical framework proposed by Foucault was geopolitical, and as he stated:

[t]he longer I continue, the more it seems to me that the formation of discourses and the genealogy of knowledge need to be analysed, not in terms of consciousness, modes of perception and forms of ideology, but in terms of tactics and strategies of power. Tactics and strategies deployed through implantations, distributions, demarcations, control of territories and organisations of domains which could well make up a sort of geopolitics.²⁰⁰

What, then, were the geopolitical implications of Said’s strategic secular criticism? Said offered two interconnecting actualities that inform secular criticism, both of which resonate vibrantly with Foucault’s geopolitical framework:

a philosophy of pure textuality and critical non-interference has coincided with the ascendancy of Reaganism, or for that matter with a new cold war, increased militarism and defense spending, and a massive turn to the right on matters touching economy, social services, and organized labor.²⁰¹

In Said’s analysis of the relationship between literary criticism and the political sphere, he was prone not to apply the critical consciousness to the situation in hand. He overlooks the oppositional elements in Foucault, Derrida, and even Chomsky, and begins to frame the intellectual sphere in terms of a conspiracy between academics, intellectuals, and power. In one of the essays in *The World, ‘Reflections on American “Left” Literary Criticism’*, Said argues that whereas ‘[n]o one would have any trouble finding a Left in American culture between the twenties and the fifties’, the situation now is that ‘oppositional Left criticism

¹⁹⁷ See Thomas L. Friedman, ‘The Beirut Massacre: the Four Days’, in *The New York Times*, September 26, 1982. <http://www.nytimes.com/1982/09/26/world/the-beirut-massacre-the-four-days.html> [accessed 23-7-2015].

¹⁹⁸ Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 219.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, ‘Questions of Geography’, a 1976 interview, in *Power/Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), p. 77. Quoted in Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 219.

²⁰¹ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 4.

contributes very little to intellectual debate'.²⁰² In essence, Said was arguing that although the main function of the Left had always been oppositional, it had taken a few steps to the Right. As shown, this was a distortion of the historical presence of the Marxist Left in the United States. The consequences for 'knowledge' (in the sense that 'true' knowledge is never attainable and must therefore always be open to scrutiny and challenge) in the new order, then, were limited. One of the outcomes of this situation was that it,

so restricted our scope of vision that a positive (as opposed to an implicit or passive) doctrine of non-interference among fields has set in. This doctrine has it that the general public is left ignorant, and the most crucial policy questions are best left to 'experts,' specialists who talk about their specialty only...people (usually men) who are endowed with the special privilege of knowing how things really work and, more important, of being close to power.²⁰³

It could be argued that the 'general public' is always kept in the dark by the political classes, Left or Right. Said, who was always 'out of place', was therefore inclined towards opposition, a tendency that designated him as an intellectual of the Left. However, his ire was aimed at both the political Right and the intellectual Left. Said's objections to a political Right which encompassed the likes of the respective Bush administrations and their state-sponsored 'humanitarian interventions' in various other lands hardly need stating, his contempt for the intellectual Left perhaps more so. Rightly or wrongly, Said was opposed to a critical philosophy which risked fetishizing textuality, even if that critical method was itself the product of the radical thoughts on knowledge of oppositional figures like Foucault and Derrida and was by no means isolated from worldly circumstances.

Said's response to the situation he characterizes, noted above, represented a thread of opposition to what he viewed as the coalescence of academic non-interference with the 'downgrading' of literary criticism, and the ascendancy of right-wing politics in the United States and Great Britain, the outcome of which would eventually be felt in military action in places as diverse as the Falkland Islands, the Middle East, and Libya. In geopolitical terms, far from being a passive critical framework for consumption in the academy, secular criticism was designed with the specific political intention of countering these mainly imperial interests.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 172.

²⁰³ Edward W. Said, 'Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community', *Critical Inquiry*, 9 (1982), 1-26. Also in Said, *Reflections on Exile*, p. 119.

The process of connecting culture and power was not a new departure for Said. He argued

that in the study of literature, not only has a thoroughly pernicious and unexamined distinction been perpetuated between the primacy of 'creative' writing and secondary writing (so that the novel, for example, is thought of as the grandest form, because the most enormously present and eternal, instead of as the most circumstantial of all genres), but also there has been maintained an almost Platonic view of a text or of an author, a view that militates totally against the realities of producing a text.²⁰⁴

Said's antagonism was based on a simple question: if removed from its relationship with the 'realities of producing a text', what 'worldly' purpose was left for criticism? Even before Said had begun to establish a mode of 'secular criticism', then, in *Beginnings: Intention and Method* he had gone some way towards preparing the groundwork for such an event. In opposition to the secular attitude of 'unbelief' proposed by Said was the quasi-religious notion of such things as 'the primacy of "creative" writing,' a powerful concept that struggled 'against the realities of producing a text'. Key to this situation was Said's old adversaries and colleagues, the professional gatekeepers and producers of knowledge. One of the most acute problems in the institutions,

is specialization, an ideological professionalism, and a hierarchical system of values that places the reinforcement of traditional explanations at the top (by granting rewards and prestige) and keeps beginning speculations that deal heedlessly with the artificial barriers between "original" and "critical" at the very bottom. These institutions are characterized by Foucault and Chomsky (correctly, I think) as representing power.²⁰⁵

The reinforcement of 'traditional explanations' – such as the binary oppositions provided by Western Orientalism that lent justification to 'our' occupation of other lands – troubled Said. Denied the possibilities of inaugurating critical beginnings, then, it was necessary for him to exert influence, to cajole academies and scholars away from their 'pernicious' relationship with state power. If, as Said argues, 'the cultural realm and its expertise are institutionally divorced from their real connections with power', then at least some of the

²⁰⁴ *Beginnings*, pp. 379-380.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 379.

blame must rest with those people charged with the task of ensuring that this does not happen.²⁰⁶

