



**FREUD AND THE NON-EUROPEAN**

*With an introduction by Christopher Bollas  
and a response by Jacqueline Rose*

EDWARD W. SAID

Published in association with the Freud Museum, London



VERSO

London • New York

This edition published by Verso 2014  
First published by Verso, in association with the Freud Museum, London, 2003  
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**Verso**

UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG  
US: 20 Jay Street, Suite 1010, Brooklyn, NY 11201  
[www.versobooks.com](http://www.versobooks.com)

Verso is the imprint of New Left Books

ISBN-13: 978-1-78168-145-9  
eBook ISBN: 978-1-78168-199-2  
eISBN (UK): 978-1-78168-508-2

**British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data**

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

A catalog record for this book is available from the Library of Congress

v3.1

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NOTES

**INTRODUCING EDWARD SAID**

*Christopher Bollas*

On behalf of the Freud Museum of London I am pleased to welcome all of you to this important occasion: to hear Professor Edward Said's talk on "Freud and the Non-European", to be discussed later by Professor Jacqueline Rose, whom I shall introduce before her response.

Well, it is no new experience for Edward Said to be in exile, and so it is here, following in Freud's footsteps (in certain respects), that he is to speak in London rather than Vienna; but those who have studied with him, or know him personally, well appreciate his remarkable yet natural way of transforming injustice into learned protest. "Provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound," he writes in *Reflections on Exile*, "there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity."<sup>1</sup>

Said was born in West Jerusalem of parents who ordinarily resided in Cairo but travelled to Palestine often to see family and friends. His first deep contact with the fate of the exile was in 1948, when his family was driven from Palestine, and he was not to return for forty-five years. Perhaps it was his Aunt Nabiha's energy and determination to address the "desolations of being without a country or a place to return to" that inscribed itself in that gathering momentum that was to become Said the international figure, but he has alluded to the importance of his move to the United States – first to boarding school, and then to Princeton University – which not only widened his horizons, but became an "object to be used", if I may allude to Winnicott's notion of creativity and the use of the object through which further to articulate his remarkable sensibility.

At Columbia University as a young assistant professor, he wrote his first book on Joseph Conrad (1966),<sup>2</sup> and between then and now I think he has written at least twenty books, translated into over thirty-six languages.

The 1967 war shook him from even an imaginary future in the academic ivory tower, and this event sponsored a new line of thought in his life that would realize itself most clearly in his book *Orientalism*, which examined, among other things, European writings on the Orient, illuminating the politics of literary representation. But *Beginnings* (1975) was certainly his first – I hate to say this – intellectual "collateral response" to that war. Said now had to begin again – not consciously knowing, perhaps, where he was headed, but knowing that his life, though influenced by forces beyond him, was evoking his own fierce response. "My view is that an intensified, even irritated, awareness of what really goes on when we begin, that is, when we are conscious of beginning, actually projects the task in a very particular way."<sup>3</sup>

(Those of you here who are interested in psychoanalytical studies will want to read his analysis of Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams* in *Beginnings*, as I think

it is a fascinating literary analysis of Freud's book as enacting what it argues.)

In 1977 Said was elected to the Palestine National Council, where he remained until 1991, when he resigned. As most of you here know, he has been a brilliant, tireless and courageous spokesman for the Palestinian cause. *The Question of Palestine* was published in 1979.<sup>4</sup> Its topics include the psychology of the refusal to recognize an other's being, or to think psychoanalytically about the question he raises; it invites us to consider the effects of "negative hallucination": of not seeing the existence of an object or an other. Thus in examining the structure of oppression, we must not only look at what the oppressors project into the oppressed (for example, Israeli violence projected into the Palestinian people), but we must also take into account a refusal to recognize the actual existence of this other (in this case Israel's reluctance to recognize the existence of Palestinians). It is this combination of positive and negative hallucination which makes this object relation, as we would call it in psychoanalysis, not only toxic but psychotic. The oppressed exists, in this respect, to contain unwanted destructiveness in the oppressor who insists at the same time that the oppressed be like a fecal entity that is so odious that it cannot be recognized, except if and when it is out of sight, and finally eliminated. In many respects, Said's writings not only constitute a literary resistance to the "intellectual genocide"<sup>5</sup> that takes place in too many Western narratives about the Palestinian, but simultaneously function as a resistance to a schizophrenogenic imposition. The stone-throwing Palestinian is symbolically returning that Israeli violence that has used stones to build the settlements. The horror of the suicide bomber returns the violence of Israeli guns, tanks and warplanes. The aim of such resistance is not to overcome Israel, it is to return Israel to itself, for better and for worse. Palestinian violence seeks to maintain sanity for its people through the insistence that the self exists even as the oppressors seek to deny it, something that, of course, the Jewish people know only too well through the catastrophe that was the Holocaust.

