

# Answering Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine*

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'I think Edward's other books are admirable. The one on the question of Palestine is very good indeed because there he is on firm ground.'

Albert Hourani, British Orientalist, in discrediting Edward Said's *Orientalism*<sup>1</sup>

'[W]hen the dust of the current literary debates settles, Said's most enduring contribution will be seen as residing neither in *Orientalism*, which is a deeply flawed book, nor in the literary essays which have followed in its wake, but in his work on the Palestinian issue.'

Aijaz Ahmad<sup>2</sup>

'It scarcely needs to be said that in discussing a subject as sensitive to history as national self-consciousness, one ought to be willing to sacrifice abstract clarity to concrete accuracy.'

Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*<sup>3</sup>

One of the most well-read critiques of Zionism, Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* in many ways had a similar impact on the Arab–Israeli debate that his previous major work, *Orientalism*, had on the field of Middle Eastern studies. Correspondingly, however, the more one understands of Zionism and its history, the clearer it becomes that the same faults that inevitably corrupted and discredited *Orientalism* run rampant in *The Question of Palestine* as well. In addition to his unending bias, Said's work is filled with constant historical distortion, a deceitfully poor choice of historical texts, and, worst of all, the author butchers quotations and clearly ignores others—all in order to fit his political ideology.

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There are, of course, a few worthwhile points made by the book. Most importantly, at the time his book was originally published (1979), Said had grounds for arguing that awareness and recognition of the Palestinians and their narrative amongst Americans and Westerners in general was significantly more limited than their awareness of the Israeli and Zionist narrative (though the situation in this regard is quite different today).

Additionally, unlike other Arabs and Palestinians writing on the subject, Said is *relatively* moderate. Writing over a decade before the Madrid Conference and the Oslo Accords, when both the PLO and Israel were unwilling to recognize formally the existence of the other and when peace seemed unimaginable, Said appeared willing to discuss a peaceful settlement between Israelis and Palestinians: 'the time has come for Palestinians and Israeli Jews to sit down and discuss all the issues outstanding between them'.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Said was willing to see that while Zionism may have been disastrous for the Palestinians, in appraising the movement as a whole 'it would be totally unjust to neglect the power of Zionism as an idea for Jews'.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Said suggested that most other Arabs who wrote on the subject constructed a picture of Zionism that is 'dogmatic', and adhere to an 'almost theological brand of Arabism'.<sup>6</sup>

Lastly, Said is even willing to take into account the hatred that the Jews have faced throughout their history, calling them 'the survivors of the most tragic destiny meted out to any people'.<sup>7</sup> In two separate passages, Said specifically discusses the importance of the Holocaust, and does so without denying or diminishing that event in anyway.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, however, while Said recognizes the importance of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, he actually overplays their importance in Zionism's formation: 'I have tried to show that the Muslim and Christian Palestinians who lived in Palestine for hundreds of years until they were driven out in 1948, were unhappy victims of the same movement *whose whole aim* had been to end the victimization of Jews by Christian Europe.'<sup>9</sup>

These small positive aspects notwithstanding, by and large the book is irreparably flawed. First, it is an obvious polemic and not the work of 'rigorous scholarship' promised by the description on the back cover. Long and repetitive literary diatribes lacking evidence and specific example fill most every passage. For instance, Said writes, 'the Jewish-Zionist colonizers in Palestine hoped perhaps that the Arabs would go away or not bother them if *they*, the Palestinians, were ignored, left alone, sidestepped. Later, they thought that punishing the Palestinians with bloody noses and terrorism would incline them to an acceptance of Zionism'.<sup>10</sup> Of course, once one moves beyond slogans (such as 'A people without a land for land without a people') and actually examines the writings of major Zionist leaders and intellectuals, it becomes clear how poor and inaccurate this generalization is (a subject which will be dealt with in much greater depth below).

Moreover, frequently throughout the book Said's polemical arguments are double-edged; in other words, just as they apply to Zionism and the Israelis, so too could they apply to the Palestinians. For instance, Said writes: 'This designation made it certain that a Zionist state would be unlike any other in that it was not to be the state of its citizens, but rather the state of a whole people most of which was in the Diaspora.'<sup>11</sup> The most curious part of this argument is that one of the few groups on earth who have been in a similar state as the Jews are the Palestinians, whose liberation movement also claimed to represent a whole people, despite the fact that many—even most— of those it referred to lived in the Diaspora.

Additionally, Said declares: 'I take it for granted morally that human beings individually and selectively are entitled to fundamental rights, of which self-determination is one. By this I mean that no human being should be threatened with "transfer" out of his or her home or land.'<sup>12</sup> While with his second sentence Said attempts to qualify his support for the principle of self-determination in a way which might seem applicable to Palestinians alone in this dispute, what Said misses in this passage is that this belief is actually a vital cornerstone of Zionism as well: the conviction that after 1800 years of living in exile from their homeland, Jews have the right to return to the land they were 'transferred' from by the Romans (and Babylonians before them). And that, collectively, the Jews as a nation—not just a religion, but a people—are entitled to the same fundamental rights as any other nation: especially that of self-determination.

Still, the work is at its most polemic when Said compares the actions of Israelis and Palestinians. Sometimes, this bias is draped in poetic flare, such as when he writes: 'As far as I am concerned, the Palestinian mission is a mission of peace . . . Certainly when the PLO is compared with the Israeli army or air force . . . it is clear that the Palestinian cause means a choice of peace and human will over steel and sheer force.'<sup>13</sup> Or in another passage he writes: 'The list of human indignities and, by any impartial standard, the record of immoral subjugation practiced by Israel against the Palestinian Arab remnant is blood curdling.'<sup>14</sup>

When describing Palestinian terror, Said is willing to call the attacks 'stupid' misadventures (his description of the killing of the wheelchair-bound Leon Klinghoffer and the 1990 Tel Aviv beach assault, the second he later calls foolish and pointless),<sup>15</sup> or mentions the 'alleged' PLO involvement in terror.<sup>16</sup> When discussing Israeli misdeeds, however, he does not bother with words like 'alleged'—for Said, it is simple, and the intifada in particular 'unmasked' for 'international public opinion . . . the Israelis as sullen and brutal killers, their "vision" nothing more than cruel punishment administered to defenceless civilians'.<sup>17</sup> And, of course, only 'senior Israeli politicians, solders, diplomats, and intellectuals' employ 'poisonous, dehumanizing rhetoric . . . to characterize all Palestinian acts of resistance as terror and Palestinians as non-human'.<sup>18</sup> Palestinians, one

might be led to believe, never dehumanized Israelis. The extent of Said's bias in this regard is demonstrated in the following passage:

Stripped of its context, an act of Palestinian desperation looks like wanton murder—as in fact, I have thought, many acts of individual adventure (hijacking, kidnapping, and the like) *were* acts of unbalanced, finally immoral, and useless destruction . . . The planting of bombs in Israel or the West Bank and Gaza must be understood in the context of day-to-day coercion and the brutality of a long military occupation. Besides, there is nothing in Palestinian history, absolutely nothing at all to rival the record of Zionist terror against Arabs, against other Jews, against United Nations officials, against the British.<sup>19</sup>

Ignoring his outlandish last sentence, it is important to notice how Said constantly stresses that Palestinian terrorism 'must be understood' because of a given context, whereas throughout *The Question of Palestine* Jewish violence is always context-free. Even when Said writes that he has 'been horrified by the hijacking of planes, suicidal missions, the assassinations, the bombing of schools and hotels', he qualifies it first by saying that 'now [he is] speaking as only one Palestinian'.<sup>20</sup> Of course, Said never qualifies his repulsion at Israeli practices as just one individual—then it is clear that everyone should be outraged. Secondly, in the same breath that he says he is 'horrified . . . at the terror visited upon its victims', and he states that he is also 'horrified by the terror in Palestinian men and women who were driven to do such things', he feels compelled to claim that some external force drove Palestinians to do their terrible acts. Never, however, does Said say, for example, 'I am appalled by Israeli brutality, and by the brutality that has caused them to act this way'. No, then it is just the Israelis being barbarous.

