CHAPTER THREE

Orientalism, Imperialism and Epistemological Bias

Said’s conceptualization of the Occident-Orient dichotomy runs through a series of historical re-workmanship that invokes centuries of cultural interaction. The Pharaonic and Mesopotamian cultures and civilizations, the Islamic conquest in the European and Far Eastern regions and later the crusades are all cultural events that can be invoked when reading Said’s reworking of a dialectical possible view of cultural dialogue. The ascendancy of Europe was, as Dorothee Metlitzki strongly argued, because of the penetration into “the ‘treasure-chests’ of learning in Arab Spain, for it was the Arabs who were the true representatives of classical knowledge and the giants on whose shoulders Latin science and philosophy had to be placed” (6).

The chapter elucidates the role played by Said’s theoretical and critical tenets in debunking the methodological misconceptions applied by the Orientalists/colonialists, and, accordingly, explains how the Orientalists/colonialists’ notion of belonging was based mainly on an epistemological dichotomy and “dominated by a Manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, self and other, subject and object” (JanMohammed 4). This Manichean Orientalist vector entails an ontological and geographical imagining of territories and locations.

Grounded on his analysis of the concepts of Orientalism, cultural imperialism and Islamophobia, the chapter explores Said’s deconstructive method of the Orientalist belief and its foundation of literary, cultural, and historical production. The chapter will also
examine Said’s proposed alternatives to the “clashing trends of cultures” and the “duality” of the system underlying the epistemological structures of Orientalism, colonialism and imperialism. These alternative visions and contemplations that strike at the heart of any confrontation between the totality of universal truth and the particular of individual values and beliefs take up centrality in the Saidian dialectics regarding Occident-Orient relationship.

In the structure of Western power and epistemology, it has been observed that the cosmic oppositions of dream versus reality, nature versus culture, are replaced by a more concrete dichotomy: “Orient” versus “Occident”. The chief concern of Said’s critical strategy and project revolves around these questions: how and why has such a turn taken place? How does cultural form or object indicate certain ontological and epistemological meanings? What are the premises and assumptions that have been used to support this binary thinking? In what way does it affect humanity at its core? In short, why there is dichotomy at all?

Following this, the chapter can be regarded as a construct study founded on Said’s conjecture that imperialism and colonialism are pathological output of the power entertained by the Orientalist epistemological bias. It investigates and interrogates the references to the East, particularly the Arab regions as the oriental “Other” through the discussion of the Western literary and cultural canon and discourse diagnosed by Said in the concept of “Orientalism” as an academic discipline, taught and practiced at academic institutions in the West, as a mode of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident”, and as “the corporate institutions” for dealing with the Orient. In a somewhat Freudian way the “unaware” hints in the texts are expected to reveal the stance referred to, unconsciously, hence more truthfully.
Orientalism and Epistemological Bias: Othering

The lineament of Said’s argument, in broad terms, is that Orientalism is not “a positive doctrine,” but a specific family of ideas – a style of thought, a set of practices, and affiliated institutions – which together constitute a broad, interdisciplinary discourse that evolved in the common cultural consciousness of Europeans for centuries for the purpose of making imaginary and actual purchase of the “Orient” and its inhabitants. Therefore, Orientalism brought into being an ambivalent, bipolar understanding of the “Orient” according to whose definitions and terminology the region and its peoples were objectified globally and locally through reductions, anatomizations, categorizations, and various forms of pigeonholing. On the one hand, there was the normally attractive, seductive “Orient” represented in the form of the exotic “Orient”, and on the other, the repellent, demonic “Orient” of dangers and apostasies such as “Yellow peril”. Within the increasingly secular context, Orientalist discourse has transmuted some aspects of its originally religious motivation, taking up a predominantly ideologically political fervor with emergence of US as super power. Stephen Batchelor has put this paradigm shift in psychological terms: “the East became a cipher for the Western unconscious, the repository of all that is dark, unacknowledged, feminine, sensual, repressed and liable to eruption” (234).

Said’s thesis, therefore, comes as a breakthrough that destabilizes this dominant discourse. For long the West has unquestionably maintained to itself the power of drawing the geopolitical and cultural map of the world and deliberately persisted on perpetuating the epistemological notion of the Occident-Orient dichotomy in order to keep its supremacy and superiority over the Eastern people and territories. As mostly refrained by Said, Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality “whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, West, ‘us’) and the strange (the
Orient, the East, ‘them’)” (Orientalism 43). This idea has been encapsulated in the statement of Marx and aptly epigraphed by Said in his seminal work Orientalism: “they cannot represent themselves; they must be represented”. This essentialist Orientalist mindset would probably be best summarized in Rudyard Kipling’s line: “East is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet”.

A representative sample of Western perceptions of the “Orient” brought into question by Said in Orientalism includes Henry Kissinger’s classification of developing countries as pre-Newtonian cultures, which cannot deal with empirical reality, that is, cultures to which “the real world is almost completely internal to the observer . . .” (47). Alfred Lyall, on the other hand, has argued that “accuracy is abhorrent to the Oriental mind . . .” (38). Hamilton Gibb has written about “the aversion of the Muslims from the thought-processes of rationalism”, building his proposition on what he called “the atomism and discreteness of the Arab imagination” (106). Ernest Renan had earlier dismissed the Semites as an inferior combination of human nature, and their languages as “inorganic”, lacking in the capacity to regenerate themselves, unlike the living, “organic” Indo-European languages (143). Chateaubriand saw the Crusades as not only “about the deliverance of the Holy Sepulchre,” but also as a fight against a cult that was “civilization’s enemy” (172). Lamartine, on the other hand, preached the advent of the age of European colonialism. To him, the “Orient” was “nations without territory, patrie, rights, laws or security . . . waiting anxiously for the shelter” of European occupation (197, italics in origin). To the Orientalist perception, Said concludes, “The Orient was, therefore, not Europe’s interlocutor, but its silent Other . . . as primitivity, as the age-old antitype of Europe, as a fecund night out of which European rationality developed, [whose] actuality receded inexorably into a kind of paradigmatic fossilization.” The distinction between the “Occident” and its different “Other” was constituted out of this
radical difference ("Orientalism Reconsidered" 202-203). In his Wellek Library Lectures in Critical Theory, published as Musical Elaborations, he writes:

For the encounter between the West and its various “Others” . . . there was often the tactic of drawing a defensive perimeter called the “West” . . . this tactic protected against change and a supposed contamination brought forward threateningly by the very existence of the Other . . . By the same token, there is a move to freeze the Other in a kind of basic objecthood. (52)

Based on false dichotomy between the “West” and its supposed “Other”, Europe’s representation of the “Other” has been institutionalized as a feature of its cultural dominance. This designed project reached its peak with the rise and consolidation of nineteenth-century imperialism. The key to this way of dominating through “knowing” effectively demonstrates the link between knowledge and power, for it “constructs” and dominates Orientals in the process of knowing them. The very term “Oriental” shows how the process works, for the word identifies and homogenizes at the same time, implying a range of knowledge and an intellectual mastery over that which is named. Said’s identification of Orientalism, therefore, is characterized by a discursive analysis and a studied scholarship which unfolds the historical contours that imputed the content of tradition in question.

Subsequently, the main question of Orientalism is mainly why, not how, is the “Orient” different? On the face of it, the question presupposes a vision of binary histories. This vision is ingrained in the “tradition of macrohistorical sociology starting with Montesquieu, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Max Weber . . . to establish ‘despotism’ as a general form of Oriental civilization whose historic immobility contrasted with the restless innovation of Europe” (Lieberman 463). This binary vision of East-West
relationship precisely rests on the idea of European Exceptionalism which was based on
dynamism-immobility contrast. In its expose’, therefore, Orientalism is a construction of
identity which involves establishing a “Self” -- “the Occident”, and its “Other” -- “the
Orient”. This gave the West a sense of its own cultural and intellectual superiority as “the
spectator, the judge and jury of every facet of Oriental behaviour” (*Orientalism* 109). In
1810 the French author Chateaubriand called upon Europe to teach the “Orient” the
meaning of liberty which he, and everyone after him, believed the Orientals knew nothing
about. Chateaubriand thereby provided the rationale for Western imperialism, which
could be described by its perpetrators not as a form of conquest, but as the redemption of
a degenerate world.

