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### **Edward Said's *Out of Place*: a cartographic memoir and modernity in place**

My intention in the paper is to read one of Edward Said's last book-length works, his memoir *Out of Place*, referring to two pieces that Said wrote approximately within the same time period, his text 'Invention, Memory, and Place' and the study *Freud and the Non-European*, which Said presented at the Freud Museum in London in 2002.

The last was initially planned to be given as 2001 Freud Memorial Lecture in Vienna. The lecture, which Said wrote while he had a relapse in his illness, was canceled because of 'the political conflict in the Middle East'. I will return in more details to the reason of the cancellation at a later point. Here it suffices to quote the words of Christopher Bollas, who on that occasion introduced Said as he was subsequently invited to give the same talk in London:

Well, it is no new experience for Edward Said to be in exile, and so it is here, following in Freud's footsteps (in certain respects), that he is to speak in London rather than in Vienna; but those who have studied with him, or know him personally, well appreciate his remarkable yet natural way of transforming injustice into learned protest. 'Provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound,' he writes in *Reflection on Exile*, 'there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity.' (cited in Said 2003: 3)

The frame of my paper relates to what might be denoted as *a cartographic memoir delineating a symptomatically recurring modernity*. In 1991, after convening a conference on Palestinian intellectuals in London, Said was diagnosed with blood cancer. In 1992 he visited

Palestine for the first time after 45 years. He started writing his memoir in 1994, while he was in the treatments of chemotherapy, and published it in 1999. Although reading the book we cannot avoid associations to Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, we would agree that the time of Said's past implies a peculiar sort of loss.

### Iron Fist, Velvet Glove...

This was Said's favorite and fairly performative expression, which he was repeatedly using in his texts as well as in his activism and ordinary communication and which can metonymically stand for all his achievement. A cyclic dialectic of discipline and desire, which marks his life from his earliest childhood, reveals in its metamorphosing circles the persistent object of his search. Pointing out his *memory* 'as his greatest gift' (1999: 3), and quite in line with general literary scholarly interests of the 1990's, Said stands up against 'assassins of memory' (2000: 176). He states that behind most losses he felt in his life is the loss of Palestine (which is replaced by Israel, where neither Said nor any other displaced Palestinian was granted the 'right to return'<sup>1</sup>). Talking about cartographies at the present day of ethnic cleansing and physical and intellectual genocides, and making a distinction between violent cartographies<sup>2</sup> and fluid cartographies, which, at least in intention, oppose violence, we

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<sup>1</sup> See: Zeev Sternhell, *The founding Myth of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (trans. Maisel, David. Princeton, N.J., 1998). The book shows that what was presented to the world as a socialist democracy was in fact nationalist socialism, and a theocracy with a rigorous limit to what the individual was and could expect from the state. Israel is the only state in the world which is not the state of its citizens but of the whole Jewish people wherever they may be, with no constitution but a set of Basic Laws. The Law of Return entitles any Jew anywhere the right to immediate Israeli Citizenship, whereas Palestinians whose families were driven out in 1948 are not allowed such right at all nor any Palestinian can buy, lease, or sell any land there (Palestinian citizens of Israel, 1 000 000 of them, constitute almost 20% of the state population).

<sup>2</sup> See: Shapiro, Michael. *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

cannot but observe that it is rarely that those less powerful in 'the contact zones'<sup>3</sup> are in position to propose some concessions.

Born on November 1, 1935, to the upper-middle class, English educated Arab Christian family in West Jerusalem, where on the eve of his twelve birthday, in 1947, he witnessed 'the puzzling vehemence with which his cousins bewailed the day of the "Balfour Declaration" as the blackest day in Palestinian history,' Said notes:

I had no idea what they were referring to, but realized it must be something of overwhelming importance. Perhaps they and my parents, sitting around the table with my birthday cake, assumed that I shouldn't be informed about something as complex as our conflict with the Zionists and the British. (1999: 107)

As a consequence of the UN approved formation of the State of Israel (which was already granted by the British in 1917) on the territory of Palestine (and the sketched ethnic cleansing of Palestinians which later turned to be awfully bloody),<sup>4</sup> Said's immediate family, living both

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<sup>3</sup> See: Pratt, Mary Louise. "Arts of the Contact Zone." In: *Profession* 91 (1991). 33-40. Pratt uses the expression "the contact zone" referring to areas which allow the intermingling of two or more cultures. She develops the term in her book *Imperial Eyes*. (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>4</sup> See: Segev, Tom. *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*. Trans. Haim Watzman. New York, 1993. Or Whitelam, Keith W. *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*. New York, 1996. Or Said, Edward and Mohr, Jean, *After the last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986). Or Said, Edward. *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-determination, 1969-1994* (New York, Vintage Books 1994). Or Said, Edward. *The End of the Peace Process* (UK: Granta Books, 2000). Or Reinhart, Tanya. *Israel, Palestine: How to End the War of 1948* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002). Or ed. Khalidi Walid. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington D.C., 1992. Or Sternhell Zeev. *The Founding myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*. Trans. Maisel, David (Princeton: N.J., 1998). Or Butler, Judith. *Giving Account on Oneself*. New York: Fordam University Press 2003. (p. 93, Butler offers a strong criticism of Levinas' equating of the fate of Israel with a fate of Jews and his neglect of the ethnic cleansing of 750 000 Palestinians from their own native territory for the sake of establishing the Israeli statehood). Or Sayigh, Rosemary. *Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon* (London: Zed Books, 1994). Etc.

in Jerusalem and Cairo, left Palestine for the last time within a few weeks. From that point on, until his early middle years, living first class in Egypt, Lebanon and U.S. (which indeed he continued all around the globe to his very end), Said had not have to care much about the ominous reality of Palestine. Here the issue of ‘contact zones’ comes forth.

