ed or *only* the place where the patriarchate of the Greek Orthodox Church says is the seat of its authority is a debasement of that. It has this extraordinary exfoliating power which has been betrayed by almost every political program and, in the case of Israel, sovereignty, that has taken it over. The Jordanians weren't any better. The Arab position on Jerusalem, which is to redivide it into east and west, is completely unacceptable to me. The idea is that for a place like Jerusalem you need an imaginative vision of the status of the city that can be realized in the life of the citizens of Jerusalem and not imposed on them by guards and outposts and police stations.

DB: *Armenians from historical Armenia in eastern Turkey used to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and when they returned home, they would be called "hajji."*

The word is used in Arabic for the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, but also for Jerusalem. The whole idea of *hijra* is important in this whole concept. Emigration. *Hijra* and *hajj*, they have a relationship which is very important, to emigrate and then to return in an act of pilgrimage is very important. But one has to see both of them, return and exile, not just one.

The Pen and the Sword

Culture and Imperialism

January 18, 1993

DB: *Where does* Orientalism *factor in* Culture and Imperialism?

Orientalism did something fairly limited, although it covered a lot of ground. I was interested in Western perceptions of the Orient and in the transformation of those views into Western rule over the Orient. I limited myself to the period from about 1800 until the present, looking at the Islamic Arab world. I only looked at it from the point of view of the West, with the understanding, which has been in my opinion greatly misconstrued by critics of mine, that I was talking about an aspect of the West, not the whole West. I wasn't suggesting that the West is monolithic. But those departments of the West in England and France and America that were concerned, as a matter of policy and rule, with the Middle East.

Culture and Imperialism is in a certain sense a sequel to that in that a) I discuss other parts of the world besides the Middle East. In fact, I don't spend much time talking about the Middle East. I look at India, the subcontinent generally, a lot of Africa, the

Caribbean, Australia, parts of the world where there was a major Western investment, whether through empire or direct colonialism or some combination of both, as in the case of India. That's one difference. And b) although I cover the same time period, the end of the eighteenth century to the present, the second aspect of the book which is to a certain degree dependent on *Orientalism* but goes further, is that I look at responses to the West, resistance to the West in the places I'm discussing. That is to say, unlike *Orientalism*, where I only looked at European and American writers and policies, in this case I look at the great culture of resistance that emerged in response to imperialism and grew into what in the twentieth century is called "nationalism." I look at the poets, writers, militants and theoreticians of resistance in the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

DB: *So it's not primarily through the prism of literature.*

Or of the West. Although literature is given a certain privilege because my argument is that many of the attitudes, the references to the non-European world were in a certain sense fashioned and prepared by what you could call cultural documents, including literary ones, and preeminently narratives. In my view, the novel plays an extraordinarily important role in helping to create imperial attitudes towards the rest of the world. Interestingly enough, I'm not really concerned with the kind of imperialism that one finds in Russia, where the Russians simply advanced by adjacents. They

moved east and south, whatever was near them. I'm much more interested in the way the Europeans, the British and the French, preeminently, were able to jump away from their shores and pursue a policy of overseas domination. So that England could hold India for 300 years at a distance of eight or nine thousand miles from its own shores.

DB: *With 100,000 people.*

That's an astonishing fact. Even though there were important geographical separations between the metropolitan center and the distant colony, in some cases, for example, France and Algeria, that distant colony was absorbed and became a department of France, as Martinique and Guadeloupe are to this very day in the Caribbean. I look a great deal also at Ireland because it is the major European colony. In the book I examine the way in which Britain and France pioneered the idea of overseas settlement and domination. After 1945, with the era of decolonization, when the British and French empires were dismantled and the United States took over, you have a continuation of the same qualities.

DB: *You argue that culture made imperialism possible. You cite Blake: "the foundation of empire is art and science. Remove them or degrade them, and the empire is no more. Empire follows art and not vice versa, as Englishmen suppose."*

I think one of the main flaws in the enormous literature in economics and political science and history about imperialism is that very little attention

has been paid to the role of culture in keeping an empire maintained. Conrad was one of the most extraordinary witnesses to this. He understands that central to the idea of empire isn't so much profit, although profit was certainly a motive. But what distinguishes earlier empires, like the Roman or the Spanish or the Arabs, from the modern empires, of which the British and French were the great ones in the nineteenth century, is the fact that the latter ones are systematic enterprises, constantly reinvested. They're not simply arriving in a country, looting it and then leaving when the loot is exhausted. And modern empire requires, as Conrad said, an idea of service, an idea of sacrifice, an idea of redemption. Out of this you get these great, massively reinforced notions of, for example, in the case of France, the "*mission civilisatrice.*" That we're not there to benefit ourselves, we're there for the sake of the natives. Or, in the case of people like John Stuart Mill, that we are there because India requires us, that these are territories and peoples who beseech domination from us and that, as Kipling demonstrates in some of his work, without the English India would fall into ruin.

So it's that complex of ideas that particularly interests me. What especially was to me a great discovery was that these ideas were largely unchallenged within the metropolitan centers. Even the people today whom we admire a great deal, like De Toqueville and Mill, and the women's movement which began at the end of the nineteenth century...

DB: *And Jane Austen.*

Jane Austen is a separate case. She's much earlier. But I'm talking about organized movements, the liberal movement, the progressive movement, or the working class movement or the feminist movement. They were all imperialist by and large. There was no dissent from this. The only time that there began to be changes inside Europe and the United States was when the natives themselves in the colonies began to revolt and made it very difficult for these ideas to continue unchallenged. Then people like Sartre, in support of the Algerians, demonstrated on their behalf. But until then there was a widespread complicity, although there were some rebels, oppositional figures, like Wilfred Scawen Blunt in England.

DB: *But behind the façade of culture, wasn't the glue that held the empire together bound by force, coercion and intimidation?*

Yes, of course. But what we need to understand is how very often the force of, say, the British army in India was very minimal in a way, considering the vast amount of territory that they administered and held. What you have instead is a program of ideological pacification whereby, for example, in India the system of education, which was promulgated in the 1830s, was really addressing the fact that the education of Indians under the British should teach the Indians the superiority of English culture over Indian culture. And of course when there was a revolt, as in the case of the famous so-called "Indian Mutiny" in 1857, then it was dealt with force, mercilessly, brutally, definitively. Then the façade could

be re-erected and you could say, We're here for your sake and this is beneficial for you. So it was force, but much more important, in my opinion, than force, which was administered selectively, was the idea inculcated in the minds of the people being colonized that it was their destiny to be ruled by the West.

