

## Edward Said's "Imaginative Geography" and Geopolitical Mapping: Knowledge/Power Constellation and Landscaping Palestine

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Attempting to explore Said's concept of "imaginative geographies," this paper presents Said's theoretical understanding of imaginative geographies, by probing his writings on Orientalism, and pointing to the ways in which his theoretical work relates to current geographical accounts. In maintaining that, I make brief stops in the fields of postcolonial, postmodern theory and cultural geography, and their various intersections, in order to consider how imaginative geographies have been re-conceptualized. The paper looks to new horizons in our understanding of Said's geographical imagination. In *Culture & Imperialism* Said pointed to how none of us are completely free from the struggle over geography, over territory, over space, and over place; this fact continues to be evident in the Palestinian struggle that Said has so eloquently articulated. The paper also seeks to build a theory and critique of power and the development process by fusing geography, history, and political economy while maintaining a commitment to a scholarship of activism and critical engagement with the world. Moreover, the paper attempts a close reading of the role of politics and state's ideology in creating a geopolitical space through examining the colonial and imperial geopolitical mapping, and how this map is institutionally purported by the Orientalist/colonialist discourse of the "Same" and the "Other". In particular, the paper takes the Palestinian landscaping as a case in point of how devastating the colonial project had been on both land and identity. The colonialist/Orientalist legacy has created split in the human space, mapped by geopolitical frenzied totalitarianism.

Introduction:

Attempting to explore Said's concept of "imaginative geographies," this paper presents Said's theoretical understanding of imaginative geographies, by probing his writings on Orientalism, and pointing to the ways in which his theoretical work relates to current geographical accounts. In maintaining that, I make brief stops in the fields of postcolonial, postmodern theory and cultural geography, and their various intersections in order to consider how imaginative geographies have been re-conceptualized. The paper looks to new horizons in our understanding of Said's notion of "imaginative geography". In *Culture & Imperialism*, Said pointed to how none of us are completely free from the struggle over geography, over territory, over space, and over place; this fact continues to be evident in the Palestinian struggle that Said has so eloquently articulated. The paper also seeks to build a theory and critique of power and the development process by fusing geography, history, and political economy while maintaining a commitment to a scholarship of activism and critical engagement with the world. Moreover, the paper attempts a close reading of the role of politics and state's ideology in creating a geopolitical space through examining the colonial and imperial geopolitical mapping, and how this map is institutionally purported by the Orientalist/colonialist discourse of the "Same" and the "Other". In particular, the paper takes the Palestinian landscaping as a case in point of how devastating the colonial project had been on both land and identity. The colonialist/Orientalist legacy has created split in the human space, mapped by geopolitical frenzied totalitarianism.

Though the term "geopolitics" is generally difficult to define, I will specify it as the practice by which intellectuals of statecraft and political cultures give meaning to "world politics" and the place of their state in the interstate system. Geopolitics, thus, requires us to examine state cultures and the mechanisms by which these construct the world. This active social

representation of the world has been termed “worlding” by certain theorists or “geo-graphing” by others, literally the writing of global political space. To examine this will require asking philosophical questions about how cultures construct meanings, how these meanings are central to the development of state institutions, how states develop geopolitical cultures, what debates and traditions characterize these geopolitical cultures and how these cultures operate on a daily basis, at “high” or formalized sites, like in universities and think tanks, and “low” sites, like in newspapers, films, magazines and popular culture. It also requires thinking through the relationship between geopolitical discourses and foreign policy institutions and practices. And it requires thinking about the relationship of these discourses and institutional practices to process of globalization and transnationalization. More specifically, the term was used in the twentieth century to describe the broad relationship between geography, states, and world power politics. In the conventional conceptions that dominated the twentieth century, geopolitics was a panoptic form of power/knowledge that sought to analyze the condition of world power in order to aid the practice of statecraft by great powers. Embedded within the imperialist projects of various states throughout the century, geopolitics generated comprehensive visions of world politics.

Our 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, efforts with transnational ambitions that have profoundly shaped the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—including, in particular, the legacies of anti-colonial movements and other internationalist thought. The global war prison can simply be framed as a dispersed series of sites where sovereign power and bio-power productively struggle for a room for action. 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, more attention has been paid to the spatial paradigm in the scholarly as well as artistic or fictional works. This tremor is characterized by a rhetorical address which shows how various individuals see their positions with broader political realities. This, of course, navigates those questions and interventions regarding the politics of space in providing a critical voice on contemporary concerns of the oppressed individuals and minorities.

“Imaginative Geography”, Geopolitics and Postmodern Condition:

The recent postmodern turn and concomitant reconceptualization of space in social theory have encouraged numerous investigators, cultural theorists especially, to augment, even to replace, material with metaphorical space; one whereby “geographical imaginations” play constitutive roles in space - society relationships. A leading contributor has been Edward Said, who aims at refashioning spatial sensibilities not only in traditional “geographic” terms but in a broader epistemological sense. Committed to transgressing established borders, Said invites us to imagine new topographies, in which units heretofore deemed separate -- cultures, professions, realms of experience -- become inescapably hybrid and interpenetrating, or what he terms as “intertwined histories and overlapping territories”.

It can be noted that for Said history is not “preordained” since it can be influenced by ideas and not by economics alone, as maintained by orthodox Marxists. He 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. This explains why he considers the vitality of language as a dramatic and active social construction that plays a material role in creating the social history of the world. In this regard, *Culture and Imperialism* is significant for its global range and scholarly references that give the reader a well-researched and imaginatively recreated history of the last two centuries of European imperialism,

stretching from Romanticism to the contemporary postcolonial/postmodern scenario, with the intervening period of nationalist struggles of modernism. Said has contended that “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.” (xii)

In essence, and in light of Said’s concept of imaginative geography, there is this question which goes beyond Said’s critique of Orientalist/colonialist and imperialist discourse to a wider range of postmodern and transnational bondings: If postmodernist theory gloats in difference, hybridity and indeterminacy, how can it answer the proposition that inequality among races is reduced only to “difference” and pluralism, and how can geography become a free human space? In order to relate space to culture, Said has directed our attention to the “privileged role of culture” in directing our geographical map, and insists that “the extraordinary global reach of classical nineteenth-and early- twentieth century European imperialism still casts a considerable shadows over our own times” (5).

Said’s concept of imaginative geography celebrates a postmodern receptivity in the sense that it rejects the idea of an enclosed space. “I have kept in mind the idea” argues Said “that the earth is in effect our world in which empty, uninhabited spaces virtually don not exist. Just as none us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from struggle over geography, that struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms , about images and imaginary (7). With the presence of infinite possibilities of meaning, reality almost certainly begins to crumble. However, to say that postmodernist views of history are nihilistic is to miss the main argument: no one has ever denied that history can be written. Postmodernists do not ignore logical arguments, verification and archival research. But neither do they maintain that all interpretations are valid. Postmodernism only asserts that there is never only one meaning. Postmodernists question the efficacy of truth since they believe that actuality is only a historical and cultural fabrication. They are not of the view that history is only creative fiction, as is commonly assumed, or that every perspective on the past is as valid as the other. According to Sad, this is “a kind of geographical inquiry into historical experience (7).

“Truth” and “representation” are the two postmodern concerns that flashed throughout his critical and theoretical works. He incessantly shows his disavowal of the Orientalist (mis)representation and (mis)conception of the other people, regions and cultures. Therefore, an imagined spatial and cultural distinction has been created by Orientalist discourse that reduces human geography into a space of inequality and difference rather a space of hybridity and intertwined partnership. Said has speculated on this issue in the following lines:

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 that can be entirely arbitrary. I use the word “arbitrary” here because imaginative geography of the “our land—barbarian land” variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. It is enough for “us” to set up these boundaries in our own minds; “they” become “they” accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from “ours.” ... The geographic boundaries accompany the social, ethnic, and cultural ones in expected ways. Yet often the sense in which someone feels himself to be not-foreign is based on a very unrigorous idea of what is “out there,” beyond one’s own territory. All kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the un-familiar space outside one’s own. (*Orientalism* 54)

Moreover, the relationship between national subjectivity and imagined geographies has been theorized in such a way that it becomes possible to think through imagined geographies in disparate national contexts. Indeed, Said's concept has attracted both the postcolonial and postmodern scholars who examine the relation between power and space in the creation of national or transnational identity respectively by focusing quite specifically on the (trans)national dimension of imaginative geographies. This becomes clearer when we examine first Said's idea of the production of distance through imaginative geographies; how distance, difference, and sameness all go into the production of place, or how a given space becomes associated with notions of belonging or non-belonging. Second, it can be looked through the relationship between ideas of space and the production of identities. Third, it can be traced through its endorsing of the importance of seeing space as a performance, as something subjects "do" in the everyday. My aim here is to demonstrate how space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive.

