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Imaginative geographies

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Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings (Edward Said: *Culture and imperialism*, p. 7).

I Rethinking geography

I have borrowed my title from Edward Said, one of those rare critics for whom a geographical imagination is indispensable. 'What I find myself doing,' he once declared, is 'rethinking geography.' Now professors of comparative literature do not usually speak like this, and when Said goes on to suggest that '. . . we are perhaps now acceding to a new, invigorated sense of looking at the struggle over geography in interesting and imaginative ways', then it is, I think, time for us to consider what he has in mind.¹

Geography is a recurrent motif in Said's writings, and commentators from disciplines other than our own have recognized his deep interest in space and spatiality. From anthropology, we are reminded that '. . . the creation of geographies – the recognition and understanding of symbolic territories – is central to Said's work' and that, even when he writes in the abstract, 'Said is moved to use geographical imagery'. From sociology, he is seen as constructing a 'cartography of identities', disclosing the formation of a geographical imaginary that supplements the 'Euro-modernist interest in time with an equivalent understanding of space and spatiality'.² Yet if Said's work can be read as charting the changing constellations of power, knowledge and geography – the phrase is his, not mine³ – inscribed within British, French and American imperialisms, the fact remains that his project has received remarkably little attention from our own discipline.⁴ Said himself has repeatedly drawn attention to geography's complicity in Orientalism and in the wider cultures of imperialism, but it is only very recently that a critical historiography capable of addressing these same issues has emerged within our discipline.⁵ What gives this new body of work its critical edge, like Said's, is its refusal to confine these entanglements to distant and dusty archives. It may be comforting to believe, with L.P. Hartley that '. . . the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there'; but it is also thoroughly deceptive. Many of the assumptions of the colonial past are still abroad in the

neocolonial present. 'Geography militant', as Conrad once called it, was revealed with unspeakable clarity in the Gulf war of 1990–91, for example, Smith's 'first GIS war', and the colonial investment in geography as a kind of earth-writing is evident in the more mundane but none the less extraordinary arrogance with which the Royal Geographical Society celebrates its union with the Institute of British Geographers by scrawling its signature on its new membership card across part of the Arab world.⁶

But geography is about more than the will-to-power disguised as the will-to-map, and I want to accentuate its critical inflections. More specifically, I should like to begin a constructive exploration of Said's geographical imagination: its grounding, its constitution, its implications and its silences. Running through my discussion will be a dialectic between 'land' and 'territory'. These two words have been invested with multiple meanings, at once political and cultural, and Said uses them (or something very much like them) in ways that are perhaps not commonplace in geography. But his deployments are, I think, unusually creative: in effect, he charts a series of mappings, sometimes discordant and sometimes compounded, through which places and identities are deterritorialized and reterritorialized. He describes landscapes and cultures being drawn into abstract grids of colonial and imperial power, literally displaced and replaced, and illuminates the ways in which these constellations become sites of appropriation, domination and contestation. This is to paint with broad brush-strokes, but I hope to show that Said's inquiries into the historical predations of Orientalism, colonialism and imperialism and his writings on the contemporary plight of the Palestinian people are recto and verso of the same processes of inscription, through which power, knowledge and geography are drawn together in acutely physical ways. Like Homi Bhabha, I think Said's politicointellectual trajectory can be characterized as a move between the West Bank and the Left Bank. I want to think about these two sites together, and retain the imbrications between them, in order to consider a simple question: where does Said's geography come from?

II Palestine and the politics of dispossession

The first set of answers is biographical or, as I suspect he would prefer me to say, experiential. Edward Said was born in 1935 in Talbiya, in west Jerusalem, Palestine, into one of the oldest Christian communities in the world. His childhood was shaped by the disciplines of an unmistakably Anglican tradition – a student at St George's, an Anglican mission school in Jerusalem, he was baptized in the same parish. When Said was born, Palestine had been under British administration for 15 years. After the first world war and the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the League of Nations had placed the newly independent Arab states under British or French mandate because, in the words of Article 22, they were deemed to be '... inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. In the autumn of 1947, following Britain's peremptory announcement that it would withdraw from its mandate within six months, Palestine dissolved into turmoil. In the course of the bloody war that ensued, as the Zionist Haganah and Irgun fought Arabs for territory, between 600 000 and 900 000 Palestinians fled their homes; among them were Said and his family.⁷ Most of the refugees settled in Egypt, Jordan or Lebanon. Said continued his education at Victoria College in Cairo, another quintessentially British institution, and then, in 1951, moved to the USA to finish his secondary education. He subsequently studied English and history at Princeton

and completed his doctorate in comparative literature at Harvard, where he wrote his thesis on another brilliant exile, Joseph Conrad.⁸

It is surely no wonder that Said should later devote so much of his working life to a critical appreciation of the western canon for, as my thumb-nail sketch implies, its history is, in part, his story. In effect, he compiles an inventory of what, following Gramsci, he calls the 'infinity of traces' left upon him, 'the Oriental subject', by '... the culture whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals'.⁹ But he also challenges his metropolitan audience to rethink their own cultural history, to cede their 'own-ership' and connect its privileges and assumptions to the busy commerce of colonialism and imperialism.

Of course, Said's 'voyage in' did not mean that he left his other cultural baggage behind; but the frictions of distance between Britain and the USA on one side and Palestine on the other make its recovery unusually problematic.¹⁰ It would be impertinent for me to suggest how the flight from Palestine affected Said. 'Most of what I can recall about the early days,' he writes, 'are obscure boyhood memories of a protracted exposure to the sufferings of people with whom I had little direct connection.' Once he left Palestine he admits he was still further '... insulated by wealth and the security of Cairo'. He lived with his parents on the island of Zamalek, '... an essentially European enclave where families like my own lived: Levantine, colonial, minority, privileged'.¹¹ This means that he can only recover the connections between biography and history in his native land through a collective recitation, a series of disconnected performances enacted within the dispersed imagination of a displaced community – what he calls '... the intimate mementoes of a past irrevocably lost [that] circulate among us, like the genealogies of a wandering singer of tales' – and which provide him with the only way of negotiating his identity within and between the island chain of what Benedict Anderson would call an 'imagined community'.¹²

Such a project is moved by an agonizing dialectic of redemption and incompleteness, and it is impossible to read Said's meditation on Jean Mohr's photographs of Palestinian lives, or his moving account of his own visit to 'Palestine-Israel' in the summer of 1992, without recognizing how deeply his (re)constructed sense of biography and history – his sociological imagination – is embedded in the shattered human geographies of Palestine.

1 *After the last sky*

The occasion for his collaboration with Mohr is particularly instructive. In 1983 Said was a consultant to the International Conference on the Question of Palestine. He persuaded its United Nations sponsors to commission Mohr (whose earlier work with John Berger he had much admired) to take a series of photographs of Palestinians to be hung in the entrance hall to the Geneva conference. The intention, I assume, was to remind the participants that 'the question of Palestine' was not some abstract conundrum, to be resolved by remote formularies, but an intensely practical question (in the original sense of that phrase), spun around webs of meanings created by particular people in a particular place. When Mohr returned, he and Said found that a condition had been attached to the exhibition: 'You can hang them up, we were told, but no writing can be displayed with them.' If geography is indeed a kind of writing – literally, 'earth-writing' – then this prohibition is hideously appropriate, as the Palestinian poet Mahmud Darwish explains in one of his early poems:

We have a country of words. Speak speak so I can put my road on the stone of a stone.
We have a country of words. Speak speak so we may know the end of this travel.

Darwish was one of the Resistance poets and, not surprisingly, the prohibition on ‘earth-writing’ was enforced in their homeland too. Many of them were arrested or forced into exile, but they continued to write poems that spoke directly of the anguish of dispossession. Said took the title of his collaboration with Mohr from another of Darwish’s poems – ‘Where should we go after the last frontier? Where should the birds fly after the last sky?’ – and, in the text he eventually wrote to accompany Mohr’s photographs, he too acknowledged the strategic-subversive copula of ‘earth-writing’. No simple Palestinian geography is possible, or even permissible, Said seemed to say: ‘We are “other” and opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement and exodus.’¹³

In *After the last sky*, Said returns again and again to a Palestine riven by the tension between geography as territory and geography as land. This is mirrored in Mohr’s triptych of images that move between the planar geometries of an Israeli settlement on the West Bank and the organic rootedness of a Palestinian village (Figure 1), and it reappears in Said’s own, more general reflections:

The stability of geography and the continuity of land – these have completely disappeared from my life and the life of all Palestinians. If we are not stopped at borders, or herded into new camps, or denied reentry and residence, or barred from travel from one place to another, more of our land is taken, our lives are interfered with arbitrarily, our voices are prevented from reaching each other, our identity is confined to frightened little islands in an inhospitable environment of superior military force sanitized by the clinical jargon of pure administration.

Thus Palestinian life is scattered, discontinuous, marked by the artificial and imposed arrangements of interrupted or confined space, by the dislocations and unsynchronized rhythms of disturbed time . . . [W]here no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events are accidents, all progress is a digression, all residence is exile.

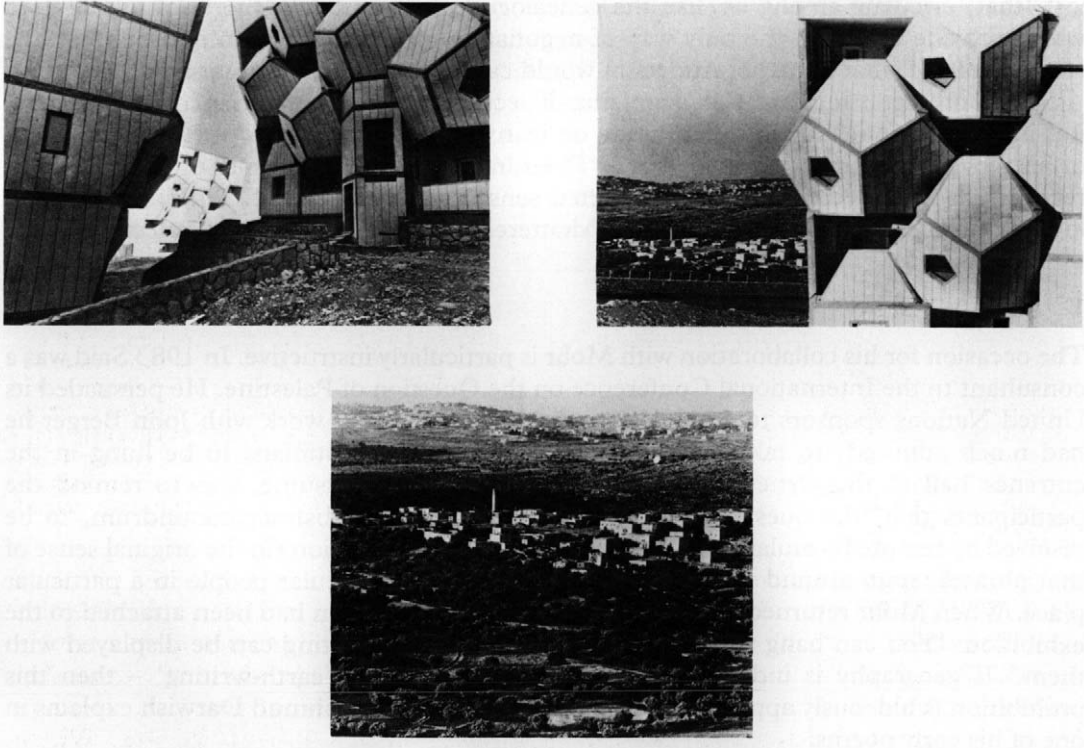


Figure 1 From territory to land: an Israeli settlement and an Arab village on the West Bank, 1979 (reproduced by kind permission of photographer, Jean Mohr)

How, then, can a geography appropriate to the Palestinian condition be written? How can that 'flaw', that crack in the clinical lattices of administered space, fracture its enframing geography? In an oblique reversal of the narrativity and systematicity that he attributes to the hegemonic discourses of Orientalism, Said's response – in this essay – is to argue for a space of representation that deploys hybrid, broken, fragmentary forms to reinscribe a Palestinian presence on the map.¹⁴

But writing such a geography is doubly difficult. Most immediately, Said's attempt to interleave Mohr's photographs with his own text is confounded by his enforced absence from Palestine. In effect, he is obliged to enframe Palestine – in the same dispiriting sense in which Heidegger used the term – and then struggle to get through the looking glass, so to speak, because he is prevented from either accompanying Mohr or following in his wake: 'I cannot reach the actual people who were photographed, except through a European photographer who saw them for me.'¹⁵ Said's predicament is deeply personal, of course, but that is exactly the point. Other sympathetic commentators were able to visit the West Bank and the exiled communities in the camps and cities beyond its borders, and they were allowed to speak with Palestinians. In a parallel collaboration between British TV journalist Jonathan Dimbleby and photographer Donald McCullin, for example, published seven years earlier, the faces *and* voices of the dispossessed leap from the pages. The images and text coalesce into an unusually direct, dignified and passionate statement about the plight of the Palestinians, and there is none of the mediated recollection and speculation that so marks Said's anguished prose.¹⁶ For the most part, all Said can do is provide a series of plausible annotations to Mohr's images. His inscriptions are moments in the collective recitation I wrote of earlier, but there is always a gap between these shards of memory and the particularities of the people and places captured by Mohr's lens. The effect is oddly abstracted, a disconcertingly generalized series of readings. But the poignancy of *After the last sky* derives much of its power precisely from this enforced absence of the subject voice.

The sadness in the sentence I cited just now – 'I cannot reach the actual people who were photographed, except through a European photographer who saw them for me' – soon spirals out into a wider set of mediations, of dislocations in time and space. Here, for example, is Said commenting on a photograph of refugee labourers packing vegetables into boxes:

When in London and Paris I see the same Jaffa oranges or Gaza vegetables grown in the *bayarat* ('orchards') and fields of my youth, but now marketed by Israeli export companies, the contrast between the rich inarticulate *thereness* of what we once knew and the systematic export of the produce into the hungry mouths of Europe strikes me with its unkind political message. The land and the peasants are bound together through work whose products seem always to have meant something to other people, to have been destined for consumption elsewhere. This observation holds force not just because the Carmel boxes and the carefully wrapped eggplants are emblems of the power that rules the sprawling fertility and enduring human labor of Palestine, but also because the discontinuity between me, out here, and the actuality there is so much more compelling now than my receding memories and experience of Palestine.¹⁷

The passage stages the rupture of an organic unity. In Said's careful prose, the deep imbrications of identity and rootedness represented by the image of Palestinian peasants tilling their land – in its way, a *détournement* of the timelessness of Orientalist discourse – are torn apart. But this is about more than the time-space compression of commodity capitalism – more than an invitation to think where our breakfast comes *from*, as David Harvey once urged – because Said has reversed the point of view. In effect he asks: 'Where has Palestine *gone*?'¹⁸

Said answers his own question in the essay in which he records his eventual visit to

Palestine after an absence of 45 years. His cousin, living in Canada, had drawn a map of Said's native village from memory, and after two hours Said found his family's house, now occupied by a Christian fundamentalist organization:

More than anything else, it was the house I did not, could not, enter that symbolized the eerie finality of a history that looked at me from behind the shaded windows, across an immense gulf I found myself unable to cross. Palestine as I knew it was over.

This is not that commonplace of autobiography, the adult return to a childhood world made strange by the passage of years; it is, rather, the melancholy of a collective memory that is inscribed in place, in landscape and in territory. As Said and his family drove along the coast, he noticed how every open space – 'whether football field, orchard or park' – was surrounded by barbed wire, and this sense of partition and enclosure heightened his sense '... of a history finished, packed up, taking place elsewhere'. He drove to Gaza, entering through a gate that was locked at night, and visited the Jabalaya Camp, home to 65 000 refugees: 'The numerous children that crowd its unpaved, potholed and chaotic little streets have a spark in their eyes that is totally at odds with the expression of sadness and unending suffering frozen on adult faces.' That sadness and suffering is written across the face of the land itself: for Said, like so many others, the very heart of the Palestinian predicament is geography.¹⁹

I shall have occasion to underscore the stubborn materiality of all this later, but in these circumstances it's not surprising that Said should admire Gramsci so much. He explains that Gramsci

... thought in geographical terms, and the *Prison Notebooks* are a kind of map of modernity. They're not a history of modernity, but his notes really try to place everything, like a military map ... [T]here was always some struggle going on over territory.²⁰

Territory is etymologically unsettled: its roots are in *terra* (earth) and *terrere* (to frighten), so that *territorium* conveys '... a place from which people are frightened away'.²¹ Both the archaeological and the historical records provide endless instances of displacements brought about by spellbinding fear and disfiguring terror, but Said is most concerned with the distinctively modern inflection of territory. On the map of modernity, territory connotes what Foucault would call a juridicopolitical field, and it is surely no accident that Said's writings about Palestine are shot through with an imagery of partition and enclosure, '... sanitized by the clinical jargon of pure administration', that so acutely mimics Foucault. This sense of territory establishes a connective imperative among power, knowledge and geography that Said's own project seeks to disclose, call into question and, in its turn, dis-place.

