CHAPTER TWO

EDWARD W. SAID: THE POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

Edward W. Said was perhaps the first Third-World critic to address the complex question of the politics of representation most comprehensively in his book *Orientalism*.¹ This is in no way to disregard or avoid references to other notable works on the same subject. I particularly like to refer to the works of A.L. Tibawi, Syed Hussein Alatas, Anouar Abdel-Malek who were some of the foremost intellectuals to have broached the subject, along with such intellectuals as Abdullah Laroui, Talal Asad, and K.M. Panikkar.² The seemingly naïve and superlative assumption of the first sentence of this chapter would considerably ruffle critics like Ziauddin Sardar, who in an eponymous book has almost dismissed Said’s claims to a critique of Orientalist tendencies of the West, and accuses him of almost sneaking his way up a ladder of success without acknowledging his precursors. Sardar writes:

> Before the publication of *Orientalism*, Edward Said’s much cited and contested study, critiques of Orientalism were confined to disciplinary boundaries such as Islamic Studies, linguistics, anthropology, sociology history and philosophy of history. Said, a Palestinian/American scholar, intellectual and activist, borrowed and built upon the earlier studies of Tibawi, Alatas, Abdel-Malek, Djait and others such as Abdullah Laroui,
Talal Asad, K.M. Panikkar and Romila Thapar; but he did not acknowledge any of them. Indeed, *Orientalism* seems to have emerged ready-made and fully-fledged, as though from nowhere, and proceeded to shape and dominate the debate.\(^3\)

A few lines later Sardar refers to a series of essays by Marshall Hodgson, published between 1940 and 1960, in which he successfully critiqued Orientalism as a discourse of dominance of the West over the non-West.\(^4\) And this was done, Sardar scathingly notes, ‘long before both Foucault and Said became fashionable’.\(^5\) He even compares Said’s treatment of the French Orientalists such as Chateaubriand, Nerval and Flaubert with that of H. Djait’s, and calls the former ‘easily forgettable’.\(^6\)

A closer analysis will reveal that Ziauddin Sardar is perhaps both right and wrong. He is right in marking out the predecessors from whom Said has freely borrowed, or whose tradition of critiquing the West Said is possibly emulating. Indeed, there has been a history of concerted protest against Western essentialism, or Orientalism much before the publication of Said’s book in 1978. It would be foolhardy to deny the impact of some of these authors I have already referred to. But there are precisely two noteworthy reasons why we might call Said’s *Orientalism* seminal.
First, as is clear from Sardar’s earlier statement, most of the critiques of Orientalism were confined to specific disciplinary boundaries. Issues pertaining to Orientalism were discussed within parameters of codified, specific knowledge systems, and rarely was there any interdisciplinary interaction to problematize the very general nature of Western hegemony. The result was a lack of concerted protest, a single centre of power that could apply counter-hegemonic pressure. Edward Said’s was a Herculean attempt to assimilate in a comprehensive manner, these weak centres of discussion into one (albeit arbitrary) discipline that could resist the discursive dominance of Western academia. Questions that naturally arise, however, are about Said’s own consolidated position in the Western academy, that have been raised not only by Sardar, but at different times by Arif Dirlik, John Mackenzie and Aijaz Ahmad. These are complex questions that I have put forth already in the previous chapter, and shall proceed to elaborate later in this chapter.

Second, Sardar’s book and consequently his attack on Said are based too much on the elaborations of Islamic historiography. Sardar’s thesis lays much emphasis on Islam, and although he emphasizes other fields of study such as geography and military history, he is essentially interested in looking into those aspects of Orientalism that try to subvert or distort the ethical premises of Islam. Most of the historians or social scientists that he chooses have tried to defend a religion rendered vulnerable through hegemonic attacks by Orientalists in the West. In the course of their discussion they have definitely talked about
imperialism, the various tendencies of negative mythmaking (like the myth of the lazy native, or of the dishonest servant etcetera), colonial capitalism, and sundry other influences that Orientalist historiography had on the Western mind; but ultimately their work has remained more or less a monolithic defence of Islam, and a thwarting of Judaeo-Christian religious hegemony.

The basis of Said’s work, however, is more objective and secular in import for a number of reasons. First, as a Christian born in Palestine it was perhaps easier for him to objectively comprehend the religio-ethnic problematic of the region that formed a basis of his later political writings which centred on Islam and the problems of its representation. Second, by not limiting himself to strict disciplinary boundaries (in his case literature or literary criticism) but by exploring other disciplines such as politics, geography, culture, history, he opens up the debate on Orientalism toward a much wider perspective than perhaps Alatas, Tibawi or Djait could possibly do. The pressure applied by Orientalism on Western hegemonic representations was thus unprecedented on the one hand and had to be seriously dealt with on the other. Third, by bringing all these Orientalisms together under one umbrella Said is perhaps trying to show his readers the heterogeneous nature of the problems rather than, as is often said, trying to homogenize these very different problems of representation. It is his scholarship and erudition that make him tackle this huge burden of heterogeneity, creating out of it complex metaphors of protest against Western essentialism.
Said’s Theoretical Base

It is somewhat difficult to comment on the theoretical framework that Said has chosen as the base from which to address the problems of representation or discursive coercion. He is a well read man with eclectic as well as esoteric interests, and that only complicates the problems of addressing his work. He has assimilated multiple influences from diverse sources, some of them even contradictory or irreconcilable, in order to elaborate his position. He has also traversed disciplines and moved in and out of various points of view in order to establish his views on the politics of representation. This becomes immediately evident in the way he talks about the introduction to his book *Culture and Imperialism*:

I there begin to describe the emergence of a global consciousness in Western knowledge at the end of the nineteenth century, particularly in such apparently unrelated fields as geography and comparative literature. I then go on to argue that the appearance of such cultural disciplines coincides with a fully global imperial perspective, although such a coincidence can only be made to seem significant from the point of view of later history, when nearly everywhere in the colonized world there emerged resistance to certain oppressive aspects of imperial rule like theories of subject races and peripheral regions, and the notions of backward, primitive, or undeveloped cultures.
It is noteworthy that within the span of a few lines Said has spoken about ‘global consciousness’, ‘Western knowledge’, geography, comparative literature, culture, and imperialism. This eclecticism, and yet the logical mindset to assimilate these hugely varied fields of knowledge is what sets Said apart from the rest of the scholars that Ziauddin Sardar talks about. Said’s inherent scepticism about the possibilities of existence and pursuit of disinterested knowledge have dragged him towards such radically different thinkers as Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci. On the other hand he is also considerably influenced by the more conventional and humanist thinkers like Erich Auerbach and Leo Spitzer, and about the possibilities of non-coercive knowledge. The multi-dimensional nature of his learning and scholarship, and the myriad issues that he addressed make it considerably difficult to fix a definitive base of influence in Said’s work. His readings have been culled from diverse sources from both the Western and the Eastern parts of the world, and the very extensive nature of his study and interests makes it difficult for his readers to locate him within a particular school of thought or epistemic system. Said was a keen learner, but his intellect was of the kind that continuously revised itself.

Thus there is every possibility that a reader of Said might be a little confused when approaching his body of work for the first time. Said was keenly aware of the problematic he was addressing. It was not only about the essentialist tendencies of the Western world; it was also about the problem of representation
of the Third World. Who does one represent? How does one represent? These were questions that Said was one of the foremost to approach without the prejudices of his predecessors—those who were approaching the East-West relationship strictly in terms of opposition. From his First-World location Said had understood early that this battle of representation could not be won strictly in terms of opposition. Opposition would only create distance—an unbridgeable rift between the two worlds. His idea was of trying to build up a consensus about the multiple possibilities of representation. The charge that is frequently levelled against Said is that he was looking at the problematic of representation of the Third World with the help of theoretical tools from the First World. I shall approach this question a little later, but let me say here that this was an obvious part of his strategy. Said was not raging a war against the West. His intention was not to antagonize but to work towards a consensus. To put it simply, there was no denying the fact that the discursive tools of knowledge-formation had already been usurped by the West. Direct opposition would inevitably be lost in essentialism. Said was approaching the problem the other way round. He was using their epistemic systems, their theoretical tools, their location to deconstruct their ideologies. In fact, he was even speaking in their language. Time and again he emphasized his American identity and addressed the First World as if he was one of them. He referred to their ideas of democracy and equality and started to ask uncomfortable questions about their traditions of historical thinking, colonial mentality, foreign policy and imperial strategies. In one of his essays he writes:
…I cannot identify at all with the triumphalism of one identity because the loss and deprivation of the others are so much more urgent to me. There is some irony in the fact that as I speak as an American to South Africans at a South African university on the subject of academic freedom, the universities and the schools in Palestine are closed and opened by wilful and punitive decree of the Israeli military authorities….Certainly the subsidies from the United States continue and celebrations of Israeli democracy also continue.10

This is the strategy that Said maintains throughout in his writings. He realizes that he is treading on soft grounds. At the same time he needs to fight this battle of representation of the Third World—which also, in a way, includes his own. To use a term from Gayatri Spivak, I believe Said has consciously used a bit of ‘strategic essentialism’ here to initiate a counter-discursive movement. Let me now try to locate the major Western influences on Edward Said.

