

# ■ Power, Politics, and Culture: An Interview with Edward W. Said

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## Abstract

2013 witnesses the tenth anniversary of Edward W. Said's untimely demise. Appearing in Chinese and English respectively, this interview, conducted at Columbia University, New York on August 24, 2001, one week after the publication of *Power, Politics, and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, complements the twenty-nine interviews included in that diverse collection of interviews from the alternative and contrapuntal perspective of the Sinophone translator of Said's *Representations of the Intellectual* and *Power, Politics, and Culture*. In addition to revealing the story behind the publication of this book of interviews, Said also discusses issues concerning the interview as a "genre," talks about his memoir *Out of Place* and his recent publication *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, laments the desperate plight of the Palestinians, and reveals his writing plans.

**Keywords:** Edward Said, interview, *Power, Politics, and Culture*, *Out of Place*, the Question of Palestine

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**Shan:** You are such a prolific writer and you have published several books since I last interviewed you in April 1998, including *Power, Politics and Culture: Interviews with Edward W. Said*, which just came out this month.

**Said:** Last week.

**Shan:** Last week, yes. Of course, in a way it is like your former book of interviews, that is, *The Pen and the Sword* . . .

**Said:** . . . with David Barsamian. Yes, those were conducted by only one person.

**Shan:** Yes, that's a difference. And also we can say that this book is somewhat complicated in the sense that you have twenty-nine selected interviews that were conducted from 1976 until last year, that is, the year 2000. Can you say something about interviews as a "genre," on the one hand, and, to a certain extent, as your own intellectual itinerary, on the other?

**Said:** You know, over the years, I must have done hundreds of interviews. Many of them were for radio and television, but a few were different—basically for print and were done with the intention of being reproduced. In the case of the first interview, from 1976, it was a written interview so I had the chance to be more reflective and more probing in it. At the same time, the interviews were often tied to an occasion—the publication of a book, or some event, or an exhibition, or a political development, or something—so they were quite dated. A second point—the selection was made by a former student of mine who is now a colleague, Gauri Viswanathan. She picked the interviews included from among many others, because she thought they showed a kind of intellectual itinerary. You know, at this stage it's hard for me to see what that is, except that it shows that I was interested in lots of different things, often not very profoundly. But one thing I did discover is—also with my book of essays, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, that came out earlier—the recurrence of a few themes that keep coming back and that are important to me. Geography is one of them, the struggle over territory, the problem of identity, the notion of performance, loss and dispossession, exile, of course, and also the pleasure of intellectual discovery and intellectual debate.

**Shan:** As you mentioned, the first one is a written interview and all the rest are face-to-face interviews, which are characterized by immediacy. The preface to the book also mentions the complicated editorial process, that is, the interviews

were edited by the editors of different journals and then . . .

**Said:** . . . they would go over them, and send them back to me, and I would make corrections and, not too often, but sometimes changes, or expand the points so they would become clear.

**Shan:** And in this book you also added some headnotes. The whole process was actually very complicated, not so immediate as it seems.

**Said:** You think it's too complicated?

**Shan:** I mean the whole process.

**Said:** It just shows the anxiety of trying to get it right, because you say something in one certain circumstance and then you get the transcription back a few weeks later and things have changed, and you realize you have been quite foolish about something. Or, some of the most interesting ones are the mistakes in transcription—entire phrases and sentences and names come out quite differently, so you have to change them back. And then you realize that in a sense you are only responsible for yourself—you can't change the interview. And you have to remember what you have said in other interviews, for you find people saying "on such and such occasion you said that." Last week I did an interview about this new book on the radio, and it was a fantastic coincidence. The interviewer had been reading the book, and before the interview I was reading the book, and for some reason we'd fixed on the same page, which is an interview from the 80s in which I said, "the Palestinian situation is probably the worst that it is going to be." So I had just read that, and I said to myself, "Oh, my God, I wish I hadn't said that, because it's now in fact worse." He asked me about that and I said that I now regret saying it because I think the situation is worse. But I had better be careful, because I think it'll probably get worse again! And, then we talked a little bit about this—the extraordinary tragedy that never seems to end, and the suffering of the Palestinians that seems to get more complex and more profound, on every occasion and in every period. So that's another thing that happened. I find myself coming back to the interviews and being asked whether I still believe what I said before.

