

Being Grateful to Edward Said

NATALIE ZEMON DAVIS

Edward Said's gifts to us were many, but I will speak here of only two, deeply important to me. The first gift was the message of his *Orientalism*. He asked there how scholars have studied and interpreted peoples different from their own in a context of conflict in power and belief, of imperialism and colonialism. I first met Edward Said in 1976, when he was a fellow at Stanford's Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences and working on that book. He came to see me at the University of California at Berkeley, where I was then teaching. I was very taken with this fine looking man, with his bright and lively eyes. He asked, "What did sixteenth-century travel literature have to say about Islam and the Arabs?" In an unforgettable conversation, we talked of Guillaume Postel and other Renaissance visitors to the Levant.

The resulting book, as we all know, was pathbreaking. *Orientalism* set the agenda for all subsequent work on colonial peoples and intercultural studies. This was true whether or not one agreed with his argument. In 1990-1992, when the Shelby Cullom Davis Center at Princeton had theme years on "Imperialism, Colonialism, and the Colonial Aftermath," every application of the hundreds we received began with the work of Edward Said.

His picture was never black and white. If the Orientalist scholars had created a stereotyped image of Arabs and Islam as unchanging, passive, and emotional in contrast to the vigorous, rational West, still they had amassed an enormous amount of material. Edward spoke of the "heroic effort," the "awesome labors" of Silvestre de Sacy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, teaching Arabic grammar, editing many texts in Arabic, translating texts into French, writing on weights, measures, coins. If Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* had running through it the British sugar plantations in Antigua, Edward still said it was a marvelous novel. If *Orientalism* had been perpetuated in the West, through its connections with scholarly institutions and to the interest of imperial advance (from Napoleon's occupation of Egypt to contemporary American penetration into the Middle East), still there was some acquiescence to these views in the Arab world itself: "the modern Orient . . . participates in its own Orientalizing." Similarly, he did not cast all Western scholars as narrow Orientalists,

caught in their preconceptions, but noted the responsiveness of, say, Clifford Geertz and Jacques Berque to the concrete detail of the societies they studied.

To me, the most enduring value of *Orientalism* and the later *Culture and Imperialism* is not the special cases explored, but the large question of how one represents other cultures. Indeed, he asks already in 1978 whether the idea of separate and distinct cultures is even a good one. Does it set us down the wrong path, beset by false dichotomies, at the very start? "Is the notion of a distinct culture (or race, or religion, or civilization) a useful one," he asked, "or does it always get invoked either in self-congratulation . . . or hostility and aggression?"

Edward Said's second gift to us is his model of the intellectual, as shown in his Reith Lectures of 1993 and his beautifully written, frank, and humorously self-reflective autobiography, *Out of Place*. There he portrays the exile or marginal person as possessing the independence to be central to the intellectual life and criticism of our time. He shows that he *chose* his own identity out of the mixture of Palestinian, Egyptian, Lebanese, and American lives entangled in his past. It was a choice made because he wanted to identify with the sufferings of the Palestinians uprooted from their homes or slain. It was a choice that never dulled his independence or honesty, as he lashed out at disastrous actions of P.L.O. leaders or the inhumanity of suicide bombers. It was a choice that never limited his connections with peoples from many worlds or lessened his sorrow at the sufferings of the European Jews during Nazi times.

I was one of the Jewish friends of Edward Said. We were many, from the Jewish piano teachers of his youth to the Jewish intellectuals he admired and collaborated with. Erich Auerbach, writing his *Mimesis* in exile in Turkey, was an image that inspired him. Noam Chomsky was a model in his critical independence and devotion to both learning and human justice and peace. Daniel Barenboim, with whom Edward collaborated on a musical venture with young Israelis and young Palestinians, played with some of these musicians at his funeral.

As a Jew, deeply committed to the diaspora and to a non-Zionist way of living as a Jew in the world, Edward's example is deeply moving for me. In 2000, I sent him an essay by my daughter, Hannah Davis Ta'eb,

about an Egyptian feminist, writer, and activist, who had been much influenced by Said's work. I told him, too, about my own current writing where, using a tenth/sixteenth century Muslim traveler, I try to paint the shapes of cultural mixture, the paths by which people move between disparate worlds. As he said in the introduction to his Reith lectures, "Cultures are too intermingled, their contents and histories too interdependent and hybrid, for surgical separation into large and mostly ideological oppositions." He took the time to answer, speaking affectionately of Hannah's subject, and commenting on my project. "Moving between worlds is, I sometimes think, *the* great theme of our time."

