A Mind So Fine:
A Tribute to Edward Said

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This is not the worst, if you can say it is the worst, as a famous Shakespearean line has it. But it can get pretty bad even if it's not the worst.

—Michael Wood

Postcolonial theory was a 1980s phenomenon, a literary critical movement that took shape on the East Coast, becoming established there and elsewhere as what one could talk about after having talked too long about feminism, deconstruction, and postmodernism. The term may have been coined by Edward Said in an essay of 1979; if so it was already a restrike, minted from a prototype used by Abdallah Laroui in the 1960s or perhaps by Albert Memmi in the 1950s. Said himself came to prefer the term "emergent" theory and practice. But by the time he proposed this nominal territory had already been claimed: "postcolonial theory" it was going to be, and has been ever since in the anthologies and commentaries published to represent and explain this recent evolution in Anglo-American literary criticism.¹

The critics associated with postcolonial theory have been exceptionally unwilling to stand together for a group photograph—the mark of the movement is the disavowal of movements. So postcolonial theory resisted systematization and became rather good at slipping out of theoretical nooses, much like new historicism in its enduring modern form as a hands-on intellectual occupation that subsists by not being theory, philosophy, history, or any other discipline bedazzled by the false promises of systems, structures, and upper-case designations. Others produce their intellectual abstractions while postcolonial writers avant la lettre—represented by writers as apparently different as Paul Hazoume,

Rene Maran, Cheik Anta Diop, Aimé Césaire, Kateb Yacine, Mohammed Dib, and Léopold Sédar Senghor (although they, too, were across the hall in another town in another time)—remind us of the urgencies of real life. There is much of this sort of language in most postcolonial narrative, which describes and commends a total immersion in practice and close, detailed engagement with specific instances.

Postcolonial theory’s opponents have not been slow to find fault with this commitment to peculiarities, seeing in it a symptom of leftist disillusionment, an evasion of the challenges posed by feminism and the women’s movement, and a head-in-the-sand attitude to the movement’s own historical identity as, for example, the purveyor of a history of the British Empire (Kipling and all) that had remained incurious about the doings of the American empire of the present day even if Said renders it careful consideration in the last section of *Culture and Imperialism.* Postcolonial theory’s preference for Said over Spivak, colonial discourse analysis over class and ideology (the latter again criticized by Robert Young as a sort of fetish), metaphors of circulation and exchange—“social energies”—over those of cause and effect, and almost anything over Jacques Derrida and the challenge of radical deconstruction, seemed to many to be a rather too comfortable rehabilitation of old pleasures in the face of what came to be known as “theory.” At the same time, there was and is a foxiness to postcolonial theory, which threatens its critics with the hint (sometimes more than a hint) that all of this has been thought about and dismissed for good reason, or has already been taken care of. Is this truth, or just finesse? Who might tell, and how? Can we have devices of doubt along with the pleasures of real presence without creating hermeneutic turmoil? Can we enjoy our acts of postcolonial reading, and the colonial “pastness” we meet with in them, without suffering too much anxiety of influence? If postcolonial theory and practice is anything to go by, can it really be said to have arrived, and has it received the final mark of legitimacy: its readers? To this set of questions one feels impelled to add yet another: how important is *Orientalism* and its iconography to postcolonial theory? To what extent, we ask, is the concept not paradigmatic but syntagmatic; not projective but connective; not hierarchical or linear but variational; not referential but consistent? What are we to make of Tim Brennan’s reading of *Orientalism,* a reading that opened a gate and sponsored an escape? Above all, it bankrolled a break-out from tired narratives about the subject. What Brennan brought forward is that by being on the periphery, one knows where the center is. Or, does one? Can the inequalities of
power and wealth between the First and Third World allow us to celebrate the "global" as if we were all participants in the same local festival? How can we remedy the profound anxiety in which we (the ex-subject peoples) see ourselves not as "primitive" and "backward," but rather as part of a shared history of human civilization?

To all this, we now have to add one finally important matter: the impossibility of mourning the death of Edward Said, a man who contained multitudes. It is in this sense that "A Mind So Fine" can be said to establish itself as a text whose plurality makes it an arena for the shifting of the immense issue: what made the intelligence and beauty of the writing, the wide-ranging breadth, the passionate communicativeness of such a man who became such an inspiration to all of us? The question is a vital one and as a result must surely become the site of deconstruction's impossible source: at the point where literature claims to foster the distinctively "human," at the point where Edward Said reminds us of one of Milton's angels—the Archangel Michael—who stood out against power and injustice to build what Milton aptly called the "great palace now of light" (45). It is to such a palace of light that this essay addresses itself.

By Force of Mourning
There are, of course, many possible ways to mourn the death of a friend and teacher, none of them adequate but some more consolatory than others. One can begin on safe ground, surely, by letting Edward himself speak. Here are a few words, his words, that say something difficult to understand: "I'm not going to die, because so many people want me dead" (qtd. in Fisk 3). Citing Edward speaking of death, of his own death, allows the posthumous Edward a sort of survivance, a kind of living on, not only after his death, his actual death, but as if to enact the impossible speech act from Edgar Allan Poe: "I am dead." By citing Edward in this manner, I hope to negotiate the dialectic between being and nothingness, sound and silence, life and death. Thus,

Out of zealous devotion or gratitude, out of approbation as well, to be content with just quoting, with just accompanying that which more or less directly comes back or returns to the other, to let him speak, to efface oneself in front of and to follow his speech, and to do so right in front of him. But this excess of fidelity would end up saying and exchanging nothing. It returns to death. It points to death, sending death back to death. On the other hand, by avoiding all quotation, all identification, all
rapprochements even, so that what is addressed to or spoken of [Said] truly comes from the other, from the living friend, one risks making him disappear again, as if one could add more death to death and thus indecently pluralize it. We are left then with having to do and not do both at once, with having to correct one infidelity by the other. From one death, the other: is this the uneasiness that told me to begin with a plural? (Fichus 45)

The gist of this passage lies in giving voice to Edward, to him alone, and yet not leaving him alone as he speaks. This is the only chance for the punctum to make its mark: the one who was and will no longer be. And although we recognize that death has made the friend that was Edward inaccessible to us except in us—that the other, whose name we still use, can no longer become a vocation, an address, or an apostrophe—our desire to speak again to him, to him uniquely, corresponds nevertheless to our disbelief that he is indeed dead.

The day Edward died in a New York hospital, the news was telephoned to me in Toronto. The message was short: “Edward is dead.” I felt heavyhearted and did not speak, just flung my arms out in a gesture as if saying “Gone! Ego silebam et fletum frenebam [I remained silent and restrained my tears]” while trying to address my loss. The grief was all the more palpable for being wordless. It has been nearly a quarter of a year since I received the news that engulfed the world and I very much doubt I have absorbed the loss of un bel esprit. Every now and again in the pelting details of day-by-day life, there is a pause during which one must respond at a determined time and place to an unrepeatable event—the death of the man who put the maintenance of poetic inspiration above every other personal consideration. To pay homage to the friend—teacher-author who gave a voice to Palestine is to point out the debt as well as pay it back. Even so, aware as I am of the sorrow at the loss of Edward, and in particular to his beloved family and immense close circle of friends, I simply cannot reconcile myself to a world where he is no longer part of the crowd, part of the mêlée, part of the storm. It is an unthinkable thought that has alas become all too thinkable now. But Edward was too individual, too fierce a writer to dissolve easily. Formal and outrageous, exquisite and coarse, precious and raunchy, amazingly human and vulnerable in his larger-than-life status to all the personal pain and doubts that beset ordinary mortals, and never too self-preoccupied to let you gain entry to his life, Edward had a kindness of heart beneath the roaring certitude. Through his stand against domination and his
defense of Palestine, he had grown into the giant dissident figure we
mourn today. Also to be mourned is that the name “Edward,” which began
with his life and kept us in good company for nearly sixty-seven years, is no
more—except that is, when it speaks and bears his death each time it is
uttered. In the throes of grief, anger, and helplessness that one feels after
the death of a dear friend like Edward Said, how can one mourn for him?
“The name alone makes possible the plurality of deaths,” Derrida
perceptively notes; the “name races toward death even more quickly than
we do, we who naively believe that we bear it. ... It is in advance the name
of a dead person” (46). That mourning begins with the name is true insofar
as one bears witness, out of a kind of fidelity to Edward, to a unique,
personal relationship with the deceased and pays tribute to his public life:
what he stood for, how he spoke, what he did to alleviate the suffering of
his people, sometimes even attempting to draw inspiration from the way
he approached life and death in word and deed. Today, the name “Edward
Said” says death, and so lends itself already to the work of mourning a
man who exhibited so many gifts of surefootedness and a selflessness of
effort that deserves the tribute paid once upon a time by the poet
Mahmoud Darwish to the achievement of the Palestinian Literary Move­
ment as a whole: “It is a sort of deposit account to the credit of the country”
(11).7 Or, to put it another way, we have now an answer to the question
posed by Plato’s ghost in the wonderful down-facing last stanza of W.B.
Yeats’ poem “What Then?”

“The work is done,” grown old he
thought,
“According to my boyish plan;
Let the fools rage, I swerved in naught,
Something to perfection brought”;
But louder sang that ghost, “What
then?” (34)8

“What then” is a question time will answer. For now, we are anxious for
Edward’s body, voice, visage, person. In mourning his death, we there­
fore recognize that he as a friend is now in us and already beyond us, in
us but totally other, so that nothing we say of or to him can touch him in
his infinite immutability. “Upon the death of the other we are given to
memory,” Derrida adds, “and thus to interiorization, since the other,
outside us, is now nothing” (34). Today, we remember, pay tribute, and
recall not only what is public but what is personal as well. The laws of friendship demand we do it, and do it we must.

Fidelity thus consists in mourning the man whose soul was too deep even for wounding, to adopt freely from Nietzsche: for he gladly crossed the bridge and dominated his generation of cultural critics and has no successor. Those victims of their adolescent dreams who are canvassing to succeed him as the preeminent Third World intellectual fail to see that the historical and structural conditions that made him possible are disappearing. The pressures of globalism and professionalism, governmental bureaucracy and the glittering prizes of the media, the cultural goods market and consumerism are combining to reduce the autonomy of the figure of the intellectual as exiled intelligence. They are threatening what is perhaps the rarest and most precious element in the Saidian model, and the element most truly antithetical to traditional attitudes of mind—namely, the refusal of worldly power and privilege and the affirmation of the strictly intellectual daring of saying no to all its airs and graces, charms and witcheries. (I will come back to the trope of the impossibility of mourning; for now, I want to concentrate on how Edward championed and articulated the Arab and/or Palestinian cause in an unreceptive West.)