The social spaces where unequal sides and cultures meet – defined as *contact zones*, above all imply unequal security networks. As belonging to one of the privileged, ‘more refined’, ivory tower or bell-glass ‘common’ social spaces (academia), academics certainly have various sorts of understanding of various stratifications of power and safety, often alien to each other, even mutually exclusive. The fact that Said did not start pondering over the Palestinian issues until the escalation of the war in the late sixties only fueled his subsequent scholarly work on one of the few most threatened communities and pieces of land on earth. Some reasons for his initial distancing from the reflection on the topic might be that his high-bourgeois parents didn’t even consider any activism, and that his mother, who informed and cherished all of Said’s immense sensibility, disliked everything ‘Palestine-related’ (although for years she didn’t have any travel document as the only non-American citizen in the family, and later when she obtained a Lebanese passport she was regularly checked at customs as ‘a potential terrorist’; 1999: 132). However, the way Said was developing his *iron-fist, velvet glove* devotion to Palestine was more concessive than most of those ‘at the other side’ could even comprehend.

In the Summer 2000, a year after Said published his memoir, someone made a photo of him when he threw a stone from the territory of Lebanon over to the Israeli border – to that act the media and various institutions reacted with ‘reproach’, as did Freud Institute in Vienna, canceling Said’s lecture. Nevertheless, Said’s stone-throwing act (along with what preceded and what followed it) opened to scholarly interest a new perspective on possible multiple layers of the symbolic and the real as well as on the interaction between one’s intellectual and bodily memory, even if Said’s gesture could be utterly trivial, without any particular meaning.

Said’s official and quite comprehensible explanation of his act was given as soon as the photo came out (*New York Times*, Fall 2000):

Edward Said was simply competing with his son to see who can throw a stone further. All other assumptions about possible causes of the act were left to its interpreters. Impartially thinking of the fact that the politics of the 'addict to power'<sup>5</sup> State of Israel handles the relations with their Palestinian (Lebanese, etc.) neighbors almost exclusively in rough military ways (to which no answer can be raised bilaterally, through a dialogue at an equal base, either at their territories or at the international level) – some can see in Said's act an act similar to a desperate but healthy reaction of children throwing stones towards those who are shooting at them with heavy weaponry. So does Christopher Bollas, who claims that

stone-throwing Palestinian is symbolically returning the Israeli violence that has used stones to build the settlements (...) the aim of such resistance is not to overcome Israel, it is to return Israel to itself, for better and for worse (...) Palestinians thus seek to maintain sanity for its people through the insistence that the self exists even as the oppressors seek to deny it, something that the Jewish people know only too well through the catastrophe that was the Holocaust. (cited in Said 2003: 6-7)

If one wishes to situate Said's act in the context of a wider theoretical explanation though, then, for example, one can refer to Jacques Lacan's definition of the subject as structured by the Other (i.e. what Israelis have done to Palestinians returns to them repetitively, although in much milder forms). Or to the (Lacanian) return in the real of what was foreclosed in the symbolic, or to the (Lacan's definition of) desire as seeking a recovery of a lost Other that it simultaneously resists. Even more effective the explanation would seem in Judith Butler's reading which would ask: 'how and where is social content attributed to the

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<sup>5</sup> See: 'Constructive Suffering of the Master of Sorrows: Against Addiction to Power' by Israel Idalovichi in: *Betraying the Event: Constructions of Victimhood in Contemporary Cultures*, ed. Festić, Fatima, CSP, 2009. Discussing Emmanuel Levinas, Idalovichi very eloquently and instructively presents the ways in which Levinas' thought can be used pragmatically and productively to reduce the conflicts among the peoples (the Israelis and the Palestinians) and pave a way to some more optimistic and tolerant 'inter-ethics' and society.

site of the “real”, and then positioned as the unspeakable?’ (I.e. the site of the ‘real’ is the stone-throwing act, but obviously a high interest is ascribed to it in the form of social content, which then revoked the invitation to Said-the-speaker in Vienna). Also, as Butler asks, ‘what it means to speak about ‘the impossible desire to return within the context of geopolitical displacements – of various kinds?’ (1993: 189). With this ‘various kinds’ as a layered designator of displacement, we can more accurately approach Said’s texts. In his *Memoir* he writes:

To me, nothing more painful and paradoxically sought after characterizes my life than the many displacements from countries, cities, abodes, languages, environments that have kept me in motion all these years. (...) when I travel I take as much as I can with me. (...) I had a secret but ineradicable fear of not returning, yet I fabricate occasions for departure, thus giving rise to the fear voluntarily (...) and the great fear is that departure is the state of being abandoned, even though it is you who leave. (1999: 217-8)

### Freud with Said

The cancellation of Said’s lecture (‘Freud and the non-European’) in 2001 came at the time of the accession to power of the far right-wing in Austria and also of the(ir) first official commemoration of the Jewish Holocaust ever in the country (2000). In the light of this fact it becomes more understandable why Said’s lecture, which exposes, in a profound intellectual way, the complexity of all individual and collective identities (and constructedness of every nation) was not welcome by some officials in Vienna at that moment. Therefore, alternatively (or metonymically) Said was invited to offer the lecture discussing Freud’s last major book, *Moses and Monotheism* in London (supposedly a more open, multi-ethnic capital of the protected and safe constitutional monarchy Great Britain).