Just as frequently, however, Said simply gets carried away. For instance, he accuses Israel of 'sponsor[ing] naked genocidal wars',<sup>21</sup> and claims that 'Until 1966, the Arab citizens of Israel were ruled by a military government exclusively in existence to control, bend, manipulate, terrorize, and tamper with every facet of Arab life from birth virtually until death'.<sup>22</sup> Said describes West Bank settlers as people 'whose vanguard is Gush Emunim, a collection of fanatics whose zeal and violence makes the "Islamic" hordes seem positively gentle'.<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, while Said dismisses all Israeli peace proposals, he distorts PLO decisions, making them appear serious, realistic offers for peace, claiming for instance, 'the PLO stated its willingness to accept a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Two meetings of the National Council, in 1974 and again in 1977, committed the whole national community to this idea, and with the idea, an implicit recognition of Israel as a neighbour'.<sup>24</sup> Yet the historical record shows the PLO in the 1970s in a much different light. Instead, on 4 December 1977, the PLO issued its 'Six-Point Programme',

in which it did accept the idea of 'an independent Palestinian national state on any part of Palestinian land', but did so 'without reconciliation, recognition or negotiations, as an interim aim of the Palestinian Revolution'—not to mention explicitly rejecting UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.<sup>25</sup>

In this same vein, Said suggests that 'Unlike the Israelis, I think, most Palestinians fully realize that their Other, the Israeli-Jewish people, is a concrete political reality with which they must live in the future'.<sup>26</sup> Yet it is entirely unclear on what basis Said draws this conclusion. For instance, Said discusses Mahmoud Darwish's short work, 'Bitaqit Hawia' (Identity Card) in some depth, saying of it: 'The curious power of this little poem is that at the time it appeared in the late sixties, it did not *represent* as much as *embody* the Palestinian.' He only quotes four stanzas, but the final, most powerful one concludes, 'The usurper's flesh will become my food / Beware—beware—of my hunger / and my anger!'<sup>27</sup> I am unaware of any Zionist poetry that discusses the Palestinians in any similar terms—and surely no such poem could be called the 'embodiment' of the Israelis.

While other examples of bias (or, more accurately, propaganda) abound throughout the book,<sup>28</sup> given the brevity of this article, the core of this critique will focus on what might be considered the worst flaw of the book: Said's total contortion of history to fit his ideological thesis. In short, it could be said that *The Question of Palestine* is what happens when a professor of literature writes about history, and believes that in this field as well, he is allowed to use the device of literary licence.

### CONTORTED HISTORY

To an extent, readers might excuse political bias in a book written by a seemingly moderate Palestinian refugee. Unfortunately, Said takes full advantage of both this leeway and the rising popularity of post-modern historians in writing his book. One of the clearest instances of this is how he presents the second chapter of the book, which he entitles 'Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims'. Obviously, the title suggests that it is a study of the Palestinian perspective of Zionism, a study which Said says is 'a consideration of Zionism as it has affected the Palestinian Arab who was not its beneficiary but its victims'.<sup>29</sup> The goal, according to Said, is to ask 'what did the victim feel as he watched the Zionists arriving in Palestine?'<sup>30</sup>

Yet this is not what Said does in practice. Chapter two does not deal with the Palestinian perspective at all (a subject he does deal with to some extent in chapter three). This is most evident in the fact that while he quotes very extensively from dozens of Zionist and European sources, he only once quotes a Palestinian other than himself (the mayor of Nazareth), and even then for only two brief sentences. Instead, Said spends the entire chapter attempting to prove historically that Zionism is nothing but

the Jewish daughter of European imperialism, and as such ignored the native Arab population—and wished to transfer it when ignoring it was no longer possible.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, many of Said's claims and assertions are simply historically false, though he speaks with the air of someone who has researched his topic thoroughly; for instance: 'And it is important to remember that in joining the general Western enthusiasm for overseas territorial acquisition, Zionism *never* spoke of itself as a Jewish liberation movement, but rather as a Jewish movement for colonial settlement in the Orient.'<sup>32</sup> What is most ironic about this particular contention is not that it is totally incorrect (almost every Zionist leader spoke about the movement in terms of liberating the Jewish people). Rather, it is that 45 pages earlier Said himself writes: 'As Herzl first conceived of it in the nineties, Zionism was *a movement to free Jews* and solve the problem of anti-Semitism in the West.'<sup>33</sup>

In other cases, Said tries to change history in ways contrary to most of the historical evidence, and even his own claims. One fascinating instance of these intellectual acrobatics deals with whether Palestinians had a unique national character, which, as Yosef Gorny points out, in many ways was as critical an obstacle for Palestinian nationalism as the lack of previous habitation was for Jewish nationalism. In particular, Said takes issue with Zionists having lumped Palestinians together with Arabs in general:

on a land called Palestine there existed for hundreds of years a largely pastoral, a nevertheless socially, culturally, politically, economically identifiable people whose language and religion were (for a huge majority) Arabic and Islam, respectively. This people—or, if one wishes to deny them any modern conception of themselves as a people, this group of people—identified itself with the land it tilled and lived on.<sup>34</sup>

Later, Said continues to 'set the record straight':

Of course, the main thing missing was a country, which until the time that Palestine was supplanted by Israel had been predominantly Arab (Muslim and Christian) in character . . . for any Palestinian, there was no doubt that his country had its own character and identity. True, Palestine had been part of the Ottoman Empire until the end of World War I, and true also that in any accepted sense it had not been independent. Its inhabitants referred to themselves as Palestinians, however, and made important distinctions between themselves, the Syrians, the Lebanese, and the Transjordanians.<sup>35</sup>

For Said, suggesting that the Palestinians did not possess a country was simply typical of the worldview held by most Europeans colonialists, such as Alphonse de Lamartine. Said criticizes Lamartine's *Voyage to the Orient*

for writing that 'the territory was not really a country (presumably its inhabitants not "real" citizens [*sic*]), and therefore a marvellous place for an imperial or colonial project to be undertaken by France'.<sup>36</sup>

The problem, of course, with Said's complaint is that Palestine *was not* a country—it was a territory that was a province of Syria and later the Ottoman Empire, a fact Said even admits.<sup>37</sup> Palestine did not even possess the wide autonomy of Egypt, which was also still formally part of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>38</sup> In fact, it is Said himself who writes that 'the defining characteristic of Palestinian history—its traumatic national encounter with Zionism—is unique to the region'.<sup>39</sup> In other words, before the arrival of Zionism, it was difficult to speak of a well-defined Palestinian nation, separate from that of the larger Arab nation. This would explain why in January 1919 the first Palestinian Congress advocated incorporation of Palestine into greater Syria. It would also explain why in the evidence submitted by the Arab Office in Jerusalem to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in March, 1946, the authors argued that:

Negatively, it [Zionist settlement] has diverted the whole [course of their [Arabs'] national development. Geographically Palestine is part of Syria; its indigenous inhabitants belong to the Syrian branch of the Arab family of nations; all their culture and tradition link them to the other Arab peoples.<sup>40</sup>

Said also glosses over a rather important fact when he begins his historical account: 'Palestine became a predominantly Arab and Islamic country by the end of the seventh century.'<sup>41</sup> By summarizing so much history with a single general sentence, what Said fails to emphasize is that Palestine became Arab and Islamic through the Islamic imperialist conquest that swept through the entire region. It is not that suddenly people decided to start speaking Arabic or convert—there was a military and cultural invasion that makes Zionism (and Western colonialism) look benign in comparison. Indeed, Said's totally amoral stance on the Islamic conquest stands out in sharp contrast to his strident stand towards 'the absolute wrong of settler-colonialism'.<sup>42</sup>

While Said very briefly brushes over Arab and Islamic history, what is more egregious is his treatment of the Jewish historical connection. In several instances throughout his book, Said tries to diminish the Jewish historical connection to the disputed land. Instead of over 1,000 years of historical presence, Said claims 'that the entire historical duration of a Jewish state in Palestine prior to 1948 was a sixty-year period two millennia ago'.<sup>43</sup> Later, he modifies this claim slightly, saying that it was sixty years of 'Jewish sovereignty over Palestine which had lapsed for two millennia'.<sup>44</sup>

Said's description of history is of course flawed on many grounds. First, the previous 'Jewish state' he seems to be referring to—the united kingdom

of David and Solomon—actually existed almost three millennia ago (1000 BCE), not two. Secondly, in addition to ignoring all history pre-King David, Said happens to leave out that while the kingdom split in half, there were still two generally independent Jewish regimes: the northern Kingdom of Israel, which fell to the Assyrians almost 300 years after the united Kingdom was first established (721 BCE); and Judea, which was finally destroyed by the Babylonians almost 150 years later (586 BCE). Moreover, after only 70 years of Babylonian expulsion, Jews returned for another 650 years (roughly 516 BCE until 133 CE). Even after the second expulsion, a very small number of Jews remained there, and they were occasionally joined by small numbers of Jews immigrating to the area. While one could rightfully claim that the Jews as a whole had spent more time in exile than on the land, to sum up Jewish historical experience in Israel as a sixty-year period is simply fallacious.

In a similar vein, Said asserts that ‘The principal Palestinian cities—Nablus, Jerusalem, Nazareth, Acre, Jaffa, Jericho, Ramleh, Hebron, and Haifa—were built in the main by Palestinian Arabs, who continued to live there even after the encroaching Zionist colonies expanded very close to them’.<sup>45</sup> Ironically, however, every city mentioned by Said was built thousands of years before the Arabs arrived, and were actually ‘built in the main’ by the Jews, Romans, or Ottomans.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, Said brings us to the junction of these last two major historical lapses: ‘A large segment of the Israeli population seems to believe that Arab land can be converted into Jewish land . . . because the land had once been Jewish two millennia ago (a part of Eretz Israel [*sic*]).’<sup>47</sup> In this claim it becomes clear how by ignoring Islamic history Said can also ignore how the land originally ‘became Arab’, while minimizing Jewish history. The Jews are no longer reclaiming an historic right but simply colonizing land.

#### ZIONISM AS A EUROPEAN ENTERPRISE

Said makes two other major mistaken and bias-driven historical claims. The first is his attempts to depict Zionism as if it were a European gentile enterprise: ‘an almost wholly European decision was made to resettle, reconstitute, recapture the land for Jews who were to be brought there from elsewhere’.<sup>48</sup> Putting new gloss on an old Arab fallacy of the Zionists as twentieth century Crusaders, Said goes on to suggest that ‘so far as the Arab Palestinian is concerned, the Zionist project for, and conquest of, Palestine was simply the most successful and to date the most protracted of many such European projects since the Middle Ages’.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, it also fits Said’s notion of Israel being an ‘imported’, colonial, and Western entity when he muses that there must be some ‘mechanism . . . in Israel for making European and American Jews into immigrants, then citizens’.<sup>50</sup> Less comfortable for Said is that as he was

writing his book, the majority of Israelis were actually of Oriental descent. In other words, it would be much harder for Said to talk about a Yemenite, Persian, Kurdish, or Moroccan Jew in Israel as a colonist. Indeed, Said understands that to the average reader such a reality would clearly not fit the mould of colonialism he is trying to put Zionism into, but rather would require another, more complex explanation. For if not colonialist in essence, then Zionism would appear to be a competing nationalism for a group seeking self-determination, and thereby a body much more difficult to vilify.

In fact, Said understands the tremendous difficulties Mizrahi (Oriental) Jews create for substantiating his claims that 'The Zionist settler in Palestine was transformed retrospectively and actually from an implacably silent master into an analogue of white settlers in Africa'.<sup>51</sup> Thus, he makes Zionism out to be a device of Occidental Jewry for oppressing both Palestinians and Mizrahi Jewry: 'once victims themselves, Occidental Jews in Israel have become oppressors (of Palestinian Arabs and Oriental Jews)'.<sup>52</sup>

Yet Oriental Jews were also a part of Zionism and, as such, played a major role in its dealings (or 'oppression' as Said would have it) with the Palestinian Arabs. Indeed, Said never comments on how Menachem Begin, whom he derides throughout his book for his stance on the Palestinians, was supported overwhelmingly by these same Oriental Jews. Further, Said fails to recognize that these Oriental Jews left their homes for Israel in large part because they had been 'oppressed' by the Arab majorities in their countries of origin. It appears that oppression, according to Said, is something that can only be done by white Europeans.

#### ZIONISM AS MONOLITH

While he pays lip service to the notion that there are 'complex internal debates characterizing Zionism',<sup>53</sup> in practice, every time Said describes Zionism, his depiction is always that of a monolithic, undivided movement—at least as regards the Palestinians. Further, Said claims that this monolithic movement's primary defining feature was to deny the existence of the Arabs in Palestine, either by ignoring them, or when that did not work, by seeking to transfer them. The following are several instances of Said's gross (and grossly inaccurate) generalizations of Zionism:

My premise is that Israel developed as a social polity out of the Zionist thesis that Palestine's colonization was to be accomplished simultaneously for and by Jews *and* by the displacement of the Palestinians; moreover, that in its conscious and declared ideas about Palestine, Zionism attempted first to minimize, then to eliminate, and then all else failing, finally to subjugate the natives as a way of

guaranteeing that Israel would not be simply a state of its citizens (which included Arabs, of course) but the state of ‘the whole Jewish people’.<sup>54</sup>

But the dehumanization of the Arab, which began with the view that Palestinians were either not there or savages or both, saturates everything in Israeli society.<sup>55</sup>

It is no wonder that today the one issue that electrifies Israel as a society is the problem of the Palestinians, whose negation is the most consistent thread running through Zionism.<sup>56</sup>

[I]t is more likely that there will remain the inverse resistance which has characterized Zionism and Israel since the beginning: the refusal to admit, and the consequent denial of, the existence of Palestinian Arabs who are there not simply as an inconvenient nuisance, but as a population with an indissoluble bond with the land.<sup>57</sup>