2 The subversive archipelago

I invoke Gramsci and Foucault as a way of opening a second set of answers to my original question, as a way of suggesting that Said's geography is also derived from the spatialization of cultural and social theory. But I don't want this intellectual genealogy to be construed as somehow separate and distinct from the intersections between Said's biography and history. He reads and reworks the ideas of these and other thinkers in ways that are inseparable from his commitment to the struggle over Palestine, and his successive engagements with the Palestinian question have been shaped by these ideas.²² I have located the roots of this intellectual project on the Left Bank as a toponymic shorthand – nothing more – but I want to disentangle two theoretical strands in Said's writings that bear directly on both the intellectual cultures of postwar France and the generalized

political project of the left. I should say at once that Said's appropriations are, in a sense, rhizomatic rather than direct: they are reworkings and graftings, conceptual equivalents of what he describes elsewhere as 'musical elaborations'. Perhaps it is for this reason that both strands have turned out to be so contentious. Some critics have been troubled by the traces of poststructuralism they identify in Said's writings, while others have objected to his distance from historical materialism. But they all read Said in obdurately conventional (linear) ways, whereas the power of his work seems to me to derive from his deep sense of spatial figuration: the creative juxtaposition of dissonant theoretical traditions. Peter Hulme captures something of what I have in mind when he describes Said's work as a 'subversive archipelago', a series of scattered but connected interventions that simultaneously calls into question the practices of colonial discourse and fractures the plates of 'continental theory'.²³

It does so, Hulme suggests, by conjoining Foucault and Marx, but this is not a purely theoretical project (however unlikely the conjunction may seem) and I am particularly anxious not to lose the echo in that last sentence of Palestine's shattered geographies and Said's courageous attempt to fissure the politicomilitarized surfaces – or at least the imaginative geographies and representations of space – that contain and divide its peoples. Although I want to consider the same intellectual conjunction as Hulme, then, I do not want to do so in the abstract. I make this point because one of the most common objections to Said's project is that, in his later writings concerned most directly with the canonical cultures of colonialism and imperialism, he slides into a textualism. This is put most succinctly – and most suggestively – by Neil Smith:

There remains in much of Said's later work a significant discrepancy between the imagined geographies unearthed from his literary texts and the historical geographies with which he seeks to re-entwine them; the latter never fully crystallize out of and into the former . . . [There is] a geographical ambivalence in Said: the invocation of geography seems to offer a vital political grounding to Said's textuality until the abstractness of that geography is realized.²⁴

Much of what follows is a consideration of this claim. I will attempt to rework some of Said's thematics to reinforce the materiality so vividly present in his interventions over the Palestinian question.

I have chosen my ground carefully, however, and I need to enter two qualifications. In the first place, the vignettes that I use to illustrate my argument – the Napoleonic *Description de l'Égypte* and the Cairo première of Verdi's opera *Aida* – move Said much further from the library than he usually travels. In his discussions of these texts, Said moves deeper into the material cultures of colonialism and into their dissonant landscapes. For metropolitan French culture, the *Description* was one of the most significant legacies of the military occupation of Egypt; but, as Said emphasizes, its production also discloses the intimate connections between textualization and taking possession. The work of the scholars and scientists who accompanied the French army was illuminated not only by the torch of reason but also by the blaze of gunfire, and Said accentuates the ways in which textual violence bleeds into physical violence.²⁵ Equally, his essay on *Aida* turns not on disembodied score and libretto but on the physical particulars of production and performance, on culture as event, and his 'worlding' of high culture proceeds here through the clamorous entry of colonial power on to the stage of the opera house itself.²⁶ Yet if the materialities of these two situations are unusual in Said's work, they are hardly exceptional in the wider scheme of things. The textual practices of Orientalism were marked by corporealities and physicalities whose recovery should be a strategic moment in any critical inquiry.²⁷ Similarly, performance may well be the ' . . . extreme occasion, something beyond the everyday' that Said says it is: the première of a Verdi opera, especially in Egypt,

was undoubtedly out of the ordinary. But culture is itself a production and a performance, and its stubborn everydayness has to be incorporated within the critique of Orientalism. As Said notes, we need to register, as part of the 'micro-physics of imperialism', '... the daily imposition of power in the dynamics of everyday life'.²⁸

In the second place, both my case studies are staged in Egypt. Unlike many critics, however, I think that one of the strengths of Said's critique of *Orientalism* was its grounding in the so-called 'middle east'. Conversely, one of the cardinal weaknesses of his magisterial account of the connective imperatives between *Culture and imperialism* is its geographical diffuseness: it is not accidental that his essay on the Cairo première of *Aida* should be one of the most successful readings in the book. I hope this will not be misunderstood. I do not mean to imply that the discourse of Orientalism is just another local knowledge, but neither do I think that its constellations of power, knowledge and spatiality can be transferred to other colonial or neocolonial situations without (often considerable) reworking. It is of the first importance to resist that exorbitation of Orientalism through which it becomes a synonym for colonial discourse *tout court*. There are resonances, connectivities and systematicities that tie Orientalism to discourses informing the practices of other colonial powers in other places; there are also inflections, supplements and reversals that differentiate it from other colonial regimes of truth. The imaginative geographies that were used to display the middle east were different from those that displayed south Asia, sub-Saharan Africa or South America, for example, and the power of their representations – their effectivity in devising, informing and legitimating colonial practices – was guaranteed by more than metropolitan assertion.²⁹ As Said repeatedly emphasizes, colonial discourses were not simply airy European fantasies: they were, of necessity, grounded. I might add that I have put all this in the plural deliberately. While Said does not treat Orientalism as that contradictory discursive terrain urged upon him by Lisa Lowe – and it is the absence of contradiction rather than any presumptive totalization which is the real issue³⁰ – the readings he offers are by no means homogeneous: within his pages, Flaubert is not Nerval, Massignon is not Renan, Lawrence is not Burton.

But if a discriminating geography is called for, so too is a determinate one. For these reasons, like Said, I want to continue my argument through a consideration of some imaginative geographies of Egypt produced by European scholars and artists in the nineteenth century. Within the geographical imaginary of postenlightenment Europe, which is Said's primary concern, Egypt occupied a pivotal position among Europe, Asia and Africa. It was at once the cradle of ancient civilization and one of the originary landscapes of the Old Testament; it was the political and commercial gateway to India and the far east; and it was a major vein into the 'heart of Africa'. These intersections made Egypt a liminal zone, located in that 'middle east' that traced a psychogeographical arc within the European imaginary from the supposed familiarity and proximity of the 'near east' to the danger and distance of the 'far east'. John Barrell suggests that the 'middle east' was thus '... a kind of itinerant barrier or buffer between what can possibly be allowed in and what must be kept out at all costs'.³¹ But the membrane was never unyielding: it was always ambiguous and contradictory. For all the attempts to project a series of binary oppositions on to the screens of Europe's imaginative geographies, 'Egypt' could not be held in place 'simply as an Other'.³²

III Imag(in)ing geography

In *Orientalism* Said treats these imaginative geographies as so many triangulations of power, knowledge and geography, and the conceptual architecture of his account is derived from the spatial analytics of Michel Foucault. Said's engagements with Foucault are neither uncritical nor unchanging, but throughout his writings he retains a considerable respect for Foucault's spatial sensibility. 'Foucault's view of things,' he remarks, was intrinsically 'spatial', and, as I want to show, this 'view of things' shapes Said's geography too.³³

In doing so, however, I will bracket two issues. First, several commentators fasten on the difficulties of yoking Said's humanism to Foucault's anti-humanism, and insist that this produces a conceptual incoherence – at best, a vacillation – at the very heart of *Orientalism*. The dilemma is largely a product of Said's ethics of critical practice, I think, and in particular his unwavering commitment to intellectual responsibility; but complaints of this sort characteristically overlook the reappearance of a parallel problem in Foucault's own later move towards an ethics of the self. In neither case can the predicament be resolved by theoretical purification.³⁴ Secondly, one of Said's most vituperative critics objects that his presentation of *Orientalism* is radically non-Foucauldian because it is suprahistorical. Aijaz Ahmad claims that Said convenes *Orientalism* within '... a seamless and unified history of European identity and thought' whose interpretative arch spans without interruption all the discontinuities that a Foucauldian history would place between ancient Greece and nineteenth-century Europe. I am not sure whether the objection is an empirical one – does Ahmad deny the continuities that Said posits? – or whether he is dismayed by Said's departure from intellectual fideism.³⁵ In any event, this is a shockingly indiscriminate reading, because the force of Said's analysis is unmistakably directed against the specifically *modern* formation of *Orientalism*. 'Othering the Orient' has a long history in European thought, as numerous writers have shown, and Said is no exception. He does indeed call upon Aeschylus and Euripides to demonstrate the antiquity of Europe's casting itself as puppet-master to the Orient's marionette. But I see no reason to choose between an account that charts continuities – the stagnant air of *Orientalism* trapped within the corridors of history – and one that throws open the shutters to admit the ill-winds that interrupt this state of affairs from time to time and place to place. Neither does Said, who argues, explicitly and unequivocally, that the French occupation of Egypt at the end of the eighteenth century inaugurated a distinctively *modern* constellation of power, knowledge and geography: that it was '... an enabling experience for modern *Orientalism*.'³⁶

In bracketing these two issues I am not implying that they are irrelevant to *Orientalism* and its representations of space; but I want to describe the connections between the imaginative geographies of Foucault and Said – their 'spatial view of things' – because I think these parallels are much more significant than any disjunctures.

1 The poetics and politics of space

Said begins with a general claim. What Lévi-Strauss called 'the science of the concrete' – what Said calls 'the economy of objects and identities' – depends on the ordered, systematic and differentiated assignment of *place*. This spatial metaphoric is a vehicle for the fabrication of identity, Said argues, through the '... universal practice of designating in one's mind a familiar space which is "ours" and an unfamiliar space beyond "ours"'

which is “theirs”³⁷ Said means this in a literal sense. Following Bachelard, he describes the practice as a *poetics of space*:

The objective space of a house – its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms – is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel: thus a house may be haunted or homelike, or prisonlike or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here.³⁸

If this seems unduly abstract, think for a moment of Said’s return to his family house in Talbiya: the site is imaginatively converted from ‘homelike’ to ‘prisonlike’ and one topography of identity is displaced by another. But notice that this *is* an imaginative transformation, a process of fabrication and poesis, so that in this first approximation Said effectively denaturalizes imaginative geographies.

All the same, the production of these imaginative geographies is a generalized practice. Said insists that ‘. . . the construction of identity involves establishing opposites and “others”’ and that it ‘. . . takes place as a contest involving individuals and institutions in all societies’.³⁹ Claims of this sort can be developed in several ways. On one side are attempts to deepen the transcendental register. So, for example, Helga Geyer-Ryan reformulates Said’s argument in Lacanian terms. She transforms the poetics of space into a *psychoanalytics of space*, in which ‘. . . the affective value lining the use-value of the house’ is attributed ‘. . . to the unconscious memory of the mother’s womb and body and the bodily imaginations of the infant’: in other words, the house becomes ‘the body’s double’. She makes the same move in relation to the city and proposes, by further extension, that the nation ‘. . . as a space, a body with clearly marked contours on a map, a quasi-organic compound of geopolitical details, seems to be imbued with the same imaginary power’. Her argument is that these layered doubles between the body and space fashion a sense of identity – precariously constructed within the imaginary and symbolic registers – that is vulnerable to, indeed shattered by, the *displacements* of exile and emigration.⁴⁰

It is of course imperative to understand the ways in which anxiety, desire and fantasy enter into the production of imaginative geographies, and Said’s inattention to these topographies of desire is a remarkable lacuna in his account of Orientalism.⁴¹ But I think it is necessary to retain the tension between the transcendental claims registered by Geyer-Ryan (and others) and the historicogeographical specificity of the congruences between bodies and spaces put in place by particular constellations of Orientalism.

On the other side, as I have indicated, Said himself is less interested in transcendental than in historical arguments, and much less interested in any psychoanalytics of space than in the *politics of space*. If the construction of identity through the poetics of space is a generalized practice, he makes it perfectly clear that it is also a ‘contest’: that it is inseparable from determinate modalities of power. For this reason, Said argues that the most appropriate model for colonial discourse analysis is not a linguistic one – on which most psychoanalytic theory turns – but a strategic or ‘geopolitical’ one.⁴² Hence in a second approximation he reformulates the poetics of space in Foucauldian terms, in order to draw attention to ‘. . . the force by which a signifier occupies a place’: to the assignment of individuals to particular places within discursive regimes of power-knowledge. Seen like that, he insists, ‘. . . the parallel between Foucault’s carceral system and Orientalism is striking’.⁴³

2 Scopic regimes

I want to describe that parallel between Foucault's 'carceral system' and Said's *Orientalism* by plotting three points on their maps of power, knowledge and geography.

a Division: First, both Foucault and Said describe the discursive construction of exclusionary geographies. At the heart of Foucault's work, Said remarks, '... is the variously embodied idea that conveys the sentiment of otherness', an idea that shapes not only what Foucault writes about but also the way in which he writes about it: hence '... there is no such thing as being at home in his writing'.⁴⁴ One of Foucault's central claims is that societies are discursively constituted through a series of normalizing judgements that are put into effect by a system of divisions, exclusions and oppositions. He traces this process in his histories of madness, the prison and punishment, and sexuality. Although these narratives all confine their trajectories of reason to the west, in the original preface to *Histoire de la folie* Foucault suggested that

In the universality of western *ratio* [reason], there is that divide which is the Orient: the Orient, thought of as the origin, dreamed of as the vertiginous point from which come nostalgic yearnings and promises of return, the Orient offered to the colonizing reason of the west, yet indefinitely inaccessible for it always remains the outer limit: night of the beginning, in which the west takes form but in which it has inscribed a line of division, the Orient is for the west everything which the west is not, even though it must search there for its original truth. It is necessary to create the history of this great divide throughout the formation of the west, to follow its continuity and its exchanges, but also to let the tragic liturgy of its simplified inscriptions become visible.⁴⁵

Foucault's own engagements with the Orient were always marginal notations, most obviously in the 'Chinese encyclopaedia' described in the opening pages of *The order of things* and in his fleeting description of the 'oriental garden' as a heterotopia. In both cases, he figured the Orient as a space of radical difference, a disruption of occidental geometries that made those geometries – our order of things, our economy of objects and identities – possible.⁴⁶

But he never developed these ideas in any detail, and *Orientalism* can, I think, be read as Said's attempt to reconstruct the missing history of Foucault's 'great divide' between Occident and Orient. His project is thus, in part, a mapping of the cells that form the primary graticule of *Orientalism's* imaginative geographies:

'Occident'/'same'	'Orient'/'other'
Rational	Irrational
Historical	Eternal
Masculine	Feminine

In *Orientalism* Said's treatment of these binary oppositions is highly uneven; in particular, he says remarkably little about the sexualization and eroticization of the Orient.⁴⁷ In his later writings he seeks to interrupt and displace the oppositions altogether: 'Partly because of empire,' he declares, 'all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous.'⁴⁸ But setting the couplets out in this stark, schematic form shows that the discourses of *Orientalism* not only essentialized 'the Orient': *they also essentialized 'the Occident'*. Contrary to many of his critics, therefore, I think that the strategic essentialism which Said discloses, of both Orient *and* Occident, is not the pure product of his own artifice: *it is, rather, a constitutive function of Orientalism itself*.