In the lecture, Said sees Freud’s book as ‘a composite of several texts, intentions, periods of time, all of them difficult for Freud in view of his illness, the advent of National Socialism, and the political uncertainties of his life in Vienna’ (2003: 27-8) and claims that *Moses* seems to be composed by Freud for himself in an entirely secular setting,

with no concession made to the divine or the extra-historical. Said, in his indisputable manner of reading against the grain, emphasizes Freud's idea about non-European outsiders, Moses and Hannibal in particular, who as such were assimilable to European culture as former outsiders (in Freud's words, 'Semites were most certainly not-European', cited in Said 2003: 16). 'Freud's view on Moses as both insider and outsider is extraordinarily interesting and challenging,' writes Said, 'given that Freud's world had not yet been touched by the globalization, or rapid travel, or decolonization, that were to make many formally unknown or repressed cultures available to metropolitan Europe.' (2003: 16) He also emphasizes a more politically charged meaning of the non-European,

the culture that emerged historically in the post WWII period, after the fall of the classical empires and emergence of many newly liberated peoples and states all over the world and the resulting many new configurations of power, people, and politics. *With that in mind we can see the radicality of Freud's work on human identity.* (2003: 17, emphasis mine)

Said argues that for Freud, writing and thinking in the mid-1930s, the actuality of the non-European was its constitutive presence as a sort of fissure in the figure of Moses – 'founder of Judaism but an unreconstructed non-Jewish Egyptian nonetheless' (2003: 42) ('Freud was quite clear, even adamant: "Moses was an Egyptian and was therefore different from the people who adopted him as their leader – people that is who became the Jews whom Moses seems later created as *his* people",<sup>6</sup> while Jahve derived from Arabia, which was also

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<sup>6</sup> Said tries to show that the actual Jewishness that derives from Moses is a far from open-and-shut matter, and is in fact extremely problematic, that Freud is resolutely divided about it. Freud tends 'to deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons' and he does so in the interest of truth far more important than what are 'supposed (to be) national interests': the removal of a religion's source from its place inside the community and history of like-minded believers (Freud 1997: 3). Then Freud explains the Arabic origin of the worship of Jahve (Freud 1997: 39) and emphasizes Moses' Egyptian identity, and the fact that his ideas about a single God are derived *entirely from the Egyptian Pharaoh who is universally credited with the invention of monotheism.*

non-Jewish and non-European, in Freud's words: 'they took over the worship of the god Jahve, probably from the neighboring Arabian tribe of Midianites,' 1967: 39). Said argues that 'Freud was aware that simply saying that the Jews were the remnants of the Mediterranean civilization and therefore not really different is discordant with his show of force about Moses' 'Egyptian origins' (2003: 40). With the insight in the text written by Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, 'Some Thoughts on Freud's Attitude During the Nazi Period,' Said suggests that it was the shadow of Nazi anti-Semitism spreading so ominously over Freud's world in the last decade of his life that caused him protectively to huddle the Jews inside, so to speak, the sheltering realm of the European:

But if we move forward very rapidly to the post-WWII period, we shall immediately take note of how designations like 'European' and 'non-European' dramatically acquire more sinister resonances than Freud appeared to have been aware of. There is, of course, the charge made by National Socialism, as codified in the Nuremberg Laws that Jews were foreign, and therefore expendable. The Holocaust is a ghastly monument, if that is the right word, to that designation and to all the suffering that went with it. Then there is the almost too-perfect literalization that is given the binary opposition Jew versus non-European in the climactic chapter of the unfolding narrative of Zionist settlement in Palestine. Suddenly the world of *Moses and Monotheism* has come alive in this tiny sliver of land in the Eastern Mediterranean. (2003: 40-1)

Observing how Freud's text is obsessed with returning not just to the problem of Moses' identity, but to the very elements of identity itself and how Freud is deliberately antinomian in his beliefs (2003: 32)<sup>7</sup>, Said writes that 'the elements of historical identity seem always to be composite' (2003: 53). This is seen in Freud's meditations and

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<sup>7</sup> I do not draw on the literature written about Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, because *Moses* itself is not the topic of my essay but a reference-support to the theses Said exposes in his memoir. I will mention though Josef Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1991), which is written from quite an opposite perspective, and which Said himself discusses (1993: 30-33), stating that Jerushalmi expertly fills in the personal Jewish background to Freud's probing of the Moses story. He quotes Jerushalmi's claim

insistence on the non-European from the Jewish point of view, in his admirable refusal to resolve identity into some of the nationalist or religious herds in which so many people so desperately run, and Freud's profound exemplification of the insight that 'even for the most identifiable, stubborn communal identity – for him, this was the Jewish identity – there are inherent limits that prevent it from being fully incorporated into one, and only one, identity. Freud's symbol of those limits was that the founder of Jewish identity was himself a non-European Egyptian.' (2003: 53) In other words, Said argues,

identity cannot be thought or worked through itself alone; it cannot constitute or even imagine itself without that radical originary break or flow which will not be repressed, because Moses was Egyptian and therefore always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, suffered – and later, perhaps, even triumphed. The strength of this thought is, I believe, that *it can be articulated in and speak to other besieged identities as well* – not through dispensing palliatives such as tolerance and compassion but, rather, by attending to it as a troubling, disabling, *destabilizing secular wound – the essence of the cosmopolitan*, from which there can be no recovery, no state of resolved or Stoic calm, and no utopian reconciliation even within itself. (2003: 54, emphases mine)