All the transformative projects for Palestine, including Zionism, have rationalized the denial of present reality in Palestine with some argument about a ‘higher’ (or better, more worthy, more modern, more fitting; the comparatives are almost infinite) interest, cause or mission. These ‘higher’ things entitle their proponents not only to claim that the natives of Palestine, such as they are, are not worth considering and therefore nonexistent; they also feel entitled to claim that the natives of Palestine, and Palestine itself, have been superceded definitely.<sup>58</sup>

Far from the Arab magnitudes signifying an already inhabited land, to the early Zionist colonists these people were to be ignored . . . This blindness was as true of left-wing ideologues and movements like Ber Borochov and Ha’poel Ha’Tzair as it was of so-called romantic right-wingers like Vladimir Jabotinsky and his Revisionists (Menachem Begin’s political ancestors). At bottom, as Amos Elon has quite accurately shown, the Zionists considered the Arab problem as something to be avoided completely or denied (and hence attacked) completely.<sup>59</sup>

Zionism was premised on the evacuation of Palestine by its majority native inhabitants. As I have said before, there is no minimizing this stark truth, and every Zionist leader of note has faced it squarely. To found a state in Asia and people it with a largely immigrant population drawn initially from Europe means depopulating the original territory. This has been a simple *desideratum* of Zionism, with very complicated ramifications.<sup>60</sup>

The first problem with Said’s thesis is that—while it does not fit his abstract clarity—Zionists have always been far from unified on their stances regarding how to deal with the native Palestinian Arab population. Since the movement’s inception there were consistently various and widely

diverging schools of thought on the issue, with some like Theodor Herzl, Yitzhak Epstein, and Ber Borochov even suggesting that the Zionist movement do its best to incorporate (and some even suggested assimilate) the local Arab population into the Jewish economy and society. As Yosef Gorny summarized the period from 1882 to 1917:

At the ideological level, particularly on the question of recognition of the national rights of the Arabs in Palestine, there were two extreme standpoints—one recognizing the equal rights of the two peoples to Palestine, the other insisting, out of a strong sense of national egoism, on the exclusiveness of Jewish rights. The two intermediate viewpoints recognized the national rights of the Arab people residing in Palestine, while demanding precedence, particularly in the sphere of immigration, for the Jewish people returning to its homeland.<sup>61</sup>

Furthermore, the early Zionist thinkers were far from 'blind' to the reality of the Palestinian presence they faced, with many commenting on the issue even before they had settled in Palestine. As early as 1891, for example, immediately upon returning from his first visit to Palestine, Ahad Ha-Am (Asher Ginsberg's pen name, arguably the leading Zionist ideologue of that time) published a scorching criticism of the way in which many Zionist settlers were conceiving of, and treating, the Palestinians in their midst.<sup>62</sup> As he would later write in 1914, 'there is a nation in Palestine which is already settled there and has no intention of leaving'.<sup>63</sup>

Second, if there does exist a general theme that unites the various mainstream factions of Zionism in their attitudes toward the native Arab population, it consists of two factors: 1) a willingness to identify the issue and try to solve it, and 2) a clear declaration that transfer is both undesirable and unnecessary. For instance, the once hawkish Moshe Smilansky stated clearly in 1914 that 'there is still much space for a great number of new settlers, and the former [i.e. the Palestinians] will in due course become a minority among the numerous newcomers'.<sup>64</sup> On the other side of the spectrum, the integrationist Yehoshua Radler-Feldman (also known by the pen name Rabbi Benjamin) also held early on that a few hundred thousand Arabs would not pose a significant problem to Zionism, as there was room in Palestine for a population of five million.<sup>65</sup> Berl Locker not only recognized 'the living right of another people, the Arab people, which has been living in the country for centuries',<sup>66</sup> but also plainly stated that 'this need [for a Jewish national home] can be satisfied in this particular country, without ejecting or displacing or harming anyone'<sup>67</sup> or without 'economically "displacing" them either'.<sup>68</sup>

Ya'acov Zerubavel even went as far as to tell the leaders of the local Arab population that the Jews not only had no intention of transferring or oppressing the Arabs, but even saw that there existed two groups in Palestine with national rights.<sup>69</sup> And while early on David Ben-Gurion was

willing to admit in private that ‘there is a certain measure of Arab opposition’ to Zionism (which he denied in his published articles), he still held in his private notes that despite their opposition to Zionism, ‘we did not come here to expel the Arabs’.<sup>70</sup> Even twenty years later, in a private letter to his son Amos explaining why he agreed to partition, Ben-Gurion dismissed the notion of transferring the Arabs, and wrote: ‘All of our aspirations are built on the assumption—that has been verified by all of our activity in the Land [of Israel]—that there is enough room for us and for the Arabs on this land.’<sup>71</sup>

Even the right-wing revisionist Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky clearly understood as early as 1923 not only that the Palestinians existed, but that *naturally* they felt great attachment to their land: ‘They feel at least the same instinctive jealous love of Palestine, as the old Aztecs felt for ancient Mexico, and [the] Sioux for their rolling Prairies’.<sup>72</sup> During the Peel commission hearings, Jabotinsky went so far as to declare: ‘I have the profoundest feeling for the Arab case, in so far as that Arab case is not exaggerated.’<sup>73</sup>

In fact, it is precisely because Jabotinsky believed that the local Arab population would view Zionists as foreign invaders that he believed they had no interest in sharing the land with the Zionists. As he declared in his treatise on the subject ‘The Iron Wall’ (1923):

Every native population, civilised or not, regards its lands as its national home, of which it is the sole master, and it wants to retain that mastery always; it will refuse to admit not only new masters but, even new partners or collaborators.

This is equally true of the Arabs.

To imagine ... that [the Palestinian Arabs] will voluntarily consent to the realisation ... of Zionism ... [in] return for the moral and material conveniences which the Jewish colonist brings with him, is a childish notion, which has at bottom a kind of contempt for the Arab people; it means that they despise the Arab race, which they regard as a corrupt mob that can be bought and sold, and are willing to give up their fatherland for a good railway system ... Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised.

That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of ‘Palestine’ into the ‘Land of Israel’.<sup>74</sup>

So much for Said’s claim of Zionism’s ‘refusal to admit’ that there was ‘a population with an indissoluble bond with the land’. Unambiguously, this recognition was actually the very reason Jabotinsky believed that the Zionist doves (or ‘peace-mongers’ as he called them) were mistaken, and why there was no choice but to use armed force to protect Zionist interests.

'We cannot offer any adequate compensation to the Palestinian Arabs in return for Palestine. And therefore, there is no likelihood of any voluntary agreement being reached'. Such an agreement, Jabotinsky held, was not possible 'now, nor in the prospective future'.<sup>75</sup> As such, the logical conclusion for Jabotinsky was clear:

*Zionist colonisation must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population.* Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population—behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach.

That is our Arab policy; not what [it] should be, but what it actually is, whether we admit it or not.<sup>76</sup>

Still, this being said, there are two important caveats for understanding Jabotinsky's thinking towards the Palestinians. First, even a hawkish pessimist like Jabotinsky believed that eventually an agreement could be reached:

[T]his does not mean that there cannot be any agreement with the Palestine Arabs. What is impossible is a voluntary agreement. As long as the Arabs feel that there is the least hope of getting rid of us, they will refuse to give up this hope in return for either kind words or for bread and butter, because they are not a rabble, but a living people. And when a living people yields in matters of such a vital character it is only when there is no longer any hope of getting rid of us, because they can make no breach in the iron wall. Not till then will they drop their extremist leaders whose watchword is 'Never!' And the leadership will pass to the moderate groups, who will approach us with a proposal that we should both agree to mutual concessions. Then we may expect them to discuss honestly practical questions, such as a guarantee against Arab displacement, or equal rights for Arab citizen, or Arab national integrity.