DB: *Don't you point out that in the case of India in the early 1800s the English novel was being studied there before it was being examined in England?*

Not so much the English novel, but modern English literature was being studied in India. This was the discovery of a former student of mine, now a colleague, Gauri Viswanathan, in her book *The Masks of Conquest*. What she argues is that the study of modern English literature begins in India well before it becomes a subject for university research and instruction in metropolitan England. If you didn't have culture and ideas about culture, the best that is thought and known, you'd have anarchy. You'd have, in effect, a lawless society. Those ideas came out of the Indian context, where her brother served for many years.

DB: *How do you account for the enduring interest in Joseph Conrad and his work? You often refer to* Heart of Darkness.

It's not just *Heart of Darkness* that I'm interested in. *Nostromo*, which I think is an equally great novel, published somewhat later, about 1904, is about Latin America. Conrad seems to me to be the

most interesting witness to European imperialism. He was certainly in many ways extremely critical of the more rapacious varieties of empire. For example, of the Belgians in the Congo. But more than most people, he understood how insidiously empire infected not just the people who were subjugated by it, but the people who served it. That is to say that the idea of service had in it an illusion that, for example, in the case of the figures in *Heart of Darkness*, but also especially in *Nostromo*, could seduce and captivate one, so that in the end it was a form of universal corruption. The trouble with Conrad, in my opinion, and I point this out several times in the course of the book, is that although he was in many ways an anti-imperialist, he also thought imperialism was inevitable. He couldn't understand, as no one else in his time could either, that it was possible for natives to take over the governance of their own destiny. I'm not blaming him retrospectively. He lived in essentially a Eurocentric world. For him, although imperialism was in many cases bad, it was full of abuses, it hurt and harmed people both white and non-white, nevertheless there was no alternative to it. When it came to what is now called liberation, independence, freedom for people from colonialism and imperialism, Conrad simply couldn't get to that. That I think is his almost tragic limitation.

DB: *But ultimately his work gives assent, gives affirmation to imperialism.*

Yes, and it's more complicated than that. In a certain sense what he does in his novels is to reca-

pitulate the imperialist adventure. His novels are really about people going out, in many cases, to the hinterlands, to the "heart of darkness" in the case of Africa, to Latin America in *Nostromo*. There they imbue themselves with an idea of service, that they are there to help the people. But of course, they are in the process enriching themselves. But I wouldn't say that he endorses that. He sees it as inevitable. He doesn't criticize it as something that can be replaced by a different idea. More than most people, he had the outsider's sense that Europe was doomed in a certain sense to repeat this cycle of foreign adventure, corruption and decline.

DB: *When you're examining these novelists, Flaubert, Balzac, Tennyson, Wordsworth, Dickens, et al., you open yourself to the criticism of putting the filters of the present on the lenses of the past.*

I try not to do that. What I focus on exclusively are extremely precise indications in the texts where these writers, only a fraction of whom you've mentioned, actually say the things that I say they're saying. I'm not blaming them retrospectively. I say quite clearly in the beginning of the book that what I'm not interested in is the politics of blame. This is the way the world was. Those people and their views lost. They were defeated in the great wave of decolonization which forms the third big chapter of the book. But what I also say is I think it's wrong for us to exonerate the cultural archive of any association with this rather sordid experience of imperialism. In fact, I say that many of these writers are made more interesting by the fact that they understood and

took for granted the presence of overseas colonies for the British.

For example, in *Mansfield Park* by Jane Austen, I comment on something that's in the novel. It's not something I add to it. The proprietor of the estate, which is called Mansfield Park, Sir Thomas Bertram, has to go to Antigua, where he owns a sugar plantation which is obviously run by slaves in order to replenish the coffers of Mansfield Park. So there's a certain dependency of a beautiful estate, signifying repose, calm, beauty, in England, on the sugar produce of a colony run by slaves in Antigua.

In our field, people like myself who teach literature historically allow ourselves to be curtained off from politics and history. We look at the work of art. I'm second to none in my appreciation for a work of art, and I only deal with writers whom I like, love and admire. But I also say that in reading them it's not enough to say, "They're works of art." I try to reinsert them in their own history and to show—this is the important point—how many subsequent writers, for example, a whole slew of African writers writing after Conrad, really rewrote *Heart of Darkness*. What we're talking about is a process of *writing back* that took place.

So rather than say, Jane Austen's novel is really only about England, I say no, it's about the Caribbean. In order to understand it you have to understand the writing of Caribbean history by other Caribbean writers. It's not just Jane Austen's view of the Caribbean that we need. We need the other views as well. I establish what I call a reading which is based on counterpoint, many voices producing a history.

The main point is that the experience of imperialism is really an experience of interdependent histories. The history of India and the history of England have to be thought of together. I'm not a separatist. My whole effort is to integrate areas of experience that have been separated both analytically and politically, and I think that's wrong.

DB: *E.M. Forster is another writer you discuss. In his* Howard's End *there's a reference to a plantation in Nigeria.*

It's not just a reference. The Wilcoxes, the people who own Howard's End, own the Anglo-Nigerian rubber company. Their wealth is derived from Africa. But most critics of that novel, for example, Lionel Trilling's book on Forster, simply do not mention this fact. It's in the book. What I'm trying to do is to highlight these aspects of the great cultural archive of the West, as I try to look also at the cultural archive of places like Australia, North Africa, Central Africa and elsewhere, to say, They're all there. We have to deal with this body of material. It's tremendously important. You may remember that the epigraph to *Howard's End* is "only connect." It's important to connect things with each other. That's what I'm trying to do in *Culture and Imperialism.*

DB: *So you accept the Zeitgeist, you're not critical of it.*

The criticism comes in the great resistance movements, which in the end defeated the empires.

The fact is that the empires didn't survive World War II. The Congress movement, which started in 1880 in India, was the very same party that took power in India after the British left in 1947. One of the points I tried to make here is that all of the great resistance movements of Africa, Asia and Latin America traced their history back to the first people who resisted the white man coming. There's a continuity of resistance.

For example, the Algerian FLN, which defeated the French and achieved independence in 1962, saw themselves as continuing the resistance begun in 1830 by Emir Abdel Kader in Algeria. They saw themselves as part of the same history. That's what I was trying to show. There's a continuous history of struggle. Imperialism is never the imposing of one view on another. It's a contested and joint experience. It's important to remember that.