Every gift creates an obligation. It is hard for us to go on without Edward's voice speaking frankly about events, to miss the articles that would appear despite his illness and that we would rush to read after every latest political horror. But we are now obliged to carry on his ethical and political mission in the broadest sense: a mission committed to universal standards of justice, to empathy with suffering among those close to us and those far away, to honest and independent expression, and to hope—hope, no matter how grim the prospects, for people of good will and reason and for a peaceful world.

Requiem for Edward Said

LINDA HUTCHEON

Where can any of us begin to talk about our loss? I was Edward's Vice-President when he was President of the Modern Language Association in 1999, but before that and after, I was lucky enough to be his friend. A few years ago, I had the honour of writing and delivering the citation when Edward was given an honorary doctorate at the University of Toronto where I teach. I began my citation in this way:

"Passion, courage, boldness:" these words—as I can testify from personal experience—are *not* the usual ones used to describe professors of English and comparative literature, either inside or outside the academy. But "passion, courage, boldness" are the words you *begin* with when you try to describe Edward Said. From there, you move on to talk about his fierce intellectual independence and equally fierce integrity, before passing on to his exhilarating originality and creativity. Edward Said is a radically innovative thinker who has changed forever the face of literary studies: by demanding that criticism be "worldly" and therefore acknowledge its investment in the political realm, he has exercised a powerful moral pressure on the academy.

The very thought of now having to put those verbs about Edward in the past tense is a sorrowful thought, but the realization that his impact is still very much in the present tense (as this issue testifies) is a comforting one.

Many others have addressed Edward's impact on the political scene as well as on the academy, and in particular have noted his seminal role in the creation of the field of postcolonial studies. Since a large part of my personal and professional association with Edward centred around music, however, I do not want us to forget that this generous and gifted man was also the music critic for *The Nation*, and, as a professional-level pianist, he could occasionally be persuaded to perform in public. In 1991 he published his Welles Library Lectures as *Musical Elaborations*—a provocative study of the cultural, political, and social implications of performance (for listener as well as performer) in Western music. One of his last published essays (again in *The Nation*) was on Beethoven's late style. His long friendship with the Israeli pianist and conductor Daniel Barenboim not only yielded splendid public discussions in places like Carne-

gie Hall, and a new English version of Beethoven's opera *Fidelio* for performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, but a few years ago the two of them joined with cellist Yo-Yo Ma to convene a group of 78 Arab and Israeli musicians (aged 18 to 25) for three weeks of master classes and joint performances. This was all in the name of musical—and political—understanding.

Always committed, always passionate, always willing to put himself on the line for what he believed—be it Palestine, literature, or music—Edward Said was always in great demand as a speaker, in person and through the media. He became a familiar face, a familiar voice, a familiar aid to understanding the complexities of the world and of art. When Edward was awarded the Netherlands's first "Spinoza Lens," the citation for this important prize said it all: it was given in recognition of "his vast body of work in the area of politics and culture—work in which he shows his penetrating understanding of the ethical foundations which underlie international relations, particularly those between East and West."

But to stop there—at the public contributions of Edward Said—would be to miss the private man, the human qualities his students and colleagues, family and friends came to value so highly: his warmth and generosity, his deep caring for others—even at times when personal worries should have been uppermost in his mind. The man who taught us so much about the meaning of "beginnings" (the title of one of his most important books) has, in recent years, also taught us even more about the dignity and bravery of endings. That is only one of the reasons why I was able to say in that citation that the name Edward Said quite simply *means* "passion, courage, and boldness."

In Memoriam: Edward W. Said¹

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK

I had written the words that follow on the day before the death of my friend and ally, the founder of postcolonial studies, Edward W. Said. I want the occasion of this important translation to mark our tribute to our magisterial colleague.

The translation of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* into Serbian is an instructive event for me. The relationship of postcolonial theory to the Balkan as metaphor is a crucial task for our world. You will have to translate your translation for me, so that I can at least follow along, as postcolonial theory unmoors itself from its provisional beginnings and transforms itself in the process. Every postcoloniality is situated, and therefore different. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* was to some extent provoked by Kant's use of the West Australian aboriginal. How will this travel to the "European" imagination of the "Balkan" today? Mark von Hagen has expanded postcolonial theory to reconstellate Soviet Eurasia. What will you add to it? My anti-colonialism has little patience with nationalism, at home and in the diaspora. How will you displace that impatience?

In response to students in the Slavics Department, I wrote as follows:

"Colonizer" and "colonized" can be fairly elastic if you define scrupulously. When an alien nation-state establishes itself as ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education, and re-arranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, one can use these terms, I think. The consequences of applying them to a wide array of political/geographic entities would be dire if we thought colonialism had only one model. On the other hand, if we noticed how different kinds of adventures and projects turn into something that would fit the bare-bones description given above, we would have a powerful analysis of the politics of progressivism, of one sort or another. How do political philosophies of social justice relate to the overdeterminations of practical politics? This venerable question would receive interesting answers if we considered the irreducibility of the colonial in a situation-specific and flexible way. Additionally, if we cast our glance at the place(s) colonized (according to the rarefied formula), we encounter great heterogeneity. This pro-

vides us an opportunity to study the politics of cultural and epistemic transformation.

