

The 42nd Annual Book Sale of the Friends of the Library, Trinity College, University of Toronto and a Book Buy (Part 1)

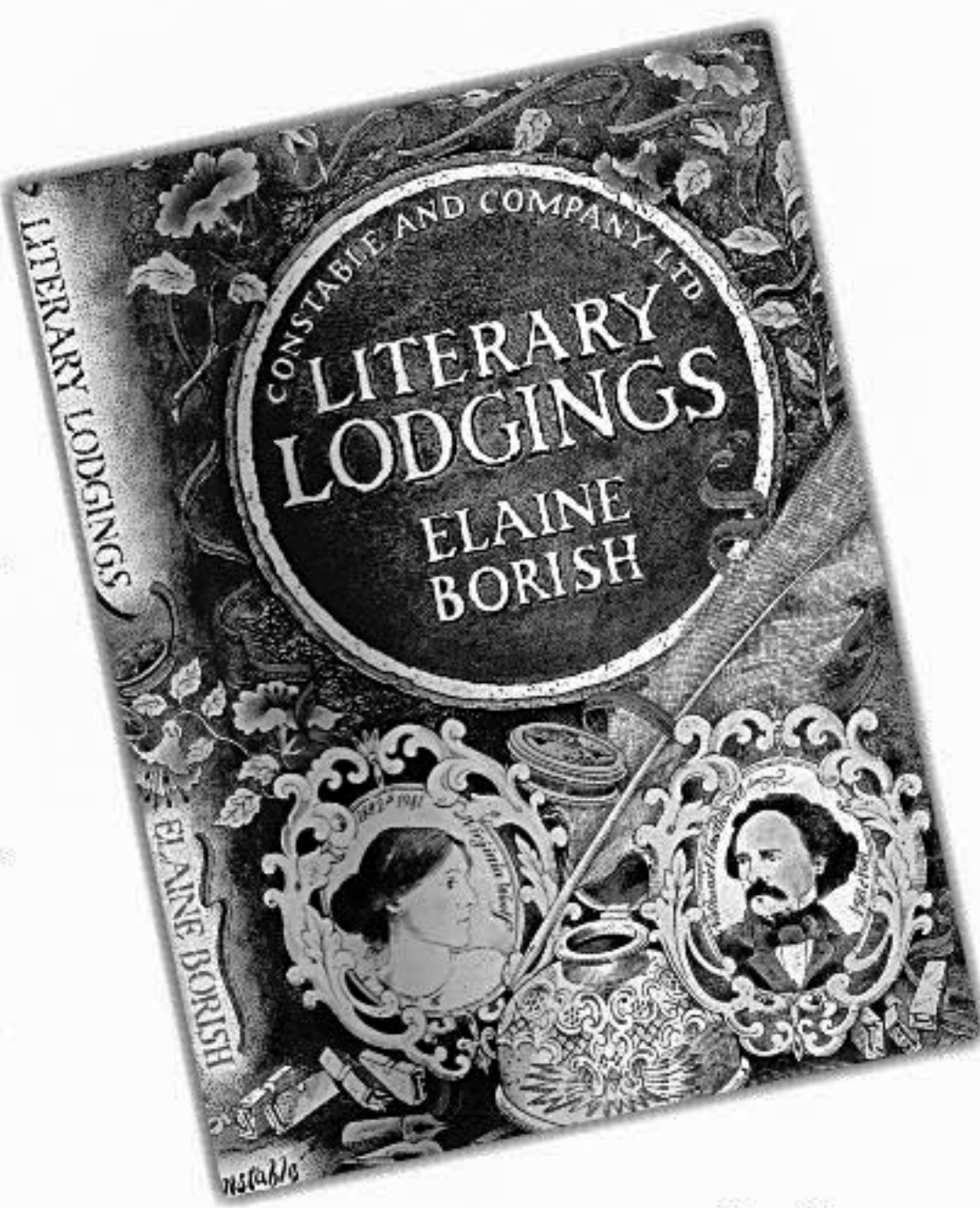
RAANA HAIDER

"A book lasts as long as a house, for hundreds of years. It is not, then, an article of mere consumption, but fairly of capital."
-Thomas Jefferson