DB: *Talking about Algeria, let's move on to Albert Camus, who you find a "very interesting figure." A Nobel Prize winner, he is celebrated as a universalist writer with some special insight into the human condition, a symbol of decency and resistance to fascism. But under your scrutiny, a very different Camus emerges.*

No less a considerable writer, Camus is a wonderful stylist, certainly an exemplary novelist in many respects. He certainly talks about resistance. But what bothers me is that he is read out of his own context, his own history. Camus's history is that of a *colon*, a *pied noir*. He was born and grew up in a place very close to a city in Algeria on the

coast, Annaba in Arabic, Bône by the French. It was made over into a French town in the 1880s and 1890s. His family came variously from Corsica and various parts of southern Europe and France. His novels, in my opinion, are really expressions of the colonial predicament. Meursault, in *L'Etranger (The Stranger)*, kills the Arab, to whom Camus gives no name and no history. The whole idea at the end of the novel where Meursault is put on trial is an ideological fiction. No Frenchman was ever put on trial for killing an Arab in colonial Algeria. That's a lie. So he constructs something.

Second of all, in his later novel *La Peste (The Plague)*, the people who die in the city are Arabs, but they're not mentioned. The only people who mattered to Camus and to the European reader of the time, and even now, are Europeans. Arabs are there to die. The story, interestingly enough, is always interpreted as a parable or an allegory of the German occupation of France. My reading of Camus, and certainly of his later stories, starts with the fact that he, in the late 1950s, was very much opposed to independence for Algeria. He in fact compared the FLN to Abdel Nasser in Egypt, after Suez, after 1956.

DB: *He said in 1957 that "as far as Algeria is concerned, national independence is an emotional formula. There has never yet been an Algerian nation."*

Exactly. There had never been an Algerian nation. He denounced Muslim imperialism. So far from being an impartial observer of the human con-

dition, Camus was a colonial witness. The irritating part of it is that he's never read that way. My kids recently in school and in college have read in their French classes *La Peste* and *L'Etranger*. In both cases, my son and my daughter were made to read Camus outside of the colonial context, with no indication of the rather contested history of which he was a part. He wasn't just a neutral observer. He was a committed anti-partisan of the FLN.

DB: *In his* Exile and Kingdom *there is a very interesting story called "The Adulterous Woman." You make a point about language.*

It's not only language. This is a late story, after 1955. It's about a woman, Janine, who's married to a salesman. They go on a bus trip to the south of Algeria. She comments, as probably Camus felt at the time, that she was in a country that was hers, but there were these strange people. She doesn't know Arabic. She treats them as if they were a breed apart. They finally get to their destination, a dusty town in the south of Algeria. They spend the night. She can't sleep. She goes out at night. In a moment which has to be understood as a moment of sexual fulfillment, she lies down on the Algerian earth and engages in a ritual of communion with the land, which in a later note Camus says is a way of renewing the self, by drawing energy from the country. This is often read as a kind of existentialist parable, whereas in fact it is an assertion of a colonial right of French people, because Janine is French, to the land of Algeria, which they think is theirs to possess. I read it in that context, whereas

normally it isn't read that way. I associate that with Camus's refusal to give up the idea of an Algeria that's special to France, *l'Algérie française*. What he's frequently quoted as having said, Michael Walzer for example quotes it all the time, is that, if in a war I have to choose between justice and correct ideas and the life of my mother if she's being threatened by terrorists, of course I'll pick my mother. But those are false choices. The choice is between the responsibility of intellectuals to justice and the truth and lying about it, which many of Camus's admirers fail to see.

DB: *Did not the French declare Arabic a foreign language in Algeria?*

Arabic, by the end of World War II, had been proscribed as a language, because Algeria was considered to be a department of France. The only place, and this has an extremely important bearing on the situation of contemporary Algeria, in which the language could be taught was in the mosque. Islam then and now is the last refuge of nationalism. The FLN takes power in 1962 and restores Arabic. There was a (I think) rather misconceived program of Arabization. Everybody had to learn Arabic. The generation of Ben Bella and Boumediene didn't know Arabic at all. Their working language was French. They could speak a patois and they could read the Koran, but they weren't able to use Arabic the way we can in the Eastern Arabic world. So they had to relearn it. In the meantime, the FLN became the party not only of the nation but also of the state. With its monopoly of

power over thirty years, it became a force against which the faithful rebelled. Hence the FIS (*Front Islamique du Salvation*). It's a repetition of the same history.

DB: *You mentioned the responsibility of intellectuals. Who is the class that is making these representations of the literature that you contend are missing all these things, who are looking at Camus and occluding essential points. They're interpreting something that you say is there, that demonstrably is there, and they're not seeing it.*

I can't really generalize in terms of class. But I can certainly say that one of the things that enables a reading of these things, that makes you pay attention to them, is the experience of decolonization. I think that if you have lived through a period of colonial struggle, you can return to these texts and read them in a way which is sensitive to precisely these points which are normally overlooked. If, on the other hand, you feel that literature is only literature and has nothing to do with anything else, then your job becomes to separate literature from the world and, in a certain sense, I believe to mutilate it and amputate from it those aspects which make it much more interesting and more worldly and more part of the struggle which was going on.

I don't advocate, and I'm very much against, the teaching of literature as a form of politics. I think there's a distinction between pamphlets and novels. I don't think the classroom should become a place to advocate political ideas. I've never taught political ideas in a classroom. I believe that what I'm there to

teach is the interpretation and reading of literary texts.

DB: *But it is political.*

Only in one sense: it is a politics against the reading of literature which would denude it and emasculate what in the literature is profoundly contested.

DB: *But as a teacher you're making certain choices.*

Of course. We all do. I wouldn't deny that. It's a choice that proposes a different reading of these classics. I don't by any means say it's the only reading. I just say it's a relevant reading, and it's the one that hasn't been addressed. I certainly don't intend to impose, because I think academic freedom is central to the issue, my reading on students and tell them if you don't read it this way you're failing the course. Quite the contrary. I want to provoke new and refreshing investigations of these texts in ways which will have them read more skeptically, more inquiringly, more searchingly. That's the point.

DB: *There have been a couple of pieces about the responsibility of intellectuals, Chomsky's being one, about speaking truth to power, and Julien Benda, in* La Trahison des Clercs *in 1928. He says, "The treason is their acceptance that intellectual activity could be harnessed to political, nationalist and racial ends." I would add to that: Why not?*

They're well rewarded and celebrated by playing ball with the dominant culture.