What Said proposed, was no less than a thorough overhaul of contemporary literary criticism. In the opening paragraph of 'Secular Criticism' Said alluded to the four major forms of literary criticism that are currently practised in the American academy: 'practical criticism', 'academic literary history', 'literary appreciation and interpretation', and 'a relatively new subject' called 'literary theory', each of which he considers to be inadequate for the serious political issues at hand.²⁰⁷ Said argued that 'if what in this volume I call criticism or critical consciousness has any contribution to make, it is in the attempt to go beyond the four forms'.²⁰⁸ In Said's view, because of their complex connections to power the four forms do not constitute what he termed 'secular' criticism. The complexity of the relationship between literary criticism and power is in the ways that criticism hides, rather than illuminates, their relationship. Said argues that 'the prevailing situation of criticism is such that the four forms represent in each instance specialization...and a very precise division of intellectual labor'.²⁰⁹ To Said, 'specialization' is a division of labour which not only fails to acknowledge the interconnectedness of the various spheres of literature both to each other and to the 'world', but is by definition a mode which is incapable of occupying the 'nodal point' at which critical consciousness begins. The activity he defines as criticism is only possible when the critic stands outside the dominant culture and 'the individual consciousness [is] placed at a sensitive nodal point'.²¹⁰ The 'nodal point', a location which corresponds to Said's critical ideal of 'exile', is only accessible when

[o]n the one hand, the individual mind registers and is very much aware of the collective whole, context, or situation in which it finds itself. On the other hand, precisely because of this awareness – a worldly self-situating, a sensitive response to the dominant culture – that the individual consciousness is not naturally and easily a mere child of the culture, but a historical and social actor in it. And because of that perspective, which introduces circumstance and distinction where there had only been conformity and belonging, there is distance, or what we might also call criticism.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 2.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

A tall order, then, for aspiring critics, bombarded as they inevitably are by the powerful discourses outlined in *Orientalism*, particularly if they have not experienced the sort of physical exile endured by some Palestinians, or that of the German writer, Erich Auerbach. Certainly, in *Orientalism* Said did not find it within himself to stand so far outside the dominant culture as to present the many voices of resistance to Western colonialism which had always existed in a symbiotic relationship with the colonizers. It was Auerbach's 'exile at that time of fascism in Europe', argued Said, that enabled him to produce his monumental analysis of Western literature, *Mimesis*.²¹² The critic, then, must be conscious of their complex situation within the 'dominant culture' - without which they cannot exert individual 'perspective' – one of the results of which is accessibility to the 'nodal point', or 'critical consciousness'. Said argued that 'the contemporary critical consciousness stands between the temptations represented by two formidable and related powers engaging critical attention'.²¹³ The first 'is the culture to which critics are bound filiatively (by birth, nationality, profession)' where Said was perhaps alluding to the powerful relationship between culture and nationalism.²¹⁴ The second 'is a method or system acquired affiliatively (by social and political conviction, economic and historical circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation)'.²¹⁵ Whilst acknowledging that the temptations of filiative and affiliative ties are incredibly hard to disentangle, Said draws on the examples of Vico and the Irish writer, intellectual, and political pamphleteer, Jonathan Swift whose 'whole enterprise [was] to resist these pressures in everything they did, albeit of course, that they were worldly writers and materially bound to their time'.²¹⁶

To Said, specialization implies that the critical consciousness is not fully and properly engaged. Specialization is therefore coterminous with a religious, dogmatic approach, and implies a lack of what Mufti called 'unbelief'. In Said's view, the specialized nature of literary criticism is representative of a significant structure with affiliations to state power. Outside of, but very much constituent with a guild, specialization is characterized by its specific function, which, Said argues, is to divide and rule: to disconnect different modes of criticism both from each other and from their relationship to the wider world. However, in

²¹² Ibid., p. 6.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 25.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

his distrust of specialization, Said – conveniently perhaps – overlooks the fact that without specialization there would have been no Saussurean linguistics, Derridean deconstruction, or Foucauldian discourse theory, each of which were crucial to his understanding of knowledge and criticism. Mufti argues that secular criticism is ‘also an invitation to the crossing of boundaries – boundaries of nation, tradition, religion, race, and language – and carries with it the implication that the world as a whole can be the only authentic horizon of critical practice’.²¹⁷ It may well involve an invitation of the sort Mufti suggests, but this characterization of Said’s secular theory as having a monopoly over the critical consciousness has the effect of removing the agency of the ‘specialist’ critic. More in line with Said’s humanism, perhaps, is the idea that specialization is practised by human beings who are all unique and whose commitment to one path is never predictable or assured. Specialization automatically requires that the specialist is unable to achieve and maintain a state of critical ‘unbelief’.

In Said’s opinion, the most pernicious mode of specialization was the relatively new field of literary theory, which, ironically, was associated with political radicalism. The irony of this statement was, as Said argued, that ‘[d]uring the late 1960s...literary theory presented itself with new claims. The intellectual origins of literary theory in Europe were, I think it is accurate to say, insurrectionary’.²¹⁸ In Said’s view, then, the rebellious lineage of literary theory, which could be traced back to the work of Saussure in 1911 and the Russian formalists, ‘had retreated into the labyrinth of “textuality,” dragging along with it the most recent apostles of European revolutionary textuality – Derrida and Foucault’.²¹⁹ In one of the essays in the collection, ‘Criticism between Culture and System’, Said argues that this metamorphosis has occurred because of the ways in which structuralism as practised by Foucault and Derrida has been domesticated ‘when it became insular and scholastic as it became in the Anglo-American tradition’.²²⁰ When transferred to the geopolitical epicentre in the United States, original thinkers like Foucault had become ineffective as agents of political opposition. In terms of Said’s essay ‘Travelling Theory’, it was a case of a whether a ‘theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for

²¹⁷ Mufti, p. 4.