As Jacqueline Rose notes in her response to Said's lecture, in his reading Said 'has offered us *Moses and Monotheism* as nothing less than a political parable for our times', seeing in Freud's fragmented and troubled relationship to his own Jewishness a possible model for identity in the modern world while, to him, '*Israel represses Freud.*'

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that 'If Monotheism was genetically Egyptian, it has been historically Jewish', 'even if the stimulus for the Jewish voice had first come from the outside, from a great stranger'. (1991: 52,53). Said thinks than Jersushalmi is far more anxious than Freud to scrape away all traces of monotheism from Egypt, and to imply that it was the genius of Judaism to have elaborated the religion 'well beyond anything the Egyptians knew about' (1993: 33). From an intellectual viewpoint, Said is granting Freud-the-thinker a greater and more comprehensive 'genius' than does Yerushalmi. See also: Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, 'Some Thoughts on Freud's Attitude During the Nazi Period', *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought* 18:2 (1988), pp. 249-65.

(2003: 65-6). The last refers to Said's claim that 'Israeli legislation countervenes, represses, and even cancels Freud's carefully maintained opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background. The complex layers of the past, so to speak, have been eliminated by official Israel.' (2003: 44).

We can notice that even more far-reaching seems Said's reading of Freud's text if we have in mind some of more recent psychoanalytic reflections (those of Laclau, Žižek, or Butler), which find impossible for the identity category to fulfill the promise of full recognition – identity claims are seen as rallying points for political mobilization and the resentment against identity as a sign of a dissension. (For illustration of these statements see: *The Other Israel: Voices of Refusal and Dissent*, edited by Carey, Roane and Shami, Jonathan, a collection of texts by some contemporary Israeli intellectuals; or Simon Shama's *Landscape and memory*, which shows that geography of the region is never coterminous with some stable reality out there that identifies and gives it permanence.) Indeed, we can only talk about a phantasmatic promise of identity as a site of phantasmatic investment and expectation within political discourse as well as the inevitability of disappointment; identity claims are to be re-thought as phantasmatic, impossible sites, hence alternately compelling and disappointing. That is precisely what Said indicates in his lecture, having in mind the phantasmatic aspect of any exclusive political and identity claim, be that Egyptian, Arab, Israeli, Palestinian, or European.<sup>8</sup>

That is why Said thinks that Freud mobilized the non-European past in order to undermine any doctrinal attempt that might be made to put Jewish identity on 'a sound foundational basis', especially since modern Judaism and the Jews were mainly to be thought of as European, while that identity 'has been consecrated by the establishment of Israel', and 'it is the science of archeology that is summoned to consolidate that identity in secular times, the rabbis as well as the scholars specializing in "biblical archeology"'.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See also the exemplification of these theoretical statements in *The Invention of Ancient Israel: the silencing of Palestinian history* by Keith W. Whitelam and *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* by Yael Zerubavel).

To Rose's understanding, Said is reading Freud in the setting of Israel's ideologically conscious policies as the one who by contrast had left considerable room to accommodate Judaism's non-Jewish antecedents and contemporaries. In excavating the buried, forgotten, repressed and denied past, in excavating the archeology of Jewish identity, Freud insisted that it did not begin with itself, but rather, with other identities (Egyptian and Arabian). In that sense he was 'an overturner and a re-mapper of accepted or settled geographies and genealogies'. 'This other, non-Jewish, non-European history has now been erased,' writes Said:

By virtue of one of the usually ignored consequences of Israel's establishment, non-Jews, in this case, Palestinians – have been displaced to somewhere where, *in the spirit of Freud's excavations*, they can ask *what became of the traces of their history that had been so deeply implicated in the actuality of Palestine before Israel* (2003: 45, emphasis mine)

The parallel between these two seminal 20<sup>th</sup> century thinkers who worked sixty years apart, Freud and Said, is rather obvious. It is the parallel between the general conditions of the otherness which both of them inhabited, between their 'fathering' of psychoanalysis at one side and of postcolonialism at the other side, between their worlds threatened by the imminent devastating wars in which their last texts were written, between the personal condition of each of them suffering mortal illness, between their foreseeing their immediate future and their resolute if sometimes contradictory opposing to any sole political avowal<sup>9</sup>, between Freud's *Moses and Monotheism*, which is intended

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<sup>9</sup> In all Said's texts that I refer to Said points out that the interplay between memory, place, and invention can be used for *the purposes opposite to exclusion – for liberation and coexistence between societies* 'whose adjacency requires a tolerable form of sustained reconciliation.' 'Israelis and Palestinians are now so intertwined through history, geography, and political actuality that it seems to me absolutely folly to try and plan the *future* of one without that of the other (...) Everywhere one looks in the territory of historical Palestine, Jews and Palestinians live together (...) Yet there can be no possible reconciliation, no possible solution, unless these two communities confront each's experience in the light of the other.' (2000: 191)

to be a work of history, not psychoanalysis, and Said's *Out of Place, a Memoir*, which is intended to be as far as possible from his political and scholarly engagement.

A unique portrait of a well-to-do, loving Palestinian Arab family, a kaleidoscope of a portion of Near Eastern society and politics up to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, and a peculiar contour of three-dimensional life which Said lived in America, Lebanon and Egypt in his college years, Said's narrative develops and progresses along with his illness. It depicts his search for the lost world, geography and landscape that his memory retains in the brightest light of the Mediterranean sky, stone, flora, architecture; those around him offering him the abundance of care, protection, education. He spent his first fifteen years, ridden by sensations, in the tight maternal embrace, then turned to the paternal order of language with the aura of the maternal resisting during the subsequent five decades he lived in U.S.