One of the great tragedies is what happened in the Third World, the onset of nationalism. There's a difference between the nationalism of the triumphalist sort, which we see in America today as we, I don't know who this "we" is, go around proclaiming our victory in the Cold War, the right to intervene in Iraq and Panama, and that of which Fanon spoke in *The Wretched of the Earth*, which was the nationalism which resists colonization and imperialism. But what interests me a great deal is that when nationalism is triumphant, and independence is achieved, too often nationalism can sink back down into a kind of tribalism, atavism, statism, and along with that becomes, for example in many parts of the Arab world today, a neo-imperialist state, still controlled by outside powers and in which the ruling elite are in effect agents and clients of one of the dominant powers. This I think was quite carefully prophesied by many of the early nationalist writers in the Third World. This is often forgotten. It's always argued by people like Elie Kedourie and others in the West that nationalism is a Western invention. What you have in places like Algeria and India are imitations of the West. But what is the interesting thing is that if you look carefully at the history of this kind of resisting nationalism that I discuss in the book, you find that many of its earliest adherents warned against the abuses of nationalism. For example, Fanon says, We aren't going to fight this revolution against the French in order to replace the French policeman with an

Algerian policeman. That's not the point. We are looking for liberation. Liberation is much more than becoming a mirror image of the white man whom we've thrown out and just replacing him and using his authority. So I'm very interested in that distinction, between liberation and a kind of mindless nationalism.

DB: *You also point out that the imperial theory that underlies colonial conquest continues today. How does it manifest itself, in culture particularly?*

In the book I talk mainly about the public sphere in America. First of all there was a fairly pronounced sense of international mission after World War II where the United States thought of itself as being the inheritor of the British and French, the great Western empires. That was certainly the case in Latin America, in Southeast Asia, where the United States in effect followed other colonial powers. In the case of Vietnam it followed the French and went through the same disastrous course. One cycle of imperialist history follows another.

Number two, it began to circulate also in the media and in the academy that there was a whole theory of American developmental science, the developmental theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, the idea that we have to go into the world and develop the non-developed. We have to provide them with models for economic takeoff, the Walt Rostow notion. It was very brilliantly parodied in the case of Graham Greene's novel *The Quiet American*, which is really a satire on the Cold War, the American in Vietnam, Pyle, who really is providing the third way.

Neither the old colonial way nor the communist way, the ideology of the Cold War is very important here, but there's a new way, which is ours. That produces many of the policies and revolts, one thinks of Indonesia, the Philippines, the Middle East and various parts of it in 1958, the earliest American postwar interventions, which really begin in Greece and Turkey right after World War II, and the idea that America is the world's policeman.

Third, you find it in the public rhetoric of the State Department and the intellectual elite in this country. We have a mission to the world. It's echoed and re-echoed by the media. The assumptions of the media are that we are the impartial observers of the world and that there's a sense in which being a newspaper person is being a witness of power and an emissary of the United States in these places, like Baghdad, etc.

The result is a very powerful ideological system, which Chomsky has talked about brilliantly, which I think is central to the education of every American. It's based upon a great deal of ignorance about the rest of the world and very little geographical knowledge of what the rest of the world is all about. My work is very concerned with geographical knowledge. One of the interesting distinctions between America and the classical empires of the nineteenth century in Britain and France is that there was first of all contiguity. There was a sense in which France was close to North Africa. There was a connection between England and the empire of the East through Suez, the Gulf, etc. There was a colonial establishment. America has none of that. There is, on the contrary, abstract expertise, people who

learn social science techniques, who can manipulate numbers, use computers, etc., but have a tremendous geographical ignorance. The United States is extremely insulated, a very provincial country in many ways. It produces these experts who are retooled for service first in Vietnam, in Latin America, in the Middle East. The result is a policy of violence on the one hand and a kind of incoherent lurching around with tremendously damaging results. It's forgotten by most Americans, many of my students don't even know about Vietnam, that the United States cost a million Vietnamese lives. That's forgotten. Jimmy Carter said it was a case of "mutual destruction." There's no comparison between the destruction of Vietnam and the losses sustained by the United States as an invading imperial force.

Last, and most important, there's been a banishment, a kind of intellectual exclusion of the notion of imperialism. The imperialists are the British and the French. We're something different. We don't have an empire. We don't have an India. But the reality is, through the transnational corporations, through the media, through the military, the United States has what Richard Barnet calls "global reach." It's the last remaining global power.

DB: *People like V.S. Naipaul say, That's all over. Imperialism is finished. We're now in a new era, and look at the mess. In his work that's often quoted,* Among the Believers, *here is Naipaul the novelist posing as Islamicist, sociologist and psychologist. He travels to Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia. He describes Muslims: "Their rage, the rage of a pastoral*

people with limited skills, limited money and a limited grasp of the world, is comprehensive. Now they have a weapon, Islam. It is their way of getting even with the world. It serves their grief, their feeling of inadequacy, their social rage and racial hate."

Naipaul is an interesting figure. First of all, he's a very gifted writer. There's no question about it. He's also, being a man of color, a wonderful case in point. As Irving Howe did when he reviewed the novel *A Bend in the River* when it came out in 1979 in the *New York Times*, he said, This is a man who's from the Third World. He's Indian, from the subcontinent, but his family lived in Trinidad and he grew up there. He's cited along with people like Fuad Ajami as witnesses. They know what they're talking about. And they say that the place is a filthy mess. Naipaul encourages that.

I have no problem with Naipaul saying the things that he wants to say. Everybody's entitled to say what he sees. And of course the evidence of his senses is such as it is. We know, however, that he's a very lazy traveler, whose information about the countries he visits is extremely incomplete. He should write and publish, and I think people should read him and criticize him. But one should have some awareness of two things that he does that are particularly pernicious. Number one, he doesn't give a full picture of the history that produced in many cases the real mess that is to be found in countries like Iran. Iran is not just a place where there's a gratuitous emergence of Islam. It comes after a particular history with the West, a prolonged, losing encounter. The opium wars, the oil concessions, the

reign of the Shah. What we have now in Iran is a response to it. So he misses that entirely. He leaves those things out. He makes it seem as if these are essentially Muslim characteristics.

And number two, much more important, is that Naipaul never gives us any indication that there's anything else in these countries except that. Islam is now the bogeyman of the West. This last summer there was a headline in the *Washington Post* that said that Islam replaces communism as the enemy of the West. This idea of some monolithic, finally undistinguished and indistinguishable form called Islam becomes a repository for all evil in the world. Without an awareness—and this is the point—of not only the monolithic quality but that within Islam and the Islamic world there are many currents, many oppositions. There are secular people who are trying to fight the brotherhoods, the jihads, Hezbollah, Hamas. These are quite different from each other. Hamas is very different from Hezbollah. The movement in Sudan run by Hassan al-Turabi is very different from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and so on.