The problem with applying these terms to the area you cover would be merely to follow the three most powerful models of colonial discourse theory currently available, belonging to the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America. These refer to colonial adventures undertaken by single nations as exploration and conquest nourished mercantile capitalism—followed by the expanding market needs of industrial capital. By contrast, your area displaced the political lines of old multi-ethnic imperial formations: Ottoman, Habsburg, Russian. The Eastern edge pushes into terrain that would be even further from the single-nation model. Another great difference is the presence of an articulated ideal—versions of "scientific socialism"—which gave a seemingly greater specificity to the epistemic change. Although the single-nation model was almost invariably accompanied by explicit or implicit "civilizing missions," they did not dictate the political and economic structure of the colonial state directly.

When we look at these differences we realize that using the colonizer-colonized model creatively in your area will enhance existing colonial discourse and postcolonial studies as well as provide you with an interesting model.

Historically, it has always been the powerful who have spoken or been spoken of. I don't know enough about the area under study to go into detail here but, as a feminist and a subalternist, I am used to looking at the pores of elite texts to tease out excluded itineraries. As we move eastwards, the nature of the texts changes. Here, my disciplinary commitments kick in. I want us to use the literary imagination to read sagas and chronicles. As for the postcolonial material, I always go in search of the gendered subaltern. I spoke with women from inner Asia ten years ago, and to folks from former Soviet Armenia more recently. They spoke of the difficulty of communication with their mothers—and for sure their grandmothers—because Russian gets in the way. (This linguistic barrier crosses the gender line: it was to penetrate this barrier that Najibullah, the last

Communist president of Afghanistan, was translating *The Great Game* into Pashto when he died.) The fracturing of gender is somewhat different from the nationalist insistence on native-language politics in the “new” nations bordering on the Russian Federation. However one approaches this, it seems to me a fertile field for real language-based Comparative Literature, much more like Cultural Studies than the older model of East European Comp. Lit.—where the discipline began. Colonial discourse and postcolonial studies have not been good with languages. The areas you study can certainly turn this around. I have long said that history should join hands with literary criticism in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological. Your field can offer spectacular opportunities for such interdisciplinary work.

Postcolonial theory has always relied on the study of dissident intellectuals. Is that a representation of “alterity?” For me, alterity is a philosophical term loosely naming what is other than the intending subject. My own intellectual and political taste balks at self-representation as “the other.” If you mean analytical representation of positions other than the colonizers’ (old and new) in the model of the organic intellectual (“permanent persuaders”—Gramsci) I am with you there. The gendered voice is particularly effective in postcolonial work because it often seeks to elaborate a position that exposes the patriarchal collaboration between colonizer and colonized. (The “surrogate proletariat” argument introduces an interesting complication here.) I do not know what the “prescriptions” of postcolonial work would be.

Feminism and postcolonial theory have a certain concern for social justice. I would like to think that this would be the case for all Humanities and Social Science work, perhaps for all work. But too narrow a definition of political commitment leads to work with foregone conclusions coming to the same dull litany time after time. I have always found such “research” tedious. I also don’t think one chooses a theoretical model and then applies it to primary material. I think the production of theory is itself a practice and the matter studied participates in this production. I therefore think one studies all kinds of theories for their “own sake” in depth, so that one’s own reading practice is altered. The actual reading “norms” the theory, every time. If the matter studied is read as an “illustration” of a theory studied as an instrument, it is invariably what escapes the reading that generates interest for more robust users of “theory.”

How will you revise this?

The entire text is feminist in impulse. How will you graft on to your gender politics, your gender history, the philosophical lines of your gendering?

Your translation is a contract for ongoing work. I thank you for making me a part of it. And I dedicate our shared future to Edward Said.²

NOTES

¹This is the Preface to Obrad Savic’s Serbian translation of *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason*.

²In response Obrad Savic wrote:

Dear Gayatri,

We received your preface to *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*: it made us happy, but also very sad... The words with which you addressed friends gathered around the Belgrade Circle are in fact words directed to our spiritual mentor—Professor Said. I think I understand the void you must feel now after Edward Said is gone... You must have been one of his most loyal friends and associates. In that sense, it seems to me that a great “burden” of spreading postcolonial theory has now fallen on your back. What I can promise at this moment is that you can always count on complete and unconditional support from your friends in and around the Belgrade Circle. We are small, but we never let go!

Once again, thank you for the moving preface.

I do hope to stay in touch, Gayatri.