*And when that happens, I am convinced that we Jews will be found ready to give them satisfactory guarantees, so that both peoples can live together in peace, like good neighbours.*<sup>77</sup>

Secondly (as this last quotation also demonstrates), in the meantime, despite their expected antagonism, Jabotinsky consistently claimed that the Arabs should not be transferred—simply put, because Jabotinsky saw no need.

I am reputed to be an enemy of the Arabs, who wants to have them ejected from Palestine, and so forth. It is not true ... Politically, my attitude is determined by two principles. First of all, I consider it utterly impossible to eject the Arabs from Palestine. There will always be *two*

nations in Palestine—which is good enough for me, provided the Jews become the majority.<sup>78</sup>

Or as he told the Peel commission fifteen years later: ‘I have also shown to you already that, in our submission, there is no question of ousting the Arabs. On the contrary’, Jabotinsky declared, ‘the idea is that Palestine on both sides of the Jordan should hold the Arabs, their progeny, *and* many millions of Jews.’<sup>79</sup> Echoing the logic of Smilansky and Rabbi Benjamin, Jabotinsky held that with 3–4 million anticipated Jewish refugees, demographically Palestine would obviously possess an overwhelming Jewish majority *without* transferring any of the native population. The price for the Palestinians, Jabotinsky conceded, was to become a minority. But that, he argues, would be a historical necessity because the Jews possessed a more pressing moral claim to Palestine:

What I do not deny is that in that process the Arabs of Palestine will necessarily become a minority in the country of Palestine. What I do deny is that *that* is a hardship. It is not a hardship on any race, any nation, possessing so many National States now and so many more National States in the future. One fraction, one branch of that race, and not a big one, will have to live in someone else’s State: well, that is the case with all the mightiest nations of the world . . . That is only normal and there is no ‘hardship’ attached to that. So when we hear the Arab claim confronted with the Jewish claim; I fully understand that any minority would prefer to be a majority, it is quite understandable that the Arabs of Palestine would also prefer Palestine to be the Arab State No. 4, No. 5, or No. 6—that I quite understand; but when the Arab claim is confronted with our Jewish demand to be saved, it is like the claims of appetite versus the claims of starvation.<sup>80</sup>

To bring this matter full circle, Jabotinsky then concluded his testimony by stating: ‘No tribunal has ever had the luck of trying a case where all the justice was on the side of one Party and the other Party had no case whatsoever. Usually in human affairs any tribunal, including this tribunal, in trying two cases, has to concede that both sides have a case on their side.’ In addressing the issue in this manner, not only was Jabotinsky clearly recognizing the Palestinian claim to the disputed land, he was also willing to recognize publicly that it was a just claim. The issue, Jabotinsky held, was that Zionism’s claim was both just *and most importantly*, that the Jew’s need for a country was far more pressing: ‘in order to do justice, they [the judges] must take into consideration what should constitute the basic justification of all human demands, individual or mass demands—the decisive terrible balance of Need’.<sup>81</sup>

While many key elements on the right wing of the Zionist movement were clearly willing to admit to the existence of the Palestinians and even

the legitimacy of their national claims, the left wing could be even more sympathetic—to the point where they were willing to subjugate the Jews' own national aspirations. Chaim Weizmann, while terribly maligned throughout Said's book as a racist colonialist, could just as easily be quoted in contexts that would simply destroy Said's thesis. For instance, during a speech to the Seventeenth Zionist Congress held in 1931, Weizmann declared that 'The Arabs must be made to feel, must be convinced, by deed as well as by word, that whatever the future numerical relationship of the two nations in Palestine, we on our part contemplate no political domination . . . we welcome an agreement between the two kindred races on the basis of political parity'.<sup>82</sup> In a follow-up interview, he was even more steadfast on this point:

I strongly feel that agreement with the Arabs is obtainable on the basis of parity . . .

I do not see how we can demand more. Parity does not mean a bi-national state, which is vague and does not necessarily imply parity. [But] I have no sympathy or understanding for the demand for a Jewish majority. A majority does not necessarily guarantee security. We may have a majority and still be insecure. A majority is not required for the development of Jewish civilization and culture.

The world will construe this demand only in one sense, that we want to acquire a majority in order to drive out the Arabs. Why should we raise a demand which can only make a provocative impression?<sup>83</sup>

For this statement, Weizmann paid a significant price: he was not re-elected to the World Zionist Organization (WZO) Executive Committee. While this might seem to justify Said, the primary reason that his remarks created such a storm was because his comments seemed to suggest that other Zionists were in favour of transferring the Palestinian population, a claim they categorically denied.<sup>84</sup>

It is also important to note that this view was not new to Weizmann, nor was it a one-off gimmick. For example, in his speech to the Zionist Congress in August 1925, Weizmann warned that 'Palestine must be built up without disturbing a hair of the legitimate interests of the Arabs . . . [The Zionist Congress] must recognize the fact that Palestine is not Rhodesia, but that 600,000 Arabs are there who, from the point of view of international justice, have just as much right to their life in Palestine as we have to our National Home'.<sup>85</sup>

Clearly, then, Said's portrayal of Zionism totally misrepresents the attitudes of its leaders towards the Palestinian Arabs. By and large, it was not colonial racism that underpinned their worldview, but realism: Zionists had no desire to repress the Arabs, but simply came to the clear conclusion that the Arabs had no desire to accommodate or consider Jewish nationalism in any shape or form.

Indeed, Jabotinsky was not the only prominent Zionist whose views regarding the native Arab population were determined largely by the conclusion that the Palestinians were unwilling to come to terms with the Zionists in the foreseeable future. David Ben-Gurion, too, was convinced that this was the case. In a speech given to the Mapai council in Haifa on 23 January 1937, Ben-Gurion was quite explicit:

I think that our approach to the Arabs, in the future as well ... must stand on two assumptions, or more correctly, on the negation of two assumptions. I negate one assumption that there is no chance and no hope for peace with the Arabs and no hope or chance for an agreement with the Arabs. I absolutely negate that assumption. I think that this assumption is dangerous ...

[But] there exists no certain and assured recipe that will bring us now, or in a year, or in five years, to an agreement with the Arabs. There is nothing that we can do or refrain from doing, which will necessarily bring us to an agreement with the Arabs. Even concessions, even if we say we will be satisfied with a small [Jewish] immigration, even if we say we will be satisfied without immigration, for even then there will be a fraud who will promise us that an agreement is definitely achievable.<sup>86</sup>

Similarly, it could be argued that when Weizmann's thoughts on the Arab–Jewish conflict in Palestine were most hawkish, the basis for his rationale was fairly similar to that of Ben-Gurion and Jabotinsky. Namely, although Weizmann preferred to reach a peace agreement with the Arabs (as demonstrated by his agreements with Husayn's son Faisal and his subsequent negotiations with other Arab parties), at certain times he considered reaching an agreement impossible for the sole reason that no significant Arab party was interested in coming to terms with Zionism. As Weizmann put it in 1918:

We were prepared to find a certain amount of hostility on the part of the Arabs and Syrians, based largely on misconceptions of our real aims, and we have always realized that one of our principal duties would be to dispel misconceptions and to endeavour to arrive at an amicable understanding with the non-Jewish elements of the population ... But we find among the Arabs and Syrians, or certain sections of them, a state of mind which seems to us to make useful negotiations impossible at the present moment.<sup>87</sup>

With so much evidence refuting his allegations, what support does Said use to defend his thesis? Amazingly, in terms of Zionists, he only quotes from two figures the average reader might possibly be familiar with, Herzl (see discussion below) and Weizmann. Besides mentioning the names of many of the main figures in passing, he does not quote any other significant intellectual or leader. Instead, he quotes very extensively from relative

unknowns: Israel Koenig, northern district commissioner of the Interior Ministry, gets almost four full pages dedicated to him, as does Joseph Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Development Division. An opinion piece published in *Ma'ariv* in 1955 by Dr. A. Carlebach, who is only identified as 'a distinguished citizen', receives almost two full pages.

