

# "My Beautiful Old House" and Other Fabrications by Edward Said

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AMONG SPOKESMEN for the Palestinian cause in our day, surely none is so articulate, or so well-known, as Edward W. Said. The holder of an endowed chair in English and comparative literature at Columbia University,<sup>[1]</sup> a prolific author of books<sup>[2]</sup> and articles<sup>[3]</sup> both scholarly<sup>[4]</sup> and popular, a frequent lecturer<sup>[5]</sup> and commentator on radio and television,<sup>[6]</sup> a sometime diplomatic intermediary<sup>[7]</sup> and congressional witness,<sup>[8]</sup> the subject of countless profiles and interviews in the world media,<sup>[9]</sup> Said--who was born in Jerusalem in 1935--has earned a reputation not only for polemical brilliance but, when it comes to championing Palestinian Arab rights (and assailing Israel for infringing them), a fierce moral zealotry that will not be assuaged.

The adulation in which Said is held by Palestinians themselves is suggested by a recent ceremony honoring him at the U.S.-based Palestinian Heritage Institute that was attended by 450 Arab diplomats and Arab-Americans,<sup>[10]</sup> as by the overflow audience of 1,000 that gathered to hear him lecture last year in Bethlehem.<sup>[11]</sup> But his prestige is no less high among American and European academics and intellectuals, who have extravagantly praised his literary scholarship and admire his uncompromising politics. As for the scholarship, his most famous book, *Orientalism* (1978),<sup>[12]</sup> with its bold thesis that the Western study of Islam (and by extension other cultures) is itself a form of "colonialism," has had as profound and radicalizing an influence on literary studies in colleges and universities as it has had on Islamic self-perceptions. And as for politics, so stringent is Said's vision of the Middle East that in recent years he has changed from being a supporter of Yasir Arafat to a vociferous opponent, accusing the PLO chairman of having betrayed 50 years of Palestinian aspirations by signing the Oslo agreements with Israel.<sup>[13]</sup>

The very model of an engaged academic, Said has been politically active since at least the late 1960's, when he co-founded the fervently pro-Palestinian Association of Arab-American University Graduates.<sup>[14]</sup> In 1974, he was the

principal author and translator of Arafat's notorious address to the UN General Assembly in which the PLO leader brandished both a gun and an olive branch;<sup>[15]</sup> during the Carter years he transmitted overtures between Arafat and the administration, and in the Reagan years participated in the breakthrough meeting of a member of the Palestine National Council (PNC), the PLO's "parliament in exile," with Secretary of State George Shultz;<sup>[16]</sup> and he himself served for many years as a member of the PNC.<sup>[17]</sup> Said's books bearing directly on the Palestinian issue include *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (1986); *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestine Question* (1988); *The Pen and the Sword* (1994); *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination* (1995); and *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine in the Middle East Peace Process* (1996).

There can be no doubt that a great deal of the moral authority accruing to Edward Said derives as much from his personal as from his intellectual credentials.<sup>[18]</sup> As a living embodiment of the Palestinian cause, he has made much in print and on film of his birth, childhood, and schooling in Palestine,<sup>[19]</sup> telling a story of idyllic beginnings<sup>[20]</sup> and violent disruption--of a paradise lost--that resonates with personal pain while also serving as a powerfully compelling metaphor for the larger Palestinian condition.<sup>[201]</sup> As Salman Rushdie put it in lauding Said's *After the Last Sky*, in writing about his "internal struggle: the anguish of living with displacement, with exile,"<sup>[22]</sup> Said "enables us to feel the pain of his people."<sup>[23]</sup>

Both his personal pain and the pain he feels for his people are on especially vivid display in a 1998 BBC documentary that Said both wrote and narrated, *In Search of Palestine*. The film, aired around the world to mark the 50th anniversary of the Palestinian *nakbah* ("disaster") of 1948, and recently shown in New York on the local PBS affiliate, features extensive footage of Said standing outside his birthplace at what is now 10 Brenner Street in Jewish western Jerusalem.

But just the mention of that birthplace confronts us with a problem. Although Said has defined his own intellectual vocation as one of "tell[ing] the truth against extremely difficult odds"<sup>[24]</sup>--he has sweepingly declared that the duty of the intellectual is "to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible"<sup>[25]</sup>--it turns out that, in retailing the facts of his own personal biography over the years, he has spoken anything *but* the plain, direct, or honest truth. Instead, he has served up, and consciously encouraged others to serve up, a wildly distorted version of the truth, made up in equal parts of outright deception and of artful obfuscations carefully tailored to strengthen his wider ideological agenda--and in particular to promote the claims of Palestinian refugees against Israel.

For the past three years I have been looking into the core autobiographical assertions made by Said about his childhood in Palestine<sup>[26]</sup>--a childhood that he has repeatedly asserted<sup>[27]</sup> is central to the formation of his political thought and indeed of his emblematic political identity as a Palestinian refugee. My search, a fascinating adventure in itself, took me through sometimes obscure public records and archives in five countries on four continents and involved tracking down and interviewing numerous relatives, neighbors, school classmates, and professional colleagues. Virtually everything I learned, the principal conclusions of which are set out below, contradicts the story of Said's early life as Said has told it.

To complicate matters still further, however, some time after completing the manuscript of this article, I learned of the forthcoming publication of another new book by Said, a memoir entitled *Out of Place*<sup>[28]</sup> --that is due to be released later this month. Remarkably--but, as I shall have reason to speculate later, perhaps not surprisingly--this new book thoroughly revises the personal tale Said has been reciting all these years, bringing it into greater conformity with the truth while at the same time ignoring his 30 years of carefully crafted deception.

But I am getting ahead of myself. In order to untangle the strands of this enigma, we must begin by examining what has been the standard version of the life of Edward Said and see where and how it diverges from the facts.

## II

FOR A characteristic rendition of the standard version, we need look no farther than a long and typically admiring feature article on Said that appeared almost exactly a year ago in the *New York Times* ("A Palestinian Confronts Time," by Janny Scott, September 19, 1998<sup>[29]</sup>). Here is the relevant paragraph:

Mr. Said was born in Jerusalem and spent the first twelve years of his life there, the eldest child and only son of a successful Palestinian Christian businessman. The family moved [elsewhere in this same *Times* piece, the word is "fled"] to Cairo in late 1947, five months before war broke out between Palestinian Arabs and Jews over plans to partition Palestine.

And here, from *Current Biography Yearbook* (1989), in a five-page profile personally approved by its subject, is a more expansive take:

Edward W. Said was born in Jerusalem in what was then Palestine on November 1, 1935, the oldest child and only son of Wadie Said, a prosperous businessman. . . . The family lived in

an exclusive section of West Jerusalem. . . . Baptized as an Episcopalian, Edward Said attended St. George's, an Anglican preparatory school, where his extracurricular activities included riding, boxing, gymnastics, and playing the piano.

. . . At the age of twelve, Edward Said was forced to use a pass when traveling between his home and his school. "The situation was dangerous and inconvenient," he recalled . . . during an interview for *New York* magazine (January 23, 1989). In December 1947, the Said family left Jerusalem and settled in Cairo, Egypt. . . . "Israel was established; Palestine was destroyed," Said wrote in his book *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*.<sup>[30]</sup>

But why rely on the words of others? Both of these summaries merely recapitulate Said's own oft-recited outline of his early life:

I was born, in November 1935, in Talbiya, then a mostly new and prosperous Arab quarter of Jerusalem. By the end of 1947, just months before Talbiya fell to Jewish forces, I'd left with my family for Cairo. . . . ["Palestine, Then and Now," *Harper's*, December 1992]<sup>[31]</sup>

I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt. ["Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *London Review of Books*, May 7, 1998]<sup>[32]</sup>

. . . my recollections of my early days in Palestine, my youth, the first twelve or thirteen years of my life before I left Palestine. [*The Pen and the Sword*]<sup>[33]</sup>

This same rendering of his early years recurs over and over again in writings both by and about Said.<sup>[34]</sup> (Thus, for example, the website of the *Nation*, a magazine with which he is affiliated as a music critic: "In 1948, Said and his family were dispossessed from Palestine and settled in Cairo.")<sup>[35]</sup> It is what undergirds his self-definition as an archetypal "exile"--i.e., one who, *like his people in general*, was separated from his homeland in a sudden act of historic violence. Except for the detail of his birth, it is a tissue of falsehoods.

### III

HERE ARE the bare bones of the truth: Said's father Wadie (also known as William)<sup>[36]</sup> grew up and went to school in Jerusalem but evidently emigrated in

1911 to the United States. During World War I, he reportedly served with American forces in Europe before returning to the Middle East with a U.S. passport to start what would become a very successful career in business.<sup>[37]</sup> At least nine years prior to his son's birth in 1935, however, Wadie Said was already residing permanently in Cairo, Egypt. There, according to the 1926 French edition of *The Egyptian Directory*, he owned the Standard Stationery Company. The company prospered sufficiently to open a branch in Alexandria in 1929 and in due course a second store in Cairo itself.<sup>[38]</sup>

It was to Cairo that Edward Said's mother Hilda (Musa), of Lebanese origin, moved upon marrying his father in 1932,<sup>[39]</sup> and it was in Cairo that the nuclear family continued to reside over the ensuing decades in a series of ever more elegant and spacious apartments, the last three of which were located in Cairo's best neighborhood on the island of Zamalek in the Nile River.<sup>[40]</sup> Documentation of their residences and other pertinent facts can be traced in decades' worth of consecutive annual editions of *The Egyptian Directory*, the Cairo telephone directory, *Who's Who in Egypt and the Middle East*, and other sources;<sup>[41]</sup> a long-time family friend, Huda Gindy, a professor of English at Cairo University, has reminisced in an interview about her former neighbors, the Saids, who from 1940 lived upstairs from her at 1 El-Aziz Osman Street.<sup>[42]</sup> By 1949, the capital of Standard Stationery was listed in the *Egyptian Trade Index* at the then very significant sum of 120,000 Egyptian pounds.

And Jerusalem? In that city lived Wadie Said's brother Boulos Yusef, his wife Nabiha, and their five children.<sup>[43]</sup> To this branch of the family, as to other destinations, the affluent Cairo-based Saids made periodic visits.<sup>[44]</sup> In November 1935, during one of those visits, Edward Said was born. On his birth certificate, prepared by the ministry of health of the British Mandate, his parents specified their permanent address as Cairo, and, indicating that they maintained no residence in Palestine, *left blank* the space for a local address.<sup>[45]</sup> Similarly blank is the entry for a local address in the church record of Edward Said's baptism, an event that likewise took place in Jerusalem two years later.<sup>[46]</sup> Of the 29 telephone and commercial directories for Jerusalem and Palestine from 1931 through 1948 that I was able to locate, more than half carry business and/or residential listings for Boulos Said and his wife. There are no listings for Edward Said's parents in any of the directories, whether in English, Hebrew, or Arabic.<sup>[47]</sup>

#### IV

AS FOR the house in Talbieh (Talbiya), that is a story unto itself. In his article in *Harper's*,<sup>[48]</sup> as in the much longer version of the same piece that he published in the (London) *Observer*,<sup>[49]</sup> and as in other iterations of this theme elsewhere, Said has wrenchingly recounted the nostalgic visit he paid in early 1992 to his

childhood roots in Jerusalem and in particular to this house at 10 Brenner Street. The *Observer* article was accompanied by a large photograph of the author perched on a stone wall with the caption: "Edward Said in front of his family's old home in Jerusalem." <sup>[50]</sup>

Footage of Said and his son Wadie outside this same structure also features prominently in the BBC documentary, *In Search of Palestine*. Its deep symbolic significance was further underlined at the ceremonies honoring him at the Palestine Heritage Institute, at the end of which a painting of the house was presented to him as a gift. <sup>[51]</sup> In an interview last March with *Jerusalem Times*, an English-language Palestinian newspaper, Said had this to say:

I feel even more depressed when I remember my beautiful old house surrounded by pine and orange trees in Al-Talbiyeh in east <sup>[sic, western]</sup> Jerusalem, which has been turned into a "Christian embassy." I went there a few days ago and took several photographs. <sup>[52]</sup>

But wait. During his visit in 1992, according to Said, he was able to locate his "family's house" only because a cousin then living in Canada "had drawn me a map from memory that he sent along with a copy of the title deed." <sup>[53]</sup> If that is so--if, that is, Said really had in hand a copy of the title deed to what he has described as "my beautiful old house"--then he could not have helped noticing the absence on it of his parents' names, his siblings' names, or his own name. For it never was, and is not now, their or his house.