Some of his subsequent writings examine the provincialism of academic studies, or what we might think of as the provincialist defence against the multicultural: in psychoanalysis, a form of splitting of the ego in which any self resides happily inside a mere fragment of itself, in order to remain untroubled by all the other parts of the total picture.

Edward Said is also a fine pianist, and became the music critic of a prominent American publication, *The Nation*. He has collaborated with Daniel Barenboim and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in a new production of Beethoven's *Fidelio*, for which he wrote a new English text to replace the spoken dialogue; in addition, he conducted a workshop with Barenboim and Yo-Yo Ma for young Arab and Israeli musicians in Weimar, Germany. He has written on many musical subjects, his essays on Glenn Gould are wonderful, and he has taken a musical act – the "contrapuntal" – and put it into the world of political and literary discourse:

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that, to borrow a phrase from music, is *contrapuntal*. For an exile, habits of life, expression, or activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment.<sup>6</sup>

We could certainly “transfer” *his invention* to psychoanalytical theory, proposing the “psychic contrapuntal” which recognizes the benefit of movement outside of one’s primary place, to a new location from which the self, and its others, are seen in a different light. Moving from the maternal order to the paternal order, from the image-sense world of the infantile place to the symbolic order of language, may be our first taste of exile, one that seems to haunt and yet energize much of Proust’s writing. In this respect, we may all be exiles of a sort – perhaps this is why even those of us who have not shared the terrible fate of those driven from home can none the less grasp their fate empathically.

Edward Said is a University Professor at Columbia University. He has delivered the Reith Lectures for the BBC, the Rene Wellek Memorial Lectures at the University of California-Irvine, the Henry Stafford Little Lecture at Princeton, and the Empson Lectures at Cambridge University. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Royal Society of Literature, The American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He has received honorary doctorates from sixteen universities. He is the recipient of too many prizes and awards to name here, but I must mention that his memoir *Out of Place* won the 1999 *New Yorker* Book Award for Non-Fiction. He also won the 2000 Ainsfield–Wolf Book Award for Non-Fiction, the Morton Dauwen Zabel Award in Literature conferred by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the 2001 Lannan Literary Award for Lifetime Achievement. His most recent publications include *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After*, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*; and *Power, Politics and Culture*.<sup>7</sup> He is currently working on *The Relevance of Humanism in Contemporary America*, to be published in 2002 by Columbia University Press.

**FREUD AND THE NON-EUROPEAN**

*Edward W. Said*

There are two ways in which I shall be using the term “non-European” in this lecture – one that applies to Freud’s own time; the other to the period after his death in 1939. Both are deeply relevant to a reading of his work today. One, of course, is a simple designation of the world beyond Freud’s own as a Viennese-Jewish scientist, philosopher and intellectual who lived and worked his entire life in either Austria or England. No one who has read and been influenced by Freud’s extraordinary work has failed to be impressed by the remarkable range of his erudition, especially in literature and the history of culture. But by the same token, one is very struck by the fact that beyond the confines of Europe, Freud’s awareness of other cultures (with perhaps one exception, that of Egypt) is inflected, and, indeed shaped by his education in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, particularly the humanistic and scientific assumptions that give it its peculiarly “Western” stamp. This is something that doesn’t so much limit Freud in an uninteresting way as identify him as belonging to a place and time that were still not tremendously bothered by what today, in the current postmodern, poststructuralist, postcolonialist jargon, we would call the problems of the Other. Of course Freud was deeply gripped by what stands outside the limits of reason, convention, and, of course, consciousness: his whole work in that sense is about the Other, but always about an Other recognizable mainly to readers who are well acquainted with the classics of Graeco-Roman and Hebrew Antiquity and what was later to derive from them in the various modern European languages, literatures, sciences, religions and cultures with which he himself was well acquainted.