It may be alleged that sustained labels such as "postmodern", "postcolonial" and "poststructural" are administered hegemonically to cultures and texts to prevent the infiltration of non-European presence into an ascendant European system. And even though such "neo-universalisms" constitute liberating practices from the discourse of the colonizer or the master narrative, they have also been interpreted as a shrewd means of controlling the "Other". The controversy of "Self" and "Other" brings about the crisis of defining one's own generic forms and space. Postcolonial politics has, therefore, to be seen as integral to postmodernism. The practice of history writing has to be integrated within poststructuralist theorizing about representation, subject, gender and the interaction of discourse, geography and power. Therefore, Said believes in the origins of the text which determine the materiality of production as well as the ideological circumstances which have a direct bearing on its form and content.

Substantially, reading Said's concept of imaginative geography beyond its postcolonial positioning reveals how the ambivalence between material and the metaphoric, between the linear and the contrapuntal, and between the local and the global drive home his critical methodology which underscores his dislocation and multiple positioning. Any attempt at resolving these polarities would in all probability be falling back into the arms of absolutist or linear master narratives. Hence, the emphasis on the simultaneity of conjunctions and disjunctions is the basis of his historical approach. The streak of postmodernism in him, therefore, cannot be denied.

Power and Geopolitical Knowledge:

The constellation of geographical knowledge and power that was and still persists in the contemporary world politics has established a universe of research problematizing the production and use of geographical knowledge in various orders of power and space. In their essay entitled "The Critical Geopolitics Constellation: Problematizing Fusions of Geographical Knowledge and Power," Simon Dalby and Gearoid O Tuathail maintain that, "Places constituted in political discourse need not be stable to be politically useful; multiple narratives can sometimes render a particular place or state in a number of ways simultaneously... The ideological production and reproduction of societies can, in part, be understood as the mundane repetition of particular geopolitical tropes which constrain the political imaginary." (451)

Knowledge, power and geopolitical mapping are the three aspects that compose the Orientalist/colonialist discourse so that one should not be studied without the other. For Said, the creation of the modern nation-state system was constituted against the backdrop of the imperial geopolitical imagination, for geopolitics is world space as charted by colonial power. Moreover, based on Said's conceptualization of cultural geography, then, issues of culture and of geography

are central to understanding how colonial “pasts” bleed into contemporary Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine. Drawing upon Said, Derek Gregory in his *The Colonial Present* (2004) details colonialism as a cultural process: “Culture involves the production, circulation, and legitimation of meanings through representations, practices, and performances that enter fully into the constitution of the world” (8). Since none of us is “outside” or “above” culture, we are all in one way or another bound up in ongoing processes of colonization, “the performance of the colonial present” (10).

Subsequently, alienated selves, displaced subjects, exiled, floated identities, and segregated groups--integrated in Said’s concept of “intertwined histories and overlapping territories”-- are the major animated issues that grapple the postcolonial and postmodern man and critic alike. This ambivalent and quibbled texture of hybridity and difference necessitates a reworking of the geopolitical mapping that built on the notion of the “Same” and “Other”. This is what has been done by Said especially in his books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Said’s idea of the centrality of spatiality in the Orientalist/colonialist discourse is echoed in Clarke Doel and McDonough’s statement that,

Physical space literally amounted to nothing, unless it conformed to a very particular configuration of cognitive, moral and aesthetic codes. The attempt by states in our contemporary world to violently engineer space (social, cognitive and aesthetic, all of which are entwined with the territorial) to fit their nationalist, exclusionary and racist visions of the perfect order is unfortunately still part of global politics. (qtd. in Dalby and O Tuathail 453)

It is of a chief concern in this paper to expound how the important themes of territoriality and governmentality are being rearticulated in the postcolonial world. Drawing on Foucault’s notion of governmentality linked to sovereignty and territory, the paper explores the contemporary reconfiguration of power and space in a global transformational zonality. All this suggests zones of contra-governmentality where the traditional claims to sovereign power that structured realist understanding of politics are practically subverted. A critical view of the geopolitical mapping thus suggests interrogating the significance of particular terrains of resistance wherein power is not being simply a matter of elite control or state rule but also a matter of contested localities where rule is resisted, thwarted and subverted by social movements. The flexible spaces of rule and resistance are part of counter-hegemonic struggles and can be understood if these facets of struggle are investigated in particular contexts. However, the visions of global space were irreconcilably Manichean ones that “smoothed away the messy, teeming complexity of everyday global politics, reducing it to a transparent surface of struggle with an implacable and irreducible “Otherness”” (453).

The entwining of aesthetics, communications, media and the politics of identity in the production of geopolitical knowledge and the nation was an effectively operational and irredeemably functional concern in Orientalist/colonialist geopolitical mapping. In his discussion of the concept of imaginative geography, Said expounds that struggle for land has its root in the artistic narration which maps out its affiliation. He argues that, “To speak, as O’Brien does, of “the propaganda for an expanding of empire [which] created illusions of security and false expectations that high returns would accrue to that who invested beyond its boundaries” is in effect to speak of our atmosphere created by both empire and novels by racial theory and geographical speculation”. He goes on to argue that “the phrase “false expectations” suggests *Great Expectations*, “invested beyond its boundaries” suggests Joseph Sedley and Becky Sharp, “created illusions” suggests “*Illusions perduse*—the crossings over between culture and

imperialism are compelling” (6). Subsequently, Said is keen to relate the universalist European discourse as a compelling space that renders the “Other” as a “homeless” subject “out of place”.

On the other hand, the representation of spatial identity in the Western popular culture reflects the deep-seated spirit of Orientalist/colonialist discourse that treated the “Other” as a verminous threat that should be exterminated and cleansed away. “The *Digest*,” argues Joanne Sharp “[does] not only represent external “Others” who can be portrayed as a threat ..., but functions to establish a series of subjectivities through which such threats can be resisted (qtd. in Dalby and O Tuathail 454). Thus popular culture is complicit in maintaining hegemony, not only by its representations of geopolitical spaces, but by the practical construction of the subjectivities that can be politically mobilized in defence of “our” space against a threat originating from “their” space. The idea of constructed subjectivities has its common relationship with the ideas of colonization and attachment in the colonial era, and enclosure and commodification that characterized the production of “space” and “nature” in the contemporary global politics. These problematic concerns cast their shadow on the construction of national identities and the importance of taking seriously the question of citizenship in the constitution of national spaces.

Substantially, Derek Gregory provides a welcome extension of Said's “imaginative geographies” to analysis of “real spaces” in his discussion of the lived, human geographies of Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq as well as the geopolitical entanglement of these spaces as a by-product of those imaginative geographies, and colonial geopolitical and politico-economic mappings. Gregory shows how geography is implicated in our cultural judgments and evaluations that underlie the ongoing exercise of colonial power. Intertwined constructions of difference and distance continue to “licence the unleashing of exemplary violence” (16) against “other” people and places. Importantly, Gregory insists that “imaginative geographies” are “performances of space” (19). He also directs our thought to the fact that imaginative geography has dominated the geopolitical mapping and “Orientalism itself never loosened its grip on the modern colonial imagination. He conspicuously illustrates that “wars in Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq confirm [that] Orientalism is still abroad: emboldened and aggressively exorbitant.” (xiv)

The perceptual shifts from the epistemological, to the cultural and then to the spatial turn in the field of cultural studies have tempted a great number of writers and scholars to investigate the validity and efficacy of Said's concept in the formulation of a cultural critique. In her recent essay entitled “Surprising Geography”, Rosalyn Deutsche has described the newly popular field of spatial-cultural discourse as “a convergence between arguments being made in cultural studies about the importance of the spatial to cultural politics, and the way many geographers are now theorizing spaces places and landscapes as culturally constructed and contested”(169). This convergence is clearly signaled by Stuart Hall as “one of the key discourses in the systems of meaning we call culture” (181). On the other hand, Gillian Rose in her article “Spatialities of ‘Community’, Power and Change: The Imagined Geographies of Community Arts Projects”, argued that, “certain forms of cultural identity are imagined through a profound sense of belonging to a bounded and stable place”. (2)

It can also be argued that the understandings of identity depend more on notions of global mobility and connection. Any difference between these geographies of identity can be understood in terms of cultural politics, in this instance of “race” as a segregated place. “Othering” becomes an essential part of the Orientalist discourse, and that the constellation of knowledge and power has created not only an epistemological distinction but also an ontological difference among humanity. Therefore, Said believes that “Orientalism is a field with

considerable geographical ambition” (*Orientalism* 50). Furthermore, Orientalism was basically based on racist discourses constructing racialized identities in part by erecting supposedly impermeable barriers which depend on an essentialist understanding of difference.