Said wires these divisions to a grid of power that is both universalizing and differentiating, and in doing so extends Foucault's original thesis. He laments that Foucault '... does not seem interested in the fact that history is not a homogeneous French-speaking territory, but a complex interaction between uneven economies, societies and ideologies'.

Some critics insist that Foucault's ethnocentrism was by no means unconsidered, and that there are difficulties in situating his work within the 'much larger picture' involving '... the relationship between Europe and the rest of the world' urged upon him by Said. But Said is determined to show not only that '... the ideas of discourse and discipline are assertively European' but also '... how, along with the idea of discipline to employ masses of detail (and human beings), discipline was used to administer, study and reconstruct – then subsequently to occupy, rule and exploit – almost the whole of the non-European world'.⁴⁹

b Detail: Secondly, and following closely from these observations, both Foucault and Said suggest that such a history of division, of 'discourse and discipline', is at the same time a history of detail. Foucault argues that its reconstruction brings us, at the end of the eighteenth century, to Napoleon, who dreamed of what he calls 'the world of details' and set out to organize it: 'He wished to arrange around him a mechanism of power that would enable him to see the smallest event that occurred in the state he governed.'⁵⁰ For Said, too, the power of Orientalism derived from its constitution as a discipline of detail. 'Most of all,' he suggests, 'it is as a discipline of detail, and indeed as a theory of detail by which every minute aspect of Oriental life testified to an Oriental essence it expressed, that Orientalism had the eminence, the power and the affirmative authority over the Orient that it had.' And he too attaches a particular significance to Napoleon, and most of all to the *Description de l'Égypte* carried out under his authority. Drawing on many of the same visual strategies deployed in the anatomized description of eighteenth-century France in Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, the *Description de l'Égypte* offered an unprecedented textual appropriation of one country by another. In effect, it constituted what Andrew Martin calls 'a textual empire' in which '... the subjugation of a country was to be supplemented by scriptural fortification'.⁵¹ The withdrawal of the expeditionary force did not diminish (though it did displace) these aspirations. In their attempt to turn Egypt into 'a department of French learning', to 'render [Egypt] completely open', and '... to divide, display, schematize, tabulate, index and record everything in sight', both the surveyors and scholars on the ground and the authors and engravers in Paris put the discipline of detail into practice with minute perfection.⁵² Said argues that this lineage of 'monumental description' (in more senses than one) inaugurated and continued to shape a distinctively modern Orientalism. Hence he reads Edward Lane's classic inventory of *The manners and customs of the modern Egyptians*, published in 1836, as an attempt '... to make Egypt and the Egyptians totally visible, to keep nothing hidden from his reader, to deliver the Egyptians without depth, in swollen detail'; similarly, he suggests that 'what matters' to Gustave Flaubert, busy keeping a diary of his *Voyage en Orient* in 1849–50, and fascinated by both what he sees and how he sees, '... is the correct rendering of exact detail'.⁵³

c Visibility: Thirdly, as the previous paragraph intimates, both Foucault and Said argue that the discipline of detail depends on 'spaces of constructed visibility'. John Rajchman, from whom I have borrowed the phrase, suggests that Foucault's histories of division and detail are also histories of 'the visual unthought' in which the production of space plays a central role: that Foucault was particularly interested in how spaces were designed to make things seeable in a specific way.⁵⁴ This is why Napoleon is of such pivotal importance for Foucault; he supposedly represents that moment in French history at which 'spectacular power' yields to 'panoptic power':

[Napoleon] combined into a single symbolic, ultimate figure the whole of the long process by which the pomp of

sovereignty, the necessarily spectacular manifestations of power, were extinguished one by one in the daily exercise of surveillance, in a panopticism in which the vigilance of intersecting gazes was soon to render useless both the eagle and the sun.⁵⁵

Said also accentuates the imbrications between power and what Foucault calls ‘the empire of the gaze’, but Said means it quite literally. He claims that the colonizing inscriptions of Orientalism are constituted panoramically: ‘The Orientalist surveys the Orient from above, with the aim of getting hold of the whole sprawling panorama before him.’ The phrasing seems to suggest what Gillian Rose perceptively identifies as ‘the uneasy pleasures of power’, with the Orient-as-woman reclining before the scopic virilities of the masculinist spectator.⁵⁶ But the visual repertoire of Orientalism was not confined to the panoramic, any more than its eroticization of the Orient was confined to a heterosexual imaginary: the sexual politics implicated in the empire of the gaze were more complicated and more unstable than any simple equation between Orientalism and masculinism. Joseph Boone has persuasively shown that the homoerotics of Orientalism all too often trembled on the edges of an occidental homophobia, for example, and that a careful reading of these imaginative geographies – the psychic screens on which these fantasies were projected – will have to acknowledge the ambiguities and contradictions generated by the collisions between sexual stereotypes and colonialist tropes.⁵⁷

But this is not Said’s project. Instead, in the central chapters of *Orientalism* he seeks to show how, in the course of the nineteenth century, European representations of the Orient as a sort of magic theatre, a stage ‘affixed to Europe’ on which were displayed the fabulations of a rich and exotic world, were overlayed (if never altogether displaced) by representations in which the Orient became a tableau, a museum and a disciplinary matrix. His chronology both repeats and interrupts Foucault’s epistemological distinctions among the renaissance, the classical and the modern. There were, for example, close filiations between the languages of theatre and geography in renaissance Europe, and Orientalism mobilized these devices in its evocations of half-imagined, half-known worlds.⁵⁸ But the tableau in which the east is watched for what the *Description de l’Égypte* calls ‘bizarre jouissance’ continues the theatrical imagery and, at the same time, installs a sense of exhibition that is profoundly modern. Its ‘use-equivalent’, so Said suggests, is to be found ‘. . . in the arcades and counters of a modern department store’. Equally, the representation of the Orient as ‘an imaginary museum without walls’, in which cultural fragments were reassembled and allocated among the categories of a tabular Orientalism, invokes an altogether different order of departmentalization: the textual inventory that is emblematic of Foucault’s classical, eighteenth-century taxonomies. Finally, the enframing of the Orient within what Said describes as ‘a sort of Benthamite Panopticon’ moves the empire of the gaze beyond the tableau and the table to anticipate a system of power-knowledge in which ‘. . . things Oriental [are placed] in class, court, prison or manual for scrutiny, study, judgement, discipline or governing’: it is a preliminary and a prop for the disciplinary powers inscribed within the colonizing apparatus of ‘the world-as-exhibition’.⁵⁹

3 Describing Egypt

It would no doubt be possible to extend and revise this account in several ways, but I want to underscore Said’s interest in what one might call the scopic regimes of Orientalism. Indeed, his constant emphasis on the visual tropes, technologies and strategies embedded in orientalist texts is as noticeable as his inattention to the visual arts themselves.⁶⁰ To consolidate my argument about the ways in which Said imag(in)es geography, I want to

provide three readings of the frontispiece to the first edition of the *Description de l'Égypte* (Figure 2).⁶¹

The image shows a view through the portal of a stylized temple on to the monumentalized landscape of ancient Egypt, from which all signs of life – of the contemporary inhabitants of Egypt – have been erased.⁶² From this position the eye commands, in a single impossible glance, a sweep of monuments from Alexandria in the foreground up the valley of the Nile to Philae in the far distance. It is a characteristic of panoramas, of what Denis Cosgrove calls 'landscape as a way of seeing', that the surveillant eye which takes in the scene is absent from the visual field.⁶³ But in this case the apparatus that makes such an impossible prospect *possible* is paraded in triumph across the panels enframing the panorama. The upper panel shows the French army putting the Mamelukes to flight at the pyramids through the metonymical figures of the eagle, emblem of the army, and a Roman hero, presumably Napoleon (and so, by implication, the legitimate heir of antiquity). Behind them are allegorical figures representing the scholars who accompanied the expedition and produced the surveys for the *Description*. The defeated Mamelukes reappear on the lower panel, laying down their arms and acknowledging the centrality of the Napoleonic seal which is encircled by a serpent, the symbol of immortality. The flanking panels are festooned with French battle honours in Egypt. In all, I think one can

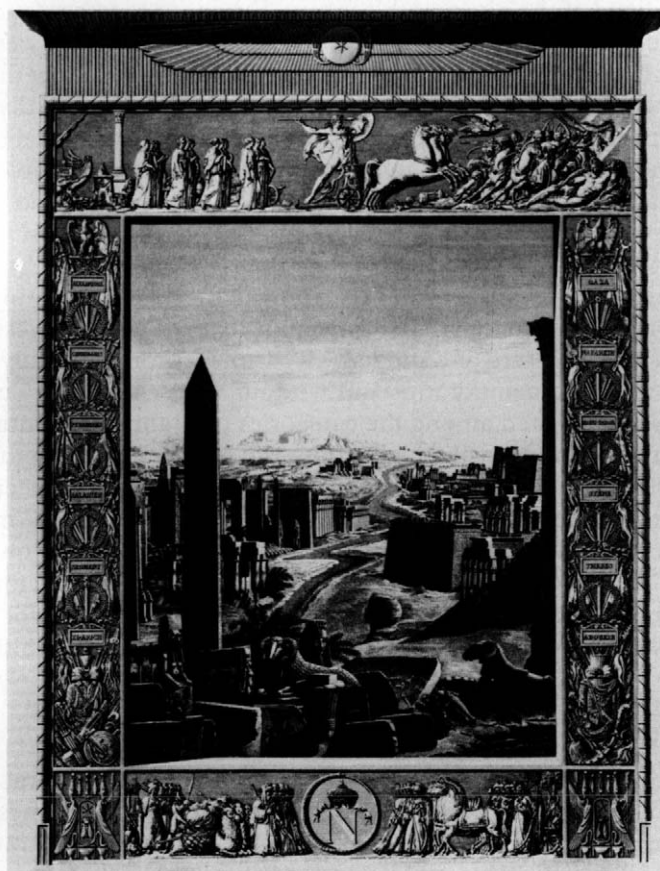


Figure 2 *Description de l'Égypte*: frontispiece

conclude, power-knowledge in indissoluble union. Indeed, as Fourier noted in his preface to the *Description*:

This great work concerns the glory of our native land; we owe it to the efforts of our warriors; it has its origins in the union between science and military might [*les sciences et les armes*]: it is both testimony to and fruit of their alliance.

But it is also surely a union of power, knowledge and *geography*. For this is a memorialized *landscape* and its surveyors are inscribed in positions of power and prominence, contemplating and conquering Egypt in the name of – and even, I think, as *part of* – France.

The originality of the scholars' contribution resided most critically in their commitment to empirical science grounded in field observation, and the *Description* was distinguished above all by the sheer detail of its representations. In the volumes devoted to ancient Egypt – the core of both the first and second editions – David Prochaska has shown that these images were organized as a hierarchical sequence of views from the panoramic down to the detailed. This is fully conformable with that 'organization of the view' implied by the modern enframing of the world-as-exhibition, but in this particular case topographies and descriptive geometries provided, in effect, a geo-graphing of Egypt whose power imposed an extraordinary unity on the dispersed volumes of the text. At each site the inventory begins with an eagle's eye view (literally so): topographic maps locate the antiquities, which are then displayed in panoramic view; these give way to perspective views, which in turn dissolve into the close-up detail of reliefs and inscriptions (Figure 3). The interlocking sequence is repeated at each site, and the imperial itinerary is thus organized into a sort of proto-GIS whose mobile gaze traces an arc down the Nile Valley from Philae in the south to Alexandria in the north. It is this journey, the empire of the gaze in material form, that is recapitulated in the frontispiece.⁶⁴

This mode of detailed representation was a way of claiming not only empirical authority – that sense of 'being there' which dazzled the first European readers of the *Description* and which continues to invest contemporary ethnographies with so much of their power – but also colonial *legitimacy*: an implication that the scholars, and by extension their European audience, were *entitled* to be there and to have Egypt set out thus for their edification. I say this because it is noticeable how often the French included themselves in the plates depicting Egypt's ancient monuments, much more rarely in those of the present Egypt, and in striking contrast to the so-called orientalist picturesque which was distinguished by the studied absence of the western observer. The practice of autoinscription was not only an enduring record of the short-lived French presence in Egypt – they were forced to withdraw by the British in 1801 – but also an implicit evocation of Egypt as the cradle and mirror of French civilization, '... a sort of Eden where reason triumphed, a perfect world governed by a wise sovereign'.⁶⁵ A fantasy-Egypt, Anne Godlewska calls it, where the torch of reason illuminated an ancient Egypt somehow '... more true and more real' – *because* rational – than the dismal present '... sullied by centuries of Oriental despotism'. Hence, Godlewska argues, in a third reading, that the frontispiece shows

... all of the outstanding monuments of Egypt ... in the foreground, out of context, as though they had all been recently collected together to be taken on board a ship about to sail into the Mediterranean ... This is the Egypt that the writers and editor of the *Description* most wanted to capture, the Egypt that could be claimed and taken home.⁶⁶

These three readings parallel Said's own summary account of the *Description*. 'What Napoleon and his teams found,' he writes, was '... an Egypt whose antique dimensions were screened by the Muslim, Arab and even Ottoman presence standing everywhere between the invading French army and ancient Egypt'. In order to displace that screen, to

open a passage leading directly from Egyptian antiquity to European modernity, the reconstructions proceeded ‘. . . as if there were no modern Egyptians but only European spectators’. Ancient Egypt was staged ‘. . . as reflected through the imperial eye’ and its material cultures were finally ‘. . . dislodged from their context and transported to Europe for use there’.⁶⁷ But I hope that my readings reveal, perhaps more clearly than Said’s, the

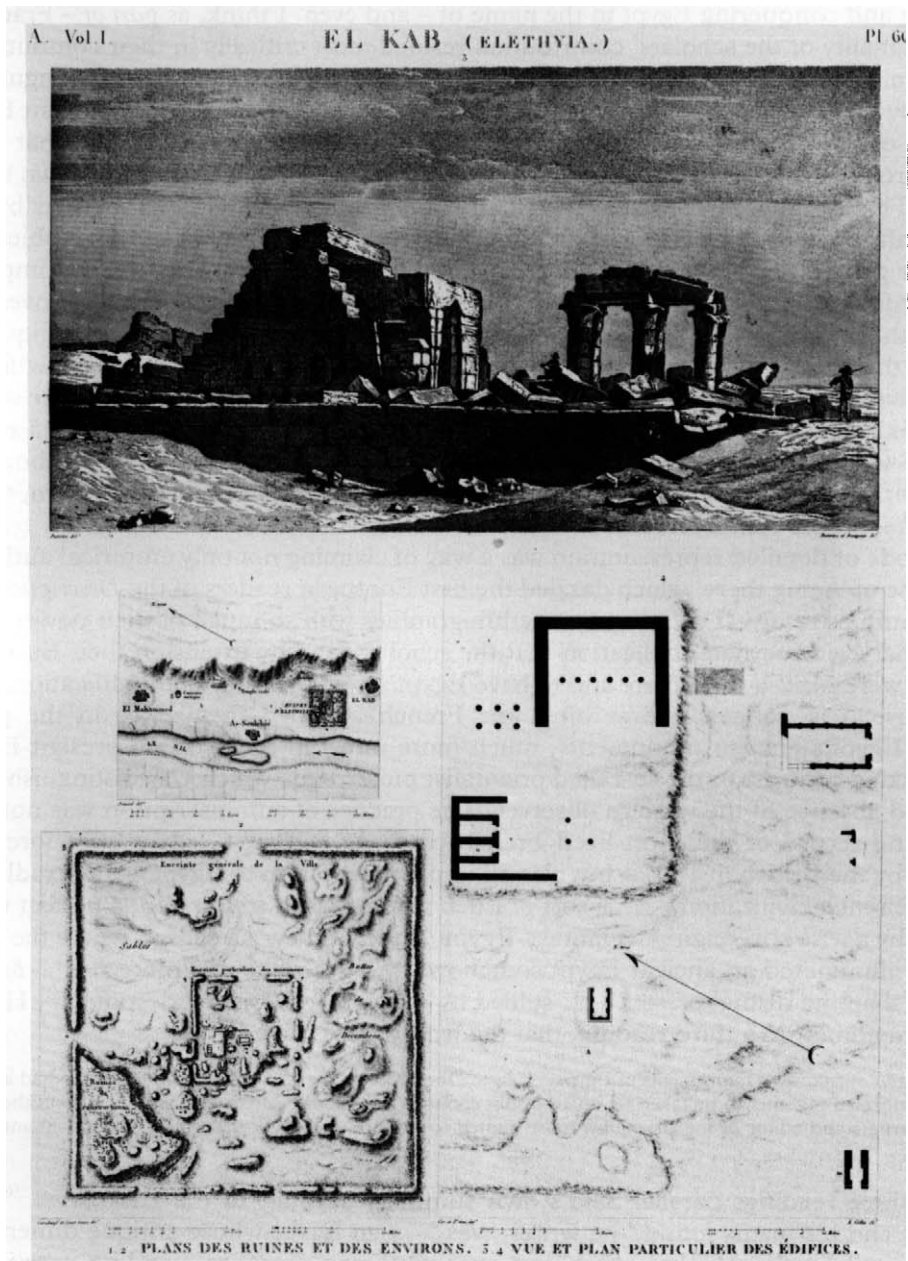


Figure 3 *Description de l'Égypte*: the organization of the view

connections among power, knowledge and geography inscribed within these representations that made the imperial project possible.