**Shan:** As far as interviews are concerned, there are these questions of representation, especially self-representation. And this representation is the result of an interaction between interviewee and interviewer. What do you think about the

aesthetics, politics, or even ethics of the interview?

**Said:** Well, it's very interesting, because one of the things I feel very consistently is that I am always trying to answer specific questions. But also, what you begin to realize in answering questions is that you begin to fit into the interviewer's agenda, which may be completely different from yours. By the way, I should say the same thing is not happening now.

**Shan:** You can say that.

**Said:** No, I mean, it's true. And then later, when I think about it and say, "Why didn't I say that?"—it's because I was too conciliatory and too complicit with the interviewer's question. Therefore, I should pursue my own concerns. It's especially true in the public media. I mean, if you are doing a television interview on a political situation, where the interviewer has a very particular sort of news angle to cover, it may not be the thing I want to pursue, because there's another message I want to get across. I find it happens all the time. I mean, the American media is concerned only about the agenda that has been set by Israel, for instance, on political issues. They want to find out when the violence is going to be stopped, what the situation on negotiations is, why the Palestinians have not accepted Camp David, and so on and so forth. I want to pursue the agenda that really focuses on, for example, the Israeli occupation, which is 35 years of military occupation, the longest in modern history, and is about to exceed the Japanese occupation of Korea. So there are other considerations in answering questions and the ethics of it includes the struggle. You, of course, want to accommodate the question, because there is also the ethics of exposure. You want to answer the question that suits the interviewer's background, the general audience he or she is writing for, the concern about particular readers and so on. But, at the same time, there is also the ethics of responsibility to your own concerns. And if you are talking about the question of representation, whether I like it or not, I have been made a representative of a whole people, which is kind of ridiculous. But you still feel you have the responsibility, because these are the people who in fact are being silenced, and you have the forum and you are trying to say things not only on your own behalf, but also on theirs. And then there's a further ethical point, that is, whether you represent the issue correctly. You feel that you may have been perhaps too accommodating to one party or another in a complex situation. So it's never-ending balancing in a way. But I don't like that notion. On the other hand, I'm not trying to be representative to all sides. I'm really interested in pushing a particular view, which is my view in the end.

**Shan:** So in these different interviews you try to negotiate between these two . . .

**Said:** . . . two or three or sometimes four different senses of process.

**Shan:** Do you find that some of your interviews have done violence to your ideas?

**Said:** You mean in my answers?

**Shan:** Yes, or in their way of representation.

**Said:** I may have thought that in the process of editing them, but I try always to edit them to give a maximum range of possibilities of interpretation—my own ideas and their ideas and others. On some occasions I will eliminate those parts that don't represent my views, or those in which somehow I may have misrepresented myself. I think it is okay to do that. In another way, I don't take the interview itself as a final statement. In other words, I feel it is possible to elaborate on a point and to change it to accommodate my feelings at the time I am editing. So, probably such points would be changed. It's a very complex process that, to me, is relatively new. Although I have done a lot of interviews, I haven't really corrected them all. You know, the other set of interviews I did with Barsamian was really edited by him, not by me. So I didn't have much to do with that and, they were with one person, and we were sitting down over a smoke all the time to do them. We are doing another one. He's done most of it, and he was supposed to come this month actually to finish it.<sup>1</sup>

I just have done another book of interviews, by the way. It is actually done as a series of conversations with a musician, Daniel Barenboim. We started it about five years ago, with the discussion about Wagner. And then over the years, ending last December, we did some conversations that have been transcribed and are going to be published as a book. Those conversations are obviously a lot about music, politics, cultural issues, interpretations, music, and beyond all that. It's a fascinating book.<sup>2</sup> However, I find that for me it doesn't replace writing. I mean, it is an adjunct, which I find very stimulating, particularly if the person you deal with is probing, or if you try to probe him.

**Shan:** In the process of editing *Power, Politics, and Culture*, did you make a lot of changes or just a few?

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<sup>1</sup> This book is *Culture and Resistance: Conversations with Edward W. Said* (2003).

<sup>2</sup> This book is *Parallels and Paradoxes: Explorations in Music and Society* (2002).

