



Orientalism after Said

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We just came across the last filmed interview of Edward Said, made available on the [blog of Verso Books](#) on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of his death. The interview is all the more poignant that Said appears physically diminished by the incurable leukemia he has had for ten years, and yet irresolute to rest, as his doctor keeps on advising him.'

There is so much more to do (...) So the idea of relaxation and resting, I completely refuse. It's a physical, almost total revulsion.

Said tells Charles Glass, his interviewer.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6NNuczNFyZM>

In this three hour long conversation, Said reflects on his childhood in Cairo, on his early years as a student in the US - a country to which he never felt he belonged, like most of the other countries where he lived - [his return to Palestine in 1951](#), and his passion for music and literature, two disciplines he views as



complementary. He also explains the way he sees the role of the critique in the contemporary world:

*The canons of understanding, the canons of interpreting apply in all these instances: whether it is politics, or literature or critics: they have to do with **memory**. They have to do with notions of **coexistence**. The world is not an exclusive place...and then **human agency** or will. It's up to you to try and hold them together. And that's where effort is for me. I never saw myself as a solver of problems. People sometimes ask me: 'Give us a programme! Give us a solution!', but I distrust that.*

But what is perhaps the most touching element of this sequence is the discovery of his isolation - only counter-balanced by the caring presence of [his family who continues to keep his memory alive](#) - and his physical incapacity to speak after the events of 9/11. When Said dedicated his life to giving a voice to the Palestinians, international media seem to strive to achieve the exact opposite, as this [interview of Frank Barat with John Pilger](#) reminds us. After the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the devastating wars in the Middle East where the ['Oriental' other is still portrayed as a blood thirsty barbarian](#), who will speak for Palestine and the Arab world with the same persuasive power?