#### Spatiality and Identity Formation:

What ruminated in postmodern and postimperial juncture was one way of challenging that spatialized essentialism of “Same” and “Other” so as to imagine a fluid of hybridizing cultural intersections. In this regard, Said critique of Orientalism as institutional and corporate system and imperialism as a theory of expansion has a humanistic goal toward creating a human space free from ideology. Cultures are hybrid, and historical experience is a shared event so that no one can claim its singularity in its mapping out its events and locale. In order to achieve this goal, Said adopts the method of contrapuntality by which we can get a clear vision of a “wordliness” world of human co-existence. He insists that to imagine a community, say, the “Oreint”, through the same spatiality as that through which power produces its margins is only to reproduce that marginalization. Therefore, Said’s view seems to be ideally a utopic vision of community for which a different spatiality is necessary if a different community is to be articulated; a dynamic spatiality where nothing is fixed forever, where there are no essentializing inclusions and exclusions, and no hierarchies of power.

A dominant vision of essentialized community was extracted by a spatiality structured and territorialized by power into a centre and a margin. It is this spatiality that was complicit with colonialism, the phallogocentric constitution of sexual difference, and the bourgeois construction of classed difference. And this is also the spatiality that Said has castigated and denied in his critical ensemble. All this suggests the desire for a space constitutive of fantasies of identity. In this way, community need not be mapped in the dualistic spatiality of power/knowledge. Community must be thought of through a space which does not structure essentialized identities. This rethought “community” must be mapped in a spatiality which can acknowledge partial and changing membership; contingent insiderness; uncertainty, loss and absence. Therefore, identity has been given spatial forms as articulations of power discourse which engender “a spatial order”. It is through such complex discursive ensembles that spaces, places and landscapes become meaningful in the context of power-ridden social relations, and why dominant forms of spatiality can be contested. It is also through such contested vision of mobility of identity and interaction of time and space in the creating of the historical moment or “historical experience” as Said incessantly reiterates that his concept of imaginative geography acquires new meaning and significance.

In light of Said’s concept of imaginative geography, one comes to understand how identify and its geopolitical formation was 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”. Rose asserted that “the first dimension of the spatiality of power is zonality. Powerful institutions are understood as producing a territory divided into a centre and a margin” (“Spatialities of ‘Community’, Power and Change” 1, 5). This territorialization occurs because power is understood as dividing the social into the acceptable and the unacceptable. The spatiality that power produces is also understood as hierarchical. The locations of power can be described as “high” and the places marginalized by power as “low”, and this is the hierarchy produced by the actions of power. To be marginalized is simply to have parameters binding your actions; it is to be constrained.

Moreover, Said's concept of "imaginative geographies" can be productively used to think through how particular national geographical configurations are constituted. For instance, state structures and practices, such as national education, are often at the forefront of creating and maintaining imagined geographies. In this way, state schooling presents citizens-to-be with the official version of a national geography through an understanding of national borders, and important internal geographical and topographical features such as rivers, mountains, and provincial or state boundaries. Alongside this official nationalism, popular, non-formal geographies are produced and circulated. Consequently, any national imaginative geography must necessarily be informed by official and popular accounts of national space. In view of such conceptualization, the need for citizens of the nation to place themselves imaginatively within a "known" territory, and to possess a "geographic common sense" of belonging are part of the processes which produce and sustain nationalisms.

Nevertheless, Said's concept has genealogically foreshadowed the contemporary geopolitical discourses and practices which have been transformed by three boundary challenging processes: globalization, informationalization, and the global risk society unleashed by advanced modernity. A re-conceptualization of Said's concept, thus, suggests and gives rise to a postmodern geopolitical condition which renders the spatial imaginations associated with modern state-centric geopolitics as increasingly redundant. In his essay "The Postmodern Geopolitical Condition: States, Statecraft, and Security at the Millennium," Geroid Ó Tuathail has advanced this idea further, arguing that the postmodern geopolitical condition revealed the necessity for remapping the colonial and postcolonial space wherein geographical boundaries have traditionally acted as a constructed socio-political codes and produced new identities. With the emergence of diasporic identities, refugees and displaced citizens the national identity reaches crisis. The relation between the cause and effect is what governs the colonial and postcolonial geopolitical imagination. Driven by the concern of national security and redemption, the colonial and imperial powers saw in the "Other" nations and geographies a source of threat and advancement. In the same fashion, the postcolonial resistance movements search for their identity in the nativist and national tradition. The postmodern condition according to Ó Tuathail refers to spatial logics beyond the modern geopolitical imagination -- with its hard borders and easy distinctions between inside and outside, domestic and foreign, East and West, "us" and "them" (166- 169). The fact that these logics are increasingly evident and articulated in discourse, however, does not mean that the modern geopolitical imagination has been transcended or left behind. The postmodern geopolitical condition problematizes the spatial reasoning associated with the modern geopolitical imagination, but it does not erase its use. Read this way, geopolitics is seen as a cultural and political practice rather than a manifest reality of world politics.

In fact, Said's proposed term "imagined geographies" has inspired many critics to write about the geopolitical and geo-cultural ideologies that dominated the colonial and imperial agencies in the past and present. As they are central for the postcolonial writers and critics, representations of other places, peoples, landscapes, cultures and natures and the ways in which these images reflect the desires, fantasies and preconceptions of their authors and the grids of power between them and their subject are also predominant postmodern themes and geo-cultural concerns. It is possible to derive from Said's discussion several significant differences between an 'imaginative geography' as he conceived it and the concepts of "mental map", "behavioural environment" or "perceived environment" then current in behavioural geography. In the first place, Said's emphasis on power was alien to behavioural geography, and drew attention to the

“non-innocence” of any act of representation. In one sense, perhaps, Said’s formulation anticipated ideas of the situatedness of knowledge and the positionality of the viewing subject. But he was most concerned to disclose the privileges that European and American authors typically arrogated to themselves when representing other cultures and hence the asymmetric grid of power within which “the West” watches; “the East” is watched. In the second place, Said’s emphasis on viewing, watching, looking, observing “on vision and visibility” drew attention to the cultural construction of the gaze. Unlike “mental maps” and the other constructs of behavioural geography, imaginative geographies are never the product of purely cognitive operations. Their images are animated by fantasy and the play of desire and carry within them comparative valorizations” or what Said, following Bachelard (1969) called a “poetics of space” by means of which places are endowed with “figurative value”. In the third place, Said argues that those figurative values enter not only into the production of alterity (other/otherness) but also into the identity-formation of the viewing subject. Imaginative geographies sustain images of “home” as well as images of “away” or “abroad”. Therefore, “imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away” (Said, *Orientalism* 55). In the fourth place, “dramatization” is not quite the same as “falsification”, and Said’s discussion undercut the distinction between “real” and “perceived” worlds on which behavioural geography depended. This is the most complicated and contentious part of Said’s argument. There are certainly passages where he contrasted what he called “positive knowledge” with imaginative geographies produced under the sign of Orientalism. And yet, if imaginative geographies are “fictions” in the original Latin sense of fiction “something made, something fabricated” this does not mean that they are necessarily without concreteness, substance and, indeed, “reality”. On the contrary, Said emphasized that imaginative geographies circulate in material forms and they become sedimented over time to form an internally structured and, crucially, self-reinforcing “archive”. This “citationary structure” is also in some substantial sense performative. It shapes and legitimizes the attitudes and dispositions, policies and practices of its collective audience, so that in this way imaginative geographies spiral into and out of a sort of cultural paradigm of “Otherness”.