Yours, Obrad

Edward Said: A Tribute

ILAN PAPPE

I belong to a very particular and limited group of people in Israel. We are Israeli Jews who have been full-heartedly supporting the Palestinian cause. Some of us had done it from very early on, others only lately. For veterans and novices, alike this position of ours has alienated us from our own society and sometimes even from our own family. In their eyes our stance verges on the border of insanity at best, and treason at worst. We have been there not because we have become Palestinian nationalists, but because we had a painful awakening to the history and essence of Zionism.

We marched on a hazardous and slippery road, undergoing an experience not that different from any liberation process addicts need to endure when getting rid of any spiritual or physical intoxication. What you need most in such a journey is a solid anchor; something or someone you can rely on to understand where you came from and where you are going to. In more concrete terms we needed a clear articulation of an agenda that would suit our preference for universal human rights issues and our rejection of the set of ideals that accompanied us from cradle; ideas that were deeply rooted in colonialism and nationalist fanaticism.

This is where Edward Said appeared in our life like a lighthouse navigating us out of the murkiness and confusion of growing up in a Zionist state onto a safer coast of reason, morality and consciousness. His untimely death left us in the darkness without his assured guidance and sense of direction, which we got accustomed to as years went by.

I am sorry I only met Edward in 1988, but I feel fortunate for the time we did spend together. His insights of, and inputs on, the global reality in general and the Palestinian one in particular will linger on, long after his death, and remain as they were at the time they were written, a relevant philosophical, political, and moral compass in the obfuscated world we live in.

But above all, I shall miss Edward's unique ability of articulating in the public sphere the essence of the Palestine question. *The Palestine Question* was his first ever work to be published in Hebrew and it was the first of his books I ever read. The spirit of the book, no less than its factual basis, accompanied me while I was mining the archives—revisiting the history of 1948. Said's

perspective coupled, with the clear historiographical picture that emerged from the documents, introduced me to the evil inflicted upon the Palestinians in the 1948 war. Soon after I became acquainted with his other short and long attempts to analyze and present this past evil in much wider perspective. Said's particular strength was juxtaposing the *Nakbab* and its horrors against its denial in the West. Said in more than one book and work exposed the Western media's effort of sidelining in, if not altogether eliminating from, the public mind the plight and tragedy of Palestine. There is no one who could easily fill his place on the various public stages in which he so convincingly represented the case of Palestine. It would be very difficult to follow in his footsteps and be able to associate so lucidly the wrongs of the past with the tragedy of the present in the land of Palestine.

Said was not an historian by inclination or profession. But he injected into the historiographical debate his original thoughts about issues such as representation, power relations and the production of knowledge—all very relevant issues to the writing of history. If and when you read Said's general thoughts about these topics, you could immediately connect this critique to the role of historiography in the Palestine conflict. Said held the keys to the riddle for the long and overdue hegemony of the Zionist narrative in the public and academic space. The historical version of a people without land arriving at the end of the nineteenth century in a people-less country, modernizing it and blooming its deserts, while fighting for its life against unexplained barbaric attacks by its Islamic and Arab neighbors dominated the academic discourse in the West. Writing differently and more truthfully about what happened, according to Said, was not just a more professional historiography; it was also a political act of redemption and justice. Under the influence of his work, the balance was redressed and the Palestinian narrative, once regarded as sheer propaganda in the West while the Israeli one was respected as academic and serious, was legitimized while the Zionist one exposed for its falsity and pretense.

No less important was the way Said related directly to the historian's workshop when he discussed the meaning and significance of the "historical document." When

moderating a meeting between Israeli and Palestinian historians in Paris in 1998, Said explained in few sentences, and in a very patient voice, to the attentive public at large, and to the less attentive Israeli historians in particular, what a “historical document” was. The Israeli historians expressed their almost religious belief that they were both ideologically and empirically just and declared that the only reliable sources for the reconstruction of the 1948 war were in the IDF archives and its documents. Said clarified that a report by a soldier from 1948 is as much an interpretation, and quite often manipulation, of the reality as is any other human recollection of the same event; it was never the reality itself. By this, he pointed us to the vitality and significance of oral history in the reconstruction of the past. The most horrific aspects of the *Nakbah*—the dozens of massacres that accompanied the ethnic cleansing—as well as a detailed description of what expulsion had been from the expelled’s point of view, can only be built when such a historiographical position is adopted.

At that meeting, Edward was at his best, mainly because he was able to articulate what others felt, but were unable to express in a meaningful manner. He wondered aloud how anyone could relate to the *Nakbah*’s real essence—as the most traumatic catastrophe that befell the Palestinian people—without showing even a modicum of solidarity with or sympathy for its victims. As he noted, the Israeli historians would have never tolerated such a treatment of Holocaust history.