I hope it is not immodest to say that Edward was one of the late twentieth century's most influential thinkers about the relations between culture and politics as well as the best known lisṣān (spokesperson) for Palestine and its plight in the court of Western public opinion. His embattled politics gave added force and drama to his scholarly arguments, while his academic eminence won him a wider hearing for his political views. At a deeper level, both activities derived from a burning anger at the unwillingness of the Western establishment to give a serious hearing—or often any hearing at all—to the Palestinian grievance. Politically, Edward sought to break through this wall of condescension with a stream of essays and books, speeches and interviews, television appearances and films. Intellectually, he gradually broadened his analysis, presenting the Palestinian case as an extreme instance of Western ideological treatment, first of Arabs in general (The Arab Portrayed, 1968), then Muslims (Orientalism, 1978), and later of the periphery as a whole (Culture and Imperialism, 1993). Aesthetically, he turned to music, his great love. And in contrast to the acrimonious conjunction of literature and politics, music and politics came happily together when he and his close friend, Daniel Barenboim, a renowned Israeli conductor with no time for political grandstanding, established a youth orchestra made of Arabs and Jews. From the way they coconducted, The West-
Eastern Divan, as it came to be known—which was in itself an aesthetic experience, enormously elegant and unique of its kind—one could see that they were setting an example of peaceful coexistence between Palestinians and Israelis. In doing so, they reminded us of Brecht’s dictum: “If one wanted an aesthetic, one could find one here.” Not a small task when one thinks about it. Or, is it?

It was Orientalism, a rock thrown through the windows of the West, that has become the model for the struggle to rewrite colonial history and that established Edward’s reputation by bringing together his two persona: professor of English literature at Columbia and member of the Palestine National Council. It caught the imagination of students all over the world with its thesis that Western academic learning about Islam and the Muslim peoples was not detached and scientific, as it liked to present itself, but one of the instruments the West used to impose its domination. Later books—The Question of Palestine (1979), Covering Islam (1981), After the Last Sky (1984), and Peace and Its Discontents (1996)—produced a formidable array of opponents and created major controversy. In 1999 Edward was wrongly accused in the pro-Zionist and Right wing American press of having fabricated the story of his childhood in Jerusalem “so as to invent himself as an embodiment of the Palestinian cause.” By chance, these attacks coincided with the appearance of his memoir, Out of Place (1999), which he wrote during his long and painful struggle against leukemia. It put an end to what Freud aptly called “la dénégation.”

Although born in Jerusalem in 1935 of Palestinian parents, Edward grew up mainly in Cairo, where his father had a successful stationery business; and the tribulations of his childhood were more personal than political. His dad, an American citizen, had fought in the first world war before returning to his native Palestine. Wadie Said—or Bill as he liked to be called—sent his son to expatriate British schools where the teachers showed no interest in Arabic culture. Indeed, speaking the language was a punishable offense. Not surprisingly, Edward felt himself a misfit. The theme of his memoir is that he was always out of place and never at home anywhere in the world and as a result was driven throughout his life by a restless insecurity that he sensed was typical of the Palestinian condition. This gave him, he believed, an empathy with other “exiled writers out of place,” including Joseph Conrad—the subject of his first book (Out 34–35). At the age of fifteen, Edward was removed from Victoria College, the “British Eton in Egypt,” and sent to a New England preparatory school followed by Princeton and Harvard. In this clubby
atmosphere, he made common cause with fellow outsiders, many of whom were children of European Jewish immigrants. For a time, his specifically Arab or Palestinian identity was almost suppressed. After toying with a musical career—he was a pianist of near professional standard—he eventually made his name as an English literature specialist. By his own account, what began his transformation into a Palestinian nationalist was the Israeli victory of 1967 and the unquestioning triumphalism with which America greeted it.

At times, Edward seemed to be asserting that the quest for knowledge about other cultures was in itself malign or hypocritical or both. Thus, his work could be taken as a condemnation of the entire canon of classical anthropology, or as an apology for cultural criticism—the notion that all beliefs are equally valid and that there is no such thing as objective truth. This brought him into conflict with such doyens of ignorance as Bernard Lewis and Ernest Gellner, for whom reason transcended culture and relativism was the ultimate trahison des clercs. Yet, critiques of his work should be distinguished from the sustained vilification to which he was subjected by political opponents, both before and after he came out against the 1993 Oslo agreement between Israel and Palestine. His anti-Zionism, however vehement, was never tinged with anti-Semitism. So perhaps it was fitting that after 1993, despairing of a meaningful Palestinian state alongside Israel, he reverted to the earlier vision of a single state, a democratic Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would be fellow citizens with equal rights. Accused by stubborn minds of political polemics, he was the most individual, independent, and idiosyncratic of writers; dismissed by many in his lifetime as a subversive cult figure, an "exotic" commodity, he has become the contemporary writer most studied at the university world wide—a victory over the mainstream he (and we) enjoy immensely. And Edward had not finished: it is his combination of scholarly erudition and critical astuteness that is most remarkable, not least in an age when those who know all about books are rarely the sharpest analysts of them, and vice versa.

In all his oeuvre, Edward sought to detail a growing pain at having to see self and others after a life he characterized as having been lived entirely on merit. Understanding the work of transplanted writers as a means of contributing meaning and values that are necessary and useful to people (readers) is thus vital to comprehending his Ijtihad (perseverance). It was not an easy thing, to be sure, even during the high noon of the bull market, to scoff at the dot-coms, the hedge funds, the Silicon Valley millionaires, the day traders, and all the other ephemera of
prosperity. But beneath all the prodigious bubbling, counsel to the wise, Edward stood as a human icon as solid and reliable as C.L.R. James or Franz Fanon before him insofar as he was also a complex being, not easily understood by the earthbound and the pessimistic. Edward, the public and private man, correctly and incorrectly understood, was a relationship, a thing of nuance and complexity, of irony and evasiveness. We were at once skeptical about him and are more than ever ravenous consumers of his works. Writers like him are interactive beings that earn our loyalty through endless repetition and constant adjustment. A particular sensibility, not a cumulative argument, links his oeuvre, a perspective that combines erudition, ardor, and heterodox opinion. Edward was after a different quarry from perspective, color, structure, tone. He was more a cerebral writer perhaps than a sensuous one. His sharp interrogative approach introduced an awkwardness into our relationship with Palestine. But that is a virtue; it is one of the ironies of postmodernism that his corpus, so daring and jolting to his contemporaries, should have taken on a fully rounded existence in the first decade of the third millennium as testimony to displacement. It (his body of works), with its sharp questions and peremptory demands, paints life in all its grand fun, unease, and pain.

The death of Edward, who departed at last after a long battle with an insidious and painful illness he bore with intrepidity, like his life, is crowded with incident and personality, with issues and crises of a great personal and national moment, yet in the face of it all, he pursued his calling undeviatingly. He had an enormous, fastidiously accumulated and articulated knowledge of the history of Palestine, as well as a living memory of where everything and everyone came from, where they went, where they were now living, or when they had disappeared. He kept up with everyone’s life with the zeal of a medieval chronicler. In doing so, Edward exemplified the virtues of that Palestinian intelligence so often invoked by Darwish, whom he admired—an intelligence independent, vigorous, liberal and, on occasion, consciously provocative, something resembling the guerrilla supremo.

We prepare for the death of a friend; we anticipate it; we see ourselves as survivors, or as having already survived. To have a friend, to call him by name—say, Edward—and to be called by him, is to know that one of the two will go first, that one will be left to speak the name of the other in the other’s absence. This is not only the ineluctable law of human finitude, but the law of the name. The name is always related to death, to the structural possibility that the one who gives, receives or bears the name of the other who will be absent from it. The operation severing the
name from the body is already at work among the living insofar as the relationship between the corpse (of Edward) and the corpus becomes possible with the very giving of a name, a signature, a context. The name is separable from the body, the corpus from the corpse. This is the case when others refer now, use, or speak the name "Edward." Derrida comments on the signature that "speaks to us always of death," of the "possible death of the one who bears the name" (136). The upshot is that in each death there is an end of the world, and yet the act of mourning allows us to speak of this end and multiply it, both to anticipate it and repeat it—with regard to Edward, one proper name. From now on, we will speak of the book—say, Orientalism—rather than the body, of the corpus rather than the corpse, and yet, in this tendency, one sees not a form of repression but also an affirmation of life in that Edward continues to live in us.

In this abundance of desperate impossibilities of mourning, laid out before us in various dimensions, there is a need for a breath of new life after the death of Edward: I have rarely seen this hope of continued struggle to fight back captured in the outpouring of handsome tributes testifying to esteem, respect, and admiration for him. Among many competing narratives, one that strikes a chord is the reprinting of a section of one of his own columns, itself part of a tribute to two of his main intellectual, political, and personal mentors, Eqbal Ahmad and Ibrahim Abu-Lughd, whose deaths brought him sadness and resignation:

It was thanks to Ibrahim that in 1970 I first met Eqbal Ahmad, the other comrade-in-arms whose untimely death has left me so diminished. Like Ibrahim, Eqbal was (to use one of Ibrahim’s highest terms of praise) asil, an "authentic," with the same gift of endlessly fertile, untiring eloquence. To sit up late at night with both of them was to be slowly cowed into silence, as they spun out lengthy disquisitions, learned and even arcane analyses, never entirely free from competitive zeal. Neither of my gurus was ever stingy with his time, and neither—perhaps for the same reason—cared much for the relative parsimony of print. Stylists of the uttered word, pluri-lingual, generous with ideas and stories, they sustained me during my illness in ways that embarrassment prevents me from recounting here. What dismays me is that they should have died before me—particularly now, when their voices would have been so telling and humanely informative. ("My" 3)

One cannot help but feel overwhelmed by the sense of gratitude, devotion, and generosity that Edward had for his close friends. It was almost
a necessity, not a constraint, but a gentle force that compelled him yesterday and obligates us today not to bend or curve otherwise the space of thought in its respect for the other, understood as friend, but rather to yield to him. Henceforth, the relation to this other dictates an infinite separation and interruption of the radiance of the visage of Edward, who, speaking of sound versus silence, wrote, “Sleeplessness for me is a cherished state to be desired at almost any cost. There is nothing for me as invigorating as immediately shedding the shadowy half-consciousness of a night’s loss, that the early morning, reacquainting myself with or resuming what I might have lost completely a few hours earlier” (Out 295). The good fortune of our debt to Edward is that we can “cast a cold eye / on . . . death,” but not on life, as Yeats thought and wrote, and affirm it without regret, in the joyous innocence of admiration. My regret is that I did not say this to him enough, did not show him this enough in the course of sixteen years of friendship.