**Said:** Not many, because most of the changes were made before the first publication. There were some changes, mainly in the form of cuts, and there were one or two interviews that I didn't want to publish. But both the editor and my publisher think I should keep them, just to give it a different flavor. The changes I made were cosmetic changes, you know, eliminating words, trying to make a sentence more elegant.

**Shan:** You mention interview as a new possibility, and what does this book mean to you? Does it mean something different to you from the books "written" by you?

**Said:** Yes, it's strange that you should ask that, strange in the sense that I don't think of it as a "book." I think it's a series of fugitive encounters that have been tracked by some people and put between two covers. And I'm very . . . I'm very . . . I would say . . . what's the word, "anxious." I'm sort of waiting to see what the responses will be. You know there were a couple of pre-publication reviews, and they've all been very good. What worries me is that the range of the materials is so vast, they will not be read the way you read through a book for one argument. There are too many things fighting inside of it, like politics, music, literature, or literary theory.

**Shan:** In fact, one of the major attractions of this book is to see various aspects of you, because when you are writing a book you focus on a certain subject and come up with an in-depth discussion on a particular topic. But in a book of interviews like this, it is somewhat similar to and yet also different from the books such as *Reflections on Exiles*, where you have a collection of essays written over the years.

**Said:** There's a difference between the written and the spoken. In the written, the argument is easier to follow. I wrote a longer introduction to *Reflections on Exiles* in which I tried to suggest the development of certain ideas throughout the book. Whereas, in this case, I just couldn't do that because it was too varied. And what I worried about is that a lot will escape and not be understood as part of the argument. So it's a worry. Now for me it's too late anyway to try to resolve or supplement.

**Shan:** Can you regard those as characteristics of interviews as a "genre"?

**Said:** Yeah, I think so. I mean, they are very, very much of our time because

the possibility of transcription, accurate transcription, is much greater now. All of them, except the first one, which was written, are all based on the possibility of electronic reproduction. And when transcription is fairly accurate, you can't say they didn't get you right, I mean, it's on the tape. And if there's anything they didn't get you right about, like names and facts and so on, then you can correct them. So if it's a genre itself, then it's a very contemporary genre, and I think it's a very risky genre because you wonder whether it's a bit pretentious to publish your words, in a sense, in a raw state. But I think it can be quite revealing of not just *my* responses and *my* words, but also of the way the interviewer conducts the interview. I think there's a separate story there—all these various people I have met and had discussions with, what story has been told, the concerns of these people.

**Shan:** Do you like this cover design?

**Said:** No . . .

**Shan:** You don't like it?

**Said:** Well, I mean, a very close friend of mine is the only one really who regarded that photo as pretentious, because of the reference to Rodin.

**Shan:** . . . "The Thinker" statue in front of this building . . .

**Said:** . . . and I wasn't conscious of it. The photographer, Annie Leibovitz, is one of the most famous portrait photographers in the world today. She has regular retainer from *Vanity Fair*; she does movie stars and the President. After she finished her section with me in the morning last March, she was flying in the afternoon to go on to photograph the President's wife—Laura Bush. That's the world she lives in; she's such an amazing professional photographer. And people who know me—my family, close friends—think of that picture as something quite marvelous. As for me, that's kind of bewildering and kind of overwhelming. I'm slightly nervous about it because it does seem a little too . . . you know, too posed. It *is* posed.

**Shan:** For me it's very artistic.

**Said:** It's kind of you to say that. That's her, not me. I think it's kind of an alien presence in the book, because it's another representation.

**Shan:** Yes, a photographic representation . . .

**Said:** . . . the photographic representation by somebody who didn't know me but who knew something about my work.

**Shan:** But she has her own agenda.

**Said:** She has her own agenda, exactly. I mean, this is almost like a signature, a photograph by her. I mean everybody who follows her reads these glossy magazines like *Vogue*, that is where she publishes regularly, and those news photographs by her. So it's more about her than about me.

**Shan:** Did you have a chance to negotiate or interact with her during the process of photographing?

**Said:** All the time, all the time. She was quite amazing. She had sent people to my house two or three days before she came. When she came here she had three or four assistants with her, all of them dressed in black, very thin young men, who seemed to know exactly what to do. We spent an hour or so in my house. Then we went downstairs in front of the house, on Riverside Drive. And then we went to a studio all the way downtown in Chelsea. So it took about five or six hours. And during that time she was talking, all the time gesturing and talking to the assistants she had. She must have shot several hundred pictures, talking and photographing all the time, chatting with me, trying to get different reactions. And then there was a series she sent to the publisher. And then they decided; I didn't decide.

