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## **Interrogating Knowledge Production Post 9/11: A Deleuzian Reading of Hamid Dabashi's Understanding of "Post-Orientalism"**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper analyzes Dabashi's understanding of the epistemic exhaustion of knowledge production designated by the term "Orientalism" after 9/11, the reclamation of agency, the dissolution of the categories of "the West" and "the East" and the role of the intellectual. After examining these concepts, the attempt is to figure out parallels between Dabashi's argument about "epistemic endosmosis" and Deleuze's understanding of "unlimited semiosis" unleashed by capitalism. Dabashi's foregrounding of the recodification of racial relations to adapt to the market logic will be juxtaposed with Deleuze's concept of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization." Dabashi's proposition of the implosion of the binaries of "the East" and "the West" will be juxtaposed with the Deleuzian concept of "schizoanalysis," and the dismantling of dualisms. Lastly, this paper attempts to trace affinities between Dabashi's conceptualisation of a revolutionary intellectual and the Deleuzian concept of "war machine" and the formation of a deterritorialized subjectivity that is able to contend and relentlessly defy the effects of power to establish rigid identities and entities.

### **Keywords:**

Post-Orientalism, Epistemic Endosmosis, Semiosis, Deterritorialization, Nomadism, War Machine, Knowledge Production

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The ongoing era of transnational flows and diasporization of "the Middle-Eastern" people, changes in demographics in "the Western" countries, the rise of Islamophobia post 9/11, and the polymorphous production of negative stereotypes of Islam in mass media demand a re-conceptualisation of "the Middle East" as a fixed sign with segregated boundaries between "the East" and "the West." The idea of "writing back" as a mode of resistance to counter the authority of "the West" needs to be reformulated in the contemporary world where both American jingoism and Islamic fundamentalism's claim to an ideological purity are assuming unmanageable and hysterical proportions. According to Hamid Dabashi, 9/11 and its aftermath have initiated an "epistemic shift" that has paved the way for newer conceptual possibilities where the older forms of knowledge production designated by "Orientalism" are no longer historically viable. In order to understand this paradigmatic shift, one has to study it beyond the relatively fixed point of the present; one has to be simultaneously in and out of the historical moment. Taking Walter Benjamin's essay "On Concept of

History” (1940) as a point of departure, Dabashi argues that “when a moment is transitional, it cannot see itself as transitional, nor can a critical theorist do without the moment when the time has narratively (theoretically) stood still” (x-xi). He argues that the “post” in his “post- Orientalism” marks a “Messianic cession” as we have burst out from the teleological conception of history which does not admit any heterogeneity. This is precisely the moment where the ruptures and fissures in knowledge formation in a “Time of Terror” have been glaringly exposed (xii). Dabashi is deeply critical of Samuel Huntington’s thesis of “the Clash of Civilizations” and argues that such dichotomous conceptualisations have been sufficiently deployed and exploited for the functioning of the globalised capital and the contemporary world has entered what he names as “a post-civilizational period in global conflict.” The contemporary perception of militant Islamism, whether manufactured by the US or otherwise, is unceasingly premised upon an obsolete discursive formation that has been a legacy of the colonial phase of Islamic confrontation with European modernity. Dabashi proclaims the death knell of that version of Islamic ideology and welcomes the emergence of a new way of organizing the socio-cultural reality of Islam (*Islamic Liberation* 1). This situation demands not only a rethinking of “us” versus “them” but also reconfiguring the question of agency.