The untimely death of Edward affects us in other ways, too: it has robbed Palestine of a resonant liassān (an articulate voice) that was always hopeful, always on the offensive; it has silenced a counter narrative that strove to give its readers a revelatory alternative, not only the obligatory two sides to a given question but the often overlooked third dimension as well; it has deprived the university (an almost-utopian place where ideas can still be discussed without fear or hindrance) of its love by affiliation; and it has taken away a dear friend on whom one could always count. As a thinker, teacher, citizen, musician, and political activist, Edward towered over his time with extraordinary luminosity. He had a prodigious capacity for work and a seemingly boundless energy for struggle on behalf of the downtrodden. Power never fazed him, and he took on its many contemporary forms with undaunted courage. His loss is as grievous as it is cruel, and were it not for his impressive œuvre, we would indeed feel orphaned in a world that continues to shrink from itself day by day—a world of surfaces, random sensations, and schizoid human subjects; a world where reality itself is now a kind of fiction, a matter of image, virtual wealth, fabricated personalities, media-driven events, political spectaculars, and the spin-doctor as artist. If at times his wit was merciless and insights biting, at other times his compassion was limitless. The wisdom that stirred him in issue after issue, leap after leap, sortie after sortie, quip after quip, flight of wit after flight of wit, was commendable. Edward did not suffer stooges gladly: when the Oslo process dribbled wretchedly on, he kept up a barrage of pointed, hard-to-answer abuse. And he did it with style to boot. Struck down as he was in the prime
of his life and brilliance, he nevertheless challenged every intellectual of his generation to step across the very line that he drew.

From the moment I sat in his class in 1986/87, the year he held the Northrop Frye Chair of Literature at the University of Toronto, I was moved by his unassuming manner and the cordiality of his regard toward me, the only student of Berber descent. To ask him for guidance, as I often did, was to be humbled by the sheer reach of his learning and erudition. Today, I can still hear his voice in my mind, discern his intention and method of reading by some other way (of reading). I knew and admired him both as a teacher and as a humanist. I also hasten to add that a demanding genius like Edward never dies insofar as his moral energy will continue to guide us and set our energy free. A demigod, Edward looked into the mad eye of history and did not blink. In the process, he proved himself to be a great writer: scathing in his critique, ferocious, bitterly, and brilliantly articulate in his prose. Poised, polished, always serious but never solemn, and actually quite charming, he rarely resisted the chance to say something witty or funny or deflating. He always sought good restaurants and vintage wines, pleasant conversation, and a certain joie de vivre. Death genuinely angered Edward. The ivresse and zest that motored his life are best captured by Wood: “In England, on the way to a party, Edward and friends remember pranks from their schooldays in Egypt, laughing convulsively—a portrait of old happiness which does not contradict but certainly complements the sadness of the schooling in Out of Place” (“On” 3). That is how Edward was. He never posed or assumed airs. Directness and sincerity of approach were the hallmarks of his intellectual presence. Even though he could be ironic, he was never condescending. To see him play the piano, an instrument that gave him immense pleasure and company when he became gravely ill, was to be delighted and enthralled. One felt in the presence of an accomplished pianist who had developed the brilliance and shimmering prism through which sounds, senses, and ideas were magically transfigured.

It is an irony and contradiction worth noting by way of a remembrance that Edward died the year Orientalism celebrated its silver jubilee. In the event, one is reminded of the question of author, authority, authorship, life, death. When T.S. Eliot made the distinction between the poet as poet, and the person who has a personality, suffers, and has a psychology, he did little to settle the point once and for all: he simply articulated it, with arresting skill, as a problem. Amid all the pallid postcolonial hybridity and the old and new postmodern anything-goes-ism, and unlike its begetter who died on September 25, 2003, Orientalism endures like
Paleolithic mammals, resisting the inevitability of extinction. Edward articulates the point with force and foresight:

It is still a source of amazement to me that *Orientalism* continues to be discussed and translated all over the world, in thirty-six languages. Thanks to the efforts of my dear friend and colleague Professor Gaby Peterberg, now of UCLA, formerly of Ben-Gurion University in Israel, there is a Hebrew version of the book available, which has stimulated considerable discussion and debate among Israeli readers and students. In addition, a Vietnamese translation has appeared under Australian auspices; I hope it’s not immodest to say that an Indochinese intellectual space seems to have opened up for the propositions of this book. In any case, it gives me great pleasure to note as an author who has never dreamed of any such happy fate for his work that interest in what I tried to do in my book hasn’t completely *died down*, particularly in the many different lands of the Orient itself. (*Orientalism* xvi; emphasis added)

Or, to put it differently, a quarter of a century after it first appeared, *Orientalism* still wakes us to the sight and sounds of the afflicted, the poor, and the dispossessed and, in so doing, stirs us still to face our vanity, our greed, and our mortality, returning us to our shared humanity. In the process, it makes the insistent dreamers among us mad and the newly awakened glad. Suffice it to add that in today’s cultural climate, *Orientalism* is, more than ever, poised to invent “*un peuple qui manque, un peuple à venir encore enfoui sous . . . [les] trahisons et reniements*”—just what it was surely constructed to achieve: what was once rejected has become the cornerstone, and centuries of insult and odious patronage are accordingly being made up for in the most obstinate of ways (*Critique* 22). Edward was right to that extent. His rich life and untimely death both reflect and clarify the turbulence and suffering that are at the core of the Palestinian experience: this is why his life withstands scrutiny. So much does it out the Palestinian situation in all its resolutions, hopes, and impediments.

One has to marvel at people who, like Edward, read literature, theory, politics, culture, and music the way he did—*contrapuntally* and against the grain. But more than his art, it was his life—the only subject of his art—that served to inspire so many of us around the world. By now, it is easy to forget how many of us have been all but patented—or lived out most wholeheartedly—by Edward, who was so spendthrift with himself, and so loud in praise of folly, that he laid himself open to many charges. He opened himself to us at various times without reserve, and sometimes with flippancy, which was not always allowed. Yet, to return to his *oeuvre*
is to rediscover him as much more complex than either memory or mourning could ever allow.

Proust once said that every artist has a particular tune (*chanson*) that can be found in almost every sentence of his or her work: a special cadence, a theme, an obsession or characteristic key absolutely the artist's own. Glenn Gould's key may be the combination of rhythm and polyphony that informed all his playing. In Edward's case, it is an immediately recognizable tension between simple melody and insistent, sometimes explosive and always variational developmental sequences. Edward set the form, as a dramatist sets a play—on a stage, before the audience and for a discrete span of time. His work on music reflects his lifelong concern with art (in contrast to reason) as the only humanly available means of expressing wholeness—or, more precisely, the longing for a transcendence whose realization represents not only a vain hope but also a potential source of good. In his thought, violence and myth, evil and death intrude into the world and must be countered by critical means both literary and aesthetic. As Edward encouragingly put it:

I take criticism so seriously as to believe that, even in the midst of a battle in which one is unmistakenly on one side against another, there should be criticism, because there must be critical consciousness if there are to be issues, problems, values, even lives to be fought for. . . . Criticism must think of itself as life-enhancing and constitutively opposed to every form of tyranny, domination, and abuse; its social goals are noncoercive knowledge produced in the interests of human freedom. (*World* 34)

As Roland Barthes once speculated that one could write a history of textuality, showing how the self-conscious play of the signifier threads its way through the history of writing, so Edward charts the surfacing and submerging of popular resistance from Antonio Gramsci to C.L.R. James, from Malcolm X to Ali Shariati. Precisely because of this coming and going, there is no unbroken teleology at work here, but there is certainly a presumption that an art that smacks of the common people is ethically and aesthetically superior to one that does not.

For a region long dismissed as "primitive" and that has been largely interpreted in terms of its tyrannies, wars, and injustices, it is both a timely and fortunate corrective to see the first-rate literature and criticism that exists all over Palestine, that most contested of places. Every writer identifies with a special place (*Baruh* for Darwish, *Al-Quds* for Said), with its own writing (memory) and history (forgetfulness). If some Arab
writers still lament the loss of the past (Darwish), their attempt to claim a lost paradise may paradoxically be the attempt for others (Edward) to exorcize it from our collective memory. That at bottom is the extraordinary intellectual trajectory of Edward, one of the most influential people of our time. Wood expresses its importance best: “Criticism is a chance to be taken and Edward continues to illustrate its allure and its rewards” (“Damaging” xv). In the upshot, the central theme of his life was his restless anxiety, a narcissistic pattern of self-concern and self-immersion that was fed and accentuated by the life of a music performer’s playing and/or writing. In the process, the extremity of being alone, day after day, sooner or later catches up with one, especially if, as in the case of Edward, the will to control life and body was constantly challenged—not just by the rigors of a performing life, but by mortality. Speaking of the variations in his illness while writing Out of Place, he wrote,

As I grew weaker, the more the number of infections and bouts of side-effects increased, the more the memoir was my way of constructing something in prose while in my physical and emotional life I grappled with the anxieties and pains of degeneration. Both tasks resolved themselves into details: to write is to get from word to word, to suffer illness is to go through the infinitesimal steps that take you from one state to another. With other sorts of work that I did, essays, lectures, teaching, journalism, I was going across the illness, punctuating it almost forcibly with deadlines and cycles of beginning, middle and end: with this memoir I was borne along by the episodes of treatment, hospital stay, physical pain and mental anguish, letting those dictate how and when I could write, for how long and where. (11)

Edward—dear friend, teacher, and guru—I bid you adieu across the infinite chasm. I do not even have to close my eyes to savor your aesthetics (of difference), spirit of unbounded generosity, sheer continuous presence, and above all, kindness of heart. To paraphrase Wood, your affection enveloped us like a roar, like a cure—even when you became the one who was ill. We felt better every time we saw you. Or rather, we felt we could be better than we were, and we thought the world was a larger place than it had seemed before (“On” 6). Gone though you are, Edward, you will nevertheless continue to shine like a “BRIGHT star”: “Awake for ever in a sweet unrest, / ... And so live ever” in the minds of those who love you from near or afar (Poems 251). It is your magnificently critical spirit that we hold on to and try, unceasingly, to perpetuate. In the long unfolding saga of Palestine where all happiness is being snatched away
by Sharon Murder Inc., were a Palestinian asked what indeed makes him or her proud to be Palestinian, he or she would hurry to tell the whole world: "Edward Said," a son of Palestine who stood as a father of the New Palestine—hopeful, stubborn, and, more than ever, determined not to shut up, but to fight back with all the determination she can muster.