The structuralist tableau of Orientalism outlines a hierarchical system of sociopolitical and epistemological relation between the “Occident” and the “Orient”. This
hegemonic formation (institutional, scientific, literary, political, geographical, imaginary,
disciplinary, etc.), assumes “some kind of center which defines its unity by bringing these
different elements together under the specific force of its concept” (Mutman 167-68).
Hence, when Said refers to Orientalism as a style of thought, he refers to this center
whose strange force is characterized by an imperceptible, unbounded, and silent
dissemination of its sign: an ontological and epistemological distinction made between
the “Orient” and the “Occident”. Accordingly, the “Orient” as a clear, distinct, and
identifiable entity appears through the segmentation or differentiation of a shapeless mass
of impressions and fusions. Said primarily uses the word “distinction” to signify power
and status hierarchy rather than a mere difference. “By being placed under the sign of
difference,” Mutman observes, “the center/concept of Orientalism comes into being
through an act or operation of centering, which is indispensable to the most typical
feature of Orientalist discourse: totalization” (168).
Moreover, the idea of distinction contributes mainly to construct the perception of “Self” against “Other(s)” which, in turn, conveys extra consequences to his/her text. In this case, the concepts of segregation, enclosure and confinement, selection and concealment were, and still persist in the present, as instrumental pillars of the authoritative position of the Orientalists that impose limitation on thoughts according to the dedications of idea of distinction and inevitable inequality. This methodological instrument helped to conceal the shared and intertwined historical experience and created an invented and imaginary image of the “Other”. Said points to the Orientalists’ cavernous incarceration of the authoritative position and the imposition of thoughts in the following terms: “. . . because of Orientalism the Orient was not (is not) a free subject of thought or action” (Orientalism 3). The idea of intellectual authority as expounded by Said is a power that is “formed, irradiated, disseminated; it is instrumental, it is persuasive; has status, it establishes canons of taste and value; it is virtually indistinguishable from certain ideas it dignifies as true, and from traditions, perceptions, and judgments it forms, transmits, reproduces” (19-20). The constructed dichotomy between the “Occidentals” and the “Orientals,” therefore, is relegated to the assumed idea of cultural superiority that constitutes the Orientalists knowledge, perception, and canon. As Anouar Abdel Malek has already put it, the Orientalists’ enclosure and restriction to the intellectual authority and knowledge force them to present a disfigured image and static picture of the Oriental (50). The “Orient” or Oriental becomes the “object”, the “domain” and the “area” of the Western knowledge, power and imagination.

Central to the Orientalist creation of otherness, “Othering”, therefore, applies a principle of enclosure and exclusion that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups: “us” and “them”. Thus, the out-group is only coherent as a group as a result of its opposition to the in-group and its lack of identity, but because of stereotypes that
are largely stigmatizing and obviously simplistic. The in-group constructs one or more others, setting itself apart and giving itself an identity. Hence, otherness and identity are two inseparable sides of the same coin. The “Other” only exists relative to the “Self”, and vice versa (Staszak 45). The asymmetry in power relationships is central to the construction of otherness, because only the dominant group is in a position to impose the value of its particularity (its identity) and to devalue the particularity of others (their otherness). In fact, it is this ethnocentric bias and Eurocentric egoism that creates otherness as an anthropological constant by the discourse and practice of power and made popular by Western historicism. According to Jean-Francois Staszak, “Western thought, whose logic has been attached to the principle of identity . . . has produced a number of binaries that oppose a positively connoted term and a negatively-connoted term and thus lends itself well to the construction of the self and the other” (45). Consequently, colonialism and ethnography arose from the same social formation of “Othering”. “Othering”, therefore, is a central principle of Orientalism, as a process of creating and maintaining a dichotomy between the “West” and the “rest”.

This construction of otherness produced a system that classifies humanity into a hierarchy of beings from the most “primitive” to the most “civilized”. From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, Western anthropology, ethnology and geography sought to give scientific basis to this typological assumption. Darwin’s theory of evolution, Said contends, offers a coherent scientific framework to explain species diversity through the diversity of the environments where natural selection takes place and through the relative isolation of these environments, which makes them favorable to the development of differentiated species. In order to “justify” the otherness of man, Darwin’s theory was transposed to human societies, with the development of a hierarchy of different environments and societies and the implementation of certain differences as principles for exclusion. Therefore, Europe
claims that its climate endorses it to be the world’s most advanced societies while the extreme climates that characterizes all other parts of the world has locked humanity there into a prior and primitive evolutionary stage. Obviously, thinking of civilizations as different “Others” justifies the supremacy of “Ours” and legitimizes its propensity to dominate them.

As a result, the Western conception of the “East” has been organized on socio-biological determinism and racially politico-cultural functionalism. The intellectual fossilization of the “Orient” was the driving force of the Western colonialism and imperial expansion. As Said states, “Since the Oriental was a member of a subject race, he had to be subjected” (Orientalism 207). He believed that the fundamental fallacy of Orientalism lay, not in its presumptions about the ontological differences between East and West, but in its very conscious and deliberate persistence on creating a dichotomy. The Manichean logic that was underpinning Darwinian Theory provided the scientific, empirical and moral justification for the Western colonial and imperial expansionist desire. This fact supports the premise that Orientalism as a corporate institutional, intellectual and scholastic legitimacy of Western colonial and imperial enterprise is based on racism.

As the latent Orientalism suggests, the West developed its premises scientifically to support its centricism epistemologically. The Anglo-Saxons were claimed to be the matured, most civilized and top-scaled race while the others were stagnated in the level of dehumanized status and became “the Whiteman’s burden”. “Orientalism” Said argues, “has been subjected to imperialism, positivism, utopianism, historicism, Darwinism, racism, Freudianism, Marxism, Spenglerism” that justified and legitimated the Western supremacy and superiority over the other peoples and nations (43). Modern degeneration of cultures, theories about civilizational progress, belief in the White race’s destiny were, in Said’s words, “elements in the peculiar amalgam of science, politics, and culture whose
drift, almost without exception, was always to raise Europe or a European race to dominion” (232). Therefore, the inferiority of the “Orient” was established through the device of essentializing difference -- primarily in race and in terms of the universal evolutionary principles between the “Occident” and the “Orient”. Said argues that “Orientalism borrowed and was frequently informed by ‘strong’ ideas, doctrines, and trends ruling the culture”, and consequently, rationalized and made possible the hegemony of the colonizer on the colonized. The result is that “there was (and is) a linguistic Orient, a Freudian Orient, a Spenglerian Orient, a Darwinian Orient, a racist Orient and -- so on. Yet never has there been such a thing as a pure, or unconditional, Orient” (22-3). The “Orient”, thus, was seen as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption. The Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. “The rigidly binomial opposition of ‘ours’ and ‘theirs,’” Said argues, “was reinforced not only by anthropology, linguistics, and history but also, of course, by the Darwinian theses on survival and natural selection”. Accordingly, “[A]n Oriental man was first an Oriental and only second a man” (227, 231). As highlighted by Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, “the investigations of Orientalist scholars all operated within certain parameters . . . Thus, Orientalist analysis almost universally proceeded to confirm the ‘primitive’, ‘originary’, ‘exotic’ and ‘mysterious’ nature of Oriental societies and, more often than not, the degeneration of the ‘non-European’” (53). Following Nietzsche’s proposition: “Only that which has no history is definable,” the West takes the “Orient” culturally and historically as its definable and contrastable “Other” (qtd. in Hawkins 1). All these theoretical and scientific propositions provide the intellectual rationale for the subordination of non-European and the non-white man, and consequently justify the colonial process which subjects him to different types of demonization and discrimination.
Nevertheless, Said argues that the “Orient” and the “Occident” have been, and still are, man-made entities and the relationship between them is one of power and hegemony that is manifested complexity and in varying intensities. The “Orient” was “Orientalized” not only because it was found to be Oriental, but also because it could be made Oriental. The foreign, wealthy, dominating European writers could tell their readers how the Oriental was typically Oriental, without letting the one being described to speak for himself. The “sheer knitted-together strength” of the discourse, its connections to socio-economic and political institutions are to be in awe. Hence, Orientalism is an institutionalizing effect of cultural hegemony at work. The idea of Europe as “us” and non-Europeans as “those” (who “we” are against) is never far from Orientalism. The notion of European culture and identity being superior to non-European ones is “precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe” (Orientalism 7). From the late eighteenth century onwards the “Orient” that could be displayed, theorized, and reconstructed emerged under the umbrella of Western hegemony, placing Western consciousness as the center of thought.

Although Said concentrated mainly on European Orientalism and colonialism in the Arab Middle East, his approach to Orientalist discourse is proved to be validly applicable to other parts of the non-Western world. He refers to John Stuart Mill’s claim that liberty and representative government could not be applied to India “because Indians were civilizationally -- if not racially – inferior” (14). He explains how Orientalist scholars and administrators in India like Macaulay and Jones were undisputedly forerunners in the Orientalist project.

What has been common to most approaches on studying the “Orient” is the fetishization of otherness, a compulsion to dichotomy between “East” and “West,” whether it is expressed by classical Orientalists or new Orientalists. Kipling’s verse is
most notable in this regard. In his essay, “Orientalist Knowledge and Social Theories: China and the European Conceptions of East-West Differences from 1600 to 1900,” Ho-fung Hung observes that “Orientalist scholarship, together with the social theories that are informed by Orientalist knowledge of non-Western societies . . . [was] part and parcel of the wider intellectual field at a particular time -- namely, the fields of seventeenth-century theology, eighteenth-century philosophy, and nineteenth-century humanities” (254-56).