**Shan:** Oh, the publisher decided.

**Said:** In the end, the publisher and the photographer. I mean, they did send them to me and asked, "Would this be ok?" And the design changed a few times. But I really passed over a lot of these things, for I didn't really know what they were looking for, for don't forget their issue of selling the book, I mean, there is a commercial issue.

**Shan:** This is a collection of interviews. And how about *Reflections on Exile*, which is a collection of your essays over the decades?

**Said:** The first essay in that book was written in the mid-sixties, thirty-five



years ago or so, on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and the last essay in the book was written last year.

**Shan:** In *Reflections on Exile* you have some important essays reconsidering your very influential, seminal essays, such as, “Orientalism Reconsidered” or “Traveling Theory Reconsidered.” How would you look at the significance of that book, especially in relation to your earlier ideas?

**Said:** Well, I think it’s tremendously important to me because it shows the consistency and the recurrences of certain patterns of thought and certain figures. I mean Vico keeps coming back, Adorno keeps coming back, Auerbach keeps coming back, and, above all, Conrad keeps coming back. So it shows one’s most important ideas are formed very early and stay with one and keep coming back. It also shows how arguments made in the book are never satisfactory, like *Orientalism*, where I found that there had to be reconsideration. I probably should write another two to three essays about Orientalism, because of the debates that have occurred.

Simultaneously with that, there appeared a four-volume *Edward Said* by Sage Publications in England in 2001 about debates, articles, and studies written on me, you know, on *Orientalism*, *Culture and Imperialism*, literary theory, and so on. I have no idea that these things have been going on. Of course I try to absorb them and respond to them, the way, for example, Derrida does all the time, or Chomsky does. But I can’t do that, because I keep wanting to go on. I feel much more committed to present concerns than to the past. But, occasionally, I think it is important to clarify, certainly when there are consistent misreadings by people with political agendas—then I think it is necessary to go back.

Another thing that happened is during the course of my working on *Reflections on Exile*—I worked a great deal revising these essays, reordering them, writing the introduction, and so on—there’s a quite remarkable book appearing by Abdirahman A. Hussein, a man I never met, who did a study of my thought, which is by far the best thing that has ever been written on me. The book is about to be published by Verso next spring.<sup>3</sup> It’s by far the most profound and searching examination of my thought that’s ever been done. It taught me so much about my own thought, because I have the impression—this is the point that I am trying to make—I have the impression that I did my writing in too much a hurry, to get over what it is that I am working on. So I’m not able often

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<sup>3</sup> This book is *Edward Said: Criticism and Society* (2002).

to see what it is I'm doing until much later. And I found this book very useful because it's not just explication. The author really is quite critical also, showing the inconsistency, showing me in the last chapter, his conclusion, which he just sent me, showing me where I could quite probably write something to synthesize arguments that are there but haven't been completed. So it's a very deep issue as to when you finish. I mean at the early stage of my intellectual career I was very obsessed with how you start and my book *Beginnings* was just about that. Now I find myself worrying about whether I really concluded something, whether it's unfinished, whether it's so hastily done that it should be redone from the beginning. Those kind of things I have found very important to me, because, as my health is decreasing and declining, I feel that I have the responsibility to myself not to leave too many things unfinished.

**Shan:** Since you mentioned the insight of the critics and your readers, can you say something about this reciprocal or, to borrow your term, the contrapuntal effect of critics?

**Said:** You know the problem for me, I have to tell you, is that I find it very, very hard to deal with, because first of all I never feel that I have enough time to go on manifesting my influence. Secondly, I think the argument might be so disruptive to what I am doing and usually the hardest thing for me to do is to respond. I try not to do it, or try to do it much later in time, or to do it in such a way that I really pursue something of my own. But the reciprocal engagement, which is critical of my work, I actually feel very, very uncomfortable about it. You understand what I am trying to say. I think so poorly of my stuff that I really do not like to get into discussion of it with somebody else. Reciprocal back and forth with somebody pursuing an argument, the way, for example, Chomsky does it, the way Derrida does it, I just find myself viscerally, physically unable to do it. I just want to go on and do something else.