Just as the greeting of the à-dieu does not signal the end insofar as it is not a finality, the struggle for a liberated Palestine must and will also go on unabashed. Edward, the dream rising out of reality is that in the unfolding story of your death, we are emboldened like never before to carry the torch of learning that you handed to us. And if you can no longer speak in return, it is because you are responding in us, and before us, in us right before us—in calling us, in recalling to us: à-Dieu. By this time, though, we begin to have an idea of what you have meant to us. It is a private idea, and a curiously ennobling one. The idea of remembering your moral stature (a rare quality in these degraded days)—which gives us the strength to go on—has built up from all you have taught us: to recognize the fragmented aspects of our identity; to see how they enable us to become who we are; to understand what is necessary about a painful and awkward past and/or present, and to accept it as part of our being while striving to change it for the better—this ceaseless process, the process, really, of carving a way in the world, is much of what will keep us going. In an age when much literature has turned inward, losing itself in halls of mirrors, your insistence on the moral function of writing will guide us through the maze. Your quest will carry the weight of lived experience, of your own profound meanings and goings of life, the goings-on. Most of all, however, it will carry the weight of your genius. Edward, we remember the genius, and the man. The rest is silence.

Reading Brennan/Prakash Reading Said
It is entirely fitting that Said held an exemplary position in the world of letters, that he was the cultural critic of the colonial trace, that he was the recipient of the Owais Prize for Literature, the Picasso Medal (UNESCO) and the Lannan Prize for lifetime achievement, and the Concord Prize for overcoming historical antagonism, promoting dialogue for peace between Palestine and Israel. This ought to come as no surprise, and that would be one way of praising the calm inevitability of his towering in stature, yet the fact that it does surprise makes of his oeuvre an undeniably major contribution to cultural criticism. Part of Said’s originality is that simply to point him out, Said ipse, would be to mistake the inquirer’s meaning if he wanted to know who Said really was. But having said all
this, one has really done no more than mark off a space in the (by now) quite familiar ongoing project known as deconstruction. Said signs on, so to speak, at the point where most interpretation signs off: with the idea that putting one's name to a text can never be a simple gesture of containment insofar as the claim to authorial copyright is an event that cannot be meaningful without having divided itself between work and text while referring back to the one and the other by birth:

Thus 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. True my mother told me that I had been named Edward after the Prince of Wales, who cut so fine a figure in 1935, the year of my birth, and Said was the name of various uncles and cousins. But the rationale of my name broke down both when I discovered no grandparents called Said and when I tried to connect my fancy English name with its Arabic partner. (Out 3)

From this position of elevated dislocation, of studied self-removal, Edward Said produced the most complex and demanding body of works of any postwar Anglophone cultural critic. His scholarship, occupying an ambiguous space between literature and theory, music and aesthetics, politics and ideology, is haunted by solitude and disciplined by a need to understand the anxieties of the written as opposed to the spoken word. To ask how he achieved that point of vantage is to be reminded that his work was still to an unusual degree incomplete at the time of his death. His life was incomplete in other ways, too. As a wanderer thrice displaced, in sentences of great precision and balance, Said reanimates the dilemmas of the postcolonial experience—the pathos of marginality and inner exile, the fear of throwing oneself into a void, and the failure of the liberated “I” to remake its home elsewhere.

There is no easy or ready-made method for discussing the life and/or works of a writer like Edward Said, whose art in its essence is so different, so remote from his everyday chores or even his career. The occasions for his petits récits and music writing are connected to the aesthetic texts of Sartre, Benda, Adorno, Gould, and others. But when it comes to such longterm projects, or grands récits like Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism, which together form a mighty ensemble, he is majestic (what little he says is always full of insight). Orientalism, not surprisingly, is a book that meditates on the necessity "to reverse oneself, to accept thereby the risks of rupture and discontinuity" (34). Said makes
clear how one can recast inherited texts and/or read them in revisionist ways:

To make explicit what is usually allowed to remain implicit; to state that which, because of professional consensus, is ordinarily not stated or questioned; to begin again rather than to take up writing dutifully at a designated point and in a way ordained by tradition; above all, to write in and as an act of discovery rather than out of respectful obedience to established “truth”—these add up to the production of knowledge, they summarize the method of beginning about which this book turns. (Beginnings 379)

But if Orientalism gestures unambiguously toward a political view of intellectual activity, it only occasionally reveals itself as “a profoundly American book” (Brennan 560). No one who read the book would mistake it for the work of a dispossessed Arab-American critic resolving to eagerly combat the wrongs done to his constituency by imperial powers, ever willing to accept duels in interpretation and virtuosity.

The book is also cannier than what Brennan purports to think for it wages struggles on behalf of the truth—the truth not only of usually unrecorded suffering but also the truth about the institutional obduracy that lurks insidiously beneath the surface of things, and (a persistent theme of its author’s early years) the callous posturing of so-called realistic or pragmatic intellectuals. Power never fazed or impressed Said: he took on its many contemporary forms with undaunted courage. Brennan shrewdly points out that to make a topic of one’s own development demands the most careful management of narrative. Its greatest exponent in this regard was Said himself as an ex-colonial, and his project took the sweetly satisfying form of a whole life lived as a kind of revenge. Brennan also makes abundantly clear that Orientalism could not have been written anywhere else, and its legacy is fused, or confused, with an American national culture that is particularly impervious to what the book is saying. To call the book American is also, of course, to raise the issue of the authentic Third World dimension of the postcolonial intellectual as a way of probing the sensitive issue of metropolitan spokesmanship. (560)

I can understand the appeal of this argument to an assiduous critic like Brennan, who undertook to demonstrate that in certain provinces of thought or writing, a theory like Orientalism and an actual experience
According to Brennan, *Orientalism* has had at least two salutary types of positive effect, the *first* on its readers generally, the *second* on those professionally involved in area studies. But his biting way of viewing the book does not explain his reluctance to engage in a critique of the discipline of Orientalism itself. Brennan avoids the ultimate question: Does the Said model in fact encourage or discourage people from understanding what would be a legitimate and constructive critique of *Orientalism*, from both within and without the community in the field? Insofar as Said’s account of Orientalism is compatible with extensive public control over the funding of research and the application/dissem­nation of knowledge, his method of writing back with a vengeance allows for radical change. Brennan’s answer to this finding is that the Saidian model leaves no room for another critique.

The late millennial *épistéme*, if we are to take the concept seriously, may only be said to have provided a setting of a linguistic will to truth from which Said vainly sought to extricate himself. The logic of intertextuality dictates, in advance, that a Foucauldian *Geist* haunts *Orientalism*’s every line according to a historical grammar, rendering heroic improvisation a self-deluding exercise. Said himself, I believe, would not try to deny the inescapability of such a riposte to the argument I’m laying out here, provided the terms of Foucault’s own theories were accepted *sui generis*. It would not then be the unyielding logic of the *épistéme* but an ideological movement that was at issue and as such a contestable one. As Said himself repeatedly argues, one simply has to deny the terms to evade them. For him, evidence still matters. One does not have to bow to Nietzsche’s great epistemological step from evidence to self-reflection (the will to truth as a truth that one wills to be true). For this essay the evidence is of two types: what Said is on record as saying about this work and what the work internally shows. (570)

This is meager. Revolutions in thinking are cognitively complex, but one of Said’s central ripostes is that the Brennan method of interpreting concepts like ظاهر/باطل (latent/manifest) are of the nature not of culture but of theory, not a failure to meet one imaginary standard of tidy evaluation. The idea is a complex one, with many aspects, as can be seen already from the use to which it is put by structuralists.¹²

There is also a sense in which Brennan proves inadequate in dealing with Said’s *organic* lived experience, for it is necessary to distinguish between, on the one hand, the accomplished in a relation with the self; and
on the other the *event* (of writing against the grain), that its own reality cannot bring to completion. In this respect, the procedure of theme and variation that Brennan ponders over and that maintains the harmonic frame of the theme of *Orientalism*, gives way to a sort of “framing,” as Deleuze would have it. The Saidian method of (deconstruction and disputation) therefore gives birth to much freer compounds, to almost complete or loaded aggregates, in permanent equilibrium. Increasingly, it is the intention of the composition that matters. This is how Said puts it: “In writing *Orientalism*, I see myself as an Oriental writing back at Orientalists, who for so long have thrived upon our silence. I am also writing to them by dismantling the structure of their discipline, showing its meta-historical, institutional, anti-empirical, and ideological biases” (*Criticism* 47; emphasis added). It is at this point that a major lacuna arises in Brennan’s otherwise mercilessly witty essay: the failure to note that *Orientalism* has a reference, one that is *plurivocal* (Palestinian by birth, Arab by race, French-German-English-American and possibly Arabic by methodology, English by language, American by location). Certainly, it is not defined by an external resemblance, which remains prohibited, but by an internal tension that relates it to the whole of thought. Put differently, *Orientalism* makes a signal contribution to our understanding of how the discipline works and what it has achieved. Orientalists may be good at running such a discipline, but few of them understand how it works. A model such as that of Bernard Lewis (whose scholarship Said examines with a fine-toothed comb) of how he tests and applies his theory to the Orient has had absurd conclusions and consequences—the idea, for example, that every observation is evidence for every theory—and his account of where that theory comes from in the first place is incoherent at best. The possibilities Said articulates and the arguments he makes are a crucial resource for improving our feeble understanding of the Arab world and its peoples (*Orientalism* 47–52).

