



## Out of Place

*Edward W. Said*

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*Edward W. Said*

**Out of Place** Edward W. Said

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## Out of Place Details

Date : Published 2000 by Granta Books (first published 1999)

ISBN : 9781862073708

Author : Edward W. Said

Format : Paperback 295 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Autobiography, Memoir

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**ZaRi says**

**Khlood says**

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## Ahmed Almawali says

**Sawsan says**

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**Hafsa says**

Initially, Edward Said's memoir was a bit slow-moving. I guess I expected him to speed through the major events in his life up until the time he started writing it--but he focused mainly on his childhood and school days. It's fascinating to me that he still remembered such marked details--names of teachers, other students, etc.

His narrative jumped around a bit and was repetitive at times, but just reading about his life, his thoughts, his analysis on his relationship with his family, etc was fascinating. He is so frank and honest, esp. when talking about his own weaknesses (and perceived weaknesses). One of my favorite lines is advice his Aunt gives him: "If you think of everything you must do as present before you, to be done all at once, you'll cripple

yourself. Time obliges you to do them in sequence, one at a time, and this, dissolves the burden almost immediately."

Wish he was alive to write part two--one that focused on his graduate school years, his early years as a professor, and how he became active in Palestinian advocacy.

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### **Emad (TheBookCritic) says**

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**"I occasionally experience myself as a cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of solid self, the identity to which so many attach so much significance".**

- Said mentioned in his last interview (2003) that the object of his memoir was mainly to revisit his relationship with his mom and dad. And, in my opinion, after reading the memoir I believe his father's had the biggest influence over him - that's why he talked about him more, and even portrayed him more accurately than he portrayed his mother.
- Said's father drew my attention; his character is very complex and his feelings towards his wife and children were infathomable to me. That's the type of characters I love the most.
- In the book, Said talked about alientation and how his 'exile' in America helped to shape the person he was. His story didn't end up well, and he didn't live happily ever after. Until his last breath he remained out of place, searching hopelessly for identity.
- One of my favorite quotes in this book is what Said wrote in the last page:  
**"with so many dissonances in my life I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place".**

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### **Andrew says**

From the man who wrote some of the most impassioned, crystal-clear prose to challenge contemporary discourse comes an equally impassioned, unapologetic memoir. On one hand, it's the story of a socially awkward kid from an upper middle class family, much like any other, and on the other hand it's the story of dislocation after dislocation. Dislocation from Palestine, Egypt, America, from the English, French, and Arabic languages in their various forms, from his family, from his class, from his ostensible political representatives, from his schooling... the list goes on. He did indulge in some of that icky author-as-sexual-being talk, which wasn't very interesting when Henry Miller or Norman Mailer did it decades ago (and was a classed-up version of "look how many chicks I nailed, bro"), was OK when Philip Roth did it because at least he was funny about it, and hasn't been any good since. But, given the scope of the memoir, I consider that to be a minor flaw. If you need a framework for how Said thought and why he thought the way he did, I couldn't think of a better next step after getting Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism under your belt. And if you just want a good memoir to take to the beach, Out of Place is great for that too.

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## **Rebecca says**

So... reading the memoirs of Edward Said, you know the same person who wrote major books like Orientalism; Culture and Imperialism; Power, Politics, and Culture; etc. When you pick up his memoirs, you probably have a shitload of expectations, and even if you tell yourself it will be the opposite of your expectations... You're still not prepared for this book.

You will not see "The Palestinian", you will not see the profile of the Arab that makes Americans and Europeans uncomfortable. You will not find the Nakba in the life of Edward Said. You will also not find the praise of pan-Arab super stars, no glorification of Abdel Nasser, no passion for Om Khoulthoum, no particular passion for Shami food.

So now that I have mentioned what you won't find, or the expectations that will be shattered... This book is by all means amazing. This is a very genuine memoir. It tells the tale of a child/teenager that was socially awkward, shy, unconfident, raised in the typical heteronormative upper Middle Eastern middle-class family. A harsh, capitalist, hard-working, distant father, and an over-protective, mostly emotionally manipulative mother that lives through her kids.

You will also find tales of the Europeanized Arabs, the excellent British/American schools, the concerts, the non-Arab Christianity, and the padded rich Zamalek lifestyle.

That being said, this book is a priceless memoir of an amazing mind. With the first chapter I personally related to the introverted childhood that Said struggled with. I was also fascinated to see the unflattering description of his parents. It is clearly the memoirs of a dying man, he no longer wants to censor his words. Some people complaining that they were expecting to find the seeds of his intellectual journey and were disappointed not to find it. I disagree, throughout the book you can clearly see how this man came from extreme privilege (as well a terrible need to please) and slowly but bravely deconstructed the complex dynamics of power, money, hegemony, and erosion of history.

Not to mention that I found some incidents and descriptions shattering, describing the situation of Palestinian refugees (regardless of their initial status) after the occupation of Palestine, in Cairo in specific, as well as the actual changes to his family's life. And he lays the foundations of his future understanding of intersectionality by talking about militarization, the oppression of the left in Cairo (and by extension of all secular Arab dictatorships), not just the token-heroes, but also the impact on their families, the silence that grows slowly but inevitably around their stories, how insignificantly people have died, etc.

And finally when reading this book, you will see Edward Said grow, from the pleasing child, to the passively rebellious teenager that took the blows but silently "Unlearning the inherent dominative mode". I am not saying this is an easy read or that the analysis I am claiming is clear. It is my own perception of this book. But quite frankly, if you took the time and energy to read this book then I don't see how you could miss these points.

PS: If you are excessively into Oum Koulthoum and/or Omar al Sharif.... Don't read this book.

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## **Ahmad Sharabiani says**

Out of Place: a memoir, Edward W. Said

Edward Said was born in Jerusalem, and brought up in Cairo, spending every summer in the Lebanese mountain village of Dhour el Shweir, until he was banished to America in 1951. This work is a mixture of emotional archaeology and memory, exploring an essentially irrecoverable past. As ill health sets him

thinking about endings, Edward Said returns to his beginnings in this personal memoir.

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## Salma says

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### **Sophia says**

A third re-read of this memoir, which I keep coming back to. Anyone interested in Said's work or in the Middle East in general - or, indeed, in depictions of childhood and elucidations of the 20th century condition of displacement - should read *Out of Place*. Moving and insightful.

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