There have been several studies of imaginative geographies that, while they may have been inspired by Said’s original formulations, retain at best a loose affiliation with his work. Thus, for example, Carter’s (1987) project of an avowedly spatial history that seeks to show how the landscape of Australia was brought within the horizon of European intelligibility through a series of explicitly textual practices. The concept of an imaginative geography has also been developed in directions that Said’s original discussion left largely unremarked. For example, feminist scholars have shown how the production of imaginative geographies intersects with gender and sexuality, and the very idea of an “imagination” has been extended through geographies indebted to various forms of psychoanalytic theory for an understanding of the operations of fantasy, desire and the unconscious. What has been clearly retained from Said’s account, in large part a result of his initial debt to Foucault, has been an interest in recovering the imaginative geographies of other “spaces” produced under the signs of colonialism and postcolonialism (See Jarosz, 1992; Radcliffe, 1996).

It should be noted that there has been a long tradition of reading nominally fictional works as expressive of “imaginative geographies” in a far more limited sense as Said had in mind. This approach to the text has usually been naive in the extreme, with little or no engagement with literary or critical theory and an extraordinarily weak understanding of the

work of re-presentation. Said's concept of an "imaginative geography" is not confined to ostensibly fictional works. On the contrary, there is an important sense in which all geographies are imaginative, even the most formal, geometric lattices of spatial science are at once abstractions and cultural constructions, and as such vulnerable to the critical readings proposed by Said and other scholars.

Orientalism and the Formation of Colonialist and Imperialist Geopolitical Paradigms:

Said's concept of imagined geographies has basically evolved out of his critique on Orientalism. In this 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 be seen as a form of social constructionism tantamount to Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. The gist of Said's argument in *Orientalism* is that western culture had 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". According to Said, the "Orient" as a space and area was feminized as an open, virgin territory, with no ability or concept of organized rule and government. Imagined geographies are thus seen as a tool of power, of a means of controlling and subordinating areas. Power is seen as being in the hands of those who have the right to objectify those that they are imagining. This Orientalizing and exoticizing of the "Orient" was a tool to colonize the area. Romanticized as a place of "strange" and "alien", the "Oriental" subject and place has been transformed from an imagined space to an objectified material territory suffering from the colonial and imperial exploitation and displacement. In line with this thought, the "War on Terror" shows a continuation of the same imagined geographies that Said uncovered. The Islamic world is portrayed as uncivilized and is labeled as backward and failing. 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 ontological and as well as epistemological positionality.

In the second part of Chapter One of *Orientalism* entitled: "Imaginative Geography and its Representations: Orientalizing the Oriental," Said argues that Orientalism relies heavily on the production of geographical knowledge in the imperial centre, 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, Said's aim is to trouble common-sense understandings of space, in this case of the "Orient", in order to destabilize the spatial, and might I add, racial order upon which Oriental knowledge is produced.

To further develop the tension between the material and symbolic that he is looking to trouble, Said uses the metaphor of the inside of a house to direct us to how objective spaces acquire a sense of intimacy, secrecy and security due to experiences that seem appropriate to it:

The objective space of a house—its corners, corridors, cellar, rooms—is far less important than what poetically it is endowed with, which is usually a quality with an imaginative or figurative value we can name and feel; thus a house may be haunted or homelike, or prisonlike or magical. So space acquires emotional and even rational sense

by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here” (*Orientalism*, 55).

Said here makes a rather provocative statement that the objective space of a house is far less important than what he calls “the poetics of space”. Through such poetics, the space of a house, its material dimensions if you will, are endowed with imaginative value(s) through which a range of cultural meanings are attributed to a particular space. In this way, through this imaginative process, space gains a whole series of meanings that are otherwise not naturally embodied in any given material space. A house can be haunted, a city can be cosmopolitan, a nation can be evil, yet none of these meanings come to the space naturally. It seems Said wants to direct us to the processes through which material spaces come to be understood in relation to the symbolic.

To develop this idea further, Said also demonstrates how this same process operates in relation to time. He argues that seemingly settled temporal markers such as “long ago,” “the beginning,” and “at the end of time” are useless unless they are endowed with some additional meanings. For example, for a scholar of Medieval Europe, “long ago” has a much different meaning than for an evolutionary biologist, in much the same way that my sense of the material space of my childhood home is qualitatively different than my father’s. Consequently, Said would have us think through how space and time converge together to form a particular understanding of the “Orient”. In his words: “there is no doubt that imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself by dramatizing the distance and difference between what is close to it and what is far away.” (Said, *Orientalism* 55)

The question that arises here is how related is Said’s concept of “imagined geographies” to his concept of Orientalism? Or what does this have to do with Orientalism, and how Said’s determined attempts operate to underline the power relations at the heart of the imperial order? To answer this, is first to understand two key features of Said’s imaginative geographies. The first feature refers to the dramatization of distance and difference involved in the imaginative geographical process. Key to Said’s theorization is the folding of difference through a series of what geographer Nicholas Blomley calls “spatializations”, or a set of geographical markers such as grids, surveys, and territories, among others. Said argues that these partitions and enclosures work to more clearly demarcate a familiar space that is “ours” from one that is “theirs.” To illustrate this, he gives the example of a group of people living on a few acres of land who set up boundaries and call the territory beyond these boundaries the “land of the barbarians.” Clearly this distinction is arbitrary, in that it does not depend on the so-called barbarians to acknowledge the “our” land-barbarian land distinction. Said goes on to explain that it is thus enough to set up the distinction in our minds: they become “they” and us becomes “us” in relation to territory, and perhaps other factors such as social, ethnic and cultural markers. Considering this reveals that the heart of Said’s geographical project lies in his explication of how distance itself is not fixed, in the same sense as the corridor or closet in the inside of our homes, since the idea of distance is created and made intelligible through cultural practices, such as the poetics of space, where, “the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here” (55). Thus, Said lays out the cultural practices that produce Western knowledge about the “Orient” throughout *Orientalism*.

Fragments of the second key feature of the concept of imaginative geographies can also be found in Said’s gestures to how imaginative geography can “help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself” (55). As we all know, Said argues throughout *Orientalism* that far from being an innocent project of imperial meaning-making, Orientalism has helped to produce

European imperial subjects. Thus, the role imaginative geographies play in forming a sense of place through understandings of belonging and non-belonging in space also forcefully produce a sense of self, an imperial identity. For Said, there is an intimate connection between the spatialities of various imaginative geographies and the production of identity. One could say, in a gesture to Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, that space and subjectivity are mutually constitutive, in that subjects define a particular space in the ways Said discusses, and a given space produces particular subjects. It is the interplay between space and subjectivity that is to be highlighted here in relation to Said's notion of "imaginative geography".

An exciting theoretical key point regarding Said's notion of imaginative geography comes from cultural geographer and postcolonial theorist Derek Gregory who has most usefully theorized Said's notion through a series of book chapters and journal articles dating back to over a decade especially in his *Geographical Imagination* (1994). Building on Said's work on the production of distance, sameness and difference, Gregory proposes that we see imaginative geographies as performative in the sense that they produce the effects that they name. In this case, space is not just a material domain, as in the walls of the house I presented above, but more to the point, space is a "doing". And in this vision of space, performance necessarily creates newness, however conditional and precarious, which allows one to know spaces differently. This understanding of space as a "doing" moves us beyond an understanding of space as primarily imagined, since it also concretely points to the practices that produce a given space.

Said's concept of "imaginative geography" is a key idea in geopolitics and postcolonial theory. Said's emphasis on Orientalism as an "institution", and the materiality of its constellation of power-knowledge is highly significant. While he was keenly interested in the production and circulation of imaginative geographies of the "Orient", he insisted that Orientalism was not merely "an airy European fantasy about the "Orient", but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been considerable material investment" (Said, *Orientalism* 6). What gave Orientalism its peculiar power and also confounded its constructions was its exteriority. From the perspective of Orientalism, "what gave the Oriental's world its intelligibility and identity was not the result of his own efforts, but rather the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West" (40). It was this, above all else, that so deeply implicated the discourse of Orientalism in a constellation of colonizing power. It made the "Orient" appear as "an essentialized realm originally outside and untouched by the West, lacking the meaning and order that only colonialism can bring." (Mitchell, 313)

Said's characterization and critique of Orientalism had its origins in his political commitment to the Palestinian cause and while his work has met with vigorous criticism, it has also proved to be of the utmost importance to the political-intellectual corpus of postcolonialism. Mapping the complexity of Orientalism's discursive terrain has qualified the exteriority of Orientalism. Said recognized that Orientalism was a gendered and sexualized discourse, but he was always much more interested in its metaphorical codings ('the Orient as feminine'), and feminist scholars have paid much closer attention to the gendered and sexualized experiences, practices and representations of Orientalist travellers, artists and writers.

