The question of beginnings in relation to Edward Said's book Orientalism can be narrated in very diverse ways, leading to a potentially productive question: when and where does Orientalism, and the critique of Orientalism, actually begin? On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Said's book, it is instructive to situate the book in relation to the various geographies, histories, and fields of knowledge in which it is embedded. What are the contexts and intertexts of Said's work? How can we characterize its undergirding conceptual paradigms and disciplinary methodologies? What about the neighboring fields, such as ethnic studies, critical race studies, and cultural studies, which impacted and have been impacted by Said's work—are they relevant to Middle Eastern studies? Since the Saidian critique of Orientalist epistemology has by now been extrapolated to diverse cultural geographies, how can we map these transnational currents in relation to the study of the Middle East and its diasporas? And, finally what does a book by a diasporic Palestinian in the United States tell us about the kinds of analytical frames and methods of readings that might illuminate what interests us in this volume: how to study transnationally a Middle East that is not merely "over there" but also "back here"?; and how to analyze cultural flows that are neither simply "over there" nor simply "back here"?

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The first of the volume’s three sections includes two chapters – “The Cultural Politics of ‘the Middle East’ in the Americas: An Introduction” by Shohat and Alsultany and “The Sephardic-Moorish Atlantic: Between Orientalism and Occidentalism” by Shohat – providing a common thread to the reader of the following thirteen essays. Shohat’s “The Sephardic-Moorish Atlantic” originating in a piece written to mark the 30th anniversary of Edward Said’s Orientalism has two central points to make: that the genealogy of Orientalism proposed by Said needs to be expanded to encompass a previous historical The Sephardi-Moorish Atlantic: Between Orientalism and Occidentalism. In Between the Middle East and the Americas: The Cultural Politics of Diaspora, edited by Ella Habiba Shohat and Evelyn Azeezah Alsultany. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. [17].