Said’s long engagement with Palestine’s history and historiography had a very clear, constructive agenda in its background. He saw a mutual recognition of the Palestinian suffering and the Jewish one, as a precondition for reconciliation. He wished Palestinians and Arabs to desist denying or dwarfing the Jewish Holocaust and hoped that this would encourage Israeli Jews to cease their *Nakbah* denial and lead them to acknowledge the past evils they had inflicted on the Palestinians. Until his last days, he remained a great believer of History not as concept that enslaves the present, but one that liberates it, for a sake of a better future.

As Said himself, so this tribute has to move back and forth from his life involvement in the Palestine issue into his incredible presence in the more general debates on culture and power. Therefore, in any retrospective review of Said’s personal and intellectual biography, we should keep on moving on the two Saidian paths—the Palestinian and the general one—that fed each other in his lifetime and work. So while we commemorate his invaluable contribution to the historiography of modern Palestine in general, and the *Nakbah* in particular, we should recognize that the academic and intellectual world would equally be disorientated without his original thoughts on, and conceptualizations of, broader issues that lie at the heart of the global cultural debate and

agenda.

Said founded a school of thought and composed a whole area of studies—this is a mark of his greatness as well as a source of hope that in the future his ideas will remain with us for a very long time. The postcolonial deliberations he began in the 1970s, as well as his 1980s formulations of cultural studies, are now part and parcel of any serious academic center in the world. Their protracted and expanded presence are a testimony to his extraordinary contribution to our intellectual life. When he published his seminal work, *Orientalism*, nobody could predict the earthquake he would cause in the academic Western world. With a stroke of a pen he effectively deconstructed the power bases behind the Orientalist enterprise and exposed the more sinister interests behind knowledge production in the West on Middle Eastern history and culture. Had he been listened to in the American corridors of power—where his advice was ignored—it may have been possible back in the 1970s to place the U.S. policy towards the Islamic and Middle Eastern world on a more sensible and fruitful track. But Washington was listening to the pro-Israeli Orientalists, who are now, after the Bush takeover, back in fashion and at the center, with dire consequences for the U.S. and the Arab World.

For those of us who knew him more personally, we have all lost a dear and genuine friend, with whom one could talk about the most abstract philosophical issues and with the same ease move to more mundane problems in life—which usually paled in comparison with his endless and brave struggle against his fateful illness.

Something of this mixture and balance was also present in his books. He will be remembered, and justly so, for *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*—twin works that shaped and nourished the invigorating field of Postcolonial and Cultural Studies. But I will also always cherish his *Politics of Dispossession*—short and lucid interventions, quite often immediate reactions to a recent crisis or juncture in the life of Palestine and the Palestinians, but always contextualizing a given event and his thoughts on it, within the much broader view of the march of history. His ability to move from a clear sighted political essay on the Palestine question onto a theoretical insight on the interpretation of culture, while musing on his love of music and agonizing on his less pleasant chapters in life, was beautifully demonstrated in his memoirs *Out of Place*. This book is a rare historical document on an era in the Eastern Mediterranean gone for ever, but so vividly alive in Said’s autobiography.

Towards the end of the summer of 2003, I had my last meaningful conversation—on the phone—with Edward. He beseeched me in a broken voice, as he did others I am sure, not to give up the struggle for relocating the Palestinians’ refugee issue at the heart of public and global agendas. He stressed the need to con-

tinue the effort to change the American public opinion on Palestine, and he was very hopeful and encouraged by what he recognized as significant change in European public opinion.

I now realize this was a will, one of the many spiritual and moral ones he left to many of us. In his memory and out of respect to his intellectual genius as well as to his moral courage, Palestinians, and those committed to the cause of Palestine, should regroup their energies and reorganize their efforts to impress on the world that there will be no justice and no peace in Palestine, no stability in the Middle East and no tranquility in the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world, without the return of Palestinian refugees to their home, the end of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and the building of a state in Palestine that would respect human and civil rights, as did Edward all his life.

Reflections on Edward Said: A Caribbean Perspective

MELANIE NEWTON

In *Culture and Imperialism*—the work which, of all of Edward Said’s writings, resonated most with me, and, I think, with many scholars of and from the Caribbean—Said did for the British novel what Trinidadian scholar and prime minister Eric Williams in *Capitalism and Slavery* did a generation before for slave emancipation. 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. Said represented more than just the empire “writing back.” His was a voice writing through and beyond the master narratives of empire, refusing the binary oppositions between empire and metropole, “them” and “us,” “familiar” and “unfamiliar” which have been so important to colonial expansion and which still informs so much of our academic inquiry.