However, the concept of imaginative geographies and its geo-cultural constellations has its worth deployment by several modern and postmodern writers and theoreticians. It becomes a common revisited concept by the critics of identity, nation, multiculturalism and global world politics. Modernist writers and critics refer repeatedly to the role of imaginative space that reinforces the alienated self. On the other hand, for the postmodern and postcolonial writers and

critics “imaginative geographies” is a referential point when the discussion of the national subject and fragmented identity is at hand.

Space and politics together form the geopolitical mapping. Early in James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* the reader encounters an auditory image of the infantile artist’s first experimentation with language:

O, the wild rose blossoms  
On the little green place.  
He sang that song. That was his song.  
O, the green wothe botheth. (7)

The prototypically modernist linguistic play of “the green wothe botheth” establishes a problem of imagining to which the young Stephen returns, “You could not have a green rose. But perhaps somewhere in the world you could” (12-13). In its encoded contestation of national and poetic imagery (the Irish green, the poetic rose), Stephen’s “green wothe” is an exemplary geopolitical image. It posits a form of cultural and political identification whose difficulty Stephen later finds inscribed in and around the “picture of the earth on the first page of his geography” textbook. (15)

However, the meaning of “geopolitics” as a term used to describe global political problems is by no means easy to pinpoint. Its increasing use as a keyword in critical theory and cultural studies signals a need to theorize what Homi Bhabha has recently called “the geopolitics of the historical present” (210). As part of that critical effort, a number of studies of geopolitics have appeared, including Gearóid O Tuathail’s recent *Critical Geopolitics* (1996). The genealogy I offer here emphasizes two features of the formation of what O Tuathail calls “classical geopolitics” (22): the suppressed importance of anarchism in the formation of imperialist geopolitical paradigms, and the fate of nineteenth-century ideas of “culture” in the formation of twentieth-century geopolitics.

The history of geopolitics may be summarized as the failure to constitute the discipline of geography as a scientific field of study, a failure on which the very success and persistence of reactionary geopolitical paradigms are premised. At issue is the ensemble of residual problems and questions that come to mark the wider sense of “geopolitics.” Stephen’s problem of imagining a “green rose” is exemplary of this ensemble of questions because it offers not a definition, but a problem: “It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended” (Joyce 17). It is in fact Stephen’s problem of identification that is the focus of this essay.

Furthermore, Said’s conceptualization of geopolitical Power/knowledge can easily be approached through H. J. Mackinder’s hypothesis of culture, and the formation of geopolitics, chiefly, his “heartland” thesis. Mackinder’s thesis projects global political power as naturally pivoting around Central Asia, the “heartland of land-based power”, or what Mackinder sees as the fundamental strategic and historical interplay of land and sea. He calculates that, “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland Who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island Who rules the World-Island commands the World” (*Democratic Ideals* 194).

However, Said’s main concern was to produce a “human geography” against the modern geography which was in the service of an expansionist, imperialist politics. It is hardly a surprise that the formation of geopolitics coincides with the rise of “new imperialism” in Europe in the late nineteenth century, although its full scope and importance for the foundations and legitimation of the modern discipline of geography have only recently been addressed. Said’s concept of imagined geography helps illustrate the wider cultural crisis within which geopolitics

take shape, and the logic by which the formation of geopolitics reconfigures nineteenth-century notions of culture. The imperialist scope and methods of geography is suggested in the final section of J. Scott Keltie's *Geographical Education: Report to the Council of the Royal Geographical Society* and also quoted by O Tuathail in *Critical Geopolitics*, with its significant emphasis on the term "culture":

A systematic scientific conception of geography will take the whole earth's surface as the subject of its comparative studies, and all the more when at the present time European culture is pressing forward on every hand with rapid progress. In consideration, however, of the historical task devolving on Europe, to become the representative and leader of this world-wide culture, the student in his historico-geographical studies will specially apply his mind to the appreciation of the physical configuration of Europe, and how it exercised such influence on its inhabitants as to qualify them for such a mission. (Keltie 111; O Tuathail 84-85)

Here, perhaps, it is more than an embryonic version of the U.S. fascination for "think and act geopolitically." This is the discourse of geopolitics which takes shape in formulation of "European culture," with an entanglement of geography and culture that Said was keen to disestablish. For Said, as it was for Elisée Reclus, the argument of geography was a matter of human emancipation:

Human beings, these "reasonable beings" who love so much to boast about their free will, nonetheless cannot make themselves independent of the climates and of the physical conditions of the country they inhabit. Our liberty, in our relations to the Earth, consists in understanding the laws of these relations to confirm the liberty of our existence. (qtd. in Giblin 64)

The central place of emancipatory principles and progress in nineteenth-century geography shows through even in the "new imperialist" rhetoric and Orientalist rubrics which characterized 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. Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*, noted for its emphasis on the influence of geography on human history, provides a useful point of reference for the geographical formulation of eurocentrism:

Looking at the history of the world, as a whole, the tendency has been, in Europe, to subordinate nature to man; out of Europe to subordinate man to nature. . . The great division, therefore, between European civilization and non-European civilization, is the basis of the philosophy of history". (1: 115)

This emphasis on the rhetorical power of "imperialist geography" underscores the central place of visualization or 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 and at the point nearest to the eye.

Emphasizing the difficulty of representing the true geographical "image" of humankind without distortion, Said invokes a humane perspective. His imaginary picture illustrates the

problem of human perspective that must vanish in the production of the geopolitical image. Said's geopolitical image thus constitutes the riddling afterimage of all those attempts to systematize and explain human history as the cultural development of all humankind. The black and white spaces, the East-West division, South North classification, or the First, Second and Third Worlds categorization are seen by Said as an ideologically political confusion that entails an ontological vision.

This perceptual play of figure against ground is reminiscent of the perceptual experiments in literary and artistic modernism discussed by Fredric Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* and Rosalind Krauss in *The Optical Unconscious*. The narratives of empire were enormously invested with the art geography and the interplay of sea-power and land-power. Similarly, the curious effect of the photograph of a globe is, in part, produced by the visual contrast of white continents and black seas, juxtaposed with the white seas and black continents of the preceding image. There is good reason to recognize here that the rhetorical power constitutes the central paradigm of geopolitics, at least one of its most characteristic abbreviations of world history.

Said's analysis of cultural imperialism emphasizes that geopolitical image of the West is shaped by the geographical image of the Mother Land, and the hegemony to maintain its relation to its (Daughters) colonies in order to assure the means of conquest and domination. However, the very terms of national sovereignty and imperial power call attention to the fact that imperialist geopolitical image and its very power depends on the anarchist thesis that the nation-state is a merely transitory form, a thesis that geopolitics articulates in the ambiguous imperialism and anarchism of its own image.

Hence, heartland thesis -- the dichotomy of land and sea, and the distribution of the continents -- is an extended argument for welding the British nation to its imperial system. What gives the "geographical pivot of history" strategic interest, after all, is not the fixed position of the state within a set global order, but rather the very instability of political forms in a changing international "balance of powers" (Mackinder, *The Scope and Methods* 43). What is most revealing here is the consequences with which the Eurocentric imperative for hypothesizing the connection between European culture and the cultural development of human history as a whole. According to such a view, Europe had become the centre of equilibrium between the forces of the human race.