**Strong Influences: Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci**

Michel Foucault has had a considerable influence on the early Said who was trying to work out the themes of power in the functioning of state hegemony. What initially attracted Said toward Foucault was this obsessive engagement with the dynamics of power. Foucault essentially saw power as an impersonal force, an implicit discursive mechanism that always wants to maximize itself by all means
possible. It is always/already present in the discourses of sexuality, punishment, knowledge and civilization, and Foucault saw the continuous and inevitable functioning of power within the system of the state, through the processes of punishment and incarceration. He saw the pervasive, and sometimes imperceptible, presence of power in the creation and sustenance of state institutions. Foucault writes:

Incarceration with its mechanisms of surveillance and punishment functioned...according to a principle of relative continuity. The continuity of the institutions themselves, which were linked to one another (public assistance with the orphanage, the reformitory, the penitentiary, the disciplinary battalion, the prison; the school with the charitable society, the workshop, the almshouse, the penitentiary convent; the workers’ estate with the hospital and the prison). A continuity of the punitive criteria and mechanisms, which on the basis of a mere deviation gradually strengthened the rules and increased the punishment. A continuous gradation of the established, specialized and competent authorities (in the order of knowledge and in the order of power) which, without resort to arbitrariness, but strictly according to the regulations, by means of observation and assessment hierarchized, differentiated, judged, punished and moved gradually from the correction of irregularities to the punishment of crime.11
Power is thus employed through a net-like organization. It is not something that percolates through the feudal/hierarchical network of a state, or based upon simple repression or juridical sanction, but a mechanism of impersonal presence in a society that is automatically and inevitably carceral in nature. It is this vision of power that exactly suited the imperial enterprise, and this formulation initially attracted Said towards Foucault.

However, some major differences in terms of their conceptions of power were soon discovered by Said. Although he was profoundly influenced by Foucault’s vision of power and knowledge, and by the way he had theorized them, Said is rather reluctant to admit the very anonymous and strategically impersonal nature of power that Foucault enumerates. It might be said that Edward Said concretizes Foucault’s almost ‘metaphysical’ conception of power, by modifying and applying it to the very political and necessarily instrumental nature of imperial discourse. Unlike Foucault, he views power not as an arbitrary, impersonal force, but one that is purposive and definitive, governed by the will and intention of individuals. Thus, while Foucault’s vision of power is generally defeatist, Said on the other hand seems to be trying to extract the individual subject from its clutches. In an interview with Gauri Viswanathan in 1996 Said speaks clearly about this difference:

…Foucault is always talking about power from the point of view, on the one hand, of the way power always wins; and then succumbing to that
power, he talks about the victims of power with a certain amount of pleasure. And I think that always struck me as wrong, and my attitude to power, in *Orientalism* and elsewhere, has always been deeply suspicious and hostile. It took me another ten years to actually make that more explicit in *Culture and Imperialism*, where I was very interested not only in talking about the formation of imperialism, but also of resistances to it, and the fact that imperialism could be overthrown and was—as a result of resistance and decolonization and nationalism.\(^\text{12}\)

He thus views the Western domination of the non-Western world as a definite manifestation of this very personal nature of power. Likewise he also believes that such power could be countered by personal kinds of resistance. He has faith in individual agency to refute and overcome this dominance of the power/knowledge paradigm. He sees the workings of power as a very real presence that has to be physically opposed, and in this sense he was successful in reading the politics of the times not in terms of abstractions, but in terms of presences. In the interview with Gauri Viswanathan referred to earlier Said is very categorical about this:

…I think perhaps one of the things of which I am most proud is that I try to make discourse go hand-in-hand with an account of conquest, the creation of instruments of domination, and techniques of surveillance that were rooted not in theory but in actual territory.\(^\text{13}\)
This working of power in ‘actual territory’ deeply disturbs Said’s intellect. Gradually he comes to realize how Foucault’s essentially theoretical concerns need to be concretized into real, discursive domains of deliberately political systems of knowledge creation that would literally counter conquest and domination. It is perhaps this passivity in Foucault’s work that led him into a rather pessimistic view about power and how it could never be successfully subverted. And it is this inherent lack of hope in Foucault that perhaps made Said restive about his work by the time he finished *Orientalism*. As an intellectual belonging to the Third World, grappling with the very real problematic of trying to find a voice within the discursive domain of Western knowledge systems, Said required a more optimistic and perhaps a little less obtuse constituency to base his work on.

By the mid-1970s Said had already grown out of Foucault, and his increasing impatience becomes obvious in the following lines:

…he [Foucault] was really the *scribe* of power. He was really writing about the victory of power. I found very little in his work, especially after the second half of *Discipline and Punish*, to help in resisting the kinds of administrative and disciplinary pressures that he described so well in the first part. So I completely lost interest in his work.14
This waning of hope in Foucault’s works led him to find new methods of protest and a new idiom of resistance which he thought he would find in the Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci. He was one of the first in the United States to teach Gramsci, and he thought of making use of Gramsci’s concept of ‘hegemony’ as the tool with which to encounter Western dominance. However, he also realized that a mere theoretical launching of a counter-hegemonic movement would once again limit the entire framework of protest within the confines of the university, or the academic elite. It had to become, essentially, a part of a larger political movement that had a direct bearing with the workings of the wider society, rather than a sterile tool of theoretical intellection. This was because, the subalterns or the marginals were not a homogeneous group who could be represented in a consolidated manner within the confines of the academy. Also, in order that the myriad and diverse social groups be represented or spoken about, the integral historian (I have borrowed this term from Gramsci) needs to have an eclectic knowledge base, and the capacity to assimilate these diverse histories. Said, like Gramsci, had such interest in diverse groups of people. His interest in Gramsci was obvious as Gramsci’s works showed him a way towards working beyond theory, and with the agenda of a direct reaching out to the masses. Gramsci writes:

The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to (at least provisional stages of) unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this
tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups; it therefore can only be demonstrated when an historical cycle is completed and this cycle culminates in a success. Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups, even when they rebel and rise up: only “permanent” victory breaks their subordination, and that not immediately….Every trace of independent initiative on the part of subaltern groups should therefore be of incalculable value for the integral historian. Consequently, this kind of history can only be dealt with monographically, and each monograph requires an immense quantity of material which is often hard to collect.\textsuperscript{15}

Said was immediately impressed by the rebellious quality of Gramsci’s writing and considered this to be a way out of Foucauldian pessimism.

It is perhaps topical to note in this context that by the time Said had abandoned Foucault as the basis of his idiom of protest, he had also grown very sceptical about theorizing protest. For that matter, he was having second thoughts about the function of theory itself. He was impatient about the fact that theory (literary or social or political) had acquired the status of a discipline and was being pursued for its own sake. He considered theory essentially as a means to an end; as the methodological basis on which one could launch a protest movement, not the protest itself. On the contrary, he felt the need for a historical study of texts which would raise political and cultural issues and debate about the
immediate importance of a moment in history, rather than ‘massive, intervening, institutionalized presence of theoretical discussion’ which throw up abstractions about the past or future.\textsuperscript{16}

Coming back to Gramsci, Said’s initial excitement with him, and his agenda of replacing Foucault’s clinical pessimism with Gramsci’s militancy, however, had to fizzle out soon enough. Gramsci was essentially a note-writer rather than a rigorous theorist who could formulate a well-defined mechanism of subverting the intricate and time-tested methods of discursive power. In a sense he was militant and radical and was a very forceful intellectual presence, but it was very difficult to derive from Gramsci’s work a consistent political and philosophical position. Said ultimately discovered in him ‘a kind of Italian cosmopolitan pessimism’.\textsuperscript{17} It was also rather difficult to use him methodologically, as he was never very detailed and thorough with his theoretical writings.

Thus, though the influences of both Foucault and Gramsci were profound, they failed to discover for Said a consolidated formula for representation. As a young Third World intellectual working in the First World academia, Said was really grappling with the problem of individual identity. His belonging to the margin was a cause of continuous intimidation. Moreover, the theories of protest were easily essentialized by the all-consuming hegemony of the Western academy. What was left for the Third World intellectual was a sense of insecurity
and fear. What Said was quick to realize, was the fact that no amount of armchair debating could ward-off this sense of insecurity. The weapon of the marginalized needed to be double-edged: on the one hand it had to have a theoretical/political base so that it could not be academically dismissed; on the other, it also needed to have a practicable, comprehensible and atheoretical appeal so that it could immediately involve participants beyond the academia. It is here that he realized the failure of both Foucault and Gramsci as individual icons of protest that could properly represent the margins. Interestingly, herein lies the answer to another implicit critique of Third-World intellectuals who were rampantly using theories born and bred in the First World. Most of them were not using these to get extra mileage within the academic circuit, and Said is a glaring case in point. He was writing at a time when both Foucault and Gramsci were quite fashionable in the Western academic culture. Said could have continued to use them to make his entry into the elite circle of theoretical experts easier. But he moved away as he felt that they could not help him in his enterprise of trying to qualify the politics of Third-World representation. He was interested in the emancipation of not only the individual marginalized subject, but also, in a way, a group, a community, or a people (I am reminded of Said’s lifelong involvement as a public intellectual in the question of Palestine, and the role of the United States in the conflict), and he realized that Foucault was too sophisticated and theoretical for mass appeal. Compounded with this was Foucault’s all-pervasive pessimism that realized the failure of the subject against the workings of power as an impersonal force. In reality, Foucault’s writings left no space for a counter-hegemonic movement,
because for him this hegemony was impersonal and hence irrefutable. Gramsci, on the other hand, was not theoretician enough to visualize a dependable framework for the politics of representation of the marginal. He could be quoted and referred to, but could never become the basis of a consolidated movement for the Third World intellectual in the First.