Beneath the carefully considered prose, the humorous language and the kindness of Said’s writings—a kindness frequently not replicated and usually unacknowledged in the writings of his detractors—is a sense of urgency, which also animates the writings of so many writers and artists from the Caribbean, who are or were public intellectuals like Said. In common with Said, many of these intellectuals have found that the history of the Caribbean does not permit them the illusion that the beauty of art can ever be disconnected from its wider historical context. Through their works these intellectuals have both helped and forced their audiences to face the fact that artistic forms, like the novel, are inextricably bound up with colonialism, and will always recall histories and legacies of exploitation, persistent inequalities and enslavement. It is no accident that the novel—perhaps the most imperially imbricated of all forms of artistic expression—became one of the principal sites for the articulation of a language of decolonization in the twentieth century Caribbean.

Said’s writings are peppered with references to Caribbean thinkers and public intellectuals who were writing in exile of various kinds. His writings on Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James and Walter Rodney reflect the empathy of a fellow traveler who shared a consciousness of himself as *in* but not *of* this messy array of institutions which make up the “West.” Like Fanon, James, or Rodney, Said did more than simply provide a

voice for the dispossessed—already a noble thing—or serve as the intellectual face of anti-colonial nationalism. He was able to occupy a difficult space of ambivalence, a position “out of place”, which could not be satisfied with easy recourse to identitarian politics. This gift of living creatively with the ambivalence of the perpetual insider/outsider speaks powerfully to the experience of many Caribbean intellectuals who have come to terms, in the words of the Barbadian novelist George Lamming, with the “pleasures of exile.” It is a rare ability, but one which is essential to any vision of a just and genuinely postcolonial world.

Said brought to his analysis a determination to recognise the imperialist assumptions, the “throw-away” references to empire which so shaped the world view of, for example, Jane Austen and William Thackeray, while still retaining the ability to admire their beauty. Even as Said laid bare the imperialist assumptions that informed the English literary canon, taking it apart and rebuilding it with empire and slavery at its heart, he also laid claim to the British novel as *his*. Like C.L.R. James, who probably knew every word of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* by heart, Said could confront and accept his own uncomfortable sense of simultaneous familiarity and unbelonging in this imperial vision, and still claim such texts, in all their ambivalence, as part of himself. I was touched by his ability to see, for example, the genius of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and yet also critique the fact that Conrad could afford—despite his trenchant critique of European imperialism in Africa—to paint a picture of Africa which closed off the possibility of alternative visions either of Africans or of the encounter between Africans and Europeans.

This ability to see beauty in all its tarnished forms, to understand that we should not run from that beauty even as we expose and condemn the assumptions on which it was based, was perhaps one of Said’s most important legacies. He understood that beauty is not to be found in the absence or suppression of historical pain but in the act of creation, recognition, naming and refusing to “throw away”. Perhaps what moves me most about Said’s writings, his life and his passing was this generosity of spirit, this capacity to marvel, whether through literature, music, or academic scholarship, at the beauty of the mess that we have made of the world.

Remembering Said

ANIA LOOMBA

All of us are the poorer for having lost Edward Said, whose commitment to global justice was as passionate as his commitment to ideas and literature. I didn't always agree with him, but his political and intellectual work opened up new vistas for the study of global relations, past and present, especially for those of us who were simultaneously the products of colonial education, the beneficiaries of the anti-colonial struggle, and the inheritors of a neo-colonial world. The term "postcolonial studies" (which Said's work helped bring into existence) was riven with the contradictions between the present day's rupture from the past and continuities with it—were we indeed inheriting newly liberated worlds, or witnessing the continuation of older inequalities in new and frightening ways? Himself continually accused of a commitment to high Western art, and of insufficient attention to third world resistance and agency, Said remained skeptical of the field that he had supposedly founded. In an interview with Neeladri Bhattacharya, Suvir Kaul, and myself in New Delhi, in 1997, he said that he did not belong to that world of postcolonial studies because "I care very much about the structures of dependency and impoverishment that exist, well certainly in this part of the world and my part of the world and in all parts in what is now referred to as the global South."¹

Many of his critics faulted *Orientalism* for suggesting that Western representations of the East had nothing to do with its reality, but for Said, the whole point of indicating a divorce between images and reality was in fact to emphasize the *political nature* of that distance, and the embeddedness of such images in the structures of colonialism. In the same interview, he described postmodernism as a "kind of provincial atavism of a very unappealing sort" whose great problem was to divorce the question of representation from any purchase in the real world—"to say 'well, the media always lies, we know that,' and to say that we know that representations are always just representations. My interest is in the more pernicious forms of these relationships, where actual lives, actual identities, actual political destinies are distorted and destroyed by a process of this sort."