The most significant accomplishment of Orientalism, as Said argues, is the construction of a single “Orient”, or a single Muslim “Middle East” which can be studied as a cohesive whole. According to Bobby S. Sayyid, this constructing process is

organized around four main themes: first, there is an ‘absolute and systematic difference’ between the West and the Orient. Secondly, the representations of the Orient are based on textual exegesis rather than ‘modern Oriental realities’. Thirdly, the Orient is unchanging, uniform and incapable of describing itself. Fourthly, the Orient is to be feared or to be mastered. (32)

Ziauddin Sardar’s account is supportive of Said’s thesis in this regard. Sardar suggests that “Orientalism is a form of inward reflection, preoccupied with the intellectual concerns, problems, fears and desires of the West that are visited on a fabulated, constructed object by convention called the Orient” (qtd. in Richardson 7). Similarly, Meyda Yegenoglu observes that Orientalism concerns “the cultural representation of the West to itself by way of a detour through the other”, in which “the [Western] subject is constructed by a mediation through the [Eastern] other”. Therefore, “the subject represents itself to itself through the other and constitutes itself as universal, abstract subject (the I or ego) by signifying the other as a categorical opposite, a radical denial or negation of itself” (qtd. in Richardson 7). This signification of categorical opposites simultaneously supposes and sustains the epistemological and ontological
distinctions between the “West” and the “East”, between the “West” and the “Muslim World”, strategies by which “the Oriental or non-Western societies are pushed back in time and constructed as primitive or backward” in contrast to the socio-cultural properties which the West is (indubitably) assumed to possess. The Western dialectical venture of dealing with the “Other” is briefed by “Said’s use of Foucault’s power/knowledge nexus, given Orientalism’s construction of a particular form of negativised ‘Otherness’ intended to subordinate and (dis-)possess” (7). In the light of this, Orientalism constitutes “an exercise in power/knowledge by which the ‘non-western’ world is domesticated . . . Orientalism was made possible by the imperialist expansion into the Muslim world, and, simultaneously, it made such an expansion possible” (Sayyid 31).

**Representation and Orientalist Archive: Textualization**

The “Orient” is made to assume the dimensions of a textual archive, a site of discovery and rediscovery where Orientalist rituals and images can be enacted with a conscious difference and activated into a theatre where history comes alive. Thus, Orientalism covers and covers over the “Orient.” In the words of Abdurrahman Hussein, “Profoundly imaginative and fantasy-prone in its imposition of methodological discipline after its own fashion, the heritage of Orientalism, . . . paved the way for – and underwrote – the grand imperial project” (238). Said’s main intervention to study of Orientalist discourse, therefore, is to conceptualize the notions of intentionality both at level of collectivity and individual agency in order to show “the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution” (*Orientalism* 24).

Within this structural vector of thought, the East has been romanticized, exoticized and estranged by means of imaginatively created pictures such as the magic
East, the world of wonders, the mystic East etc., with the aim of discovering and knowing it. “Magic”, “wonder” and “mystic” have been used as metaphors for all types of knowledge extant outside the logic of power, unsanctioned by it and falling beyond its authority. “To them, Muhammad was a *learned magician and astronomer* who accomplished his evil ends by his skill in *forbidden lore*” (Smith 5; italics added). This subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and cultures continues to the present day situation. The long tradition of false and romanticized images of Asia and the Middle East in Western culture had therefore served, and still serves, as an implicit justification for Europe and the US’ colonial and imperial ambitions.

This master-discourse, which was largely shaped in the political realities of the nineteenth century, has its beginnings further back in time. Said traces it back through Shakespeare, Chaucer, and Dante, all the way to the ancient Greeks. In this sense, the intellectual class was one social grouping responsible for the shaping of Orientalism. In fact, Said’s critical strategy testifies itself in his rejection of the Orientalists’ unchecked belief in the idea of distinction as it detaches the Orientalist from depicting the reality of his or her text: “Thus a very large mass of writers . . . have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs ‘mind,’ destiny, and so on” (*Orientalism* 2-3).

In fact, Said distinguishes between two stages of Europe’s dealing with the Orient: the “pre-colonial” and the “colonial”; while the former refers to the kind of awareness demonstrated in the works of Dante and d’Herbelot, the latter, defined as “modern Orientalism”, embodies the process of systematic accumulation of human beings and territories (123). Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, Austen’s *Mansfield Park*, Kipling’s *Kim*, Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*, to mention but a
few samples of the English literary works, all reveal the actual imperialist, colonialist tendencies at their best. This literary product termed by Said as the “art of empire” incorporates multiple degrees of the domination of the other that include geographical exploration which facilitates the acquisition of intentional knowledge which ultimately leads to colonization. Knowledge and power are dialectically connected; Faustus or Mr. Kurtz or Prospero, the over-reachers, emerge as Nietzschean supermen in whom the will to power is first transformed into the will to know and then vice versa. Hence, according to Nietzsche’s will to power, a rebel like Faustus must be honored “because he finds something in society against which war ought to be waged – he awakens us from our slumber” (*The Will to Power* 391). This testifies more evidently on the inherently interlinked relationship between Orientalism and the imperial knowledge of the “Other” as “a distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical, and philological texts” (*Orientalism* 12, italics in origin).

In this context, Benjamin Disraeli’s statement that “East is a career,” becomes true since over the past centuries, Western scholars, soldiers, politicians, missionaries, merchants, travelers, and artists have been journeying eastward, constructing their own private “Orients”, returning home, and making them public. Their motives were mixed and their prejudices were rarely examined. As noted by David R. Blanks, “Western discourse has constructed an Orient that is often completely disconnected from the ‘real’ Orient . . . Those who have made the East their career -- from Herodotus and Hippocrates to the members of the Middle East Studies Association -- have literally “made” their Easts” (12). What Said attempts to emphasize is that the Orientalist representation of the “Other” does not attempt to develop a model of fair knowledge that could view the human and historical experiences of both “Self” and “Other” from a panoptic perspective. Their knowledge conceals the reality of the others’ historical experience. The replicated
the consequences of unchecked belief in the idea of distinction in depicting the Oriental and became the starting point of their thinking about the Oriental.

Remarkably, it was the literary discourse bound in a tradition of writers, texts and conceptualizations in which “every writer on the Orient . . . assumes some Oriental precedent, some previous knowledge of the Orient, to which he refers and on which he relies” (Orientalism 20). Said substantiates Aeschylus’s The Persians as an example of early attempts to create an “Orient”. Far from being an abstract body of ideas, such representations were a means of exercising cultural leadership or hegemony. Orientalist writers, from different periods and places, employed a relatively set repertoire of tropes that put “the Westerner in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing him the relative upper hand” (7). These Orientalist structures of reference and attitude were largely self-referential in which writers would frequently echo each other though they often had very little first-hand experience of people and places they were representing. The repeated use and circulation of statements about the “Orient” took on the status of “truths” which had far-reaching and profound material effects because they became the basis for imperial policy. The “historicism presentism” implicit in Cromer’s speech explains the interrelationship between politics, art and culture, and illustrates the “knitted system” of misconceptions and (mis)representation of the Orientalist discourse and its constellation of knowledge/power expertise. This picturesque account and “exclusive dualism” reinforces the Orientalist “hierarchical opposition between a competent Westerner and a deficient Easterner” (Ghazoul 124).

As a consequence, the textual attitude is just a methodological (mis)conception that detaches Orientalist text from the reality of the Oriental, focusing on the inherited text of predecessors. The Orientalist “abolishes himself as a human subject by refusing to marry into human society (Orientalism 163). The Orientalist instrumentality, therefore,
provides us with a fabricated reality corresponding to the intellectual authority, not to the reality of historical experience. The received reality is what is imposed, not the actuality of it. Consequently, it is possible to philosophically locate the Orientalist representation and conception of the Orient-al through Frederic Nietzsche’s concept of the “appearance and thing in itself” as he argues that “the human intellectual allowed appearance to appear and projected its mistaken conceptions onto things” (*Human All Too Human* 24). In the light of this thought, the Orientalists’ ideas and conceptions have been based on an intellectual authority and archival knowledge rather than on truth and reality: “Everything they knew, more or less, about the Orient came from the books written in the tradition of Orientalism” (*Orientalism* 94).

The correlation that was established between the evolution of “Orientalism” in the arts in the nineteenth century and the rise of European, mainly British and French, imperialism explains the latent interrelationship between Orientalism as an epistemological base and imperialism and colonialism as the material structure. According to John Mackenzie, “Orientalism was but one of a whole sequence of perceived or invented traditions invoked by restless art” (210). Though he struggles to justify the Western intellectual superiority and authority in one way or another, Mackenzie indirectly acknowledges Said’s thesis that the West has appropriated the Eastern art and tradition to define itself. Therefore, the textual Orientalism is manifestly ideological at most, and this is what Said attempts to demystify when he argues, “without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage -- and even produce -- the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically” (*Orientalism* 3). His reference to Balfour’s lecture about the British occupation of the Egyptian lands
highlights the ideological intervention of power to knowledge in the perception of the Arabs, the “Other”.

Phenomenologically, Orientalism is a way of defining and “locating” Europe’s “Other”. In its intentional method and action, the West’s creation of its own identity has been doomed by the conscious presence of the “Other”. In this case, Orientalist mentality has been preoccupied with the creation of the “Orient” as paradigmatically phenomenal and intentional content that is inseparable from their phenomenal character. As a result, Orientalism as a group of related disciplines was about Europe itself, and hinged on arguments that circulated around the issue of national distinctiveness, and racial and linguistic origins.

In this line of thought, the elaborate and detailed examinations of Oriental languages, histories and cultures were carried out in a context in which the supremacy and importance of European civilization was unquestioned. Such was the vigor of the discourse that myth, opinion, hearsay and prejudice generated by influential scholars quickly assumed the status of received truth. The influential French philologist and historian Ernest Renan declares confidently that “Every person, however slightly he may be acquainted with the affairs of our time, sees clearly the actual inferiority of Mohammedan countries” (85). Similarly, Lord Cromer, who relied a great deal on writers like Renan, found a major difference between the European mind and its different Oriental “other”. He claimed that while the European’s “trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism”, the mind of the Oriental, “like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry” (2: 146).