There's very little attention paid to the other forms of fundamentalism that exist. For example, there is Jewish fundamentalism. Israel is a fundamentalist country, in many ways as terrifying to me, as a non-Jew, as Iran is. That invidiously is never discussed. Israel is ruled according to theocratic laws that forbid certain things on the Sabbath, that censor music because it's considered to be too Christian, in some instances, that proscribe composers like Wagner, that lay down very strict laws about who is a Jew and who isn't a Jew, etc. That's

completely excluded from mainstream discussion. I am a secular person. I'm against any kind of religious politics. But I'm not alone. And if one is going to talk about Islam the way Naipaul does, he ought to talk about it in a much fuller and truer context than the one he engineers. For in the end it is a kind of opportunism, because it will sell and it's easy to do.

DB: *To what do you ascribe the appeal of Islam in such countries today as Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia, and especially in Egypt, where there are some very serious problems?*

I think first of all it's a failure of the secular modernizing movements that came to power after World War II in reaction to imperialism. These brought very few solutions. They were unable to face the demographic explosion. They were unable to face the democratization and empowerment of the population that occurred after liberation. For example, in Egypt, for the first time in Egyptian history, every Egyptian was entitled to a full education. What is often forgotten is that the Islamic revival comes on the heels and as a result of a tremendously successful campaign against illiteracy. These are movements not run by illiterates. They're run by doctors and lawyers. These Islamic movements, which are very different in each place, are very often contested by a quite vibrant secular culture.

Crucially, the movements are occurring in countries, like Egypt, Algeria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, whose rulers are considered to be allies of the West. Take the alienation felt by people in Egypt

who saw Sadat coddled by the United States, making peace with Israel, selling his integrity, admittedly with a great deal of panache and a great mastery of public relations, but nonetheless giving up Egyptian priorities to those priorities set by the United States. This induces a sense not only of hopelessness and desperation, but a sense of anger which is fueled by these Islamic movements.

Last and most important, the Islamic revival in the Arab world largely occurs in countries where democracy had been abrogated by virtue of the priorities of the national security state. Here Israel plays a very important role. This is often forgotten. The presence of Israel, a theocratic, military state, a Sparta, that is imposed upon the region—I'm not talking just about the Palestinians, whose society it destroys, its country, its land, it's been in occupation for over twenty-five years—but also its invasions, its incursions in Lebanon, in Jordan, in Syria, in Tunisia. It has overflown Saudi Arabia many times. It has attacked Iraq. Israel is a regional superpower. This sense of Israel and the United States as victimizing at will the Arab heartland has forced people to go back to nourishing roots in the native culture, which is Islamic.

DB: *Kind of an autochtonous, indigenous response.*

It's a response to that. It's deeply flawed, in my opinion. In many cases it's reactionary. But it has objective causes. It's not some evil essentialism, as it's often portrayed in the press here. You read Bernard Lewis and he talks about the "Roots of

Muslim Rage" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and you get the sense that Muslims are just mad at modernity, as if modernity were some vague force that they want to attack and revile in order to go back to the seventh century. That is part of the picture. The descriptions of Islam in the West are part of the very same problem that Muslims throughout the Arabic world and the Islamic world generally, whether in Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Iran, are fighting. There's been very little attention paid to an understanding of Islam and a sense of wanting to have a dialogue with it. On the contrary, there are vast legions of reporters, and here's where in my opinion the laziness and mediocrity of the Western media is very much to blame, as well as the so-called intellectual experts who lend themselves to this sort of thing. Their main job, whether through the normal television documentaries and news programs that we see, is to foreshorten, compress, reduce, caricature even, in order to produce a sound bite. You can even see this in films. I remember the week before Christmas I saw at least three movies, *Delta Force* was one, on television which were all about killing "terrorists" who were Muslim and Arab at the same time. The idea of killing Arabs and Muslims is legitimized by the popular culture. This is part of the atmosphere which we need to look at.

DB: *I'm very interested that you mentioned the popular culture. You are perceived as someone who is immersed in the highbrow culture. You're an academic. But yes, there is* Delta Force. *Then there is* Iron Eagle, *which is one of the most extraordinary of this genre. I was asked to give a talk on representations*

of Arabs and Islam in the media at the University of Colorado at Boulder during what is curiously called "Arab Awareness Week." So I checked out a lot of videos and went through them. In Iron Eagle, *an American teenager steals an F-16 in Arizona and somehow flies nonstop to the Middle East, a remarkable achievement. He kills an entire army of fanatical Arabs, who are holding his father hostage. He rescues his father and brings him back to Arizona. My favorite is* Black Sunday. *Arabs will stoop to nothing. This is the ultimate in sinister activity: they want to disrupt and bomb the Superbowl, the Vatican of American culture. There's a whole range of these films. The terrorists, incidentally, are enormously incompetent. They can't shoot straight. They can't operate equipment. There's one American or one Israeli holding off a hundred Arab terrorists.*

By the way, I don't know whether you're aware of this, but most of the terrorists, the Muslims and the Arabs, are played by Israelis. It's quite astonishing. They never use Arab actors. I don't think they could find any Arab actors to play these parts. There's a small but thriving industry in Israel of producing extras and standins for these roles who play the Arabs who are being shot and killed. Two or three Americans versus hundreds, maybe thousands of Arabs who can't do anything right.

DB: *In addition to being portrayed as totally incompetent, Arabs never have a normal conversation. They scream at one another. They bark and shout.*

It's all probably put down in the popular mind, such as it is, to Koranic imprecations, Koranic curses. That's all they ever speak. The word "Koranic" is wonderful, because it includes almost everything you don't like.

DB: *There have been some middlebrow films as well,* Lawrence of Arabia *and* The Sheltering Sky. *The pattern continues.* Patriot Games *is a recent film with Harrison Ford in which IRA terrorists are trained by Libyans in the desert. You've commented that there are only a few Arabic words that have entered the English language in the twentieth century, such as* jihad, intifada, harem *and* sheikh. *I think that really shows the contrast: one is violence and the other is sensuality.*

Intifada is a recent word associated with a particular political uprising, which I think on the whole is positive, a revolt against colonial occupation. It was taken up all through some of the great uprisings in the Third World and the Second World, Eastern Europe and the non-European world generally during the late 1980s. People in Prague were wearing *intifada* T-shirts in the Velvet Revolution. When I was in South Africa last year, one of the striking things was that, largely because Mandela made the connection, there was a very warm sense of association between Palestinians fighting against Israeli occupation and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The *intifada* was really the crucial point.

