American Power—For What?
A Symposium

Elliott Abrams • William F. Buckley, Jr. • Eliot A. Cohen
Francis Fukuyama • Frank J. Gaffney, Jr. • Owen Harries • Jacob Heilbrunn
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Charles Krauthammer • William Kristol • Michael Ledeen • Edward N. Luttwak
Walter A. McDougall • Joshua Muravchik • Joseph S. Nye, Jr.
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The Birthday Party
Avner Holtzman

Art, Excrement, and “Sensation”
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Edward Said’s Fabrications

To the Editor:

Justus Reid Weiner’s “My Beautiful Old House” and Other Fabrications by Edward Said” (September 1999), largely a collage of petty and irrelevant calumny, has a clearly political and ideological motive, namely, the neutralization of one of the most important and credible advocates of Palestinian rights at a most critical time in the unfolding peace process. The article also has a broader objective, which is, as Edward Said himself has noted, “discrediting . . . Palestinian claims to return and compensation.” Mr. Weiner’s main argument comes down to this: Edward Said’s nuclear family maintained its major domicile in Cairo rather than Jerusalem, therefore Said is not a Palestinian refugee. If true, the status would be irrelevant in the current context.

Edward Said was a political activist and intellectual who played a significant role in the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. His work has been widely recognized and influential, and his contributions to scholarship and public policy are immeasurable. The targeting of an individual for such a personal and political reason is not only unfair but also undermines the credibility of the critique.

Edward Said himself has noted that his book was not about the personal details of his life but about the larger political and historical context of the conflict. The focus on his personal life is not only a misrepresentation but also a distortion of his broader contributions.

Mr. Weiner’s article is a prime example of how criticism can be used to undermine an opponent’s credibility rather than engage in a substantive discussion of issues. Such tactics are not only inappropriate but also counterproductive. It is important to maintain a level of discourse that is respectful and constructive, even when discussing sensitive and controversial topics.

Edward Said’s work continues to be a source of inspiration and guidance for many, and efforts to diminish his standing are not only misguided but also damaging to the broader cause of justice and peace.

Indeed, several quotations from Said’s own work—apparently disregarded by Mr. Weiner—show that he has never made conflicting claims about his family’s residence in Jerusalem or denied that his family spent considerable time in the city. What is equally plausible is that Mr. Weiner, who once worked at Israel’s Ministry of Justice for the state, has a clear record of often using human-rights violations, and other allegations as a basis for such accusations.

It is essential that such criticism be addressed with care and consideration, and that efforts to diminish the stature of a respected scholar are met with a robust defense of his contributions and principles. The true measure of Said’s work is not in its personal details but in its enduring impact on the discourse of justice and peace in the Middle East.
analysis of the situation in the Middle East, it's important to recognize that the conflict is complex and multifaceted.

The Israeli government has a history of using military force to defend its borders and maintain control over Palestinian territories. However, it's important to consider the impact of these actions on both the Israeli and Palestinian populations.

Additionally, there are efforts by international organizations to promote peace negotiations and development in the region. It's crucial to support these efforts and work towards a lasting solution to the conflict.

It's also important to recognize the role of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience in bringing attention to the human rights abuses and violations of international law that have taken place in the region.

Overall, it's important to stay informed and active in supporting diplomatic efforts towards peace in the Middle East.
COMMENTARY January 2000

To the Editor:

For the indoctrinated reader and the opportunistic believer, Jumaah Redi Weiner's article may seem to speak clearly and truthfully (which means that Mr. Weiner has mostly not said—never), but to any rational-minded, close-thinking person whose views are not guided by a burning desire for peace and brotherhood, it is another heart-breaking example of propaganda and deceit.

STEPHEN BERGER

To the Editor:

I am sure that Jumaah Redi Weiner did his homework, as he maintains, but I am concerned about any claim we Jews have on the land of Israel that rests on the veracity of one or more of our opponents. Regardless of whether Edward Said is a man of honor or whether he has fabricated a past in order to legitimate his role as a Palestinian spokesman, the Jews have to be able to make a legal and historic claim (not to mention a religious) to the land.