In the ledgers kept at the Land Registry Office in Jerusalem during the Mandatory period, the earliest entry for the house in question is dated February 14, 1941. <sup>[54]</sup> It records a transfer of fractional interests in the property from its registered owner, Yusef Said (Edward Said's grandfather), to Mrs. Boulos Yusef Said (Edward Said's aunt) and her five children. <sup>[55]</sup> And that is all. There is no record of Edward Said's parents owning either the house or any interest in it.

IF HIS nuclear family had no ownership interest in the house at 10 Brenner Street, neither did he or they ever permanently reside in it. <sup>[56]</sup> (Nor, apparently, did his aunt and cousins until 1942. <sup>[57]</sup>) After being built in the early 1930's, <sup>[58]</sup> the structure was initially divided into two apartments, <sup>[59]</sup> each with a separate entrance from the outside; in 1942, a third apartment was created in the basement. <sup>[60]</sup> From 1938 to 1946 (that is, from the time Edward Said was roughly three to the time he was eleven), the upstairs level <sup>[61]</sup> was rented out to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia as its consulate general, and then from 1946 to 1952 to the successor government of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. <sup>[62]</sup>

It was used both for office space and for housing; during World War II,<sup>[63]</sup> the exiled King Peter II lived in it for about six weeks.<sup>[64]</sup>

Is it not curious in the extreme that Said, while on record as remembering the "rooms [in this house] where as a boy he read *Sherlock Holmes* and *Tarzan*, and where he and his mother read Shakespeare to each other,"<sup>[65]</sup> has nowhere brought to mind the presence upstairs of the Yugoslavian consulate, the comings and goings of visa-seekers, diplomats, and politicians, including for a time the king of Yugoslavia himself, or the arrival of limousines and their elegantly attired occupants for official functions like the annual Yugoslavian independence-day reception? On November 29, 1947, the very night the UN voted in favor of the partition plan for Palestine, and a couple of weeks before he has told us the Saids were forced to leave for Cairo, this reception was attended by no lesser figures than the British-appointed mayor of Jerusalem;<sup>[66]</sup> Golda Meir, then director of the political department at the Jewish Agency;<sup>[67]</sup> Hussein Haldi, the secretary of the Arab Higher Committee;<sup>[68]</sup> and most of the city's social and political elite.<sup>[69]</sup>

As for the downstairs, main-entrance level of the house, it was rented from about 1936 to 1938 by the Iranian consulate.<sup>[70]</sup> Then, after 1938, this and the basement level were leased to the illustrious German-Jewish philosopher Martin Buber, his wife, and his two teenage granddaughters, all of them recent refugees from Nazi Germany.<sup>[71]</sup> The Buber family was forced out of the house in early 1942 (when Edward Said would have been about seven) in a dispute with the owners--that is, Nabiha (Mrs. Boulos Yusef) Said--who broke the lease and reclaimed the premises for their personal use, winning a judge's ruling in favor of eviction.<sup>[72]</sup> Buber's granddaughters, from whom I heard this account, also accurately remember the names of Nabiha Said and two of her boys, Yusef and Robert.<sup>[73]</sup> Another tenant of the house during the latter Mandate period remembers George, still another son of the family.<sup>[74]</sup> None remembers Edward or any of his four sisters.<sup>[75]</sup>

Is it not curious, again, that Martin Buber's residence in this house should have gone unnoticed by Edward Said? Actually, that is not so; at least, not quite. In 1992, Said wrote of having heard, years earlier, "that Martin Buber had lived in the house for a time *after 1948*" (emphasis added).<sup>[76]</sup> Last year, in a speech at Birzeit University on the West Bank, he amplified this thought with characteristic vehemence:

The house from which my family departed in 1948--was displaced--was also the house in which the great Jewish philosopher Martin Buber lived for a while, and Buber of course was a great apostle of coexistence between Arabs and Jews, but

he didn't mind living in an Arab house whose inhabitants had been displaced.<sup>[77]</sup>

But the truth is the other way around: it was Said's aunt who evicted the Bubers,<sup>[78]</sup> an event--surely a memorable one--that took place during the very period when Edward Said was allegedly growing up in the selfsame house, and long before Israel's war of independence in 1948. But there can be little wonder why neither that event, nor the presence in and subsequent removal from the building of Martin Buber's surely no less memorable library of some 15,000 books,<sup>[79]</sup> has ever figured in his meticulous recollections of "my beautiful old house . . . in Al-Talbiyeh." The Bubers and their library were there. Said was not.

## V

NONE OF this, to be sure, is to gainsay the possibility or even the likelihood that, after 1942, when the Bubers had departed and Nabiha Said and her five children moved in,<sup>[80]</sup> Edward Said's nuclear family may have stayed for brief periods with their cousins on the main entrance floor at 10 Brenner Street. By now, however, both families would have been quite large, while the apartment in question had a grand total of only four bedrooms.<sup>[81]</sup> Assuming two were set aside for parents, this would have meant accommodating ten children in the remaining two bedrooms, without even taking into account the needs of grandparents or live-in servants, drivers, cooks, and the like. It is hard to imagine Wadie Said, accustomed as he was to spacious arrangements, enduring this for any great length of time.<sup>[82]</sup>

And that brings us to another element in Said's reconstruction of his Jerusalem childhood: the question of his schooling.

According to the standard version, he attended St. George's Anglican preparatory school in eastern Jerusalem, "along with most of the male members of my family" (as he put it in his 1992 piece in *Harper's*).<sup>[83]</sup> In the recent BBC documentary, Said is seen touring this school, which still exists.<sup>[84]</sup> In the headmaster's office, where he turns the pages of an old, leather-bound student registry, he locates on camera the listing for a Jewish student named David Ezra, whom he says he remembers clearly.<sup>[85]</sup> A vignette of David Ezra also turns up in Said's new memoir, *Out of Place*.<sup>[86]</sup>

Interestingly, in this segment of *In Search of Palestine* we are not shown or told about any listing for Edward Said himself in the St. George's student registry. And for good reason: neither in the particular registry shown on camera nor in the school's other two old leather-bound registry books is there any record of his having attended this institution as he has claimed.<sup>[87]</sup> Nor does David Ezra, who

today goes by the name of David Eben-Ezra, have any recollection whatsoever of a classmate by the name of Edward Said--though in 1998 he was easily able to recall for me the names of nearly all his other classmates at St. George's. Not even the childhood movie footage of Edward Said that has been incorporated in the BBC documentary, not even old still photographs of his class, succeeded in jogging Eben-Ezra's otherwise quite remarkable powers of recall. He did comment, though, on Said's claim in the TV documentary that the two of them had sat together in the back of the classroom. Because of his poor eyesight, Eben-Ezra always sat in front.<sup>[88]</sup>

None of this--again--is to gainsay the possibility of the young Said's having been now and then a temporary student at St. George's while on visits to his Jerusalem cousins. He might well have become aware of David Ezra and others in the school without having stayed long enough to enroll and have his own presence recorded in its official registry books. But so modest a possibility hardly fits what up to now has constituted the standard version of his life from birth until the age of twelve. To cite it one more time: "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there and, after 1948, when my entire family became refugees, in Egypt."<sup>[89]</sup>

## VI

LET US look now at the latter part of that sentence: that is, at the circumstances of the Said family's departure as "refugees" from Jerusalem to Cairo, an event Said himself has repeatedly placed in mid-December 1947.

First, the standard version. In evoking the ominous atmosphere of those days, Said has cited the fact (duly recorded in his profile in *Current Biography Yearbook*)<sup>[90]</sup> that even he, an innocent twelve-year-old schoolboy, had to produce a pass to traverse three British security zones between his home in Talbieh and his school, St. George's, in eastern Jerusalem.<sup>[91]</sup> But what really caused his family to flee "in panic," he has recalled, was something far more menacing: in December, "a Jewish-forces sound truck warned Arabs to leave the neighborhood" (interview with Robert Marquand, *Christian Science Monitor*, May 27, 1997).<sup>[92]</sup> In other words, the family's departure was a forcible one, a product of the incipient usurpation of the entire country, and the banishment of its indigenous Palestinian-Arab inhabitants, by the Zionists.<sup>[93]</sup>

Neither of these claims withstands scrutiny.

If Said and his parents had in fact been living regularly in Palestine during the years prior to 1947, they would have become accustomed, as was every citizen of Jerusalem, to routinely producing identification and zone passes at the demand of British soldiers manning roadblocks<sup>[94]</sup>--an inconvenience that was

hardly "dangerous," as Said has termed it, but was, rather, designed to facilitate the search for fugitives or contraband weapons, to prevent violence between Arabs and Jews, and to protect British personnel.<sup>[95]</sup> More to the point, at age twelve young Edward Said would hardly have been required to carry individual identification to and from school or at any other time; as David Eben-Ezra (along with several of his contemporaries) has attested, a St. George's uniform and/or a schoolbag with books would have been quite sufficient.<sup>[96]</sup>

The matter of the "sound-truck" warning is a bit more complicated. Contemporary accounts indicate that relations between Jews and Arabs were, as it happens, quite good<sup>[97]</sup> in the affluent and cosmopolitan neighborhood of Talbieh.<sup>[98]</sup> (According to the then British mayor of Jerusalem, the area was "shared fairly evenly" between the two groups,<sup>[99]</sup> though Said with his typical disregard for facts has asserted that its population was almost exclusively Arab.) In the five-and-a-half month period between the end of November 1947 and the middle of May 1948--that is, between the UN partition resolution and the establishment of the state of Israel--only two incidents of intercommunal violence marred Talbieh's calm.