Like most of his contemporaries, Freud knew that other, noteworthy cultures existed and deserved recognition. He referred to those of India and China, for instance, but only in passing and only when, say, the practice of dream interpretation there might be of comparative interest to the European investigator of the subject. Much more frequent are Freud’s references to the “primitive” non-European cultures – mostly via James Frazer – on which he drew for his discussion of early religious practices. These references provide most of the substance for *Totem and Taboo*,<sup>8</sup> but Freud’s ethnographic curiosity hardly goes beyond looking at and citing aspects of these cultures (sometimes with a numbing repetitiveness) as supporting evidence for his argument about such matters as defilement, prohibitions against incest, and patterns of exogamy and endogamy. To Freud, the Pacific, Australian and African cultures he took so much from had been pretty much left behind or forgotten, like the primal horde, in the march of civilization; and even though we know how much of Freud’s work is dedicated to recovering and acknowledging what has either been forgotten or won’t be admitted, I don’t

think that in cultural terms non-European primitive peoples and cultures were as fascinating to him as were the people and stories of Ancient Greece, Rome and Israel. The latter were his real predecessors in terms of psychoanalytic images and concepts.

Nevertheless, in view of the dominant race theories of the time, Freud had his own ideas about non-European outsiders, most notably Moses and Hannibal. Both were Semites, of course, and both (especially Hannibal) were heroes for Freud because of their audacity, persistence and courage. Reading *Moses and Monotheism*,<sup>9</sup> one is struck by Freud's almost casual assumption (which also applies to Hannibal) that Semites were most certainly not European (in fact, Hannibal spends his life fruitlessly trying to conquer Rome, but never even gets there) and, at the same time, were somehow assimilable to its culture as former outsiders. This is quite different from theories about Semites propounded by Orientalists like Renan and racial thinkers such as Gobineau and Wagner, who underlined the foreignness and excludability of Jews – as well as Arabs, for that matter – to Graeco-Germanic-Aryan culture. Freud's view of Moses as both insider and outsider is extraordinarily interesting and challenging, I think, but I want to talk about this later. In any event, I believe it is true to say that Freud's was a Eurocentric view of culture – and why should it not be? His world had not yet been touched by the globalization, or rapid travel, or decolonization, that were to make many formerly unknown or repressed cultures available to metropolitan Europe. He lived just before the massive population shifts that were to bring Indians, Africans, West Indians, Turks and Kurds into the heart of Europe as guest-workers and often unwelcome immigrants. And, of course, he died just as the Austro-Germanic and Roman world portrayed so memorably by great contemporaries such as Thomas Mann and Romain Rolland would lie in ruins, with millions of his fellow Jews slaughtered by the Nazi Reich. In effect, it was also the world commemorated in Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*, the autumnal exilic book written during the war years in Istanbul, whence this great *Gelehrter* and philologist could sum up the passing of a tradition seen in its coherent wholeness for the last time.

The second – and far more politically charged – meaning of “the non-European” that I'd like to draw attention to is the culture that emerged historically in the post-World-War-Two period – that is, after the fall of the classical empires and the emergence of many newly liberated peoples and states in Africa, Asia and the Americas. Obviously, I cannot go into the many new configurations of power, people and politics that have resulted, but I would like to stress one in particular that seems to me to give a rather fascinating perspective, and indeed enhances the radicality of Freud's work on human identity. What I have in mind is how, in the postwar world, that constellation of words and valences that surrounds Europe and the West acquired a much more fraught and even rebarbative meaning from observers outside Europe and the West. Because of the Cold War there were first of all two Europes, East and West; and then, in the peripheral regions of the world

going through the throes of decolonization, there was the Europe that was representative of the great empires, now seething with insurrections that were finally to develop into struggles beyond European and Western control. Elsewhere I have tried to describe the new light in which Europe is now seen by articulate anticolonial combatants, so I won't go into it here, except briefly to quote Fanon – surely Freud's most disputatious heir – from the final pages of his last, posthumously published book, *The Wretched of the Earth*.<sup>10</sup> The section I shall be citing is one of the appendices to the book entitled “Colonial Wars and Mental Disorders”, in which – as you will recall – Fanon catalogues and comments on a series of cases he has dealt with that emanate, as it were, from the colonial battlefield.

First of all, he notes that to the European, the non-European world contains only natives, and “the veiled women, the palm trees and the camels make up the landscape, the *natural* background to the human presence of the French”.<sup>11</sup> After listing how the native is diagnosed by the European clinical psychiatrist as a savage killer who kills for no reason, Fanon cites a Professor A. Porot, whose considered scientific opinion is that the native's life is dominated by “diencephalic urges” whose net result is an undevelopable primitivism. Here Fanon quotes a chilling passage from a learned technical psychiatric analysis by Professor Porot himself:

This primitivism is not merely a way of living which is the result of a special upbringing; it has much deeper roots. We even consider that it must have its substratum in a particular predisposition of the architectonic structure, or at least in the dynamic hierarchization of the nervous centers. We are in the presence of a coherent body of comportment and of a coherent life which can be explained scientifically. The Algerian has no cortex; or, more precisely, he is dominated, like the inferior vertebrates, by the diencephalons. The cortical functions, if they exist at all, are very feeble, and are practically unintegrated into the dynamic of existence.<sup>12</sup>

While it may be possible to see in this sort of thing a fundamentalist perversion of Freud's description of primitive behaviour in *Totem and Taboo*, what seems to be missing is Freud's implicit refusal, in the end, to erect an insurmountable barrier between non-European primitives and European civilization; on the contrary, the severity of Freud's argument, as I read it, is that what may have been left behind historically catches up with us in such universal behaviours as the prohibition against incest, or – as he characterizes it in *Moses and Monotheism* – the return of the repressed. Of course, Freud posits a qualitative difference between primitive and civilized that seems to work to the latter's advantage, but that difference, as in the fiction of his equally gifted subversive contemporary Joseph Conrad, doesn't excuse or in any way mitigate the rigour of his analyses of civilization itself, which he sees in a decidedly ambiguous, even pessimistic, way.

The point for Fanon, though, is that when you extend not just Freud, but all

the scientific achievements of European science, into the practice of colonialism, Europe ceases to occupy a normative position with regard to the native. Hence, Fanon proclaims:

leave this Europe where they are never done talking of Man, yet murder men everywhere they find them, at the corner of every one of their own streets, in all the corners of the globe.... Europe undertook the leadership of the world with ardor, cynicism, and violence. Look at how the shadow of her palaces stretches out ever further! Every one of her movements has burst the bounds of space and thought. Europe has declined all humility and all modesty; but she has also set her face against all solicitude and tenderness.... When I search for Man in the technique and the style of Europe, I see only a succession of negations of man, and an avalanche of murders.

Not surprisingly, then, and even though his prose and some of his reasoning depend on it, Fanon rejects the European model entirely, and demands instead that all human beings collaborate together in the invention of new ways to create what he calls “the new man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth”.<sup>13</sup>

Fanon himself scarcely provides his readers with anything like a blueprint for the new ways he has in mind; his main purpose, however, is to indict Europe for having divided human beings into a hierarchy of races that reduced and dehumanized the subordinates to both the scientific gaze and the will of the superiors. The actualization of the scheme, of course, is what was brought forth by the colonial system in the imperial domains, but I think it is true to say that the gist of Fanon’s attack was to include the whole edifice of European humanism itself, which proved incapable of going beyond its own invidious limitations of vision. As Immanuel Wallerstein described so well,<sup>14</sup> subsequent critics of Eurocentrism in the last four decades of the twentieth century furthered the attack by taking on Europe’s historiography, the claims of its universalism, its definition of civilization, its Orientalism, and its uncritical acceptance of a paradigm of progress that placed what Huntington and others like him have called “the West” at the centre of an encroaching mass of lesser civilizations trying to challenge the West’s supremacy.

However much or little one agrees with Fanon or Wallerstein, there is no doubt that the whole idea of cultural difference itself – especially today – is far from the inert thing taken for granted by Freud. The notion that there were other cultures besides that of Europe about which one needed to think is really not the animating principle for his work that it was in Fanon’s, any more than it was for the major work of his contemporaries Thomas Mann, Romain Rolland and Erich Auerbach. Of the four, Auerbach was the one who survived somewhat into the postcolonial era, but he was mystified – perhaps even a little depressed – by what he could intimate of what was coming. In his late essay “Philologie der Weltliteratur” he spoke elegiacally of the replacement of Romania as the research paradigm that had nourished his own

career by a welter of what he called “new” languages and cultures, without realizing that many of them in Asia and Africa were older than those of Europe, and had well-established canons and philologies that European scholars of his generation simply never knew existed. At any rate, Auerbach had the capacity to sense that a new historical era was being born, and he could tell that its lineaments and structures would be unfamiliar precisely because so much in it was neither European nor Eurocentric.