This must be pressed further, because I also want to insist upon the *specificity* of the imaginative geographies of Orientalism. This matters for at least three reasons. First, it is necessary to retain the particular imbrications of place and space within colonial constellations of power-knowledge. I have some sympathy with the suggestion that Foucault's 'geometric turn', on which much of Said's spatial sensibility depends, runs the risk of '... elevating an abstract sense of space above a concrete sense of place'.⁶⁸ But, as I have indicated, Orientalism was implicated in the forced, often violent production of an abstract(ed) space and its superimposition over the particularities of different places. Those places were never the timeless, essentialized settings represented by orientalist travellers – the historicity and hybridity of Egypt's human geographies requires emphasis – but during the nineteenth century their textures were caught up in and reworked by European grids of power-knowledge. Conversely, the incorporation of those places, localized knots in wider webs of social practice, recast the spaces of Orientalism (and in so doing made the binary distinctions of its imaginative geographies highly unstable). This makes it necessary to say much more than Said usually does about the particular places brought within the imaginative geographies of Orientalism, in order to map both the violence of its projective geometries and the shifting contours of its spaces.

Secondly, the production and superimposition of these abstracted spaces depended on practices and protocols that, though they were also deployed within Europe, became freighted with other modalities of power-knowledge in their extension beyond Europe. The visual practices through which nineteenth-century Paris was known by its bourgeoisie, for example, the same bourgeoisie that gazed on the plates in the *Description* early in the century, trooped through the Egyptian galleries in the Louvre at mid-century, and travelled up the Nile at the end of the century, were not radically different from those through which they knew nineteenth-century Cairo.⁶⁹ But outside Europe these visual practices were intertwined with colonialism and imperialism to produce imaginative geographies that involved not simply demarcating 'our space' from 'their space', as Said first proposed (above, p. 455), but 'our' *reaching into* 'their' space and imaginatively – and eventually materially – *appropriating* that space and claiming it as 'ours'. Said sees this as the singular, baleful achievement of nineteenth-century Europe. 'When it came to what lay beyond metropolitan Europe,' he argues, the arts and the disciplines of representation '... depended on the powers of Europe to bring the non-European world into representation, the better to be able to see it, to master it, and above all to hold it.'⁷⁰

Thirdly, it is possible to resist these appropriations by turning around the practices of representation on which, historically, they have depended. Thus, for example, Said now calls for the Palestinian leadership to set in motion its own 'discipline of detail'. He notes that all the documents and maps used in the negotiations that culminated in the Declaration of Principles in Oslo in 1993 were produced by Israel, and he insists that Palestine has to devise its own maps and a systematic counterstrategy on the ground, '... in which each detail is an organic part of the whole'.⁷¹ Said's argument turns not only on the deconstruction of the map – though he is properly sceptical of the neutrality of cartographic science – but also on the specificity of the imaginative geographies of Orientalism and, by extension, of Zionism. For if, as I have argued, the discipline of detail is implicated in the production of a specific space of constructed visibility, then effecting a *détournement* of its visual practices should enable the Palestinian people to be seen in a different way, to represent themselves, on their own ground as inhabitants of their own

land.⁷² There is thus a profound continuity between Said's genealogy of Orientalism and his closing observations in *After the last sky*:

I would like to think that we are not just the people seen or looked at in these photographs: We are also looking at our observers. We Palestinians sometimes forget that – as in country after country, the surveillance, confinement and study of Palestinians is part of the political process of reducing our status and preventing our national fulfillment except as the Other who is opposite and unequal, always on the defensive – we too are looking, we too are scrutinizing, assessing, judging. We are more than someone's object. We do more than stand passively in front of whoever, for whatever reason, has wanted to look at us. If you finally cannot see this about us, we will not allow ourselves to believe that the failure has been entirely ours. Not any more.⁷³

IV Dislocating geography

In order to disclose the connections I've tried to establish in the previous paragraphs – the articulations between place and space, the modulations between Paris and Cairo – and to make possible the strategic reversals, Said suggests that it is necessary to move towards what, in *Culture and imperialism*, he calls a 'contrapuntal reading'. I want to follow in his footsteps, but I need to make two complicating observations, the first about colonialism's 'consolidated vision' and the second about its 'overlapping territories'.

1 Consolidated vision

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the French writer Louis-Sebastien Mercier came down for breakfast in his Paris hotel. There, as Linda Colley observes,

[He] saw imperialism displayed upon a Parisian breakfast table. The polished mahogany surfaces, like the steaming coffee, brought the colonies of the New World instantly to his imagination. The fine porcelain, he judged, had been shipped by armed merchantmen from China. The sugar spoke to him of Caribbean slavery and the scented tea of Indian plantations. The world the Europeans looted was no longer a distant enterprise. It was part of the very fabric of their lives at home. Yet, as he noted this, Mercier was clearly congratulating himself on his rare measure of perceptiveness. *He did not believe that those eating alongside him saw what he saw.*⁷⁴

The visual image is striking, and Said makes a similar point. 'The empire functions for much of the European nineteenth century as a codified, if only marginally visible, presence in fiction,' he writes, 'very much like the servants in grand households and in novels whose work is taken for granted but scarcely ever more than named, rarely studied or given density.'⁷⁵ This is a perceptive observation too, trading on another visual metaphoric, but the oversight to which it draws attention is mirrored in Said's own transition to *Culture and imperialism*, where the visual thematic that is so prominent in the central chapters of *Orientalism* is virtually eclipsed.

But this is more complicated than it seems. Said offers one other arresting visual image to conjure up the relationship between metropolitan cultures and their colonialisms, when he describes Guy de Maupassant choosing to have lunch at the Eiffel tower because it was the only place in Paris from which he couldn't see it.⁷⁶ By then, however, the world had turned. The Eiffel tower was built for the Paris exposition of 1889, which not only marked the centenary of the Revolution but also incorporated for the first time a simulacrum of a colonial city whose 'Moslem minarets, Cambodian pagodas, Algerian mosques and Tunisian casbahs' were expressly designed to display France's colonies to a metropolitan (and cosmopolitan) audience.⁷⁷ By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the reverse projection of metropolitan cultures on to non-European landscapes was also becoming a commonplace in colonial planning discourse and in other, less instrumental but no less colonial cultural productions. At the turn of the century a guidebook published

by Hachette figured Egypt thus: 'The shape of Egypt is for all the world exactly like the Eiffel Tower. The shaft is Upper Egypt, and the base is the Delta . . . All the space inside is cultivation; without is desert. At the junction of the two is Cairo.'⁷⁸ The envelope of cultivation (and, by implication, civilization) was contained within what had become an unmistakably Gallic symbol: everything beyond was aridity and sterility. Yet Said says nothing about the visual cultures and iconographies inscribed in imaginative geographies like these. For the most part his interest in the optics of colonialism and imperialism seems to be resolutely metaphorical.

Said's argument is double headed. On the one side, he agrees with Colley that there was a 'fundamental unevenness' in the receptivity of European cultures to empire. Given the scale of Britain's imperial enterprise, she insists, ' . . . what is surely remarkable is not that this should have influenced its literary culture, but that it failed to influence it far more than it did'. Although Colley claims that Said is unwilling to confront this paradox, or at least to offer an explanation for it, he does concede that the connections between culture and imperialism are only displayed with clarity in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. 'Not until well after mid-century did the empire become a principal subject of attention in writers like Haggard, Kipling, Doyle, Conrad,' he observes, and ' . . . when European culture finally began to take due account of imperial "delusions and discoveries"', Said argues that it did so with a characteristically modernist gesture: irony. European writers ' . . . began to look abroad with the skepticism and confusion of people surprised, even shocked by what they saw'.⁷⁹ On the other side, however, Said also suggests that colonialism and imperialism functioned as a ground for European cultural production much earlier:

If one began to look for something like an imperial map of the world in English literature, it would turn up with amazing insistence and frequency well before the mid-nineteenth century. And turn up not only with the inert regularity suggesting something taken for granted, but – more interestingly – threaded through, forming a vital part of the texture of linguistic and cultural practice.⁸⁰

The appeal to cartography is not accidental and is repeated at intervals throughout *Culture and imperialism*. Said argues that the 'consolidated vision of empire' (his phrase) is unlikely to be disclosed through conventional critical practices that privilege temporality. 'We have become so accustomed to thinking of the novel's plot and structure as constituted mainly by temporality,' he admonishes, 'that we have overlooked the function of space, geography and location.'⁸¹ What is required, as a complement to the usual practices of textual criticism, is a contrapuntal reading that is specially attentive to spatial connectivity and juxtaposition. Thus in his readings of *Mansfield Park* and *Kim*, Said discloses a hierarchy of spaces that functions as a grid wiring metropolitan circuits of action to their colonial ground: what Dana Polan describes as the novel's ' . . . projection of power across locales, its rendering of disparate situations as linked by interests and economies'. Polan's metaphor is revealing because it suggests that there is an essential – though for the most part understated – connection between the sly spatiality of colonizing cultures and the empire of the gaze. There is something phantasmagoric about this metropolitan 'projection of power'. I owe the comparison to Benjamin's critique of commodity culture. The phantasmagoria was a magic lantern which became popular in early nineteenth-century Europe through its use of back-projection to ensure that its audience remained unaware of the source of the image they were seeing. Benjamin used it to figure the ideological projections of nineteenth-century bourgeois culture and to disclose the elisions and evasions in their visual practices and 'structures of understanding'.⁸² It is not, I think, unduly fanciful to glimpse something of the same in Polan's suggestion that Said reads

cultural productions ‘. . . as doubly driven, pushed by the needs of imperial ideology to spatialize history, but enabled by contrapuntal reading to reveal the traces of the very history they seek to occult in the security of spectacle’.⁸³

2 Overlapping territories

Closely connected to the changes in his approach to visibility, spatiality and colonialism, Said’s theoretical attention switches from Foucault in *Orientalism* to Gramsci in *Culture and imperialism*. Said’s relationship to historical materialism is, of course, as complex as it is contentious, not least because the very ‘westernness’ of western Marxism, its typical closure around the cultures of Europe and North America, makes it difficult for him to invoke it in a transcultural register.⁸⁴ It is not so much Marxism, therefore, as particular Marxists who have captured his attention: most of all, Raymond Williams and Antonio Gramsci.

Williams was one of the main inspirations for *Orientalism*. This must seem a strange role for so British a thinker, and Said admits that Williams’s work is limited by his ‘stubborn Anglocentrism’ and its implication that ‘English literature is mainly about England.’⁸⁵ But he still has the greatest admiration for him, and says that his own project was particularly affected by the dialectic between acquisition and representation that animates *The country and the city*. He cites Williams’s readings of seventeenth-century English country-house poems as exemplary instances of a critical strategy that interprets cultural productions not so much for what they represent as ‘. . . what they are as the result of contested social and political relationships’. Of all Williams’s writings it is probably *The country and the city* that has had the greatest impact on geography, but it will be clear from what I have thus far said that Said’s geographical sensibility is radically different from Williams’s deep love of landscape and what he usually called ‘working country’. Perhaps for this reason his influence on Said’s early writings is at once pervasive yet oblique. His theoretical formulations are rarely invoked, but the shape and form of his critical practice animates Said’s work. Much the same could be said of his presence in *Culture and imperialism*, where Said graciously records that many parts of the book ‘. . . are suffused with the ideas and the human and moral example of Raymond Williams’. ‘Suffused’ is, I think, exactly right; his passionate humanism radiates the argument, but his concept of a ‘structure of feeling’ is invoked in only the most general of senses to indicate the ways in which cultural productions ‘. . . support, elaborate and consolidate the practice of empire’. The concept underwrites – but does not directly inform – Said’s attempts to chart a distinctive ‘cultural topography’, in which

. . . structures of location and geographical reference appear in the cultural languages of literature, history or ethnography, sometimes allusively and sometimes carefully plotted, across several individual works that are not otherwise connected to one another or to an official ‘ideology of empire’.⁸⁶

In *Culture and imperialism*, however, it is Gramsci who supports the main architecture of the text, and in a similarly pervasive but none the less oblique fashion. His main function, I suggest, is to provide Said with another way of mapping the intersections among power, knowledge and geography. His specific contribution seems to be twofold. In the first place, Said is attracted by Gramsci’s emphasis on the productivities and positivities – what he called the work of ‘elaboration’ – through which power and culture are conjoined. Gramsci, he says,

loses sight neither of the great central facts of power, and how they flow through a whole network of agencies operating by rational consent, nor of the detail – diffuse, quotidian, unsystematic, thick – from which inevitably

power draws its sustenance, on which power depends for its daily bread. Well before Foucault, Gramsci had grasped the idea that culture serves authority and ultimately the national state, not because it represses and coerces but because it is affirmative, positive and persuasive.⁸⁷

Accordingly, when Said draws attention to a geographical notation, to the 'imperial map' that licensed the 'cultural vision', and suggests that '... common to both is an *elaboration of power*', this should, I think, be understood in exactly Gramsci's sense.⁸⁸

In the second place, the mainstream of western Marxism was thoroughly Hegelian and, as Said recognizes, attached a special importance to History and historicity, whereas Gramsci's writings display a contrary emphasis on space (without that imperial capital) and spatiality. Said finds this 'explicitly geographical model' in Gramsci's essay on 'Some aspects of the southern question', which functions as a prelude to his *Prison notebooks* '... in which he gave, as his towering counterpart Lukàcs did not, paramount focus to the territorial, spatial, geographical foundations of social life'. More specifically, Said argues that Gramsci was not interested in some transcendent logic by means of which antinomies are resolved within the telos of History, but rather '... in working them out as discrepant realities, physically, on the ground'.⁸⁹ This sense of what, following Benjamin, might be seen as a sort of geographical constellation, a configuration formed by the forceful conjunction of distanced geographies in a particular place, intersects with Said's objection to treating colonialism as a one-way street:

In one instance, we assume that the better part of history in colonial territories was a function of the imperial intervention; in the other, there is the equally obstinate assumption that the colonial undertakings were marginal and perhaps even eccentric to the central activities of the great metropolitan cultures.⁹⁰

Said believes that by mapping the interpenetrations of culture and imperialism as 'overlapping territories, intertwined histories', it is possible '... to reinterpret the Western cultural archive as if fractured geographically by the activated imperial divide'.⁹¹

And yet Gramsci remains a spectral figure in *Culture and imperialism*, always in the margins and shadows of the text, haunting the interline, so to speak, yet repeatedly invoked by Said in his subsequent interviews and commentaries. Strangely, Said neither develops nor even fully deploys Gramsci's conceptual apparatus. Had he done so, he would, I think, have been obliged to treat the colonial 'elaboration of power' in less cohesive terms; that is to say, he would have been able to recognize those 'textual gaps, indeterminacies and contradictions' that fissured colonial discourse and, in consequence, would have found it easier to map those spaces of resistance, that 'mutual siege' as Gramsci called it, which Parry suggests splintered the 'consolidated vision' of colonialism and imperialism.⁹² One of the main differences between *Orientalism* and *Culture and imperialism* is in fact Said's determination to open a space for resistance, and he now suggests that one of the major limitations of Foucault's work is its portrayal of 'an irresistible colonizing movement': 'The individual [is] dissolved in an ineluctably advancing "microphysics of power" that it is hopeless to resist.' Yet Gramsci's passionate sense of the power of collective agency – of subaltern resistance and displacement – is passed over and his relation to the project of subaltern studies, surely of cardinal significance to any re-visioning of colonialism, is barely noted.⁹³

Said elects to explain his way of working not through any discussion of critical theory – and I understand his wariness about its institutionalization, neutralization and, indeed, trivialization – but by invoking a metaphor derived from music. He proposes to model his work not on a symphony, '... as earlier notions of comparative literature were', but on an 'atonal ensemble'. In effect, he transposes Gramsci's mapping of a complex and uneven cultural topography into his own practice of contrapuntal reading:

As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but *contrapuntally*, with a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from a rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. In the same way, I believe, we can read and interpret English novels, for example, whose engagement with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance and finally native nationalism.⁹⁴

Most of Said's writing about music has focused on contrapuntal work. Forms like opera interest him for that very reason, '... forms in which many things go on simultaneously', and he says that he made a considered decision to organize the essays that compose *Culture and imperialism* around the same musical form: his intention was thereby to exhibit '... a kind of exfoliating structure of variation'.⁹⁵ It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that the clearest illustration of Said's contrapuntal method should be his account of the Cairo première of Verdi's opera *Aida*.⁹⁶ But I want to consider this essay for reasons other than the purely methodological. Its substantive significance rests, in part, on the place classical opera occupied within the bourgeois cultures of late nineteenth-century Europe and, by extension, on the intersections between the cultural formations of the bourgeoisie and the cultures of Orientalism.⁹⁷ But I think it is also possible to connect Said's treatment of this production to the scopic regimes of colonialism and imperialism and the geographies of truth inscribed within them and so reactivate my previous discussion.