In the first, on December 21, 1947, an Anglo-Jewish journalist for *Palestine Post* was shot dead by Arabs.<sup>[100]</sup> In the second, which occurred on February 11, 1948, a member of the Haganah, the indigenous Jewish defense force,<sup>[101]</sup> was wounded by an Arab,<sup>[102]</sup> and that same day, at the unauthorized behest of the Haganah sector commander,<sup>[103]</sup> a sound van proceeded to drive through the area, warning Arabs to evacuate.<sup>[104]</sup> According to the Hebrew newspaper *Ha'aretz* (February 12, 1948), the three Haganah men in the vehicle were promptly arrested by British police.<sup>[105]</sup>

Some Arab residents of Talbieh apparently did pack up and go after this incident in February, but only temporarily, returning within a few days from nearby locales on the assurances of British police and clergy.<sup>[106]</sup> The numbers could hardly have been large, since no mention of their flight appears in the leading Palestinian-Arab newspapers at the time.<sup>[107]</sup> The permanent evacuation took place later, with the departure of British forces and the capture of Talbieh and the rest of southern Jerusalem by the Haganah. That occurred in mid-May,<sup>[108]</sup> although the leading book on this subject by the Institute for Palestine Studies, a pro-PLO think tank, puts the date two weeks earlier, on April 30.<sup>[109]</sup>

In any case, we are speaking of a period four and a half to five months *after* the time Said claims for a certainty the defining incident took place, and two and a half to three months after the mini-incident of mid-February. For what it is worth, the voluminous British documents from this period, including

de-classified security telegrams, make no mention of Palestinians leaving Talbieh, for any cause or reason, during the month of December 1947. [\[110\]](#)

From these multiple internal inconsistencies and discrepancies from the historical record, [\[111\]](#) one cannot avoid the reasonable conclusion that just as Edward Said and his nuclear family were not long-term or permanent residents in Talbieh in the 1930's and 1940's, so were they not resident there during the final months of the British Mandate. They thus cannot be considered "refugees" or "exiles" from Palestine in any meaningful sense of those two very weighty and politically charged terms.

## VII

NOR, OF COURSE, did they arrive in Cairo for the first time in late 1947. For it was in Cairo that Edward Said in fact grew up and played with his childhood companions. It was in Cairo that he attended the Gezira Preparatory School, and in Cairo that he was enrolled, at the age of almost fourteen, at Victoria College. [\[112\]](#) And it was from Cairo, in 1951, that he was finally sent by his father to complete his secondary education at the Mount Hermon school in Massachusetts. [\[113\]](#)

As I indicated earlier, the history of the Said family's presence in Cairo can be traced through public records and the clear recollections of friends and neighbors. It has now also been confirmed by Said himself in his forthcoming memoir, *Out of Place*. [\[114\]](#) In this book, with its weirdly apposite title, the man who for decades has presented himself to the world as a professional refugee, who has powerfully described the traumatic effect on himself and his family of their sudden, panicked exile from the beloved city of his birth and childhood, who has harped repeatedly on the horrors of dispossession, of losing house and home, school, companions, and, in the case of his father, livelihood itself, sharply reverses course. Jerusalem, it turns out, was not the soul and center of Edward Said's youth, the place to which, as he averred in 1998, "nearly everything in my early life could be traced." [\[115\]](#) Jerusalem was one of several family vacation spots. The center of its existence, from years prior to his birth until the early 1960's, was Cairo, Egypt.

If Said reverses course in this book, however, he does so silently, without acknowledging the bombshell disparity of his present account from his previous ones. Instead, he methodically camouflages and backfills, calmly giving us a "revised standard version" comprising hundreds of pages of family minutiae, all remembered 50 or 60 years later in picayune (and often boring) detail, not least when it comes to narrating the course of his budding if thwarted youthful sexuality and the humiliations he suffered at the hands of parents, classmates, and teachers. By this titillating means are we ourselves, no doubt, meant to be

seduced into overlooking the egregious departures of his latest autobiography from the autobiography we have had delivered to us in segments over three decades of books, essays, lectures, interviews, and filmed reminiscences. Or perhaps the two are meant to chug along in our minds like a single locomotive on two parallel tracks, with neither version to be held to so old-fashioned a standard as the objective truth.

Why Said should have chosen this particular moment to release a revised standard version must remain a matter of speculation. For myself, I cannot rule out the possibility that the 85 interviews conducted over the course of my own three-year investigation, including many with persons known to him, may have alerted him to the urgency of retrieving from amnesia this amazingly full reconstruction of his Cairo childhood. If so, that very fullness, characterized by a near-photographic recall of everything from his parents' conversations to his adolescent wet dreams, might well be intended as a stay against skepticism; for how could anyone so candid ever have intended to conceal anything?

**W**HATEVER HIS motive, however, one thing this tireless paladin clearly does not intend to do is to permit a mere book, even one written by him, to interfere with his larger political agenda. That much, at least, was made perfectly clear in his BBC documentary, *In Search of Palestine*.

For in that film, standing with his son and a friend in front of 10 Brenner Street in Jerusalem, Said gesticulates at the house "my family owned" and, voice shaking with emotion, discusses the possibility of securing its rightful return from the Israeli authorities. Similarly, in an interview earlier this year, he reiterated his claim both to the house and to a business putatively owned by his father in Jerusalem, the Palestine Educational Company (a firm that "made office equipment and sold books").<sup>[116]</sup>

*Interviewer:* I was wondering, would you accept financial compensation from the Israeli government for these losses?

*Edward Said:* You're damn straight.<sup>[117]</sup>

And elsewhere: "I lost--and my family lost its property and rights in 1948."<sup>[118]</sup> Compensation is owed for that property, he insists, as for all lost Palestinian property. "I've never believed in giving that up. If we lost it, then it has to be paid for by the Israelis."<sup>[119]</sup>

Now, leave aside the plain fact that the war of 1948 was instigated not by Israel but by the Palestinian-Arab leadership, which launched hostilities against the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine after refusing to accept the UN partition resolution.<sup>[120]</sup> Leave aside, too, the no less plain fact that over the course of the

ensuing war, which saw every neighboring Arab nation rush in on the Palestinian side, not only did hundreds of thousands of (genuine) Palestinian refugees leave the Mandatory territory for various reasons, but many hundreds of thousands of Jews were simultaneously driven out of Arab countries, eastern Jerusalem, the Old City, and what later came to be known as the West Bank, and arrived in Israel traumatized and destitute. This alone suggests that if consideration is to be extended to the claims of some refugees, it must be extended to the claims of all.<sup>[121]</sup> But leave all that aside, and ask only this: why, if Edward Said has any legal basis for his assertion, has he not lifted a finger to secure the financial restitution due him?

It cannot be from ignorance of Israeli procedure. He has mentioned the actual filing process itself in one of his books (*After the Last Sky*),<sup>[122]</sup> and, as he must know, that process is simplicity itself. All that is required is the completion of a two-page form that can be filled out in English, Hebrew, or Arabic.<sup>[123]</sup> Claimants may file for themselves, or a lawyer may file on their behalf. There is no fee.<sup>[124]</sup> In short, the risk is zero, while the gain could be substantial.

Perhaps little was to be hoped for, it is true, in connection with his father's alleged interest in the Palestine Educational Company. This store stood on Jaffa Street in an area looted and burned by Arab rioters in late 1947,<sup>[125]</sup> heavily damaged by shell fire during the war of 1948-49,<sup>[126]</sup> and remaining in no-man's-land between Jordanian and Israeli positions until Jerusalem was reunited by Israel in the Six-Day war of 1967;<sup>[127]</sup> by that time, certainly, there could have been nothing left to salvage. But the house is another matter: according to the head of the most prominent real-estate agency in Israel, the building at 10 Brenner Street is worth, at the most conservative estimate, \$1.8 million today.<sup>[128]</sup> And, financial gain apart, think of the example an action of this kind on Said's part would set for his fellow Palestinians, and of the inestimable political value that would accrue from what would inevitably become a highly publicized and, to Israel, potentially quite embarrassing proceeding.

But there will of course be no filing, either for store or house. Even had the Palestine Educational Company been classified by Israel as absentee (rather than abandoned) property, it is unlikely that Wadie Said could have personally suffered financial loss from its destruction. Although I did find his name or initials in some listings for the store in local telephone books and (more pertinently) business directories, that was only prior to 1931; from 1931 onward, the solitary name listed is that of Boulos Yusef Said.<sup>[129]</sup> Perhaps, then, for a few years after he moved permanently to Cairo in about 1926, Wadie Said retained some interest in the firm; anything beyond that seems highly unlikely. And as for the house at 10 Brenner Street, well, that is a subject we have already covered.

Still, I cannot leave this matter of "reparations," to use Edward Said's inflammatory term,<sup>[130]</sup> without two final comments. The first is that, even if pride were to have prevented him from submitting a claim of any kind to an Israeli government office,<sup>[131]</sup> he had ample opportunity, either by mail or during his several visits in the last years, to register with one or both of the Palestinian organizations that have undertaken to document such claims of ownership; as of 1998, neither had been contacted by him.<sup>[132]</sup>

The second comment is this: whatever pecuniary losses the family of Wadie Said did or--more likely--did not suffer in Jerusalem in the late 1940's, they pale beside the devastating losses that befell him and them a few years later in Egypt.<sup>[133]</sup> As the current manager of the Standard Stationery Company confirmed in an interview last year, and as Said now acknowledges in *Out of Place*, a revolutionary mob burned down Wadie Said's flagship Cairo store as well as a local branch store in 1952.<sup>[134]</sup> Several years later, the successfully rebuilt business was nationalized in a purge of Western influence instituted by Egypt's president, the revolutionary dictator Gamal Abdel Nasser.<sup>[135]</sup> (Wadie Said, it will be remembered, was a foreigner with an American passport.)

Yet, in contrast to the vigor with which Edward Said has spoken about his putative claims against Israel, he has been strangely silent concerning his family's very real and weighty losses of property in Egypt. One can readily imagine why. Not only would dwelling on those losses highlight the fact of his family's long-term residence in Cairo rather than Jerusalem, it might retroactively compromise Edward Said's own self-acknowledged enthusiasms as a onetime "Nasserite."<sup>[136]</sup> Or perhaps he just knows that, unlike in Israel, where the rule of law holds sway, the prospects of recovering anything at all in Egypt are negligible to nil.

## VIII

IN HIS many narratives of his childhood in Palestine, Edward Said has painted the years before 1948 as a romantic idyll, in which life was simple, harmonious, and happy.<sup>[137]</sup> This perfection was rudely destroyed by the outbreak of violence that preceded full-scale war in 1948-49, forcing him out of his "beautiful old house" into a 50-year exile that has been, for him, the "central metaphor" not only of his personal biography but of his very identity, and that drives his campaign for redress. For Edward Said in this scenario, now substitute the Palestinian people--as his readers and listeners are meant to do--and one begins to gain some apprehension of the myth-driven passions that have animated the revanchist program of so many Palestinian nationalists, whose expanding political ambitions often seem, even to sympathetic observers, permanently insusceptible of being satisfied through the normal processes of politics.

Edward Said is also an eminent scholar and literary figure, the author of a book entitled *Representations of the Intellectual*<sup>[138]</sup> and of such uncompromising definitions of an intellectual's responsibility as the one I cited early on: "to speak the truth, as plainly, directly, and as honestly as possible."<sup>[139]</sup> What are we to make of the fact that, in his own case, the plain, direct, and honest truth is so radically at odds with the parable of Palestinian identity he has been at such pains to construct over the decades? For, to say it one last time, he himself grew up not in Jerusalem but in Cairo, where his father, an American citizen,<sup>[140]</sup> had moved as an economic expatriate approximately nine years before Edward's birth and had become the owner of a thriving business; and there, until his own departure for the United States as a teenager in 1951, the young Edward Said resided in luxurious apartments, attended private English schools, and played tennis at the exclusive Gezira Sporting Club as the child of one of its few Arab members.