The analogy between the cancer ravaging each of Said's parents, later ravaging him too, and the war ravaging his homeland he was vaguely keeping in his memory and later integrating into his scholarship is a pretext for his memoir. Said also depicts three Palestinians from his past who informed his scholarship and work: his paternal aunt Nabiha, who devoted all her time and funds to Palestinian refugees and was the only source of the bleak stories Said ever heard about the horror of the cold-blooded massacres committed against Palestinians 'over there'; his paternal uncle David, who roamed Brazil as an adventurer of Dostoevskyan depth and stood as an avatar for Said's work on Conrad; and an older friend, Dr. Farid, Marxist and socialist, who was murdered in a political turmoil in Cairo – whose life and death became an underlying motif for all Said's life. Sheltering the family within the realm of comfort, so as to confirm their full living in spite of the circumstances, Said's parents nevertheless did enough. For, it is owing to them, too, that the Palestinian *nakba* – the catastrophic collapse of a society and the country's disappearance – entered Columbia University, New York, front door.

## Modernism revisited

The fact that Freud is considered a modernist does not prevent us to read some of his texts as postmodernist *par excellence*<sup>10</sup>. Likewise, Said the postcolonial author can be read as a modernist, even an avant-garde one. If we understand postcolonialism as the body of postmodernism and postmodernism not so much as a historical break with modernism but as an attempt to speak out what in modernism was unthinkable, unrepresentable, unsymbolizable, – thus integrating modernism within itself, within postmodernism –, the interaction between modernism and postcolonialism appears to be a real dialectics of the present day.

What Andreas Huyssen refers to as ‘the fall of the great divide’<sup>11</sup>, claiming that a modernist programmatic distance from political, economic, and social concerns was to a degree always challenged as soon as it arose (1986: xii), the itinerary of Said’s life well exemplifies. And as much as modernism constituted itself through ‘a conscious strategy of exclusion’, ‘an anxiety of contamination by its other’ (1986: xii), the symptomatic return of the excluded imbues it one way or the other. In my reading, that is what Huyssen claims to be more important for a theoretical and historical understanding of modernism and its aftermath than the alleged historical break which, in the eyes of so many critics, separates postmodernism from modernism, and which is, to me, exemplified in the exclusiveness of Adorno’s or Habermas’ statements on Auschwitz or the Jewish Holocaust as the end of the modernist epoch.

To mention again Lacan and his figuring of the place of the traumatic Thing (Freudian *das Ding*) as empty (i.e. open for any kind of content), we can say that it might be precisely the underlying memory of the common trauma that propelled Said to throw a Freudianly excavated stone over the border into his own native land. And that is why we

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<sup>10</sup> In this context, in particular, I have in mind Freud’s study *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. See: The Standard Edition. Trans. James Strachey. W.W. Norton & Co. New York, London.

<sup>11</sup> See: Huyssen, Andreas: *After the Great Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986).

might read Said's memoir as predominantly modernist, issuing from his multiple, dissociated selves, yet all masterly entwined into the recovery and the embodiment of the blind spot of his youth, of what was unknown to him or lost. For, what humans have in common is a trauma; what Said notes about Freud elsewhere is that he 'draws attention to a type of knowledge so devastating as to be unbearable in one's sight, and only slightly more bearable as a subject of psychological interpretation.' (1985: 170).

The dissonance consisting already in the 'superficially coherent and disorganized structure of his English name "Edward"' – as he states – his 'mixed identities in conflict with each other', 'a non-Arab Arab, a non-American American' (1999: 236), the split between 'Edward' (or, as he was soon to become, 'Said'), his public, outer self, and 'the loose, irresponsible fantasy-ridden metamorphoses of his private, inner life' (1999: 137) was very strongly marked. Later, he claims, the eruption from his inner self grew not only more frequent but also less possible to control:

I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance. These currents (...) like the themes of one's life flow along during the waking hours, and at their best they require no reconciling, no harmonizing. They are 'off' and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one central theme. A form of freedom, I would like to think, even if I am far from being totally convinced that it is. That skepticism too is one of the themes I particularly want to hold on to. With so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place. (1999: 295)

A chart and a graph of his memory forming his past through his narration, his signature that ought to be left on the 'non-existing' land where he was born, his memoir is itself a reenactment of the experience of departure and separation, as Said feels the pressure of time hastening and running out – losing time falls back into losing space, the imprints of his cartographic knowledge becoming his access to the past. Writing

on Proust, Kristeva noted: 'whether we are lost in time, losing time or losing our lives without discovering anything in death, we are made of the same substance as time because it defines the boundaries of our speech' (1996: 167). Similarly, Said's sense of time is pressured by his experience of the erasure of history:

When I hear references today to West Jerusalem they always connote the Arab sections of my childhood haunts. It is still hard for me to accept the fact that the very quarters of the city in which I was born, lived and felt at home were taken over by Polish, German, and American immigrants who conquered the city and have made it the unique symbol of their sovereignty, with no place for Palestinian life, which seems to have been confined to the Eastern city, which I hardly knew. West Jerusalem has now become entirely Jewish, its former inhabitants expelled for all time by mid-1948. (1999: 111)

There is a remarkably analogous theoretical backing to these lines in Said's text 'Invention, Memory, and Place', where he shows how two totally different characterizations of a recollected event have been constructed – the celebrated establishment of Israel meaning the catastrophic disestablishment of Palestine, and how this radical irreconcilability at the origin of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is routinely excluded from considerations of related subjects concerning collective memory, geographical analysis, and political reflection (2000: 183). 'Memory in the modern sense is something to be intervened in, used and abused', writes Said; 'to the whole matter of memory as a social, political and historical enterprise has been added a complication, (...) the role of invention.' He writes: 'Invention must occur if there is recollection.' (2000: 182). Likewise, considering geography as a socially constructed and maintained sense of place, Said opposes *mythological* to *actual* geographical location, in which landscape, buildings, streets, and the like are overlain or entirely covered with symbolic associations totally obscuring the existential reality of what as a city and real place Jerusalem is. 'The same can be said for Palestine,' writes Said, 'whose landscape functions in the memories of Jews, Muslims and Christians entirely differently' (2000: 180).