#### 'MANGLED QUOTATIONS'

Still, the worst academic sin committed by Said in *The Question of Palestine* concerns one critical quotation, in which Said actually removes sentences and even changes a crucial word in a quotation in order to fit his political ideology. To use Said's own phrase (when he disparages Joan Peter's *From Time Immemorial*): Said 'mangled' the quotation.<sup>88</sup>

This occurs the very first time Said quotes an early Zionist. Shrewdly, Said attempts to use the man most closely associated with Zionism, Theodor Herzl, to prove that transfer was an inescapable part of the Zionist plan from the beginning. Yet Said does not quote from Herzl's two major books on Zionism, *The Jewish State* or *Alt-Neuland*—instead, he chooses an obscure passage from Herzl's diary in 1895:

We shall have to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.

Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.<sup>89</sup>

Said finds this quotation so critical that he does not bother to quote Herzl otherwise—not from his published works or from his diary. Instead, what this 'scholar' lacks in evidence, he makes up by actually citing the same quotation twice: precisely the same quotation is used on page 13 and later on pages 70–71 (for good measure, the quotation is even referred to a third time on page 100).

Yet this repeated quotation purposely leaves out critical sentences. The full quotation is as follows, with removed sentences in italics and the changed word in bold:

June 12

When we occupy the land, we shall bring immediate benefits to the state that receives us. We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us.

We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.

*The property-owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly.*

*Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth.*

*But we are not going to sell them anything back.<sup>90</sup>*

By removing the italicized sentences, Said takes what is clearly a class reference, and leads one to believe that Herzl is referring to all of Palestine's native inhabitants. Still, most disingenuous of all is not that it is an incomplete quotation (without proper notation), but that he changes the key word of 'try' to 'have', suggesting that Herzl believed that it was impossible for a Jewish state to come to fruition without removing the native population. It is important to note that this is not a question of whose translation he used either—I quoted from the very same edition of the same translation.

Yet, even if this quotation was unaltered, it is far from a quotation which could be considered historically representative of what Herzl believed. The proof lies in simply examining the journal entry immediately following the one quoted by Said (even written on the same day), which begins with sentiments much closer to Herzl's typical thoughts on the subject:

It goes without saying that we shall respectfully tolerate persons of other faiths and protect their property, their honour, and their freedom with the harshest means of coercion. This is another area in which we shall set the entire old world a wonderful example.<sup>91</sup>

Again, on the same day, Herzl writes:

Estate owners who are attached to their soil because of old age, habit, etc. will be offered a complete transplantation—to any place they wish, like our own people. This offer will be made when all others have been rejected.

If this offer is not accepted either, *no harm will be done*. Such close attachment to the soil is found only with small properties. Big ones are to be had for a price.

Should there be many such immovable owners in individual areas, we shall simply leave them there and develop our commerce in the direction of other areas which belong to us.<sup>92</sup>

But the transfer quotation chosen by Said shows none of this, and, indeed, it is clear that Said had to ignore actively these and other passages because they disproved precisely what he wanted his readers to believe.

Moreover, Said's choice is a quotation from 1895, in the first few months of Herzl's journal and in the first year of Herzl's 'conversion' to

Zionism. To quote Herzl at this moment would be as fair as to claim that Herzl always believed in converting all Jewish children to Christianity, because in his very first journal entry, he discusses how two years previously he had proposed such a conversion scheme in order to solve the problem of anti-Semitism.<sup>93</sup>

In fact, far from being Herzl's deep-rooted and hidden plan for how to 'deal with the natives', this quotation is only characteristic of how Herzl worked. First, Herzl was an intricate planner, and wanted immediately to plan every detail. For instance, only a few days before the quotation used by Said, Herzl writes that: 'The High Priests will wear impressive robes; our cuirassiers, yellow trousers and white tunics; the officers, silver breast-plates.'<sup>94</sup> Only a few months after he is struck with the idea of a Jewish state, he is planning out the precise colours for the priest's garb during religious ceremonies.

More importantly, for understanding Herzl's true thinking it is critical to note that he also allowed himself to write ideas in his journal as they came into his head without screening them as part of a brain storming process, and only later discounted the bad ideas. As Herzl himself wrote *the day before* the 'damning' quotation used repeatedly by Said:

Much in these notes will seem ludicrous, exaggerated, crazy. But if I had exercised self-criticism, as I do in my literary work, my ideas would have been stunted. However, the gigantic serves the purpose better than the dwarfed, because anyone can do the trimming easily enough. Artists will understand why I, otherwise of rather clear intelligence, have let exaggerations and dreams proliferate among my practical, political, and legislative ideas, as green grass sprout among cobble-stones. I could not permit myself to be forced into the straitjacket of sober facts. This mild intoxication has been necessary.<sup>95</sup>

This later process of adjusting his original ideas is precisely what Herzl eventually did. For instance, Herzl quickly dropped notions of nobility, and went back and forth on the place religious authority figures in his future state. Early in his diary, Herzl wrote: 'The Wonder Rabbi of Sadagura to be brought over and installed as something like the bishop of a province. In fact, win over the entire clergy.'<sup>96</sup> Yet only a few months later, in *The Jewish State* (Chapter 5), Herzl writes with a much nastier tone: 'We shall keep our priests within the confines of their temples in the same way as we shall keep our professional army within the confines of their barracks.'

Which raises the critical question: why did Said not quote extensively from *Alt-Neuland*, which discusses the Palestinian question in some depth? Because the message would inevitably be the opposite of what Said is trying to prove. While *The Jewish State* does not delve into the issue of minority rights (it is only a small monograph of under 100 pages), *Alt-Neuland* (1902), a utopian novel whose social content Herzl treated as a thoughtful,

practical plan of action,<sup>97</sup> does spend several pages of discussion on this particular debate, raising most of the difficult issues.

First, Herzl believed that everyone should be allowed membership in his proposed 'New Society' regardless of race or religion, and that membership's privileges and obligations would be the same for all. In order to drive this point home, one of the novel's main characters is a local Arab Muslim named Reschid Bey, a friendly, European-educated man who owns a large farm.

Second, Herzl responds to an anticipated Jewish ethnocism and exclusivism. In one scene, for instance, one of the Jewish characters (Steineck) tells a Christian visitor from Europe (Kingscourt): 'Cultivation is everything!... We Jews introduced cultivation here.' To which Herzl has Reschid Bey reply 'with a friendly smile': 'Pardon me, sir! But this sort of thing was here before you came—at least there were signs of it. My father planted oranges extensively.'<sup>98</sup>

Of course, this does not mean that Herzl believed the Palestinians could not benefit immensely from Jewish immigration. Herzl continues the conversation:

'I don't deny that you had orange groves before we came,' thundered Steineck, 'but you could never get full value out of them.'