DAVID A. HORTON
Columbia, Maryland

To the Editor:

Edward Said's oft-told tale of his Jerusalem home, lost home, and agony of dispossession is now revealed by Jumaah Redi Weiner as a self-constructed myth of forced exile, to put it mildly. Clearly it was designed by Said to bolster his credibility in a continuing deceitful attempt by Israel to keep the Palestinians from the homeland. Therefore, could someone ask for a more politically just rebuke to Said than Mr. Weiner's discovery that it was Martin Buber who was expelled from his Jerusalem home by the Said family, or that the Nasser revolution in Egypt, not the struggle for Jewish statehood, influenced upon the Said family its most grievous deprivation of property.

What if, not guilt, was the source of Said's continued identity? Here his newly published memoir, Out of Place, is quite instructive. His father, born in Jerusalem, left Palestine in 1911 for the United States, where he became an American citizen and lived for ten years, thereafter claiming that America was "his country." Returning to Jerusalem in 1920, he moved to Cairo in 1929. There he lived and there he conducted his business.

Although many members of Said's extended family lived in Palestine, his paternal identity was anything but Palestinian. Indeed, his father, we are told, "never much liked the place." With a luxurious house and lucrative business in Cairo, and with three-month vacations in Lebanon virtually every summer, it is hardly surprising that Jerusalem was a place for the Saida to visit during "off-and-on sojourns."

If his memoir clarifies anything, it is that young Edward and his parents, all born in Palestine but in no other discernible respect "Palestinian," lived prosperously as wandering Arabs, never at home anywhere, but necessarily returning to their "native environment" in Cairo and Lebanon. Palestine hardly was, as Said still claims, the place "I grew up in."

Said has now lived in the United States, one more place that is not home, for nearly 50 years. It was here, banded by the "unrelenting sense of many identities" and the "deeply disorganized state of my real history and origins," that he reinvented himself as a Palestinian. The rest is not only history, but, as Mr. Weiner convincingly demonstrates, duplicity.

JACOB S. ABRAMSON
Wellesley College
Wellesley, Massachusetts

To the Editor:

Jumaah Redi Weiner tells us that Edward Said invested a house in Jerusalem. I would like to suggest that this phenomenon may be more common among Palestinian émigrés than the one example given by Mr. Weiner. If we conclude that the Palestinian writer's yearning for the past, real or imagined, is so deep-seated emotionally as to make sense of Said's invention, we have an opportunity to explore the consequences of this tendency for our society and our culture in the 1990's: The New York Observer.

Robert Wexman
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor:

Let me add to Jumaah Redi Weiner's fine expose. Edward Said has claimed (in an interview quoted by Mr. Weiner) that in 1945 the army was forced to move its home in the Talbiya section of Jerusalem by a "Jewish force"—in fact sound truck warning Arabs to leave the neighborhood." As is well known, Said lived in Talbiya in 1945 and can report that this allegation is totally untrue. At that time and throughout the entire year of 1948 I was editor of the Palestine Press in Jerusalem. From September 1947 until May 1948, both my wife and I were compelled by constant Arab stripping and shelling to leave our family home, which we occupied in a ground-floor apartment on what is now Haas's Gate Street in the heart of Talbiya.

Our landlord was a fine Arab physician named Dr. Jamal. He lived around the corner and was the first to visit me after I was hurt in the car-bombing of the PDA office on January 2, 1948. During

there are glossy monthly magazines that would love to be the kind of must-read The New York Observer has become."

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said, "Hip," another "Jazzy," one said, "Off-beat," and still another called us "Opinion-forming." This is the praise that The New York Observer has garnered from the likes of The New York Times, The Denver Post, The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, "W" Magazine and a host of others. And why all this praise? Because these publications know where to go to find the kind of insider information, commentary and criticism that gives them a unique perspective on business, politics, the arts, events, real estate, restaurants, movies, fashion and our society in the 1990's: The New York Observer.

Experience the kind of writers that are missing from today's slick, glossy, celebrity and sound-bite addicted media— the kind of writers that make reading a pleasure again. See for yourself why The New York Observer is praised as "the freshest voice of the 90's" (The Boston Globe).

Frankly, if you're not reading The New York Observer, you're getting your news (and gossip) second hand. The New York Observer reveals with inclusive reporting, wry commentary and a bite of wit just what really goes on "on the inside."

The word is out, and everyone agrees: The New York Observer is the weekly newspaper for today's savvy reader. As one reader said recently, "This is a publication you will want to add to your must-read list!"