²¹⁸ *The World, the Text, and the Critic*, p. 3.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 183.

another period or situation'.²²¹ The thrust of Said's argument was that the production by Foucault and Derrida of 'oppositional' knowledge was no longer oppositional. Worse still, the entire structure of this mode of oppositional thought had slipped into a pernicious mode of 'textuality' – the structuralist and poststructuralist 'obsession' with the internal features and proliferation of meanings in texts – which had, in Said's view, 'become the exact antithesis and displacement of what might be called history'.²²² By a convoluted route, textuality was therefore connected to Said's political views, because if criticism was to be predominantly about the 'text', what about the 'world' and 'history'? As *Orientalism* had demonstrated in its mode as a counter-discourse to Western Orientalism, historical narratives were crucial sites of contestation in Said's resistance. The most important of these were Palestinian and Zionist narratives. A Palestinian presence in history is a narrative that Said was rightly keen to establish. This could be achieved by filling 'the space... the space of history as opposed to the space of the sacred or the divine'.²²³ One might wonder, of course, how or by whom Said was given the authority to classify his particular version of Palestinian history as 'secular' (one formed through the practise of 'unbelief), or to label histories that countered this version as 'sacred or the divine'.

As a critical framework, secular criticism reflects Said's intentions: it should be inquisitive, non-dogmatic, open-ended, open-minded, and resistant to the slavishness of discipleship and schools of adherents. It must deal with the connections between text and world. Said cannot be allowed, though, to get away with this set of principles without also discussing secular criticism's 'worldliness'. In short, this means answering the question of who wrote it and why? The fact that secular criticism was a direct result of the emergence of fetishizing 'textuality' and its relationship to 'Reaganism', or the 'non-interference' of intellectuals, says much about the author's political viewpoint. To practice secular criticism is to engage with the political world, which is not the same as being a political critic. It is hard not to notice, though, that even if he was avowedly secular, Said was still extremely political, a trait that runs through his evocation of 'democratic criticism'.

²²¹ Ibid., p. 226.

²²² Ibid. pp. 3-4.

²²³ 'Orientalism and After', in *Power, Politics, and Culture*, pp. 208 – 232; p. 222.

Humanism and Democratic Criticism?

If in secular criticism Said re-installed his 'out of placeness', he seemed to reverse it in his evocation of 'democratic criticism'. As Radhakrishnan has speculated: '[w]hy is it that Said, whose temperament and critical sensibility are always on the side of the exilic, the borderly, and the liminal, chooses to locate critical activity within the body proper of humanism, rather than sitting it without?'²²⁴ Despite his continual flirtations, Said always refused to accept the label of 'Marxist'. He has no such problem with being called a humanist. Radhakrishnan suggests that Said was drawn to the 'continuity and the *longue durée* of humanism', although this collides with his focus on beginnings and rupture.²²⁵

Presented in the posthumously published work, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Said tethered democratic criticism to American humanism. *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* was the product of a series of lectures given at Columbia University in January 2000. As a consequence of what Said called 'a changed political and social environment', and at a time when he was gravely ill, these lectures were expanded and adapted in October and November 2003.²²⁶ The revised lectures were subsequently delivered at Cambridge University, and then adapted again for publication. The lectures and the subsequent book, then, were inflected by political events, even as they came into the world at a very different personal, historical, academic, and political moment to that of secular criticism.

In keeping with the usual pattern, Said's notion of democratic criticism was attached to a calamitous political event. The reason for the amendments to the lectures was the catastrophic events of September 11, 2001. Of still more importance for this discussion is the effect that the events had on Said and therefore on his ideas about humanism and 'democratic criticism'. In his revised preface, dated May 2003, just four months prior to his death, Said noted that

[a] changed atmosphere has overtaken the United States, and, to varying degrees, the rest of the world. The war against terrorism, the campaign in Afghanistan, the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq: all these have given rise to a world of heightened animosities, a much more aggressive American attitude towards the world, and - considering my own bicultural background - a much

²²⁴ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, 'Edward Said's Literary Humanism', *Cultural Critique*, 67 (2007), 13-42 (p. 18).

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 'p. 19.

²²⁶ Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. xv.

exacerbated conflict between what have been called ‘the West’ and ‘Islam,’ labels I have long found both misleading and more suitable for the mobilization of collective passions than for lucid understanding unless they are deconstructed analytically and critically. Far more than they fight, cultures coexist and interact fruitfully with each other. It is to this idea of humanistic culture as coexistence and sharing that these pages are meant to contribute.²²⁷

This is high-minded, if no doubt heart-felt language, and in light of the rise of the so-called Islamic State Said’s sentiments could hardly be more relevant. None of this, of course, weakens the argument made in this chapter that Said was intrinsically a political critic, that all knowledge is to some extent political, or that democratic criticism is essentially a framework for critical practice that emanates from a particular set of moral and political values, one that usually argued in favour of the ‘un-housed, exilic’ humanist tradition and yet simultaneously requires the critic to take political sides. Said, of course, did take sides. He was committedly opposed to the invasion of Iraq and the ‘occupation of Palestine, political stands which have largely been justified by subsequent academic analysis, but positions that undoubtedly permeate his work and which undermine his earlier notion of “pure knowledge”’.²²⁸ The fact that Said’s moral and political values were aligned *against* what he considered to be the United States’ (neo) imperial practices made them more, not less, entwined *politically* with the notion of democratic criticism.

Said was absolutely committed to humanism, but not necessarily as it was conventionally defined and invoked. One of the major problems of carrying this affiliation was, Said argued, that the perceived (or real)

connection between humanism as an attitude or practice that is often associated with very selective elites, be they religious, aristocratic, or educational, on the one hand, and, on the other, with an attitude of stern opposition, sometimes stated, sometimes not, to the idea that humanism might or could be a democratic process producing a critical and progressively freer mind.²²⁹

In short, then, humanism as it pertained to the humanities in academia had become, or continued to be, an environment for the few, cut off from the political world, a place which once again, after the rebellious interruptions of the 1960s and 70s, had become

²²⁷ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. xvi.