Reschid nodded. 'That is correct. Our profits have grown considerably. Our orange transport has multiplied tenfold since we have had good transportation facilities to connect us with the whole world. *Everything here has increased in value since your immigration.*'<sup>99</sup>

Still, Herzl understood that even if Zionists would enrich the native population, there would still be several objections, which he answers one at a time. The first seems to anticipate Edward Said specifically:

'One question, Reschid Bey,' interrupted Kingscourt. 'These gentlemen will pardon me, but you are much too modest. Were not the older inhabitants of Palestine ruined by the Jewish immigration? And didn't they have to leave the country? I mean, generally speaking. That individuals here and there were the gainers proves nothing.'

'What a question! It was a great blessing for all of us,' returned Reschid. 'Naturally, the land-owners gained most because they were able to sell to the Jewish society at high prices, or to wait for still higher ones. I, for my part, sold my land to our New Society because it was to my advantage to sell.'

Yet Herzl does not stop there. In what is a clear reversal of his position in the diary entry seven years before (as suggested before, one reversal of many), Herzl specifically discusses what he believes will happen to the poor Palestinians. Herzl continues to use Kingscourt to press the case of potential objectors:

'But I wanted to ask you, my dear Bey, how the former inhabitants fared—those who had nothing, the numerous Moslem Arabs.'

'Your question answers itself, Mr. Kingscourt,' replied Reschid. 'Those who had nothing stood to lose nothing, and could only gain. And they did gain: Opportunities to work, means of livelihood, prosperity. Nothing could have been more wretched than an Arab village at the end of the nineteenth century. The peasants' clay hovels were unfit for stables. The children lay naked and neglected in the streets, and grew up like dumb beasts. Now everything is different. They benefited from the progressive measures of the New Society whether they wanted to or not, whether they joined it or not. When the swamps were drained, the canals built, and the eucalyptus trees planted to drain, and "cure" the marshy soil, the natives (who, naturally, were well acclimatized) were the first to be employed, and were paid well for their work.'

'Just look at that field! It was a swamp in my boyhood. The New Society bought up this tract rather cheaply, and turned it into the best soil in the country. It belongs to that tidy settlement up there on the hill. It is a Moslem village—you can tell by the mosque. These people are better off than at any time in the past. They support themselves decently, their children are healthier and are being taught something. Their religion and ancient customs have in no wise [*sic*] been interfered with. They have become more prosperous—that is all.'

Which raises the last issue, the possibility of Islamic-based anti-Zionism and Islam's stance on religious pluralism:

[Kingscourt:] 'You're queer fellows, you Moslems. Don't you regard these Jews as intruders?'

'You speak strangely, Christian,' responded the friendly Reschid. 'Would you call a man a robber who takes nothing from you, but brings you something instead? The Jews have enriched us. Why should we be angry with them? They dwell among us like brothers...'

... [to which Kingscourt replies] 'Sounds reasonable. But you're an educated man, you've studied in Europe. I hardly think the simple country or town folk will be likely to think as you do.'

'They more than anyone else, Mr. Kingscourt. You must excuse my saying so, but I did not learn tolerance in the Occident. We Moslems have always had better relations with the Jews than you Christians.'

While one might claim that Herzl was naïve or overly optimistic, or even that his assumptions of Arab reactions to Zionism were not based on sufficient study, it does not change the basic point: Herzl was clearly not planning to transfer or oppress the native Arab population.

Truly, the more one looks at the general historical record of Zionist thought, the more ridiculous becomes Said's claim that 'Zionism was

premised on the evacuation of Palestine by its majority native inhabitants . . . there is no minimizing this stark truth, and every Zionist leader of note has faced it squarely’.

## CONCLUSIONS

Had it not been taken so seriously by so many respected scholars, one might have excused the view that *The Question of Palestine* was an exercise in irony. Coming close on the heels of *Orientalism*, in which Edward Said decried the vast stereotyping and poor scholarship of Western academics studying the Orient, Said himself embarked on precisely such a study of Zionism. Wearing the garb of scholastic history, Said’s polemic goes far beyond accepted bounds in his distorted use of historical sources.

While the *New York Times* review said that ‘Books such as Mr. Said’s need to be written and read in the hope that understanding will provide a better chance of survival’,<sup>100</sup> the opposite is more true. With ‘concrete accuracy’ being sacrificed for ‘abstract clarity’, books like Edward Said’s *The Question of Palestine* are precisely the reason why so few people, especially those in the Arab world, comprehend either the true essence or history of Zionism.

In general, this book fits a larger pattern in which most Palestinian and Arab academics and intellectuals have tried to see Zionism in a way that would fit with their needs and desires instead of looking at the historical reality. Too many Palestinians—including this seemingly moderate one—are unwilling to see the Jews in Israel not as a ‘new foreign colonialism’,<sup>101</sup> but as another ‘population with an indissoluble bond with the land’.

## NOTES

1. Interview with Albert Hourani in Nancy Gallagher (ed.), *Approaches to the History of the Middle East*, London, 1994, pp. 40–41, as quoted in Martin Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*, Washington, DC, 2001.
2. Aijaz Ahmad, ‘*Orientalism* and After: Ambivalence and Metropolitan Location in the Work of Edward Said’, in *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*, London, 1992, pp. 160–161, as quoted in Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand*.
3. Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine*, New York, 1992, p. 141.
4. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 51. Though after spending an entire book delegitimizing Zionism as a foreign colonial enterprise, his readiness to truly accept Israel, and especially under what conditions, is questionable.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 60. See also p. 84.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. xxxii and 72.
9. *Ibid.*, p. xxxix (emphasis added). This notion that the only legitimate motivating factor for Zionism is European anti-Semitism is a common theme in Said’s book. For instance, Said also writes: ‘were our [Palestinian] dispossession and our effacement . . . justified even to save the remnant of European Jews that had survived Nazism?’, p. xliii. Also see p. 59.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 119 (emphasis original, as are all others unless otherwise noted).

11. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
12. *Ibid.*, p. xlii.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 233–234.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. xx, xxvi.
16. *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.
17. *Ibid.*, p. xxxii.
18. *Ibid.*, p. xxi.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 172.
20. *Ibid.*, p. xxxviii.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 217.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 207. After the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, I think even Said himself would have to consider this an exaggeration. Along the same lines, Said believes that only Jewish settlers have an 'anachronistic' rationale for wanting to conquer biblical lands, whereas 1948 Palestinian refugees have 'expressed their politics in holistic terms: they were exiled not from parts of Palestine, but from all if it, and therefore all of it had to be liberated', pp. 136–137.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 224.
25. 'PLO: Six point Programme', in Walter Laqueur and Barry Rubin (eds.), *The Israel Arab Reader*, New York, 1995, p. 397.
26. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 174.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156.
28. While there are many other examples of Said's patently ridiculous bias – see especially *ibid.*, pp. xviii, xxiv, xxxi, xxxv, 90, 98, 101, 102, 105–106, 111, 253 – this is not the main focus of this short article.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
31. Said makes the transition in topic on page 72, as if these two ideas were actually one and the same. The claim and its faults are discussed in the section 'Zionism as Monolith' below.
32. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 69.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 23–24 (emphasis added).
34. *Ibid.*, p. 7. Earlier (page 5), Said also writes, 'That there had been such an entity as Palestine until 1948, or that Israel's existence – its "independence", as the phrase goes – was the result of the eradication of Palestine: of these truths beyond dispute most people who follow events in the Middle East are more or less ignorant, or unaware'.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 117. Said also tries to make this argument when he says, 'Palestinian society [before Zionism] was organized along feudal and tribal lines; this is not to say, however, that it did not have its own coherence'. *Ibid.*, pp. 176–177.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
38. Likewise, the Arab inhabitants were not real citizens either – the idea of citizenship was a totally Western one, as was the idea of an independent nation state. While Said appreciates both of these ideas (he is arguing for a Palestinian nation state), he will neither give credit to colonialism for bringing them to the Arabs, nor will he admit that they did not exist in the Arab world before Europe began colonizing it.
39. *Ibid.*, p. xxxv.
40. 'The Arab Case for Palestine: Evidence Submitted by the Arab Office, Jerusalem, to the Anglo American Committee of Inquiry, March, 1946', in Laqueur and Rubin (eds.), *The Israel Arab Reader*, p. 81.
41. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 10.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 119. Most interesting is how on page 75 Said claims that it was 'axiomatic by the middle of the nineteenth century that Europeans always ought to rule non Europeans'. Even if this debatable proposition were true, that precise idea exists in Islam. Indeed, it is very problematic for Muslim populations to be ruled by non Muslims, and until recent times, Muslims were even forbidden from living in countries controlled by non Muslims. For more on this issue, see Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Challenge and Middle Eastern Response*, New York, 2002.
43. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 58.