Subsequently, Said's notion of hegemony and domination is premised on a Eurocentric articulation of the accelerated unification of the world under the forces of global capital. Such forces involve a process of "Europeanization". As a result, all parts of the world will be drawn into the atmosphere of a general culture of a predominantly European type. This formulation of the connection between European culture and the global strategies of domination and conquest comes close to Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony of Western culture over the whole world culture. The affinities are interesting to note since Gramsci's concept of hegemony has played a particularly important role in current cultural studies, opening with nineteenth-century formulations of culture to anticolonial contestations of Eurocentric assumptions. But, the formation of geopolitics over the turn of the century is not a history of geographical institutions. It is, rather, the story of imaginary institutions of geography. Indeed, the history of geopolitics is a genealogy of an imaginary institution whose contours are defined not only by the reactionary politics of European imperialism, but also by the emancipatory politics of European socialism and anarchism. Geopolitics is formed by the rejection and incorporation of various forms of representation. Therefore and for its essentially formulative position in the Orientalist/colonialist project, Said devoted to the concept of "imaginative geography" an important part of his

*Orientalism*. According to Said the perception of the colonial space is determined by images and discourses created and spread by those who detain power. Describing the “Orient” as a blank space, the colonial empires tried in fact to justify the cultural annihilations and political invasions they committed overseas.

Said argues that Huntington’s categorization of the world’s fixed “civilizations” omits the dynamic interdependency and interaction of culture. All his ideas are based not on harmony but on the clash or conflict between worlds. The theory that each world is “self-enclosed” is applied to the world map, to the structure of civilizations, to the notion that each race has a special destiny and psychology. According to Said, it is an example of an imagined geography, where the presentation of the world in a certain way legitimates certain politics. For example, interventionist and aggressive as it seems, the concept of civilizational clash is aimed at maintaining a war-time status in the minds of the Americans. Thus, it continues to expand the Cold War by other means rather than advancing ideas that might help us understand the current scene or that could reconcile the two cultures.

Viewed by Said as “a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another”, culture in this sense is relegated to “practices like arts of description, communication, and representation...which were immensely in the formation of imperial attitudes, references and experiences” (Said, *CI* xiii, xii). From such perspective, imperialism can be described as a geopolitical expansionist system which entails the creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural and territorial relationship based on domination and subordination. According to Said, imperialism has been a predominantly western project and form of dominance that has been shaped by Western overseas expansion initiated by Portuguese and Spanish mariners in the fifteenth century and reached its territorial and ideological climax in the early twentieth century, when many European states were engaged in “the scramble for Africa”. Imperialism is closely affiliated with colonialism for both processes are intrinsically geographical dynamics that involve the extension of the sovereignty of a ruler or nation-state over the land and lives of an alien people through a mixture of military conquest, colonial settlement, the imposition of direct rule, or the creation of informal empires of trade and political supervision.

In any case, if we approach the concepts of territory, home, lands, nation, etc., from the postcolonial perspective, the notion of space becomes problematic for two aspects. First, we have to take into account the initial approach the colonialist made towards the new unknown territories, and the transformations they forced upon the lands in order to make them *sound/feel/look* familiar to them. The second is the postcolonial repercussion of counter-approach of territories that resulted in *imaginary lands*. Edward Said describes this two-fold process as follows:

Imperialism after all is an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted, and finally brought under control. For the native, the history of colonial servitude is inaugurated by loss of the locality to the outsider; its geographical identity must thereafter be searched for and somehow restored. Because of the presence of the colonizing outsider, the land is recoverable at first only through imagination. (Said, *NCL* 77)

With the dissolution of colonial empires, “imperialism” has gained other connotations. The term is now used to describe variously the global economic influence the USA; the webs of neo-colonial dependency spun by multinational corporations; the international spheres of intervention cultivated by the USA; the USA’s recent military campaigns in the Middle East and

Central America; and the fashioning and management of the Third World as subordinate to the West. In recent years, there has been considerable discussion of the cultural geography of imperialism. It is becoming increasingly apparent that modern imperialism was characterized by a tension between the universalization and differentiation of European culture and power, bringing back to the fore the concepts of nationalism and Eurocentrism. Imperialism fostered, and was fuelled by, what Gregory describes in his *Explorations in critical human geography* (1998) as the “production of Europe” as a sovereign and composite subject at the centre of an imaginative grid that positioned all the other continents in subordinate spaces. Many imperial projects were inspired by the idea that Europe was the hearth and pinnacle of civilization the pivot of world “history” and “geography”, and had the special task of completing human development by bringing the rest of the world up to its mark. Imperial expansion was then conceived in triumphalist terms, as a universally beneficent agent of progress and an inevitable consequence of European superiority. Nourished by the Orientalist discourse of “Othering”, Europeans saw the world as their rightful inheritance and represented colonial intervention as a response to the appeal of land for astute use of its resources, to the calling of humanity which searches for universal betterment and for the of the need of the colonized who wait for redemption from their own ignorance and violence. These were compelling fictions that had profound material consequences. The geopolitical configuration of non-European lands and peoples as uncultivated or backward, and hence in need of domestication and rule, is an intrinsic feature of colonial and imperial mappings.

The operational link between Orientalism, imperialism and colonial geopolitical mapping has been shown by Said in the way in which the West engaged (and continues to deal) with the East. The West resorted to justify its colonial intervention by elaborating imaginative geographies of “us” and “them”, and by representing cultural and geographical differences as unchanging essences. The West fabricated binary oppositions between a dynamic/rational/masculine/ democratic ‘Occident’ and an eternal/excessive/ feminine/despotic ‘Orient’. Said has also brought to the fore how travellers, geographical societies and professional geographers contributed to empire, and how imperial categories of thought and colonial practices have been shaped by explorers, travel-writers, cartographers, surveyors, photographers and landscape artists. In short, imperialism was conceived by Said as a multifaceted “struggle over geography” (Said, *CI* 7). Said’s conception suggests that geography should be treated as both a discipline and discourse of empire; as a set of geographical ideas, institutions and practices that induced and legitimized territorial expansion; and as a dynamic medium through which European attitudes of dominance and metropolitan-colonial relationships were imagined, represented and negotiated.

Imperialism, and no less colonialism, was driven by covetous national agendas and by a range of imperial ideas that revolved around the utilization of space. Imperial differentiation also stemmed from what might be called the intensive and extensive geographies of European movement, interaction and expansion. These tensions of empire are imbued with the perspectives of postcolonialism and postmodernism. A considerable critical attention has been paid to the Eurocentric dimensions of imperialism particularly the nature of colonial discourse because they point out that while colonial empires have been largely dissolved, global relations are still structured by imperial attitudes and the affairs of postcolonial societies are still shaped by western frameworks of knowledge. Such recognitions have generated new debates within and beyond geography about the nature of “Otherness”, the legacies of colonialism, and how the West continues to engage the world in imperial terms. European politicians struggled to

administer large, sprawling settler empires and sustain firm metropolitan-colonial bonds. European colonists forged identities that diverged from metropolitan visions of empire and led colonial societies out of empire. Such insights fracture and pluralize stark oppositional models of Europe and its (inferior) “Others” and prompt us to think about imperialism as a geographically variegated system of power and knowledge.

Said has explained how art is implicit in the meaning of “geography” through its embrace of pictorial representation and imaginative appeal. Hence, geography takes the form of a politico-cultural expression and shares the epistemological fixation with fictive representation on which western imperial project has converged. Thus Said has directed our attention to the fact that European oceanic exploration and nation-building was closely dependent on geographical knowledge. Furthermore, recent work in the history of geography has also drawn the attention to these issues through a critical interrogation of geopolitical complicity in the adventures of colonialism and imperialism and, in particular, of the reciprocities between the intellectual formation of the discipline and the political trajectory of European expansion, exploitation and dispossession (Driver, “Geography’s Empire” 24-26). Although the contemporary Anglo-American discipline has become sensitive to its intellectual formation as a situated knowledge, it continues to rely on what D. Slater has called a “Euro-Americanism” that projects its own situations as “lineages of universalism” (1). Understanding geographical knowledge as a situated concern can mean several things. Geographical knowledge cannot be understood as something set apart from the intellectual, social and political milieus of its time. In this sense, geopolitical knowledge emerged as an institutionalized academic subject, leading scientific ideas, such as neo-Lamarckianism and Darwinism. (Withers 4)

In such sophisticated and collocated matter, indeed, it is difficult to think and write about knowledge without evoking spatial vocabularies, from metaphoric ideas about fields of expertise, to the specific institutional spaces in which science is located, and the landscape imaginaries against which European ideas about nature, bodies, and cultural practice are shaped. A focus on the geography of knowledge draws attention to how different kinds of knowledge are co-constituted through particular places, and embodied practices. From this perspective, knowledge emerges as hybrid, embodied and historically and spatially contingent (G Davies 294).