²²⁸ See Dilip Hiro, *Secrets and Lies: The True Story of the Iraq War* (New York: Nation Books, 2004).

²²⁹ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 16.

strongly influenced by T.S Eliot and later, by the Southern Agrarians and New Critics: namely that humanism was a special attainment that required the cultivating or reading of certain difficult texts and, in the process, the giving up of certain things, like amusement, pleasure, relevance to worldly circumstances, and so on.²³⁰

Said links Allan Bloom's 1987 *Closing of the American Mind* with the school of New Humanists sixty years prior,

whose principal members were Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More [who had] berated American education, culture, and academics for abandoning the classical worldview typified (tautologically enough) by the classics, Sanskrit, and a few literary monuments or languages which they happened to teach, as an antidote for what [Saul] Bellow, in his preface to Bloom's book, calls 'Health, Sex, Race, War'.²³¹

In linking humanism to democratic criticism, then, Said's intention was to formulate a new direction for western humanist criticism, one which would lead to a more 'democratic' mode of analysis, and one which would extricate humanism from its pernicious associations with Western imperialism, and from the influence of academics like Bloom and Bellow who, at root, were saying 'that too many undesirable non-Europeans had suddenly appeared at "our" gates'.²³² As a Jewish immigrant to the United States – a person belonging to a minority cultural group – Bloom remained a traditionalist, a person enthralled by the idea of the majority, the dominant national culture. If the dominant culture reflects *your* vision of the world, then you may well be in thrall to it. On the other hand, if you are an intellectual and a humanist, it is, in Said's view, your responsibility 'to present alternative narratives and other perspectives on history than those provided by combatants on behalf of official memory and national identity and mission'.²³³ Bloom's complaint that the humanities departments of universities 'have had to alter their contents for the sake of openness to other cultures', is, for the committed pluralist, wonderful to behold.²³⁴ Had he lived to see it in print, Bloom would have done well to listen to Said's insistence that 'American identity is too varied to be a unitary and homogeneous thing'.²³⁵

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

²³¹ Ibid., p. 18. Cited in Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Minds of Today's Students* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid., p. 141.

²³⁴ Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, p. 373.

²³⁵ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xxix.

The second problem envisaged by Said, and related to the first, is that the attitude exemplified by Bloom, Bellow, and some of academia, is in fact a reluctance to accept the realities of the world. By this Said means that 'of all the baggage inherited from nineteenth-century political thought, it is a notion of a unified, coherent, homogenous national identity that is now undergoing the most rethinking, and this change is being felt in every sphere of society and politics'.²³⁶ The flight to a conventional literary canon which so appealed to Bloom, is no more than a reaction to the migrations which were, and are, affecting many areas of the world, and are, moreover, simply a denial of the pluralism that has always been an integral factor in the formation of what is essentially an immigrant nation like the United States.

In Said's view, the third great site of contestation within the sphere of the academic humanities is the interpretation of history, which, as a Palestinian, was of paramount importance to him. Said notes two opposing viewpoints that 'are locked in interminable combat'.²³⁷ The first view sees 'an essentially complete history; the other sees history, even the past itself, as still unresolved'.²³⁸ In general terms, the first vision was favoured by Bloom, the latter by Said. As a Palestinian, Said probably had good reason for favouring a mode of continued scrutiny – perpetual beginnings – of the possibilities for knowledge. First, because Palestinian histories had been glossed over, and second, as the discussion of contrapuntal criticism below will show, Western colonialism continues to impinge on our everyday lives. The humanities, for Said, should function as a conduit for a democratic criticism capable of resisting theoretical and political closure: 'critique as a form of democratic freedom and as a continuous practice of questioning and of accumulating knowledge that is open to, rather than in denial of, the constituent historical realities'.²³⁹

The determining framework for the relationship between humanism and democratic criticism, then, meant for Said a 'return to philology'.²⁴⁰ Harking once more back to Saussure, it is language that again situates itself at the heart of Said's intellectual project.

²³⁶ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 24.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

Said proposes a return to close reading, but one that resists slipping into another mode of textuality that alienates the text from the 'world'. He argues that

[y]es, we need to keep coming back to the words and structures in the books we read, but, just as these words were themselves taken by the poet from the world and evoked from out of silence in the forceful ways without which no creation is possible, readers must extend their readings out into the various worlds each one of us resides in.²⁴¹

With Bloom's thoughts no doubt ringing in his ears, Said notes that '[i]t is especially appropriate for the contemporary humanist to cultivate that sense of multiple worlds and complex interacting traditions, that inevitable combination...of belonging and detachment, reception and resistance'.²⁴² Said, then, is returning to that difficult, it could be argued impossible, location which framed his analysis of secular criticism, that of the exilic consciousness which for the humanist means 'to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society of the other'.²⁴³ To be a 'democratic' critic the humanist must somehow endeavour to be what Said described as 'the non-humanist humanist'.²⁴⁴ As Spanos argues,

[t]his implies rejecting any form of nationalism grounded in a transcendental or biological (filial) principle of presence or identity – and its binary, us-against-them logic - as a construction produced by the dominant culture that justifies violence against the "Other."²⁴⁵

This is a position which, finally, Said cannot attain, attached as he was to the notion of Palestinian identity and national consciousness whose aim is fundamentally a the decolonization of Palestine. As Frantz Fanon – veteran of a 'successful anti-colonial conflict' - convincingly argued in *The Wretched of the Earth*, '[d]ecolonization, is the meeting of two forces, opposed to each other by their very nature'.²⁴⁶

Fanon's violent resistance was very different from Said's mode of democratic humanism. By and large, Said did not advocate violence and he practised his resistance from within the United States. Said's contention was that for obvious economic, social and

²⁴¹ Ibid., p. 76.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 77.