Whatever we do finally make of all this, there can be no denying that the parable itself is a lie. An artful lie; a skillful lie; above all, a very useful and by now widely accepted lie--but a lie. As he continues the process of silently "spinning" this lie, a process now auspiciously launched in *Out of Place*, it will be especially interesting to see who among his legions of admirers, or among the friends of the Palestinian people, will notice or care. *That* is a question with reverberations far, far beyond the shifts and dodges and brazen misrepresentations of one prevaricating intellectual.<sup>[141]</sup>

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## Notes

[1]. He is the Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature, and one of only nine current Columbia faculty members recognized with the title of University Professor. *Columbia University Bulletin* (1997), 8.

[2]. According to one source, Said has written 10 books. "Edward W. Said: Contributing Writer and Music Critic," Internet, <http://www.thenation.com>, Oct. 10, 1997. In a 1997 interview, Said put the number at 18 books. Robert Marquand, "Conversations with Outstanding Americans: Edward Said," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 27, 1997, 10. By 1998, he was credited with 20 books. Written citation for Edward W. Said's honorary degree, University of Michigan, n.d. Internet message from [mjfrank@umich.edu](mailto:mjfrank@umich.edu), May 4, 1998, 2. Whatever the actual number, they are regularly assigned in college courses throughout the United States and Europe. Eqbal Ahmad, Introduction to *The*

*Pen and the Sword* by Edward W. Said (1994), 7. Another indication of Said's influence is an index of articles *about* his writings, containing 986 entries. Internet, University of California at Irvine, "Selected Critical References to Edward W. Said and His Writings," visited Mar. 7, 1998.

[3]. Said writes articles about the Middle East and other subjects for the *Progressive* and contributes a twice-monthly column to the London-based Arabic daily *Al Hayat* that is widely distributed in the Arab world. Suzanne Trimel, "Faculty Profile: Edward Said," *Columbia University Record*, Apr. 24, 1998, 3.

[4]. Said's scholarship has been credited with giving shape to entire disciplines. Janny Scott, "A Palestinian Confronts Time: For Columbia Literary Critic, Cancer is a Spur to Memory," *New York Times*, Sept. 19, 1998, A17. Professor Timothy Mitchell of New York University's Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies has remarked of Said: "He's had as much impact as any scholar in the humanities in the recent decades on American and Western scholarship more broadly." *Idem*. Even Said's critics acknowledge him to be the most prominent Arab scholar in the Western hemisphere. Kanan Makiya, *Cruelty and Silence: War, Tyranny, Uprising and the Arab World* (1993), 21.

[5]. Said has lectured at 150 universities and colleges. "Edward W. Said: Contributing Writer and Music Critic," *loc. cit.* In 1997 and 1998 he gave special lectures in England, India, and France. Suzanne Trimel, *op. cit.*, 3.

[6]. Said has appeared on the British Broadcasting Corporation, *The MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, National Public Radio, Canadian Broadcasting Company, Australian radio, and many other places. Suzanne Trimel, *op. cit.*, 3. (See, for instance, interview with Edward Said, *The MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*, Educational Broadcasting and GWETA, September 12, 1990, Transcript #3858.)

[7]. He transmitted overtures between the Carter administration and Yasir Arafat. Edward W. Said, *The Pen and the Sword* (1994), 136-37; Said K. Aburish, *Arafat: From Defender to Dictator* (1998), 156, 194. He later participated in the first official meeting of a member of the Palestine National Council (the PLO's quasi-parliament in exile) with President Reagan's Secretary of State, George Shultz. Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination 1969-1994*, (1994), xxviii. And see text below.

[8]. Edward W. Said and Ibrahim Abu Lughod, "Summary of Statement," *U.S. Congress, House Special Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on*

*International Relations, Hearings on the Palestinian Issue in Middle East Peace Efforts*, 94th Congress, 1st Sess., Sept. 30, 1975, (1976), 28-31, 31-36, 36-62.

[9]. Eqbal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, 7. Said was the subject of a BBC documentary entitled *The Edward Said Story* in the early 1990's (*idem*) and recently wrote and narrated another BBC documentary entitled *Edward Said: A Very Personal View of Palestine*, timed to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the events Palestinians refer to as the *nakbah* (catastrophe) of May 1948. It was broadcast in England on May 17, 1998. In the United States, it was aired by the Public Broadcasting System (for example, on WNET, the New York PBS affiliate, on July 5, 1999) under the title, *In Search of Palestine*. See text below.

[10]. "Edward Said Honored," *Jerusalem Times*, May 21, 1999, 13. The Institute cited Said "for his active role in giving a human dimension to the Palestinian cause." Said has himself admitted that, over time, he began to "relish" telling "the story." Edward W. Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 164.

[11]. See his "West Bank Diary," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Dec. 10-16, 1998. Internet, <http://msanews.nynet.net/MSANEWS/199804/19980410.25.html>. In Bethlehem, he urged a rapt audience to achieve liberation by lobbying public opinion, arguing that "[i]nterested people should be told personal stories, alongside accurate history." Lecture at the Third International Sabeel Conference on Liberation Theology on "The Challenge of the Jubilee," in Bethlehem, Feb. 13, 1998 (tape recording on file with the author); Suzanne Ruggi, "Edward W. Said: Humor, Conviction & Scholarly Agitation," *Jerusalem Times*, Feb. 20, 1998, 7. One of Said's most important books examines the significance of beginnings as a point of departure not only in creative writing but in life generally. Edward W. Said, *Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975).

[12]. This highly influential and controversial book was a runner-up in the criticism category for the National Book Critics Award ("Edward W. Said: Contributing Writer and Music Critic," *loc. cit.*) and has been translated into 26 languages (Janny Scott, *op. cit.*, A17).

[13]. See generally Edward W. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East Peace Process* (1996).

[14]. Ian McIntyre, "Disillusioned by Arafat," the (London) *Times*, July 7, 1994, 39; Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dis-possession*, xxiv.

[15]. *Ibid.*; *ibid.*

[16]. See above, note 7.

[17]. In 1977, Said served as a member of the PLO delegation to the United Nations. Guy Bechor, *Lexicon Ashaf [The PLO Lexicon]* (1991), 246. In addition, he helped to draft the 1988 resolution of the Palestine National Council (PNC) proclaiming an independent state of Palestine, and served as a member of the PNC from 1977 until 1991. Bryan Appleyard, "Reflections from the Tightrope," the (London) *Independent*, June 23, 1993, 23; "Edward Said: Bright Star of English Lit and the P.L.O.," *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 1980, A2; Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 3. See also "Said, Edward W.," *1989 Current Biography Yearbook* (Charles Moritz, ed., 1989), 493-94; Zoe Heller, "Cosmopolitan Mind, Complex Politics, Ties to Scholarship, Palestinian Cause Shape Professor's Life," *San Francisco Examiner*, Feb. 21, 1993, D7.

[18]. Both his scholarship and his grasp of political and cultural history have, in fact, been subjected to severe criticism, though this has hardly sufficed to undermine his reputation or to prevent his recent accession to the presidency of the prestigious Modern Language Association. See, for example, Jeffrey Hartman, Letter to the Editor, *Critical Inquiry* (vol. 16, Autumn 1989), 199; Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (1993), 115; Robert J. Griffin, "An Exchange on Edward Said and Difference," *Critical Inquiry*, (vol. 15, Spring 1989), 611; Susan Fraiman, "Jane Austen and Edward Said, Gender, Culture, and Imperialism," *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 21, Summer 1995), 805, 807, 816, 817; Emmanuel Sivan, "Edward Said and his Arab Reviewers," *Interpretations of Islam: Past and Present* (1985) 134, 136-39, 142, 151; Kanan Makiya, *op. cit.*, 278-79, 317-19, 348 n.9; Fouad Ajami, "The Silence in Arab Culture," *New Republic*, Apr. 6, 1987, 32; Walter Laqueur, review of *The Question of Palestine* by Edward Said, *New Republic*, Dec. 15, 1979, 23, 34-35.

[19]. Unlike other academics, historians, or journalists who cover Palestinian and Israeli issues, Said repeatedly places himself at center stage. He has often been interviewed about his childhood in Jerusalem. See, for example, Dinitia Smith, "Arafat's Man in New York: The Divided Life of Columbia Professor Edward Said," *New York*, Jan. 25, 1989, 40, 42; Robert Marquand, *op. cit.*, 10; Salman Rushdie, "On Palestinian Identity," *New Left Review* Nov.-Dec. 1986, 63; Mouin Rabbani, "Symbols Versus Substance: A Year After the Declaration of Principles," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Vol. 24, 1995) 60, 63, 71-72; David Barsamian, "Edward W. Said: The Pen and The Sword: Culture and Imperialism," *Z Magazine*, July/Aug. 1993, 62, 69. Similarly, in his own writings, Said frequently highlights his early family life in Jerusalem and his subsequent "exile" in Egypt and the United States. Edward W. Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *London Review of Books*, May 7, 1998, 3; Edward Said & Jean Mohr, *After the Last Sky* (1986); Edward Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," the (London) *Observer*, Nov. 1 and 8, 1992 Review Section, 1; Edward W. Said, "Cairo Recalled," *House and Garden*, Apr. 1987, 20; Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through

Israel and the Occupied Territories," *Harper's*, Dec. 1992, 47, 50; Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 3-6.

[20]. See Laurie King-Irani, "Said Calls for Arab-Jewish Re-conciliation," *Jerusalem Times*, Dec. 5, 1997, 6.

[21]. "In *Orientalism, Culture and Imperialism*, and then again in the five or six explicitly political books concerning Palestine and the Islamic world that I wrote around the same time, I felt that I had been fashioning a self who revealed for a Western audience things that so far had either been hidden or not discussed at all." Edward Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *loc. cit.*, 3, 7. The historian Martin Gilbert paraphrased Said's biographical narrative at length as an emblem of the Palestinian condition in *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century* (1996), 346-48.

[22]. Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky* (1985), 112. In *BBC World Hard Talk*, <http://ftp.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/japanese/hardtalk.html>, Jan. 2, 1998, Said addressed the tragedy of exile:

Exile is one of the saddest fates. In premodern times, banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it not only meant many years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, but also meant being a sort of permanent outcast. . . . During the 20th century, exile has been transformed from the exquisite, and sometimes exclusive, punishment of special individuals . . . into a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples, often the inadvertent result of impersonal forces such as war, famine, and disease.

See also Robert Marquand, *op. cit.*, 10; Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994), 47; Edward W. Said, "Reflections on Exile," *Granta*, Autumn 1984, 157.

[23]. Salman Rushdie, "If I Forget Thee . . . Salman Rushdie on What it Means to be a Palestinian," review of *After the Last Sky* by Edward Said, in the *Guardian*, Sept. 19, 1986, Books Section, 11.

[24]. Edward W. Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 164.

[25]. The full quotation reads:

[T]here is a great difference between political and intellectual behavior. *The intellectual's role is to speak the truth, as plainly, directly and as honestly as possible.* No intellectual is supposed to worry whether what is said embarrasses, pleases or displeases

people in power. Speaking the truth to power means additionally that the intellectual's constituency is neither a government nor a corporate or a career interest: only *the truth unadorned* [emphasis added throughout].

Edward W. Said, "Israel-Palestine: A Third Way," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Aug-Sept. 1998, internet,  
<http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/en/1998/09/04said.html>

[26]. I began to question these assertions in researching a law-review article: Justus R. Weiner, "Peace and Its Discontents: Israeli and Palestinian Intellectuals Who Reject the Current Peace Process," *Cornell International Law Journal* (Vol. 29, 1996), 501.