**Shan:** Some of your readers might find your memoir *Out of Place* disappointing in the sense that they expect to read your engagement with politics or things like that, but you didn't have a chance to develop that.

**Said:** I didn't want to, because that's not what it was for. I'm very certain about my earlier stage. But after the '67 war, a lot of my engagement was public, and I have kept no records. I don't have diary and notes, and I don't even have accurate records of what I wrote and where I spoke—sometimes I am worried about that. I'm not sure if I can sit down and write the continuation of *Out of Place*

in a discursive form, because my memory is not so reliable anymore. I have a generous English friend who is very anxious to do the second volume of my memoir in the form of interviews with her. I may be in that way, you know.

**Shan:** If there is a sequel to your memoir, what name will you choose?

**Said:** That's another problem. I mean, obviously, something like "in place without really," something like that.

**Shan:** What were your family members' responses to *Out of Place*?

**Said:** My sisters all are very, very offended by the book. I talked about how harsh my father was with me, but at the latter part of the book I reconciled myself to him and I talked about his generosity and the things he made possible for me and the strength he displayed. Many members of our extended families told me that they enjoyed reading the book. My aim in the book is to tell the things the others have not told. For I'm thinking in large measure, and it might be true in Chinese tradition as well, in the sense in which I've done something that nobody does in the Arabic tradition about autobiography, namely, to discuss things frankly about one's parents, older relatives, and so on. Because we have a tradition in Arabic of the sanctified parents, the mother is always loving and sacrificing and the father is severe, but, in the end, a loving man. You know, my case is very complicated and less flattering. And I think that was very shocking for a lot of people. When the book came out in Arabic, this fact was recognized; people read it and they said that this is really the first modern autobiography in Western terms. Although some of the writers of famous autobiographies in Arabic would think that about themselves, they never went this far—the reflections on, and sometimes psychoanalytic reflections on, the close family, sisters, and parents. There's an ideology of the family which in a sense I unmasked or demystified. That was very difficult to accept to some people.

**Shan:** The Chinese translator of *Out of Place*, Huai-tung Peng, whom I recommended to the publisher, was my classmate in graduate school. He said that your father was very successful. He would be more than happy if he would be able to educate his son or his daughter to be as successful a scholar as you.

**Said:** I think so. I think it was necessary for me to separate myself from my father. I think my father knew that when he sent me away when I was fifteen. I didn't want to leave. But I think he understood that I could never develop as I

have developed, if I was not taken away from that environment which was coming to an end anyway and from the influence of my mother also.

**Shan:** Do you think your good memory comes from your family?

**Said:** Yes, I find it does. But, it also comes from a very, very strong aural sense. I mean, I have very perfect musical memory; I can remember music. When I was a year old, I would remember pieces correctly. So I have a very good ear. So a lot of it is verbal memory, what people said and how they said it, but also a kind of snapshot memory, seeing exactly . . . because of my early powers of observation I know how these people dressed. I don't have a very good memory when it comes to visual arts, but I can remember the pattern of your shirt perfectly. So it's that kind of memory.

**Shan:** You mentioned earlier that the situation of the Palestinians nowadays is even worse. But generally speaking, people would tend to see that nowadays in the media there seems to be a fairer representation of both sides, unlike in the earlier period.

**Said:** Yeah, that is unmistakable, simply because if you see any pictures, you could see the brutality of the Israelis, but you don't have a sense of the Palestinian narrative. Most people don't. I mean, in America, because I don't know anywhere else, in America it's very different from Europe. In Europe there's a continuity, there's a sense of the narrative. But in America, there isn't. There's just these isolated pictures of Palestinians throwing stones or masses of people who are obviously suffering, you know, like funerals, or mothers crying. It's not the explanation: the narrative of what happened from the first dispossession of 1948 to the occupation of the West Bank, to Gaza and to now. It's completely missing. I made a survey in December or November of a hundred articles on the situation from four or five newspapers. In 94 of them, the word "occupation" was not mentioned. Only six mentioned the continuity of the Israeli occupation from 1967. It's a startling fact. So I think the hardest thing for us to liberate, for me to liberate, is the exclusion, the banishment of the daily scenes of accumulated humiliation and suffering as you try to get to school, try to get to work, try to go to the market. That's virtually impossible today. Yesterday I spoke to my sister-in-law on the phone for about forty-five minutes. She was crying, describing the ordeal, the minute-by-minute ordeal, of what it's like to live without having the ability, for example, to see your sister or brother even though you live in the same town. And if your children try to go to