Said well exposes the element of invention in his *Out of Place*, which is intended to be his subjective account of the life he lived in the Arab world. However, what makes the point is that his *inventiveness* in the memoir turns into a precise and exact drawing of the maps of a collapsed, replaced, and resurrecting world. Then we can ask – how come? Why is it that Said’s recalling the scenes from the past, hence necessarily also inventing them, nevertheless renders the sheer reality of both the geography and the landscape<sup>12</sup> of Palestine, Lebanon, and colonial Egypt that are no longer existing or that are elsewhere presented as non-existing? Why does the text of Said’s memoir differ from a number of other texts displaying the history and geography of the area, in spite of its prosaic, memoir genre, which is therefore more subject to invention than some scientific treatise?

Of possible answers the key one seems to be to understand the way Said deals with loss, trauma and its symptom. If we talk specifically about Said’s memoir – issuing from the specific circumstances which I described earlier, from the specific perspective of an insider-outsider who has his own body as the referent of the excluded (and not allowed to return) – we can say that *Said’s primary interest* in the mapping of his lived history and presenting it to those who are either ignorant of it or innocent of it, *is to retain the actuality of the Other within it*. The Other that for him, gradually and predominantly, became the Jewish one. Said’s perspective is opened with a specific task: he wishes to leave behind him a trace of a lived world that was erased from the Earth and he has a commitment to retrieve it, although he knows there is no way he would live long enough to bear witness to it. He is linking to each other the images which survived in his inner eye and which are retroactively de-mapping the territory that was fifty years ago forcefully de-mapped and re-mapped. However, in his de-mapping he saves his ability not to remove the Other from himself, from his map, and from his text. Such a sense of responsibility for the representation of the past comes as closely related to:

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<sup>12</sup> See: Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City*. London, 1973; Said points out that no one has studied more powerfully the unending cultural struggles over territories in referring to the relation between geography and landscape.

1. Said's extremely frank and rich exposition of his experience of multiplicity;
2. his profound *awareness* of inventiveness and manipulateness of the past and
3. his in flesh-and-blood experienced *awareness* of the power of discourse to materialize its effects, hence either to erase or to authenticate and reclaim the narrated past.

We can connect Said's stands to some stands of Butler, who claims that *performativity is not willful and arbitrary choice*. To her, the power of discourse to enact what it names is always constituted by the historicity of discourse and historicity of norms. And a subject is addressed and produced by such a norm, and this norm – and the regulatory power of which it is a token – materializes bodies as an effect of that injunction. (1993: 188)

On the first pages of his memoir Said writes that he was delivered at home, in Talbīyah, West Jerusalem, by a Jewish midwife; close to the end we learn that in the most difficult of his moments, in the treatments of chemotherapy, he was taken care of by Jewish nurses in the Jewish Hospital in New York. The most precious aspect of his sensibility which he developed and trained through music was influenced by his teachers and friends, music professionals, many of them Jews. Although he was aware that there was some difference since his very early years in Palestine – when, for example, his aunt reproached them as kids for 'visiting a Jewish cinema' 'as we don't have plenty of ours', or when he was surprised in Cairo with his Jewish classmates' different response to the stories of Israeli crimes in the Palestinian refugee camps –, he writes:

Until 1967 I succeeded in mentally dividing U.S. support for Israel from the fact of my being an American pursuing a career there and having Jewish friends and colleagues. The remoteness of the Palestine I grew up in, my family's silence over its role, and then its long disappearance from our lives, my mother's open discomfort with the subject and later aggressive dislike of both Palestine and politics, my lack of contact with Palestinians during the eleven years of my American education: all this allowed me to live my early American life at a great distance from *the Palestine of remote memory, unresolved sorrow, and uncomprehending anger*. (1999: 141, emphasis mine)

‘I was forced to speak as Palestinian’

This is what Said used to say. It was the Palestine of the war in the 1967 that finally blasted Said’s resistances to acknowledging that they – him and his family – are part of the war too. In his *Memoir* he writes:

I was suffering a dissociation myself about Palestine, which I was never able to resolve or fully grasp until quite recently, when I gave up trying. Even now *the un-reconciled duality I feel about the place*, its intricate wrenching, tearing, sorrowful loss as exemplified in so many distorted lives, including mine, and its status as an admirable country for *them* (but of course not for us), always gives me pain and a discouraging sense of being solitary, undefended, open to the assaults of trivial things that seem important and threatening, against which I have no weapons. (1999: 142)

What seems important to emphasize is Said’s primarily maternal experience of the territory of his native world, which as such also occupied a place within himself and which, as a part of his body and the body of the land, was subject to transmutation into literature. The more efforts he later invested to conceptualize the schism in him between the worlds he inhabited, one existentially, the other mentally and scholarly, the wider seemed the gap. The fact that after their leaving Jerusalem at the end of 1947 (in order to avoid to be expelled by the Israeli military), leaving their property there without any right to reclaim it, the family was spending the subsequent eighteen summers in a resort just outside Beirut, renting the same house all the time, is enough to suggest the abyssal position of those who ‘pretend’ that nothing happens in their neighborhood of which until recently they themselves were a part, which belonged right to them, yet which was torn apart by horrors, misery, injustice, and oblivion. That pretense is – it seems – what was for Said the hardest to work through in *his own ‘right to return’ enterprise*. Therefore, *the search for the repressed behind the façade of his upbringing became the commitment of his work and life*. At what point, we might ask, in what way, and at what cost one establishes a link with the past moment of break that was hidden from him/her and denied to him/her as much as it was hidden from the most of the world?