What I resist in Brennan’s “The Illusion of a Future” is the move from the *transitive* to the *intransitive* model, and the reasons Brennan provides do not seem provocative or exacting enough to establish a genuinely alternative reading. His ardent and at times balanced narrative gives a diachronic structure to *Orientalism*, as it attempts to put the luminous details together into a suggestive protohistory of modernity. Motifs of this kind are both arresting and convincing, but they fall short in understanding a hybrid text that was fathered at a time of extreme tension between the West and its nemesis (the Arab world). Brennan cheerfully admits that the connections he advances do not truly make a single
They are, however, loosely historicist: they suggest that significant things happen in the light of other things that have happened:

Without Said's prominence, his prolific writing, and (not least) his effective personal presence as a speaker, the process of breaking from an Anglocentric parochialism and moving towards more unsettling and linguistically diverse kinds of intellectual influence would not have proceeded as inexorably as it did. Obviously, what produced the theoretical turn, on the one hand, and the postcolonial moment, on the other (not to mention the conflation of the two), involved much larger and more complicated forces than those entailed by one man's career. Indeed, that is the point of this essay. But given Said's combined authority as literary amateur and proponent of anticolonial liberation in Palestine, this fictional Foucauldian Said did provide reasons for talented and resourceful younger scholars with a taste for the political to see a side of the French theorist that Said, somewhat tendentiously, sought to emphasize in his own early writing: one that popularized critiques of the West and placed literary critics themselves as credible arbiters of political value by virtue of the role of language in power. (568)

The model of modernity implied here is as relatively familiar as the one formed around "Traveling Theory" and real presence. But the derivation of the details is not familiar; indeed, it is unfamiliar enough to be breathtaking and to invite that willing suspension of disbelief that constitutes poetic faith, as Coleridge memorably put it. The pity of it is that from time to time Brennan does not have much that is penetrating to say about the author himself—his scattered comments on the constant pummeling Said has received amount to less than one instance:

The finesse of scholarship is, as it were, made naked here; its very formidability and grandeur bears an inversely proportional relationship to the more basic questions that prejudice makes elusive: why is one only an "Oriental" in the West, but never in the Orient itself? Why have the subjects never been given (as Said was to put it in a later essay) "permission to narrate"? (582)

The question raised above demands an answer in the form of another question—namely, how are we to conceive of a practical distinction between the writer as writer, and the person who has a personality, suffers, and has a psychology? To my mind, the condition of the writer and what he writes about go hand in hand; they suggest an unconscious
desire to belong, a feeling that grows more apparent in Said's late style. Unfortunately, because he takes Said's almost adopted home at face value, Brennan does not even entertain the possibility of rebelliousness. Said, whose directness and sincerity of approach are the hallmarks of his intellectual presence, even though he can be scathingly ironic in his attacks on imposture and fraud, is well aware of his power to generate provocative and expressive ideas that seem now and then to escape America's dominion entirely and to assume the outlines of a separate world altogether. In objectifying cultural movements whose currents and transformations he has chronicled with unparalleled mastery, he is able from there to rise to a theoretical vision that is incomparably elegant and stirring still.

I would like to take Brennan further than he is willing to go, although the analogy with *authorization* is his, not mine. "The Illusion of a Future" declares itself to be a belated recognition that something should or could have been said about the intention and method of writing *Orientalism*, the greatness of which is measured by the nature of the events to which its concepts summon us or which it enables us to ponder over them. So the unique, exclusive bond between Orientalism as a creative discipline and *Orientalism* as a great book must be tested in its finest details. Great in what way is the question. If it is nearly a quarter of a century too late to be a manifesto, then it is rather too soon to look like a *summa*, given that postcolonial theory's exponents are still in productive mid-career. The matter of influences is rehearsed in the narrative, and debts are acknowledged to some of the familiar fellow spirits, like Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James. There is also Raymond Williams, to be heard most obviously in Said's predilection for "lived experience," and E.P. Thompson, whose determination to remember the overlooked figures of the past is affirmed (though with qualifications) by Said as a formative model for his own work. There are also, appropriately, some surprises. One might not have thought of Albert Memmi and Abdallah Laroui as exemplary precursors, but here they are; and the appearance of Eric Auerbach took me even more by surprise, though as with the best of Said's conjuring tricks, the outcome is perfectly obvious once he has performed it. Auerbach seems right, especially after he has been cloned with Faiz Ahmad Faiz and acquired a hold on the world that his more purely literary conjurings might not otherwise attain. It is Auerbach's presence that anchors the pervasive question of displacement, which is seen as common to his exile to Istanbul during the War, his act of homage to the texts of a literary tradition from which he had been exorcized (his "cultural catholicity").
Just as with Auerbach, all the evidence we have about Said the exile and Said the reader-interpreter is that he has an uncanny power with individual phrases or themes whose combinational potential he can understand at a glance. “Orientalism Now,” a brilliant study by Gyan Prakash, reveals how Said’s creative powers derive from his capacity for finding (*inventio*), fetching out and knowing how to use all the combinations of which a given phrase is capable. In his deliberate, patient, overwhelmingly plotted and elaborated text, Prakash is Brennan’s exact opposite. If Brennan is to be admired for his normativity, Prakash is to be lauded for his eccentricity. His critique of Said ought to be flushed out so that we may appreciate the scientific basis of his thesis, given the way that postmodern life, with its brittleness of response, noisy disruptions and drastic impoverishment of experience, has thrown us out of kilter.

Like a mathematician with a rare insight into the heart of natural numbers, what their basic properties are, the way they cohere, combine and behave in groups, Prakash sees into the Oriental system, discerning the articulation of its language as well as its potential for concentration, expansion, expression, and elaboration. He is most perceptive in demonstrating that taking an almost random selection of notes in a given discipline—say, Anthropology—Said is able to put it through every permutation and also to keep those combinations occurring together according to a rigorous set of rules over which he has complete mastery. Prakash writes,

Edward Said’s *Orientalism* has lived a seditious life. Since 1978, when it launched an audacious attack on Western representations of the Orient, the book has breathed insurgency. Its history is now inseparable from the several condemnations it provoked from some and the high praises it elicited from others. Denounced as an uncharitable and poisonous attack on the integrity of Orientalist scholarship, it opened the floodgate of postcolonial criticism that has breached the authority of Western scholarship of Other societies. The hallowed image of the Orientalist as an austere figure unconcerned with the world and immersed in the mystery of foreign scripts and languages has acquired a dark hue as the murky business of ruling other peoples now forms the essential and enabling background of his or her scholarship. The towering and sagely images of men like William (“Oriental”) Jones have cracked and come tumbling down from their exalted spaces. This iconoclastic effect of Orientalism remains one of its most enduring influences, arousing some to an unrelenting hostility to the book while inciting others to mount further assaults on the authority of Western scholarship of the Other. (24)
The magnificence of Said's narrative, as Prakash amply demonstrates, its polyphonic ingenuity and its steady way with counter-argument, square with his awareness of the problem of representing other cultures. One cannot help but notice how amply they demonstrate Said's sense of responsibility to the public, his affiliation with a cause, a unified position he maintains in the midst of conflicting posts. Whether it be poststructuralism, postmodernism, postcolonialism or post-anything, they all represent a sort of spectacle. Those hoping for a weightier, more incisive input may find solace in the narrative of Orientalism. Prakash makes the point with flair:

More than anything else, what counts for the extraordinary impact of Orientalism is its repeated dissolution of boundaries drawn by colonial and neo-colonial Western hegemony. The book ignited an intellectual and ideological conflagration by its insistent undoing of oppositions between the Orient and the Occident, Western knowledge and Western power, scholarly objectivity and worldly motives, discursive regimes and authorial intentions, discipline and desire, representation and reality, and so on. Violating disciplinary borders and transgressing authoritative historical frontiers, Orientalism unsettled received categories and modes of understanding. Its persistent and restless movements between authorial intentions and discursive regimes, scholarly monographs and political tracts, literature and history, philology and travel writings, classical texts and twentieth-century polemic produced a profound uncertainty. (21)

Like Raymond Williams, Said uses logic and paradox to diagnose and subvert, but unlike Williams he has managed at last to come in from the cold. As a result, it is scarcely surprising that his engaging narrative has more than a touch of "mission accomplished" about it, the suggestion of a gate finally wide open.

Neither Brennan nor Prakash, however, is sufficiently concerned with the nature of the concept of Orientalism as reality. They have preferred to think of it as a given knowledge or representation that can be explained by the faculties able to form it (abstraction or generalization) or employ it (judgment). But the concept of Orientalism is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed, but posits itself in itself—it is self-positing. Brennan and Prakash also fail to understand how creation and self-positing mutually imply each other because what is truly created, from the living being to the work of art—say, from Delacroix to Femmes d'Alger dans leur appartement—thereby enjoys a self-positing,
as an aesthetic characteristic by which it is recognized. The concept of Orientalism as analyzed by Said posits itself to the same extent that it is created. In this sense, Orientalism is not post-Kantian—is not an encyclopedia—but stands for a modest task of a pedagogy of the concept. It contemplates, reflects, and communicates its findings to the members of its constituency and to those sitting on the outside of the fence. Take one meaning of Orientalism as a linguistic index: Arabia is a possible world, but it takes on a reality as soon as Arabic is spoken or Arabia is spoken about within a given field of experience—say, perfume or belly-dance or terrorism. This is very different, Said tells us, from the situation in which Arabia is realized by becoming the field of experience of domination and/or misrepresentation itself. Here, then, is a concept of the Other that is distorted and deliberately deformed by the West so that it may appear inferior. It is in this sense that Said thought anew the discipline of Orientalism. It is also in this sense that Orientalism resembles the (new) Idiot as conceived by Nicholas de Cusa. The new idiot will never accept the truths of history. The old idiot wanted to account for what was or was not comprehensible, what was or was not rational, what was lost or saved; but the new idiot wants the lost, the incomprehensible, and the absurd to be restored to him. The old idiot wanted truth, but the new idiot wants to turn the absurd into the highest power of thought—in other words, to create, to invent in Vico’s sense of the word. The old idiot wanted to be accountable only to reason, but the new idiot, closer to Job than to Socrates, wants account to be taken of “every victim of History”—these are not the same concepts insofar as the new idiot will never accept the truths of History. That in essence is Said’s critical attitude and position vis-à-vis the discipline of Orientalism, which, interestingly enough, totally eludes both Brennan and Prakash. Neither of them sees the death of experience or the spread of Western hegemony in the Middle East during the global era, which Said sets up not only for the sake of analytic clarification but also for distancing himself from the old school that sees the Orient as a static block, frozen in time.

Certainly, there is a sense in which Said was struck by the consensus among those working in the field of Orientalism during periods of what Thomas Kuhn came to call “normal science.” It is not just that they accept the same theories and data; they also have a shared conception of how to proceed in their research, a tacit agreement about where to look next. There is agreement about which new problems to tackle, what techniques to try, and what count as good solutions. It is rather as if the practitioners in a particular discipline—say, Oriental Studies—were
covertly given copies of a book of rules, the secret guide to research in their field. But no such rulebooks exist. Said, like Kuhn, wanted to find out what does the job of the rules that are not there in the first place. In the process, what he found was that the so-called experts on the Orient learned to proceed by example rather than by rule. They are guided by what Kuhn terms their exemplars, or certain shared solutions to problems in their speciality, like the problem sets that science students are expected to work through. ("Exemplar" captures the most important sense of Kuhn's famous multivalent term, "paradigm.") The function of problem sets is not to test students' knowledge, Kuhn adds, but to engender it. Similarly, exemplars guide research scientists in their work, for although, unlike rules, they are specific in content, they are general in their import. (Arabs are lazy, tricky, bloodthirsty, vindictive, irrational, anti-modernist. I note in passing how the encounter with the Arabs in Iraq produces a signal victory for "us" versus "them," forgetting to point out how the architect of the so-called victory serves as a limit text in which the characteristic operations of neocolonial discourse may be discerned—as an instrument of exploitation, a register of beleaguerment, a site of radical ambivalence.) Those pseudo-scholars will choose new problems that seem similar to the exemplary ones, will deploy techniques similar to those that worked in the exemplars, and will judge their success by the standards the exemplars exemplify.