That's why for Said there was no contradiction between his interest in Western classical music and literature on the one hand, and the political world, although

he also valued being one step removed from the political process. "I have," he told us, "become in my late years, I suppose, partly because of my illness and partly because of other things...very involved in a different view which is—you know, Adorno is very important to me now—the idea of trying to maintain a certain kind of tension without resolving it dialectically, as a sort of witness, a testimonial to what is happening . . . that seems to me to be something worth trying." It was this commitment to the idea that intellectuals must bear witness that made Said such a valuable presence in our troubled times. He reminded us that as teachers and students, we need to strive to be more than merely professional—we have a much larger responsibility as intellectuals. The role which Said exemplified is going to become increasingly difficult to play in the coming years, but also increasingly necessary if the university is going to remain a site of intellectual freedom and dissent.

But I have also been re-engaging with Edward Said's work in the last few years as a scholar of early modern Europe. It is especially ironic that Said's *Orientalism* deals with the same geographical spaces that are now being used to "re-orient" perspectives on early modern global relations. Revisionist work on the European Renaissance now routinely opens by criticizing Said for his suggestion that an opposition between the West and the Orient has animated "European imaginative geography" from the Greek times till the present. Such an opposition, it is true, does not accommodate the complicated relations between European Christians and a variety of Eastern (especially Muslim) societies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when, instead of dominating the East, Europe feared the mighty Turkish empire, but also desired to trade with it and with other Muslim powers such as Morocco and India. For many post-colonial critics of early modern Europe, we can respond to Dipesh Chakravarty's appeal that we "provincialize Europe" by emphasizing its marginality during this period.

Although sympathetic to, indeed a participant in, these efforts to "re-orient the Renaissance," I am troubled by the fact that talk of early modern Europe's "marginality" on a global scale often results in two reverse over-simplifications. First, it tends to romanticize trade, and to counter-pose it too absolutely to "colonialism," obscuring the complicated but crucial relation-

ship between the two. While sixteenth century European advocates of overseas trade invoked it, as indeed such advocates do now in our era of rampant globalization, as a relation of perfect reciprocity, neither in the sixteenth century, nor today, has global trade been established through mutuality. It was the silver and gold culled from the New World Empires, the African slave trade and the plantations that allowed Europeans to increase their participation in the Asian-dominated global economy, and thus eventually to tilt the relations of power. Such participation, moreover, depended upon European military tactics to disrupt trade between different Asian centers; as one Dutch colonist wrote home in 1614, “Your Honors should know by experience that trade in Asia must be driven and maintained by the protection and favor of your Honors’ own weapons, and that the weapons must be paid for by the profits from the trade; so that we cannot carry on trade without war nor war without trade.”²

Secondly, even when Europe had *not* established uncontested mastery over the East or Africa, attitudes of religious and cultural superiority were repeatedly expressed in its writings about those parts of the world. Hundreds of images, in literary texts, in religious sermons and books, in paintings, in official documents, speak of a revulsion towards, or an anxiety about, blacks and infidels. Of course these are not the sole or only responses to outsiders at that time, but the point is that while Said may have been wrong in projecting a simple “othering” of non-Europeans, especially Muslims, backwards into a pre-colonial past, we cannot conclude that because they had not yet been colonized, Africans or Muslims were *not* viewed as a threat in the early modern period. If, on the one hand, such views need to be differentiated from a nineteenth century Orientalism which rested upon colonial domination, then, on the other hand, it is equally problematic to unhook them entirely from a continuing history of religious and cultural tension and rivalry that can be traced back at least to the Crusades, and that finds repeated expression in re-workings of classical literature.³

Responding to the criticism that *Orientalism* did not acknowledge the variety and heterogeneity of imperialist conception of the Orient, Edward Said argued, in the interview to which I have alluded earlier, that

as Chomsky has shown in . . . his work on syntactic structures . . . you can devise a fantastically complicated structure, endlessly variant, out of a very small number of elements. I think this is the case with Orientalism . . . I think there is a kind of deep structure of Orientalism which is able to multiply and proliferate in all kinds of ways. . . . I think that they all depart from the same premise, that there is a line separating 'us' from 'them'. And it keeps recurring . . . I mean look at this, what's his name, that

Huntington *The Clash Of Civilizations* book . . . it has reemerged and its been there all along, I mean, for hundreds of years. That doesn't mean its the same, you understand, but it can be re-appropriated.