²⁴⁵ Spanos, p. 182.

²⁴⁶ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970), pp. 28-29.

political reasons '[i]t almost goes without saying that for the American intellectual the responsibility is greater, the openings numerous, the challenge very difficult'.²⁴⁷ One of the grave problems for contemporary American humanism (as discussed, Said saw himself as an American humanist with 'special' responsibilities, drawing a distinction between this classification and various other forms of humanism), and therefore for Said's ideas on secularity and secular criticism, is the damage done to humanism in humanism's name. Western military action taken on 'humanitarian grounds' – particularly in the period following the declaration of 'The War on Terrorism' – led to less than 'humane' consequences for the countries affected by the subsequent actions. In attempting to map out the sphere of contemporary humanism, Said describes the ways that 'so many of the words in current discourse have 'human' (and implying 'humane' and 'humanistic') at their cores. NATO's bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, for example, was described as a 'humanitarian intervention,' though many of its results struck people as deeply inhumane'.²⁴⁸ Despite the enormous loss of life and vociferous resistance to his views from politicians and academics alike, former British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, continues to insist that the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were carried out with 'a humanitarian purpose'.²⁴⁹ Sadly missing from these espousals of 'humanitarian' interventions is a secular interpretation of history. In its place, the 'divine' is frequently called upon to assist in the various occupations and invasions. George W. Bush's Ultimatum speech to the nation prior to the invasion of Iraq ended with the words 'may God continue to bless America'.²⁵⁰ In the wake of 9/11, Osama bin Laden's 'Letter to America', reported in *The Guardian* on November 24th, 2002, began with the words 'In the name of Allah'.²⁵¹ If the narrow, 'traditional' visions of society perpetuated as knowledge by academics like Bloom are added to these deformations of humanism, the urgency of Said's resistance becomes ever more apparent.

²⁴⁷ *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, p. 135.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²⁴⁹ 'Tony Blair Speech to Chicago Council on Global Affairs', April 23rd, 2009. <http://www.tonyblairoffice.org> [accessed 1-7-2013]. Blair continues to defend the invasion: see 'Iraq Inquiry Hears Defiant Blair say I'd do it Again', 29-1-2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8485694.stm> [accessed 15-8-2015]

²⁵⁰ 'A Transcript of George Bush's War Ultimatum Speech from the Cross Hall in the White House', <http://www.theguardian.com> March 18th, 2003. [1-8-2013]

²⁵¹ 'Full Text: bin Laden's 'Letter to America', 24-11-2002. <http://theguardian.com> [accessed 1-8-2013]

Few would argue that in defining democratic criticism against racial, cultural, and ethnic bigotry Said's intentions were a commendable step towards rescuing humanism from the associations with the events discussed, above. To stand outside the dominant culture, to believe in the values of 'democratic freedom', and to situate criticism in the secular world provide an idealized intellectual framework. Except, of course, that humanism was not outside the dominant culture, only Said's version of it. However, as with secular criticism, democratic criticism was less a practical technique for deconstructing texts than an exemplary – if idealized – set of principles, principles informed unwittingly or not by Said's geopolitical strategy. As a precautionary measure it is worth noting how resonant the language is in these modes of criticism with that of the postcolonial school of criticism, and in turn to the language of empire. The postcolonial 'school' may have been authorized by the success of *Orientalism*, but it was not always philosophically in tune with Said's thoughts on critical secularism. Robert Spencer, for example, exhibits a zealotry bordering on the religious. It can be more or less taken as read that the word 'democratic' became part of the Western civilizing lexicon, the world 'secular' less so. Paradoxically, Said's 'secular' approach attracts adherents with the religious zeal, if not the moral values, of old-fashioned imperialism. In response to *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, and seeking to affirm his field's connections to humanism, Spencer, a Saidian post-colonial critic, writes that 'the calling of the postcolonial critic [is to] to help humankind prevail over the manifestly undiminished consequences of imperialism'.²⁵² Whilst Spencer astutely notes that Said was attempting to reaffirm 'humanism as the basis of principled intellectual work', he is less 'secular' in his claims that '[t]he challenge presented to his readers by the humanist in the public sphere is, then, to peer beyond the bounds of ordinary knowledge'.²⁵³ If something more than 'ordinary knowledge' is not a religious sentiment, then what might it be? There, in fact, lies the problem with Said's attempts at a secular approach to criticism, histories, and politics: it produces an endless struggle over the meaning of 'knowledge', a will to take ownership of language, and a struggle over critical methodology which more often than not results in less attention being paid to 'worldly' issues.

²⁵² Robert Spencer, 'Edward Said and the War in Iraq', *New Formations*, 59 (2006), pp. 52-62.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Contrapuntal Analysis: Binaries or Nuance?

Contrapuntal criticism is a secular, if political, approach to historical analysis that confronts the subject of knowledge from the viewpoint espoused by Said in his confrontation with Bloom: there is no such thing as a unitary history. The idea of contrapuntal criticism appears in Said's final major work, *Culture and Imperialism*, a response to his call in *Orientalism* for an analysis of the relationship between these key terms and the complex systems that they signify. As a literary and cultural critic Said's interest was in the literary and linguistic shelves of the 'cultural archive', but in *Culture and Imperialism* he takes his controlling metaphor from the world of music, a field outside his normal professional life but well within his social one.²⁵⁴ As a gifted and trained pianist music was a sphere Said knew very well and one that became increasingly important to him over the course of his life and career. Nevertheless, music was on the periphery of his expertise, perhaps an exile of sorts, and one that presented him with a perspective that was liberated from the constraints of his usual academic life. To invoke 'counterpoint' as a controlling metaphor of one aspect of his criticism was, in some ways, a manifestation of the philosophical 'exilic' state that he ascribed to his self-representation. Contrapuntal criticism alludes to the situation where,

[i]n the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work.²⁵⁵

Said 'was fascinated by the idea of counterpoint's 'simultaneity of voices,' voices that are 'always continuing to sound against, as well as with, all the others'.²⁵⁶ Hutcheon argues that 'Said saved the word "contrapuntal" to describe only the most positive things he valued'.²⁵⁷ This is an overstatement, perhaps, and one that excludes some very important concepts that were also extremely close to Said's heart: 'Palestine', 'humanism', and 'family'. Where each of these things of 'value' to Said converged was in the fact that they were constants, emerging quite early in his life and enduring to the end.