DB: *In the process of preparing for that talk that*

I mentioned, I went to the public library to do some research. Boulder is a fairly progressive, liberal town. I examined what they had in the public library. I discovered they had 257 books on Christianity, 160 on Judaism, 63 on Islam. Given the fact that there are very few Muslims in Boulder, I'd say that's a pretty generous selection of books on Islam. But then you look at some of the titles and come to some other conclusions. Some of them are: The Islamic Bomb, March of Islam, Militant Islam, Holy Terror: Inside the World of Islamic Terror, Sacred Rage, The Crusade of Modern Islam, Among the Believers, *the Naipaul book, and my particular favorite,* Banditry in Islam. *I then looked at the Christian and Judaic titles, expecting to find* The Judaic Bomb, Banditry in Christendom. *Not one.*

I think we have a sense here that I've been very critical of, both this phenomenon that you're talking about, but also on the other side. The Arab and Islamic world has not really paid enough attention to this. There needs to be an effort made by Arab intellectuals or Islamic intellectuals to address the West. The books you referred to should be refuted, of course. But also there should be an attempt to put forward an alternative view of Islam which not only refutes these but embodies the reality of Islam, which is very various and on the whole quite benign. I was interested during the 1492-1992 commemorations of the past year that there was very little effort made by the Arab countries in the West to describe Andalusian civilization, which is one of the high points in the human adventure because of its ecumenism, the splendor of its aesthetic and intel-

lectual achievements, but also that it provided a kind of counter model to the Islam that is argued today as being the essential one. Namely, an Islam that is not only tolerant but actually encouraged coexistence of the various communities. This is the model.

Against it, I think largely because of the struggle between the Palestinians and Israel, a new view of Islam has emerged as essentially intolerant, reactionary and above all a chauvinist religion which cannot tolerate the outsider. But there's a difference between an outsider in the general sense, which is the way Bernard Lewis always speaks about it, and the outsider as represented by Israel. Israel is after all an incursion against not an Arab territory but a territory that was ecumenical.

When I grew up in Palestine it was a place in which the three faiths lived, perhaps not perfectly, but certainly better than they lived in Europe at the same time. I was born at the end of 1935. During that time, as the Jews were about to be slaughtered in Europe, there were small Jewish communities in Palestine. At the time one didn't know that they were planning to become much larger communities, and in fact take over the country from the original inhabitants, the Palestinians. But instead you get an image of Islam that is bent upon the destruction of the Other. This continued portrait of Islam has never really, in my opinion, been responded to by Muslims themselves in the West, who think it's all just propaganda. I'm very critical of the Arab states, for example, in their information policy, not showing that this is not only wrong but that in fact one can argue with it. I'm an optimist. I think people can be

made to change their minds and that experiencing a different and alternative view of the Islamic and Arab world can in fact open people's minds in the West to another perspective.

DB: *You have observed that in many Arab colleges and universities there are no departments that study the United States?*

There isn't a single one in any Arab university today that is exclusively devoted to the study of the West, or in particular the United States. I mentioned this in Bir Zeit University (West Bank) on my trip in June of 1992. I was told, Not only do we not have a department of American Studies here, given that the United States is the most powerful outside force in the region, we don't even have a department of Hebrew and Israeli Studies. After all, Israel is the occupying power. Some attention should be paid to the systematic study of the state and its society as it impinges on Arab life. That hasn't occurred yet. These are all parts of the legacy of imperialism.

DB: *There's a certain chauvinism there, too.*

It's not only chauvinism, but there's a certain sense that you shouldn't defy it. The absence of defiance bothers me a great deal. What distinguishes people in the contemporary Arab world from the period of the 1950s and 1960s and certainly the 1930s and 1940s is an attitude of wanting to challenge imperialism. Now there's a great fear. The Palestinians and others run to the United States as if it were the court of last resort and the true friend

of justice. There is very little awareness. Certainly this is the case in the negotiations in Washington and Madrid. There's very little sense of the history of the United States. There was Baker, who said, Oh, yes, we really want you in the peace talks, that really was a word that could be taken at face value, and it proved a tremendous disappointment.

DB: *This may be a generalization. I haven't traveled extensively in the Arab world, but in the contact that I have had there's a sense that the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians, are the aggrieved party, they have been trodden upon savagely. You could make a strong case for that. And that right is on their side and it will be discovered. They don't have to make a strong case.*

That's absolutely right. There's a sense in which the sense of being right and the rightness of the case requires no further action.

DB: Allah Kareem *is sort of the abiding philosophy.*

A very un-Gramscian attitude, I'm afraid.

DB: *Let's move to your December 1992* Harper's *article, "Palestine, Then and Now." It was very moving. I was very touched by it. There was a strong sense of sadness and sorrow permeating the piece. You used such adjectives as "mournful, "gloomy" and "melancholy." "Acre is a very sad place." It was a kind of "bury the dead" journey. It was like a testi-*

mony. You were linking your children with your past.

I thought it was important for them to see it. They've never been to Palestine. They've never seen where I was born and grew up. I'm not a great believer in roots, to be honest. I think roots can be overstated. But Palestine is an unusual place. Whether you are from there or not, it's certainly something that affects you. There's been a tremendous amount of attention, alas, a lot of it due to Israeli propaganda, to the situation in the Middle East. So my kids grew up knowing about Palestine essentially through these secondhand reflections of it that you see in the media, reading about it, and having been, as they had been, to countries like Egypt and Lebanon and Jordan. They had a sense of belonging to a community but no sense of the particularity of a community to which their father belonged. So in that sense it was very important.

I found writing about the experience very difficult. I think I got about ten or fifteen percent of the barrage of impressions I received and memories that were stimulated by that trip. We were there for about ten days, and we went everywhere. So it was difficult to choose. There were two contradictory feelings that I had overall. One was a sense of pleasure at coming back to a place which in a certain sense I could still recognize. I was aware of the extent to which Palestine had been transformed into Israel. I'm not from the West Bank, but from what became in 1948 Israel, West Jerusalem, Talbiya. My mother's from Nazareth, which is also part of Israel. I remember Haifa, Jaffa, that's the geography of my childhood. To see that it survived and that there

was a recognizable Arab presence there, despite the enormous upheavals and transformations of the last forty years was heartening.