**Search For Idioms: ‘Worldliness’ And ‘Amateurism’**

Said’s intellect flourished in this situation of despondency. By the time he had grown impatient with Foucault and Gramsci, he had already become an important intellectual presence within the Western academy. The pressure of his scholarship had, in a way, forced the American academy to find a place of some prestige for him within the metropolitan university in spite of his active political participation in the Israel—Palestine debate.

But it needs to be noted that Said was, after all, much more of an academic than a political man. What Said had always insisted on was the fact that in spite of his very active political presence outside, within the university he was very much a teacher of literature and literary theory, that he never carried his political notions to his classroom:
I’ve never used my classes to talk about political activism of the kind that I’ve done. I’ve stuck pretty carefully to the notion that the classroom is sacrosanct to a certain degree.\(^{18}\)

But while teaching literature within the classroom he realized how the study and teaching of the so-called liberal arts were fraught with implicit nuances of authoritarian discourse, and that, ultimately, even the teaching of literature was bound to be political in its analytic import.

How he encountered this discursive mechanism in his reading of the literature of empire he has discussed comprehensively in *Culture and Imperialism*. We shall come to that in more detail later in this chapter. For the present we need to know that from his initial years of teaching literature in an American University Said began to realize the pressure of canonical texts, of how there were pre-conceived notions regarding the reception of particular texts that were written in certain parts of the world or by certain authors. He even discovered the politics of imperialism in apparently innocuous and politically naïve authors such as Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters, or Charles Dickens.

What he also discovered with considerable impatience was that the study of theory was increasingly becoming too sophisticated and glamorized to serve its true purpose. Literary theory, particularly in the twentieth century, was primarily a weapon of representation. Movements such as feminism, postcolonialism or
deconstruction were meant to rupture the centre of power at its very core and render its hegemonic enterprise vulnerable. The primarily political and emancipatory nature of theory could never be denied. Terry Eagleton has put it succinctly in one of his lectures:

At the height of capitalist consumerism, American imperialism and the Civil Rights movement, it was becoming more and more difficult to conceal the fact that those areas of disinterested humane enquiry known as academic institutions were in fact locked directly into the structures of technological dominance, military violence and ideological legitimation. A new, more socially heterogeneous student body, who could not be expected any longer spontaneously to share the cultural class-assumptions of their teachers, thus effected a kind of practical ‘estrangement’ of those assumptions, which forced them in turn into the new forms of critical self-reflection… ‘Theory’ was born as a political intervention, whatever academic respectability it may since have achieved.  

Thus, theory was meant to represent the margins, to become a metaphor of protest that would consolidate the rights of those that were never heard. What Said discovered instead was a sad lack in all these theoretical enterprises to become true cornerstones of protest. Theory was gradually becoming too obtuse and abstract, far removed from the very basic and pedestrian enterprise of talking for the margins. Movements that were meant to be counter-hegemonic were easily
being subsumed within the sophisticated seminar discussions and conference
debates of metropolitan knowledge systems. It is this anxiety for representation
that led Said away from these too verbose theories of literature that failed to serve
their primary purpose. As a Third World intellectual fighting tooth and nail to
establish his voice within the American academy, Said felt the need for a simpler
and more direct approach towards the politics of knowledge and reading.

**Amateurism: A Novel Strategy**

As a corollary to this kind of direct approach that Said envisages, he reminds us of
the admonition of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico that ‘human history is
made up by human beings’. Said advocates what he calls ‘amateurism’ in
intellectual life which is a metaphor for the condition of exile. Now, this concept
of amateurism is rather novel and emerges out of what Said has termed ‘secular
criticism’.

The term secular criticism, simply defined, means a criticism free from the
restrictions of intellectual specialisation. But once criticism is freed from
intellectual specialisation it also runs the risk of becoming too subjective and thus
open to various partisan influences and interest groups. Then, what does Said
mean by secular criticism? How does he want it to operate? In a 1992 interview
with Jennifer Wicke and Michael Sprinker, two of his former students and friends
later in life, Said tries to elaborate on this idea. He defines this subjectivity in the
perspective of nationalist, religious, or cultural identity—those which are formations easier to converge in. All these are kinds of fetishizations of identity that give rise to myriad forms of desperate religious or fundamentalist sentiment in the form of a Christian world, or a Jewish world, or an Islamic world. On the other hand, the notion of secularism is devoid of these kinds of religio-ethnic subjectivisms and goes back to actual living human beings:

Men and women produce their own history, and therefore it must be possible to interpret that history in secular terms, under which religions are seen, you might say as a token of submerged feelings of identity, of tribal solidarity…But religion has its limits in the secular world.  

Thus, he calls for a secular and humane vision in order that one might address the issue of identity in a proper perspective. Here, we might say, Said becomes a humanist almost in the classical sense of the term (that is to say, ‘humanism’ devoid of the very political affiliations that are attached to it these days), almost on the lines of Erich Auerbach or Leo Spitzer, two of his early intellectuals mentors. He talks of human history ‘not being the result of divine intervention but a much slower process than the politics of identity usually allow’.  

Once this secular idea of criticism widens his vision, the critic as an amateur must refuse to be dictated by professional specializations. It is in Said’s idea of amateurism that his concern as a public intellectual emerges clearly. He
tries to make his readers realize how narrow professional expertise of the intellectual, his excellence in research and study, are all easily subsumed by policy. The true intellectual needs to look beyond the constrictions of his profession into those matters that are politically and socially compromised—matters of justice, oppression, marginalisation, or constituency. Thus, instead of the intellectual locked up within his coterie, Said wants him to have an active public role, a direct connection with the socio-political history of his times. In this context then, the intellectual becomes an amateur in the truest sense. He learns to look beyond boundaries of disciplines or pedagogy. Incidentally, it is here that we note the faith Said has in the power of the intellectual in society, in the need for his/her direct participation in the life of his/her times. We can notice Said’s optimism as an intellectual, a strong belief in the basic equation of the positive influence of an intellectual (amateur) upon the common people who are otherwise rudderless.

**Worldliness: Towards the Ethico-political**

This concept of worldliness that Said envisages emerges out of amateurism, and works in unison. Here Said talks about the function of criticism. He makes the intellectual encounter a basic question: what is the function of criticism? Is it a way of theorising literature and opening up new modes of critical thought that might titillate the university intellectuals down the years? Or is it supposed to provide a perspective on the world that we live in—a world which is continuously
qualified in realistic terms by politics, suffering, war, injustice, commitment, policy, and etcetera?

Said very definitely believes in the latter. I have already spoken about Said’s increasing impatience with the artificial intellectualization of literary theory. In this idea of worldliness Said expresses a need for criticism to return to the real world where the critic is politically active and dissolved in the entire social process. He becomes a voice of dissent, someone who is located at an uncomfortable distance from the power centre and exerts a very real and irritating pressure on it. He reveals hypocrisy, uncovers the false, and prepares a ground for change. This intellectual is far removed from the one ensconced comfortably in a metropolitan university, who indulges in the quasi-religious quietism of abstruse theoretical thought and who can dismiss social involvement as lowly and unimportant.

This concept of worldliness is Said’s expression of the function of the public intellectual. It is through the ‘secular’ return to the world that the intellectual might speak truth to power. It is obvious that Said was grappling with his own position as an intellectual when he thought of amateurism and worldliness. He consistently realized the plight of the post-colonial Third-World intellectual who, along with his theories, was being consumed by the metropolitan academy. Sophistication was actually a way of usurping. Saïd realized how the position of these intellectuals was being continuously compromised. This journey
back, out of theory, was in a way his means of trying to re-position the co-
ordinates of the Third-World intellectual within and without the academy. A
socio-political involvement, a public role was essential to continue to be present
in the map of influence and counter-influence.

The Public Role of the Intellectual

In this context, I believe, it is imperative that one undertakes a detailed study of
the Reith Lectures of 1993, which Said delivered on the BBC, about what the
public role of the writer and the intellectual need be. I have already mentioned
this cursorily in the first chapter. Not only was this an attempt by Said to fix a
reference frame for the intellectual and his functions; it was also, in a major way,
a consolidation of his location as an intellectual and a teacher in an American
university. He was a Palestinian Christian, a citizen of the United States, a Third-
World expatriate intellectual working in the First-World academia, and very
interested in the fate of his country of origin—Palestine. Many times in the lecture
Said feels the need to emphasize that he was a citizen of the United States,
addressing the people and the intellectuals of the country (United States) about the
role and function of the intellectual. Here is an example:

For an intellectual who lives in America, there is a reality to be faced,
namely that our country is first of all is an extremely diverse immigrant
society, with fantastic resources and accomplishments, but it also contains
a redoubtable set of internal inequities and external interventions that cannot be ignored…(Italics mine).  

The reason for such an emphasis is, of course, quite simple. One, he was in a way addressing the First-World politico-academic milieu—making them aware of the kind of hegemonic and fiercely discursive political space that they inhabit. He, being one of them, realized the potential of such a milieu to fall into an acquiescent complacence, thereby into the trap of a regime of power. He was making the citizens of the First World aware of this. Second, this continuous emphasis on his citizenship was perhaps a veiled, protracted effort at being assimilated rightfully into the First World. The comfort of belonging is always the desire of the expatriate. I could be over-simplifying this aspect of my argument, but this repeated litany about being the citizen of the United States undercuts Said’s claims about the similarities between the exile and the expatriate that I have discussed in detail in the first chapter.