To the Editor:

The latest report in the Jerusalem Post from Jus-

tin Reitman mentioned the Jews driven from their

homes and businesses in Old City in 1948. These

events had been witnessed by many residents of

Jewish neighborhoods in Old City. Some of these

events were later substantiated by eyewitness tes-

timony. The Post also acknowledged the role of

the British forces in the eviction of Jewish families

from their homes in Old City.

Jewish neighborhoods in Old City were

attacked and their property was looted. The Brit-

ish forces were responsible for the violence and

they took no action to stop it.

Jewish residents were forced to evacuate their

homes and businesses. This was a violation of the

right of the Jewish residents to live in their homes.

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Letters from Readers

Threat, among the most frequently bristled allegations are those repeated here by Marwan D. Hana
and Frederik M. Hoyt. That I misidentified Said's cousin, Boulous Said as his
uncle, misidentified his mother's nationality as Lebanese when she actually
"held a Palestinian passport," and ignored attempts by Said's father Wishe to
"obtain compensation and redress" for loss of real property in Palestine.

As to my misidentification of Bousis Said, a trivial matter that Said has
typically extrapolated into "he got it all wrong," this was indeed an error, I
evertheless as accurate and correct
in print on page 19 of the October Commentary. It arose in part out of the fact
that the person in question, who was married to Said's aunt Nabiha, shared the
family name, and partly out of the fact that Edward Said himself has referred to him in print as "Uncle Boulous." But, uncle or cousin, none of this has the slightest bearing on my thesis that Edward Said's nuclear family
held no ownership interest in the "beautiful old house" at Benner Street in Jerusalem that he has claimed he grew up in and has asserted to be his own, but which, in fact, as proved with archival Land Registry office ledgers, he could not have owned or even applied for the ownership of which passed from his grandfather directly to his aunt Nabiha and her five children.

As to his mother's nationality, Edward Said has himself typically offered contradictory testimony, stating in After the Last Sky (1986) that her passport (of unspecified origin) was taken away by a British official in 1912 when she married his father, and in One in Place that she could have qualified for a U.S. passport in 1948 on the strength of her husband's American citizenship but refused to fulfill all the requirements, subsequently obtaining Lebanese papers; all this is likewise of no significance whatsoever to my article.

And as, finally, to his father's having made an attempt at "witches" after 1948, neither Said nor any one else has explained both the property in question or offered a shred of evidence to support this incredible and uncheckable contention.

Nor does any such evidence exist with regard to the only two properties Edward Said specifically claimed for his family over the years: the house on Benner Street or the Palestinian Educational...
Company. Against this, his own failure to file a claim on the site at 10 Bremen Street, now valued at some $1.8 million, speaks for itself.

Messrs. Hanania and Hoyt are not alone in attacking their reputation of Said's claim of ownership by saying I am ignorant of the "cosmopolitan" conception of property typical of the Middle East, families like the Saids. As Said himself put it in his "Abu-Abs," "Land Registry records [from Palestine] are rarely complete," and the house on Bremen Street "was in fact a family house in the Arab state, which means that our families were one in ownership."

Nice try, but legally impossible and practically ridiculous. After capturing Palestine from the Ottoman empire in World War I, the British enacted the Land Titles Act in 1922, superseding the old Mulk Tittles Law in force under the Turks. Foremost among these provisions was the requirement that written consent of the Land Registry office be obtained for every dealing of property. This would have meant the property would have to pass through both parties to the transfer. Moreover, both during the Ottoman and the British Mandate period, all land in private hands was subject to taxation, which was determined by reference to the rent the Land Registry. Those records, as I indicated my article, are not only complete with regard to the chain of title ownership for the house at 10 Bremen Street, they are unequivocal on the point of who owned it and who, by implication, did not.

Then there is the matter of Said's schooling. "He [he] says that I didn't attend St. George's School" in Jerusalem, wrote Said in a 1968 letter. "That is an outright lie." Both he and the mighty duo of Flacks and Crookshank also accuse me of having failed to consult one of Said's classmates at the school, Haig Boyadjian, now living in Beirut, who could vouch for his presence there. But who is lying there? I explicitly objected in Commentary that the young Edward Said could well have been, "now and then, a temporary stu- dent at St. George's while on visits to his Jerusalem cousins." But I also demur

consciousness conclusively that he was never a regular student there and that, not surpris- ingly, there is no entry in the registry books of St. George's to attest to his ever having been enrolled in the school. The fact that Said had attended the 1998 BBC television documentary, "The Search of Palestine," in which he is filmed in the headmaster's office reminiscing about the school while examining those socalled "family books!" As for Boyadjian, I did not locate and interview him, and he, in fact, recalled his friend Said's having been at St. George's—but, significantly, he could not say for how long. All of this is doc- umented in note 88 to my article, available on COMMENTARY's website.