The University of Toronto (UFT) holds an annual book sale every October at its prestigious academic and architectural landmark building Trinity College established in 1851. Founded in 1827 by the Royal Charter as Kings College, UFT ranks as Canada's most reputable university and remains among the world's most eminent centres of education and research. It was the first university of higher learning in the British colony of Upper Canada. Its motto is meaningful: 'As a tree through the ages.' And there I was one fine autumnal afternoon in 2017 meandering through the serpentine walkways over mini-downs of velvet green grass that provide a palette of contrast to fallen yellow and orange tinged leaves. My destination- the 42nd Annual Book Sale of The Friends of the Library, Trinity College. The massive Seeley Hall, a haven for bibliomaniacs, is a literary oasis paying homage to the glory of the written word. Categorized by topic were rare books and those not so rare. Some 70 academic and popular categories are labeled. From Antiques and Decorative Arts to Drama and Stagecraft to LGBTQIQ to Occult, to Spirituality to Sport and Fitness; picking out only some of the more distinctive labels. The entire book sale is donated, sorted, sold and managed by volunteers, many of whom are UFT alumni bibliophiles. No mean input, nor output. Annual funds hover around CA\$ 120,000 in recent years. The proceeds go towards maintenance and purchase of books for Trinity College's John W. Graham Library. Every adage rings true. Never ever judge a book by its cover. In preparation for the 2013

book sale, volunteers were shocked to find a 1933 edition of Adolph Hitler's manifesto 'Mein Kampf,' 22nd edition among donated books. The outer dust jacket read 'The Holy Scripture of the Old Testament.' Inside was something else. Also found amongst the pages of 'Mein Kampf' was a folded article from an Austrian newspaper dated 1938 headlined 'Bismarck' plus a silk bookmark embroidered with Hitler's picture and signature. Price: CA\$ 150. My humble pick at CA\$ 4 was 'Literary Lodgings' authored by Elaine Borish, published by Constable and Company Ltd., London, 1984 whose blurb notes: 'Elaine Borish introduces the reader to the delights of nearly forty hotels in Britain which were once the haunts of famous writers and where the reader can now actually stay.' Once upon a time these authors had spent a night, couple of nights, months and even years at cottages, manors, mansions, inns, pubs with rooms, homes, hotels. Guest accommodation with a literary past. These tales transport us back in time, reminiscent of lingering literary nostalgia. She offers the reader a delightful compilation of literary ancestry to entice the passionate traveller who wants to take in a selected author's landmark panoramic, personal and public, frequently venturing further away from Britain's urban areas, concentrates on geography as often a determinant of history. Happily, these literary legacies remain as a tacit acceptance of time; some of them time capsules. However, current owners of locales have resorted to respectful uplift reinforced with modernization. Contextually, Borish

meticulously updates the reader and the potential occupants on modern built-in contemporary conveniences; attached bathrooms and some with even gyms, spas and play-areas. For hard-core literary buffs in Britain, there



are reading lists to tick off; bookstores to visit, an alert eye for smart buys and then there are literary havens. I had in my hand a bibliophile's potential dream stay-in reflective details, where the written word has taken on a momentum of its own making. You could

head for London and the South East, South of England, Wales, West Country, Midlands, East Anglia, North of England and Scotland. The literary map of where to spend the night is yours for the choosing, profiled in detail for literature-minded pilgrims. Marking the British literary lodging trail, the book is replete with anecdotes and insight into the author; their lives and life-style. Her criteria of choice? "Only buildings that once housed writers and exist today as hotels are included in this book. The rule for 'Literary Lodgings' is that the hotel in Britain associated with an author must be alive, the author not." However, since *Literary Lodgings* was published in the last century, prior to setting off for the lodging of choice author; I would in 2018 first Google search the destination - to ensure that the lodging itself remains 'alive.' Very much alive and prospering is the grand luxury The Savoy at the Strand in central London where not only did Arnold Bennett (1867-1931) stay but the hotel built in 1889 on the bank of the Thames was the basis for his novel *Imperial Palace*. A literary retreat with a commendable view. The Savoy honoured the writer by naming a favourite dish of his after him - a large open omelette made with smoked haddock - 'Omelette Arnold Bennett. Oscar Wilde (1854-1936) was arrested at the Cadogan Hotel on Sloane Street in London in 1895. The judge sentenced the writer to two years of imprisonment with hard labour. The charge: 'committing acts of gross indecency with various male persons.' Room 118 was Oscar Wilde's. "...with crystal chandelier, blue