This colonizing gesture was explicit and obvious in the formulations of classical spatial science, whose supposedly general models were almost invariably predicated on specifically European and American cases. Geography in the sense of discourse rather than discipline has a much more general involvement in Eurocentrism. European colonialism worked on certain conceptual strategies that entered directly into the formation of its colonial policy. By absolutizing time and space, European meanings of history and geography were taken to be natural and inviolable, as marking the centre around which other histories and other geographies were to be organized. Similarly, through the production of spaces of inclusion and exclusion, the Europeans had normalized the subject-position of the white, while subjected the “Other” to a configurationally abnormal position. The production of geographical knowledge has always involved claims to know “space” in particular ways. This recognition of an intricate connection between power, knowledge and geography has transformed the ways in which we conceptualized human geography and space. From the Kantian perspective, space (like time) is conceived of as a universal of human existence, an external coordinate of reality, an empty grid of mutually exclusive points, “an unchanging box” within which objects exist and events occur (Smith 67-8).

It has become commonplace to treat space as a basic organizing concept of the geopolitical mapping in which not only the spatial relations that matter in geography but also power,

knowledge and economy. This movement involved an interrogation of the substantive processes that were inscribed on and which operated through the production of spatial systems and spatial structures. From such a perspective, concepts of space were not to be adjudicated by appeals to the courts of philosophy or science, but through the conduct of social and political practices. As D. Harvey put it, “The question what is space? is therefore replaced by the question how is it that different human practices create and make use of distinctive conceptualizations of space?” (*The limits to capital* 14)

In his landmark study *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and The Production of Space* (1984) N. Smith had described capitalism as a continuous, but jagged process of expansion into absolute space through the advances of colonialism and imperialism until those absolute spaces were differentiated and transformed within the production of a larger and highly unstable relative space (69). It is apt here to quote what N. Smith and C. Katz emphasized in this regard as the way in which these material productions were elaborated in ideological registers, thereby forging a powerful connection between “material” and “metaphorical” spaces:

The emergence of capitalist social relations in Europe brought a very specific set of social and political shifts that established absolute space as the premise of hegemonic social practices. The progressive, outward expansion of European hegemony through the conquest, colonization and defence of new territories; the division of global space into mutually exclusive nation-states: these and other shifts marked the emerging space-economy of capitalism from the sixteenth century onwards and represented a powerful enactment of absolute space as the geographical basis for social intercourse. (75)

History, Geopolitics and Landscaping Palestine:

Theorizations of space were all significant ideas which were extended and reworked through other politico-intellectual traditions in which the production of space was caught up in the production of “race”, gender and sexuality. This underscores the significance of cultural formations, cultural practices and cultural politics in the production, interpretation and transformation of space and geo-cultural map. The most significant contributions to re-theorizing space in these terms have concerned both epistemology and ontology in which claims to knowledge about space have been registered. Landscape and maps are conceived of as functioning as representations; as orderings of space, re-describing their naturalization as the product of cultural-political practices that called into question the systems of power. This epistemology involves human geography in analytical gestures that invoke through a particular conception of space both colonizing white mythology.

It is perfectly true that constellations of power and knowledge are typically elaborated through a spatial system of inclusions and exclusions: most generally, through the demarcation of a space of the “Same” from which the “Other” is supposedly excluded. This also involves what G. Rose refers to as “imagining a “somewhere else”” (*Feminism and geography* 153). For Rose this possibility is central to a feminist imaginary, whereas other writers have drawn attention to the emancipatory recognition of similarly hybrid spaces under the signs of postcolonialism and transculturation.

The dualism between “real, material, concrete space” and “non-real, imagined, symbolic space” Rose claims, constitutes the performances of normative power within a masculinist geographical imaginary:

[Real space] is simultaneously concrete and dynamic, yet both these qualities signify the masculine; the non-real is simultaneously fluid and imprisoning, but always engendered as feminine. Material real space could thus be re-described as the effect of masculinist

power; its very materiality also its particular masculinity; but non-real space is also the effect of masculinist power, its lack of reality the sign of its feminization. [T]he distinction is a dualism which reiterates the constitutive relation between the masculine “Same” and the feminine “Other”. Through trying to fix difference, they fix the same. (Rose, “As If The Mirrors Had Bled” 59)

On another plane, language is a proxy for power. Accordingly, those in power use language to disseminate truth selectively through a process of representation and concealment. When applied to the Israel/Palestine issue, this insight reveals how the interplay of representation and concealment permeates the exercise of power, and why there is little reason to expect any progress in the situation. This geopolitically unfolds the strategies of dominant powers which inhere within the productions of space that seek in order to confine “Others” to their “proper” places.

When the history of Palestine is invoked, the idea of concealing the history and experiences of a people under occupation permeates the language of the powerful side on housing for Jewish settlers. The land is then rezoned for housing by Israeli planning authorities while the former users, invariably Palestinian farmers or shepherds, and the former uses are declared absent and nonconforming. So successful is the Israeli discourse of concealment on this issue that it has managed to convince American news organizations to refrain from mentioning the words “settlement” or “illegal” when referring to these installations. The preferred term has become “Israeli neighborhoods.” Housing built by the occupier in Palestinian Territory is actually but one element in a broader Infrastructure of domination referred to by the Jerusalem-based, Israeli Committee to End House Demolitions as “The Matrix of Control.” From the occupation, to the settlements and the Wall, the entire apparatus behind the Matrix of Control is illegal under provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention and now most recently by the Opinion of the International Court of Justice. But, it is said that those who control the present control the past, and those who control the past control the future. As long as the powerful side in this conflict continues to exercise control over the present, it will conceal the history of the “Other” as a means of perpetuating its power into the future. In truth, the conflict in Israel/Palestine is not about the Infrastructure of Terror, but geopolitically it is about the fact that one group of people dominating and subjugating the other. It is about discursive rationalizations that justify such domination and render the people under domination invisible. It is only when these facts on the ground are dismantled, and the discourses justifying them cease, that there can be any starting point for justice in the region.

In the case of the Palestinian plight, for instance, the emphasis focuses on geographical landscapes as representations and instruments of power, and the practice of “territoriality” which refers to the power of human agency to influence patterns of development in a place by asserting control over a geographical area. The question here is: How do territorial landscapes communicate the power of dominant groups to reorganize patterns of material life, politics, and culture in particular places, and how does landscape itself become an instrument of dominant groups to control subalterns in this process of transformation?

The use of power to reshape landscapes is a historically enduring phenomenon in the making of modernity, present in both major routes to the modern world, capitalist development and nation-building. This geo-cultural landscaping reveals how the imperial and colonial business uses force to reshape the economic and physical landscape, and uses this corporate power to rearrange elements on the land. This focus on the interplay of power and landscape in Palestine shows that geography of fragmentation and dispossession in Palestine marks a

longstanding pattern of territoriality. In this pattern, dominant group --inspired by the discourses of entitlement to a “promised” land backed by the state -- re-imagines the landscape and recasts its socio-economic, demographic, and physical character to fit this imagined vision. According to Gary Fields landscaping is used by practitioners of power to “promote systems of segregation and control movements of groups designated as threats by virtue of their representation as “Other”” (2010, 63). In his essay, “Landscaping Palestine: Reflections of Enclosure in a Historical Mirror”, Fields argues,

What is occurring on the Palestinian landscape is a program of re-making land and shifting populations that is different from the partitioning of space in the walled borderlands, the gated communities and the fortified enclaves. It is a landscape aimed at transforming the economy, demography, and culture of territorial space itself through a time-honored practice -- the practice of *enclosure*. (63-4)

As a geographical concept, “landscape” is a social product (Cosgrove 13–14). It represents the outcome of human interaction with human subjects and material objects that reorders the surface of land. Yet, landscape is more than a plot of ground. Landscape can also be understood as a dynamic political process. “To “landscape”” argues Fields “refers to a *process* in which human agency transforms what is occurring on land. Both product and process, landscapes are representations of the societies anchored to them and the relations of power that govern them” (“Landscaping Palestine”, 64). In this sense, the Palestinian landscape has been transformed by processes of geopolitical powers from an imagined place of “land without people” into a “redeemed territory” materialized in the creation of Israel. Modern geopolitical mapping has created a different set of imperatives for exercising power and maintaining the social order. In this new historical environment, power evolved into a more subtle but no less formidable mechanism by controlling individuals’ spatial environs. In this way, power as a form of control over human beings emerged for Foucault as a thoroughly spatial phenomenon (Philo 121–28).