But consider the absurdity of this entire play. Here we are arguing about whether Edward Said was schooled in Jerusalem, as in the old version of his life, when he himself has already radic- ally revised that version in favor of the truer one presented in "One of Place—where, among other things, we learn from his own lips that his schooling from 1941 to 1951 (i.e., from the age of six to six- ten) took place in three different institutions, each and every one of them located in Cairo, Egypt. Or are we now expected to believe that during those very same years, half of which saw much transportation mobilized for the British effort in World War II, the young Edward Said, duly enrolled at school in Cairo, was ri- monastically connecting 250 miles back and forth across the Sinai desert to attend St. George's school in Jeru- salem? Outright lies, indeed.

This brings us to point number two the contem- nation, in the words of Menahem Hanania and Hoyt, that Said has "never made con- flicting claims regarding his family's residence in Jeru- salem or denied that his family spent considerable time in Egypt." Well, if set- ting repeatedly and in so many words that "I was born in Jerusalem and spent most of my formative years there," or pointlessly recol- lecting "my early days in Palestine, my youth, the first twelve or thirteen months of my life before I left Pales- tine, 1943, does not conflict with stating that he spent most of his formative years in Egypt, then we are dealing with a novel definition of conflict. Shall we just say that Edward Said is capable of assuring (and causing others to assert) both a thing and its oppo- nent? Here, too, in any case, I have anticipated my critics, pointing out in my Commentary article the course of the carefully cul- tivated impression that he had grown up and gone to school in Jerusalem, only to be driven therefore by the "Zeitengeist" in 1947, "horns of the truth" about Said's early life had "also appeared in the foggiest places over the years," even before the fall- blows revisionism of "One of Place.

The utter obfuscation from that book of any trace of the earlier version is, in- deed, what may have caused some agnostic or unin- formed reviewers (like the eminent literary scholar Frank Kermode in the New York Observer), who had nev- er followed Said's revisionism as a memoirist, not known much about my article beyond the contro- versy it stirred, to express puzzlement over the dis- pute: for surely the book they had in hand makes no bones about a childhood in Cairo. But others, including some of Said's admirers, were not so easily snook- ered. One of them, Steven Howe, reviewing "One of Place for the (London) In- dependent," stated honestly that "The impression gained by most readers of Said's earlier autobiographies is that Jerusalem was his home until the age of twelve, when the family was forced to leave. Cer- tainly this has been my per- ception—and I have read al- most everything that Said has ever published.

Just so.

What, then, accounts for the revised standard version now presented in "One of Place? Much sport has been had with my tentative spec- ulation in Commentary ("peremptory and insolent"—Edward Said) that "the 85 interviews conducted throughout the course of my own three-year inves- tigation, including many with persons known to him,
Israel was founded fifty-one years ago. It has been a fixture in our lives for all of that time. It has played and continues to play a role—in our emotional lives, economically, politically, and militarily—beyond its size and its population. Israel embodies the complexities of our time and it is an area of very real possibility that, within a time not too long from now, Israel will no longer exist, that it will be destroyed in a Holocaust even more terrible than the Holocaust of the Second World War, which killed six million Jews.

What are the facts? The victimization of the Palestinian people is the only country in the world whose legitimacy, "right to exist," has been questioned. Very recently, before its birth, Israel was surrounded bycorporeal enemies, single-mindedly obsessed with its destruction. The very day of its birth, in the truncated and miserable territory assigned to it by the United Nations, six Arab armies invaded the newborn state. In what was clearly a biblical miracle, the invading hordes were repelled, and the raging Israeli army entered the territories which make me uneasy. There is no question about it. I am talking about the massed aggressors launched another attack against Israel, from the north (Syria), from the south (Egypt), and the east (Jordan). The Six-Day War resulted in a complete rout of the Arabs, and a victory for Israeli arms that will be studied as a landmark for centuries to come. Unable to vanquish Israel on the battlefield, the Arab states resorted to a propaganda campaign that had been successful, and which the Jews cannot afford to neglect. Its threat, which was declared in the state of emergency which has existed since 30, 1999, calls not for moral recognition but for the development of a legal position. The concept of nationhood in historic Palestine? In meaning, plain English, how do you define "nationhood," when you are talking about the transformation of the age-old provinces of Judea/Samaria into Arab/Palestinian "histories," and their connotation of illegitimacy; and much more.