However, one also needs to add that Said has tried all through his working life in the United States to balance his role in between the exile and the expatriate. He has used the term ‘exile’ more in the metaphorical sense than in the real sense. As someone who held a tenureship in a premier First-World university he had somehow maintained his position as a sort of an outsider who continued to ask uncomfortable questions to the centre of power. This is where he tries to find a similarity between the locations of the exile and his own:
Exile for the intellectual in [the] metaphysical sense is restlessness, movement, constantly being unsettled, and unsettling others. You cannot go back to some earlier and perhaps more stable condition of being at home; and alas, you can never fully arrive, be at one with your new home or situation.²⁴

Throughout the Reith Lectures and elsewhere in his other writings he has tried always to maintain this ambivalent uncertainty about his location. This is quite interesting. I have already emphasized how Said has, all his life, worked more or less under an influence of humanist scholars—scholars who insist on a sound foundational base for the intellectual. Yet this ambivalence about location is perhaps a typical reaction of the Third-World intellectual working in the First World. This uncertainty, which was perhaps a part of Said’s process of acculturation or assimilation/non-assimilation within the First World, was taken up later as a conscious strategy by his successors like Spivak or Bhabha. This anxiety about location, which was perhaps earnest in Said, veered towards a strategic postmodern stance in them. I shall come back to this aspect of location in my later chapters.

Said was perhaps most profoundly influenced in his assumptions about exile by Theodor Adorno whom he calls ‘the dominating intellectual conscience of the middle twentieth century’.²⁵ This fascination with Adorno also had interesting implications. Adorno saw the condition of exile not only as a
metaphoric one, but also as essential to the growth of the critical intellectual. He believed that the intellectual should learn to go beyond all discursive systems and be able to carry on his critical vocation from a position of intense and lonely subjectivity. In his Reith Lectures Said seems to admire this aspect of Adorno’s personality:

Paradoxical, ironic, mercilessly critical: Adorno was the quintessential intellectual, hating all systems, whether on our side or theirs, with equal distaste. For him life was at its most false in the aggregate—the whole is always the untrue, he once said—and this, he continued, placed an even greater premium on subjectivity, on the individual’s consciousness, on what could not be regimented in the totally administered society.26

Adorno’s emphasis on subjectivity is noteworthy here. It is this individual subject position that the champions of postcoloniality and postmodernity will emphasize in the later years. By admiring Adorno, Said is thus, perhaps, opening up this space where his successors will flourish in their sometimes deliberate uncertainty.

Coming back to Said, he sees the condition of exile as a model for the intellectual who feels tempted to conform and say ‘yes’ to be accommodated and feel secure. The exile teaches the expatriate intellectual to move away from the centre to the margin, to raise uncomfortable issues, and upset all (or any number of) discursive authorities. Although this condition of marginality might seem
irresponsible or flippant, it frees you from those assumptions and cautions that makes the intellectual ‘afraid to overturn the applecart, anxious about upsetting fellow members of the same corporation’.27

**The Independence of the Intellectual: A Movement Beyond Professionalism**

Around the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century, the noted French intellectual Regis Debray noted a major change in the cultural role of the intellectuals of his country. He noticed how many of them were willingly moving away from their publishers and sometimes even the strict confines of academia and increasingly showing an interest in the mass media—in appearing for television talk shows, writing columns in newspapers, advising corporate bodies—on the whole appreciating and enjoying what one might call mass exposure and mass appeal. He writes:

> By extending the reception area, the mass media have reduced the sources of intellectual legitimacy, surrounding the professional intelligentsia, the classic source of legitimacy, with wider concentric circles that are less demanding and therefore more easily won over...The mass media have broken down the closure of the traditional intelligentsia, together with its evaluative norms and its scale of values.28
This trend had its own advantages and disadvantages. But one of the major changes that this had brought was in the much greater accessibility of the intellectual, and a widening of the space of participation of the intellectual in the life of his or her community. Even some of the foremost intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre or Simone De Beavoir participated in the regular socio-political life and debates of the French nation. This trend, of course, had serious implications in terms of the social fabric of a nation—where the direct participation of the intellectual in public life and debates helped in the consolidation of democracy, and in the creation of consensus among the common masses.

Edward Said sadly notes, however, that such a trend of the participation of the intellectual in the daily life of the society was only localized within France. Neither the other parts of Europe, nor the United States saw such a trend amongst their intellectuals. In the United States, particularly, the intellectual was seen, and still is seen as having generally an organic function, in his or her specific area of specialization. The intellectual in this case belongs to a group or a class, and loses his or her individual identity, and thus is not able to contribute to the general debates about everyday living or the rights or the demands of the citizens. On the contrary he becomes an instrument in the hands of those in power, and only speaks up or expresses his opinion on his specific area of specialization, and that too only when it is asked for. Saïd says in his Reith Lectures:
With the increased number of twentieth-century men and women who belong to a general group called intellectuals or the intelligentsia—the managers, professors, journalists computer or government experts, lobbyists, pundits, syndicated columnists, consultants who are paid for their opinions—one is impelled to wonder whether the individual intellectual as an independent voice can exist at all.\(^2\)

That is to say, Said insists on how this location of the intellectual within the acquiescent frame of the specialist compromises his basic function—that of speaking truth to power. Being reduced merely to an uncontroversial technician he is no longer instrumental in striking up debate or raise uncomfortable questions about the functioning of the state or the centre of power. The intellectual is therefore reduced to a writer of esoteric prose, a specialist with only a functional role in the society, whose job is to work towards academic or technical advancement and not social change.\(^3\) The intellectual thus becomes merely a classroom technician who works for various patrons or agencies, armed with academic credentials and degrees, intimidating non-experts with his or her specialized prose and esoteric references, but not performing the function of the *parrhesiastes*—something that is most expected of him/her.

Said is rather miffed by this function of the intellectual. In the present United States the intellectual is infected by an attitude of professionalism. Thus the mark of individuality, the committed and forceful voice of the intellectual is
lost in this era of increasing corporatization and professionalism. The definitive role of the intellectual is ideally not inside but outside the academy working towards enlightenment and emancipation and giving voice to the injustice around. This pervasive professionalism, on the other hand, has compromised the true vocation of the intellectual. Said categorically defines this professionalism:

By professionalism I mean thinking of your work as an intellectual as something you do for a living, between the hours of nine and five with one eye on the clock, and another cocked at what is considered to be proper, professional behaviour—not rocking the boat, not straying outside the accepted paradigms or limits, making yourself marketable and above all presentable, hence uncontroversial and unpolitical and ‘objective’. 31

The political presence of the intellectual is thus no longer a force to reckon with. By becoming a professional the intellectual automatically belongs into the group of the yea-sayer, not giving any cause of worry to the discursive authority. On the contrary, his or her expertise in a particular field is sanctioned and certified by the proper authorities, and unless the intellectual is ‘politically correct’ he has little chance of acquiring the necessary nod from the said authority. The intellectual is thus in a unique situation of compromise in the era of specialization. Within the socio-political milieu of most of the First World, he has lost his public role completely, and has been co-opted into becoming a specialist or an expert, whose authenticity, moreover, needs to be sanctioned by the centre of power.
It is in the face of such a sad condition of co-option that Said gives his call for ‘amateurism’. It is an absolute imperative that the intellectual emerges out of his garb of the professional and once again adopts a public role. The easy exchange of ideas between the intellectual and the general public is an imperative to challenge the discourses of power. In his life as an intellectual, Said himself has time and again come out of his shell of the university academic and played the role of the public intellectual to the hilt. A regular contributor to the Israel-Palestine debate, Said has been uninhibited in his support for the cause of Palestine, in spite of the very real threat of being ousted from his cushy university job in the United States. An expert in the field of English Literature, a connoisseur of Western classical music, he has shown no signs of esoteric inclinations while participating in these very political debates. In this context, a critique can be launched about the works of the other two Third-World intellectuals I shall discuss in the course of my thesis. Neither Spivak, nor Bhabha has ever shown such enthusiasm in participating in such public and political debates. This could well be because of the fact that they did not have such a burning issue like Palestine in front of them to play such a role. This is by no means devaluing the importance of either their works or their representative significance, but somewhere it is true that the kind of theoretical sophistication that they have shown is difficult for the common citizen to always comprehend. This could have been otherwise overlooked, but neither of these two has ever attempted to come out of this shell of intellectualism and address the common people about issues
remotely political. This is a comment made in passing and does not, in any way, attempt to undercut the enormous value of the body of their work otherwise, as Third-World intellectuals in the First World.

**Parrhesia and its Implications**

I have already discussed in some detail how Said was influenced in his formative years as an intellectual by Michel Foucault, although in later years he decided to qualify his opinion about this French intellectual. However, the influence was rather profound, and this indeed is one of the reasons why he has kept on going back to Foucault’s ideas about the state and its governance. It is interesting to notice how Foucault had also discussed, in some detail, the trope of the intellectual coming out of his private space and speaking truth to power.\(^{32}\) The obvious digression notwithstanding I shall take the liberty here of discussing in some detail the idea of *parrhesia* or speaking truth to power, as explicated by Foucault in his book.