Dabashi is an Iranian professor of Iranian studies and Comparative Literature at Columbia University who significantly draws from the Saidian corpus and critically engages with it to offer a new way of looking at the production of “the Orient” especially in the aftermath of 9/11 and the rise of Islamophobia. The critical theorisation of Félix Guattari, a French psychiatrist and political activist and Gilles Deleuze, a French philosopher, emanates from a very different school of thought and is shaped by very different considerations especially if one were to analyze their location and positionality. However, it was very interesting for one to discover that a Deleuzian understanding of “semiotics of territorialization” is deeply embedded in the works of Dabashi even though he does not explicitly claim to have been inspired by it. Again, taking recourse to a Deleuzian framework helps one to understand the methodological intersection better. This paper purports to undertake a detailed analysis of Dabashi’s understanding of the epistemic exhaustion of knowledge production designated by the term “Orientalism,” the reclamation of agency, the dissolution of the categories of “the West” and “the East” and the function of the intellectual. After examining these concepts, the attempt would be to trace parallels between Dabashi’s understanding of the modus operandi of capital as transnational and ideologically promiscuous, semiotics of imperialism and extermination, the implosion of the binaries of “the East” and “the West” and the Deleuzian understanding of capitalism as schizophrenic, characterised by “semiotics of territorialization and deterritorialization,” the dismantling of dualisms, the critical task of “schizoanalysis,” “nomadism” and “war machine.” Juxtaposing Deleuze with Dabashi helps one re-think the intersection between politics and (literary) theory vis-à-vis politics versus (literary) theory and the nature of knowledge production in terms of a process. The paper will focus on the following three interdependent thematic concerns of Dabashi in order to analyse his idea of “Post-Orientalism”:-

1. The Politics of Knowledge Production post 9/11
2. The Reclamation and Reconfiguring of Agency
3. The Function of the Intellectual

1. The Politics of Knowledge Production post 9/11

Dabashi proposes that the post 9/11 world is witnessing a form of knowledge bereft of "agential subjectness," that constitutes the methodology of an "empire without hegemony." While European colonialism operated through diversified hegemonies, not confined to scholarship but as Said has foregrounded, also in art, literature, and popular fantasies as well, American imperialism functions without a determining hegemony and by politico-economic clout. The transformation of old-fashioned Orientalists into Area Studies specialists is now further metamorphosed into active propagandists who work in collusion with think tank strategists. He calls this "epistemic endosmosis" - knowledge crafted with vested interest in think tanks and diffused into the public domain. This kind of disposable knowledge production that provides instant gratification and is then eliminated after use is analogous to American fast food. He argues that such kind of disposable knowledge production is compatible with the imperial power they serve in the time of postmodern crisis of subject-formation and shattering of illusions of complete sovereignty and authority. Taking a somewhat Foucauldian position, Dabashi differentiates between power as emanating from a relatively authenticated and centralised locus and power as existing in a diffused and amorphous state. He contends that the kind of power that was integral to the construction of a supposedly omniscient and agential European subject that fostered the classical period of "Orientalism" and produced knowledge about "the Orient" in a way that it can be understood, possessed and conquered, no longer exists. Knowledge that works in close collaboration with the current period of imperial rule is knowledge by endosmosis, knowledge of nothing of consequence, knowledge produced without claims of agentiality, for an empire with no hegemony (*Post-Orientalism* 222-224).

Dabashi argues that the US sponsored military aggression against the "terrorists" is premised upon what he identifies as a sort of semiotic imperialism at work as all the grand postures of universalism on the part of the US betray their parochial perspective of world geography (*Post-Orientalism* 210). The imperial machinery manufactures such disposable knowledge in tandem with the sanctioning of militaristic adventures. By referring to an editorial cartoon published in the 4 September 2007 issue of the *Columbus Post-Dispatch* where Iranians are represented as cockroaches ejecting out of a sewer, Dabashi tries to foreground how the collective negative consensus is established about an entire community by repeatedly depicting them as not worthy of being treated as human beings. Dabashi understands such a mode of representation to be characteristic of what he understands as the semiotics of extermination. The propaganda of a military attack against Iran is not only validated but also made to sound most urgent by drawing on the analogy of cockroaches, for they