I feel I should add something else here. I have often been interpreted as retrospectively attacking great writers and thinkers like Jane Austen and Karl Marx because some of their ideas seem politically incorrect by the standards of our time. That is a stupid notion which, I just have to say categorically, is not true of anything I have either written or said. On the contrary, I am always trying to understand figures from the past whom I admire, even as I point out how bound they were by the perspectives of their own cultural moment as far as their views of other cultures and peoples were concerned. The special point I then try to make is that it is imperative to read them as intrinsically worthwhile for today’s non-European or non-Western reader, who is often either happy to dismiss them altogether as dehumanizing or insufficiently aware of the colonized people (as Chinua Achebe does with Conrad’s portrayal of Africa), or reads them, in a way, “above” the historical circumstances of which they were so much a part. My approach tries to see them in their context as accurately as possible, but then – because they are extraordinary writers and thinkers whose work has enabled other, alternative work and readings based on developments of which they could not have been aware – I see them contrapuntally, that is, as figures whose writing travels across temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries in unforeseen ways to emerge as part of a new ensemble *along with* later history and subsequent art. So, for instance, rather than leaving Conrad’s compelling portrait of Leopold’s Congo in an archive labelled as the dead-end rubbish bin of racist thinking, it seems to me far more interesting to read Conrad’s late-nineteenth-century work as – in all sorts of unforeseen proleptic ways – suggesting and provoking not only the tragic distortions in the Congo’s subsequent history but also the echoing answers in African writing that reuse Conrad’s journey motif as a topos to present the discoveries and recognitions of postcolonial dynamics, a great part of them the deliberate antitheses of Conrad’s work. Thus – to give a brief pair of examples – you have the radically different responses embodied in Tayib Salih’s *Mawsim al Hijra illal Shimal* and V.S. Naipaul’s *A Bend in the River*. These two works couldn’t be more different from each other, but both are unimaginable without the structure of Conrad’s prior imaginative feat to guide and then push them, so to speak, into new avenues of articulation true to the vision of a Sudanese Arab’s experience in the 1960s and that of a Trinidadian Indian expatriate a few years later. The interesting result is not only that Salih and Naipaul depend so vitally on their reading of Conrad, but that Conrad’s writing is further actualized and animated by emphases and inflections that he was obviously unaware of, but that his writing permits.

Thus later history reopens and challenges what seems to have been the finality of an earlier figure of thought, bringing it into contact with cultural, political and epistemological formations undreamed of by – albeit affiliated by historical circumstances with – its author. Every writer is, of course, a reader of her or his predecessors as well, but what I want to underline is that the often surprising dynamics of human history can – as Borges’ fable of *Pierre Menard and the Quixote* so wittily argues – dramatize the latencies in a prior figure or form that suddenly illuminate the present. The horribly attenuated and oppressed black porters and savages that Conrad portrays in terms that Achebe finds so objectionable not only contain within them the frozen essence that condemns them to the servitude and punishment Conrad sees as their present fate, but also point prophetically towards a whole series of implied developments that their later history discloses despite, over and above, and also paradoxically because of, the radical severity and awful solitude of Conrad’s essentializing vision. The fact that later writers keep returning to Conrad means that his work, by virtue of its uncompromising Eurocentric vision, is precisely what gives it its antinomian force, the intensity and power wrapped inside its sentences, which demand an equal and opposite response to meet them head on in a confirmation, a refutation, or an elaboration of what they present. In the grip of Conrad’s Africa, you are driven by its sheer stifling horror to work through it, to push beyond it as history itself transforms even the most unyielding stasis into process and a search for greater clarity, relief, resolution or denial. And of course in Conrad, as with all such extraordinary minds, the felt tension between what is intolerably there and a symmetrical compulsion to escape from it is what is most profoundly at stake – what the reading and interpretation of a work like *Heart of Darkness* is all about. Texts that are inertly of their time stay there: those which brush up unstintingly against historical constraints are the ones we keep with us, generation after generation.

Freud is a remarkable instance of a thinker for whom scientific work was, as he often said, a kind of archaeological excavation of the buried, forgotten, repressed and denied past. Not for nothing was Schliemann a model for him.<sup>15</sup> Freud was an explorer of the mind, of course, but also, in the philosophical sense, an overturner and a re-mapper of accepted or settled geographies and genealogies. He thus lends himself especially to rereading in different contexts, since his work is all about how life history offers itself by recollection, research and reflection to endless structuring and restructuring, in both the individual and the collective sense. That we, different readers from different periods of history, with different cultural backgrounds, should continue to do this in our readings of Freud strikes me as nothing less than a vindication of his work’s power to instigate new thought, as well as to illuminate situations that he himself might never have dreamed of.