For anyone trying to understand the relationship of racism to colonialism, this is an important point—racism repeats and appropriates certain images and tropes to the point where they take on a trans-historical flavor. Etienne Balibar has suggested that as we are faced with the resurgence of neo-racism (or what he calls “racism without race”), it is particularly useful to go back to the Renaissance with its cultural stereotypes that did not necessarily depend upon a pseudo-biological discourse but were, nevertheless, extremely pernicious.⁴ In suggesting this, Balibar is thinking of contemporary anti-Semitism, but also of the rise of Islamophobia which, since his essay was written, and especially after 9/11, has indeed become a global phenomenon. The language of such Islamophobia invokes the Crusades, freezes the Islamic world in a medieval past, and depends upon the recirculation of a very old repertoire of images, a division between “us” and “them” that does not reflect but seeks to manage a far more complex reality. Of course this division is not static and today it cannot be mapped onto a simple East-West binary as some of the most pernicious articulation of anti-Muslim sentiment is now to be found among Hindu fundamentalists (both in India but also elsewhere).

In the discourses of globalization and the new world order, the idea of cultural difference is either proclaimed to be dead (in the face of the “hybridities” of food, clothing and life-style which are touted as evidence of the global and equitable spread of the fruits of the new economy), or, as is evident in the work of Samuel Huntington, it is posited as the eternal motor of history. Thus contemporary global differences are rewritten as the “clash of civilizations.” As Said points out, Huntington is less an astute analyst of culture than the product of a long intellectual and political history which has repeated binary oppositions between “us” and “them” to the point where they become both the “common sense” of our times and the language of those whom John Berger has called “the new rulers of the world.”⁵ As this language is re-circulated in new forms (such as the “the axis of evil”), Said’s work on both past and contemporary global formations, remains extremely pertinent. Not surprisingly then, it is increasing, under attack, not only from those who oppose his commitment to justice in the Middle East, but also those for whom Said’s legacy needs to be dismantled in order to justify the idea of “new American century.” As the idea of a U.S. empire is increasingly circulated and normalized, its advocates simultaneously appropriate earlier empires, and claim a radical exceptionalism for the U.S. This strategy is exemplified by a recent essay in

The Atlantic Monthly by Robert Kaplan tellingly entitled "Supremacy by Stealth." Kaplan tells us that "the United States is an international society comparable to Rome in the second century A.D. . . . Our military, intelligence, and diplomatic communities must now turn to our Iranian-, Arab-, and other hyphenated Americans. . . At a time when we desperately need more language specialists, it is shameful that we are seeking out so few of the many native speakers at our disposal."⁶

The terms on which such co-operation (from not just "hyphenated Americans" but all scholars) is now being solicited are becoming daily clearer. Many of us have been recently alerted to a current legislation before the House of Representatives seeking to rewrite the Title VI legislation that has provided federal money to many area studies centers in U.S. universities. At a hearing on June 19, 2003, Stanley Kurtz provided testimony to the House of Representative's Subcommittee on Select Education, claiming that area studies centers are anti-American. Kurtz focused on postcolonial theory and especially Said's *Orientalism* claiming that "Said equated professors who support American foreign policy with the 19th century European intellectuals who propped up racist colonial empires. The core premise of post-colonial theory is that it is immoral for a scholar to put his knowledge of foreign languages and cultures at the service of American power."⁷ Kurtz proposed an oversight board that would link Title VI funding to student training for careers in national security, defense and intelligence agencies, and the Foreign Service.

In fact, one of Said's most valuable achievements in *Orientalism* was not simply to establish the connection between scholarship and state power in the colonial period, but to indicate its afterlife in a "postcolonial" global formation with the U.S. at its epicenter. Today, the destructive, even genocidal histories of modern empires are being whitewashed by obscuring, distorting, ignoring, and directly attacking anti-colonial and post-colonial scholarship. Advocates for U.S. empire directly target both students and teachers—Niall Ferguson suggests that the U.S. must learn from Britain in sending out its best and brightest students on the imperial mission.⁸ Said's work consistently pointed out what is at stake in our choices as teachers, students, and citizens. We will miss him increasingly in the days to come, and the best tribute we can pay to him is to stand by the lessons we learnt from his scholarship and from the example of his own life.

NOTES

¹Interview with Edward Said, *The Book Review* 22:1-2 (1998), 39-44; Reprinted in *Interventions* 1:1 (1998), 81-96.

²Quoted K N Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 87.

³See Ania Loomba, *Shakespeare, Race and Colonialism* (Ox-

ford: Oxford University Press, 2002) for a fuller development of this history.

⁴Etienne Balibar, "Is There a Neo-racism?" in Etienne Balibar and Emmanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, Verso, 1991), 17-28, esp. 23.

⁵Edward W. Said, "The Clash of Definitions," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 567-90.

⁶Robert D. Kaplan, "Supremacy by Stealth," *The Atlantic Monthly* (July/August 2003), 6.

⁷Quoted from Kurtz's statement found at <http://edworkforce.house.gov/hearings/108th/sed/titlevi61903/kurtz.htm>

⁸Niall Ferguson, "The Empire Slinks Back," *The New York Times Magazine* (27 April 2003).