These intentional phenomenal perceptions were ingrained in the narrative discourse as an instrument for the articulation of empire. Said maintains that since nations
are narration, novel and imperialism “are unthinkable without each other” (*Culture and Imperialism* 71). The realization of empire was set forth in narrative as a representational form. Thus, the structure of feeling examined by Said is tied with the general thinking of the empire. During the nineteenth and eighteenth century, for instance, the British people had a unified feeling of the importance of empire to home, which disallowed them to resist the idea of plundering the resources of other nations. They had a feeling that what they did was no more than a civilizing mission; we went there just to enlighten their minds, not to steal their bodies. Subsequently, the novelists and the intellectuals had copied unconsciously or consciously such rampant feeling in their works related to the empire. “Taken together these allusions constitute what I have called a structure reference” (62). Hence, at the level of both intentionality and design, the empire was a product of intellectuality at the first hand, and politics afterwards. To put it differently, what made empire a rampant act of feeling and reference is itself the act of creating it.

**Orientalism and the Episteme of Power: Culturalization**

Orientalist discourse engenders the war of cultural dichotomies which incorporate multiple degrees of domination, including the acquisition of subjectively intentional knowledge closely connected to colonialism. The French colonial rule in Algeria is exemplary in this regard. The French colonization of Algeria was devastating to its Algerian Arab cultural identity. The imposition of the French as the official language and the elimination of anything Arabic in cultural sphere were more traumatic to Algerians than anything else. This culturalization process was part of a general colonialist/Orientalist scheme which aimed at westernizing local cultures and styles through the episteme of power. The Arab-West encounter which was characterized by epistemological war for long has been transformed into a politico-cultural project at the core of which is cultural imperialism and the question of identity and its socio-political aftermaths. The Arab looks
suspiciously at the Western culture as an expansionist project. The demonization of the Arab in the Western literary and public discourses iconizes and canonizes the Western culture and legitimates its domination.

Under the label of Western cultural hegemony, four shades of Orientalist and imperial culture are discerned: historicism, knowledge as possession, economic exploitation and actual colonization. In his essay, “Under the Sign of Orientalism: West versus Islam,” Mahmut Mutman remarks, “If Orientalist knowledge is linked with colonial/imperial economic and political powers, this is because they cannot be the powers they are without the knowledge of the Orient and the Oriental, while, at the same time, the production of this knowledge is unthinkable without the support and the context that the network of power provides” (167).

The depiction of the East, Arab and Islam, in particular, in the Orientalist discourse shows that though it has been historically targeted by Western expansionist inclinations, the “Orient” is more connected with Western quest for knowledge. There is no better example of this mania than Faustus’s quest for “unexceptional” power. This is what Said means when he refers to Orientalism as “a discourse” that was shaped to a degree by the exchange with power political (as with a colonial or imperial establishment), power intellectual (as with reigning sciences like comparative linguistics, anatomy, or any other modern policy science), power cultural (as with orthodoxies and canons of taste, texts, values), power moral (as with ideas about what “we” do and what “they” cannot do or understand as “we” do. (Orientalism 12)

The intellectual aspect of Orientalism is combined with the political aspects of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The landmark, according to Said,
is Napoleon’s expedition to Egypt. He states that “[Napoleon’s] plans for Egypt therefore became the first in a long series of European encounters with the Orient in which the Orientalist’s special expertise was put directly to functional colonial use” (80). This colonial expedition was Modernization Theory at work. It was cultural in most since it focused on bringing in a new cultural mode that was alien to local culture -- the concept of Western modernity. As a result, the Arab intellectual sphere still struggles to balance its Arabianness against the effects of modernity as a major influential socio-political and cultural tool of Western cultural hegemony and imperialism.

In fact, the political aspects of Western imperial culture were rooted in the notions of Orientalism, European historicism, modernism and Eurocentricism. Said brings this fact out when he argues, “To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism. . . The absolute demarcation between East and West, . . . had been years, even centuries, in the making” (39). Therefore, knowledge has been the epistemological tool for exercising cultural domination over the “Orient”. “To rule and to learn, then to compare Orient with Occident” Said argues, “were Jones’ goals” (78). This is truly evident when reading Said’s critical thoughts on the political situations, histories, cultures and literatures in terms of past colonialism(s) and present neocolonialism(s). In his essay, “Edward Said: On Hijacking Language and Creating Facts,” Julian Vigo points out that “texts like Orientalism and Culture and Imperialism safely take to task Western hegemony -- cultural, political and economic -- and all the institutions that help constitute such a monolith of power”. He reconfirms that “one need not blink to see how cultural hegemony translates into occupation and its concomitant legitimization throughout the West” (3).
The shift from the archival knowledge to the material exercise in the Western relationship with the “Orient” began with utilizing the linguistic theoretical perceptions of William Jones’ pronouncements to enrich an already engrained conception of the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race and its culture. This philological breakthrough introduced by Jones opened the gates for historical speculations about racial groupings and cultural genealogy and accompanied by ethnological and anthropological projects which were lately institutionalized and utilized in the struggle for domination and control. The example of “Aryan” race popularized by German philosopher Friedrich Schlegel came to symbolize an idea close to the hearts of European states -- that a separate language indicated a separate racial/national origin (Poliakov 193). Hence, Orientalism becomes an “instrument of Western imperialism . . . and even an ideology, justifying and accounting for the subjugation of blacks, Palestinian Arabs, women and many other supposedly deprived groups and peoples” (Macfie 4).

As Said argues, the colonial project was a result of a long process of culturalization and demonization of the “Other”, a project which was backed up by institutionalized machinery that based its ideology on the principle of dichotomy and distinction. The “Orient” has become a defining image of the “Occident” and its constructed “Other”. With the coming of the “civilized missions” and the establishing of new world order, humanity was divided into larger cantons of “races”, “nations” and “cultures”. Ontological classification have never been a matter of distinction until it was “imagined”, “culturalized”, “ politicized” and “canonized”. These Manichean distinctions and racial classifications were among several other theories and assumptions that contributed to the discourse of power and hegemonic cultural system. This Orientalist discourse, therefore, functioned as epistemological background for the cultural imperialism. The colonial administrator Lord Curzon, the then Viceroy of India,
confessed that “our familiarity, not merely with the languages of the people of the East but with their customs, their feelings, their traditions, their history, and religion” had provided “the sole basis upon which we are likely to be able to maintain in the future the position we have won” (qtd. in Orientalism 214). In the late twentieth century, the field helps preserve American power in the Middle East and defends what Said calls “the Zionist invasion and colonization of Palestine” (318).

Undoubtedly, colonization allowed the West historically to export its values and have them acknowledged almost everywhere through more or less efficient processes of cultural imperialism, whereby Western categories of identity and otherness have been transmitted through the universalist claims of “scientific truths” and forcibly imposed through modernist project. This may explain why Said is suspicious of modernism as a school of thought and literature because it carried with it the establishment of the West historically as a cultural archetype. From this modernist viewpoint, Said argues, historical reality would represent the West, and would be assigned, selected and seen only from the Western vantage point. Consequently, other histories and cultures would be ignored as untrue, irrelevant and insignificant, and Europe would be the center of power, knowledge and metropolitan culture.

Thus, cultural imperialism is one of key-elements of the Orientalist and modernist material forms and typological structures, old and new. “[t]he tendency in anthropology, history, and cultural studies in Europe and the United States,” Said insists, “is to treat the whole of world history as viewable by a kind of Western super-subject, whose historicizing and disciplinary rigor either takes away or, in the post-colonial period, restores history to people and cultures ‘without’ history” (Culture and Imperialism 35). Therefore, empire was central to the grand culturalization process, and one could not make sense of that culture without taking it into account. Scholars of European literature
thus had to locate the works they studied in relation to the broader historical contexts which had helped shape them. Said argues that a fuller understanding of a novel like Jane Austen’s *Mansfield Park* required critical awareness of the fact that it was colonial slavery which produced the wealth that made possible the social world Austen depicted – a reality only partially and indirectly acknowledged in the text itself yet central to it. The point is not to belittle Austen as a writer or diminish the importance of her novels; it is rather to encourage a deeper awareness of the links between the nineteenth- and twentieth-century European novel -- and European culture more broadly -- and contemporary European colonialism and imperialism. Building on and extending the argument he made in *Orientalism* fifteen years earlier, Said thus demands that scholars not treat the West and the rest of the world as if they were separate worlds, each with its own distinctive essence and historical trajectory, but instead explore the ways in which they had powerfully influenced – indeed, constituted – each other in the modern era.

On yet another level, it is easy to read such narrative against simplistic East/West binaries. Nonetheless, by the thirteenth century Europe had developed a self-identity, especially among the elites, that might properly be called “Western.” However, Said’s thesis demonstrates not only the importance of history and historiography in the formation of questions of identity (personal, national, civilizational) and how easily this formation can be manipulated or skewed, but also the extent to which the current models of civilizational identity depend upon in readings of the past. If anything, this analysis lends weight to the idea that “civilization” is as much a retrospective imposition of values on the past – shaping and unifying a culture in terms of a common heritage – as it is a narrative forging of future national identity in terms of “what we can become”.