3 *Aida* and the geography of truth

Aida was commissioned by the Khedive of Egypt after a series of protracted negotiations during the first six months of 1870. The Superintendent of the Khedival Theatres, Paul Draneht, had originally tried to persuade Verdi to compose a celebratory hymn to mark the opening of the Suez Canal, but Verdi's polite refusal only heightened the Khedive's ambitions, and now he envisioned '... a purely ancient and Egyptian opera'.⁹⁸ The storyline was drafted by Auguste Mariette, a distinguished French Egyptologist whom the Khedive had placed in charge of archaeological excavations throughout Egypt. It traced the tragic love-affair between Radames, a captain in the Egyptian army, and Aida, the daughter of the king of Ethiopia; she had been captured and made to work as a slave in the household of the pharaoh's daughter. The story revolved around jealousy and betrayal, played out against the background of military conflict and aggression.⁹⁹

The interpretative politics of *Aida* are extremely complicated. Anthony Arblaster agrees that, from some perspectives, it might appear to be '... a triumphalist work from the high noon of European imperialism'; but, as he says, it can also be seen as a transposed commentary on European geopolitics. Thus Said argues that the British tacitly encouraged Egyptian expansionism in east Africa in order to frustrate French and Italian ambitions in the region, so that '... from the French point of view, incorporated by Mariette, *Aida* dramatized the dangers of a successful Egyptian policy of force in Ethiopia'.¹⁰⁰ 'From the French point of view' it may have done exactly that; but Said fails to note that Verdi himself was no defender of imperialism and that he was frankly appalled by the territorial ambitions of the European powers. He took an active part in developing Mariette's original outline and shaping the libretto, and this allows Arblaster to argue that *Aida*'s indictment of the bellicosity and cruelty of ancient Egypt and its priesthood was intended by Verdi as a pointed comparison with the Prussians, '... whose success in the Franco-Prussian war he regretted and whose growing power and ambition he (rightly) feared'.¹⁰¹ Whatever the merits of these readings, however, Said's central claim is that the production '... is not so

much *about* but *of* imperial domination', and I want to explain what I think he means by sketching the geography of truth that underwrote the Cairo production.¹⁰²

This was double edged. On the one side, the Khedive placed an unprecedented premium on accuracy and authenticity. Mariette was no stranger to the meticulous staging of Egypt. He was closely involved in the Egyptian installation at the 1867 exposition in Paris, which he described as 'a living lesson in archaeology'. At its centre was a copy of the temple at Philae, and Mariette had its architect work from precise measurements and photographs taken at Philae. Although a number of compromises had to be made, Mariette insisted on '... the greatest authenticity in the ensemble and in the minutest detail'.¹⁰³ In a sense, therefore, *Aida* was fully continuous with the aesthetic of the Paris exposition, and when the Khedive insisted on a rigorously exact *mise-en-scène* for *Aida*, Mariette affirmed – and, in a way, reaffirmed – his commitment to fidelity:

The sets will be based on historical accounts; the costumes will be designed after the bas-reliefs of Upper Egypt. No effort will be spared in this respect, and the *mise-en-scène* will be as splendid as one can imagine. This care for preserving local color obliges us, by the same token, to preserve it in the outline itself.¹⁰⁴

And yet: although the opera was *about* Egypt and was to have its world première *in* Egypt, it had behind it the most displaced of geographies that tied Egypt umbilically to Europe. On the other side, therefore, *Aida* was written in Italy (and in Italian: there was never any question of its being sung in Arabic); Mariette was sent to Paris to oversee the preparation of sets and costumes by French craftsmen and costumiers; the company was cast in Italy and the Khedive was prepared to allow rehearsals to be held in Paris, Milan or Genoa. This was time-space compression on a grand scale, and Hans Busch's wonderful documentary history of *Aida* – on which Said relies too – shows that the postbags bulged and the telegraph wires hummed between Genoa, Paris and Cairo. By July 1870 Mariette was in the thick of things in Paris. 'In order to follow the instructions the [Khedive] has given me,' he wrote, 'to make a scholarly as well as a picturesque *mise-en-scène*, a whole world must be set in motion.'¹⁰⁵ A few weeks later it was. The Prussian army invaded France and laid siege to Paris; the only communication with the outside world was by pigeon or balloon, and by November all work on the sets and costumes had been suspended and the première postponed. The contractors were unable to resume work until the following summer, but Mariette was inordinately satisfied with the result. 'The view of the pyramids is completed and crated,' he wrote to Draneht. 'It is very lovely, and I am pleased with it. *At the raising of the curtain one will truly believe oneself in Egypt.*'¹⁰⁶

But then, of course, one would *be* in Egypt ... Think about that for a moment. The audience in the Opera House in Cairo will 'truly believe' itself transported to Egypt, not because it already *is* in Egypt, not through any theatrical suspension of belief – always awkward in opera¹⁰⁷ – but because Egypt would be presented as a spectacle 'more true and more real' (above, p. 461) than the streets and bazaars outside the theatre. This Egypt would be more true and more real precisely because the view would be *organized*: the set would be *framed*; it would have depth, perspective, coherence – in a word, *meaning* – that the 'other Egypt', the Egypt checked at the doors of the Opera House, was supposed to lack.¹⁰⁸

Mariette's sentiment was, I think, sparked by what Jean-Louis Comoli calls 'the frenzy of the visible' that exploded in the second half of the nineteenth century, a moment in which, so he suggests, '... the whole world becomes visible at the same time that it becomes appropriable'.¹⁰⁹ The interconnections of vision and appropriation within the cultures of colonialism and imperialism are of the first importance, because what lay behind Mariette's proud boast, what gave 'his' Egypt its verisimilitude, was a regime of

truth imposed through a sort of archaeology-in-reverse. The sets for *Aida* (Figure 4) were explicitly based on the *Description de l'Égypte*, and just as the scholars had sketched plans and views and, on occasion, disassembled and crated artifacts to be shipped to Paris, so now those same plates were to be used to reconstruct an 'authentic Egypt' in Paris which was then to be disassembled, crated and returned to Egypt. 'Next week,' Mariette wrote,

We will consign the first cases of scenery to [the freight-agents]. But a great deal will remain to be done in Egypt, assembling the flats, etc., etc. The sets are very complicated, and the task of putting everything together will be troublesome. However, these gentlemen here have given me all the necessary plans and annotations.¹¹⁰

I have called all this a geography of truth because it was clear to all the European principals that accuracy and authenticity could not be found in Egypt. Mariette was only the most recent in a long line of French intellectuals who claimed to be unable to find the 'real' Orient there. Gérard de Nerval despaired of ever being able to furnish Théophile Gautier with descriptions of Cairo that could be reproduced as sets for the Paris Opéra: 'I will find at the Opéra the real Cairo, the Orient that escapes me.' In the end, as Mitchell remarks, '... only the Orient that one finds in Paris, the simulation of what is itself a series of representations to begin with, can offer a satisfying spectacle'.¹¹¹ But this time Mariette was also aware that authenticity would not be found in the customary assumptions of the Paris *ateliers* either. He was determined to eschew '... imaginary Egyptians as they are usually seen on the stage', and although he knew French designers who could provide him



Figure 4 Set design for the Cairo première of Verdi's *Aida*: Act II, Scene ii: entry to Thebes (designer: Édouard Despléchin)

with 'Egyptian architecture of great fantasy', he was adamant 'that is not what is needed'. Authenticity could only be found in the pages of the *Description*.¹¹²

The result certainly impressed the first-night audience. According to one of its members,

Aida was accepted, generally, as an opera *faithful* to its historic import; as one which is, beyond question, among the most *conscientious* works of the century; as a spectacle with splendid and *truthful* scenery, princely costumes and massive music; as history written on the scale, tradition glowing on the canvas. Viewed in this light by the Egyptologist, it is *unilateral* and *instructive*, and it is the first example where poetic license has not been freely indulged by the composer . . . [B]ut to Verdi does not belong all the credit of this success. It must be shared with Mariette Bey, a most eminent Egyptologist, who went to Paris by special order of the [Khedive] to oversee the preparation of the costumes. To the *minutest degree* they reproduced the *acknowledged* dress of the ancients. The stage scenery too was prepared with like *fidelity*.¹¹³

And the Khedive was also impressed, so much so that, in a final truly spectacular twist, he bought the Villa La Spina on the shores of Lake Maggiore – not far from Verdi's home at Sant' Agata – and had its gardens landscaped into a fantastic version of the *Aida* sets. The lakeside village of Oggebbio eventually became a popular tourist destination known as 'Little Cairo'.¹¹⁴

And yet, as I showed earlier, the *Description's* Egypt was a fantasy-Egypt too. Said captures something of this when he argues that the 'projective grandeur' of its plates produced not so much description as ascription:

As you leaf through the *Description* you know that what you are looking at are drawings, diagrams, paintings of dusty, decrepit and neglected pharaonic sites looking ideal and splendid as if there were no modern Egyptians but only European spectators . . . The most striking pages of the *Description* seem to beseech some very grand actions or personages to fill them, and their emptiness and scale look like opera sets waiting to be populated. Their implied European context is a theater of power and knowledge, while their actual Egyptian setting in the nineteenth century has simply dropped away.¹¹⁵

The reverse-archaeology of *Aida* was also directed at a European audience. Said argues that Verdi recognized that '. . . the opera was first composed and designed for a place that was decidedly not Paris, Milan or Vienna', and suggests that this accounts for some of its incongruities and irresolutions.¹¹⁶ Against this reading, however, I suggest that the opera was conceived and presented for a place that decidedly *was* Europe. This was clearly true of Verdi's involvement. He was never greatly interested in the Cairo production and did not bother to attend the première on 24 December 1871; he was always much more exercised by its première at La Scala in Milan, and arrived there in early January to begin rehearsals.¹¹⁷ But it was also true of the Cairo production itself. Not only did it present, as Said says, 'an Orientalized Egypt', but its audience was also largely European. Special steamers ran from the main Mediterranean ports bringing '. . . amateurs and artists anxious to see the operatic sensation of the day', and on the first night, according to one critic,

The curiosity, the frenzy of the Egyptian public to attend the premiere of *Aida* were such that, for a fortnight, all the seats had been bought up, and at the last moment the speculators sold boxes and stalls for their weight in gold. When I say the Egyptian public, I speak especially of the Europeans; for the Arabs, even the rich, do not care for our kind of theatre; they prefer the miaouing of their own chants, the monotonous beatings of their tambourines . . . [and] it is a perfect miracle to see a fez in the theatres of Cairo.¹¹⁸

I don't know what the ordinary inhabitants of Cairo made of the production, if they did so at all; but the series of displaced and dispersed European geographies to which it was tied also bound *Aida* to the city in which it was staged. According to one member of the audience,

The drop curtain was a work of art, representing old Egypt on the right, with decayed temples, pyramids, obelisks

and mausoleums, and on the left its new green fields, railroads, telegraphs and modern agriculture. This alone expresses the purpose of *Aida* – to advertise the progressive works of the Khedive.¹¹⁹

Those ‘progressive works’ were inscribed on the landscapes of both the country and the city. The editor of Murray’s revised *Handbook for Egypt*, published in 1873, justified his new edition by the changes that had taken place over the previous decade:

Since the accession of the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, the work of change has been carried on in Egypt at an almost feverish rate of speed. Several hundred miles of railway have been completed and are in full operation. The telegraph wires intersect every part of the country. Many parts of Alexandria and Cairo are so changed that those who saw them only a few years ago would hardly recognise them.¹²⁰

And in the closing passages of his essay, Said opens the door of the Opera House to confront the shimmering, teeming, buzzing city that lay outside. It was a city caught up in the desperate toils of capitalist modernity, and as Said describes the congeries of European merchant bankers, loan corporations and commercial adventures who were involved in the runaway transformation of the Egyptian economy, he also makes it clear that Cairo was indeed in the eye of the storm. Unlike Alexandria, he writes,

Cairo was an Arab and Islamic city . . . Cairo’s past did not communicate easily or well with Europe; there were no Hellenistic or Levantine associations, no gentle sea-breezes, no bustling Mediterranean port life. Cairo’s massive centrality to Africa, to Islam, to the Arab and Ottoman worlds seemed like an intransigent barrier to European investors, and the hope of making it more accessible and attractive to them surely prompted Ismail to support the city’s modernization. This he did essentially by dividing Cairo.¹²¹

The Opera House was on Ezbekiah Square, which was the focal point of Cairo’s modernization (Figure 5). It was once a vast open space, flooded each year by the Nile. Murray reports that the old square was now laid out ‘. . . as a sort of public garden, after the Continental fashion’, with an ornamental lake, a belvedere, grottoes, plantations of exotic trees and heavily watered, sparkling green turf; scattered around the grounds were cafés, a theatre and a bandstand. ‘The roads all round are broad, well-kept and well-lighted with gas; the foot pavements are wide and planted with trees.’ This wholesale redevelopment had been inspired by the Khedive’s visit to Paris for the 1867 exposition and his tremendous admiration for Hausmann’s transformation of the French capital. He determined to turn Cairo into a ‘Paris-on-the-Nile’ for the opening of the Suez Canal. His energies were focused on the western edge of the city, where he envisaged a new quarter to be called Ismailiya. Barillet-Deschamps, who had executed the plans for both the Bois de Boulogne and the Champ de Mars, was brought to Cairo to design its centrepiece, the new Ezbekiah. When Eugène Fromentin visited Cairo in 1869 he described parts of the city as a vast demolition site that reminded him, so he said, of a more disordered version of the destruction of the old quarters of Paris. Two years later, Richard Ferguson, a dyspeptic Englishman, observed that the Ezbekiah ‘. . . is now reclaimed, drained and Frenchified, with Egyptian variations such as a hole or two just sufficient to break a leg’. But Ismail would have been delighted at the reaction of another visitor, Charles Leland, who was there in 1872: ‘What a place for a Paris!’ he declared. Leland had no time for those who bemoaned the passing of an older Cairo and, unlike most tourists and travellers, looked forward to the day when the whole city would be remade in the image of the new western city.¹²²

I suspect, too, that the symbolic importance of both the opera and the Opera House derived from the Paris of the second empire. After all, why did the Khedive of Egypt place such a premium on this particular European cultural form? Said does not say, but when Ismail visited the French capital, grand opera was an established imperial institution and the extravagance and exuberance of its productions reflected both the splendour of the