How to think the rupture and work through it if what preceded it was officially and forcefully proclaimed as non-existing? What kind of force, gift or genius 'chose' Said, a bright, warm, but infinitely timid and shy boy about whom we read in his memoir, to turn him into an academic spokesperson – shall we say Moses-like – not only of the people of his native land but also of the majority of today's humankind?

I believe that Said himself did not find the answer to these questions for a long time. It might be that his memoir, into which he poured the material of his remembrance as dictated from within, by his organism's own cancerous turning against itself, was also an attempt at guessing it. Then we can evoke his expression 'dialectics of memory over territory' (2000: 181) – the process which animates the relationship of disparate accounts of the same event, and we can use it in the context of both of the lands, the map of his own body as much as the map of the territory of the homeland, observing how 'the same images of prickly pears, oranges, trees, and return thread their way into discourses of memory for both Jews and Palestinians.' (Bardenstein 1998: 9)

As if the narrative subject of his own schism recognizes the Other with no fear, ideology, or a program underlying it; or was it just Said's desire to recover such an image of the Other in the years when all possible peace accords failed like his own body did? Whichever the case, we can also relate to Said what he wrote about Freud's interest in exposing the split in the origin of Judaism, in himself, and in the very concept of identity in his discussion on *Moses and Monotheism*:

Everything about the treatise suggests not resolution and reconciliation (...) but rather, more complexity and willingness to let reconcilable elements of the work remain as they are: episodic, fragmentary, unfinished (i.e. unpolished). (...) [T]he intellectual trajectory conveyed by the late work is intransigence and a sort of irascible transgressiveness, as if the author was expected to settle down into a harmonious composure, as befits a person at the end of his life (...) but wishes us to understand that there are other issues at stake here – other, more pressing problems to expose than ones whose solution might be comforting, or provide a sort of resting-place. (2003: 28-9)

It is because of its intrinsic duality and transgressiveness that *Out of Place* coincides with the veracity of the facts and physical structures. Painfully clarifying the intersection of political and aesthetic meanings of representation, Said reminds us that most often all what matters is who has the power to represent whom (in institutions as well as in texts), and the problematic (if not symptomatic) position of the groups that are excluded from representation. The fact that ‘his Other’ denied him all rights in his country of birth turned to be crucial for Said’s bringing out his mnemonic records and consequently his territorial claim. Said’s out-of-placeness is becoming his in-placeness, his curse of homelessness upgraded into a lesson of a cosmopolitan which is learned in a painful but constructive way.

‘In the complex guerrilla fighting of cultural studies’

As John Winkler would put, ‘the larger methodological issue is whether the author’s meaning should be the goal of our reading and thinking? Should we concede that much authority to the writers we read?’<sup>13</sup> (cited in Higgins and Silver, eds. 1991: 30) The real point in reading seems to be in fighting the imposed structures of cultural violence and in recognizing the ambiguities so as to become resistant readers. In a victim, as Catherine MacKinnon claims in another context, ‘at stake is a hermeneutic, a question of meaning and a question of power of certain readers – under “conditions of inequality” – to make their point of view coextensive with the real, to universalize their particularity.’<sup>14</sup> (cited in Higgins and Silver, eds. 1991: 89) The magnitude of Said’s memoir, ‘a bolt from the blue, a dream come true’, as Kenzaburo Oe says in his endorsement of the book (Said, 1999), comes also from the side of its readers, from its worldly reception, for it might be hard to

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<sup>13</sup> See: “The Education of the Chloe”. In: Higgins, Lynn A., and Silver, Brenda R., (eds), *Rape and Representation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991).

<sup>14</sup> See: Catherine MacKinnon, “Feminism, Marxism, Method and the State: Towards Feminist Jurisprudence.” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* (Summer 1983), 8(4): pp. 635-658. I quoted her per Ellen Rooney in: Higgins, Lynn A., and Silver, Brenda R., eds. *Rape and Representation* (New York: Columbia UP, 1991).

find a reader who is non-responsive to the ethics of Said's polyphonic and ever inviting cartography.

*Out of place* is not only a piece of imagination like many fictional pieces are. In its narrative construction, it also implies and involves a complex and sharp insight of Said's memory of the world that vanished not only from the maps and history books, but also from the minds of those who were either pretending to go on with their routine lives elsewhere in the decades to come, or those who stayed in the hellish emptiness of ghetto-like ruins of a no longer existing state, echoing with mortar-shelling day in day out for half of a century. From his "Olympian detachment" (1999: 117), Said was able to offer *a testimony to a common life of the past* that was once unwisely and arrogantly refused and demolished. At one point, describing the quarters of Jerusalem from his last months there, he writes:

When my family suddenly determined just before Christmas that we had better return to Cairo, my ruptured connection to Ezra came to symbolize the unbridgeable gap, repressed for want of words or concepts to discuss it, between Palestinian Arabs and Jews, and the terrible silence forced on our joined history from that moment on. (1999: 112)

His text on invention, memory, and place points out that the important link, well established in contemporary Jewish consciousness, between the Holocaust and the founding of Israel as heavens for Jews, never states that it also meant 'the destruction of the Palestinian human ecology', although for Palestinians it increases the agony of their plight: 'why, they ask, are we made to pay for what happened to the Jews in Europe by what was in fact a Western Christian genocide?' (1999: 183).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For scholarly illustrations of the destruction of Palestinians and the means and practices used in the process see some titles in note 4. Also very informative and meticulous is the study that Said discusses in *Freud and the Non-European – Facts on the Ground: Archeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* by Nadia Abu el-Haj, who traces the quasi-narrative biography of a land out of which Israel emerges 'visibly and linguistically, as the Jewish national home' (2002: 48).