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Said’s message is that imperialism is not about a moment in history; it is about a continuing interdependent discourse between subject peoples and the dominant discourse of the empire. Despite the apparent and much-vaunted end of colonialism, the unstated assumptions on which empire was based linger on, snuffing out visions of an “Other” world without domination, constraining the imaginary of equality and justice. Said considers bringing these unstated assumptions to awareness as a first step in transforming the old tentacles of empire; a task which constitutes the general theme of *Culture and Imperialism*. He underscores the submerged connections between culture and imperialism as a historical problem of the modern world, an evenly experienced relationship between West and the non-West. He offers an investigation into the cultural archive of the high European imperialism, not just to describe the brutalizing everyday presence of colonialism but how it has become as a vitalizing and sustained ideology. This includes “an interesting range of options . . . all premised upon the subordination and victimization of the native”. From the exercise of power as a way to “observe, rule, hold, and profit from distant territories and people” to the “ideological rationale for reducing, then reconstituting the native as someone to be ruled and managed” through propagating the “idea of Western salvation and redemption through its ‘civilizing mission’, . . . the imperial idea of westernizing the backward achieved permanent status world-wide”. Above all, “the idea of culture itself . . . ‘The best that is thought and done’” is considered as a marketing place by which imperial powers spreads its hegemony and sustains its domination. Consequently, “the natives have been displaced from their historical location on their land, their history is rewritten as a function of the imperial one” (131-32).

This highly schematized summation shows in a stark fashion the extent to which the imperial ideology was, in Said’s view, sustained by a carefully concealed transaction between two greatly valorized poles of a European axis: a multi-inflectioned, finely
nuanced distribution of an aesthetic/ethical pole refracts its beautifying, Arnoldian sweetness and light over consolidations actualized by a power pole of political rule and military force.

In fact, Said pinpoints the paradox in the construction of identitarian thinking of Eurocentric thought, a paradox which resulted from two antithetical versions of the idea of culture in the West: the national and the humanistic ideals. The deeper and more insidious paradox emerges in the historical synthesis in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between national goals and idealistic slogans, a synthesis which, according to Said, not only coincided with the material consolidation of European imperialism in the non-Western world but was ultimately wedded to it. This unqualified synthesis was based on a hegemonic relationship between versions of “centrality” and “periphery” as consequentially two forms of socio-cultural practice of European imperial thought. This resulted in the hierarchy of canon, faultily promoted as an idealistic analogue of the geopolitical realities of the imperial and colonial era, and enacted in a hierarchical formula of superior West (ruler) and inferior non-West (subject race). In a broader term, this enactment of hierarchy exerted itself on a presupposed ontological imperative which conjures the “Otherness” of the non-West in terms of demotions and valorizations.

These structures of feelings and attitudes open up a broad domain of cultural signs as a way of life enacted into operations of socio-political institutions. One of such structures constitutes the hierarchist/compatarist conceptions -- of order and rationality, races and civilizations, etc. -- in which European or Western cultural forms were -- and still are -- inevitably seen as the norm while all others became deviations from it. The question of modernity, therefore, is bound up with reference to the history of colonialism and capitalism with “the unspeakable horror which is committed daily in the name of
profit, efficiency, order, modernization, oppressive power and its maintenance” (Venn 3). In consistent with this proposition, Said has already established that colonial discourse was not just about the discursive construction of the colonized “Other,” but it was also intrinsic to European self-understanding, determining how Europe and Europeans could locate themselves -- as modern, as civilized, as superior, as developed and progressive -- only by reference to an “Other” that was represented as the negation of everything that Europe imagined or desired itself to be. Today, similarly, the postcolonial world is present everywhere, but it is “altered for the ‘West’ through the representational devices of consumer culture and the tourist gaze, or it is relocated by the conceptual suppositions of development theory and of modernization such as . . . generalities of globalization theory” (3).

The discourse of modernity, Said suggests, shifted the focus from the mysteries of a transcendent divine will and a vagrant destiny to the ontology and epistemology of cultural formation. As Couze Venn remarks, “Western modernity gradually became established as the privileged, if not hegemonic, form of sociality, tied to a universalizing and totalizing ambition” (19). Therefore, “the becoming modern of the world” which colonialism and imperialism accomplished over the centuries becomes a central question to postcolonial societies. In this sense, Orientalism in its modernist propaganda is “affiliated with the idea of modernity as the history of humanity in the singular and the idea of ‘History’ as the becoming-Western of humanity.” Therefore, in its cultural orientation, the concept becomes “the space of the co-articulation of logocentric reason, technocratic rationality and imperialism by way of an egocentric ontology of being. It inscribes the privilege of the West as the superior locus of world-historical development, and the modern Western subject as the agent of that process” (83). It is appropriate to note that with the emergence of modernity as part of an Orientalist discourse, “the
modern, occidentalist and instrumentalist principle which binds knowledge to domination, clearly articulated later in mechanism” (112).

Hence, modernization theory was no less a strategic paradigm of the Orientalist instrumentalized tool than any other trends that took prominence during the 1950s and 1960s, and “was rooted in a common set of assumptions about the character and trajectory of historical change”. In effect, modernization theory’s intellectual prowess lies in its distinguishing principles between “traditional” societies and “modern” societies. Accordingly, a new hierarchical history of relationship between different strata of societies was notoriously established. To this theory, the status of an individual is primarily classified “not in terms of their family or kinship group or tribe or religion but by more general criteria, such as nationality and citizenship.” This sharp dichotomy between tradition and modernity, defined as polar opposites, is reworked to denote a process of transition from a “backwardness and fixity” to “progress and mobility” (Lockman 134-35). To Daniel Lerner, the premises underpinning modernization theory and its way of looking at the world helped shape Middle-East studies as it emerged and flourished in the 1950s and 1960s. Lerner saw modernization as a universal process initiated by the West: “From the West came the stimuli which undermined traditional society in the Middle East; for reconstruction of a modern society that will operate efficiently in the world today, the West is still a useful model. What the West is, in this sense, the Middle East seeks to become” (qtd. in Lockman 138). According to this logic, there was only one possible path to becoming modern – that is, like the United States and Europe. Thus, for Lerner, Arab nationalism, resentment of continuing Western influence in the Middle East, and demands for political and social transformation that challenged pro-US elites were not only illegitimate but pathological. They were, in fact, manifestations of irrational psychic disturbances.
Imaginative Geographies and the Politics of Space: Imperialism

The idea of agency brings us closer to the concepts of authority and spatiality in the colonialis
t and imperialist discourse. Said’s work builds on an analysis of Western novels (Austen, Conrad, Chateaubriand, de Nerval, Flaubert), travel and anthropological writing (Burton, de Sacy, Renan), opera (Verdi) and media (mainly in the USA) to link Western imperialism with Western culture. This linkage produces what he calls “Orientalism,” the systematic “body of theory and practice” (*Orientalism* 6; *Culture and Imperialism* xxiii). By “theory” of imperialism, Said means the Western imperial episteme -- the West’s intellectual and cultural production, including research, writing, ideas, arguments, images; and by “practice” he denotes the accompanying socio-cultural institutions and structures -- the colonial administration, universities, museums, media, etc (*Orientalism* 3, 5, 332).

The concept of “imaginative geography” in the Western Orientalist/colonial discourse is constituted in the idea of incompatibility and inequality among nations and cultures. Therefore, the question of the “Other” and “Otherness” was transformed into a geographical issue and geographical knowledge was entwined with political power. This left a stigmatic effect on the field of identity politics as a natural aftermath of colonial and imperial enterprises. Under the pretext of discovering the faraway, dreamlike lands, societal diversity and the peculiarities of other civilizations, European geographers, starting with the end of the nineteenth century and the institutionalization of colonial geography in Europe, sought to demonstrate that Western civilization is superior to others and to explain why this is so. This leads us to ask questions about the diversity of groups in terms of socio-discursive construction rather than in terms of supposed objectives of difference. Otherness in this case is “the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (‘Us,’ the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (‘Them,’ Other) by stigmatizing a difference -
- real or imagined -- presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination” (Staszak 44). Therefore, geography becomes an effective basis of the Orientalist discursive constructions of a number of expressions of otherness. The classification of “us/them” or “Self/Other” is transformed into, here/there, known/unknown, norm/exotic and real/imagined, whereby “We”/“here” means the “Self”; “they”/“there” denotes the “Other(s)”. How can otherness be essentially geographical? And how was imaginative geography indulged into the politics and poetics of space? It is not difficult to answer. Simply, the Orientalist/colonialist discourse treated those different people or nations that are far away from the point of being “Others”. The “Orient,” therefore, was imagined and constructed epistemologically, defined geographically and marked culturally as an “Other”, as locale/space to be utilized, ruled, possessed, and cultivated for the benefit of its creator and the producer of its knowledge.

The Orientalist/colonialist classificatory imaginings of space into a “civilized” and “savage” constituted the basic premise of the imperial project that invested the concept of otherness into the spatial component of civilization: the civilized (Europe/West/Occident), and the savage (Arabia/East/Orient). In this case, exotism constitutes the most directly geographical form of otherness, in that it opposes the abnormality of “elsewhere” with the normality of “here”. It becomes a discursive process that consists of superimposing symbolic and material distance, mixing the foreign and the foreigner.