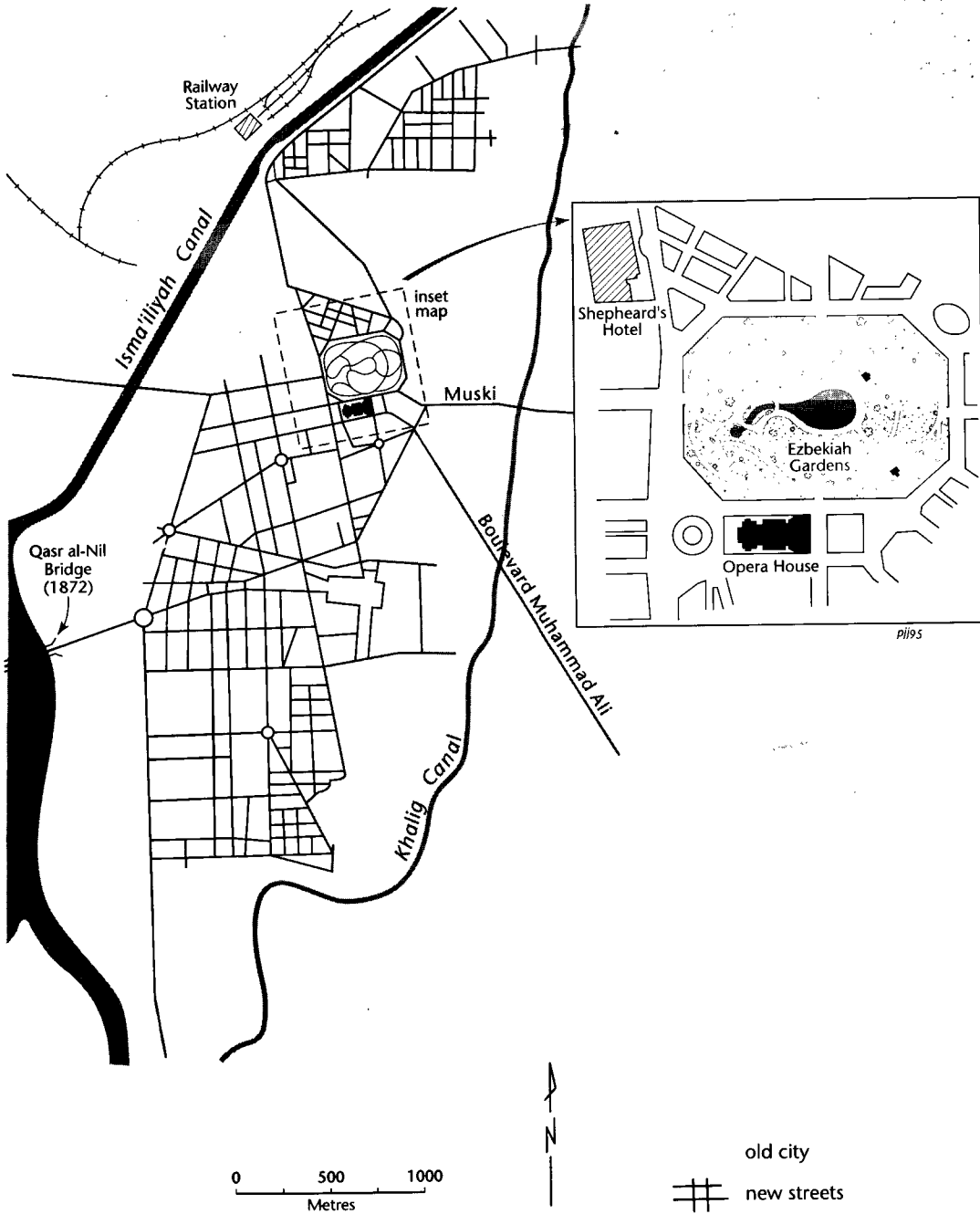


Figure 5 Ezbekiah Square and Cairo, c. 1871 (after Abu-Lughod)

imperial court and the sophistication of bourgeois culture. Work on Garnier's new opera house had started in 1862, five years earlier, and Penelope Woolf argues that the new building was intended '... to establish as historical orthodoxy the radical modernity of its age'. Thus '... the Opera House joined banks, market halls and currency and commodity exchanges as an indicator of opulence and prosperity'. It lay at the centre of – and in a sense was the crowning glory of – the Hausmannization of Paris.¹²³ Ismail surely could not have overlooked the intense public interest in the Opéra nor its symbolic importance in the new urban landscape.

Transposing these iconographies to Cairo, then in much the same way that the production of *Aida* was intended to mark the threshold of a radically modern Egypt, so the Opera House marked the boundary of the new city: and both were supposed to mirror the mastery of the Khedive. It was fortunate that the Cairo Opera House was not modelled on Garnier's Opéra, which did not open until 1875. Instead it was modelled on La Scala, designed by two Italian architects and completed in a mere five months, just in time for the performance of *Rigoletto* that celebrated the opening of the Suez Canal.¹²⁴ As Said remarks, it turned its back on the traditional eastern city to face the modern western city: 'Behind the Opera House lay the teeming quarters of Muski, Sayida Zeinab, 'Ataba al Khadra, held back by the Opera House's imposing size and European authority.' In Said's view, clearly, what counted was not so much the reflected glory of the Khedive as the refracted power of Europe. Hence he concludes that

Aida's Egyptian identity was part of the city's European façade, its simplicity and rigor inscribed on those imaginary walls dividing the colonial city's native from its imperial quarters. *Aida* is an aesthetic of separation . . . [and] for most of Egypt was an imperial *article de luxe* purchased by credit for a tiny clientele whose entertainment was incidental to their real purposes . . . [It was] an imperial spectacle designed to alienate and impress an almost exclusively European audience.¹²⁵

But it was, I think, more than a façade; it was also part of a much deeper process of cultural appropriation. Just as the Opera House, the conventions of operatic form and the reverse-archaeology of *Aida* staged a spectacular appropriation of Egyptian history, so too the familiar sites of the modern city – the western hotels, banks, booksellers, telegraph offices and, from 1873, the office of Thomas Cook in the grounds of Shepherd's Hotel – were platforms from which western visitors could issue out to inspect the exotic sights of the traditional city.¹²⁶

V Learning from Luxor

I began by recalling Said's attempt to 'rethink geography', and I hope to have shown that his imaginative geographies are indeed different from the mental maps and images recovered by our own disciplinary traditions that have been concerned with behavioural geographies and environmental perceptions. His are profoundly ideological landscapes whose representations of space are entangled with relations of power. They cannot be counterposed to a 'more true and more real' geography whose objective fixity is disclosed through the technologies of science – for example – because those technologies are always and everywhere *technocultures*: they are embedded in distinctive regimes (and geographies) of truth too, and their representations are also partial and situated. As Donna Haraway has reminded us, however, situated knowledge is not a barrier to understanding but rather its very condition. In much the same way, and for much the same reason, mapping imaginative geographies can be said to constitute a 'cartography of identities'

(above, p. 447), provided it is conducted as a process of negotiated understanding and not an exercise in surveillance and confinement, because there is a sense in which 'knowing oneself' is, in part, a matter of 'mapping where one stands'. Certainly there is in Said's work, from both the West Bank and the Left Bank, an intimate connection between the spatialities of these imaginative geographies and the precarious and partial formation of identity.¹²⁷

But I do have reservations about the way in which that connection is usually construed. In the first place, neither 'knowing oneself' nor 'mapping where one stands' imply that space is rendered transparent. Imaginative geographies cannot be understood as the free and fully coherent projections of all-knowing subjects. It is necessary to find ways to interrogate the unconscious and to explore the multiple spatialities inscribed within the geographical imaginary; these inclusions create analytical openings for the contradictions that are contained within (often contained by) dominant constellations of power, knowledge and geography. Said's contrapuntal reading needs to register these dissonances and 'atonalities' more explicitly, but there is nothing in his critical practice that excludes them. In so far as such a project will have to pay particular attention to the ways in which imaginative geographies congeal into a socially constituted geographical imaginary, it will require a careful working out of the tensions between psychoanalytic theory on the one side and social theory on the other. As I have indicated, however, Said's interest in psychoanalytic theory is strangely attenuated: the allusions to a 'manifest' and 'latent' Orientalism, the appeals to Deleuze and Guattari in *Culture and imperialism*, are wonderfully suggestive but radically undeveloped. It is symptomatic, I think, that when Fanon is invoked in *Culture and imperialism*, it is always his celebrated account of *The wretched of the earth* that occupies centre-stage, written in ten short weeks after he learnt he had leukaemia, while *Black skin, white masks* – of which Bhabha makes so much – slips into the wings and endnotes where Said mutters darkly about his 'early psychologizing style'.¹²⁸ And so I start to wonder about Said's reservations. . . .

Clip one: on the desk, surrounded by other antiquities and figurines, is a statue of the Egyptian god Amon-Re from the city of Thebes, the site of Luxor and Karnak; hanging over the couch in the consulting-room is a colour print of the temples at Abu-Simbel, dedicated to Ramesses and associated with Amon-Re. The apartment belongs to Sigmund Freud. He often referred to his classic *The interpretation of dreams*, which was first published in 1900, as his 'Egyptian dream-book', and he was clearly fascinated by the art and archaeology of ancient Egypt. What are we to make of his obsession? Most obviously, archaeology provided Freud with a linguistic model for psychoanalytic practice. 'Amon-Re' means 'the hidden one', for example, and – although he expressed reservations about the analogy from time to time – Freud seems to have thought of psychoanalysis as a process of quasi-archaeological excavation and disclosure. He insisted on the continued presence of the past in the present, at once unexpected and unacknowledged, and drew upon archaeology for a stratified and spatial figure of the psyche in which those things hidden and concealed from 'surface consciousness' can be brought into the light.¹²⁹ But the appeal to archaeology also allowed Freud to invoke a remarkably successful and highly popular science as a cover, or at any rate a theatrical guise, for the otherwise suspect and even discreditable science of psychoanalysis.¹³⁰ There is no doubting the spectacular public success of archaeology in the early decades of the twentieth century. One only has to think of the hoopla surrounding Carter, Caernarvon and the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. But this was also the moment at which archaeology reached its imperialist climax, when western archaeologists and adventurers fought over the spoils of the valley of the Nile

in the full glare of publicity.¹³¹ What, then, was the impact of all this on Freud's archaeological metaphor and, by extension, on his thought and practice? He once confided to a close friend that he was '... not at all a man of science, not an observer, not an experimenter, not a thinker'. 'I am by temperament,' he wrote, 'nothing but a conquistador...'¹³²

It would, of course, be absurd to use one casual remark to claim that psychoanalytic theory is indelibly and inescapably marked with colonialist trappings. In its various post-Freudian forms it can, I think, help to elucidate the connections between imaginative geographies and the formation of identities and, as I have implied, the work of Fanon and Bhabha shows that these ideas can be enlisted in struggles *against* colonialism and imperialism. But Said suggests that Fanon's work was an attempt to 'overcome the obduracy' of theoretical elaborations produced by the cultures of European capitalism, '... to turn them back against their authors so as to be able, in the phrase he borrows from Césaire, to invent new souls'. Was Fanon, then, also struggling against psychoanalytic theory?¹³³ Perhaps this explains Said's hesitations and avoidances. Perhaps, too, psychoanalytic theory should be examined for its colonial signs, because there is at least the possibility that its repressed past might have entered, unexpected and unacknowledged, into its critical present.

In the second place, and my second set of reservations, the production – the inscription and contestation – of imaginative geographies cannot be confined to the realm of high culture. It is of course important to demonstrate that high culture is not immune from the corruptions of colonialism, and Said does this with exemplary tact and patience, but the connections between spatiality and identity are continuous with the production of everyday life in *all* its particulars. To insist on this is not to agree with those critics who charge Said with abstraction or textualism. As I have tried to show, the spatialities of Orientalism were – *are* – abstractions, and the canonical texts in which they are articulated are marked by corporealities and physicalities. In short, there *is* a materialism in Said's work; he himself notes that we live in a world not only of commodities but also of representations, and these are at once abstractions *and* densely concrete fabrications.¹³⁴ In the late twentieth century, however, commodities and representations have become interlaced in ever more complex forms, and what Said makes much less of is the way in which these connective tissues have challenged – if not altogether dissolved – the (other) 'great divide' between high and popular culture. In doing so they have also reworked the relationship between past and present, revisiting and re-presenting the past, but most of all, I think, *re-envisioning* the past. One sees this, literally so, in the 'theatres of memory' visited so attentively by Raphael Samuel and in the unprecedented interest in the history of visual cultures inside and outside the academy.¹³⁵

Clip two: the pyramid of Luxor rises 350 feet from the desert floor into the shimmering blue sky; its entrance is guarded by a great Sphinx; beyond, an obelisk from the Temple of Karnak towers into space; inside the tomb of Tutankhamun a golden sarcophagus, amulets, masks and scarabs gleam in the darkness; outside, boats full of tourists cruise along the River Nile – making their way from the lobby to the elevators and the casino. The desert is in fact the Mojave, the obelisk and the tomb are replicas, the Nile is artificial, and the Luxor is one of the newest resort hotels to open on the Strip in Las Vegas. This 'entertainment megastore' is owned by Circus Circus Enterprises, and one of the press releases for its opening was headlined 'Ancient civilization discovered in Las Vegas'. The Luxor was conceived '... as a vast archaeological dig, where the mysteries of ancient Egypt are revealed as though in a state of "excavation" throughout the interior'. The tomb

of Tutankhamun is a reproduction of the site 'as it was found' by Carter and Carnarvon; the measurements of the rooms are 'exact', the artifacts have been reproduced using 'the same materials and methods' as the original artisans, and each is '... meticulously positioned according to the records maintained by Carter'. The intention of its promoters, so they insist, 'is a homage – not an exploitation'. In the casino, where homage of a rather different kind is the order of the day, ancient Egypt is 'brought to life' with reproductions from the temples of Luxor and Karnak. Advertised as 'the next wonder of the world', 'the most monumental achievement in 3,000 years' and, perhaps closer to the truth than the copywriter had in mind, a place where 'history is about to be rewritten', the resort boasts 'inclinators' that travel up the inside slopes of the pyramid to the oversized guest rooms; adventure entertainments conceived by the special-effects designer for *Blade Runner* that promise to '... race you through time and astound your sense of reality'; galleries and boutiques with authenticated Egyptian antiquities; theme restaurants that offer not only 'feasts fit for a pharaoh' but also '... a Kosher-style deli located on the River Nile', presumably to tempt the Israelites to return; and, finally, a floor show devised by Peter Jackson, including a team of acrobats wrapped in linen shrouds called 'The Flying Mummies', '... extravagant dance numbers, belly dancing, nail-biting stunts and original special effects'. The production tells the story of '... a long-lost pharaoh whose resting place is desecrated by a band of thieves'.¹³⁶

I don't intend to mimic Frederic Jameson's odyssey in the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, but situating the Luxor Las Vegas within an itinerary inaugurated by the *Description de l'Égypte* and continued through the production of Verdi's *Aida* shows how the Luxor's imaginative geography stages the interpenetration of a colonial past and a neocolonial present. There is, perhaps, a knowing irony in the promotional copy, a parodic re-presentation of the colonial connections installed within the world-as-exhibition between visualization and appropriation, but these fantasy-architectures none the less provide a physical site at which particular spatialities are captured, displaced and hollowed out, and by means of which identities are fashioned, negotiated and contested.

It should be clear from my two clips – I use the filmic phrase deliberately – that the historical geographies I have described in the preceding pages open passages into our own present. The critical reading of late twentieth-century cultural geographies cannot turn its back on the past. Two hundred years ago, before the French army engaged the Mamelukes at the battle of the pyramids, Napoleon dismissed his immediate entourage with the instruction to '... think that from the heights of these monuments, forty centuries are watching us'. Robert Young's remarkable account of *White mythologies: writing history and the west* has on its cover a photograph of the former Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, gazing back up at the pyramids. There are lessons there for the writing of geography too, and for our own productions of imaginative geographies.