The Arab countries (and Iran) are frantically arming themselves with the most dreadful weapons of mass destruction. As the world knows, it is one fact only—their only political objective and their relentless obsession—namely the destruction of the Jewish state, Israel. Two or three nuclear weapons would wipe Israel off the map once and for all. Riotarisation by Israel, the destruction of major Arab cities, and millions of Arab casualties, would simply mark the end of their pursuing their goal. For them, a small victory is a great victory. In dismembered, with five or six Arab states poised to attack with weapons of mass destruction, with 40,000 Palestinian "police" armed to the teeth in Israel's midst, can anybody really doubt that a second Holocaust, even more terrible than the first, is just about upon us? During the Holocaust, it is true, it was the Jews who suffered. Not by any means; suffering is a relative concept. But it is a real concept. Not only by and didn't lift a finger to prevent the most gruesome slaughter of innocents in the history of the world. In fact, many who were given the opportunity joyfully and without effort. They are the ones who have instigated and carried out this massive destruction, this insidious "Justice for the Palestinians" and pursuit of the "peace process," by finetuning and profiting from the buildup of weapons of mass destruction solely destined for the destruction of Israel, the world actively promotes this second Holocaust.

"By its pious insistence on "Justice for the Palestinians" and pursuit of the "peace process," by finetuning and profiting from the buildup of weapons of mass destruction solely destined for the destruction of Israel, the world actively promotes this second Holocaust."
COMMENTARY
January 2000

The Republicans

To the Editor:

Daniel Case's "What the Republicans Have Forgiven" [October 1999] is essentially a hymn to Nelson Rockefeller. There is, of course, the obligatory bow to Ronald Reagan, a conservative, but clearly the proper sort—a big-government conservative.

Let me pose the following question to Mr. Case: Are the best and most people really impressed by the departments of Energy, Commerce, Transportation? Has increased societal spending actually done more than good than harm? Mr. Case's obvious affirmation of the utilizing social engineering is a piece of his parroting of the Democrats. For example, he writes that the "Republican-led Congress shut down the federal government," without any mention of presidential incursion during the 1995 shutdown.

He even cites the Clinton impeachment and the push for term limits as instances of the Republicans being "rebellious anti-government." But Mr. Case's distortion of 20th-century Conservatism is raw in the limitation that fascists infuse in being pro-life.

Perhaps Republicans dedicated to buying votes using public treasury and serving differently toward pro-choice and abortion are the kind of Republicans most likely to succeed. Still, a dose of principle would be refreshing, again, and perhaps even rewarding.

John D. Kooi
Austin, Texas

To the Editor:

Republicans can be faulted for many things, but their refusal to support President Clinton's war against the former Yugoslavia is not one of them. As Daniel Case believes, most Republicans were absolutely correct in not enlisting Clinton's unpopular, misguided "no-fly" zone.

This was even compared with the众 who endorsed this course of action against a weak, familiarly engaged in an internal struggle against Muslim separatists with the efforts of left-wing Democrats to win President Bush's campaign against Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

Mr. Case writes: "John D. King's letter notwithstanding, nowhere in my article did I express endorsement for Nelson Rockefeller or suggest that pro-life Republicans are fanatics. But Mr. King is correct about one thing: I am skeptical of those Republicans who think that diluting a few cabinet departments is going to save the country against a war that is not a war in foreign policy.

World War I

To the Editor:

That a country could permit a man like Ronald Reagan to manage its foreign policy and defense is the most significant fact of the post-Vietnam era. The Reagan era became dominated by military expenditures and military intervention, and the country was plunged into the excesses of the Cold War, which were to have long-term effects on the country's economy and its ability to maintain a credible military posture.

The country was, in short, on the verge of a nuclear catastrophe, and the only way to avoid it was to continue to spend billions of dollars on nuclear weapons. But the Reagan era was also characterized by a decline in the country's economic power, which was to have serious consequences for the country's ability to maintain a credible military posture.

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