The idea of the coordinating and creative power of exemplars provided Said with the basis for his general model of how Oriental Studies developed. Any new inquiry into the discipline must do, he says, without exemplars to start with and hence without coordination of normal science. If suitable exemplars are eventually found, normal science can proceed. But exemplars sow the seeds of their own destruction, since they will eventually suggest problems that are not soluble by the exemplary techniques. This leads to a state of crisis and in some cases to a scientific revolution, where new exemplars replace the old ones and another cycle of normal science begins.

This finding brings us back to the original claim: what scientific truth is not, according to Kuhn, is an accurate representation of the world as it is in itself. Scientific theories represent a world, but one partially constituted by the activities of the scholars themselves. This is not a commonsensical view, but it has a distinguished philosophical pedigree, associated most strongly with Kant. The Kantian view is that the truths we can know are truths about a "phenomenal" world that is the joint product of the "things in themselves" and the organizing, conceptual
activity of the human mind.21 Said, however, is Kant on wheels. Where Kant held that the human contribution to the phenomenal world is invariant, Said's view is that it changes fundamentally across scientific investigations. This is what he meant by his statement that after his inquiry into Oriental Studies the discipline changed. The relevance of Orientalism to the student of the colonial encounter is thus proclaimed: it is said's view that Western scholars have for a long time been putting their knowledge to the service of power and have been involved in a discourse for "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (Orientalism 3). Scholarship of this kind enabled the colonization of the Orient, and Western writers and artists (Flaubert, Delacroix, Gide, Kipling, and others) were implicated, willingly or unwillingly, in an act of appropriation and subjugation. To cite one example: Delacroix's Femmes d'Alger illustrates the point all too well.

The painting shows the gaze as it relates to the Other of the Other, the detritus of social strata, the leftovers, the nameless Arab females bathing in their private quarters. In their literal embodiment, these women are placed inside their (mi)lieu where they are constantly under surveillance from a central male vantage point: the artist. Said makes the point with force:

In the works of Delacroix and literally dozens of other French and British painters, the Oriental genre tableau carried representation into visual expression and a life of its own (which this book unfortunately must scant). Sensuality, promise, terror, sublimity, idyllic pleasure, intense energy: the Orient as a figure in the pre-Romantic, pretechnical Orientalist imagination of late-eighteenth-century Europe was really a chameleonlike quality called (adjectivally) "Oriental." But this free-floating Orient would be severely curtailed with the advent of academic Orientalism. (118-19)

In such an arrangement, those under observation are literally scrutinized in detail and, at the psychological level, made constantly aware of the ever-present, unverifiable possibility that they are being gazed at all the time. This spatial arrangement, Foucault once argued, merely concretized a more diffuse societal practice in which the dominant watched the dominated. These types (Delacroix and Co.) belonged to a system, a network, an enterprise of representations. Thus, "all designation must be accomplished by means of a certain relation to all other possible designations. To know what properly appertains to one individual is to have before one the classification—or the possibility of classifying—all
Intermediate to these essentially panoptical variants is what ought to be identified as the internalization of the gaze—the disposition to make of oneself an object that can be observed without detrimental consequences—in a counter logic of affirmative self-display: that seeing is dependent on looking, which is itself an act of choice; that the objects of our looking in *Femmes d'Alger* are not simply things but the relationships that exist between things, and between things and ourselves; that every look establishes a particular relationship between ourselves and the world we inhabit; and that it is at the same time highly personal, reflecting the concerns of the viewer, the bearer of the look. There is an implicit affinity between Said’s interpretation of the look and Sartre’s in *L'Être et le néant*, a look that is dialectical, going with the assumption that we (the natives), too, are looked at, that we, too, become objects of the gaze of others.

In Franz Hals’s portrait of the Regents of the *Old Men’s Almshouse in Harlem*, the Regents, as John Berger perceptively notes, look back at the painter, whom they see as a social inferior, even a pauper. He on the other hand must strive to see them as objectively as he can, to avoid the temptation of seeing them as a poor man might naturally see them, eyes fixed on his rich clients with envy, contempt, or flattery. The same cannot be said of Delacroix in *Femmes d’Alger*, for the painting stresses the representation of the native nude, the naked Algerian woman as a recurrent subject for painting, which reflects the imbalance of power between the Western white male, master of the gaze, and the dominated native female, object of the gaze, an imbalance accentuated by the probability that the future owner of the painting would also be Western and white and male (and clothed). Berger goes on to argue that because an oil painting is typically a commodity it transforms “the look of the thing it represents” into a commodity. Hence, there is an analogy between “possessing” and “the way of seeing which is incorporated in oil paintings” (322). He cites Levi-Strauss as observing that “it is this avid and ambitious desire to take possession of the object for the benefit of the owner or even of the spectator which seems to me to constitute one of the outstandingly original features of the art of Western civilization” (411). Berger himself suggests that the norms of oil painting—“its own way of seeing”—were not established until the sixteenth century, remaining unchallenged until they were undermined by Impressionism and then, at the beginning of the next century, overthrown by Cubism. If this were true, however, Cubism should have changed not only the concept of painting but also the relationship of art to property and possession. It
would be more accurate, perhaps, to say that Cubism changed an entrenched way of seeing and thus created a new way of looking, as a complex and multifaceted image was conceptually integrated by the viewer.

Representing female form in paint is not just creating an image based on what Fraunhofer calls the “laws of anatomy.” It is also the painter’s attempt to steal nothing less than God’s secret, to master a sexuality posed as radically other, as a mysterious essence and metaphysical ground of being. Or, to return to the terms of Lacan’s “Dieu et /la/Jouissance de la femme,” the artist is in thrall to the mystery of sexual difference; God’s secret is that “face of the female Other,” the God face as supported by feminine-jouissance around which male (Western artist and spectator) fantasy hopelessly turns in pursuit of an ever-elusive knowledge (it will be recalled that one of Lacan’s illustrative examples in La sexualité féminine is a work of art, Bernini’s sculpture of St Teresa). Closer to home, this may also remind us of Baudelaire’s confession of artistic “impotence” in the poem “Un fantôme”: “Je suis comme un peintre qu’un Dieu moqueur / Condamné à peindre, hélas! sur les ténèbres.” Femmes d’Alger is thus a painting in which Western white male artistic and Eastern erotic interests converge in a scopic regime of pouvoir-savoir-plaisir. It is a domain of violence and transgression in that it poses a challenge to all laws of anatomy, and in that it is beyond the pleasure principle. Indeed, the relation of the (white) male artist to the Algerian (female) nudes is not just one of sexually-interested looking (wanting what he paints) but also of looking at sexuality (wanting a knowledge and aesthetics he can put into paint). It is in this sense that the painter is said to be a painter and nothing but a painter, with color seized as if just squeezed from a tube, with the imprint of each hair of his brush, with this blue that is not an agua blue but a liquid paint blue. Female nakedness is, of course, another figure in the representation of the female’s sexuality; it torments the artist by virtue of being a visual zero.

Here then is a painting about a crisis of representation, where the essential, attempted move by the artist is not in fact beyond the figure toward abstraction, but rather deep into the figure and its “secret” life, from the surface forms of “anatomy” to the inside of flesh, to the pulse and rhythms of blood felt by the male artist. The painting is also a strong marker of the disparate carnality of vision itself in that it bespeaks a message about a brutal colonial regime and the oppositions that criss-crossed it.
Of course, as Lacan points out, the viewer’s eye is another sphere caught in this crossfire. It is not that the viewer, seeing the painting from the same space, has absorbed a different aspect of the work (a portrait of Arab women taking a bath). The space of spectatorship itself has become transformative and contradictory. The work of art is caught in a double historical frame with contending focal points. As the painting circulates, the culture of France becomes a palimpsest of the colonial destruction of another culture—namely, Algerian culture. Where the male viewer’s gaze and the female’s downcast look cross, there is no parallelism, no equidistance. We are at the critical point of contesting histories and incommensurable subjects of humanity (Bhabha, “Double” 87). Or, to put it differently, the gaze of the master comes to be reinscribed in terms of, or in connection with, the enslaved or the colonized. The artist, in attempting to appropriate the private stare at the Algerian female, renders his gaze a public duplication of the divine glance, and, by so doing, he establishes himself as ultimately different from all the rest of us viewing the painting. Delacroix is *sui generis*. It is this unmarked, privileged and private, in Derrida’s wording, “*différence qui écarte le sujet de l’objet,*” that marks the artist’s special stare. It does not, however, make him a private person, even if it means that in public he also bears another body, his invisible body, the body of his gaze.

There is very little consent to be found in the fact that the Western artist’s encounter with the naked body of the Oriental female produced a widely influential model of Arab women who never spoke of themselves; they never represented their emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented them. *He* was white, male, colonizer, outsider, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess the women artistically but to tell his Western constituency in what way they were “typically Arab”: soft, mellow, mysterious, voluptuous, devi­ous, easy to penetrate.

Men like Delacroix, however, suffer not just from distress at the strength of their own passions but from an endemic dread of regressing into infantile vulnerability. The danger of the sexual woman is that she is the same creature whose body bore and nurtured the male child, who having dragged himself away from her apron strings must now encounter her. His fear of being engulfed or consumed is a terror of returning to helpless dependence, a fear, when it comes right down to it, of oblivion and death. We are just a hop and a skip here from Freud’s *Oedipus*, and only a triple jump from Klein’s object relations theory. Either way, psychoanalytic theory indicates to Delacroix that men like him need to
wrench themselves from the power of maternally and sexually nourishing women in order to run the world—after all, maleness is a developmental afterthought; we all begin as female and only some of us develop into males. By analogy, social maleness is a cultivation that needs protecting from rampantly natural femaleness. "Maleness can be seen as a fragile pose, an insecure facade, something made up, frangible, that men create beyond nature" (Diski 12). Here men, valiant but feeble, are fending off entropy itself, standing against extinction in the form of their own innate inner femaleness.