Freud’s intense concentration on Moses occupied the last months of his life, and what he produced in his last major book, *Moses and Monotheism*, is a composite of several texts, numerous intentions, different periods of time – all

of them personally difficult for him in view of his illness, the advent of National Socialism and the political uncertainties of his life in Vienna which meant that he had to contend with sometimes contradictory and even disorganizing, destabilizing effects.<sup>16</sup> Anyone with an interest in what has been called late style [*Spätstil*] will find in Freud's *Moses* an almost classic example. Like the bristlingly difficult works that Beethoven produced in the last seven or eight years of his life – the last five piano sonatas, the final quartets, the *Missa Solemnis*, the Choral Symphony, and the Opus 119 and 121 Bagatelles – *Moses* seems to be composed by Freud for himself, with scant attention to frequent and often ungainly repetition, or regard for elegant economy of prose and exposition. In this book, Freud the scientist looking for objective results in his investigation, and Freud the Jewish intellectual probing his own relationship with his ancient faith through the history and identity of its founder, are never really brought into a tidy fit with each other. Everything about the treatise suggests not resolution and reconciliation – as in some late works such as *The Tempest* or *The Winter's Tale* – but, rather, more complexity and a willingness to let irreconcilable elements of the work remain as they are: episodic, fragmentary, unfinished (i.e. unpolished).

In Beethoven's case and in Freud's, as I hope to show, the intellectual trajectory conveyed by the late work is intransigence and a sort of irascible transgressiveness, as if the author was expected to settle down into a harmonious composure, as befits a person at the end of his life, but preferred instead to be difficult, and to bristle with all sorts of new ideas and provocations. Freud explicitly confesses to this unseemliness in a footnote early in *Moses* where, without embarrassment, he refers to his autocratic, arbitrary and even unscrupulous way with biblical evidence. There are also explicit reminders to the reader that the author is an old man, and may not be up to his task; at the end of the second part and the beginning of the third Freud draws attention to his failing strength as well as to the diminishment in his creative powers. But this admission doesn't stop or in any way deter him from reaching difficult and often mystifyingly unsatisfactory conclusions. Like Beethoven's late works, Freud's *Spätwerk* is obsessed with returning not just to the problem of Moses's identity – which, of course, is at the very core of the treatise – but to the very elements of identity itself, as if that issue so crucial to psychoanalysis, the very heart of the science, could be returned to in the way that Beethoven's late work returns to such basics as tonality and rhythm. Moreover, the combination in Freud of interest in the contemporary expressed in sometimes arcane excavations of the primordial are parallel to Beethoven's use of medieval modes and startlingly advanced counterpoint in works like the *Missa Solemnis*. Above all, late style's effect on the reader or listener is alienating – that is to say, Freud and Beethoven present material that is of pressing concern to them with scant regard for satisfying, much less placating, the reader's need for closure. Other books by Freud were written with a didactic or pedagogic aim in mind: *Moses and Monotheism* is not. Reading the treatise, we feel that Freud wishes us to understand that there are other issues

at stake here – other, more pressing problems to expose than ones whose solution might be comforting, or provide a sort of resting-place.

In one of the most interesting of several books on Freud's *Moses* – Josef Yerushalmi's *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*<sup>17</sup> – Yerushalmi expertly fills in the personal Jewish background to Freud's probing of the Moses story, including his painfully longstanding awareness of anti-Semitism in such episodes as his spoiled friendship with Carl Jung, his disappointment with his father's inability to stand up to insults, his concern that psychoanalysis might be considered only a "Jewish" science, and, centrally, his own complicated and, in my opinion, hopelessly unresolved connection to his own Jewishness, which he seemed always to hold on to with a combination of pride and defiance. Yet Freud repeats over and over that although he was a Jew he did not believe in God, and only in the most minimal way could be said to have any religious sense at all. Yerushalmi shrewdly points out that Freud seemed to have believed, perhaps following Lamarck, that "the character traits embedded in the Jewish psyche are themselves transmitted phylogenetically and no longer require religion in order to be sustained. On such a final Lamarckian assumption even godless Jews like Freud inevitably inherit and share them". So far so good. But then Yerushalmi goes on to ascribe a kind of almost desperately providential leap to Freud that I find largely unwarranted. "If monotheism", he says, "was genetically Egyptian, it has been historically Jewish". He then adds – quoting Freud – that "it is honor enough for the Jewish people that it kept alive such a tradition and produced men who lent it their voice, *even if the stimulus had first come from the outside, from a great stranger*" (italics added).<sup>18</sup>