In the Fall Term of 1983 Michel Foucault delivered a series of lectures at the University of California at Berkeley in a seminar entitled ‘Discourse and Truth’, where he studied the Greek notion of *parrhesia* or ‘frankness in speaking the truth’. The literal translation of *parrhesia* into English is ‘free speech’, which does not bring out the problematics of the term in all its aspects. In ancient Greece
*parrhesia* was a kind of speech activity that involved a number of parameters relating to the *parrhesiastes* or the user of *parrhesia*.

First, and the most inevitable, is the fact that the *parrhesiastes* must speak the truth. Of course ‘truth’ itself is a problematic term, as I have already discussed in the first chapter, that might lead one to complex metaphysical debates of the Platonic or the Hegelian order on the one hand, or the postmodern order on the other. However, in this case, truth constitutes what the *parrhesiastes* thinks is true or knows to be true, and is devoid of the metaphysical or postmodernist implications of truth, and therefore, leads us into a subjective rather than a universalist order of conception. Of course, the corollary that the *parrhesiastes* has an access to the truth is preconditioned by the fact that he has certain moral qualities necessary for the conception of truth.

Second, the *parrhesiastes* is always in a situation of disadvantage when he speaks the truth. This is because, theoretically, the speaker must be in a position of inferiority with respect to the one he addresses, and thus there is always the danger of incurring the wrath of the person spoken to. The subject who speaks the truth might be punished by the centre of power—be it the king, the ruler, the government, the colonizer, or the employer as the case may be. The power centre can never be the *parrhesiastes*.
Third, in *parrhesia*, telling the truth is regarded as a *duty*. The orator is free to keep silent, but tells the truth out of his own accord or sense of responsibility, as he considers it to be his duty to speak the truth. Foucault has summarized the concept of *parrhesia* in the following manner:

*Parrhesia* is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relationship to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, *parrhesia* is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In *parrhesia*, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.33

What emerges as the central argument is that it becomes necessary to speak truth to power, not only due to the fact that the power centre sometimes needs criticism, but also due to some indomitable urge within the individual to articulate his rightful feelings. Thus although it might seem that *parrhesia* involves a lot of
formal decorum and perhaps a final moment of crisis, there are forms of *parrhesia* that involve neither.

Edward Said is inviting the intellectual to play the role of the *parrhesiastes*, something that is being lost in the increasing propensity of the intellectual to become a professional. Said emphasises throughout the course of his Reith Lectures that the intellectual is neither a functionary nor an employee of the government to be completely dedicated in consolidating its policy goals. The moral quality that Foucault talks about is compromised, Said fears, through awards and gifts and positions of power that the authorities shower on the intellectual. It is the duty of the intellectual to consciously evade such techniques of essentialism, and indulge in a game of *parrhesia* with the authorities. Of course Said is intensely aware of the lures and temptations showered on the intellectual, and realizes how it is not always possible for him to resist either:

Many intellectuals succumb completely to [the] temptations, and to some degree all of us do. No one is totally self-supporting, not even the greatest of free spirits.⁴⁴

And this would be the reason why Said insists that the intellectual steps out of his garb of professionalism and become an amateur. The power centre wants the intellectual to be and forever remain a professional. This gives them a sense of security, and they shower privileges and favours on the intellectual. So long as the
intellectual remains within the confines of his or her discipline, and contributes theoretically or otherwise towards the development of the knowledge base of his/her subject, there are no ripples within the discourse of the state. But as soon as the intellectual chooses to voice his or her opinion about policy matters, the tentacles of the state become active. They try to determine whether this intellectual is speaking for or against them. If it is the former, he or she is lauded, showered with favours and privileges. If, however, it is the other way round, the awards dry up, the privileges, if any, are taken away and there are continuous attempts at coercion and forceful assimilation. As an amateur, the intellectual can play the role of the dissenter much better. He or she has come out of his or her professional milieu and it is less easy for the centre of power to either understand or react to his or her intentions immediately. This could be a successful strategy of intervention on the part of the intellectual—where the sudden amateurish participation in the politics of the state unsettles the structures of power. They cannot place him or her within the set co-ordinates, and the intellectual needs to try and maintain this ambivalent amateurism throughout to counter essentialism.

For Said the role of the intellectual as an amateur is cut out—and that is asking uncomfortable questions and opposing discourse:

…the intellectual must be involved in a lifelong dispute with all the guardians of sacred vision or text, whose depredations are legion and whose heavy hand brooks no disagreement and certainly no diversity. Uncompromising freedom of opinion and expression is the secular
intellectual’s main bastion: to abandon its defense or to tolerate tamperings with any of its foundations is in effect to betray the intellectual’s calling.\textsuperscript{35}

Thus, clearly, Said is envisaging a very public role for the intellectual. He or she needs to take a principled position in terms of what he or she thinks is right. The amateur, unlike the professional, works under no pressure of being objective or balanced or moderate. The amateur intellectual should necessarily be controversial and very political. He or she works under no lure for an honorary degree, or a prize, or may be an ambassadorship. He/she speaks as a representative of the people, as the public face of the society.

\textbf{The ‘Public’ Role of \textit{Orientalism}}

It is imperative that one discusses \textit{Orientalism} when one is talking about Edward Said. The stupendous influence that the book had on studies about the Orient almost gave it a canonical status within the paradigm of academic protest against Western hegemonic dominance. The counter-discursive pressure that \textit{Orientalism} applied on the creation and formation of knowledges has been acknowledged with much respect by scholars associated with and who represent the Third World. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak calls it ‘the source book in our discipline’:
Said’s book was not a study of marginality, not even of marginalization. It was the study of the construction of an object, for investigation and control. The study of colonial discourse, directly released by work such as Said’s, has, however, blossomed into a garden where the marginal can speak and be spoken, even spoken for. It is an important (and beleaguered) part of the discipline now.36

Some Critiques of Orientalism

Of course the reception of the book was not one of unanimous praise. Hostile criticisms from all over the world laid out and explained the theoretical and methodological loopholes of the book. The recent attack on Said’s method by Ziauddin Sardar has already been discussed at the beginning of this chapter. Significant protests and criticisms were also initiated by Dennis Porter, Aijaz Ahmad, Robert Young and many others.

Dennis Porter

Dennis Porter, for example, argues how Said fails to stick to any consistent methodological apparatus while talking about truth and ideology. On the one hand, Said talks about the ‘Orient’ being a Western construction. On the other hand, he appears to suggest that there is a ‘real Orient’ beyond these theoretical (or atheoretical and arbitrary) constructions of the West. Porter is also
at pains to understand why Said fails to realize hegemony as a process that emerges by consent rather than by force. He accuses Said of failing to understand Gramsci’s theory of hegemony in the proper perspective. There is, Porter feels, a potential contradiction between discourse theory and Gramscian hegemony. This is the reason why, according to Porter, Said seems to have homogenized the texts he has chosen for critiquing in *Orientalism*. The failure to historicize these texts adequately has led Said to view all of them in terms of the homogeneous paradigm of discourse theory. Each discipline that he has chosen, each text that he analyzes comes out of different considerations of discursivity, and hence cannot be spoken of as if they form a unilateral pattern of historiographical discursivity. In fact, Porter argues that many of these discourses are in contradiction to each other and hence need to be addressed from a very heterogeneous space of interaction. Said, he says, failed to understand this conflict. He also argues that Said does not distinguish between the literary instance from the more transparently ideological forms like history or geography or anthropology. Porter also accuses Said of a rampant misreading of literary texts. Said, he says, fails to realize that the literary text might very well create a distance between itself and the ideological formations or discursive assertions of the state where it is conceived. 37
Michael Richardson

The anthropologist Michael Richardson has also lambasted Said for certain assumptions he has made. He is particularly disturbed by the kind of intervention that Said has attempted into the field of anthropology. Although Said has not addressed the discipline of anthropology directly in his critique of Orientalism, Richardson feels that the discipline automatically falls into the purview of Said’s analysis. Richardson’s critique begins with the basic problem that Said discovers in the formations of Orientalism—that of the methodological separation between the self and the other. The discipline of anthropology is founded on this basic methodological separation between the self and the other. Richardson feels that if Said’s argument be accepted, and the self-other paradigm be done away with, then the very legitimacy of the discipline of anthropology will be brought into question. He calls Said ‘manifestly idealist’ and believes that by his critique Said ‘simply adds one more level of mystification to what is already a difficult terrain to survey’. 38

Richardson is particularly irritated by the way Said has, it seems to him, first praised and then abandoned the noted anthropologist and scholar on Islam—Clifford Geertz. In Orientalism Said had written how Geertz’s interest in Islam was ‘defined intellectually’ and not by any kind of Orientalist tendency. 39 He also saw Geertz’s interest in Islam ‘discrete and concrete enough to be animated by the specific societies and problems he studies and not by the rituals, preconceptions,
and doctrines of Orientalism. But Richardson notes with much wry humour how, a few years later, the works of Geertz had been transformed, in Said’s terms, into simply ‘standard disciplinary rationalizations and self-congratulatory clichés…’. It is obvious here that Richardson, the naïve practitioner of anthropology that he was, failed to understand the strategy of continuous shifts that Said was trying to assume (although, one must admit, that he was not very successful in these attempts in the manner in which his successors were) in the later years to avoid assimilationist practices that were very much a reality even within the university premises. In his intense anger Richardson writes:

In 1978 he[Said] had been seeking to place himself within ‘Western’ discourse, almost in the role of a radical reformer. By 1983, he is clearly seeking to orient his critique differently, seeking to find a place within a ‘space’ of anti-imperialist studies, in which the work of Geertz does not fit.