[27]. See above, footnote 19, and, generally, Janny Scott, *op. cit.*, A17.

[28]. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place* (1999).

[29]. Janny Scott, *op. cit.*, A17.

[30]. "Said, Edward W.," *loc. cit.*, 493-97.

[31]. The full title is given above in footnote 19: "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *Harper's*, Dec. 1992, 47. Also in Edward W. Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," *loc. cit.* 49, and Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 175.

[32]. Edward Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *loc. cit.*, 3.

[33]. Edward W. Said, *The Pen and the Sword*, 50.

[34]. See John Sigler, "Palestinian Speaks for his People: Said Makes Plea for Tolerance and Understanding," review of *The Politics of Dispossession*, *Montreal Gazette*, Aug. 27, 1994, H2. In a recent article Said has referred to Jerusalem as "the small, compact city in which I grew up over fifty years ago." Edward W. Said, "Scenes from Palestine," *Al-Ahram Weekly*, Mar. 26-Apr. 1, 1998, internet, <http://msanews.nynet.net/MSANEWS/199804/19980410.25.html>. In a typical interview, he describes his childhood home near the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, his schooling at St. George's Academy in Jerusalem, and how, when his family left Jerusalem in December 1947 for Cairo, "I certainly didn't think I was never going to return." Only then does he discuss his privileged life in Cairo and the schools he attended there, presumably from December 1947 onward. Dinitia Smith, *op. cit.*, 40, 44.

[35]. Internet, <http://thenation.com/static/about/magazine/bios/said.htm>, Jan. 15, 1998.

[36]. Edward Said's middle name is William or Wadie, in honor of his father. Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 88.

[37]. This account of his father's American sojourn has been given often by Said himself. I have not verified it independently.

[38]. *The Egyptian Directory* 1926 (Max Fischer, ed.), 326, 358. The following year's directory contains a one-third page feature advertisement for the Standard Stationery Company, suggesting a substantial commercial presence (795). The 1928 edition lists William Said as living on Kasr el-Nil Street in Cairo (408, 946). The listing for 1929 mentions a branch store located in Alexandria (401, 920). Nearly identical listings appear in the 1930, 1931, 1933, and 1936 directories, the latter three containing an icon indicating that William Said owned a car. *The Egyptian Directory* 1930, 408, 964; *The Egyptian Directory* 1931, 444, 461, 870; *The Egyptian Directory* 1933, 400, 417, 1042; *The Egyptian Directory* 1936, 522, 1231.

[39]. *Edward Said: A Very Personal View of Palestine*, loc. cit.; Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*, 78.

[40]. See [Appendix 1](#), following these notes. Memo from Seth Wikas, Jan. 7, 1998 (on file with author); memo of Avi Green, Apr. 30, 1998 (on file with author). Some time after 1933 but prior to 1936 the family moved from Kasr El-Nil Street to 49 El-Falaki Street. See *The Egyptian Directory* 1933, 417; *The Egyptian Directory* 1936, 522. By March 1937, as the family continued to grow, William had moved to 1 Khamel-Muhamed Street. Egyptian State Railways, Telegraphs & Telephones, *Cairo Telephone Directory* Mar. 1937, 174. Their next move, before January 1942, was to 1 El-Aziz Osman Street. *Cairo Telephone Directory* Jan. 1942, 156. This was Edward Said's last permanent residence in Egypt, as he moved to the United States in 1951 and thereafter visited his parents in Cairo mainly during summer vacations.

[41]. The continuous residence in Cairo of Edward Said's nuclear family is documented by the appearance of his father William Said in consecutive editions of *The Egyptian Directory*. For the years prior to Edward Said's birth in 1935, see above, footnote 38. For the years after, see, for example, *The Egyptian Directory* 1936, 508, 522, 1231; *The Egyptian Directory* 1939, 546, 932, 951; *The Egyptian Directory* 1940, 469, 931; *The Egyptian Directory* 1941, 350, 822; *The Egyptian Directory* 1942, 756, 774; *The Egyptian Directory* 1943, 351, 802; *The Egyptian Directory* 1944, 363, 832; *The Egyptian Directory* 1949, 302, 1138. See also *Cairo Telephone Directory* Mar. 1937, 167, 180; *Cairo Telephone Directory* Sept. 1938, 182, 197; *Cairo Telephone Directory*,

Oct. 1940, 31; *Cairo Telephone Directory*, Jan. 1942, 156, 170; *Cairo Telephone Directory*, July 1944, 79, 84; *Liste Des Abonnés Aux Téléphones Du Caire* [*Cairo Telephone Directory*, French] May 1949, 164, 183. See also the *Egyptian Trade Index* 1945-46 (Elie Sawaf, ed.) 348-49; *Egyptian Trade Index* 1948, 493. And see *La Semaine Financière et Politique*, *L'Annuaire Industriel et Commercial* [Annual of Industry and Commerce, French] 1945-46, 267, 269; *L'Annuaire Industriel et Commercial* 1947, 326, 328. And see *Who's Who for Agents and Distributors in Egypt & the Middle East* 1948 (Middle East Publishing Co.), 242-43, and various editions of J. E. Blattner, *Le Mondain Egyptien et du Proche-Orient* (published in English as *Who's Who in Egypt and the Near East* and/or *The Egyptian Who's Who*): 1937, 239; 1943, 225; 1946, 304; 1947, 336; 1948, 441; 1949, 523. The 1937 edition of this privately published annual is the only directory I have succeeded in locating in which neither William Said nor the Standard Stationery Co. appears.

[42]. Professor Gindy, who has maintained contact with Edward Said for over 55 years, reminisced about playing with him and his sisters in the Aquarium Grotto, a park across the street from their apartment building, and also recalled that he frequented the nearby Gezira Sporting Club, where he played tennis. She stated that the Saids lived in the building year-round (except for summer trips to Lebanon) from the early 1940's until 1962; she could not recall his family's having made trips to Palestine. Telephone interview with Professor Huda Gindy in Cairo (Dec. 26, 1998). Memo from Seth Wikas, see above, note 40.

[43]. This sentence in the text should be amended to read: In that city lived Wadie Said's sister Nabiha, her husband (and cousin) Boulos Yusef Said, and their five children.

[44]. Cf. Edward Said, "Lost Between War and Peace: Edward Said Travels With His Son in Arafat's Palestine," *London Review of Books*, Sept. 5, 1996, 10.

[45]. Certified copy of birth certificate for Edward Said and cover letter, Israel Ministry of Interior, No. 3439/128/1935, Mar. 24, 1997. By Edward Said's own admission, "Even though they lived in Cairo in 1935, my parents made sure that I was born in Jerusalem. . . . Hilda had already given birth to a male child, to be called Gerald, in a Cairo hospital, where he developed an infection and died soon after birth. As a radical alternative to another hospital disaster, my parents traveled to Jerusalem. . . ." *Out of Place*, 20.

[46]. St. George's Episcopal Cathedral, Register of Baptisms in the County of Palestine, June 1901 to Oct. 1958, 63-65; interview with Suheil Dawani, Canon of St. George's Episcopal Cathedral, in Jerusalem (Feb. 6, 1998).

[47]. See below, note 56.

[48]. Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *loc. cit.*, 47.

[49]. Edward Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," *loc. cit.*, 49. Also in his book, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 175-99.

[50]. The photograph appears as [Appendix 2](#) to these notes.

[51]. "Edward Said Honored," *Jerusalem Times*, May 21, 1999, 13.

[52]. Interview with Edward Said, "Making a Cause to be Reckoned With," *Jerusalem Times*, Mar. 6, 1998, 6.

[53]. Edward Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," *loc. cit.*, 49, 50. Despite having in hand the map drawn by his cousin Yousef (also spelled Yusef), it took "almost two hours to find the house, and it is a tribute to my cousin's memory that only by sticking very literally to his map did we finally locate it." In light of the facts I have described, this is hardly surprising. Yousef had actually lived for six years on one floor of the house, and so remembered it well enough to draw a map after a 45-year absence; Edward Said, who had resided in Cairo and paid only visits to Jerusalem, naturally experienced great difficulty locating the house, even with a map in hand.

[54]. These records, initially registered in English by clerks working for the British Mandate authorities, were kept in large ledger books.

[55]. Land Registry Office of Jerusalem, 30 *Register of Deeds* 41, block no. 30027, parcel no. 50. The aunt, Nabiha Ibrahim Said, is listed as having a 25-percent interest in the property. Each of her five children, Yusef, George, Albert, Robert, and Evelyn, has a 15-percent interest. Robert Said, one of these children, was interviewed at his office in Amman by my research assistant, the Belgian lawyer Paul Lambert. Although initially cordial and cooperative, Robert Said refused to proceed further when questions began to zero in on his cousin Edward's biographical claims. Becoming verbally abusive, he accused Mr. Lambert, a Catholic, of having been "brainwashed by the Jews." He also said, "They [the Jews] are the worst people. You can't believe them, they're liars." Mr. Lambert was then all but thrown out of Robert Said's office by a burly employee. Interview with Robert Said, Amman, Jan. 23, 1997 (on file with author).

[56]. Although none of the telephone books and business directories of Mandatory Palestine that I examined, spanning the period 1932-48, in English, Hebrew, or Arabic, contained a listing for Edward Said's parents, Jerusalem listings did exist in most of these same volumes for his uncle Boulos Y. Said at his business, the Palestine Educational Company, and for his aunt Nabiha, Mrs.

B. Y. Said. See Palestine Posts, Telegraphs & Telephones, *Telephone Directory* January 1932; *Miskhar v'Ta'asia* [Commerce and Industry, Hebrew], *The Palestine Directory and Handbook* 1932; *Telephone Directory* January 1933; *The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1935; *Telephone Directory* January 1936; *The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1936; *Telephone Directory* January 1937; Government Printer, *The Palestine Blue Book* 1937; *The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1937; *Telephone Directory* April 1938; *Telephone Directory* January 1939; Azriel Press, *Madrikh Klali l'Eretz Yisrael* [*The Land of Israel Guide*, Hebrew] 1939; *The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1939; *Madrikh Klali l'Eretz Yisrael* 1940 [*The Land of Israel Guide*, Hebrew] 1940; *Madrikh Hatelefon Nissan Taf-shin* [*Telephone Directory* April 1940, Hebrew]; *Telephone Directory* July 1941; Palestine Posts, Telegraphs & Telephones, *Subscribers List* July 1941; *Madrikh Klali l'Eretz Yisrael* 1941 [*The Land of Israel Guide*, Hebrew] 1941; *The Palestine Guide* 1942; *Palestine Directory: The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1942; *Supplement to the 1942/3 Editions of The Palestine Directory: The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1944; Government of Palestine, *Palestine Telephone Directory: Jerusalem and Southern Palestine* January 1946; *Hakumat Falastin* [Government of Palestine], *Dalil Atalefon Al-Falastin* [*Palestine Telephone Directory*, Arabic] Jan. 1946; *Madrikh Hatelefon Shvat taf-shin-vav* [*Telephone Directory* February 1946, Hebrew]; Anglo-Palestine Publications Ltd., *The Anglo-Palestine Year Book* (F. J. Jacoby, ed.) 1946; *The Palestine Guide Book (The Blue Directory)* 1947-48; *Palestine Directory: The Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1948.

[57]. See [Appendix 3](#) for a chronology of residential occupancy of the house at 10 Brenner St.