This is so central a point in Freud's argument that it bears looking into further; certainly, I think, Yerushalmi has jumped to conclusions about what is historically Jewish that Freud himself doesn't actually reach because, as I shall try to show, the actual Jewishness that derives from Moses is a far from open-and-shut matter, and is in fact extremely problematic. Freud is resolutely divided about it; indeed, I would go so far as to say that he is deliberately antinomian in his beliefs. You will recall that Freud's opening sentence is an astonishingly hybriatic celebration of what he has done and will do in the pages that follow, which is nothing less than "to deny a people the man whom it praises as the greatest of its sons"; he then goes on to say that a feat of this kind cannot be entered into gladly or carelessly, "especially by one belonging to that people". He does so in the interests of a truth – he minces no words at all – far more important than what are "supposed [to be] national interests". The sarcasm in this last phrase fairly takes your breath away, as much for its arrogance as for its willingness to subordinate the interests of a whole people to what is more important: the removal of a religion's source from its place inside the community and history of like-minded believers.<sup>19</sup>

I won't rehearse all the main points of Freud's arguments – I too wish to be a bit arbitrary – except to recall emphases that he makes in them. First, of

course, is Moses's Egyptian identity, and the fact that his ideas about a single God are derived entirely from the Egyptian Pharaoh, who is universally credited with the invention of monotheism. Unlike Yerushalmi, for instance, Freud goes out of his way to credit Akhenaton with this idea, insisting that it was an invention which did not exist before him; and although he says that monotheism did not take root in Egypt, Freud must have known perfectly well that monotheism returned to Egypt first in the form of primitive Christianity (which remains in the Coptic Church of today) and then via Islam, which he does in fact discuss briefly later in the text. Recent work in Egyptology in fact suggests that considerable traces of monotheism are found well before Akhenaton's reign, and this in turn suggests that Egypt's role in the development of the worship of one God is a good deal more significant than has often been allowed. Yerushalmi is far more anxious than Freud to scrape away all traces of monotheism from Egypt after Akhenaton's death, and he implies that it was the genius of Judaism to have elaborated the religion well beyond anything the Egyptians knew about.

Freud, however, is more complex, and even contradictory. He grants that the Jews eliminated sun-worship from the religion they took over from Akhenaton, but further undercuts Judaic originality by noting (a) that circumcision was an Egyptian, not a Hebrew, idea; and (b) that the Levites, surely as Judaic a group as convention says ever existed, were Moses's Egyptian followers, who had come along with him to the new place.

As for that place, Freud departs further from the conventionally attributed Israelite geography and states that it was Meribat-Qades: "in the country south of Palestine between the eastern end of the Sinai peninsula and the western end of Arabia. There they took over the worship of a god Jahve, probably from the neighbouring Arabian tribe of Midianites. Presumably other neighbouring tribes were also followers of that God".<sup>20</sup> So Freud first restores to their place components of the origin of Judaism that had been forgotten or denied along with the murder of the heroic father common to all religions, then shows – via his theory of dormancy and the return of the repressed – how Judaism constituted itself as a permanently established religion. The argument is strangely subtle and discontinuous, as anyone who has read *Moses and Monotheism* will quickly attest. Repression, denial and return pass before the reader almost magically as experiences from the individual to the collective: they are arrayed by Freud in a sequence of narrative followed by submerged and then manifest positivity, all of which gives rise not only to Jewishness but to the anti-Semitism that goes along with it. The main points I want to underscore are first, that all of this is given an entirely secular setting by Freud, with no concession made that I have been able to find to the divine or the extra-historical; and second, that Freud makes no effort to smooth out his story or give it a clear trajectory. This is perhaps because so much of the material he is dealing with as he chronicles the aftermath of Moses's legacy is uneven, as radically antithetical in its startlingly sharp contrast between the founding outsider and the community

he established (which also killed him) as the primal words he had studied and written about decades earlier.