Carving humanity into races and the world into continents is the third and most recent template used to create a spatial form of otherness. This template still uses the figures of the barbarian and the savage but puts a new criterion into place that allows “us”, White Men, to be opposed to “them”, Men of Color. According to this view, each race has a corresponding continent, a natural birthplace from which it can flourish. The created geographical fiction of races and continents allow these categories to be reified and
naturalized by giving them a supposedly geographical legitimacy and a false sense of evidence (46). Thus, Orientalism, as analyzed by Said, encompasses all of these components. The Oriental is characterized by his “barbarity”, his “savageness” and his “race”. The “Orient” is the geographical fiction that gives him geographical basis. The West thereby gains the right, if not the duty, to dominate the “Orient”, to save it from “despotism”, “barbarism”, slavery, decadence, etc.

This social and “geo-graphing” representation of the world posits philosophical questions about how cultures construct meanings and develop geopolitical cultures, and how these cultures operate on a daily basis. It also includes the relationship between geopolitical discourses and foreign policy institutions and practices. This panoptic form of power/knowledge was embedded within the imperialist projects of various states throughout the century and generated comprehensive visions of world politics. Hence, imaginative geography for the processes of cultural intervention has been shaped by the long tradition of efforts to forge effective political formations in times of global crisis. In a situation like this, terms such as “clash of civilization”, “permanent war” and “cultural dichotomy” become concepts that incited critical speculations on the importance of geography. As a result, identity was spoken of in terms of territorial and spatial paradigm as a constructed form. This condition divides humanity pathetically into groupings of supremacies and inferiorities, centers and peripheries and majorities and minorities.

In his debunking of cultural dichotomies Said believes that all events and ideas are historicized and contextualized in time and place, and universal ideas are part of the hegemonic exclusion in which imaginative geography has been a key-factor. He proclaims: “stories are at the heart of what explorers and novelists say about strange regions of the world; they also become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history” (Culture and Imperialism xii). He
shows that Orientalist (mis)representation and (mis)conception of the other people, regions and cultures created an imagined spatial and cultural distinction and reduced human geography into a space of inequality and difference. He argues that “this universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions . . . The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways” (*Orientalism* 54).

Indeed, Said directs the attention to the relation between power and space in the creation of national or transnational identity via the dimension of imaginative geographies. Through imaginative geographies, he argues, distance, difference, and sameness all go into the production of place so that a given space becomes associated with notions of belonging or non-belonging. Therefore, the power politics of the space can be looked through the relationship between ideas of space and the production of identities whereby space becomes a performance. In other words, space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive. This is precisely what Said means when he argues that “Orientalism is a field with considerable geographical ambition” (50). The vision of global space, therefore, becomes irreconcilably Manichean and “a transparent surface of struggle with an implacable and irreducible ‘Otherness’” (Dalby and O’Tuathail 453). To render it simple, the understandings of identity depend more on notions of geographies and in terms of cultural politics -- “race” as a segregated place.

Considering Said’s concept of imaginative geography, one comes to understand the complexity of the postcolonial identity and how it has been geopolitically bound by power/knowledge constellation. Thus, one needs to think of what Gillian Rose reiterates: “to change oppressive definitions of identity it is also necessary to rethink the spatialities which give both material and symbolic structure to those definitions” (1). According to
Rose, powerful institutions are understood as producing a territory divided into a center and a margin, an acceptable and an unacceptable or “superior” and “inferior”.

In fact, Said’s concept of “imagined geographies” has basically evolved out of his critique on Orientalism. The term, “imagined” is used not to mean “false” or “made-up”, but “perceived”. It refers to the perception of space created through certain images, texts or discourses. Imagined geographies can also be seen as a form of social constructionism similar to Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities. The gist of Said’s argument is that Western culture has produced a view of the “Orient” based on a particular imagination, popularized through academic Oriental studies, travel writing and a colonial view of the “Orient”. Imagined geographies are, thus, seen as a tool of power/knowledge in the hands of those who have the power to objectify those they are imagining.

The imperial project relied on these notions to exercise its power and increase its encroachment. Therefore, under the pretext of civilizing the natives, redeeming the oppressed, liberating the nations, eliminating poverty, democratizing peoples, deposing dictatorship, and combating terrorism, imperialism shows a continuation of the same imagined geographies that Said uncovered. This justifies, in the view of those imagining, the military intervention that has been seen in Afghanistan and Iraq. This reminds us of Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* which was based on geopolitical knowledges and forms of imagined geography in which the Occident-Orient dichotomy takes an established epistemological and then ontological positionality. Substantially, in his chapter on “Imaginative Geography and its Representations,” Said argues that Orientalism relies heavily on the production of geographical knowledge in the imperial center, since for him any representation of the “Orient” is necessarily spatial. Yet, beyond the techniques of mapping that underplayed the imperial project, he is interested in
teasing out the cultural and symbolic domains of this geographical understanding, since it is the cultural politics of space and place that he is primarily concerned with uncovering. Thus, his is not a typical geographical undertaking, one that seeks to direct us to the cartographic techniques of what he calls the Orientalizing process. On the contrary, his aim is to trouble common-sense understandings of space, in this case of the “Orient”, in order to destabilize the spatial, one might add, racial order upon which Oriental knowledge is produced. The material dimensions of the space, or what Said terms as “the poetics of space” has been endowed with imaginative value(s) through which a range of cultural meanings are attributed to a particular space (Orientalism 54-5).

Hence, Orientalism, according to Said, works geopolitically on two key elements or features. The first feature refers to the dramatization of distance and difference involved in the imaginative geographical process such as “spatializations”, or a set of geographical markers. He demonstrates that these partitions and enclosures work to more clearly demarcate a familiar space that is “ours” from one that is “theirs” in relation to territory, and perhaps other factors such as social, ethnic and cultural markers. The second key feature can be found in Said’s gestures to how imaginative geography can “help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself” (55). The act of imagining geographies or reproducing of space was an effectively operational and irredeemably functional concern of the Orientalist/imperial project. Said emphasizes this fact when he expounds that the struggle for land has its root in the artistic narration which maps out its affiliation. He shows that, “To speak, as O’Brien does, of ‘the propaganda for an expanding of empire . . . ’ is in effect to speak of our atmosphere created by both empire and novels by racial theory and geographical speculation . . . the crossings over between culture and imperialism are compelling” (Culture and Imperialism 6).
The idea of imaginative geographies was a predominant concept of the modernist and triumphant attitudes that characterized the imperialist rhetoric and Orientalist rubrics which put geography at the head list of Europe’s “mission” as representative and leader of this world-wide culture. This made European geography the condition for imagining what principle of development or culture connects European culture with the history of all humankind. The specifically geographical formulation of Eurocentrism in this hypothesis of culture conditions many of the most ambitious nineteenth-century narratives. G. W. F. Hegel’s *Philosophy of History*, Henry Thomas Buckle’s *History of Civilization*, and Karl Marx’s *Capital* are some of the more influential resources that provided a useful point of reference for the geographical formulation of Eurocentrism.

This emphasis on the rhetorical power of “imperialist geography” underscores the “geopolitical gaze” in that rhetoric. The European geographical discoveries placed politics at the heart of geography and created a configurationally great ruptures in the map of the world. The historical meaning of the Columbian discoveries can best be realized by turning a terrestrial globe so that Europe became the centre. To instantiate, the narratives of empire were enormously invested with the art geography and the interplay of sea-power and land-power, and the black-white continent. Hence, imperialism is described by Said as a multifaceted “struggle over geography” wherein geography takes the form of a politico-cultural expression and shares the epistemological fixation with fictive representation on which Western imperial project has converged (7). This explains the reciprocities between the intellectual formation of the discipline and the political trajectory of European expansion, exploitation and dispossession.
Orientalism and Public Discourse: Islamophobia

The crudest aspects of Orientalist discourse, the positivistic jargon of “social science”, the continual demonization, trivialization and defamation of Islam, Muslims and Arabs, all converge to forge an instrument for effecting and sustaining a neat divide between “us” and “them” – a state of affairs “signifying the triumph of unthinking Manicheanism over rational as well as self-critical analysis” (Representations of the Intellectual 112). Said’s outcry against the Western machinery is that history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that “we” might inscribe our own future there and impose “our” own forms of life for these lesser people to follow. He connected the recent Western propaganda of changing the map of the Middle East to what has often happened with the “Orient”. The general understanding of the Middle East, the Arabs and Islam in the United States, the demeaning generalization and triumphalist cliché and simplistic contempt for dissenters and “others” and the looting and destruction of Iraq in the twenty-first century is similar in motive, drive and propaganda to Napoleonic invasion of Egypt during the nineteenth century. He asserts,

It is surely one of the intellectual catastrophes of history that an imperialist war . . . was waged against a devastated Third World dictatorship on thoroughly ideological grounds having to do with world dominance, security control, and scarce resources, but disguised for its true intent, hastened, and reasoned for by Orientalists who betrayed their calling as scholars. (Orientalism xiv-xv)

In the context of Western public discourse, Said’s Covering Islam is to be seen in conjunction with his previous publications Orientalism and The Question of Palestine for all the three are addressed to the constitutive problem of metatheoretical sociology, that is, how we can know other people/cultures in order to talk to them and about them, and
how through languages and discourses these cultures are constructed and represented. Since representation presupposes control, power and knowledge are necessarily coupled together. The language by which we talk about others is not theory neutral, politically innocent or morally detached. This double theme of the book is neatly contained in its title. First, there is the pun that, while the mass media exist to uncover the significance of passing events, the media cover up reality by operating within the confines of a political discourse that is remarkably limited, simplistic and myopic. Therefore, we can never through the media discover that diverse and complex world which lies behind the media coverage. Second, the coverage of “Islam” by the media is merely the exposition of a short-hand label, a discursive filter which blocks any genuine understanding of complex Islamic cultures in history. Hence, Covering Islam illustrates Western, particularly American, conceptions of global politics in terms of a set of simple clichés of “bizarre mentality”, “demonization psyche” and “simplification or general informant”. It recapitulates the Western comforting simplicity of the cultural equations in which Islam = anti-American = anti-democratic = anti-modern = irrational = dangerous = “Other”.