[58]. On the basis of aerial photographs of Talbieh during the 1930's, I have determined that the house was constructed between 1932 and 1935. Aerial Photography Department Archives, Hebrew University, Mt. Scopus, Jerusalem, Sept. 17, 1996. It was impossible to determine the exact date since the records of the municipal office that granted building permits in Jerusalem were destroyed in a bombing/fire in 1944. Cf. J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion* (1977), 142-45.

[59]. I gathered this information through on-site study and interviews with former tenants. Interview with Barbara (Buber) Goldschmidt, in Jerusalem, Nov. 10, 1996; telephone interview with Yehudit Agassi, in Herzlia, April 14, 1998; interview with Ruth (Neuman) Weintraub, in Jerusalem, Oct. 17, 1996; interview with Hella Mayer, in Jerusalem, Aug. 6, 1996; telephone interview with Victor Stark, Honorary Consul of Yugoslavian Embassy, in Haifa, July 2, 1996; telephone interview with Victor Stark, in Haifa, July 22, 1996; telephone interview with Leon Zeldis, Honorary Consul of Chilean Embassy, in Herzlia,

Feb. 5, 1996; telephone interview with Fanny Silberman, Honorary Consul of Chilean Embassy, in Jerusalem, Sept. 13, 1996. (All on file with author.)

[60]. Ms. Weintraub's parents, Yaakov and Elena Neuman, renovated the basement level of the house, converting what had previously been a storeroom/library into a habitable apartment by installing a kitchen and bathroom. The last member of the Neuman family did not move out of the basement level until 1983. Ms. Weintraub's mother was originally from Vienna and her father from Budapest, but the couple had lived in Athens, where her father was a wholesaler of German books. Fleeing on the last boat out of Piraeus in 1941, the family resided briefly in Haifa before settling in Jerusalem. There her father earned a living securing food and other scarce supplies for the British Mandatory authorities and for various embassies and consulates in Jerusalem, including the Yugoslavian Consulate situated upstairs. Interview with Ruth (Neuman) Weintraub, *loc. cit.*

[61]. The upper level is connected by stairs to a small room, presumably used for storage, on the roof. My inspection showed that this room, accessible only from the upstairs level, and lacking plumbing, would be very cold in the winter and stifling in the summer. Certainly no family could have resided there. Memo to the file, August 21, 1998.

[62]. This information was provided by the Honorary Consul of Yugoslavia in Israel, Victor Stark. Letter of Victor Stark, Feb. 7, 1996 (on file with author); telephone interview with Hon. Mirko Stefanovic, the Ambassador of Yugoslavia to Israel, in Tel Aviv, Apr. 8, 1996 (on file with author). In addition, two Mandate period block-and-parcel maps located in the Archives and the Measurement Department of the Jerusalem Municipality indicate that the Embassy (*sic*) of Yugoslavia was located in the house. Memorandum by Max Rapaport, July 4, 1996 (on file with author). Ruth (Neuman) Weintraub, who resided in the basement level from 1942 until the 1960's, similarly recalled that the upstairs level served as the Yugoslavian Consulate. See above, note 59. Finally, Ms. Hannah Degani, a retired professional photographer, informed me that she was retained by the Yugoslavian Counsul General in 1940 or 1941 to photograph his impressive offices on the upstairs level of the house. Herself then a resident of Talbieh, Ms. Degani also confirmed that the Bubers lived on the main entrance level (where she participated in discussions of philosophy and psychology) and that in the mid-1940's the Neumans lived in the basement-level apartment. Interview with Hannah Degani in Jerusalem, Oct. 11, 1998 (on file with author).

[63]. Letter of Victor Stark, *loc. cit.*

[64]. King Peter II, an ally of the British during World War II, was driven into exile by the German invasion of his country. He resided in the house from April

21 to June 5, 1941. Letter from H.R.H. Crown Prince Alexander of Yugoslavia, May 19, 1998 (on file with author); internet <http://www.suc.org/royal>. Stephen Clissold, *A Short History of Yugoslavia: From Early Times Until 1966* (1966), 208-09. Another tenant, Yehudit (Buber) Agassi, recalls that Peter II lived upstairs for a period of time, and that he parked his car in the yard. Telephone interview with Yehudit (Buber) Agassi in Herzlia, *loc. cit.* King Peter II spent the remainder of the war in Allied territory, first in the Middle East and then in London. In the spring of 1945 Tito's Communist party won a plebiscite and formed a new government that was recognized by the king. Muriel Heppell & F. B. Singleton, *Yugoslavia* (1961), 169, 181, 238-39; Phyllis Auty, *Yugoslavia* (1965), 232-33.

[65]. Robert Marquand, *op. cit.*, 10.

[66]. The name of the mayor was R. M. Graves. See his memoirs, *Experiment in Anarchy* (1949), 101.

[67]. Meir (whose given name was Goldie Meyerson) later held various senior ministerial portfolios and was Israel's fourth prime minister from 1969 to 1974. Cf. R. M. Graves, *op. cit.*, 101.

[68]. Uri Milstein, *History of the War of Independence: Volume 1, The Nation Girds for War* (1996), 453-54.

[69]. *Ibid.*

[70]. *Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1936, at Consulate Listing; *Register of Commerce and Industry in Palestine* 1937, at Consulate Listing.

[71]. Interview with Yehudit Agassi, *loc. cit.*; interview with Barbara Goldschmidt, *loc. cit.* The basement was used for the overflow of Buber's library.

[72]. *Ibid.* As of 1999, Martin Buber's large black metal mailbox was still affixed near the front door of the house's main entrance level. Buber's granddaughter Barbara Goldschmidt recalls trying unsuccessfully to remove it as the movers were packing up the last loads of the family's possessions in 1942. Interview with Barbara Goldschmidt, *loc. cit.*

[73]. Ms. Agassi recalls that the landlord would come to visit the house with two young sons. Interview with Yehudit Agassi, *loc. cit.*

[74]. Interview with Ruth Weintraub, *loc. cit.*

[75]. Edward, the "oldest child and only son of Wadie Said," had no brothers. "Said, Edward W." *1989 Current Biography Yearbook*, 493-94. See also Dinitia Smith, *op. cit.*, 40, 44.

[76]. Edward Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," *loc. cit.*, 49; also in Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *loc. cit.*, 47, 50, and in Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 5.

[77]. Edward Said, Lecture at the Fifth International Conference for "The Scenarios of Palestine" at Birzeit University, Bethlehem, Nov. 12, 1998 (tape recording on file with author).

[78]. Interview with Barbara Goldschmidt, *loc. cit.* Ms. Agassi has similarly recalled that the landlord, who lived in the neighborhood and frequently visited the house, utilized a local law permitting the ouster of a tenant when the landlord needed the premises for personal use. The landlord's lawyer asserted in court that Nabiha Said suffered from rheumatism and needed to move to escape the dampness where she was living. The counterclaims of the Bubers, who had a long-term lease agreement, included the assertion that Ms. Agassi also suffered from rheumatism, which was aggravated by the damp conditions in the house. Ms. Agassi also noted that the Bubers, relying on the long-term nature of their lease, had made major improvements in the apartment and landscaped the garden. Given the shortage of housing in Palestine during World War II, their eviction could not have come at a worse time. Interview with Yehudit Agassi, *loc. cit.*

[79]. Interview with Barbara Goldschmidt, *loc. cit.*

[80]. Cf. Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 18.

[81]. Inspecting the house's interior, I was able to distinguish the original plaster construction from rooms constructed of drywall after 1948. During the pre-1948 period the main entrance floor consisted of one large living room, four bedrooms, one small kitchen, and two bathrooms.

[82]. My reconstruction of the occupancy of the house for the various periods prior to 1948 virtually forecloses the possibility that Edward Said's nuclear family ever resided in the structure. See [Appendix 3](#). As noted in the text, even brief stays as guests with their cousins on the main entrance floor would have been limited to the period from 1942 to 1948. Such temporary visits, if they indeed took place, do not begin to justify Professor Said's claims regarding the house at 10 Brenner Street.

[83]. Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories." *loc. cit.*, 48; also in *The Politics of Dispossession*, 177.

[84]. *Edward Said: A Very Personal View of Palestine*, *loc. cit.*

[85]. *Ibid.*

[86]. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*, 112-13.

[87]. Student Registry Books, St. George's Preparatory School, Jerusalem (available in the office of the headmaster), visited June 17, 1996, Oct. 21, 1996. By the time Said made his BBC documentary, I had visited the headmaster's office twice and on each visit had scrutinized, page by page, all three of the institution's registry books, without finding any trace of Said's being enrolled in the school on a permanent basis. See text below for the possibility that he was a temporary student on visits to his cousins in Jerusalem.

[88]. Interviews with David Eben-Ezra, former student at St. George's Academy, Tel Aviv, Sept. 16, 1998, and November 5, 1998 (on file with author). Haig Boyagian, a former St. George's student who told me that he has remained friends with Said until today and who commended the latter's political viewpoint on Israeli-Palestinian issues, had the recollection that Said did attend the school. This disparate recollection, however, is not inconsistent with my conclusion that Said was, at most, at the school only briefly when his family visited Jerusalem from their home in Cairo. Significantly, Boyagian could not recall the period or duration of Said's attendance at St. George's. Telephone interview with Haig Boyagian, in New Jersey, Feb. 17, 1999 (on file with author).

[89]. See above, footnote 32.

[90]. "Said, Edward W." *loc. cit.* 493-97.

[91]. Cf. Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *loc. cit.*, 47, 50. Also cf. Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 179, and *Out of Place*, 113.

[92]. Robert Marquand, *op. cit.*, 10. No contemporaneous record of such a December 1947 warning appears in the archives of the daily newspapers *Palestine Post* (memo from Gary Emmanuel, Oct. 26, 1997, on file with author); *Ha'aretz* (memo from Yoni Rachamin, Jan. 18, 1999, on file with author). *Ma'ariv* (*idem*); *Yediot Ahronot* (*idem*); the *New York Times* (memo from William Kaplan, on file with author); *Egyptian Gazette* (memo from Seth Wikas *loc. cit.*); the (London) *Times* (memo from Gary Emmanuel, on file with

author). The diary of the British mayor of Jerusalem during the period is also silent as to any use of threats to drive Arabs from Talbieh in December 1947. R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 102-18.

[93]. As will become apparent below, this detail, rather than substantiating Said's claimed residence in Jerusalem in late 1947, actually casts further doubt on it, as well as on his claim that he and his nuclear family departed Palestine at that time.

[94]. See Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*, 80, 175; Nachum Tim Gidal, *Jerusalem in 3000 Years* (1995), 180; Ezra Yakhin, *Elnakam* (1992), 192-98; A. J. Sherman, *Mandate Days: British Lives in Palestine 1918-1948* (1997), 193; J. Bowyer Bell, *Terror Out of Zion*, 216; Dominique Lapierre & Larry Collins, *O Jerusalem* (1972), 21.

[95]. Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem History Atlas* (1977), 90; Ezra Yakhin, *Elnakam*, 84, 192-98.

[96]. Interview with David Eben-Ezra, *loc. cit.*; interview with Efraim Degani, Deputy Commander of the Haganah in Talbieh, in Jerusalem, Oct. 11, 1998 (on file with author); telephone interview with Yosef Nevo, a Haganah commander in Jerusalem during 1947-48, in Herzlia, Oct. 7, 1998 (on file with author).