On the other hand, it was very difficult for me to note the way in which the place had become another country, in some instances a kind of ersatz European country. Talbiya looks like an elegant Zurich suburb. There were no Arabs there. We went to Safad, which is where my uncle used to live, a place we used to visit, the last time I was there in 1946. I visited in 1992, forty-six years later, there wasn't a single Arab in sight. They had all been driven out. So these are sites of catastrophe for me. Of course, in the general political economy of memory and recollection that exists in public culture in the West, there's no room for the Palestinian experience of loss. So it was very hard.

Interestingly, I might add that the article you saw in *Harper's* brought forth a number of responses from friends who wrote telling me how much they enjoyed reading about it and how they were stirred and saddened by it. But the thing I was unprepared for was that it seemed to infuriate a lot of pro-Israelis, who wrote the most angry, appalling letters. After all, I was only describing a trip. They were angry that I should even say anything like this. One person who claimed to be a psychiatrist, for example, prescribed a psychiatric hospital for me, that I should be locked up. Others accused me of lying. The most extraordinary propaganda, hysterical, rabid letters to *Harper's* and to me. It shows the extent to which in the official Zionist discourse the presence of a Palestinian voice or a Palestinian narrative is simply unacceptable. I think it should be

noted that there still isn't allowed a presence, even though this discourse is responsible for the destruction of Palestine and the horrors meted out onto a population of almost five million people today. There's no responsibility taken for it. I find that very disheartening.

DB: *I think you might also be underestimating your own position. I remember when you came to Boulder in 1990 and you were astonished that your talk was being picketed and people were handing out leaflets denouncing you. You are a significant figure, and you will attract this kind of attention.*

But even so, it strikes me as inhumane and intolerant. If Muslims did this, as they have done, for example, to Salman Rushdie, there's a chorus of protest saying, You cannot prevent somebody from speaking. But this continues against Palestinians. There are constant attempts to silence, to vilify, to blackmail, to make life miserable for anybody who dares speak out. I find that absolutely appalling. Especially since a lot of the time it's accompanied by moralistic piety about the necessity to remember the horrors of the past and the Jewish experience, with which I completely agree. But if you dare say something about an attendant holocaust, perhaps not a holocaust but a catastrophe, we call it the *nakba*, catastrophe, that occurred for us as a result of the Holocaust, the destruction of Palestine, that's not permitted. And the violence and the anger and the poison that's spewed out is terrifying.

DB: *Let's go back to your visit to Israel and*

Palestine. You arrive at Lod airport, outside Tel Aviv. There's a tremendous sense of apprehension and anxiety. You're met by Mohammed Miari, who is an Arab-Israeli member of the Knesset.

This was about ten days before the elections. Unfortunately, Miari was not reelected.

DB: *But you observed the ease with which he spoke Hebrew and moved about among the Israelis and you said, "I was learning the reality of things." But you really didn't pursue that. Why not?*

It was difficult to describe it. I thought that Palestinians lived, as indeed they do, as a subservient minority population in their own country. That's certainly true. Arab villages inside Israel are poorer. Education is given a lot less money than education for the Jewish citizens of Israel. Yet, what I was unprepared for was the general sense, I wouldn't call it defiance, in which Palestinians who are Israeli citizens live in the state in a contestatory way. But they are by no means submissive and meek. There's a certain amount of resistance that they put up. Miari is a perfect example. He's a fighter in the Knesset. He belongs to a tiny minority of five or six Palestinian members in an overwhelmingly Jewish parliamentary house, the Knesset. But he's far from silent. Never having seen Palestinians with Israelis inside Israel, I was surprised and heartened. It's a mundane observation, but I thought it was quite remarkable. And I thought that Palestinians would try to be unobtrusive. I never felt that. I felt that Palestinians inside Israel acted and

spoke as if it was their country. They weren't there on tolerance or on sufferance. They were there because they belonged there. I was glad to see that. I certainly felt that they should feel and act that way, and they did. I had no idea what it was like.

DB: *The visit to your family home in Jerusalem is described in very poignant terms. It's an irony that Swift would have appreciated, for the house you were born in today houses the International Christian Embassy, a fundamentalist Christian group which is pro-Zionist. You said, "anger and melancholy overtook me, so that when an American woman came out of the house with an armful of laundry and asked if she could help, I could not bring myself to ask to go inside."*

That was the one place where I felt that I didn't penetrate enough into my own past. I felt that throughout Palestine and Israel, when we were wandering around to sites that were important to me whether for memory or places like Hebron because of political and more recent associations, I ventured into these places for the first time with a great deal of interest and desire to know. Here I felt something I didn't feel anywhere else in Palestine. I *didn't* want to know. I simply did not want to go inside the house, although my kids urged me to go in. I pointed out the window of the room in which I was born, which you could see from the outside of the house, and said to them that that was where I was born. They said, "Daddy, don't you want to go in and look at it?" I said, No, I didn't. It was as if there was a part of my past which was really over and associated with the fall of

Palestine which I couldn't reinvestigate, I couldn't visit once again. It was enough to see it from the outside, somehow. That sort of made the point for me.

DB: *One of the subheadings in the essay is "Descending into Gaza." I don't think the metaphor was lost on you. It is a descent.*

It's the most terrifying place I've ever been in. Before we went—I didn't say this in the article—the young Palestinian who drove us to Gaza from Jerusalem said to my wife and daughter, "You can't go to Gaza looking the way you do, wearing Western dress. You really have to be veiled. You have to cover you head and arms." It was midsummer, a hot day. I said, "We weren't told this before." He said, "Well, they didn't tell you. Gaza is a very violent place, and anybody who strays from the straight and narrow equally Arab or Israeli gets stoned. You shouldn't wear dark glasses in Gaza, because then they'll immediately know you're a foreigner and maybe an Israeli spy and they'll gang up on you." So there's this whole mythology about Gaza which predisposes you to dislike it. In effect, when you go in there it's a horrifyingly sad place because of the desperation and misery of the way people live. I was unprepared for camps that are much worse than anything I saw in South Africa. I felt that the imposed regime of inhumanity and primitive, even barbarian absence of amenities are a great crime against humanity, imposed ultimately by the Israelis. There's nobody else who rules there. So that the intransigence and rebelliousness of many of the people, certainly the young men we saw, is

exactly explainable by those circumstances. Against which no one speaks out except a few people like Gloria Emerson. Nobody talks about Gaza.