In uncompromising style, Covering Islam pinpoints how American media is guilty of perpetuating shallow stereotypes of a complex culture and of cooperating in the intellectual imperialism. Said’s title puns on the journalist coverage and covering up the truth and expounds the West’s coercive system that paradoxically treats Islam as a subject of threat and object of hegemony. The book comes to unfold the uses of ‘Islam’ for the ‘West’ in the Western discourse, a discourse which is indubitably saturated with politics (lvi-lvii). No one would dispute that the central theme of the Covering Islam is that knowledge of Islam and of Islamic peoples has generally proceeded not only from dominance and confrontation but from cultural antipathy. He insists, “If the history of
knowledge about Islam in the West has been too closely tied to conquest and domination, the time has come to these ties to be severed completely” (172-3).

The main thesis of Said’s *Covering Islam* is that the Western conception of Islam “is not an interlocutor, but in a sense a commodity . . . these things also made it clear that covering Islam from the United States, the last superpower, is not interpretation in the genuine sense but an assertion of power” (150). This perception has been recapitulated, intensified and spread through negative images of and “an intense focus on Muslims and Islam in the American and Western media most of it characterized by a more highly exaggerated stereotyping and belligerent hostility” (xi). These perceptual renderings have been concretized in Westerners’ attack on Muslims in Bosnia, Palestine, and Chechnya, etc. According to Said, localized as it is, the Orientalist imagings and imaginings such as those of Martin Peretz’s *The New Republic* and Morton Zuckerman’s *The Atlantic* have promoted the negative image of Islam and propagated a typified hostility and reductionism of discourse, ignoring the fact on the ground and the alternative interpretations which has been taken place in the Muslim world.

Looking at the more current media genre, Said states in *Covering Islam* that over 100 movies filmed in the past three decades revolve around a story-line where Middle Easterners are depicted as terrorists. Although he ensures that this form of negative portrayal is not unprecedented for other ethnic, religious or racial groups, he argues that unlike any other portrayals in today’s media, these representations seem officially sanctioned: “Malicious generalizations about Islam have become the last acceptable form of denigration of foreign culture in the West; what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussion about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians” (xii). This view, he reaffirms, is “dominated by a radically simplified type of thinking” characterized as “an imaginative
and yet drastically polarized geography dividing the world into two unequal parts, the larger, ‘different’ one called the Orient, the other, also known as ‘our’ world, called the Occident or the West” (4).

The Occidental perception of the “Orient,” therefore, has been cocooned within two paradoxical sets of ideas: irrational, feminine and backward etc., and inimical, challenge and threat. Hence, frequent caricaturing of Muslims as terrorists and bloodthirsty mobs is no less damaging a perception to them as that of an irrational, abnoramal and exotically savage depiction. This process of cultural and epistemological construction of the “Orient,” especially of Arab-Muslim world, has been carried out in two ways. The first is directed towards the distortion of the image by frequent and incessant misrepresentation, misconception, falsified caricaturing and continual stereotyping. The second has profoundly been through a coercive discourse of negativity and denial. There are lots of efforts institutionally and systematically exerted in the world scale to prevent the Oriental, especially the Muslim-Arab to narrate and represent him/herself. This has been done through a monopoly of power of narration such as the international agencies, and through dominating the cultural and political institution, or what can be described as “administrative colonialism.”

Said’s concern in Covering Islam is to show that academic experts on Islam reinforce rather than challenge vulgar media stereotypes informed by the discourses and structures of the production of orthodox knowledge of Islam. According to Said, this is all a constructed truth, and what is deemed objectively about Islam, is only “communities of interpretation,” for “[n]o one lives in direct contact either with truth or with reality . . . we depend for our sense of reality not just on the interpretations and meanings we form individually for ourselves, but also on those we receive” (45-6, emphasis in original).
However, by debunking this stereotypical imaging, Said’s work becomes certainly more and more empirical, investigating facts related to the very concept of Orientalism, especially in a neocolonizing world in which he lived, in which we live. He bridged his critical theory on Orientalism directly to his empirical testimony on Orientalist public discourse: “All terror is especially bad when it is attached to religious and political abstractions and reductive myths that keep veering away from history and sense” (“Collective Passion” 110). With an absolutist stringent ideology and claim of “unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force,” the ideologues of power, the policy makers, and the intellectual designers of the Orientalist discourse have safeguarded themselves and their ideas so that “each time the concept of the Arab national character is evoked, the myth is being employed” (Orientalism 307). In “Collective Passion,” he discredits the Orientalist authority, stating that “There isn’t a single Islam: there are Islams, just as there are Americas. This diversity is true of all traditions, religions or nations. . . . history is far more complex and contradictory than to be represented by demagogues who are much less representative than either their followers or opponents claim” (110).

In effect, Said’s lifelong work was moving towards a debunking of all sorts of Orientalisms throughout history and contemporary life. He suggests that the language of war and suffering must be turned on its head because the very inflammatory language of hatred and division does not remain within the strict confines of geographical space.

From Dichotomy to Interface: Saidian Dialectics

A close reading of Said’s critical project will reveal his stringent zeal to bridge the cultural gap that has been created across accumulated process of backing ideologies and political motivations. He calls for and works hard toward redefining and demystifying the
vague connotation of power-conditioned and power-oriented Western preconceptions about the East with its bewildering variety of intellectual offences. All essentializing strategies and concepts are discarded by Said as spuriously imposed identities on heterogeneous phenomena.

Seen in the context of the emerging pluralistic vision of civilizational complexes, the question of the West and its historical identity can now be reformulated in more concrete terms. Theoretical reflection on the inherited notions of East and West has led to differentiations on both sides, as well as to alternative mappings of the world. The ongoing deconstruction of a traditional problematic seems a more fruitful attempt to reformulate the concept of dichotomy away from the indiscriminate emphasis on cultural diversity and connectivity at the same time. Therefore, Said’s critique of the concept of Orientalism and his subsequent critical speculations on cultural imperialism lies within the deconstructive process of the binary thinking and approach.

It is to be noted that Said speaks from the position of both “insider” and “outsider”. He has undergone the experience of colonialism, imperialism, neocolonialism and globalism. As Mihir Bhattacharya puts it, Said was “writing from a definite position, a position which has moral, intellectual, historical and geographical specificities, and without which much of the import of what he wants to say will be lost” (110). Said is not really writing about the Orientals and what they thought of themselves or of the Occidentals in idiosyncratic sense. Therefore, looking at his work would unfold that he tends to break with the dichotomous discourse that assume “a justification and a rationalisation of the raw violence and expropriation unleashed by the ruling classes of a few countries on very large population in others” (111).
In order to invalidate the authority of a given culture or civilization as a predetermined force, Said introduced the metaphor of the “voyage” to describe the transfer of theories across cultures and civilizations. Theories, he argues, journey both in space and in time – and they are marked by each place and by each historical constellation through which they travel. The main nexus of Said’s “travelling theory” is to connect the idea of volatility of civilization to ideas of “interrelated cultures”, “intertwined histories” and “overlapping territories”. On this basis, the Orientalist construction of the “Other” is castigated as it crisscrosses with the concept of hybrid ideas and cultures. In his essay, “Imaginative Geography as a Travelling Concept,” Michael Frank opines: “Theories, in short, are not stable, located as it were in a fixed place, but they are part of the general dynamics of history” (62).

From a closer humanistic perspective, Said critiques the Orientalists’ methodological misconceptions as they strip knowledge off its humanistic values and subjugate knowledge to the idea of specialization and professionalization. His main concern is: “Can one divide human reality . . . into clearly different cultures, histories, traditions, societies, even races, and survive the consequences humanly?” Throughout his critical pursuit, he attempts to find a “way of avoiding the hostility expressed by the division” because “such divisions are generalities whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually towards not especially admirable ends” (Orientalism 45). This created dichotomy, he believes, is antagonistic to both fair critical consciousness and the idea of worldliness as it helps to divide the human reality into different categories and to create unrealistic barriers among different cultures.