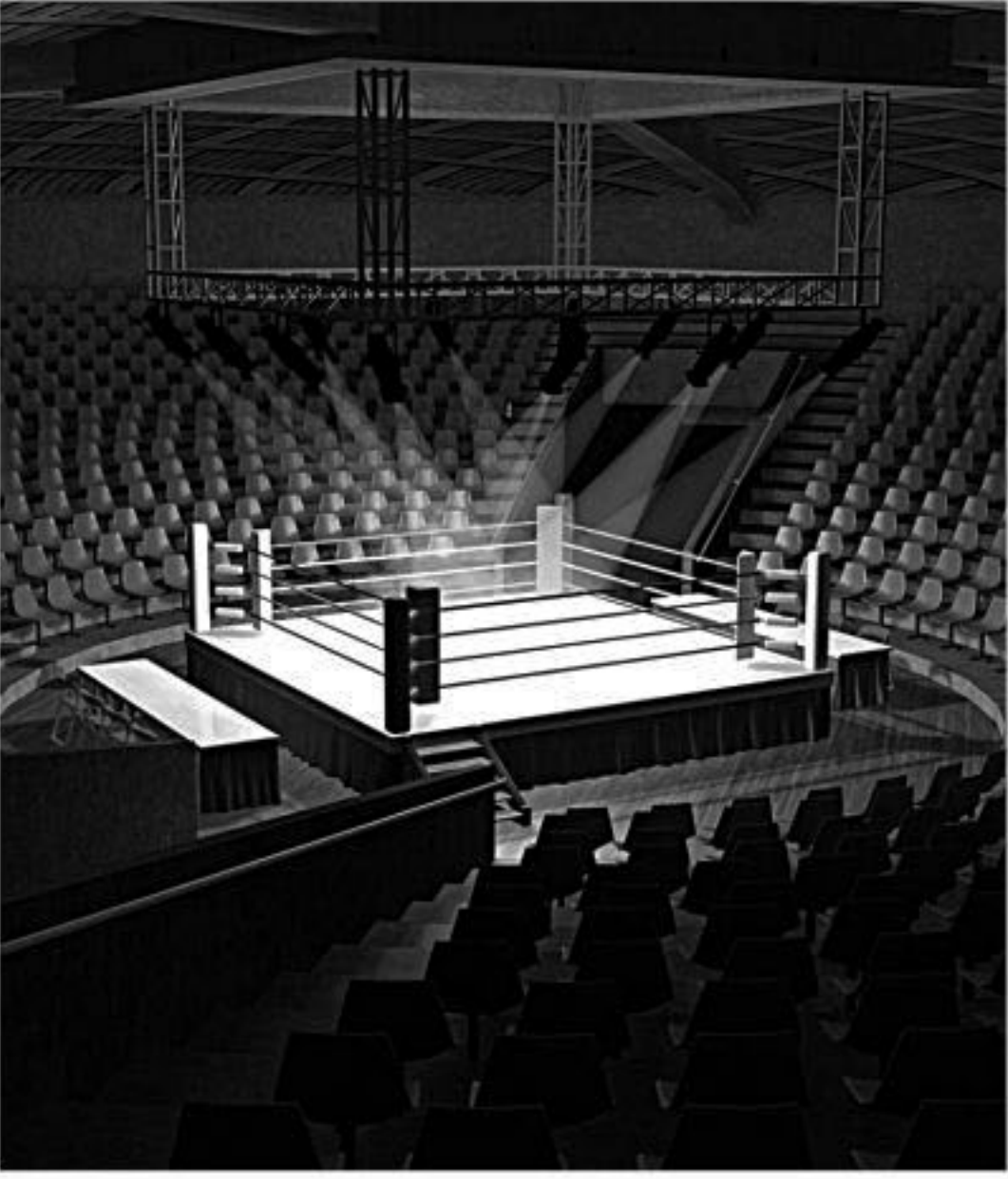
draperies over the windows and pink padded headboard over the bed..in such a bring and cheerful environment, it is difficult to visualise the dark events" writes Borish. His epigrams remain salient features of the English language: 'I can resist everything except temptation.' 'The last word was his. 'One can survive everything nowadays except death.' He died in Paris at the age of forty-six. Rudyard Kipling (1865-1937) although a global traveller; his fixed address in London was Brown's Hotel, Dover Street. Founded in 1837, it remains an upscale hotel. He was staying at Brown's when he had a violent hemorrhage and was rushed to hospital where he died on 17 January 1936. The Charing Cross Hotel built in 1864 as a premier railway hotel was booked by Edith Wharton (1862-1937). She was the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1920 for 'The Age of Innocence.' E.M Forster (1879-1970) stayed at the Kingsley Hotel, Bloomsbury near the British Museum. "It might be said that Forster bloomed in Bloomsbury...." In 'Room with a View' (1908), Forster relates his London accommodation to the novel's Italian setting: "And even more curious was the drawing-room, which attempted to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding-house. Was this really Italy?" After all, rooms with a view are there for the taking. Whatever you make of the view - is yours. Online verification declares all above mentioned hotels in the panoramic city vista of London to be very much 'alive.' (Continued)

Raana Haider is a literary pilgrim.