Richardson believes that Said is attempting to establish, what he calls, a ‘catch-all critique’ where he(Said) provides the means to dispose of all that he finds objectionable and to praise whatever he seems to approve. In this Richardson discovers the same kind of power relation in operation that Said discovers in the Orientalists whom he critiques.
The other interesting observation that Richardson makes is that Said denies any form of existing reciprocity between the subject (that is the Orientalist) and the object (that is the Orient and its people). He (Said) believes that the entire epistemology of Orientalism is a Western construct and has neither the approval nor the real presence of the Oriental subject. It was a mythographic construct that helped in the European project of imperialism, where the Orientalist was a passive pawn and the Oriental subject was an imaginary construct. If that is so, argues Richardson, then Said should not have developed an alternative model, because in that case, he was basically fighting a battle with shadows:

In fact, since the object has no real existence, being only a conceptualization of the subject’s mind, it can never be a question of the former acting upon the latter...The only way out of the impasse is for the subject to develop representations of the object that would represent the object more faithfully...But then by what right can Said stand as a representative of the Orient?44

These were important and relevant questions that Said had to answer.

**Aijaz Ahmad**

Aijaz Ahmad assumes the typical leftist stance and expresses concern about Said’s affiliation to the kind of history writing that questions the ‘very facticity of
facts so that it will eventually force a wide range of historians around the globe—some of the Indian Subalternists, for example—to start putting the word ‘fact’ in quotation marks.

He has definite problems with Said’s choice of the Foucauldian discursive structure that questions the very possibility of making true statements. The other telling concern that Ahmad addresses is the kind of selective memory that Said’s book incites, and a consequent probability of the rise of Third Worldist nationalisms in their extreme forms. Over and above all these, Ahmad is disturbed by the way Said and his Third-World colleagues theorize their marginality from their privileged locations in the metropolitan university. I shall discuss in brief a few of the points that Ahmad makes in his critique of *Orientalism*.

One of the basic problems that Ahmad seems to have with Said’s conceptions of Orientalism is about its origins. Ahmad finds out at least three definitions of Orientalism that Said has given in his book and discovers the chances of a deep methodological disparity if all of them are taken together. In the first, Said defines Orientalism as the practice of the Orientalist—that is the scholar (anthropologist, or sociologist or historian or philologist) who studies and/or writes about the Orient. In the second he calls it a style of thought based on the epistemological and the ontological distinction between the East and the West. In the third, he sums it up as a corporate institution that develops a discourse of domination of the East by the West. In this last definition Saïd locates the eighteenth century as ‘a roughly defined starting point’ for the practise of
Orientalism. This is where, Ahmad says, that he is confused. He is unable to fix a temporal base for Orientalist practice. If Said is tracing the history of Orientalism from the classical period of Aeschylus, through Dante to Marx and ultimately, Ahmad does not forget to mention, Bernard Lewis, then how can he possibly take the eighteenth century as the starting point?

This, then, raises the question of the relationship between Orientalism and colonialism. In one sort of reading, where post-Enlightenment Europe is emphasized, Orientalism appears to be an ideological corollary of colonialism. But so insistent is Said in identifying its origins in European Antiquity and its increasing elaboration throughout the European Middle Ages that it seems to be the constituting element, transhistorically, of what he calls ‘the European imagination’.

There is, I feel, a misunderstanding involved here. Ahmad perhaps fails to realize that Said here is making an implicit distinction between the epistemic or conceptual phenomenon of ‘imagining’ the Orient, and the discursive one of ‘ruling’ it. The structures of power that conceptualized, wrote and spoke about the Orient in the eighteenth century, and later, were systematic attempts at discursive control that consolidated the very political enterprise of imperialism. The basic thrust in Said’s work has been necessarily political, and it was obvious that his arguments and contentions about Orientalism would subsequently veer more towards the political than towards the conceptual (or philosophical).
Another major concern in Ahmad’s argument is the development of a branch of literary theory called ‘Colonial Discourse Analysis’. He says that it is under the influence of Edward Said that such a field of study gained such discursive importance. He does not, of course, mean to demean or dismiss Said’s achievement on this count, but feels that there are certain pronounced aporetic limitations in the development of this discourse. Ahmad argues that Said’s obsessive habit of locating and critiquing the tropes of colonialism as the chief thrust in trying to analyze the cultural formations of a nation is somewhat biased. He does not undermine the importance of colonial discursive formations in the development of the cultural climate of a colonized nation. But he also believes that there could be and are various other considerations that need to be emphasized when we are talking about the cultural make-up of a nation or a civilization. He writes:

A notable feature of *Orientalism* is that it examines the history of Western textualities about the non-West quite in isolation from how these textualities might have been received, accepted, modified, challenged, overthrown or reproduced by the intelligentsias of the colonized countries: not as an undifferentiated mass but as situated social agents impelled by our own conflicts, contradictions, distinct social and political locations, of class, gender, region, religious affiliation, and so on—hence a peculiar disjuncture in the architecture of the book.⁴⁹
Ahmad also suggests that there is a basic flaw in the manner in which Said has developed his critique. Said’s basic argument has been that the Orient has always been represented by the West since almost the classical period. But all the voices that Said has used in his critique of the tendencies of Orientalist discourse, except his, are voices from the West. Here Ahmad accuses Said of falling into a trap of unconscious self-reflexivity that has implicitly undermined his critique. I find this critique of Said somewhat unfounded. I have emphasized a number of times in my thesis that Said belonged to a school of Western liberal humanist thought, and his years of intellectual formation were underlined by the pervasive presence of Western epistemic tropes. This is the reason why we see Said using Western theoretical machinery in his critique. I see no reason in the argument that if you are brought up within the tradition of a particular school of thought you cannot use its tools to undercut its discursive formations. Second, Said did not have the necessary training in the schools of Eastern theorizing to make a considerable intellectual impact by using them as his theoretical base. If he was using the Western tools, he was using them for the proper consolidation of his argument, which he could not have achieved if he were using indigenous critical tools. Third, the reason for the almost pervasive impact of *Orientalism* is due to the fact that it has reached and qualified that space which mattered the most in terms of the development of colonial discourse—that is to say the West. Said was not only critiquing the discourse of Orientalism in the West, but he was also trying to qualify the thinking habits of the colonized elites who have, in their own
ways, continued the hegemonic formations within these colonized societies for their own benefit. The book has reached them as well, almost in the form of a caveat announcing the beginning of a counter-discourse. Fourth, and most important, is the fact that Said also had a very active political life in the West. He was not an armchair intellectual and his voice was heard. Thus, even if he was using Western tools for the sake of grounding his arguments, the logic or intention of his argument would rarely be misunderstood. He was usurping and using the Western theoretical tools to undercut their own traditions of discursivity. Such a counter-hegemonic exercise is more commendable than perhaps Ahmad can conceive of from his less problematic location. And, for that matter, do we dismiss Ahmad’s arguments summarily by an identical logic just because he has consistently used Marxism as his primary theoretical tool?

Ahmad’s conservative Marxism has also somewhat come in the way of his critique of Said. As early as 1978, with the publication of his book *Orientalism*, Said was anticipating some of the later postmodern developments in the debate about the politics of representation. His call for ‘amateurism’ and ‘worldliness’ on the part of the intellectual was an early call to the counter-discursive dynamic which was developed later on by the likes of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Ahmad cannot accept this kind of an intellectual who is shifty and clever, continuously vacillating between political positions, and avoiding all attempts of fixing them within a certain framework. From his training in Classical Marxism, Ahmad perhaps finds it difficult to understand this locational dynamic of the
Third-World intellectual working under extremely qualified circumstances in the First World. The kind of Leftism that they practise is beyond his conservative conception. His frustration is evident in the way he confusedly assesses this new band of intellectuals:

…we have witnessed, in all the bourgeois countries, the ascent to dominance of an entirely new kind of intellectual within a formation which continued to call itself a Left. The characteristic posture of this new intellectual was that he or she would gain legitimacy on the Left by constantly and fervently referring to the Third World, Cuba, national liberation, and so on, but would also be openly and contemptuously anti-communist; would often enough not affiliate even with that other tradition which had also descended from classical Marxism, namely social democracy, nor be affiliated in any degree with any labour movement whatsoever, but would invoke an anti-bourgeois stance in the name of manifestly reactionary anti-humanisms enunciated in the Nietzschean tradition and propagated now under the signature of anti-empiricism, anti-historicism, structuralism and post-structuralism, specifically Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Derrida, Glucksmann, Kristeva, and so on.50

It is clear from the above argument how Ahmad does not agree with the newly founded traditions of anti-humanism that were associated with the names of Foucault, Derrida and the likes. Here lies the basic disagreement with Said. His
consistent use of Foucault, at least in his early writings, and the movement toward an arbitrary interventionism (through amateurism) in later years completely unsettles the foundational ideas nurtured by Ahmad. Moreover, he is also confused by the way in which Said has tried to marry off both the traditions of humanism and anti-humanism. Thus although his critique of Said’s argument in *Orientalism* can be accepted on many accounts, his traditional Marxist reaction to the neo-Leftism practised by Said and his peers in the First World is perhaps unfounded. Ahmad, it seems, has failed completely to understand Said’s theoretical logic.