It is not by chance that Said wrote his paper on Freud and the non-European (and in the introductory pages referred to his own proleptic reading of Conrad and to Fanon), almost right after he published his memoir. Said's work stands for the same perspective of incorporating the Other into one's origin and keeping vital that openness, albeit in a wider context of an unlimited universality and dialectics of the contemporary world. One of his key concepts, *worldliness*, which is attentive to the circumstances that press upon texts, writers and readers alike, well connotes a so simple but so often detested awareness that the Other is inherently a part of us, whether we allow it or not. The wide-ranging ignorance of the Palestinians' catastrophe and of their subsequent rights to their own land is built up into the most profound '*circumstantiality*', enveloping Said's texts as much as Said-the-author and his approving or disapproving readership.

'The fact that I was never at home, always out of place in nearly every way gave me the incentive to find my territory not socially but intellectually,' (1999: 231) he writes, underlying that he always felt the priority of intellectual consciousness, rather than national or tribal, which kept open in him the irreconcilability between intellectual belief and passionate loyalty to tribe and country. We can make a remark that Said's attitude of intellectual detachment opposes the resoluteness of his political interests and efforts to retrieve his homeland. He himself stated that his homelessness marked him with the most profound sadness yet in a way it was also sought after, as a precondition for his intellectual enterprise. That constant tension between his inner drive for alienation and departure and his devastating feeling of being a victim of political and illegal dispossession (according to the international law) – which the entire people of Palestinians suffered and which he was so arduously exposing in his scholarship and activism as their representative, remained open to the very end. '*I am a creature of privilege, comparatively to other Palestinians. So I felt that I have a responsibility to speak. There I was,*' he explains it in an interview with David Barsamian. (1994: 165, emphasis mine).

Where the bodies speak...

It was some months before his death that I met Said for the last time. He gave two lectures in Los Angeles, Spring 2003, the time after the siege of Ramallah, massacres in Jenin and the cycle of suicide bombings in Jerusalem. His first lecture on the possibility of peace in the Middle East was given at the UCLA; the University hardly ever in its history received so many visitors paying credit to a single event. Some members of the Jewish Hillel Center distributed flyers showing the photo of Said throwing a stone at the Lebanese gate towards Israel, and a few sentences denying his pacifism and good intentions, some calling him 'killer of the Academia'. When after the lecture, the Center's Rabi Heim, with big efforts because the oratorio of students shouted at him trying to silence him, asked Said: 'If you and I sit down now to sign the agreement – two states, two peoples, Jerusalem divided, will you sign it?' – Said calmly answered: 'The only document that I would sign now is the end of occupation.' His other lecture was organized for a small group at the Villa Aurora, given to the city for philanthropic purposes by a couple of WWII Jewish refugees. I heard about the event at the last minute and rushed to it, explaining that I worked as Said's Assistant and that he might be glad to see me. Noticing me, Said called my name; I answered with a warm hug and loud, echoing words: 'I said – if they don't let me in, I will break the door.' After the lecture, people wanted to shake hands with him. When he looked at me, on his tired, infinitely beautiful face<sup>16</sup>, I recognized his so familiar, boyishly conspiring smile, and only then realized that my words indeed could also be the response to the troubled photo of Said, standing at the gate between Lebanon and Israel, the photo which was distributed possibly in thousands of copies at the UCLA the previous day: '*I, Said, if they don't let me in, I will...break the door.*' Myself a Bosnian who, from the beginning of its disastrous war which tore the country apart, desperately struggled to maintain all of its components within myself, to avoid the designation of world 'refugee' and to keep sanity, devoting myself to scholarly work, I

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<sup>16</sup> The expression 'face' also implies the postulates of Levinasian meta-ethics and the concept of infinity.

well understood the moments when the pressure of the bodily memory of some shattering event overwhelms any words that might be found to express it. I wish to believe that there are enough of those for whom Said was the 'Other' who are able to share the same understanding.

*Performativity stands for the way of reclaiming the experience of being victimized*, I will again recall the words of another precious educator, Judith Butler, "the exclusions haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed – the unlivable, the non-narrativizable, the traumatic." (1993: 188). Indeed, that is what comes as a primary task to our practice of reading victimization: to restore victimization to the body and the event, to the point where it has been distorted and defaced. 'Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence and, with that presence, the right to possess and *reclaim a collective historical reality*, at least since the Zionist movement began its encroachment on the land (emphasis mine),' writes Said. 'A similar battle has been fought by all colonized people whose past and present were dominated by outside powers who had first conquered the land and then rewrote history so as to appear in that history as the true owners of the land.' (2000: 184). The stone which Said threw towards the border of his native ground on one occasion, close to the end of his life, might also stand for Said's farewell injunction into Palestine.

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