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Notes

1. Said, E. 1994: Edward Said's *Culture and imperialism*: a symposium. *Social Text* 40, 21.
2. Fox, R. 1992: East of Said. In Sprinker, M., editor, *Edward Said: a critical reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 144–56 the quotation is from p. 144; Gilroy, P. 1993: Travelling theorist. *New Statesman and Society* 12 February, 46–47. Gilroy's implicit assimilation of Said's work to postmodernism, which he shares with several other commentators, is misleading. While Said makes no secret of the crisis of modernism – and in particular the dislocations and displacements brought about by its imbrications with imperialism: see Said, E. 1993: *Culture and imperialism*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 186–90 – this does not make him a postmodernist. In fact, Said reserves some of his most trenchant criticism for the postmodern assault on metanarrative. 'The purpose of the intellectual's activity is to advance human freedom and knowledge', he insists, and when Lyotard and his followers dismiss '... grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment' then, so Said claims, they are 'admitting their own lazy incapacities' rather than acknowledging the politicointellectual challenges and opportunities that remain 'despite postmodernism': Said, E. 1994: *Representations of the intellectual*. London: Vintage, 13–14.
3. Said, E. 1995: *Orientalism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books (1st edn, 1978), 215.
4. But see Driver, F. 1992: Geography's empire: histories of geographical knowledge. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, 23–40; Rogers, A. 1992: The boundaries of reason: the world, the homeland and Edward Said. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, 511–26.
5. Said, *Orientalism*, 215–18; Driver, Geography's empire; Livingstone, D. 1993: A 'sternly practical' pursuit: geography, race and empire. In *The geographical tradition: episodes in the history of a contested enterprise*. Oxford: Blackwell, 216–59; Godlewska, A. and Smith, N. editors, 1994: *Geography and empire*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
6. Smith, N. 1992: Real wars, theory wars. *Progress in Human Geography* 16, 257–71.
7. These estimates are inevitably contentious: United Nations, Palestinian and Israeli sources all differ. See Hadawi, S. 1989: *Bitter harvest: a modern history of Palestine*. New York: Olive Branch Press; Tessler, M. 1994: *A history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.
8. Said, E. 1966: *Joseph Conrad and the fiction of autobiography*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
9. Said, *Orientalism*, 25.
10. Said describes the productive force of '... peripheral, off-center work that gradually enters the West and then requires acknowledgement' as 'the voyage in' (*Culture and imperialism*, 216, 239). Cf. Robbins, B. 1994: Secularism, elitism, progress and other transgressions: on Edward Said's 'voyage in'. *Social text* 40, 25–37.
11. Said, E. 1986: *After the last sky: Palestinian lives*. New York: Pantheon Books, 115.
12. Said, *After the last sky*, 14; Wicke, J. and Sprinker, M. 1992: Interview with Edward Said. In Sprinker, editor, *Said*, 221–64; the quotation is from p. 222, where Said sketches his own 'imaginative geography' of Cairo. There are important bonds between imaginative geographies and imagined communities, as Anderson now recognizes, but his discussion needs to be reworked to take into account the particular predicaments of dispersed and displaced national communities: Anderson, B. 1991: *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso (2nd edn).
13. For a larger discussion of the culture of dispossession and exile and its imbrications with geography – though one that, unaccountably, makes no mention of Said – see Parmenter, B.M. 1994: *Giving voice to stones: place and identity in Palestinian literature*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. The poems I cite here are 'We travel like other people' and 'The earth is closing in on us', reprinted in Darwish, M., al-Qasim, S. and Adonis, 1984: *Victims of a map*. London: Al Saqi Books. The other quotations are from Said, *After the last sky*, 6, 17; see also Rushdie, S. 1993: On Palestinian identity: an interview with Edward Said. In *Imaginary homelands: essays and criticism 1981–1991*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 166–84.
14. Said, *After the last sky*, 19–21, 38. Rogers, *Boundaries*, 521, suggests that Said's language is redolent of the bleakness of the postmodern condition, but he also urges that the experience is particular not universal – '“We” are not all Palestinians' – and argues that, for Said, these dislocations and dispersions are '... to be fought against rather than embraced'. Exactly so.
15. Said, *After the last sky*, 12.
16. Dimbleby, J. 1979: *The Palestinians*. London: Quartet Books.
17. Said, *After the last sky*, 28.
18. In Chicago, Edward Soja urged me to reflect on this question as an antidote to the 'historicism' he saw underwriting my presentation. Historicism usually means a view of history as a telos, however, and I

don't think this is a proper characterization of my argument (or Said's project). What Soja was cautioning against was the privileging of history over geography, but I believe that the power of Said's work derives from his remarkable ability to think the two *together*. He certainly does not diminish the importance of historical inquiry. When he concluded that 'Palestine does not exist, except as a memory or, more importantly as an idea, a political and human experience, and an act of sustained popular will', for example, he was surely drawing attention to the continued salience of the past – imaginatively, culturally, critically – for contemporary politics. See Said, E. 1979: *The question of Palestine*. New York: Times Books, 5. Elsewhere Said does accentuate the importance of spatial counterpoint rather than temporal sequence, but this is an argument about affinity, influence and connection that scarcely diminishes the significance of historicity: see *Culture and imperialism*, 81.

19. Said, E. 1994: Return to Palestine – Israel. In *The politics of dispossession: the struggle for Palestinian self-determination 1969–1994*. New York: Pantheon, 175–99.

20. Said, E. 1993: An interview with Edward Said. *Boundary 2*, 1–25; the quotation is from pp. 12–13.

21. Bhabha, H. 1994: *The location of culture*. London: Routledge, 99–100.

22. Said provides his own narrative of these engagements in *Politics of dispossession*, i–xxxiv; he was a member of the Palestine National Council from 1977 to 1991. For a review and commentary, see Hovsepian, N. 1992: Connections with Palestine. In Sprinker, editor, *Said*, 5–18

23. Hulme, P. 1990: Subversive archipelagos: colonial discourse and the break-up of continental theory. *Dispositio* 15, 1–23. By 'continental theory' Hulme means a postwar discursive terrain triangulated by Marx, Nietzsche and Freud that is distinctly European in both its origins and its presumptive universality.

24. Smith, N. 1994: Geography, empire and social theory. *Progress in Human Geography* 18, 491–500; the quotation is from pp. 492–93.

25. Said, *Orientalism*, 80–87; *Culture and imperialism*, 33–35.

26. Said, E. 1993: The empire at work: Verdi's *Aida*. In *Culture and imperialism*, 111–32.

27. See Gregory, D. 1995: Between the book and the lamp: imaginative geographies of Egypt, 1849–50. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 20, 29–57.

28. Said, E. 1991: *Musical elaborations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 17; *Culture and imperialism*, 109.

29. On south Asia, see Breckenridge, C. and van der Veer, P., editors, 1993: *Orientalism and the postcolonial predicament: perspectives on south Asia*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press; on 'Orientalism' and South America, see the cautions of Mary-Louise Pratt in 'Symposium', 4–6.

30. Lowe, L. 1991: Discourse and heterogeneity: situating orientalism. In *Critical terrains: French and British Orientalisms*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1–29. There are multiple ways in which 'contradiction' can be conceptualized, as the vocabularies of social theory and psychoanalytic theory suggest, and it is not my intention to privilege any one of them here.

31. Barrell, J. 1991: *The infection of Thomas de Quincey: a psychopathology of imperialism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 16.

32. Lant, A. 1992: The curse of the pharaoh, or how cinema contracted Egyptomania. *October* 59, 86–112; the quotation is from p. 98.

33. Said, E. 1986: Foucault and the imagination of power. In Hoy, D. C., editor, *Foucault: a critical reader*. Oxford: Blackwell, 149–55. I do not, of course, claim that Foucault is the only source but, for reasons that will become clear, I disagree with Brennan's otherwise engaging appreciation when he treats Foucault as 'a minor player' in *Orientalism*: Brennan, T. 1992: places of mind, occupied lands: Edward Said and philology. In Sprinker, editor, *Said*, 74–95.

34. For the criticisms of Said, see Clifford, J. 1988: On *Orientalism*. In *The predicament of culture: twentieth-century ethnography, literature and art*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 255–76; Young, R. 1991: Disorienting orientalism. In *White mythologies: writing history and the west*. London: Routledge, 119–40. For a critical discussion of Foucault's ethics of the self, see McNay, L. 1992: *Foucault and feminism: power, gender and the self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

35. Ahmad, A. 1994: *Orientalism and after: ambivalence and metropolitan location in the work of Edward Said*. In *In theory: classes, nations, literatures*. London: Verso, 159–219; see especially pp. 165–66. On Ahmad's fideism – his '... rage against critics who do not declare themselves Marxists' – see Parry, B. 1993: A critique mishandled. *Social Text* 35, 121–33; Levinson, M. 1993: News from nowhere: the discontents of Aijaz Ahmad. *Public Culture* 6, 97–131.

36. Said, *Orientalism*, 57, 122; see also pp. 42–43, 76, 87, 120, 201. For premodern genealogies of

Orientalism, see Hentsch, T. 1992: *Imagining the middle east*. Montreal: Black Rose Books.

37. Said, *Orientalism*, 54.
38. Said, *Orientalism*, 55; Bachelard, G. 1969: *The poetics of space*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
39. Said, E. 1995: East isn't east: the impending end of the age of Orientalism. *The Times Literary Supplement* 3 February, emphasis added.
40. Geyer-Ryan, H. 1994: Space, gender and national identity. In *Fables of desire: studies in the ethics of art and gender*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 155–63. I have shifted the weight of Geyer-Ryan's argument, which is concerned less with the exiled – 'though they bear the cruellest burden' – and more with those '... who are confronted with immigration and experience the arbitrariness and relativity of the symbolic order through their encounter with the other'.
41. Said's distinction between 'manifest' and 'latent' Orientalism trembles on the edge of psychoanalytic theory, but this remains undeveloped in his work: for an elaboration, see Bhabha, *Location of culture*, 71–75.
42. The opposition is not an inevitable one, of course, and the work of Gerard O'Tuathail in particular suggests several ways in which a critical geopolitics might be informed by psychoanalytic theory.
43. Said, E. 1984: Criticism between culture and system. In *The world, the text and the critic*. London: Faber & Faber, 178–225; the quotations are from pp. 219–22. There are important filiations between Bachelard and Foucault, but these reside in Foucault's archaeology rather than the genealogy that Said is attempting here.
44. Said, E. 1988: Michel Foucault, 1926–1984. In Arac, J., editor, *After Foucault*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1–11; the quotations are from p. 5.
45. Foucault, M. 1961: *Folie et déraison: histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. Paris: Librairie Plon, iv; this passage is omitted from the revised and abridged edition translated into English as *Madness and civilization* (New York: Pantheon, 1965). Foucault's closing image is of 'son hiératisme tragique' which does not readily translate into English; 'hiératisme' usually conveys the sense of a sacred tradition, but it is also used to refer to a simplified form of hieroglyphics.
46. Foucault, M. 1970: *The order of things*. London: Tavistock, xv–xix; Foucault, M. 1986: Of other spaces. *Diacritics* 16, 22–27.
47. Said, *Orientalism*, 186–88, 207–208.
48. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, xxv.
49. Said, Criticism, 222.
50. Foucault, M. 1979: *Discipline and punish*. New York: Vintage Books, 140–41.
51. Martin, A. 1988: *The knowledge of ignorance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 81.
52. Said, *Orientalism*, 80–85. On the surveys in Egypt, see Laurens, H., Gillispie, C., Golvin, J.-C. and Traunecker, C. 1989: *L'expédition d'Égypte 1798–1801*. Paris: Armand Colin; on the publishing project in Paris, see Albin, M. 1980: Napoleon's *Description de l'Égypte*: problems of corporate authorship. *Publishing History* 8, 65–85.
53. Said, Criticism, 223; *Orientalism*, 162, 186.
54. Rajchman, J. 1991: Foucault's art of seeing. In *Philosophical events: essays of the 80s*. New York: Columbia University Press, 68–102; see also Flynn, T. 1993: Foucault and the eclipse of vision. In Levin, D. M., editor *Modernity and the hegemony of vision*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 273–86.
55. Foucault, *Discipline and punish*, 217; the eagle is, of course, Napoleon and the sun Louis XIV.
56. Rose, G. 1993: Looking at landscape: the uneasy pleasures of power. In *Feminism and geography: the limits of geographical knowledge*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 86–112; for a discussion of masculinism and Orientalism, see Kabbani, R. 1986: *Imperial fictions: Europe's myths of Orient*. London: Macmillan.
57. Boone, J. 1995: Vacation cruises, or the homoerotics of Orientalism. *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 110, 89–107; see also Gundermann, C. 1994: Orientalism, homophobia, masochism. *Diacritics* 24, 151–68.
58. See, for example, Gillies, J. 1994: Theatres of the world. In *Shakespeare and the geography of difference*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 70–98; Lestringant, F. 1994: Ancient lessons; a bookish Orient. In *Mapping the renaissance world: the geographical imagination in the age of discovery*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 37–52.
59. Said, *Orientalism*, 63, 103, 127, 166. On the world-as-exhibition, see Mitchell, T. 1988: *Colonising Egypt*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Mitchell, T. 1992: Orientalism and the exhibitionary order. In Dirks, N., editor, *Colonialism and culture*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 289–317.

60. There is now a rich literature on Orientalism in art history: see, for example, Nochlin, L. 1989: *The imaginary Orient*. In *The politics of vision: essays on nineteenth-century art and society*. New York: Harper & Row, 33–59. But I suspect that nineteenth-century photography is even more important to Said's argument for at least two reasons. First, photography encapsulated the ideology of definitive truth in ways that drew together imperialism and the discipline of detail. As Solomon-Godeau notes, '... the mid-nineteenth century was the great period of taxonomies, inventories and physiologies, and photography was understood to be the agent par excellence for listing, knowing and possessing, as it were, the things of the world'. Indeed, one of the best-known calotypists of Egypt, Félix Teynard, advertised his systematic survey of Egypt's monuments as a calotype to the *Description de l'Égypte*. Secondly, for purely technical reasons, calotypists focused on immobile scenes – especially the exterior of buildings – and so depicted them as 'essentially vacant spaces': 'It is reasonable to assume that such photographic documentation, showing so much of the world to be empty, was unconsciously assimilated to the justifications for an expanding empire.' See Solomon-Godeau, A. 1991: *A photographer in Jerusalem, 1855: Auguste Salzmann and his times*. In *Photography at the dock: essays on photographic history, institutions and practices*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 150–68; the quotations are from pp. 155, 159; see also Howe, K. 1994: *Excursions along the Nile: the photographic discovery of ancient Egypt*. Santa Barbara, CA: Santa Barbara Museum of Art.

61. The frontispiece and its accompanying explication are reprinted in Gillispie, C.C. and Dewachter, M., editors 1987: *Monuments of Egypt: the Napoleonic edition*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Architectural Press.

62. This is a commonplace of colonial discourse: see Pratt, M.L. 1992: *Imperial eyes: transculturation and travel writing*. London: Routledge. But this discourse of negotiation required special strategies in Egypt, since it plainly could not proceed through the usual evacuation of the inhabitants as a 'people without history': the whole purpose was to reclaim and recover that (ancient) history as both prolegomenon to and part of European history. This eventually licensed a racialization of the past, in which the people of ancient Egypt were assumed to be white – and hence proto-European – unlike most of the contemporary inhabitants of Egypt.

63. Cosgrove, D. 1985: Prospect, perspective and the evolution of the landscape idea. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 10, 45–62.

64. Prochaska, D. 1994: Art of colonialism, colonialism of art: the *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–1828). *L'Esprit créateur* 34, 69–91; on 'the organization of the view', see Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 12. For a wonderfully detailed exposition of the geographical apparatus involved in the production of the *Description*, see Godlewska, A. 1988: The Napoleonic survey of Egypt. *Cartographica* 25, monograph 38–39; Godlewska, A. 1994: Napoleon's geographers (1797–1815): imperialist soldiers of modernity. In Godlewska and Smith, editors, *Geography and empire*.

65. Laurens *et al.*, *L'expédition*, 352–53; Said, *Orientalism*, 88, speaks to much the same point when he identifies '... highly stylized simulacra, elaborately wrought imitations' produced by subsequent European writers who conceived of the Orient as '... a kind of womb out of which they were brought forth'.

66. Godlewska, A. 1995: Map, text and image: representing the mentality of enlightened conquerors. *Transactions, Institute of British Geographers* 20, 5–28.

67. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 118.

68. Philo, C. 1992: Foucault's geography. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, 137–61.

69. On envisioning nineteenth-century Paris, see Asendorf, C. 1993: *Batteries of life: on the history of things and their perception in modernity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 46–47; Clark, T.J. 1984: The view from Notre Dame. In *The painting of modern life: Paris in the art of Manet and his followers*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Green, N. 1990: *The spectacle of nature: landscape and bourgeois culture in nineteenth-century France*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 29–31; Prendergast, C. 1992: *Paris and the nineteenth century*. Oxford: Blackwell. The parallels I have in mind are touched upon in Behdad, A. 1994: Notes on notes, or with Flaubert in Paris, Egypt. In *Belated travelers: Orientalism in the age of colonial dissolution*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 53–72 and Shields, R. 1994: Fancy footwork: Walter Benjamin's notes on flânerie. In Tester, K., *The flâneur*. London: Routledge, 61–80.

70. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 99–100.

71. Said, *Politics of dispossession*, 416–17; Said, 1995: Symbols versus substance a year after the Declaration of Principles: an interview with Edward Said. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24, 60–72.

72. Cf. the epigraph from Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* that Said uses to head *Orientalism*: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.'

73. Said, *After the last sky*, 116.

74. Colley, L. 1993: The imperial embrace. *Yale Review* 81, 92–98; the quotation is from p. 92, emphasis added.

75. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 63.

76. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 239.

77. Silverman, D. 1977: The 1889 exhibition: the crisis of bourgeois individualism. *Oppositions* 8, 70–91. The exhibition also included the first Rue du Caire: see Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 1–4; Çelik, Z. 1992: *Displaying the Orient: architecture of Islam at nineteenth-century world's fairs*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. In fact, Maupassant entertained in his apartment '... a troop of Arab dancers, acrobats and musicians' who were in Paris for the exhibition: Steegmuller, F. 1950: *Maupassant*. London: Collins, 279.

78. *Egypt and how to see it*. Paris: Hachette, London: Ballantyne, 131.

79. Colley, Imperial embrace, 94; Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 74, 189. Said is, of course, talking about high culture in general and the novel in particular. Two other cultural productions are of special importance for the colonial construction and circulation of imaginative geographies. That there are intimate connection between travel-writing and colonialism is shown by a stream of illuminating studies: see, for example, Blunt, A. 1994: *Travel, gender and imperialism: Mary Kingsley and West Africa*. New York: Guilford Press; Mills, S. 1991: *Discourses of difference: an analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism*. London: Routledge; Pratt, *Imperial eyes*; Spurr, D. 1993: *The rhetoric of empire: colonial discourse in journalism, travel writing and imperial administration*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. The connections between the rise of cinema and the age of imperialism have attracted less attention, but see Browne, N. 1989: Orientalism as an ideological form: American film theory in the silent period. *Wide Angle* 11, 23–31; Lant, *Curse of the pharaoh*; Shohat, E. and Stam, R. 1994: *Unthinking eurocentrism: multi-culturalism and the media*. London: Routledge.

80. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 82–83.

81. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 84.

82. Cohen, M. 1993: *Le diable à Paris*: Benjamin's phantasmagoria. In *Profane illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of surrealist revolution*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 217–59.

83. Polan, D. 1994: Art, society and 'contrapuntal criticism': a review of Edward Said's *Culture and imperialism*. *Clio* 24, 69–79; the quotations are from pp. 73, 75. Polan's appeal to 'the needs of imperial ideology' is more functionalist than Said's argument warrants, but the essential point stands. In counterpoint to Said, Behdad has argued for what he calls an 'anamnesiac reading' of colonial discourse that '... unmasks what the object holds back and exposes the violence it represses in its consciousness'; but in so far as this critical strategy privileges historicity it obscures the *geopolitical* violence that is Said's main concern. See Behdad, *Belated Orientalism*, 8.

84. Cf. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 278; see also Young, *White mythologies*. Nevertheless, Benita Parry describes Said as '... a secret sharer in that socialist project which nourishes hope in the possibility of human agency effecting a transfigured secular future from which exploitation and coercion have been erased'. I am not sure he would see it quite like that, but Said's recent writings have been distinguished by a (qualified) recuperation of the enlightenment project and an affirmation of its values of truth, reason and emancipation that distances him from postmodernism, post-Marxism and probably most of what passes for 'postcolonialism' in the metropolitan academy. See Parry, B. 1993: *Imagining empire: from Mansfield Park to Antigua*. *New Formations* 20, 181–88; Norris, C. 1994: *Truth and the ethics of criticism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 67–69, 110–12.

85. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 14. Said's criticism is itself oddly displaced, given the importance of Williams's Welsh roots, but the wider claim surely stands. See also Viswanathan, G. 1993: Raymond Williams and British colonialism: the limits of metropolitan theory. In Dworkin, D. and Roman L., editors, *Views beyond the Border Country: Raymond Williams and cultural politics*. London: Routledge, 217–30; Radhakrishnan, R., 1993: Cultural theory and the politics of location. In Dworkin and Roman, editors, *Views*, 275–94.

86. Williams, R. 1973: *The country and the city*. London: Chatto & Windus; Said, E. 1984: Secular criticism. In *The world the text, and the critic*. London: Faber & Faber, 1–30; the quotation is from p. 23; Said, *Culture and imperialism*, xxvii, 14, 52.

87. Said, E. 1984: Reflections on American 'left' literary criticism. In *The World, the text and the critic*. London: Faber & Faber, 158–77; the quotation is from p. 171.

88. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 48, 59.
89. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 49. Edward Soja makes the same point about 'Gramsci's geography': 'Gramsci is so much more spatial than the other founding fathers of Western Marxism'. Soja, E. 1989: *Postmodern geographies: the reassertion of space in critical social theory*. London: Verso, 46n.
90. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 35. Said subsequently argues that the importance of these conjunctions and displacements has been heightened at the end of the twentieth century. In doing so, he develops a contrast between the 'unhoused and decentred' politicointellectual formulations of Virilio, Deleuze and Guattari and others – which propose a radical break between past and present – and the condition of countless refugees, migrants and exiles whose predicament continues to articulate '... the tensions, irresolutions and contradictions in the overlapping territories shown on the cultural map of imperialism' (p. 332).
91. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 50.
92. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 195; Parry's reservations will be found in her 'Imagining empire', 182–83 and in her 'Overlapping territories, intertwined histories: Edward Said's postcolonial cosmopolitanism', in Sprinker, editor, *Said*, 19–45.
93. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 266, 278. Said makes much more of the debt to Gramsci in his 'Foreword' to Guha R. and Spivak G. C., editors, 1988: *Selected subaltern studies*. New York: Oxford University Press, v–x. The project of subaltern studies is of particular relevance to any consideration of Said's work because it has become a touchstone in debates surrounding the relations among western humanism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism: I have provided an outline of that discussion in Gregory, D. 1994: *Geographical imaginations*. Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 183–93.
94. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 51, 318.
95. Said, Interview, 2–3.
96. Most commentators agree with me. There are dissenters, however, most notably the historian John Mackenzie. But I think he comprehensively misrepresents Said's argument: see Mackenzie, J. 1993: Occidentalism, counterpoint and counter-polemic. *Journal of Historical Geography* 19, 339–44; and Mackenzie, J. 1994: Edward Said and the historians. *Nineteenth-century Contexts* 18, 9–25.
97. See Adorno, T. 1993: Bourgeois opera. In Levin, D. editor, *Opera through other eyes*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 25–43. Opera has found a wider audience in late twentieth-century Europe and North America, as much through recordings as productions; and on my way to Chicago I learnt that Elton John and Tim Rice are currently collaborating on a version of *Aida* that Disney intends to bring to Broadway: see *Time*, 13 March 1995.
98. Mariette to Du Locle, in Busch, H. 1978: *Verdi's Aida: the history of an opera in letters and documents*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 11.
99. Mariette's part in the storyline is a matter of some controversy. He claimed to have collected material for the short story on which *Aida* was based during an archaeological trip through Upper Egypt in 1866 (whose main purpose was to collect artifacts for the Paris exposition). His son Edouard later claimed that he had drafted the first version of the story, but most critics think this improbable. Mariette was quite explicit: '*Aida* is, in effect, a product of my work,' he declared. 'I am the one who convinced the Viceroy to order its presentation; *Aida* is, in a word, a creation of my brain': Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 186. Matters are further complicated because, much later, Verdi made light of Mariette's contribution, but that can probably be explained as Verdi's reaction to a threatened copyright action. More problematic is the suggestion that the outline was the work of Temistocle Solera, who had provided the libretto for *Nabucco* – there are similarities between the two operas – and who had organized the celebrations for the opening of the Suez Canal: 'Verdi's refusal to be reconciled with Solera, over a period of more than twenty years, would likely have caused problems, had he been told that the author of *Aida* was Solera. As for Solera's failure to claim authorship, he could not have done so without ruining Mariette's reputation and defaming the Khedive.' See Phillips-Matz, M. J. 1993: *Verdi: a biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 570–72. Whatever one makes of all this, my own argument depends much less on Mariette's involvement in the storyline and much more on his part in the *mise-en-scène*, about which there is no doubt.
100. Said, *Empire at work*, 126.
101. Arblaster, A. 1992: *Viva la Libertà! Politics in opera*. London: Verso, 141–44; see also Mackenzie, Said and the historians.
102. Said, *Empire at work*, 114.
103. Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 115–16.
104. Mariette to Du Locle, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 11.
105. Mariette to Draneht, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 33–34.

106. Mariette to Draneht, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 209, emphasis added.
107. I have in mind the outrage that greeted the Frankfurt Opera's production of *Aida* in 1981, when the curtain rose on the second act to confront the audience '... with something like its mirror image: the original first-night audience of the opera's European premiere at La Scala in 1872': Weber, S. 1993: Taking place: toward a theatre of dislocation. In Levin, editor, *Opera through other eyes*, 107–46. As Weber notes, a production that calls attention to its own staging in this way also calls into question the 'individualist attitude' to opera (p. 113).
108. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 12.
109. Comoli, J.-L. 1980: Machines of the visible. In de Lauretis, T. and Heath, S., editors, *The cinematic apparatus*. New York: St Martin's Press, 122–23.
110. Mariette to Draneht, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 225.
111. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 29–30; de Nerval, G. *Oeuvres I*, 878–79, 882, 883. The Paris Opéra staged a series of orientalist operas, including in 1827 Rossini's *Moïse* (whose sets were based, in part, on the *Description*) and in 1850 d'Aubert's *L'enfant prodigue* (whose sets and costumes were drawn from Champollion's *Monuments de l'Égypte et de la Nubie*). See Humbert, J.-M., Pantazzi, M. and Ziegler, C. 1994: *Egyptomania: L'Égypte dans l'art occidental 1730–1930*. Paris: Louvre, 395.
112. Mariette to Draneht, in Busch, *Verdi's Aida*, 33, 44; Humbert et al., *Egyptomania*, 423–28.
113. Southworth, A. 1875: *Four thousand miles of African travel*. New York: Baker, Pratt; London: Sampson & Low, 45–47, emphases added.
114. Phillips-Matz, *Verdi*, 570.
115. Said, Empire at work, 118, 120.
116. Said, Empire at work, 124–25.
117. Budden, J. 1992: *The operas of Verdi. Vol. 3: from Don Carlos to Falstaff*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 183.
118. The opera critic Filippo Filippi writing in the Milanese newspaper *La Perseveranza*, in Osborne, C. 1987: *Verdi: a life in the theatre*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 223.
119. Southworth, *Four thousand miles*, 45.
120. *A handbook for the traveller in Egypt*. London: John Murray, 1873, v; this revised edition was based on a series of visits made between 1863 and 1871.
121. Said, Empire at work, 128; Said draws in particular on Landes, D. 1958: *Bankers and pashas*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
122. *Handbook*, 1401; Ferguson, R. 1873: *Moss gathered by a rolling stone*. Carlisle: Thurnam, 18; Fromentin, E. 1935: *Voyage en Égypte (1869)*. Paris: Ed. Mouton, 143; Leland, C. 1874: *The Egyptian sketch book*. New York: Hurd & Houghton, 87–88. See also Abu-Lughod, J. 1971: *Cairo: 1001 years of the city victorious*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 98–117; Scharabi, M. 1989: *Kairo: Stadt und Architektur in Zeitalter des europäischen Kolonialismus*. Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth.
123. Woolf, P. 1988: Symbol of Second Empire: cultural politics and the Paris Opera House. In Cosgrove, D. and Daniels, S., editors *The iconography of landscape: essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 214–35; the quotations are from p. 219.
124. Mostyn, T. 1989: The finest opera house in the world. In *Egypt's belle époque: Cairo 1869–1952*. London: Quartet, 72–82.
125. Said, Empire at work, 129–30. Garnier's Opéra also staged an aesthetic of separation at the heart of Second Empire Paris, dramatizing the division between the affluence of the western quarters and the poverty of the east. According to one critic, it too was a façade, '... the showground of the epoch's poverty, masked by wealth': Woolf, Symbol, 229.
126. I discuss this in detail in Gregory, D. in preparation: *Describing Egypt*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, London: Routledge.
127. For the purposes of this discussion I have focused on the ways in which representations of space are implicated in the sort of cultural distinctions that Said describes because this is his main concern, and one that has come to be shared by some of the most innovative work in our contemporary discipline: see Keith, M. and Pile, S., editors, *Place and the politics of identity*. London: Routledge. But a more comprehensive discussion of the imaginative geographies of colonialism and imperialism would also have to consider the ways in which representations of 'nature' entered into these cultural discriminations. I am thinking in particular of the connections among landscape, nature and colonial identity described so brilliantly for the rain forest of South America by Michael Taussig in his *Shamanism, colonialism and the wild man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 74–92. I think it would be possible to show, for

example, that in the course of the nineteenth century, Europe's imaginative geographies of Egypt assimilated its native inhabitants to the desert while, both poetically and physically, the west took possession of the Nile, and that these discursive strategies played through colonial and imperial constructions of identity.

128. Fanon, F. 1986: *Black skin, white masks*. London: Pluto Press (originally published in Paris, 1952); Fanon, F. 1967: *The wretched of the earth*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books (originally published in Paris, 1961); Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 267–68, 351n. On the contrasting appropriations of Fanon by Bhabha and Said (and others), see Gates, H. L., jr 1991: Critical Fanonism. *Critical inquiry* 17, 457–70.

129. This paragraph relies on Spitz, E. H. 1989: Psychoanalysis and the legacies of antiquity. In Gamwell L. and Wells, R., editors, *Sigmund Freud and art: his personal collection of antiquities*. New York: Harry Abrams, 153–71; Torgovnick, M. 1990: Entering Freud's study. In *Gone primitive: savage intellects, modern lives*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 194–209; Forrester, J. 1994: 'Mille e tre': Freud and collecting. In Elsner, J. and Cardinal, R., editors, *The cultures of collecting*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 224–51.

130. I owe this suggestion to Kuspit, D. 1989: The analogy of archaeology and psychoanalysis. In Gamwell and Wells, editors, *Freud and art*, 133–51.

131. See Frayling, C. 1992: *The face of Tutankhamun*. London: Faber & Faber. When Howard Carter first entered the tomb, incidentally, he recorded that '... the first impressions suggested the property room of an opera of a vanished civilisation' (p. 4). The connections between archaeology and empire in the previous century are described in Fagan, B. 1992: *The rape of the Nile: tomb robbers, tourists and archaeologists in Egypt*. Wakefield, RI: Moyer Bell.

132. Freud to Fliess, 1 February 1900, in Masson, J. M., editor, *The complete letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess 1887–1904*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 398.

133. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 268. Said's argument is a general one, but for a discussion of Fanon's critique of eurocentric psychoanalysis, see McCulloch, J. 1983: *Black soul, white artifact: Fanon's clinical psychology and social theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

134. Said, *Culture and imperialism*, 56

135. Samuel, R. 1994: *Theatres of memory. Vol. 1: the past and present in contemporary society*. London: Verso.

136. The descriptions are all taken from promotional materials produced by Luxor Las Vegas for its opening in October 1993. See also Chabon, M. 1994: Las Vegas: glitz and dust. *New York Times Magazine* 13 November.