[97]. *Ve'im Bigvurot [Fourscore Years: A Tribute to Rubin and Hannah Mass on Their Eightieth Birthdays]*, Abraham Eben-Shushan, A. Sh. Elhanani, Aharon Bier, A.M. Habermann, Shin Shalom eds. (1974), 357-58; R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 30.

[98]. About 20 percent of the population of Talbieh comprised diplomats, foreign journalists, clergy, British officials, and others who were neither Arabs nor Jews. Many journalists and even some spies frequented the bar of the Salvia Hotel in the district. Interview with Efraim Degani, *loc. cit.*

[99]. R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 30.

[100]. "Journalist Murdered in Jerusalem," *Palestine Post*, Dec. 22, 1947, 3; "Snipers Busy in Palestine," the (London) *Times*, Dec. 24, 1947, 3; R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 117.

[101]. The Haganah, the largest pre-state Jewish voluntary self-defense organization, gave rise to the Israel Defense Forces after Israel was founded. Dominique-D. Junod, *The Imperiled Red Cross and the Palestine-Eretz-Yisrael Conflict 1945-1952* (1996), 166 n. 474.

[102]. The *Palestine Post* furnished additional detail regarding the incident:

In the morning Arabs questioned two Jews near a road-block in Talbieh and then shot and wounded one of them, Shmuel Lehrer, seriously. Bela Zilver, 21, was slightly injured.

"Army Prevents New Attack on Yemin Moshe," *Palestine Post*, Feb. 12, 1948, 1.

[103]. Edwin Samuel, *A Lifetime in Jerusalem: The Memoirs of the Second Viscount Samuel* (1970), 240. Shmuel Kneller, who was assigned to ride next to the driver in the sound van, confirmed to me in an interview that a student of Arabic rode in the back of the vehicle and broadcast a message over the loudspeaker: "In response to the stabbing [shooting] this afternoon, and to prevent further bloodshed, we are advising the Arab residents, for their own best interests, to leave the neighborhood quickly." According to Kneller, none of the three men in the sound van carried a weapon because of the severe British penalties against Jews found carrying unlicensed arms. The verbal warning was repeated for about 20 minutes while the van slowly crisscrossed the streets of Talbieh. Interview with Shmuel Kneller in Jerusalem, Dec. 4, 1998 (on file with author).

In 1949, the late Pinchas Blumenthal, the commander of the Haganah in Talbieh, published an article on the organization's struggle with the rival Arab *Najada* militia. It includes a description of the mid-February incident. Pinchas Blumenthal, "Talbieh," *Ha'magen [The Shield]*, Feb. 17, 1949, 6. The shooting and the retaliatory sound-vehicle warnings described by Blumenthal were confirmed for me by Blumenthal's deputy, Efraim Degani. Degani stated that this was the only instance in which the Jewish forces in Talbieh used a sound vehicle. Interview with Efraim Degani, *loc. cit.*

It should be kept in mind that in the 1940's Jerusalem was an ethnic checkerboard. According to a contemporary report in the *New York Times*, "Although the barrier separates the Jewish from the Arab areas, many non-Moslem Arab families still live next door to Jews. The importance of Talbieh in the Haganah strategic scheme is that it is a vital link in communications between the center of Jerusalem and outlying suburbs." ("4 Die in Palestine in Wide Disorders," *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1948, 16.) During the final months of the Mandate and the Arab siege of Jerusalem, control of the mixed-population neighborhood was regarded as critical by the Jewish forces, all the more so because of the threat posed by an armed Arab force--a contingent of the Iraqi army situated in the nearby neighborhood of Katamon--as well as by the *Najada* militia in the Old City. See *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War* (Salim Tamari, ed.), 1999, 113-140 n.148. There were also Arabs snipers in the nearby train station and on

the ramparts of the Old City. See Dan Kurzman, *Genesis 1948* (1970), 204-05; *Ve'im Bigvurot*, 357-58; interview with Efraim Degani, *loc. cit.*

[104]. "The Haganah Clears Talbieh of Arabs," *Ha'aretz*, Feb. 12, 1948, 4. Benny Morris, a "new" Israeli historian who has written extensively and sympathetically on the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem, acknowledges that this particular evacuation was motivated by military exigencies. Benny Morris, *1948 and After* (1994), 2. The Arab siege of Jerusalem had already begun, and Arab forces were interdicting the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem while the Jordanian Arab Legion had cut off the city's main water supply and water and food were being strictly rationed. *Idem*; Marie Syrkin, "The Palestinian Refugees: Resettlement, Repatriation, or Restoration," in *Israel, the Arabs and the Middle East* (Irving Howe & Carl Gershman, eds., 1972), 164; Hannah Hurnard, *Watchman on the Walls* (1997), 112-14; A. J. Sherman, *op. cit.*, 212.

[105]. *Ha'aretz*, Feb. 12, 1948. Other contemporary reports include "Army Prevents New Attack on Yemin Moshe," *Palestine Post*, Feb. 12, 1948; "Palestine Is Tenser as Arab Stalks Jew," *Egyptian Gazette*, Feb. 12, 1948, 1; and "4 Die in Palestine in Wide Disorders," *loc. cit.* The mid-February incident is corroborated in nearly identical fashion by eyewitnesses. These include not only the Haganah commander in Talbieh, Pinchas Blumenthal, and Shmuel Kneller, one of the three Haganah men who rode in the sound vehicle (see above, note 103), but also three residents of Talbieh who heard the warning (telephone interview with Marlin Levin, in Jerusalem, Dec. 4, 1998, on file with author; telephone interview with Batya Levin, in Jerusalem, Dec. 7, 1998, on file with author; telephone interview with Rhoda Cohen, in Jerusalem, Dec. 9, 1998, on file with author); the chairman of the Jewish residents of Talbieh (*Ve'im Bigvurot*, 357-58); and the British mayor of Jerusalem (R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 143). See also the daily Summary of Events of the British Mandatory Police Criminal Investigation Department (*Palestine Police Report*, Feb. 11, 1948, 1-2). And see the British historian Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem in the Twentieth Century*, 194; and Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (1987), 52.

[106]. Pinchas Blumenthal, *op. cit.*, 6. According to Shmuel Kneller, there was no immediate panic. That evening, however, many Arabs living in Talbieh packed their cars and drove to Bethlehem or Jericho. Interview with Shmuel Kneller, see above, note 103. This was confirmed by Marlin Levin, Batya Levin, and Rhoda Cohen, the three Jewish residents of the neighborhood who were also interviewed by me: see above, note 105. That the Arab residents soon returned is corroborated by an article, "Talbieh Patrolled," in the *Palestine Post* for February 22, 1948, 3:

Arab Municipal Policemen are now patrolling the main section of the Talbieh Quarter which has been fenced in since last Sunday. Talbieh was put behind barbed wire several days after two Jews were shot by Arabs from another neighborhood [the February 11, 1948 incident].

There would have been little point to such a patrol if the Arab residents of Talbieh were no longer there.

[107]. The irregularly published Palestinian Arab newspapers *Falastin* and *Defa* carried no mention of Arabs evacuating Talbieh in December 1947, when Said claims his family left. *Falastin* was examined for the period November 30, 1947 through April 24, 1948. *Defa* was examined for the period December 4, 1947 through April 23, 1948. Interview with Haim Gal, curator at the press archives of the Moshe Dayan Center of Tel Aviv University, in Ramat Aviv (Feb. 2, 1999).

[108]. According to Pinchas Blumenthal, however, Jewish forces did not actually capture Talbieh until immediately after the British withdrew. Pinchas Blumenthal, *op. cit.*, 6. In the same vein, Rubin Mass, publisher and chairman of the Jewish residents committee of Talbieh, described in detail how the Arabs fled the quarter on May 14, 1948, without a fight, after they saw the Israeli flag flying from the former Royal Air Force headquarters in that neighborhood. *Ve'im Bigvurot*, 357-58. This particular account of the causes and date of the Arabs' flight is supported by Dr. Salim Tamari, the leading Palestinian authority on Talbieh during the 1948 war. *Jerusalem 1948: The Arab Neighborhoods and Their Fate in the War*, 113. R. M Graves, the British-appointed mayor of Jerusalem, wrote similarly: "This quarter had the distinction of housing Arabs and Jews in fairly amicable relations until the final departure of our security forces, after which the Arab residents moved out. . . ." *Experiment in Anarchy*, 30.

According to Yosef Ami, the commander of the 4th battalion of the Etzioni Brigade, the Haganah unit responsible for Southern Jerusalem (including Talbieh), the Arabs evacuated the neighborhood just *before* the British left, which would have been in early to mid-May 1948. This evacuation followed the breaching by the Arabs of an agreement between the Jewish and Arab residents not to bring armed men into Talbieh. According to Ami, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Haganah, a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross sat in on the discussions as a witness. The agreement promised Arab residents that they could stay in their homes without interference provided the armed *Najada* militia did not enter the neighborhood. (A similar agreement between Arab and Jewish commanders to demilitarize the Mount Scopus area is reported by Dominique D. Junod, *op. cit.*, 149 n.412.) But the Arabs broke the understanding when armed men from the *Najada* were seen

walking around lower Talbieh. Fighting broke out immediately in the area of the school next to what is now known as Liberty Bell Park, and during it the Arab residents left Talbieh, some riding in trucks provided by the International Committee of the Red Cross. Interview with Yosef Ami, in Haifa, Oct. 6, 1998 (on file with author).

[109]. Institute for Palestine Studies, *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians 1876-1948* (Walid Chalet, introduction and commentary, 1984), 319. An inspection of the Palestinian Arab newspapers *Falastin* and *Defa* until late April 1948, when publication was temporarily halted, came up with no articles about Arabs refugees leaving Talbieh. Interview with Haim Gal, *loc. cit.* An examination of the *Egyptian Gazette* during the entire relevant period similarly revealed no mention of Arabs fleeing Talbieh; the newspaper's earliest references to refugees from Palestine in general appear in late April 1948. ("British Mediate to End Haifa War," Apr. 23, 1948, 1; "Army to Protect Arab Haifa Refugees," Apr. 25, 1948, 1; "Arabs Row to P[ort] Said," Apr. 26, 1948, 1; "Palestine Refugees Flee Across [Trans-jordanian] Border," Apr. 28, 1948, 1; "100,000 [Pounds Sterling] for Arab Refugees," May 4, 1948, 1; Photo of Arab Refugees from Palestine Arriving in Beirut, May 4, 1948, 1.) Memo from Seth Wikas, *loc. cit.* Henry Cattán, a prominent Palestinian lawyer and author, wrote that Talbieh was not "overrun by Jewish forces [until] 14 and 15 May [1948]." Henry Cattán, *Jerusalem* (1981), 46.

[110]. Reviewed for these purposes were the reports of the British Mandatory government to London, i.e., the detailed daily telegrams of General Sir Alan Cunningham (the British High Commissioner in Palestine), the Police Criminal Investigation Department Reports, the Criminal Investigation Department Internal Security Reports, the Weekly Intelligence Reports, and the District Commissioner's Fortnightly Reports. See, for example, Inward Telegrams from General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: No. 2340, Dec. 5, 1947; No. 2362, Dec. 9, 1947; No. 2379, Dec. 9, 1947; No. 2323, Dec. 10, 1947; No. 2388, Dec. 10, 1947. And see Fortnightly Reports of the [British Mandatory] District Commissioner of Jerusalem to the Chief Secretary for the period Dec. 1-16, 1947 (Dec. 22, 1947); for the period Dec. 17-31, 1947 (Jan. 9, 1948); for the period Jan. 1-16, 1948 (Jan. 24, 1948); for the period Jan. 17-31, 1948 (Feb. 4, 1948). For the mid-February incident and thereafter, see Inward Telegrams from General Sir A. Cunningham to the Secretary of State for the Colonies: Feb. 14, 1948; Feb. 21, 1948; May 1, 1948. And see Fortnightly Report of the District Commissioner of Jerusalem to the Chief Secretary for the period Feb. 1-16, 1948 (Feb. 23, 1948) and for the period Feb. 17-29, 1948 (Mar. 4, 1948).