On one level, this is no more than to say that the elements of historical identity seem always to be composite, particularly when seminal events like the killing of the father and the exodus from Egypt are themselves so tied up in prior events. As to whether Moses can be said to be “foreign” to the Jews who adopt him as their patriarch, Freud is quite clear, even adamant: Moses was an Egyptian, and was therefore different from the people who adopted him as their leader – people, that is, who became the Jews whom Moses seems to have later created as *his* people. To say of Freud’s relationship with Judaism that it was conflicted is to venture an understatement. At times he was proud of his belonging, even though he was irremediably anti-religious; at other times he expressed annoyance with and unmistakable disapproval of Zionism. In a famous letter about the work of the Jewish Agency in 1930, for instance, he refused to join in an appeal to the British to increase Jewish immigration to Palestine. In fact he went so far as to condemn the transformation “of a piece of Herodian wall into a national relic, thus offending the feelings of the natives”. Five years later, having accepted a position on the board of the Hebrew University, he told the Jewish National Fund that it was “a great and blessed ... instrument ... in its endeavour to establish a new home in the ancient land of our fathers”.<sup>21</sup> Yerushalmi rehearses both Freud’s comings and goings subtly as well, and he painstakingly shows that Freud’s Jewishness runs the entire gamut from his identity as a Jew, arising from stubborn resistance to the “compact majority”, through the whole process of recalling and accepting the tradition that develops out of Moses (and hence of reconciliation with the slain father), to the grandest idea of all: that in an act of sublimation peculiar to monotheistic religion (borrowed from Egypt: Freud can’t resist inserting that phrase), Jews subordinated sense perception to the spirit, disdained magic and mysticism, were invited “to advances in intellectuality” (I take this phrase from Strachey’s translation, since it is inexplicably left out by Jones: the German word is *Geistigkeit*), and “were encouraged to progress in spirituality and sublimations”. The rest of that progress, however, is yet to come in rather less evenly happy forms: “The people, happy in their conviction of possessing truth, overcome by consciousness of being the chosen, came to value highly all intellectual and ethical achievements. I shall also show how their sad fate, and the disappointments reality had in store for them, were able to strengthen all these tendencies.”<sup>22</sup>

An even more detailed analysis of the relationship between Freud’s Jewish identity and his quite convoluted attitudes, as well as actions, *vis-à-vis* Zionism is presented by Jacqy Chemouni in *Freud et le sionisme: terre psychanalytique, terre promise*.<sup>23</sup> Although Chemouni’s conclusion is that Herzl and Freud divided the Jewish world between them – the former locating Jewishness in a specific location, the latter choosing instead the realm of the universal – the book presents a daring thesis about Rome, Athens and Jerusalem that comes

quite close to Freud's antithetical views about the history and future of Jewish identity. Rome, of course, is the visible edifice that attracted Freud – perhaps, says Chemouni, because he saw in the city the destruction of Jerusalem's temple and a symbol of the Jewish people's exile and, as a result, the beginning of a desire to rebuild the temple in Palestine. Athens was a city of the mind, a generally more adequate representation of Freud's lifelong dedication to intellectual achievement. From that vantage point, the concrete Jerusalem is an attenuation of the spiritual ascetic ideal, even if it is also a realization that loss can be addressed through the concerted labour that was in fact Zionism.

What I find interesting – whether we accept Yerushalmi's sophisticated reclamation of Freud as a Jew forced to accede to his people's reality in Fascist Europe and anti-Semitic Vienna in particular, or Chemouni's somewhat more complex (a trifle fanciful?) and largely unresolved triangulation of the dilemma of exile and belonging – is that one element keeps importuning, and nagging at whoever thinks about these issues of identity in either uniformly positive or negative terms. And that element is the issue of the non-Jew, which Freud treats lackadaisically late in *Moses and Monotheism*. Jews, he says, have always attracted popular hatred, not all of which is based on reasons as good as the charge that they crucified Christ. Two of the reasons for anti-Semitism are really variations on each other: that Jews are foreigners, and that they are “different” from their hosts; the third reason Freud gives is that no matter how oppressed Jews are, “they defy oppression, [so] that even the most cruel persecutions have not succeeded in exterminating them. On the contrary, they show a capacity for holding their own in practical life, and where they are admitted, they make valuable contributions to the surrounding civilization”. As for the charge of Jews being foreigners (the implied context is, of course, European), Freud is dismissive of it, because in countries like Germany, where anti-Semitism is pervasive, the Jews have been there longer, having arrived with the Romans. On the accusation that Jews are different from their hosts, Freud backhandedly says that they are not “fundamentally so”, since they are not “a foreign Asiatic race, but mostly consist of the remnants of Mediterranean peoples and inherit their culture”.<sup>24</sup>

In the light of Freud's early harping on Moses's Egyptianness, the distinctions he makes here strike me as limp: both unsatisfactory and unconvincing. On several occasions Freud described himself, so far as language and culture were concerned, as German, and also Jewish; and throughout his correspondence and scientific writings he shows himself to be quite sensitive to issues of cultural, as well as racial and national difference. To the pre-Second-World-War European, though, the term “non-European” is a relatively unmarked term denoting people who come from outside Europe – Asiatics, for example. But I am convinced that Freud was aware that simply saying of the Jews that they were the remnants of Mediterranean civilization, and therefore not really different, is janglingly discordant with his show of force about Moses's Egyptian origins. Could it be, perhaps, that the shadow of