must be exterminated for a healthy and hassle-free living (*Post-Orientalism* xvi-xvii). He also points out that the manner by which the US propaganda machinery has functioned since 9/11 is deeply predicated upon the manufacturing of consent, the discarding of history and the construction of collective amnesia. The spectacle of attacks could not be allowed to be remembered. Given how globalised capital operates in an amorphous manner, the faceless enemy had to be constructed by giving an identity and location. The fabrication of successive enemies premised upon the politicisation of criminal acts of a band of militant Muslims became the modus operandi of the empire (*Brown Skin* 68). Dabashi talks about how the ideological machinery of capital keeps refashioning itself and recodifies racial relations to open up avenues to exercise domination and control so as to maintain its supremacy. He argues that capital is in the end colour-blind, it simply wants to manufacture at the lowest possible cost and make the maximum possible profit irrespective of those who bear the brunt of this vicious cycle (*Brown Skin* 37). Dabashi contends that since the events of 9/11, there has been a semiotic transmutation of “blacks” and “Jews” into “Arabs” and “Muslims” respectively, in the political dictionary of America and this was particularly evident during the presidential election of Barack Obama in 2008 (*Brown Skin* 114).

According to Deleuze and Guattari, capitalism creates a situation of “schizophrenia” where fixed meaning systems are destroyed by the market nexus that leads to “unlimited semiosis,” an extremely fluid form of meaning making that is polyvocal, multiple and nomadic. But this limitless sense of possibilities also get continuously challenged by the reactionary capitalist by-product of “paranoia” which restricts the emancipatory potentialities that have been unleashed. Deleuze and Guattari view capitalism as not just a historical or political experience but also as a psychological one as every psychic investment is a social investment and therefore they deploy the concepts of “schizophrenia” and “paranoia” (Holland 2-3). The economic process in a capitalist regime functions according to the mechanism of “axiomatization” that in turn produces two antithetical effects: “decoding” and “recoding” which are related to representation.”Decoding” implies doing away with established meanings. Cycles of “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization” through “axiomatization” constitute one of the fundamental characteristics of capitalism. If capitalist society deterritorializes because of the objective of incessant revolutionising of production and consumption so as to generate a surplus value, concomitantly it also undermines the given codes as per the market nexus. The capitalist machine cannot code in a way that the whole social field can be covered. However, it temporarily invests the social field or recodes it to serve the purpose of reterritorialization that limits access to socially produced flows. As compared to the other modes of functioning, the capitalist mode of investment of meaning is most ambivalent and contradictory because it sponsors both “deterritorialization” and “reterritorialization.” As a consequence of the ceaseless metamorphosis of signs, one sign is constantly decoded and supplanted by another. As soon as the capitalist system defines a boundary, it deterritorializes this boundary in the quest for a new territory. This explains the imperialist tendencies within capital which Marx delineated, and it's desire to find new markets for its flows.

Capitalism is therefore premised upon codes, values, norms that are frequently changed to conquer a new market (Holland 20-21). This is exactly what Dabashi implies by recodification of racial relations to serve the flows of capital. Dabashi's understanding of the semiotics of imperialism and semiotics of extermination can be juxtaposed with the Deleuzian understanding of working of capital and the notion of "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization." Moreover Dabashi's terminology of "epistemic endosmosis" to explicate the generation of disposable knowledge about "the Middle East" which is diffused in the social fabric and then discarded after it has served its purpose, can be juxtaposed with the Deleuzian understanding of capitalism as unleashing "unlimited semiosis" which for all its liberatory potential, is ultimately channelised to serve the market nexus. The State is itself incorporated into the workings of capitalist flows; it no longer monitors and checks these flows, but itself assumes the role of a flow to lay down the conditions for free flow of production and consumption and becomes the custodian of the capitalist system. As a result, the State oversees the "deterritorialization" intrinsic to capital flows and makes certain that they are "reterritorialized" in accordance with the demands of capital. This necessitates regimes of "anti-production" in the form of repressive measures like law, police and army to ensure the easy flow of capital (Rae 13-14). The ideological landscape of the US is a quintessential embodiment of such a functioning of capital where capital has overpowered the socio-political apparatus of the State and has left the State with the perpetual task of codifying and recodifying the socio-cultural matrix to sustain the supremacy of the logic of capital.