Jerusalem, you have to go in four different cars, changing, stopping all the time, taking a five-hour course, and the trip normally is only fifteen minutes at most. And the sense, you know, they can do anything they want to, that's missing and that is deeply frustrating. And the unacknowledged injustice—the Israelis in this country have succeeded in representing themselves as basically the victims, the sufferers of bombing, terror, whereas in fact it is us. We don't have an army, we don't have a state, we don't have an air force, we don't have defenses. They can enter a town like they did yesterday in Hebron—spent a couple of hours, destroyed two houses, and moved out, and they didn't even get out of their tanks. And all we have is stones. And there are misrepresentations of the words. They talk about places and neighborhoods of Jerusalem whereas these are confiscated villages which the Israelis took and made them part of Jerusalem. Things like that. And above all, we have a completely useless corrupted discredited leadership that has been co-opted by the Americans and the Israelis since '93. And it's now trying desperately to get back to the game, trying to make itself acceptable to the Israelis and the Americans. Arafat is in China today, trying to get support for resumption of the talks with Israelis, and yesterday he was in India, and the day before he was in Pakistan, whereas his people are suffering in hell. I keep saying that he should be with his people, suffering with them instead of traveling around the world, uselessly appealing for charity whereas what we need is leadership and courage and intelligence and continuing resistance.

**Shan:** Your book *After the Last Sky* was reprinted by Columbia University and you wrote a new foreword. Do you think of that book as your effort to provide this kind of narrative, the story behind these images?

**Said:** Yes, yes, it was done at the time when I couldn't go to Palestine. It was an attempt to rectify the exhibition of photographs that took place in the UN conference in Geneva in 1983 when I was a consultant to the Secretary General. And there are a lot of good pictures about the war by Jean Mohr. But they did not allow captions to be put, so I decided to write a book, trying in a sense to capture the photographs. But I was unable to go to Palestine, so they were all done through the eyes of somebody else, except for the experiences of the refugees and my own family, and some of the people in the book who are friends. Then after that, in 1992, I was able to go back and I go back regularly since then. So I'll probably write a completely different book. But I'm glad I did it then.

**Shan:** When you mentioned the situation of the Israeli people, I wonder whether we can draw an analogy, that is to say Japan. The Japanese people pose

as the victims of atomic bombs, but they have avoided mentioning their military invasion of other countries and regions . . .

**Said:** . . . in China.

**Shan:** Yes, in China, Korea, Hong Kong and so on and the ensuing brutality, such as the Nanjing Massacre.

**Said:** Yes, I know exactly. I mean, I can understand the horror of using the atomic bombs, and I can never forgive the Americans for that. But at least Japan was fighting as a state with their army, navy, and air force. They could fly from Japan to Pearl Harbor and launch an attack. But we have nothing. The Israelis certainly can do all that because they are very, very like the Japanese in a different order. I mean, many of them are people who have survived the anti-Semitism of Europe and the Holocaust, and came to Palestine. But the Palestinians have nothing to do with what they suffered in Europe. And now we are the people who are described as the representative of their tormentors, whereas they are the modern tormentors of the entire people, and are, in a fantastic way, preposterous in the literal sense, putting the first last and the last first, reordering the events. They can do anything they want, you know, they have a village of thirty and forty thousand people, they have F-16s, the Apache helicopters and Cobra helicopters, and tanks, and bulldozers. And the Palestinians have none of that. And we are not even a state, as Japan was and as Israel is.

**Shan:** So was your act of throwing stones a gesture of anger and resentment?

**Said:** No, it was not even that. I mean, it would be a different matter if I were throwing at somebody. But there was nobody out there and it was no attack. On the contrary, it was the result of a contest between my son and myself—he threw stones and I wanted to see if I could throw as far as he could. We were at the Israeli border and there was nobody there on the other side. You know, I never came into terrorism myself. I didn't know there was a man taking a picture of me, and that evening he would sell it to the local press. The next day we were on the front page of the Israeli press. They used it as propaganda and campaigned against me to show that I was a man of violence and I was a terrorist. When I think about it, it was so outrageous, because even if I was throwing stones at the Israelis, the Israelis weren't there—the nearest Israeli would have been in a tower about half a mile away. In fact, I was the more vulnerable.