Essentialization is the key-word of the Orientalist construction of “Othering”. To eliminate this epistemological threat, Said distinguishes between “difference” as a natural
distinguishable feature among peoples, cultures and individuals, and “Othering” as an ideologically constructive tool and mechanism. He critiques the discriminatory rule that segregates others and judges them according to a single homogenous and totalitarian world view, always that of the dominant and the triumphant. He believes that “Otherness” is due less to the difference of the “Other” than to the point of view and the discourse of the person who perceives the “Other” as such. In his view, opposing “Us”, the “Self”, and “Them”, the “Other”, is to choose a criterion that allows humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norm and whose identity is valued and another that is defined by its faults, devalued and susceptible to discrimination.

In the light of this, Said’s Orientalism can largely be read as an anti-identitarian text which proposes an alternative world view for human history of ideas. Significantly, Said’s anti-identitarian approach to theory has been revitalized by his insistence on the affiliative rather than filiative structure of subject position. In his essay, “The Illusion of a Future: Orientalism as Traveling Theory,” Timothy Brennan argues that “it would be neatly appropriate to . . . characteri[ze] Orientalism in terms of its worldliness, . . . its materiality, its self-positioning” (558, italics in origin).

From what has been cited above, it becomes obvious that Said’s literary and cultural training is bound up with his political positioning, especially when turning to the reading of Orientalism. Without appreciating his attempt to elaborate politics by way of philology, it is hard to understand his appeal. However, Orientalism’s reception did indeed come about as the result of explaining an “identitarian contradiction in Euro-American consciousness, with its emphasis on name, race, immigration, and color” (577). Orientalism’s intellectual importance, therefore, is a matter of its positional freshness, not only its geopolitical or racial location, given that criticism for Said is “a method or system acquired affiliatively (by social and political conviction, economic and historical
circumstances, voluntary effort and willed deliberation)” rather than “bound filiatively (by birth, nationality, profession)” (*The World, the Text and the Critic* 25).

In fact, Said’s concern is not (mis)representation as an act by itself, rather, the structure and the system that produced it. His concern is about how intellectuals create reality. He writes: “The nexus of knowledge and power creating ‘the oriental’ and in a sense obliterating him as a human being is therefore not for me an exclusively academic matter. Yet it is an intellectual matter of some very obvious importance” (*Orientalism* 27, italics in origin). His critical endeavor, therefore, targets the epistemological and ideological tyranny of intellectual apparatus that produces dichotomy. In this context, *Orientalism* is not a study of the historical upbringing of the West and the analysis of its culture, and its aim is not to investigate the array of disciplines or to elaborate exhaustively the historical or cultural provenance of Orientalism, but rather to reverse the “gaze” of the discourse, to analyze it from the point of view of an “Oriental Arab” -- to “inventory the traces upon me, the Oriental subject, of the culture whose domination has been so powerful a fact in the life of all Orientals” (25).

With a critical openness and urgency, Said’s aim was to provoke and stimulate “a new kind of dealing with the Orient” so that if the binary between “Orient” and “Occident” were to disappear altogether, “we shall have advanced a little in the process of . . . the ‘unlearning’ of ‘the inherent domintive mode’” (28). His approach and solution to such complexity and dichotomy can be traced to his theories of “worldliness”, “travelling theory”, “journeying in” and “contrapuntality”. These theories and concepts sum up his critical thought as a strategy of value system. He sees more of interface than dichotomy in the world cultures and invites his audience to have approached them critically with self-denial consciousness. Accordingly, worldliness necessitates a belonging to the world of humanity as a whole, and a breaking with the parochial, nativist
and other provincial filiations. This realization of the dynamism of human civilization and the dialogic nature of human culture remind us that theories, thoughts and cultural elements travel with us, by us and through us as civilizational and cultural centers revolve and move. In this regard, Said’s contrapuntal reasoning becomes a significantly fair critical tool that brings the opposed parts together under one roof, subjected to the scrutiny of truth. Subsequently, the created gap will be minimized and the representational misconception will be eliminated. The historical experience will be rehearsed and reinvented into the text and the context will reveal the complete image.

Said’s critical project embraced a more humanistic position through its upholding of human agency, active political engagement and the possibility of non-coercive, non-dominating kinds of knowledge. The nexus of his notions of intertwined histories and overlapping territories demonstrates that the colonized were not mute victims, but active participants in shaping the modern world. The historical experience is a mutual act of involvement. It is impossible to wipe out or cover up the colonized involvement: “The difficulty with theories of essentialism and exclusiveness, or with the barriers and sides, is that they give rise to polarization that absolve and forgive ignorance and demagogy more than they enable knowledge” (Culture and Imperialism 31). In his essay, “Hope and Reconciliation: a Review of Edward Said W,” Paul A. Bove explains that Said’s critical strategy derives its legitimacy from conceiving human experience as mainly historical experience that “depends upon and reinvents the critical and creative possibilities of literary history; it offers itself as a historical document . . . as an agency in the reorganization of cross-cultural relations in the current world” (267).

Following the deconstructive trend of the Orientalist discourse, Said offers a new understanding of culture as a domain of socializing human thinking and perception of himself and of others. Therefore, cognizing, assimilating and applying his concept of
culture represents the hallmark of his critical strategy because of its clandestine influence on the intellectual’s stiff perception of both his culture and other world cultures. The idea of culture as “possessing possession” is relegated to its function “to be an agent of, and perhaps the main agency for, powerful differentiation within its domains and beyond it too.” He strongly holds that “What is more important in culture is that it is a system of values saturating downward almost everything within its purview . . .” (The World, the Text and the Critic 9, italics in origin). He contends that in its normative meaning, culture is a set of values and practices shared by human, but when it is stripped off of its humanistic values and concentrates only on the centrality of its own, it becomes an instrumental function that nurtures the hierarchical division among different cultures.

By exposing the Western homogenous view of culture and its exercise, Said destabilizes the West’s claim of inevitable superiority. This a celebratory position of Said’s cultural relativism that rejects the singularity and purity of a culture and its endowment of the sole right of judging, issuing views, constituting and communicating knowledge to other cultures, excluding the overlapped, intertwined and discrepant historical experiences shared by all world cultures. His contention is that when culture is based on an absolute element of nationalization, it becomes combative and aggressively repulsive to other cultures, and consequently contributes to asserting man-made geographical boundaries, and enhances the xenophobia. He states: “Culture in this sense is a source of identity, and a rather combative one” (Culture and Imperialism xiii). The progress of mankind, he contends, results from the cultural hybridity and reciprocal communication. In this case, Western culture is a result of, and, is in no way a state of constant reciprocity among all world cultures. In Representations of the Intellectual, he reconfirms,
The construction of fictions like “East” and “West,” to say nothing of racialist essences like subject races, Orientals, Aryans, Negroes and the like, were . . . mythical abstractions . . . cultures are too intermingled, their contents and histories too interdependent and hybrid, for surgical separation into large and mostly ideological oppositions like Orient and Occident. (xi-xii)

Said’s heterogeneous view of culture is applauded by Paul A. Bove as a celebratory contribution of a cultural relativist “for whom the greatness of culture matters just because it comes from coalescence and not from difference alone” (8). Bove persists that Said frequently invokes the “historical example of Andalusian society lest we forget that different peoples can share a common history and, together, coexist to produce institutions of civil justice and artworks of extraordinary value and impact . . . (2).

Said’s cultural relativist leanings are best expressed in his rejection of cultural purity, critical radicalism and orthodoxy. Hence, whereas he reprimands colonial culture because of its “clear-cut and absolute hierarchical distinction . . . between ruler and ruled,” he disapproves nativism because it “reinforces the distinction even while reevaluating the weaker or subservient partner” (Culture and Imperialism 228). He warns that “to accept nativism is to accept the consequences of imperialism, the racial, the religious, and political divisions imposed by imperialism . . . [and the] unthinking acceptance of stereotypes, myths, animosities, and traditions encouraged by imperialism” (228-29). Consequently, he believes that the idea of “true liberation”, as distinct from mere national independence, can only be won in a war of cleansing violence through “a transformation of social consciousness.” He concedes that the “shift from the terrain of nationalist independence to the theoretical domain of liberation,” requires “a fertile culture of resistance whose core is energetic insurgency, a ‘technique of trouble’” and sometimes armed insurrection (281, 230, 268, 267).
Significantly, in demystifying an entrenched discipline, Said’s critical thought has gone beyond its focal topic -- the so-called “Orient”. However, it is a mistake to see Said’s *Orientalism* largely as an attack on the “Occident” by the “Ori ent”. According to Ferial J. Ghazoul, “Anyone who reads Said’s *Orientalism* as an attack on the West, or as a dualistic struggle between the East and the West, has completely missed the point” because his aim “is precisely to demolish the conceptual constructions that divide the world into confrontational cultures or hierarchical civilizations” (123-24). For him, “all types of discourse prioritizing identity over difference or universality over locality do or can be deployed to justify the ongoing power relations between East and West or South and North” (Xie 77). For this end, he has insightfully espoused “a new geographical consciousness of a decentered or multiply-centered world”, for “deal[ing] with disjunctive formations and experiences” (“History, Literature and Geography” 471, 458). This geographical mode of thinking has rewardingly become a major contribution to contemporary postcolonial studies. This takes us back to his main theses that never solidarity before criticism, and humanity cannot be divided into races, cultures, histories, etc., and survive the division humanely.