Although theorists of territoriality draw upon this insight from Foucault about the interplay of power and space, it can be broadened into two important ways: first by emphasizing the socially constructed character of geographical landscapes and the power of human agency in transforming geographical space, and second by acknowledging the role of subalterns in resisting power and thus helping shape territorial outcomes. Briefly, territoriality is human action exercised on space. It refers to the efforts of individuals or groups “to affect, influence or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area” (Sack 19). What emerges from the insights of Foucault and territorial theorists influenced by him is a narrative of power. The landscape of Palestine today is part of this ongoing spatial history in which dominant groups and subalterns confront one another in an effort to impose and defend competing visions of life on the land.

This type of territorial ambition and narrative of power, which involve re-imagining the character of land and reinventing the notions of who is rightfully entitled to it, are part of a more generalized cultural process, described by Said as *imaginative geography*. Said’s concept of “imaginative geography” suggests, among many other things, the way actors with territorial ambitions reinvent meanings about the landscapes they covet and frame discourses justifying why they belong on, and are entitled to take control of, the landscapes they reinvent. Although acknowledging the incentives for territorial expansionism to be material, Said argues that the inspiration for controlling other places and people is rooted in culturally shaped attitudes and

ideologies. He insists that reimagining landscapes—making new meanings about places—is but a first step to remaking them.

In Palestine, this began with an imagined geography first popularized in the late 19th century by Theodor Herzl to solve the problem of anti-Semitism by creating a state haven for the Jewish people. This imagined vision also represented a redefinition of property rights in seeking to remake the land where Palestinians resided. In justifying Palestine for the project of building a Jewish state, Herzl characterized the Palestinian landscape as primitive, absent cultivation with low levels of development. European Jews, by contrast, with their experience of commerce and economic development, would improve this land. In this way, Zionists crafted a redefinition of rights to land based on an imagined vision of Palestine as a landscape not only historically Jewish, but also in need of development (Shlaim 13–17; Zerubavel 14–17). When this process of moving populations spatially and socially to remake land assumes geo-cultural dimension, enclosure is achieved and land assumes a new identity. The result is a forced exile, displaced refugees and conflictual identity formation.

Enclosing landscape in Palestine is a story driven on an “ethnocratic” aim to “unmake” Palestine as Palestinian and to “redeem” it as Jewish. Such a project of “de-Arabising” and “Judaizing” Palestine was at the heart of the colonial project which sees in Israel as the extended part of the West in the center of the East. The geo-cultural and geo-historical mapping of Palestine has been situated as the key-point in the Orientalist/colonialist discourse. According to Fields, “Within a process of “imagining” landscape, enclosure on the Palestinian landscape is part of a historically enduring interplay of power and space” (“Landscaping Palestine” 79). As a result of this ideologically imagined vision of land, the Israeli violence against Palestinians appears to be rooted in a more historically longstanding narrative about power, property, and socially constructed notions of progress, along with practices of territorial dispossession and conquest -- “This practice of constructing alternative representations of places and people is what Edward Said refers to as the crafting of “imaginative geographies”” (Fields, “Imagining Geography” 234).

In a significant essay entitled “Invention, Memory and Place” published two years before his death, Said treats imaginative geography as a form of invention used by practitioners of empire--and Zionism as well--to re-interpret the meaning of certain territories and create discourses justifying the need for control over such re-imagined places. For Said, this exercise in imagination begins by reconstructing the history of those places coveted by empire builders. Such a process of recasting the historical geography of places, however, fuses two key themes one focusing on *property rights*, the other on *progress*. For Said, geography is “a socially constructed and maintained sense of place” (180). Said has extensively shown how scenes of the Palestinian nativity and landscape, for instance, appear in European Renaissance paintings as taking place in a sort of denatured Palestine, since none of the artists had ever seen the place. Such an idealized landscape gradually took shape and sustained in the European imagination for hundreds of years. These scenes of memory, according to Said, led Bernard of Clairvaux to announce a crusade to reclaim Palestine and the holy places from the Muslims, and that after hundreds of years of living in Europe Zionist Jews could still feel that Palestine had stood still in time and was theirs, despite millennia of history and the presence of actual inhabitants. This too is also an indication of how geography can be manipulated, invented, characterized quite apart from a site’s merely physical reality. (180-1)

Imaginative geography, in effect, is a precondition for the politics of territorial conquest. It is also the imaginative geography of Palestine, put into practice by early colonial Zionists and

their present-day descendants, that is the source of all aggression against the Palestinians today. In fact, Said's crafted concept of "imaginative geographies" has explained in depth the formation of ideologies aimed at controlling places and the people living there. Thus for Said, imagining geography is a cultural process of creating representations about places designed to reinforce and at the same time justify the conquest of territory and the subjugation of its people. This cultural process of ideology-making refers to the way groups with power invent the meaning of geographically-placed landscapes while reinterpreting notions of who *belongs* to the places being imagined. For Said, such conquests of territory begin with the practice of inventing new meanings about territory and re-imagining systems of sovereignty on the landscape. Gary Fields has avowedly stated that "State terror against Palestinian civilians has its origins in an imagined vision about the landscape of Palestine" at the core of which "geographical imagination was a vision of "Judaizing" and "de-Arabising" this territory" ("Imagining Geography" 243). The historical geography of the Palestinian landscape attests to the thoroughness of this effort at both imagination and implementation.

Located within a historically geo-political contestation, violence against the Palestinian population committed by the Israeli state is rooted in the convergence of two historically created discourses about land and landscape. The first derives from nineteenth-century nationalism affirming the legitimacy of culturally differentiated groups to statehood, and the influence of this ideology in convincing European Jewry of its right to a territorial "container" within the modern state system. The second is rooted in notions of entitlement to property and ideas about land improvement. From this convergence evolved the idea of a "Jewish state," along with a specific ideology for remaking Palestinian territory, the ideology of Zionism. At its core, Zionism was an exercise in re-imagining the geography of the Palestinian landscape as a Jewish landscape. Although secular as an ideology, Zionism drew from the belief of many Jews and Jewish organizations in the right of the Jewish people to return to Palestine as part of God's will (Taylor 151-162). Hence, dispossession, whether from British enclosure, American expansion, or Israeli occupation, is an ongoing story of the same historical lineage of what Said has termed "the politics of dispossession."

To admittedly conclude, Said's engagement with the notion of imaginative geography and landscaping comes from his own experience as an exiled subject living "out of place", attached to the place of belonging. He writes in the "Introduction" to *Orientalism*:

My own experience of these matters is in part what made me write this book. The life of an Arab Palestinian in the West, particularly in America, is disheartening... The web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism, dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arab or the Muslim is very strong indeed, and it is this web which every Palestinian has come to feel as his uniquely punishing destiny. (27)

Recalling personal memories, Said's intellectual work must be understood in the context of the Palestine question, for at the heart of both is the idea of dispossession, be it the actual dispossession of Palestinians or the intellectual dispossession of the colonized who are robbed of their voice and represented through the prism of Orientalism. The condition of exile that was placed on Said was intrinsically related to the "in-between" character of his academic work.

However, Said's dialectical method shows how as a Palestinian intellectual experiencing double displacement and alienation is living "out of place". At the same time, it also states how exile has given him the pleasure of being an insider and an outsider. Exile was for him also a way of being attached to a wider space of humanity, belonging to one common world of human geography and of possibly overcoming narrow-mindedness and taking an outside view on an

ethical cosmopolitanism, which takes common humanity as its goal. This universalism that is developed through a continual taking of another's place is a lived one, rather than the false universalism that is based on abstraction and cannot really take into account the other. As Aijaz Ahmad has pointed out, "In the field of cultural studies, Said is our most vivacious narrator of the history of European humanism's complicity in the history of European colonialism." (99)

Substantially, for Said dialogue was the ability to engage on the level of social reality with literature and society, rather than depicting it from above in sweeping generalizations. Politically, he emphasized how this ability to dialogue presupposed equality of the interlocutors rather than establishing it as its end. This point connected neatly with Said's critique of the Oslo Accords and the subsequent Israeli-Palestinian "peace process". The co-existence he fought for was not to be reached by subsidiary Palestinian negotiators at America's behest, but in real dialogue in which public intellectuals could play a role through the expansion of horizons.

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