²⁵⁴ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 59.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

²⁵⁶ Linda Hutcheon, 'Edward Said on Music: Always Comparative, Always Contrapuntal', *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 83 (2014), 21-27 (p. 24).

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Although in Said's oeuvre the term 'contrapuntal' is best known for its appearance in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), it actually emerged much earlier in his work. Mortimer notes how 'before applying contrapuntality to literature, he [Said] evoked it in terms of the exile's heightened awareness of multiple dimensions'.²⁵⁸ In 'The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile' (1984), Said argued that

[m]ost people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal.²⁵⁹

The contrapuntal theme can be traced forward from 'The Mind of Winter' to *Out of Place* (1999), in which Said describes his discomfort with such things as his equivocation over English or Arabic as his first language, and backward to *Orientalism* (1978) where, although the terminology is not evoked, Said's authoritative voice *is*, as a colonized person writing back to the imperial centre, a position he assumed in *Diacritics*. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia have argued that in Said's work the idea of contrapuntality is tied to Said's complex sense of self-identity, which embodies 'contradictory dimensions of his own worldliness'.²⁶⁰ Thus, Mortimer argues,

contrapuntality reflects three key elements of the critic's life and work: his devotion to music and mastery of the keyboard; the plurality of vision that he, as an exile, has personally experienced; and his endeavour to trace imperialist complicities in modern European canonical texts.²⁶¹

As Lachman argues, it was not surprising that as a follow-up to *Orientalism* Said 'sought to develop a theoretical approach that could cope with the complex mappings of the postcolonial world'.²⁶² This strategy led inevitably to the issue of Palestine. Setting aside for a moment the historical and literary applications of contrapuntalism, the theme of counterpoint can be mapped on to wider cultural site of the establishment in 1999 of the *West-Eastern Divan*, an orchestra brought together by Said along with the Jewish conductor,

²⁵⁸ Mildred P. Mortimer, 'Edward Said and Assia Djébar: A Contrapuntal Reading', *Research in African Literatures*, 36 (2005), 53-67 (p. 57).

²⁵⁹ Edward W. Said, 'The Mind of Winter: Reflections on Life in Exile', *Harper's Magazine*, September 1984, pp. 47-52.

²⁶⁰ Bill Ashcroft and Pal Ahluwalia, *Edward Said: The Paradox of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 93.

²⁶¹ Mortimer, p. 58.

²⁶² Kathryn Lachman, 'The Allure of Counterpoint: History and Reconciliation in the Writing of Edward Said and Assia Djébar', *Research in African Literatures*, 41 (2010), 162-168 (p. 163).

Daniel Barenboim. The aim was to provide a workshop for 'Israeli, Palestinians and other Arab musicians' as 'an alternative way to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict'.²⁶³ In effect, the music produced by the orchestra is the interweaving of the many threads, voices, cultures and histories. Outside the immediacy of the music are the inevitable conversations between the Palestinian and Israeli musicians, the debates about the political issues at hand, and so forth.

One of the problems with the way that Said connects contrapuntal criticism with the pattern of his life and identity is that, consequently, it embodies both the positive aspects and the limitations of his personality. In Said's contrapuntal approach

[g]one are the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise...the old authority cannot be simply replaced by the new authority, but the alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments than now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notions of *identity* that have been at the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism.²⁶⁴

Setting aside the hugely optimistic vision of this statement in an era when imperialism is categorically not over, and when the force of 'static notions' of identity, whether it be the American, the Islamic, or the British, is extremely hard to withstand, Said found it very hard to resist 'binary oppositions'. It might be argued that he had, in *Orientalism*, consolidated the most pernicious binary in the shape of Orient and Occident. The risky pragmatism of pitting the monumental binaristic terms of Orient and Occident against each other in order to provoke change teeters on the brink of essentialism.

The object of Said's contrapuntal method is to take apart and then to bring together the various themes that constitute the imperial experience. In essence, Said wishes to score the 'discrepant experiences' of imperialism.²⁶⁵ He argues that '[t]he notion of "discrepant experiences" is not intended to circumvent the problem of ideology'.²⁶⁶ Rather,

[i]n juxtaposing experiences with each other, in letting them play off each other, it is my interpretative political aim (in the broadest sense) to make concurrent

²⁶³ 'West-Eastern Divan Orchestra', at <http://west-eastern-divan.org> [accessed 16-8-2015]

²⁶⁴ *Culture and Imperialism*, p. xviii.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

those views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other, and that attempt to distance or suppress other views and experiences.²⁶⁷

Said argues that '[a] comparative, or better, a contrapuntal perspective is required in order to see a connection between such things as coronation rituals in England and the Indian durbars of the late nineteenth century'.²⁶⁸ In applying a contrapuntal methodology Said could not circumvent the problem of selection, for he was choosing to include some experiences and to exclude others. Said chooses to privilege the provincial experiences of the wealthier classes. Unsurprisingly given what we might term a tone-deafness to class politics, Said excludes the 'lower' or 'working classes' from his analyses.

Said's contrapuntal literary criticism is explored with reference to the grand lifestyle of the characters in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Mansfield Park is the location of the narrative of the novel, and the characters play out various romantic and social activities within it. However, although not explicitly, the novel depends for its internal unity on the readers' knowledge of empire, of overseas territories, and an understanding of and an agreement with the notion of 'our' simply being there. Where *Mansfield Park* is concerned, Said insists that 'we have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel's plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality that we have overlooked the function of space, geography, and location'.²⁶⁹ Therefore in order to rectify this oversight, Said's interest lies in the hidden spatial stories just under the surface of the text that give life to the 'discrepant experiences' of empire on which the novel depends for its coherence.