**Robert Young**

Robert Young goes back to the much-discussed problems of epistemology in Said’s work. He argues that in using Foucault or Gramsci, or being influenced by Spitzer or Auerbach, Said is borrowing from the same humanist tradition that he sets out to oppose. *Orientalism* thus becomes a kind of self-reflexive exercise that helps to consolidate Western epistemic traditions rather than opposing their hegemonic dominance. Young’s contention is simple. He argues that Said has rightfully critiqued the hegemonic constructions within the discourses of Western knowledge systems in his book *Orientalism*. The chief objection to his book has been that he does not offer an alternative to the phenomenon that he criticizes. Said categorically refuses to be drawn into the argument on the ground that there should be no reason why there should be an alternative at all. But what Young
finds problematic is that Said does not talk about how he separates himself from these coercive epistemic structures that he critiques so vehemently. Young writes:

What method can he use to analyse his object that escapes the terms of his own critique? The absence of such a method constitutes the significant lacuna of the book, with the result that in many cases Said finds himself repeating the very structures that he censures.  

Young is perhaps right, in a way, in accusing Said for his ‘unwillingness to pursue [the] problem of methodology in any rigorous way’. Even when Said was attacking almost all the disciplinary formations of Western epistemology, he did not seriously consider the need for either developing, or adhering to a set methodological paradigm. From the kind of intervention that he was attempting into the discursive constructions of the West, it was clear that he was anticipating the logic of postmodernism. But in spite of his inclinations to postmodernism (particularly in his knack for the ideas of ‘worldliness’ and ‘amateurism’) he never clearly declared his allegiance to it. Critics like Aijaz Ahmad and Bernard Lewis have consistently accused him of using the tropes of postmodernism to evade certain methodological knots that he was getting into, but Said never seriously felt the need to defend his methodological apparatus. It is this part of Said’s technique of intervention that Young finds problematic, and one tends to think that Young has a point in this. Of course, on the other hand, by not declaring
his methodology as postmodern in so many words Said was actually making exactly the same point.

**Bernard Lewis**

Bernard Lewis, Emeritus Professor of Near Eastern Studies at the Princeton University, has been one of the sharpest of his critics that Edward Said had to contend with. Since he himself was dealing with the Orient, and particularly with Islamic history, Lewis took Said’s arguments in *Orientalism* personally. Of course, there were reasons for this, as is evident from Said’s direct reference to Lewis in his book. He was directly attacking Lewis’s agenda and Lewis had every right to react. Said wrote:

> Lewis is an interesting case to examine…because his standing in the political world of the Anglo-American Middle Eastern Establishment is that of the learned Orientalist, and everything he writes is steeped in the “authority” of the field. Yet for at least a decade and a half his work in the main has been aggressively ideological, despite his various attempts at subtlety and irony. I mention his recent writing as a perfect exemplification of the academic whose work purports to be liberal objective scholarship but is in reality very close to being propaganda against his subject material.\(^{53}\)
It is quite obvious that Lewis would not take such an attack lying down. After the publication of *Orientalism* he comes down heavily on Said, not only questioning his scholarship and methodology, but also his intention in critiquing the practice of Orientalism. Lewis accuses Said of writing ‘science fiction history’ in *Orientalism* and its ‘lexical Humpty-Dumptyism’, in one of his essays.\(^{54}\)

Lewis argues how Said had completely misunderstood the project of Orientalism or Orientalist studies—either because he lacked knowledge of the entire history of such a discipline, or he was deliberately myopic to suit his own political purpose. For example, Lewis is surprised by Said’s reduction of the cartographic space of the Orient to the Middle East, and the further confinement of the Middle East to only a part of the Arab world. Lewis believes that by eliminating the Turkish and Persian studies on the one hand and Semitic studies on the other, Said isolates the study of the Arabs from both their historical and philological contexts. Moreover, Lewis believes that Said is guilty of a major elision when he talks about Orientalism only with reference to the French and the English, and with scant mention of the Germans and the Russians—nations that were no less important in the growth and development of Orientalist studies. Lewis writes:

*Indeed, any history or theory of Arabic studies in Europe without the Germans makes as much sense as would a history or theory of European*
music or philosophy with the same omission…It reveals a disquieting lack of knowledge of what scholars do and what scholarship is about.  

Lewis is also extremely critical of Said’s praise for the French scholar Raymond Schwab and his study of the Orient. He believes that Said had completely misunderstood Schwab’s project and applied his framework incorrectly to another region and another purpose. Schwab, Lewis writes, was a scholar of Indology, and his study of the Orient was generally confined to India. Said, while appropriating Schwab, deliberately overlooked this Indian aspect of his work, and applied his ideas generally to the Islamic world as well. Lewis argues how the history of the relationship between Europe and India could not be confused with the history of the relationship between Europe and the greater Islamic world. The relationship between Europe and India developed at a time when India was falling under foreign control, and the nature of the relationship could be explained in terms of Europe’s commercial and military/imperial interests in South and Southeast Asia. On the other hand, the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world could be traced back to the High Middle Ages, when Islam was a power block and Europe had to contend with it on very different terms than in the case of India. It was more of a cautious defence of a beleaguered Christendom than a hegemonic enterprise of discursive superiority. Moreover, the Europeans of the Middle Ages would be more interested in Turkish rather than Arabic, as that was the official language of government in all Arab countries east of Morocco. Ultimately, Lewis argues that:
Although the relationship between Europe and the Islamic world was later transformed and in some measure even reversed, it remained profoundly different from the European relationship with India. Lewis thus accuses Said of consistently and capriciously toying with historical background, and arbitrary rearrangement of political positionalities to suit his purpose.

Even if we take Lewis’ critique at face value and concede that Said was distorting history to suit his purpose, there is a certain aspect of Said’s work that critics like Lewis overlook. Said was not a historian and neither was he attempting to rewrite the history of the relationship between Europe and Islam. Through his multi-disciplinary technique he was trying to reconsider the entire epistemic format of reading that was in vogue in Europe, and in the rest of the world by default. He was trying to re-examine the power structures that are always and inevitably in operation when we belong to or write from within certain disciplinary parameters. Said attempts to deconstruct the disciplinary paradigms that have, down the ages, influenced our study of history and society as a whole, thereby producing a knowledge base that is inevitably biased and discursive. The rupture that Said attempts encompasses the study of the entire discipline of the humanities and he had to make certain generalizations. There are major flaws in his work, but I guess that is inevitable when someone is trying to reconsider the
entire epistemic logic of disciplinary formations. It is not that Said himself did not realize this, and that is one of the reasons why he was making an early, albeit sceptical, move towards postmodernism—where all disciplinary considerations can be qualified within an encompassing heterogeneity. Lewis also recognizes this, and in order to consolidate his arguments against Said he comes down heavily on postmodern practise. When he cannot deal with Said’s disciplinary vacillations, he tries to undermine it by calling it postmodern and hence irrelevant:

According to a currently fashionable epistemological view, absolute truth is either nonexistent or unattainable. Therefore, truth doesn’t matter; facts don’t matter. All discourse is a manifestation of power relationship, and all knowledge is slanted…This is demonstrated in Orientalism, in which scholars whose methods and procedures are indistinguishable by any scholarly or methodological criterion are divided into sheep and goats according to their support or lack of support for Arab causes. Such support, especially when buttressed by approved literary or social theories, can more than compensate for any lack of linguistic or historical knowledge.58

Here Lewis is defeated in his argument. If whatever he determines as a ‘lack’ can be approved by some literary or social theories, he should at least learn to accept if not approve of it. Postmodernism and its pervasive uncertainty might not be
approved by the school of thought he belongs to, but that does not immediately nullify either its assumptions or its methodological success. Is he not, then, guilty of the same faults he accuses Said of falling prey to: arbitrary assumptions and capriciousness?

Critics such as James Clifford or Michael Dutton have also commented at length on Said’s theoretical inconsistencies and have argued how Said’s position as a representative Third-World intellectual has been thoroughly compromised by his consistent use of Western pedagogical tools of protest.

**Said’s Position in Orientalism**

In the face of such consolidated criticism from the academia in both the East and the West, Said has tried to clear his position not only in books and articles that he wrote later, but also in interviews and lectures. While some critiques were direct attempts to defame him and disadvantage him politically (for example, the one by Bernard Lewis, the powerful presence in the Anglo-American Middle Eastern Establishment), others like that of Ahmad or Young were genuine attempts to critique his problematic position with respect to Western epistemology.
In his ‘Afterword’ to *Orientalism* Said clearly states his intention in writing the book:

I intended my book as part of a pre-existing current of thought whose purpose was to liberate intellectuals from the shackles of systems such as Orientalism: I wanted readers to make use of my work so that they might then produce new studies of their own that would illuminate the historical experience of Arabs and others in a generous, enabling mode.  