The upshot is that Femmes d'Alger is not an isolated instance in the drive to dominate Algeria; it clearly stands for the pattern of relative power between North/South, male/female, us/them that was enabled in the first place. The painting also bears the debris of a culture of domination: its presence in the Western museum today reflects not only the intrusion of a foreign artist into an "exotic" milieu but also turns the painting from being a sign in a sensation into a symbol of high art. And although it is independent of its creator through the self-positing of the created, it is nevertheless a bloc of emotions caught on the canvas. "The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself," Deleuze and Guattari inform us:

The material is so varied in each case (canvas support, paint brush or equivalent agent, color in the tube) that it is difficult to say where in fact the material ends and sensation begins; preparation of the canvas, the track of the brush's hair, and many other things besides are obviously part of the sensation. . . . This is why those who are nothing but painters are also more than painters, because they "bring before us, in front of the fixed canvas," not the resemblance but the pure sensation of a "tortured flower, of a landscape slashed, pressed, and plowed," giving back "the water of the painting to nature." (What 166–67)

In this respect, the painter's position is no different from that of the writer, architect, or anthropologist; they are all part of a system: colonial knowledge gathering, whether ethnography, compilations of lexicons and grammars, or physical surveys.

As we enter the last phase of the exhibition, the tragic history of French domination in Algeria becomes more apparent and the need for the parallax more pertinent since in the very conventions of presentation, the painting reminds us of a past that knew all too well the colonial violence (of the brush). Said articulates the point: "The Orient was Orientalized not because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered
commonplace by an average . . . European, but also because it could be—that is, submitted to being—made Oriental” (Orientalism 5–6). But more compelling than the logic of anxiety, to be gazed at is to be imprisoned in le lieu and/or milieu where the encounter between the subordinate native and the colonial artist took place. It is from this perspective of unveiling the secret of intrusion that Said’s work assumes a monumental importance. This is indeed the new meaning of reference as form of the proposition and its relation to a system of domination. The operation is a complex variable that depends on a rapport de force between the subject/object represented here by the native female and the master artist represented by Delacroix. We may note the anonymity of the subject/object (femmes d’Alger) just like “l’Arabe” in Camus’s L’Étranger, and the proper name (Eugène Delacroix) standing for a signature placed inside the painting so that an act of authorship may be fully established.30

Neither Prakash nor Brennan address this perspective of “double interdit” even if “The Illusion of a Future” marks out as noteworthy “the view that the imperial absurdities of the high nineteenth century—relatively easy to ridicule in retrospect—live on in the supposedly enlightened technologies of the contemporary” world (582). True, for let us not be persuaded, as Homi Bhabha has bravely and bracingly argued, with all the goodwill in the world, that Orientalism is just a simple celebration of cultural borders and boundaries collapsing before the transcendence of the neoliberal and “global” vision—an international coterie of the inspired arguing well for the multicultural millennium. The last time such an assumption was made by Aziz, in E.M. Forster’s Passage to India, his carefully laid plans to host what he called an “international picnic” at the Marabar Caves went, as we are aware, badly wrong (“Double” 87).31 Contrary therefore to what Prakash and Brennan maintain in their otherwise compelling and persuasive investigations, Orientalism, in its journey round the back of Theory (of misrepresenting the Other as in the case of the Algerian woman), identified itself with the revolt against the sorts of wholeness called “totality” and “totalisation” and associated in the 1980s with perhaps a (misreading of) Fredric Jameson, Marxism, and Sartre—against the belief, that is, in the accessibility of a social-historical whole determining individual lives or events. Resistance to this notion came from the conviction either that no such wholeness exists (the liberal autonomy position) or that even if it did, we could not know it as such (the hermeneutic instability lobby), and sometimes by both at once. Said himself became well-known for wanting “to speak against the market forces and with the deprived, the disadvan-
taged, and the peripheral” (“Illusion” 442). Postcolonial theory, in its early days, emphasized the cinematic bringing to life of the colonial past—avowedly “representational,” but giving the effect of the real—while standing against the postmodernist idea that coherent and complete patterns in the past could be determined and articulated. Like a clip of movie footage, the new postcolonial past was wholly there and yet not there, and not implicated in any pattern beyond that of its own telling, except by loose association with something in the teller’s own place and time that was itself resistant to full knowledge. Colonial history, in this way, became synchronic: events were conjured up in densely contextual detail, but cut loose from what came before or after. Some said that this was as much of colonial history as we could have in an age that had forgotten how to think historically; others found only another incarnation of “slice-of-life” criticism, now in a mode more fully cinematic than ever.

There is of course a link between territory, tradition, and peoplehood that serves certain functions of state and governance and bestows an important sense of belonging. But the strong, global version of this relationship can lead to a limiting collusion that returns to the dominant sociocultural paradigms of colonialism, for as we make our global leap—a leap in technology as well as globocracy—we must return to that early form of globalization that the periphery had known for at least two-hundred and fifty years in its different phases as the histories of European expansionism, colonialism, and paternalism (“Double” 88). Much of the scholarly work on the new political and economic order, or what Harry Magdoff has described as “globalization”—a system by which a small, financial Western elite expanded its power over the whole globe, inflating commodity and service prices, redistributing wealth from lower-income sectors (usually in the Third World) to the higher-income ones—is compelling to say the least. Along with this, as discussed in astringent terms by Said in the last chapter of *Culture and Imperialism*, there has emerged a new transnational order in which states no longer have borders, labor and income are subject only to global managers, and colonialism has reappeared in the subservience of the South to the North. The global perspective in 1830 as in 2002 is the purview of power. The globe shrinks for those who own it. For the displaced or the dispossessed, the migrant or refugee, no distance is more awesome than the few feet across borders or frontiers. And in addition to the serendipity of domination, the common enemy is not the kind of oppressor that will acknowledge defeat, not least because it has no properly constituted representatives to sign the treaty on its behalf. Anyway, it already has feet in too many camps. Said
goes on to show how the interest of Western academics in a subject such as multiculturalism and postcoloniality can in fact be a cultural and intellectual retreat from the new realities of global power: what we need, he is hinting, is a rigorous political and economic scrutiny rather than a gesture of pedagogic expediency, exemplified by the "liberal self-deception," to adapt freely from Bhabha, contained in such new fields as cultural studies and multiculturalism.32

There is yet another layer of brain-subject that is no less creative than the ones I have been discussing—notably, knowledge as neither a form nor a force, but a function clearly showing the persistence of the maxim: "I function."33 The subject of Orientalism now appears as an "eject," because it extracts other disturbing elements I want to consider. The third section of Orientalism suggests that Said is not merely dissecting a body of colonial history and knowledge that has become a thing of the past; he contends that the discipline persists into the future as an influential academic tradition that, indeed, affects Western policy and attitudes to the Eastern world even now. If anything, Orientalism as an essential enabling cause of imperialism was—as the title of the relevant section of the book has it—"in full flower" between the wars and had been reincarnated as Middle Eastern Studies in Anglo-American universities after World War II. From this vantage point, Orientalist discourse was still perpetuating imperialist doctrines even as the world was fast decolonizing itself. Or, as Said put it near the end of Orientalism: "The fact is that Orientalism has been successfully accommodated to the new imperialism, where its ruling paradigms do not contest, and even confirm, the continuing imperial design to dominate Asia" (322). One can hardly disagree with such a finding insofar as globalism (another scourge) is meant to be a consciously and conspicuously mediated response by the West to the many identities that sit Janus-faced on the boundary of cultural difference, agonizing over what it means to be subjugated and exploited for copper, uranium, coffee, sand, sun, sex, oil, and other precious commodities. Where Iraq is concerned, the question of its invasion and rape by Bush and Blair cannot be sidestepped. In one sense, to be sure, a postmodern warfare that keeps belching so much smoke in the name of peace is doomed to failure even if it continues to score points: the destruction of the only country in the region that could pose a real challenge to Israel, the long degradation of its people, the day-by-day indignities of women, children, and the elderly, not to speak of the hole-in-the-corner calamities of obscure individual lives that lack even the dignity of a collective political title. (Think of Chalabi Inc.) And none of
these experiences is abstractly exchangeable with the others. They have no shared essence, other than the act of suffering. Those accustomed to inflicting pain with almost admirable dispassionateness are quite un­ashamed to display the most red-necked, reductively caricaturing of responses when it comes to the Other (Arab for now, but it could be Chinese tomorrow). For such a community, what Jonathan Swift aptly called “The Academy of Lagado,” injury, pain, suffering, and antagonism are the currency they share in common. That at bottom is their credo: to rule the world by fiat.

All-Out Friendship

“We can have true friendship with only a few”—so writes Aristotle, who goes on to explore the question of the number of friends it is good or possible to have (171).34 He thinks that friendship is a matter of kind feeling, an amity of sort, not of whether it involves something called painful energy. According to this theory, friendship is essentially related to mourning when one friend dies, leaving the other (friend) behind. For all its formidable coherence, then, there is a fairly simple opposition at work in the Aristotelian theory of friendship, one more sinewy than the universal respect paid to Aristotle. A similar claim can be found in the following set of questions: What happens when one friend must each time go before the other, when a singular relation with a friend ends abruptly? What comes about when the unique death of a friend such as Edward is taken up into all the codes and rituals of mourning? Can there be other words in which to remember him? To answer this set of questions, one must restore openness to each moment of a long, rich life, which requires a mastery of many different planes of narrative, all unfolding simultaneously, for Edward truly had a multiple self that he did not necessarily seek to simplify.

Although the worry about the relation between friendship and death is a very old one, and it is not getting any younger, some grief is curable—but not this one, which has inclined us to a long sadness. No matter how prepared we might have been, we knew no act of mourning would console us or diminish the pain of our loss.35 Since the death of Edward—and I owe it to him, as I owe it to the truth, to say this, assuming that I might at last be able to do so—it has been impossible for me to speak as I knew I wanted to, impossible to speak to him, to him, as one does with a true friend without pretense. I thus had to try to relearn everything, and I am still at it, for in attempting to capture his memory, I found myself confining and solidifying it, and in this sense, celebrating its meaning and
pride. In the process, the one thing that seemed to stand out for me and possibly for others at the time of his death was that Edward stood for energy, mobility, discovery, and risk. He was also able to lose his fondness for himself.

Edward was unique in his laughter and in his art, which carry through in the great body of work he has left us. For him, art and laughter were readings of works of art, but these readings were also experiences, pleasures, journeys, and lessons in the magisterial sense of exemplary lecturing or teaching—Edward was a superb teacher, as so many personal affiliations throughout the world can testify. The readings were lessons in performance, examples of what Edward said through what he did, giving himself, as one might say, with nothing held back, throwing himself into the storm headlong. Like a Conradian hero, he seemed always to be trying to rescue sense and sensibility from the dramas going on around him, as well as from his own strengths and weaknesses.