POETRY

In the Ring

PARAM WAZED SIKDER



An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind-
Not in the ring though!
There it's simple-
Kill or be killed.

Sorrow, gloom and failure may consume you-
Not in the ring though!
Everything disappears-
It's just you and the guy in front.

They call you an animal;
So aggressive, even your father hates you-
Not in the ring though!
They call you champ-
Beat your opponent to the punch.

You are defeated by depression, anxiety, stress-
Not in the ring though!
Your dark feelings stand personified before you-
You can punch him in the face, kick him in the ribs.

In the ring, like Ali said-
You can wrestle alligators,
You can tussle with whales.
You can handcuff lightning
And throw thunder in jail.

You know you're bad.
Just last week, you murdered a rock,
Injured a stone, hospitalized a brick.
You're so mean, you make medicine sick.

But for this to be true,
You need to be a glutton for punishment,
Learn to love getting hit
As much as you love to punch or kick.

Param Wazed Sikder is a kick boxing and MMA enthusiast studying for an MA in English and Creative Writing at ULAB.

AN ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR EDWARD SAID (1 NOV. 1935 - 25 SEPT. 2003)

Between History and Identity: Freud and the Non-European

NATASHA AFRIN

Quite differently from the spirit of Freud's deliberately provocative reminders that Judaism's founder was a non-Jew, and that Judaism begins in the realm of Egypt, non-Jewish monotheism, Israeli legislation countervenes, represses, and even cancels Freud's carefully maintained opening out of Jewish identity towards its non-Jewish background. (Said, 66)

Edward W. Said – former Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University – is regarded by many as one of the most formidable cultural critics and public intellectuals of our time. Said has also been a forthright spokesman of human rights and the most eloquent defender of Palestinians and their right to self-determination. This fearless and distinguished Professor's intellectual journeys are preoccupied with an impassioned quest to explore and offer alternative readings of texts and histories. With *Freud and the Non-European*, which contains his lecture on the same title delivered at the Freud Museum of London in 2002, Said re-investigates into the contemporary discourses of history and identity. By examining Freud's monumental work *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Said delves deep into the existing practices of historiography and shows how an adherence to the purist/solitarist approach to identity generates a reluctance to recognise an “other's being” as well as engenders feelings of aggressive nationalism and xenophobia.

In this essay Said substantiates the contrapuntal paradigm of reading a historic writer, that is, he sees the writer as an individual whose writings can travel across temporal, cultural, linguistic and ideological boundaries. Said reads Freud contrapuntally, by placing him in the contemporary cultural context and constructs conversations between the author's and our own times. He views him as a bundle of paradoxes, as an intellectual who has been unable to knit the divergent strands of his ideas: according to Said Freud had a Eurocentric view of culture; but, he was not unaware of the existence of other cultures and communities. He had rather his own observations about non-European “other,” most notably about Moses, and this betrays his awareness of the alternative modes of existence and identities other than that of the European. Said's contrapuntal approach to Freud or his rereading of the author's controversial text *Moses and Monotheism*, not only offers us Freud's reflections and meditations regarding the issue of identity, which he perceives with all its inherent ironies and limits, but also provides an alternative paradigm of reading history.

In *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud explores his own relationship with his ancient faith through the history and

identity of its founder Moses, who Freud assumes, was an Egyptian, a non-European, and therefore an outsider to the people who adopted him as their leader – people who became the Jews after Moses embraced and created them as *his people*. In excavating the archaeology of Jewish identity, Freud comes up with this conclusion that the founder of Jewish identity or modern Judaism is a non-European Egyptian. Freud's assumption regarding Moses' roots being entrenched in its non-European Egyptian origins underscores the fact that Jewish identity is not made of itself alone, rather it is informed by the presence and the interplay of other identities, Egyptian and Arabian. Freud's assumptions regarding the core of Moses' identity, his troubled and unresolved relationship with his Jewishness presents penetrating insights into the idea of identity itself: according to Freud, identity cannot be viewed through a monochromatic lens, as no neat categorisation of self is possible; identity cannot be defined by a singular parameter, as it is not a homogeneous entity. Freud refused to acknowledge a singular, one-dimensional notion of identity. He refused to reduce identity to some of the “nationalist or religious herds in which so many people want so desperately to run” (53). Freud was unable to harmonise the discordant voices of his own self; his partial, fragmented and unorthodox relationship with his roots provides a model for identity in the contemporary world, that is, it encourages us to notice its “irremediably diasporic, unhoused character” (53) and cosmopolitan essence. Freud's paradigm of identity also dismantles the singularist approach or 'purist' myths surrounding the notion of a unique identity, which aims at erecting divisionary walls among cultures, communities and individuals.