Thus, he was trying to provoke an alternative mode of critical thinking and a consequent re-location of intellectual history on a multicultural plane such as would rupture the unilateral Eurocentric discourses of history. His immediate agenda was to locate the very problematic discursive development of Western intellectual history, and undercut, and consequently unsettle its monolithic development by a heterogeneous pattern of studying history and society. Contrary to certain protracted and perhaps deliberate misunderstanding of Said’s agenda, he was absolutely aware of the methodological problematic that his writings constituted and gave rise to:

*Orientalism* is theoretically inconsistent, and I designed it that way: I didn’t want Foucault’s method, or anybody’s method to override what I was trying to put forward. The notion of a kind of non-coercive knowledge, which I come to at the end of the book, was deliberately anti-Foucault.
What is important here is to understand the understated logic of such methodological messing up. It was a deliberate attempt at amateurism, of trying to find a way out of sophisticated theorizing that was at the heart of the Western hegemonic academia. The intellectual has to re-locate himself continuously, be in a perpetual state of flux, if he has to steer clear of essentialist agency and say what he has to say. What Said wants to do is to open up new platforms of discussion, one after the other, in quick succession, so that the critical space increases in a manner that the intellectual might emerge out of overbearing hegemonic pressure of canonicity and speak truth to power. He insists that the intellectual develop a ‘critical attitude’:

…I think that’s what education is all about—to instil a critical sense, a kind of nasty, demanding, questioning attitude to everything that’s put before you.61

The heterogeneity in *Orientalism* is precisely born out of this questioning of the consistent pattern of Western scholarship.
Not only does the heterogeneity in *Orientalism* question the theoretical academia, it also questions the cultural component of historical study—the ones that have deep roots in imperialism and representation. By continuously referring to such presences as Ali Mazrui or Hussain Fawzi or Milad Hanna and the authenticity of their discourses, Said effects the opening up of a counter-cultural space—one that is adamantly authenticating a counter-discursive reading, and thereby raising intriguing questions on historicism and the formation of a homogeneous historicity.\(^{62}\) Simply put, Said was trying to authenticate these voices and their readings of cultural history:

Where I think *Orientalism* was useful was in those works that looked at the cultural component of forms of domination as giving rise to Africanist, Indianist, Japaneseist etc., types of discourses; as having, in a very narrow sense, played an important constitutive role in talking about those places.\(^{63}\)

However, the problem of playing such a role of opening up of cultural spaces has led to critics like Aijaz Ahmad accuse Said of speaking up for the cause of nationalism. Unfortunately, however, Said was more of a liberationist than a nationalist. He was not trying to provoke any kind of deliberate nationalist or separatist ethos as an alternative to Western hegemonic cultural forms. On the contrary, he was trying to address what constitutes overlapping areas of experience. His contrapuntal style of reading cultural history was a means of trying to generate a genuine polyphony that would create interdependent histories rather than a monolithic academic construct that would facilitate coercion in various forms—cultural, economic, or imperialistic. This is where, I suppose,
Said can be located in the First World—in trying to strike a liberationist balance. He becomes the intellectual who masterminds or hovers around the borderline of ‘overlapping territories’, thereby creating a fluid dynamics of movement between cultures and histories.

**Contrapuntal Reading : Resistance, Not Opposition**

Said borrowed his idea of contrapuntal reading from the Canadian virtuoso pianist Glenn Gould who peculiarly elaborated the concept of contrapuntal performance, which is an ability to elaborate intricately a particular musical theme. Said takes up this idea of contrapuntality to establish a counterpoint between imperial narratives and postcolonial perspectives. It is a way of undercutting the univocal focus of canonical texts in order that a heteroglossial mode of reading might be initiated. The whole idea behind such contrapuntal reading is to establish the quintessential hybridity of cultural forms and initiate a fluidity that avoids a rhetoric of blame. This might be done by an overlapping of metropolitan and colonial discourses—histories, social doctrines, literatures etcetera. And this is precisely the point where Said carefully departs from Foucault. Foucault’s pessimistic view of the workings of power emerges out of a playfulness that is metaphysical, and a lack of political commitment. Said is talking here categorically about intellectual responsibility, about a conscious effort towards a paradigm shift in terms of the theoretical mapping of geography, history, fiction or philosophy.
The emergence out of this ‘rhetoric of blame’ definitely requires a counter-hegemonic pressure that would ably overcome the erstwhile dominant imperialist discourse of the colonialists. However, Said’s point is somewhat more complex than is immediately evident. What he is soliciting from the intellectuals of the Third World, imperialized nations is a kind of resistance that cannot be conflated with opposition. Opposition is frontal, violent, and inimical it its import. This, according to Said, is somewhat inhibitive in terms of an exchange of dialogue, in arriving at the discussion table. Opposition locates political consciousness in terms of a binary relationship which is too limited for the mobilization of resistance. Resistance is a way of writing back; of appropriating the language and discursive literary forms of the colonizer and construct a different cultural reality out of it. This is what Said means by contrapuntal reading—a secular means of resistance and interpretation, which comes out of the clutches of xenophobic national consciousness and the rhetoric of blame to create an atmosphere of exchange and interaction. It would be topical to note here that Said has always expressed a deep scepticism about nationalism as a means of cultural resistance (unless, of course, it is specifically anti-imperialist), because it always runs the risk of developing into extremist chauvinism and nativism. A typical example of this is the celebration of Blackness by the negritude writers which ultimately traps them in a blind alley of self-glorification.

It is Said’s worldliness that makes him realize the necessity of political dialogue in order that a reconstruction of post-colonial identities might be possible. An overt racializing of the problematic of cultural oppression would
only diminish the possibilities of true liberation and it is the intellectual’s prerogative to negotiate a re-location of cultural identities by continuously writing back to the canon.

**Culture And Imperialism: A Writing Back**

Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* is a fine example of such writing back to the empire, what he calls the ‘voyage in’, to rupture the Western literary discourse and discover sites of power implicit within it. He deconstructs canonical texts to show how culture consciously or unconsciously participated in the imperial project but was somehow excused from it. He explores fiction, racial theory, political science, travel writing and discovers how casual statements or arbitrary assertions are accepted as universally valid truths and consequently used to consolidate power/knowledge equations between the ruler and the ruled. He closely examines such texts as Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Tennyson’s *The Idylls of the King*, Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* or Albert Camus’ *L’Etranger* to discover how colonialist discourse has been comprehensively validated in such texts, sometimes innocently and unconsciously, and sometimes deliberately.

The chief motive of *Culture and Imperialism* was to initiate a process of contrapuntal reading to reveal the overlapping areas of imperialism and resistance. The book delineates a history of resistance against empire, and this idea of resistance becomes the central thematic thrust of the book. His thesis enumerates that since the inception of colonialism there was an implicit resistance to it, but that this culture of resistance was never properly explored because of
discursive domination. Resistance to domination is automatic, and a total history of this dialectical relationship needs to be excavated in order that there might be a proper de-contextualization and a consequent re-contextualization of the native with his corresponding history and location.

It is interesting to see how this entire debate about the dynamics of domination can be re-located to the present problematic of location and the politics of space in today’s world, and the entire debate about the First World and the Third World. Said’s entire enterprise as a Third World intellectual is to address this politics of space, and he uses these metaphors of imperialism and culture as correlatives that place the present problem of representation within a cultural continuum. He sees this as the intellectual’s duty to address these problems and try and negotiate a neutral space (as far as is possible) where the process of re-contextualization and re-location can begin. The evils of hegemony can be countered by the extremities of nationalism, but that could only lead to other minor, but nonetheless, effective micro-hegemonies. Further, the tool of nationalism would also, inevitably, widen the gap between the First and the Third Worlds. Edward Said locates himself within the metropolitan academy in the First World to problematize resistance (as no unique solution is possible), as also to try and open up a space for agenda based discussions that can at least address the problems of cultural and representational discourse if not solve them. His writings have influenced many, and a future generation of comprehensive intellectual presence has been nurtured by this culture of resistance that he, in a way, initiated. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Bhabha are two such influential Third-
World intellectuals who have successfully problematized the politics of representation in the First World, and I shall discuss some of their major concerns in the next chapters.
NOTES AND REFERENCES:


13. Ibid., p.269.


17. Ibid., p.214.


22. Ibid., p.130.


24. Ibid., p.39.

25. Ibid., p.40.
26. Ibid., p.41.
27. Ibid., p.47.


30. For an argument on this, and how the role of the intellectual is being increasingly confined within the limits of the classroom see Russell Jacoby, *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe* (New York: Basic Books, 1987).


33. Ibid., pp.19-20.


35. Ibid., pp.65-6.


40. Ibid., p.326.


44. Ibid., p.211.

45. Ahmad, ‘*Orientalism* and After’ in *In Theory*, p.194.

46. Ibid., p.179ff.

47. For all these three definitions of Orientalism see Said, *Orientalism*, pp.2-3.

48. Ahmad, ‘*Orientalism* and After’ in *In Theory*, p.181.

49. Ibid., p.172.

50. Ibid., p.192.


52. Ibid., pp.128-9.

53. Said, *Orientalism*, p.316. He is specifically referring to some of Lewis’ works such as Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (Bloomington: Indiana


55. Ibid., p.258.


58. Ibid., p.265.


62. Said refers to these three Arab intellectuals at different points in his work. Ali Mazrui was a Kenyan-Muslim professor of political science at the University of Michigan. In 1968 he was commissioned by the BBC for a television documentary called The Africans. Said insists that due to several political reasons, one of them being that Mazrui showed the Muslims in a good light
and that he critiqued the Western project of imperialism, the documentary was severely criticized by the establishment and consequently taken off air. Dr. Hussein Fawzi was a scientist, and chairman of the Egyptian Scientific Academy. He was famous for a series of writings called the ‘Sindbad Series’ in which he presented lively accounts of his travels around the world. In these sporadic writings he analysed the culture patterns and clashes between the Orient and the West. Milad Hanna, the winner of the 1998 UNESCO Simon Bolivar prize, is an engineer by profession and an Egyptian intellectual. He has also consistently tried to bridge the gap between the cultures of the East and the West, and written extensively about the concept of the ‘other’. See Milad Hanna, *Acceptance of the Other*, trans. Ahmed El-Sherif Hammad (Cairo: Al-Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies, 2001).