The 'other' story, which is mainly absent in the novel, is that the source of the Bertrams' wealth is the sugar plantation in Antigua, which, Said argues, 'would have had to be a sugar plantation maintained by slave labour (not abolished until the 1830s)'.²⁷⁰ Austen's readers in the early nineteenth-century would have understood this aspect of the narrative because, as Wilson notes 'the intended audience can be expected to bring to the text a set of background "attitudes" concerning the relevant real world materials, and that these beliefs, concerns, ideological presuppositions, etc., are elaborated within the work's

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 107.

embedded patterns'.²⁷¹ It is a given in the novel that Sir Thomas Bertram's wealth provides the economic support for the various activities at Mansfield Park, the bulk of which seem to be centred on the whimsical pieties of life in a country house. The outcome of this type of contrapuntal reading is, as Newton has argued, that 'Said took what were previously dismissed as merely peripheral, passing references to the empire "out there," comments carelessly "thrown away" and forgotten, and showed how central they in fact were to the stories being told'.²⁷² Without an understanding of these exterior narratives, Said tells us, we will not understand the full richness of the novel or the function of culture in empire.

The choice offered by Said is binary or nuance, neither of which is theoretically sound or empirically satisfactory.

²⁷¹ George M. Wilson, 'Edward Said on Contrapuntal Reading', *Philosophy and Literature*, 18 (1994), 265-273 (p. 266).

²⁷² Melanie Norton, 'Reflections on Edward Said: A Caribbean Perspective', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 23 (2003), p. 11, in *Project Muse*
><http://www.projectmuse.jhu.edu/journals/cst/summary/v023/23.1newton.html>< [accessed 1-9-2015].

Conclusion

What has been learned about Said's resistance? One of the things that has permeated this analysis has been the continuance of 'resistance' as a motif in Said's critical oeuvre and responses to the man and his work. It very quickly became clear that everything that is written or spoken on the subject of Edward Said meets resistance and affirmation almost in equal measure. It was not hard to locate the roots of this opposition, which emanates from two points.

The first point of friction is Said's support for the Palestinian cause. This is hardly a revelation, because the Palestinian/Zionist conflict is one of the most contentious and explosive issues of the last and current centuries. Said, by filiation and by choice, stood on the side of the Palestinians. Because Said lived and worked in the United States, this was an uncomfortable stance to take. As the analysis of *Out of Place* showed, the United States and New York in particular is home to a powerful Israel lobby. The human rights lawyer, Justus Reid Weiner, threw himself into a three-year investigation of Said's memoir, on the assumption that to question the veracity of Said's self-representation was also to destabilize his political position in support of the Palestinians. Written into Said's memoir was a resistance narrative that was inextricably linked to his self-representation, but that was not always faithful to his own previous accounts of his early life in Palestine. This narrative was based on a dubious association between Said's status as a Palestinian exile and a notion that the United States was only a provisional home. The Palestinian academic Alono Confino questioned the theoretical basis for Said's exile-home metaphor. The main point to emerge from the Said-Weiner clash was the construction of two intractable political positions, each fighting for a political outcome that concerned people on another continent who, in the main, had no particular affiliation with either of the protagonists. It is true that Said was at one time a member of the PNC, but his political resistance was ultimately embedded in the Western sphere of intellectual production. This is an important point. Much of Said's academic work was concerned with challenging Western representations of the Eastern Other, but his political resistance, if successful, would have constituted a Western voice effectively dictating the parameters of land ownership in another continent. Another point of resistance occurred in the Said-Weiner debate. Although the direct antagonism concerned Palestine/Israel, the clash raised the question of what sort of society the United

States was. Shohat raised the point that the idea inferred by the anti-Said side of the conflict was that Jews could be 'Americans' but such an identity was more problematic for Palestinian Arabs. This inference was markedly resistant to Said's viewpoint, that the United States is a multicultural nation – as it has been since its inception.

The second point of resistance was connected to the first, but constituted a much wider geographical and historical scope. Said's resistance was also centred on the relationship between Western power and its production of knowledge in the history of Western colonialism and imperialism. The central point of Said's resistance here was that Western domination did not cease with decolonization, but has instead reinvented itself in various forms of neo-colonialism or postcolonialism. This has taken the form of military aggression, most notable to Said in the inauguration of the state of Israel, but also in the various incursions into Iraq and Afghanistan. Other forms of epistemological neo-colonialism were seen to be at work in the United States, where justification for imperial adventures needs to be found. The two aspects of Said's resistance were constant from at least 1967, when the Arab-Israeli War altered forever the ways in which he perceived the relationship between the imperial West and the colonial Other. The main point to emerge from the two spheres of resistance was that neither one can really be separated from the other.

The principal argument of this thesis has been that despite his intentions, it was not possible for Said to produce a body of what he called 'non-coercive knowledge'. This eventuality seemed to have been eliminated almost at the beginning of the thesis, when it was made clear that Said had no qualms about producing an overtly 'partisan' book in *Orientalism*. Yet, almost from the start that premise was subject to modifications. What became abundantly clear was that what we know about the world is what we are told, and what we choose to believe. Knowledge is really no more than this simple equation. Under the influence of the Italian humanist, Vico, Said understood quite early in his career that the only world we can truly understand is the world made by human beings. Knowledge can be made, and it can be unmade, challenged, questioned, altered, all for particular reasons at particular times. Said showed that knowledge is inherently unstable. If this is correct, then it is difficult to make a statement like 'Said could not produce non-coercive knowledge' because that statement is also unstable and provisional.