## 2. The Reclamation and Reconfiguring of Agency

The attempt in this section is to examine Dabashi's argument that with the crashing of the Twin Towers in the US, the binary opposition of "Islam and the West" manufactured in negotiation with colonial modernity also collapsed. Doing away with this Manichean framework and its concomitant myopic vision has unleashed a myriad of possibilities as far as the geopolitical reconfiguration of power is concerned, both for the globalised empire and revolutionary resistances to it. Dabashi heralds the fait accompli of Islamic ideology as the structuring postulate of the politically combative relationship with colonial modernity. Militant Islamism took inception in the early nineteenth century as a counter to European colonialism, and slowly transformed a faith into a terrain of ideological rebuttal to colonial modernity. In the course of this transmutation, the innate cosmopolitanism of Islam was lost. He sees the initial triumph and eventual collapse of the Islamic revolution in Iran and the subsequent developments in world politics as signalling the death of Islamic ideology. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the coming back of the US endorsed, Saudi funded and Pakistan governed Taliban to haunt its own architects, the accession of the US as the sole superpower, the well-known tussle between the US and Europe over the Second Gulf War, and the emergence of Europe as an independent power in competition with the

US, proclaimed the death of the credibility of “the West.” The collapsing of “the West” as a structuring principle also devoid Islam of its main interlocutor. As a consequence both “Islam” and “the West” have exploded as categories (*Islamic Liberation* 2-3). This section intends to juxtapose Dabashi's proposition of the implosion of the binaries of “the East” and “the West” with the Deleuzian concept of “schizoanalysis” and the dismantling of dualisms to facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the current politico-ideological landscape and most importantly, to foreground the reclamation and the reconfiguration of agency that the situation urgently demands.

According to Dabashi, the modus operandi of capital has always been transnational as capital is ideologically promiscuous as it carries an inherent ability to monopolise anything and everything (*Brown Skin* 9). Capitalism has never had a centre and thus no periphery. The periphery is already in the centre, for that centre has been involved in the territorial acquisition of the peripheries. People of diverse communities from the colonised lands now inhabit “the West” and do away with the possibility of any preconceived notions regarding a community irrespective of its native land. The category of “Third World” is itself the creation of “the first world” (*Islamic Liberation* 167-68).

Dabashi argues that the chauvinistic vision of a colonial mapping that fails to look at the world beyond the binary is the problem. Drawing on the American feminist scholar, Zillah Eisenstein's observation, that “in the twenty-first century, ‘the West’ means the US more than Europe as well as the globalised forms of cultural capitalism which no longer have any one geographical location,” Dabashi proposes that such an emancipatory vision shatters the geographical hierarchy of control, premised upon “the globalised forms of cultural capitalism,” and he sees it as the first step towards a liberated imagination of world geography. Corroborating Eisenstein's point, Dabashi argues that imperial power controls the world in a way that protects the interest of the privileged classes not only within the territory of the US but even outside it. This explains the collusion of American billionaires with Saudi and Kuwaiti billionaires, Asian entrepreneurs, and Iranian clerical cliques (*Islamic Liberation* 150-151). The dismantling of the false dichotomies between the centre and the margins of world economy, the colonised and the coloniser work in tandem with the destruction of the meta-narratives of emancipation, Islamism and nationalism. The “end of the Islamic ideology” should not be equated with the death of history. In fact, it is the commencement of a history in negotiation with the imperial empire. Dabashi argues that a new “Islamic liberation theodicy” awaits to be articulated where Islam voluntarily chooses to be all encompassing and transcends the colour logic, for abuse of labour by capital knows no boundaries (*Islamic Liberation* 168).