DB: *You wrote, "Nothing I saw in South Africa can compare with Gaza in misery. Yet Israel has been spared universal criticism as South Africa has not. Somehow Israel is viewed as unconnected to its practices." "Somehow" is a bit imprecise. It's not magic.*

No, it isn't. I can't understand it, that's why I used "somehow." It is something I can't explain. People who know what Gaza is like find it very difficult to connect the situation in Gaza with the practices of the Israeli government. I'm surprised that there hasn't been, just I was surprised that there hadn't been a major Western campaign by academics against the closure of the educational institutions of the West Bank and Gaza, that more people haven't tried to draw attention to this fact. Even in the recent business of the deportations, most of them are from Gaza. Nobody in any of the media reports that I saw, associated the type of resistance practiced by the people of Gaza with the situation there which has been created by the Israelis, who have tried to reduce Gazans to an animal-like existence. Nobody made that point. I find that extraordinary.

DB: *As Prime Minister Rabin said, the world is hypocritical when it comes to the deportations. There's all this hollering and screaming about 415 Palestinian deportees. Where was the world when*

300,000 Palestinians were deported from Kuwait? You have to agree with him.

Yes, he's exactly right. The difference is, of course, that first of all Israel is responsible for the destruction of an entire country, which occurred in 1948, and the expulsion of most of its population, and second, Israel has been in colonial occupation flaunting dozens of U.N. Security Council resolutions on the West Bank and Gaza since 1967. Number three, a much more important point for me, the Kuwaitis and their response to the Palestinians are disgraceful. The Kuwaitis do not have a high standing in the West. They're a figure of fun. They are a corrupt and mediocre lot. I'm talking about the ruling families who run the country. And they deserve everything they get. They had a war fought on their behalf by the United States, of course because of their oil. That's about it, and nobody's giving them more credit.

Israel is the moral godchild of the West. Israel is celebrated, saluted, given hundreds of millions of dollars. $77 billion have been vouchsafed to Israeli citizens since 1967 by the United States alone. And therefore is answerable to criticism of this sort. It is in defiance of United Nations resolutions. So I think that Rabin is only partly right. He, in my opinion, is a war criminal in any case, because he was personally responsible for turning 50,000 Palestinians of Lydda and Ramla into refugees in 1948. He talked about it in his memoirs. Nobody ever asked him that question. "Don't you see, Mr. Rabin, a continuity between what you did in 1948 in the army, in the Haganah, and what you've done now?" There is

a continuity. This is the same man who expelled 50,000 people in 1948 and has recently kicked out 415. What's even more disgraceful is that Rabin is considered to be a man of the left. He's a member of the Socialist International. In his cabinet, many left-wingers, the Meretz party, voted along with him for the deportations. In the process nobody has inquired as to why there is this extraordinary congruence between liberal and left on the one hand and deportation and expulsion on the other.

I think here it's important to note that the idea of getting rid of the Palestinians has been a constant in Zionist thought since the early twentieth century, whether of the left, the right or the center. Every major Zionist thinker has always talked about the transfer of the Palestinians, the expulsion of the Palestinians, getting rid of them, spiriting them away. So it's a continuity which was there from the very beginning. It's not some aberration on the part of Rabin.

DB: *You've said that the enemy of the Palestinians, in the end, is not to be forgotten or marginalized, but that "it is silence: to be aware and to turn away." I would add that time is also your enemy.*

I know. Time is our enemy. But on the other hand, one of the major achievements of Palestinian struggle in the last twenty years has been that more and more Palestinians are dedicated to remaining on the land. As long as we're there, we provide a problem for them. That's the main thing. There's no doubt in my mind that ultimately they want to get

rid of us. The idea that there's some notion that Shamir wanted to forever hold on to the land of Israel while Rabin is different—that's tommyrot. He talks a different line. He's much more plausible when it comes to *hasbara*, information in the West for the goyim, but basically it's the same idea. The best thing that will happen to the Palestinians is to get rid of them. If they won't be gotten rid of, we'll sign an agreement with them that will make their lives so intolerable that in the end they will die to get out. That is in my opinion the plan. Anything that you hear about reconciliation and peace is the talk only of a marginal few. In the mainstream is basically a notion of fundamental apartheid, that the Palestinians have got to go.

Why do I say this? Not because I'm angry at them or because I've lost hope, but largely because there is no appreciable segment of Israeli public opinion that has ever voiced anything but these views of Palestinians. There are a few visionaries, people like Professor Shahak, Professor Liebovitz, the members of B' Tselem, the human rights observer group, etc. They believe in coexistence with the Palestinians on the basis of equality. But the basic Zionist premise, which runs not only the negotiations but the status quo in terms of the current situation, is that Palestinians have to be inferior and if possible out of there. There has never been a credible alternative within the mainstream of Zionist thinking. That's as true of American Jews who are Zionists as it is of Israeli Jews.

DB: *It's the process exemplified in that term you often heard in Gaza, "mawt batiq," slow death.*

Exactly.

DB: *Stephen Daedalus in* Ulysses *talks about history as "a nightmare from which I am trying to awake." When you're awake what do you see?*

I don't think history's a nightmare, unlike Stephen Daedalus. I don't take that view. I think history is a place of many possibilities. I don't think in the present political setup either in the Middle East or in the United States that any real change is going to happen. It can only happen very slowly and as a result of education. Education is a central instrument in all of this. Without a self-conscious, skeptical, democratically minded citizenry, there's no hope for any political change for the better, in this country or in the Middle East. That is occurring only very slowly.

DB: *You conclude the* Harper's *piece with, "I would find it very hard to live there. I think exile seems to be a more liberated state. But I can feel and sometimes see a different future as I couldn't before." That reminded me of a T.S. Eliot line you've quoted elsewhere: "Here the impossible union of separate spheres of existence is actual. Here the past and future are conquered and reconciled." That's the kind of vision you have.*

Absolutely. And I think it's possible through vision. That's why I think culture is so important. It provides a visionary alternative, a distinction between the this-worldness and the blockage that one sees so much in the world of the everyday, in

which we live, which doesn't allow us to see beyond the impossible odds in power and status that are stacked, for example, against Palestinians, and the possibility of dreaming a different dream and seeing an alternative to all this. I learned this many years ago from a great English critic, Raymond Williams, who more than anyone else taught me the notion of always thinking the alternative. Not so much only the dream, which is rather other-worldly, but to every situation, no matter how much dominated it is, there's always an alternative. What one must train oneself is to think the alternative, and not to think the accepted and the status quo or to believe that the present is frozen.