In *Out of Place* Said produced what was purportedly a memoir, a form that is generally considered to be an impressionistic account of one's life. It was clear both in Said's writing and in the responses to it that the book was actually a constituent part of a much greater conflict than simply whether or not the author was telling the 'truth'. Said's aim was, if not to coerce, then certainly to manipulate the reader into sharing his version of his early life, Wiener's, in another act of coercion, to challenge it. At stake was the future of millions of people in the Middle East and beyond. A book cannot fire bullets but it can influence others to do so. The outcome of Said's narrative was that knowledge was seen to be connected to issues of power, Said's and Wiener's. The knowledge produced by both participants was of the coercive sort, that is, it was intended to shut down alternative knowledge. Yet, neither of these 'knowledges' was able to close off the other. If nothing else, *Out of Place* demonstrated that there is always another way of knowing a subject.

Said made a great deal of his intentions to produce knowledge in a particular way. At the base of this intention was the philosophy of humanism. He attached himself to the ideas of Vico, an outsider, like Said. This provided the framework for Said's ideas about critical exile, secularity, and metaphorical homeless-ness, and it enabled him to see other lines of thought for the human constructions that they are. Tracing Said's journey through the thoughts of various thinkers, it was apparent that Said made a conscious effort to avoid entrapment within their sphere of influence. One of the trains of thought to emerge from this sense of provisionality was the attention Said paid to the constructed-ness of the intellectual and the academic. He came to see these 'gatekeepers' of knowledge as crucial constituents of resistance to domination and power, yet precisely because of this power he was always dedicated to the practice of destabilizing their authority. A curious paradox emerged whereby Said saw the intellectual as someone with no power, but also a great deal of power when the state demands it.

Said took a great deal from his association with Marxism, or Marxist thinkers, and in particular the work of Gramsci, Lukács, and Williams. Gramsci's ideas on geography and the 'infinite traces' permeated Said's thoughts on his own life and on the relationship between culture and power. Even such a powerful and pervasive influence could not resist Said's sense of provisionality. Efforts to categorize Said as a Marxist need to be tempered by his avowed philosophical humanism that always resisted entrenchment, sometimes to his

detriment. If Said had attached himself to a thoroughgoing Marxist project, who knows what could have been achieved. Yet, when Said refused to acknowledge the full import of Marxism into his project, he was doing no more than consolidating his sense of exile, of provisionality. The warning signs for Said were in Williams's reluctance to connect culture and imperialism, a portent of how Said would come to be diagnosed as constraining thought. Said's relationship with the structuralists followed a similar pattern: a long courtship followed by an unhappy break-up with Foucault. In Saussure, Said was able to clearly see the shape of humanly produced structures. He needed Foucault to help bring them down. The uncanny critics were useful, if at times too technical and even arcane for Said's tastes. Said was interested in the 'play' of language, but he was also interested in ridding the world of imperialism, and that could only be done if criticism stepped out of the rarefied atmosphere of purely philosophical speculation and worldly beginnings were inaugurated. Vico was very useful for beginnings, not so the uncanny critics. The two parties were irreconcilably opposed on what an intellectual, as opposed to an academic, ought to achieve.

The question of Said's own production of knowledge and criticism now comes into view. Armed with the fortunate experience of being contemporary with Foucault, Williams, and Lukács, Said had learnt from them in ways that had proven crucial to his attempts to resist domination. This thesis set out to prove that Said did not create a body of 'non-coercive knowledge'. This is correct, but only provisionally so. Other than in the statements that Said made on his intention to produce 'non-coercive' criticism, there is no evidence to suggest that he did not, at certain times, attempt to constrain the thoughts of others. The most obvious example of this coercion was *Orientalism*. In this counter-knowledge to Western Orientalism, the voices of the colonized were almost completely erased from history. The book was learned, yet Said created a huge structure, a binary of Occident and Orient that threatened in places to converge with the essentialism it was intended to dismantle. Said's critique of the academic Orientalists was immensely powerful. When Orientalists are summoned by power to offer 'expert' advice on matters concerning peoples in other countries in faraway lands, on Islam or the 'Arab mind', they can now, post-*Orientalism* be seen in an entirely different perspective. This has not, of course, prevented the continuation of the relationship between state power and scholarly knowledge. It is

right, though, that the doubt is there, that knowledge is held to account, at least by those outside the institutions of power. Was this worth sacrificing the Orientalists who were not complicit in Western domination of the Orient? Perhaps so; it was certainly a sacrifice that Said was ready to ask others to make. Said's knowledge production was driven by admirable intentions, but at times flawed in its practice when held up against the criteria of 'non-coercive knowledge'. A similar picture emerged with his critical practice. Each of Said's modes of criticisms – secular, contrapuntal, and democratic – involved scholarly attempts at providing a useful type of inquiry which was fit for purpose at a specific time. Each, though, were imperfect and probably designed to be so. Contrapuntal criticism presupposes the blanket discourse of Orientalism and makes no place for nuance, for the Orientalist who was not an imperialist. There must surely have been some. Democratic criticism inevitably ventriloquises some of the language of imperialism. Secular criticism is an implicit critique of religious sentiment. We must ask why, if Said was committed to an exilic location, a place of critical homeless-ness, he created such imperfect structures of knowledge and criticism.

It is my understanding that Said was a political pragmatist whose aims were admirable. His principal intention was to challenge power and domination, dispossession and exile. In this very important pursuit he was prepared to offer conceptually flawed structures of knowledge and criticism. In some ways this made him a coercive intellectual. However, at the root of everything Said did was his humanity and humanism, a concept which, in his hands, was centred on human freedom, but also on human frailties. In the construction of his flawed knowledges Said was conscious of the 'other' knowledges, of the spaces that existed outside of his words, which, even as he wrote, would begin to be filled with the voices of others and then to be subverted and challenged. Does this mean that Said actually created knowledge and criticism that was 'non-coercive'? Not really, but it does mean that he had an enduring faith in the human subject.

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