Dabashi foregrounds that the distinction between a “liberation theology” and a “liberation theodicy” is premised upon the difference between a liberation project secluded from the developments of the world and an emancipatory movement that is

closely tied to the dissolution of all global binaries. A "liberation theodicy" cannot afford not to take cognizance of the existence of the entire heritage of the faith while at the same time negotiate its rhythms in a polyvocal context and multicultural world. With the implosion of "the West," Islam has now assumed the status of a buoyant signifier in quest for multiple connotations (*Islamic Liberation* 216-17).

Dabashi contends that envisaging a "post-Western world" necessitates the destruction of the structures of knowledge and the fictions "the West" has sustained over the years. Dismantling that binary is a crucial feat that must be carried out by recuperating the worlds that preceded it. He posits the recovering of the precolonial condition of cosmopolitan worldliness in which Muslims lived, as the most important manner of jolting out from the slumber inherent in the current mode of knowledge production. He identifies the historical agency of the Muslim who recovers the precolonial Muslim worldliness as a matter of immense significance. (*Muslim in the World* 4-5).

The retrieval of Islamic heritage that Dabashi proposes is premised on what he designates as "a hermeneutics of alterity rather than a politics of identity." He argues that the "hermeneutics of alterity," suggested by him has often occupied an integral component of Islamic experiences historically but has been repressed by the identitarian compulsions imposed on Muslims during its confrontation with colonial modernity. By dismissing the efficacy of "dialogue of civilization," he argues to do away with thinking on civilizations along the age old binaries. Both "the clash" and "the dialogue" among civilizations exaggerates that in actuality must be diluted and eventually done away with (*Muslim in the World* 15). According to Dabashi, for transgressing manufactured dichotomies, Muslims need a "hermeneutics of alterity" that fashions them in appositional, not oppositional terms (*Muslim in the World* 26).

For all the amorphous nature of the American empire, the mode of resistance cannot be amorphous and demands national and transnational alliances. The very presumption of postcoloniality has extended the colonial domination of the world into the normative domination of knowledge production against which people revolt not only to overthrow their ruling regimes but also the regime of knowledge that entraps their struggles in dominant terms. Dabashi views the "Arab Spring" as reclaiming a global public sphere and restoring historical agency and moving beyond metaphysical bipolarity along an East-West axis (*Arab Spring* 14-16). The "Orientalist" will to knowledge was characterised by the European colonial will to power. The will to challenge that very colonial power triggers the will to counter-knowledge, which necessitates a narrative with a new interlocutor (*Arab Spring* 61). The "Arab World" is no longer what it was- it has become a floating signifier. Dabashi views the "Arab Spring," transnational rebellions in Morocco, Iran, Syria and Yemen as conjuring a new map of freedom, removed from the imperial and postcolonial organs of power. He thinks that the reconfiguring highlights a drastic transformation in an open-ended dynamic if such imaginings continue to be both historically rooted and freely defy the



weight of history. These uprisings are characterized by a rebuttal of imperial domination the people have suffered as well as the postcolonial projects that had emerged and now ideologically depleted themselves in Islamist, Nationalist or Socialist grand narratives, as the struggle is as much against domestic tyranny as against foreign control. These revolts are transversal, restructuring the administrative bodies from the bottom, and thus creating new avenues of production of self, challenging status quo and thereby necessitating alternative modes of knowledge formation and dissemination. The regime of knowledge associated with that politics is being reformulated, by way of reconfiguring the worlds one inhabits, and not merely by way of resistance to power. The transversalism of these revolutionary uprisings, as a result, generates its own synergy by consistently expanding the public space they implicate for the exercise of civil liberties (*Arab Spring* 14-16). Dabashi argues that the confounding between the national and the transnational will not only leave the counter-revolutionary forces, which include the US, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic Republic in a state of dilemma but will also unleash alternative ways of mapping and reconfiguring the world (*Arab Spring* 21).