By appropriating Freud's ideas regarding the non-Jewish background of Jewish identity, Said shows how Israeli legislation took great pains to repress Freud (66) as well as to undermine the history of Palestine. The intricate and complex layers of past, the legacy of non-Jewish and non-European avatars of Jewish identity have been carefully eliminated by Israel. Moreover, Israel has refused to acknowledge and address the founding and the later history of the state of Israel, and the turmoil which its creation and existence have brought to

the lives of Palestinians.

The official establishment of Israel in the land of historical Palestine, in the years after 1948 (already given a mandate by the Balfour Declaration of 1917), Said argues, is the result of European anti-Semitism. Europe could not carve out a European territory for the victims of the Holocaust, rather it held the Jews at bay and gave a political mandate to establish their state in a non-European territory. In the wake of decolonisation Israel emerged as an incorrigible colonial state, using military means and applying brutal force for the occupation of territories that belonged to the natives, and replicated similar schemas of anti-Semitism Europe engineered: the establishment of official Israel and the consolidation of Jewish identity took very specific “legal and political positions effectively to seal off that identity” (43) from the presence of anything that is native and non-Jewish. Defining itself as a state of and for the Jewish people, Israel has not only undermined the history of an ancient land, which is conceived as a conglomeration of multiracial population of divergent peoples, but has allowed “exclusive immigration and land-owning rights” (43) for the Jews. As a result of this, a Jew who does not inherit any birth rights to Israel, can come and settle there if s/he wishes. As far as the Palestinians are concerned their “rights to land” are made null and void, and “right to return” exists as a viable reality for the “Jews only”.

Against the backdrop of post-1948 Israeli occupation of Palestine and the unleashing of the mad frenzy of racial as well as religious hatred that led to the resurgence of “myopic nationalism” and ethnocide, where victims turn into victimisers, Israel experienced a desperate need to formulate and articulate a historical narrative that will not only consolidate Jewish-Israeli identity, but will also validate their return to their ancestral homeland (Jerusalem) and legitimise the establishment of the state of Israel. In the context of post-1948 Israel the science of archaeology was summoned to substantiate the notion of a “nascent national” ideology, an ideology that refuses to recognise the presence of Palestinians as well as the traces of other civilisations, emphasising on the concept of a cohesive national Jewish identity, and seeks to camouflage a sinister systematic project of land-grabbing by manufacturing

archaeological particulars, for example, dispersed remnants of tablets, tombs and masonry. The nationalist thesis of Israel appropriates the discourse of archaeology in such a way where it turns an “intermittent and dispersed Jewish presence of scattered ruins and buried fragments into a dynastic continuity” (48). Thus history is adorned with fabrications, underneath which the skeletons bear the silenced stories of non-Israelite, non-Jewish histories.

To conclude: Said's *Freud and the Non-European* attempts to challenge the dominant nationalist historiographies that construe the illegal Israeli occupation as a linear narrative. His narrative points finger at the “manipulative silences,” and stresses the need to break away from the prevailing parameters of historiography. For Said, the investigation into history is not meant to be a search for the “desired narrative,” rather it should be the search for “truth.” Said questions the status-quo, the stereotypical notions/received ideas about individuals and collectives, and refuses to remain mere spectators of cruel, unjust operations of institutions. Said's is a humanist and philosophical standpoint that acknowledges the right to existence for contending – or to use his phrase – contrapuntal histories, that celebrates the existence of plural perspectives. And this consciousness of contrapuntality enables Said to envision the possibility of a bi-national state; a state which will be premised upon democratic principles and equal rights; and which will ensure the sovereignty of both the Palestinians and Israelites, and the environment of mutual respect and peaceful co-existence.

With the unrest now prevailing in West Bank and Gaza, the world has witnessed not only the perils/debris of a flawed peace project and ceasefire in Palestine, but has encountered the demolition of basic human rights, the tragic consequences of communal conflicts, ethnic cleansing, mass murder and rape. Against such barbarism and primitivism, such mindless orchestration of mass killing and frenzied dance of “ignorant armies,” a Saidian paradigm of an equitable existence for people and communities having divergent ways of living and thinking, will lead us towards re-envisioning a more empathic universe.

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