44. Ibid., p. 87.
45. Ibid., p. 10.
46. With this same contorted sense of history, he writes 'Tel Aviv, whose importance as a Jewish centre derives in great measure from its having neutralized the adjacent (and much older) Arab town of Jaffa' (p. 92). Of course, the founding of Jaffa well pre dates the Arab settlement there as well, and its Arabic name is even derived from its prior Hebrew name, Yafo. Another example of this line of thinking is found on page 14.
47. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. 98. On page 49, a similar synthesis becomes apparent: 'Yet even so, one must be able to discriminate between an invading, disposing, and displacing political presence and the presence it invades, displaces, and dispossesses.'
48. Ibid., pp. 7–8. Also see p. 18.
49. Ibid., p. 10.
50. Ibid., p. 46.
51. Ibid., p. 140.
52. Ibid., p. 59.
53. Ibid., p. 60. He also says 'When we speak today of the Arabs, or the Lebanese, or the Jews, or the Israelis, we seem to be speaking about stable entities whereas in reality we are talking about interpretations that are highly volatile and even more speculative', pp. 143–144.
54. Ibid., p. 84.
55. Ibid., p. 90.
56. Ibid., p. 82.
57. Ibid., p. 8.
58. Ibid., p. 15.
59. Ibid., p. 18.
60. Ibid., p. 181.
61. Yosef Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs, 1882–1948*, New York, 1987, p. 77.
62. Ibid., p. 26. Herzl had published *Alt Neuland* in 1902, Borochov had published his 'On the Question of Zion and Territory' in 1905, and Epstein's controversial piece 'The Hidden Question' was published in 1907. As early as 1907, Chaim Weizmann had also remarked to an audience in Manchester that 'The Arab retains his primitive attachment to the land, the soil instinct is strong in him, and by being continuously employed on it there is a danger that he might feel himself indispensable to it, with a moral right to it'. As reported in the London *Jewish Chronicle*, 25 October 1907. Cited in the introduction of Leonard Stein and Gedalia Yogevev (eds.), *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Series A* (Referred to below as Weizmann Letters A), London, 1968, Vol. 5, p. xxi.
63. Letter to Moshe Smilansky, 12 December 1914, as cited in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 65.
64. Moshe Smilansky in *Ha Olam*, as cited in Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 64.
65. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 47.
66. Berl Locker, *The Jews and Palestine: Historical Connection and Historic Right*, 4th edition (translated from Yiddish by Joseph Leftwich), London, 1938, p. 23.
67. Ibid., p. 28.
68. Ibid., p. 24.
69. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 75.
70. Shabtai Teveth, *Ben Gurion and the Palestinian Arabs: From Peace to War*, New York, 1985, p. 29.
71. Letter from David Ben Gurion to his son Amos (Hebrew, my translation), 5 October 1937, p. 3. Ben Gurion Archives.
72. Vladimir Jabotinsky, 'The Iron Wall' (We and the Arabs) (The original appeared in Russian in 1923, in English in *Jewish Herald* (South Africa), on 26 November 1937.) Available at <http://www.jabotinsky.org/Jaboworld/docs/Iron%20Wall.doc>.
73. Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, 'A Jewish State Now: Evidence Submitted to the Palestine Royal Commission', in Laqueur and Rubin (eds.), *The Israel Arab Reader*, pp. 52–53.
74. Jabotinsky, 'The Iron Wall'. Original South African spelling kept.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid. (emphasis original).
77. Ibid. (emphasis original).
78. Ibid.

79. Jabotinsky, 'A Jewish State Now'. Another critical document in this regard is Vladimir Jabotinsky, 'Ethics of the Iron Wall' (1925), which can be found at <http://www.jabotinsky.org/Jaboworld/docs/ethics.doc>.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Barnett Litvinoff (ed.), *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weizmann, Series B* (referred to below as Weizmann Letters B), New Brunswick, NJ, 1983–1984, Vol. 1, pp. 613–641, as cited in Norman Rose, *Chaim Weizmann: A Biography*, New York, 1986, p. 290.
83. Paper 124. 'Jewish Majority in Palestine Not Necessary.' Interview with Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 3 July 1931, in Weizmann Letters B, Vol. 1, p. 642.
84. Ibid.. See the editorial note on the bottom of page 642.
85. Weizmann Letters A, Vol. 1, p. 466, as cited in Rose, *Chaim Weizmann*, p. 195.
86. Mordechai Nasihu, 'Ha Mifne bi Midiniuto ha Tzionit shel Ben Gurion [The Turning Point in Ben Gurion's Zionist Policies]', in Itzhak Cohen (ed.), *Idiologia u Mediniut Tzionit* [Ideology and Zionist Policy], Jerusalem, 1978, pp. 144–145 (Hebrew).
87. Chaim Weizmann, letter to William G.A. Ormsby Gore, 16 April 1918, in Weizmann Letters A, Vol. 8, p. 128.
88. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, p. xix.
89. Ibid., p. 13. This is precisely as the quotation appears in Said.
90. Raphael Patai (ed.), *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, translated by Harry Zohn, Vol. 1, New York, 1960, p. 88 (12 June 1895).
91. Ibid., p. 88 (12 June 1895)
92. Ibid., p. 90 (12 June 1895). Similar thoughts are written the day before (p. 72, 11 June 1895): 'The worth of my plan obviously lies in the facts that . . . I have regard for all suffering (certainly including the hurts inflicted by Jews on Gentiles), protect all acquired rights, take all human impulses into account.'
93. Ibid., p. 7 (around Pentecost 1895).
94. Ibid., p. 40 (7 June 1895).
95. Ibid., p. 76 (11 June 1895).
96. Ibid., p. 34 (6 June 1895).
97. Gorny, *Zionism and the Arabs*, p. 30. For specific evidence of this, see Herzl's letter to Baron Rothschild in 1902.
98. Theodor Herzl, *Old New Land (Alt NeuLand)*, translated by Lotta Levensohn, New York, 1941. All quotations in the following section are taken from the dialogue on pages 121–125.
99. Emphasis added.
100. As cited on the back cover of Said, *The Question of Palestine*.
101. Ibid., p. 8.