The critical task of the Deleuzian “schizoanalysis” is permeated with revolutionary fervency and purports to destroy the power of representations in all its forms, to move beyond localised subversion to a revolution without reproducing power hierarchies or getting consumed by a new capitalist axiom. Deleuze and Guattari argue that there are multiple regimes of signs and they often co-exist. The real concern for Deleuze and Guattari is not pitting regimes of signs against one another or privileging one over another but interrogating what does the tendency towards change look like and exploring the transformative tendencies within the assemblages of the semiotic systems (*A Thousand* 119). On similar lines, as an extension of W. E. B DuBois’s notion of “double consciousness,” Fanon’s “dual consciousness,” Dabashi speaks of “multiple consciousness” in Iran, though not as a completely disjointed and disintegrated state but rather as something entirely amenable to the emergence of a defiant subject with sufficient scope for creative responses against any modes of oppressive governmentality. The most important repercussion of coming to terms with multiple consciousness is the fact that it does away with habitual thinking in terms of rigid binaries. Acknowledging this multiple consciousness and its concomitant worldliness reveals the social dynamics of a people as a living organism that both rehabilitates and generates its own varied signs and signifiers (*Green Movement* 205, 211). This political open-endedness steers the revolutionary terrain away from an ideological and a hermeneutic direction into a semiotic direction, where signs and signers embark on an open-ended semiological chain reaction of meaning-making that cannot be crystallised in repressive political structures (*Arab Spring* 141). He in fact advocates open-ended revolutions and refutes Marx's notion of the task of philosophy. Marx opined that the task of philosophy is not to interpret the world but to change it; Dabashi forcefully argues that the task of philosophy is to interpret the world, interpret revolutions, in order to change it.

### 3. The Function of the Intellectual

The attempt here is to engage with Dabashi's deconstruction of racism and the depoliticization of criminal acts as a precursor to the decriminalisation of legitimate political movements. Dabashi views the discourse of racism to be premised upon the semiotic foundation of the American empire that consolidates its hold by repeatedly signifying itself with accelerating military prowess and generation of collective amnesia about the atrocities it perpetrates. He identifies the primary function of the native informers to be to fuel the illusion of this virtual empire (*Brown Skin* 128). He compares and contrasts such native informers with the revolutionary intellectuals who are symbolic of a paradigmatic shift in the constructed dialogue between "Islam and the West." This section attempts to find parallels between Dabashi's conceptualisation of a revolutionary intellectual and the Deleuzian concept of "nomadism" and the formation of "deterritorialized" subjectivity that is able to subvert and continuously challenge the effects of power that carry the potential to establish rigid identities and entities.

Dabashi argues that in classical European imperialism, the discursive formations were generated by the imperialists themselves to perpetuate their authority. But now, the native informers have indoctrinated themselves with this knowledge and command the authority of the natives. Dabashi extends Fanon's insights into the contemporary context of the American "war on terror" via Said's notion of "intellectual exile" so as to foreground the ugly side of intellectual migration. While Said glorified the positive aspects of exilic intellectuals who are at odds with the power of the State, Dabashi recognises the liberating force of that exile in so far as Said himself personified it, but he also exposes the ugly nexus of the comprador intellectual who simultaneously performs the role of the citizen of the cosmopolitan world and also pretends to represent cultural authenticity. He ponders over the ideological machinations of the imperial in a new world beyond national politics, economies, cultures, fed upon disposable forms of knowledge produced by immigrant intellectuals. Homeless compradors with no affiliation to any particular nation or loyalty to any particular cause can often get swayed by monetary benefits. Dabashi differentiates between the native informers and the collaborators by arguing that the latter provide factual knowledge while the former provide emotive openings and ideological legitimacy with which to criminalise any mode of resistance to the exercise of tyrannical power (*Brown Skin* 20,23). He argues that the native informers have rendered a significant role without which the theses of grand strategists like Fukuyama and Huntington would have lost the massive power they enjoyed in building collective opinions and legitimizing wars (*Brown Skin* 13). Dabashi argues that the native informers not only fake authenticity but also narrate to their white masters what they want to hear. Their adaptability to an Islamophobic atmosphere of their new homes is a curious combination of simultaneous acknowledgement and eschewal of their Muslim origins. In return, they are rewarded

and celebrated for being “voices of dissent.” Globalisation in general and labour migration in particular have joined together to create an indispensable condition for these comprador intellectuals (*Brown Skin* 16-17).