[111]. Edward Said has written, "By February 1948 Talbiya was in the hands of the Haganah, the Jewish underground." Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and

Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *loc. cit.*, 47, 50. This "memory" could not have been first-hand since, by Said's own account, he and his family were already living in Cairo as of December 1947. It is possible that, residing permanently in Cairo, Said learned about the sound-van incident and perhaps also about the British roadblocks from refugees (including members of his extended family) who had evacuated Talbieh during the spring of 1948. This conjecture is supported by Said's statement elsewhere that, "In the spring of 1948, right after the Deir Yassin massacre, my father's sister and her family appeared [in Cairo]." Edward W. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 115-16.

[112]. Huda Gindy, Said's childhood friend, furnished this information. (Memo from Seth Wikas, *loc. cit.*) It is confirmed by Said's new book, *Out of Place*, in which he specifies that he attended the Gezira Preparatory School from 1941 to 1946, with a few interruptions, the Cairo School for American Children from 1946 to 1948, and Victoria College from 1949 to 1951. Edward W. Said, *Out of Place*, 36, 82, 130, 147.

[113]. Edward Said, "Holy Land of My Fathers," *loc. cit.*, 49; James Woodall, "Not Going Gently into Palestine's Dark Night," a review of Edward Said's *The Politics of Dispossession*, in the *Observer* (of London), June 26, 1994, Review Section, 6.

[114]. See above, note 28. To be completely fair, hints of the truth have also appeared in fugitive places over the years, including in a 1987 article by Said in, of all venues, *House & Garden* ("Cairo Recalled," *loc. cit.*, see above, note 19). My attempts to verify the record with Said himself were unsuccessful; a request for an interview, made through his assistant at Columbia, Zaineb Istrabadi, met with no response.

[115]. Edward W. Said, "Palestine, Then and Now: An Exile's Journey Through Israel and the Occupied Territories," *loc. cit.*, 48; also in Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, 177.

[116]. Dinitia Smith, *op. cit.*, 40, 43. Said's claim that the bookstore belonged to his father has been repeated frequently. See, for example, John Sigler, "Palestinian Speaks for his People: Said Makes Plea for Tolerance and Understanding," *loc. cit.*, H2.

[117]. Seth Wikas interview of Edward Said, Nazareth, Mar. 23, 1999 (on file with author).

[118]. Interview with Edward Said, Educational Broadcasting and GWETA, *MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour*, Aug. 1, 1991, Transcript #4129.

[119]. Mouin Rabbani, "Symbols Versus Substance: A Year After the Declaration of Principles," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (1995), 72.

[120]. Christopher Sykes, *Crossroads to Israel, 1917-1948* (1973), 352-53.

[121]. Whatever his own personal circumstances may have been, I am hardly questioning Said's right to support personal and property claims by Palestinian refugees in general. Nor do I deny for a moment that genuine Palestinian refugees left the Mandatory territory of Palestine, for a wide range of reasons, during the period of the 1948 war, or that many such refugees lost property, real and personal. In fact, I have written a lengthy article recommending the establishment of an international arbitral tribunal to consider and resolve such claims, alongside the losses suffered by hundreds of thousands of Jews who arrived in Israel destitute after being driven out of Arab countries, eastern Jerusalem, and what later came to be known as the West Bank. The plight of these Jewish refugees has been largely ignored, and no form of compensation has ever been offered for their weighty losses. Nor, to the best of my knowledge, has Edward Said ever addressed or expressed any interest in compensating those losses. Justus R. Weiner, "The Palestinian Refugees' 'Right to Return' and the Peace Process," *Boston College International and Comparative Law Review*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1997. See also State of Israel Government Press Office, *The Refugee Issue: A Background Paper* 4 (Oct. 1994); Shlomo Gazit, *The Palestinian Refugee Problem* (1995), 10-11; Noah Lucas, *The Modern History of Israel* (1974), 272-73; Maurice M. Roumani, *The Case of the Jews from Arab Countries: A Neglected Issue* (1983), 1-8; Norman Stillman, *The Jews of Arab Lands in Modern Times* (1991), 149-75.

[122]. Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*, 104.

[123]. Interview with Yehezkel Shamash, Custodian of Properties of Missing Persons, Ministry of Finance, in Jerusalem (Apr. 8, 1997); telephone interview with Yehezkel Shamash, in Jerusalem (Feb. 24, 1999).

[124]. Interview with Yehezkel Shamash, in Jerusalem (Apr. 8, 1997).

[125]. R. M. Graves, *Experiment in Anarchy*, 102-103. Graves wrote:

December 2nd [1947]: This morning we had demonstrations that reminded me of Cairo twenty-eight years ago. The Arab Higher Committee had ordered a three days' protest strike, which was strictly observed. The demonstrations, without which political strikes are no fun, start harmlessly with a small crowd, mainly consisting of youth and street boys, trailing up the Jaffa Road. Their numbers gradually increased, and they soon started breaking into Jewish shops and setting them on fire. *Some of the*

*shops that were burned out were Arab, and were either set alight by mistake or caught fire from their neighbors.* [emphasis added]

According to Graves, efforts of the Fire Brigade to put out the fires were hampered by the rioters, who cut the hose-pipes with impunity.

[126]. A photograph taken in December 1948 from above the strip of stores near where the Palestine Educational Company was located reveals roofs gutted or blown off. Martin Gilbert, *Jerusalem History Atlas*, 102, plate 87. Also, interview with Herbert Silberstein, proprietor of Tower of David Ltd. office-supplies company, a competitor of Palestine Educational Company from the 1920's until 1948, in Jerusalem, Oct. 2, 1998 (on file with author). If shelling destroyed the store's roof, it stands to reason that the contents (books and office equipment) would have quickly been ruined by seasonal precipitation. Anything of value that was left may have been pilfered by desperate civilians in a city under siege.

[127]. Interview with Herbert Silberstein, *loc. cit.*

[128]. Letter of Tom Schmidek of Anglo-Saxon Realty, Apr. 14, 1997 (on file with author).

[129]. See, for example, *The Palestine Guide* 1942, xiv; and *The Palestine Guide Book (The Blue Directory)* 1947-48, xxi. Two prominent Palestinian Christians who shopped frequently at the Palestine Educational Company during the latter part of the British Mandate period, and remember it well, were interviewed for this article. Nabil Kerresh, a hotel owner, and Mukhtar Mitrey Issa Tobey, an income-tax official for the British, both recall that the proprietor was Boulos Yusef Said, whom they knew personally. Interview with Nabil Kerresh, in Jerusalem, Apr. 27, 1998 (on file with author); interview with Mukhtar Mitrey Issa Tobey, in Jerusalem, Apr. 21, 1998 (on file with author).

[130]. Interview with Edward Said, "Making a Cause to be Reckoned With," *loc. cit.*, 6.

[131]. According to Yehezkel Shamash, the director of the Israel Government Office of the Custodian for Properties of Missing Persons (see above, note 123), no such claim has been filed. This office, part of the Ministry of Finance, is located in downtown Jerusalem and operates pursuant to the Knesset's [Israeli parliament's] authorization in the Absentee's Property Law, 5710-1950 as amended. The statute permits the Custodian to act as a trustee on behalf of the owners of abandoned property. The Custodian is allowed to hold property, sell it to the Development Authority, or lease it; any proceeds from such transactions, minus legal and administrative expenses, are held in trust until such time as the state of emergency declared in 1948 is canceled. Mr. Shamash has confirmed

that title ownership prior to the 1948 War was vested in Edward Said's aunt "Nabiha and her children Yusef, George, Albert, Robert and Evelyn." Interview and subsequent telephone interview with Yehezkel Shamash, *loc. cit.*

[132]. The two Palestinian organizations are the Land Research Center of Orient House (part of the Arab Studies Society, an institution headed by Faisal Husseini, a member of the PLO executive who is responsible for the Jerusalem portfolio) and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights and the Environment. The efforts of both these organizations on behalf of absentee owners have been widely covered in the local and international media. See Isabel Kershner, "Palestinian Affairs: The West Jerusalem File," *Jerusalem Report*, Nov. 2, 1995, 24.

[133]. As documented above (see notes 38, 40, 41), the business was listed in every annual *Egyptian Directory* located by me or my research assistants from 1927 to 1959. Its success is suggested by the opening of two branch stores, the large feature advertisements it purchased, and the fact that as of 1944 the main branch had three telephone numbers. Memo of Avi Green, *loc. cit.*

[134]. On January 26, 1952 many Cairo businesses were looted and burned by mobs. King Farouk responded by dismissing the government and imposing a dawn-to-dusk curfew, enforced by orders to shoot on sight. "Cairo Rocked by Rampaging Mobs," *Chronicle of the 20th Century* (Derrik Mercer, ed., 1988), 726; interview with Matthew Ibrahim Aziz, manager of Standard Stationery, in Cairo, Apr. 29, 1998 (on file with author); interview with Matthew Ibrahim Aziz, in Cairo, Dec. 26, 1998 (on file with author).

[135]. When asked the identity of the current owner of the store, Matthew Ibrahim Aziz, manager of Standard Stationery, pointed to a framed photograph of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Memo of Avi Green, *loc. cit.* Edward Said's sister, Jean (Said) Makdisi, wrote in her own memoir, "I was eleven when the revolution, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, took place. . . . The revolution changed the pattern of society in Egypt, especially after the Suez war, and all the private, foreign-owned businesses were nationalized." Jean Said Makdisi, *Beirut Fragments* (1990), 102. And see Edwin Shanke, "Nasser Is Remolding Egypt to End British and French Role," *New York Times*, Dec. 1, 1956, 4.

[136]. Edward W. Said, "Cairo Recalled," *loc. cit.*, 20, 32. Said was impressed by "the great power of his [Nasser's] appeal," his "fiery charisma, personal incorruptibility, and almost limitless dedication to pan-Arab unity and anti-imperialist struggle." See also Edward W. Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, xiv.

[137]. He recently wrote, "My memories of those days and places [Palestine, Lebanon, and Egypt] remain extremely vivid, full of little details that I seem to

have preserved as if between the pages of a book." Edward Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *loc. cit.*, 7. For a discussion of the literary trope of childhood as a blissful paradise that is later lost, see Martha Ronk Lifson, "The Myth of the Fall: A Description of Autobiography," *XII Genre* (1979), 45, 47.

[138]. Edward W. Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* (1994).

[139]. See above, note 25.

[140]. Edward Said, "Between Worlds: Edward Said Makes Sense of His Life," *loc. cit.*, 3.

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#### [Appendix 1](#)

Residential Addresses of William (Wadie) Said and Family in Cairo

## [Appendix 2](#)

Photograph of Edward Said "in front of his old home in Jerusalem." The Observer (London), November 1, 1992.

## [Appendix 3](#)

Occupancy of the House at 10 Brenner Street