Like Iqbal Ahmad before him, Edward died at the height of his powers: in mid-sentence and mid-style, so to speak. For us (ex-colonials), this is the cruelest of deaths. His monumental work is the measure of our loss, but it is also our treasure to savor and to hoard while he is out there, out there in Culture, in Politics, in Theory, in Literature, in Music—a Ray of the clear Fountain of Eternal Day. Most people with an interest in him and his work have already expressed their grief from New York to New Delhi, Paris to Pretoria, San’a to São Paulo. Most of the tributes have lived up to the expectations created by so fine a mind in that they are crammed with a life that comes from its subject’s capacity to be at home in the worlds of deep imaginings.

"It seems," Hannah Arendt once wrote, "as if certain people are so exposed in their own lives (and only their lives, not as persons!), that they become, as it were, junction points and concrete objectifications of life" (11). Caught up by this passion in which life and thought were one and the same, Edward’s varied yet profoundly coherent intellectual journey continues to place life—in and of itself, and as a concept to be elucidated—at the center. Like Arendt’s, Edward’s personal and political experiences lead us to adjust our attention as well as our criticism so that we may be able to focus on the modern world, starting with an appropriation of a fundamental ontology that is centered on the “essence of man.” In the process, his experiences lead us also to catch glimpses of the beginnings of political actions that are vehicles for a “who.” In the end, if thinking and willing led Edward to meditations that are original and profound, meditations that dismantle culture and literature just as they do
politics and music, they also enabled him to sketch out a new way of looking at freedom, a way that is specifically his. Such method and intention also propose a way of articulating multilayered narration (story/history), a way that differs, in its originality, from the formalist theory of narrativity. What remains for us will be the duty to care for his way of telling and/or seeing, a way and/or a mind that is because it begins anew in the plurality of others and in that condition alone can act as a living thought that surpasses all other activity.

In the end, does not every major writer lay out a new field of immanence, introduce a new substance of being and draw up a new image of thought, so that there could not be two great critics on the same plane? It is true that we cannot imagine a great critic of whom it could not be said that he has changed what it means to think; he has “thought differently,” as Foucault put it. When we find several theories in the same author, is it not because they (the theories) have changed plane and once more found a new image? Maybe. For now, we ought to remember Maine de Biran’s complaint when he was near death: “I feel a little too old to start the construction again” (357). On the other hand, those who do not renew the image of thought are not real thinkers but functionaries who, enjoying a ready-made thought, are not even conscious of the problem and are unaware even of the efforts of those they claim to take as their models. But how, then, can we proceed in Theory if there are all these layers that sometimes knit together and sometimes do not?

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Notes

1. It is now granted that postcolonial theory was born around the same time as the launching of Orientalism by Edward Said in 1979. Other pioneers before Said paved the road for the discipline, including Frantz Fanon, C.L.R. James, Malcolm X, and James Baldwin.

2. The recent assault on Orientalism is part of a diatribe on the legacy of Said. Martin Kramer, Daniel Pipes, Bernard Lewis, and Richard Perle are behind the attack. Stanley Kurtz, another member of the pack, is keen on reversing the order of things when it comes to funding higher education. Their effort to limit funding gave birth to H.R. 3077, already passed by the lower house. The upper house is expected to deliberate on it next year. If it passes, we are in for a bumpy ride.

3. For Said’s definition of theory, see World 1.
4. Said is one (Raymond Williams, Terry Eagleton, and Frank Kermode also fit in the bill) of the best prizes offered by the builders of Empire. The practical side of this example is that it expanded what is today called “English Literature” as a subject or field of inquiry.

5. Unlike others, Fisk’s tribute to Said is fair, eloquent, and learned.

6. For an interesting view of the pain of death, see Poe 34 and 45-48.

7. Said’s untimely death is already felt by the resistance movement headed by Darwish. It leaves a huge gap no one can aspire to fill, especially in the West.

8. The poem explores the idea of pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.

9. For more on this subject, see Weiner; see also Marrouchi.

10. The memoir is a moving portrait of a childhood lived on the margins. Proustian in its scope, it deals with an apolitical period in the protagonist’s life.


12. For more on the subject, see Kriteva “Sujet” and Barthes 143-48.


14. Just as Auerbach was dismissed from his university post in Marburg in 1935 “on racist grounds,” Said was also nearly dismissed from his post of University Professor at Columbia University. See Said “Freud” and Cockburn 6.

15. I am indebted to Deleuze and Guattari (What) for the formulation of some of the ideas I develop in this section.

16. Since 9/11, anyone with an Arab or Muslim name is usually made to stand aside for special attention during airport security checks. There have been many reported instances of discriminatory behavior against Arabs, so that speaking Arabic or even reading an Arabic document in public is likely to draw unwelcome attention. Arabic is also synonymous with terrorism. The line of misrepresentation is quite reductive and hostile to the history, society, and culture of the region.

17. For an elaborate view on the subject, see Hopkins, who develops a suggestive introduction to the idea of the “Idiot.”

18. Said elaborates on his method of inventio in “Globalizing.” For more on the New Idiot, see Deleuze and Guattari, What.

19. On the Idiot (the uninitiated, private, or ordinary individual as opposed to the technician or expert) in his relationships with thought, see Cusa.

20. See chapter 1 in particular.

21. For more on the subject, see Eagleton 23–24.

22. See Jacob 50 and passim, and Canguilhem 44–63.

23. By shifting the origin of the gaze from a Western male viewer to a native female viewer, Said stresses the circulation and negotiation of the look rather than a unidirectional movement from white male subject-viewer to indigenous object. The reader is made to identify with the position of the object of the gaze, as well as with the gaze itself, so that the spectacle is no longer exclusively feminine, or the gaze exclusively masculine. For Sartre on the other hand, the
gaze is a menace, a threat directed at the Other. It is mobilized to unsettle, so that the subject and object of the gaze appear as relative positions in the symbolic chain rather than as fixed or essential. See Orientalism; Sartre 3.

24. For more on the subject, see Berger 45.

25. A cogent view of this matter is to be found in Lacan, “Mythe” and Écrits 213–41.

26. “L’amour du mensonge” and “la brune” in particular.

27. France is barely starting to face up to its shady past. The rise of Le Pen and his political party in the 2002 presidential election is a clear indication of the way the French still think of and treat their minorities. That Jacques Chirac was elected with eighty percent of the total vote is not a defeat of his policy to say the least, for he, too, thinks little of “les petits Arabes,” as he once called them.


29. See Derrida, Of.

30. It is an irony and contradiction worth noting by way of a supplement that during a recent trip to the South of France (Aix-en-Provence, to be precise), I dealt with an unforgivably nasty merchant in an open-air market who wanted to sell me two straw bags at a high price. When I pointed out that the merchant next to him was selling them for much less, he asked his assistant to check if “l’Arabe” was indeed selling them for less. I then told him that the merchant in question was not an Arab and what difference did it make even if he were, at which point he answered by saying: “Ce n’est pas pareil, cher monsieur! Un Arabe, c’est un Arabe, point final!” In other words, an Arab is a “scum.” In another instance that took place in a bakery, a six-month-old Arab baby carried by her mother touched the head-scarf of a French woman standing in line to buy bread. The baby’s hand was pushed away by the woman, who stormed off muttering in disapproval. On my way back to Canada, a much more pleasant and tolerant country, I kept thinking about both incidents and asking myself: why should we (the children of people who were once colonized) spend good money to experience meanness and intolerance, not to mention sheer racism and anti-Semitism? No wine, food, or landscape is worth that kind of humiliation even if it was not directed at me. It was after all directed at my people, and I am one of them—point final.

31. I owe a debt to Bhabha for the formulation of some of the ideas I develop in this section.

32. Said makes the point in “Orientalism, an Afterward.”

33. See Deleuze and Guattari, What 163–85, a shrewd and daring view of the matter I discuss here.

34. Aristotle makes it abundantly clear that a true friend sincerely wishes his or her friend well even if this does not coincide with the former’s interest. He actually condemns friendship that is based solely on interest because in such case it is not the person we love that is concerned, but the means by which we can profit from such friendship. See Book VIII, 1, 1155b–1156.

35. The writings of Maurice Blanchot, Pascale-Anne Brault, Michael Naas, and Jacques Derrida on death and mourning have in part influenced the
construction of the section on mourning. I am indebted to all of them as well as to Tommo of Qaf and Fran Devlin for reading the essay in its entirety. People who attended the funeral in New York were moved to tears by the tributes paid to Edward. Although the family had announced that the service would be private, open only to family members and close friends, they were nevertheless overtaken by the event insofar as Riverside Church, which is located in uptown New York, not far from Columbia University campus, and where the ceremony was held, was turned into the site of a large-scale pilgrimage, with many of the innumerable mourners having traveled thousands of miles to pay their final respects to the unique figure that was Edward. Daniel Barenboim, Chief Conductor for Life of the Staatskapelle Berlin and a close friend of Edward’s, played Mozart, Bach, and Brahms on the piano, the musical instrument Edward loved so much. The Reverend James Forbes ended the ceremony with a similarly traditional benediction, while the Reverend James Fitzgerald, describing Edward as a great thinker and an honest man who had boldly stood up for his views, was likewise conventional in his tribute. The more intimate side of the service was left to the Reverend Fouad Bahnan, a Lebanese national who has been close to the Said family since 1982. The sermon he delivered in Arabic moved even those with no knowledge of the language, his voice communicating the depth of his grief. Edward’s son, Wadie, gave a poignant speech, the physical resemblance between father and son—Wadie’s height and sturdy build—making it all the more touching. The piano played again, followed by Najla Said, the scholar’s daughter and actress by profession, reading “Waiting for the Barbarians,” a poem by the Greek Alexandrine poet Constantine Cavafy (1863–1933), and a favorite of the late Edward, she said. At the end of the ceremony, as the coffin was being escorted out, people lined up to offer their sympathy to the Saids in a reception area adjoining the chapel. All were united in the sense of loss that the absence of Edward entailed.

36. “The world” was one of Edward’s favorite words. He wrote that contemporary literary criticism was too often “worldless,” by which he meant inattentive to the circumstances that press upon texts, writers and readers alike: “My contention is that worldliness does not come and go, nor is it . . . a euphemism . . . for the impossibly vague notion that all things take place in time.”


38. For an insightful view of this matter, see Kriteva, Hannah 7–14.

Works Cited


—. “Living by the Clock.” London Review of Books 29 April 1999: 8–12.