**Shan:** Were you bothered by that kind of coverage?

**Said:** Oh, tremendously. Recently I did an interview with a German newspaper, or maybe an Italian one, they still use that picture whenever they get a chance. You know, it's kind of bullying. I don't have a newspaper; I have no way of responding. There's not much I can do about it.

**Shan:** With the publication of this book of interviews, people around the world will once again have a chance to know more about you and your ideas. How do you think about your own role as a public intellectual?

**Said:** I try not to think about that. I'm too busy trying to do things responding to the situation, trying to initiate discussions, asking questions, describing events, making interventions with some ongoing context. And that's too exhausting for me to think about myself. I'm *always* surprised; I don't think of myself as important or well-known or anything. I'm too close to . . . to the ground. I've been tired, exhausted.

**Shan:** How is your health now?

**Said:** Well, it is discouraging. I had treatments during the past year, some of them very severe, which didn't really reach any result. The disease is slowly advancing and I feel weak most of the time. And the doctor doesn't seem to think that there is much I can do now. I know my situation is declining, but I have no choice. I mean I don't want to go through treatments that would make me feel worse, because I want to continue living, travelling, teaching.

**Shan:** What is your current plan, since you mentioned you want to write two or more articles about Orientalism?

**Said:** I have commitments. I have two books around next spring and I really must finish them. I mean they were in a sense finished; they were lectures I gave at Columbia last year on humanism. And I have to give that to the press. I should have done that a year ago. And I have a series of lectures I gave at Cambridge in 1997, the Empson Lectures, and I've got basically the introduction and the conclusion to write, to finish.<sup>4</sup> As I mentioned earlier, there's a book

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<sup>4</sup> The former, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, was published posthumously in 2004 and the latter is never published.

of discussions with Barenboim. And then my big project, which I have been working on since the 1980s, a book on late style. That's slowly advancing and I would like to finish that.<sup>5</sup> And there are dozens of articles and things I wrote. I want to write something about archeology in Palestine, which is very interesting, for there is a lot of new stuff about the politics of archeology, and geography, representation of the territory. I have some things that I want to write further about music. I just wrote a long essay on Bach, which appears in *London Review*. I should give it to you. I've thought about writing a book about Bach and Beethoven, two contrasting styles, composition, and performance. Finally, I'd like to do something about Conrad, a retrospective volume on Conrad. You know, my first book was about Conrad.

**Shan:** Yes, *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography* in 1966.

**Said:** 1966, yes. You know, I've written an essay on that, but I plan in this coming semester to teach a course on Conrad, to try to do a revision, rethinking, and produce a book.

**Shan:** The whole course is on Conrad?

**Said:** Yes, Conrad and his political and cultural effects, what happened in the Congo, the story of the Third World revolution and nationalism, Conrad and Asia . . . a lot to do. Plus, I started a novel.

**Shan:** A novel?

**Said:** Yeah, about betrayal, three episodes on childhood. It's really a triptych, three interconnected stories of love and betrayal.

**Shan:** Is it your first novel?

**Said:** Well, yes, but I'll never get it written.

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<sup>5</sup> *On Late Style: Music and Literature Against the Grain* was published posthumously in 2006.



## 權力、政治與文化：薩依德訪談錄

### 摘 要

2013年為薩依德逝世十週年。2001年8月24日於紐約哥倫比亞大學進行此訪談時，適逢《權力、政治與文化：薩依德訪談集》甫出版一週。全書收錄了二十九篇訪談，內容豐富而多樣。本訪談從該書與《知識分子論》的華文譯者之另類與對位的角度出發，恰可與該書互補，並納入中譯本。訪談除了透露這本訪談集出版的幕後故事之外，薩依德也討論了訪談作為「文類」的特色，談及他的回憶錄《鄉關何處》與論文集《流亡的反思與其他論文》，哀歎巴勒斯坦人的艱難處境，並透露他當時的寫作計畫。

**關鍵字：**薩依德，訪談，《權力、政治與文化》，《鄉關何處》，巴勒斯坦問題