Fanon foregrounded that the ideological apparatus of the colonisers generates an inferiority complex in the psyche of the colonised subjects that make them identify with and be subservient to the colonial agency. The bourgeoisie and upwardly mobile comprador intellectuals are especially prone to experience this. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon identified the pathological traits that would grow into today’s native informers. Dabashi argues that the primary function of theories – from Fanon to Said has been to emancipate the colonised mind from the obsequious identification with power (*Brown Skin* 19-20). Dabashi’s goal in analysing the role the native informers play is predicated on his understanding of the globalised empire. He shifts the comprador-like character of the native informer from its colonial margins and attributes it to those intellectuals whom Said called “Aye-Sayers” at the heart of the empire who inhabit the centres of power. The most important theoretical distinction between Fanon and Said’s understanding of the native informers and his own is that he has moved his theoretical framework from the colonies to the heart of the empire in the wake of the phenomenon of globalisation that has decentred the world. Dabashi does not write from the site of the colony, as Fanon did; nor does he any longer think of himself in exile as Said did. Therefore, there is a change in his vantage point as neither the distant location of the colony nor the exilic site carries as much importance now as it did before. (*Brown Skin* 22-23). He points out that the project of “Orientalism” that has solicited the contributions of these native informers is definitely not characterised by any phenomenal novelty if one were to examine the history of European colonialism and American imperialism. But the rapacious globalisation of imperial plunder has enhanced the importance of the ideological machinery that functions to give the territorial, socio-cultural and economic conquest of the world a semblance of liberatory project. Along with national integrity concerns, human rights and women’s rights in particular are now commonly laid out as the overriding justifications of American imperial interventions (*Brown Skin* 36). He contends that the comprador intellectuals cannot be understood to be inhabiting the periphery of any centre or the centre of any periphery; they are everywhere, because they are nowhere in particular, and they are nowhere in particular because they maintain intimate contact with the active centres of power (*Brown Skin* 44). Dabashi argues that the comprador intellectuals and the native informers who have come from the outside work in tandem with the functioning of capital. For sustaining its politico-economic clout, the empire necessarily has to exterminate all communities that try to resist capitalism and its concomitant standardised culture (*Brown Skin* 62).

Fundamentally, the rationale of conceiving a territory in the geopolitical domain, where territory stands for jurisdictional and administrative unity, consists of limiting space by deployment of designated signs which then determines the criteria for entrance and exit from the territory in question (Cox, Low, Robinson 100). The

territory of a subject is basically understood by the domain of being that it possesses, by the space over which it enjoys dominion and by the space inside the territorial boundary that shapes its identities. Following this logic, it emerges that if the creation of a territory is viewed in terms of a semiotic structure which confines identities and if one believes that the primary dimension of identity is represented by the subjective identity, it can be concluded that subjectivity is the rational consequence of territorial production. If the manufacturing of a subjectivity dovetails with the delimiting of a territory, it will subsequently trigger a mutually reinforcing dual tendency for destructive preservation and expansion. This is because the process of subjectification mandatorily entails power-effects (Aurora 3-4). Power continually transmutes the nomadic existence of differences into identity-forming territorial codes. All identity and territory markers are like superstructures imposed on the polyphonic and heterogeneous reality. The territorial identity subject is necessarily a microfascist, but one must understand, according to Deleuze and Guattari that there is first a common land and then territories are formed, first a univocal being and then distributed identities, and being in itself, dovetails with the heterogeneous play of differences in a perpetual state of flux, where everything varies from everything, where everything is a singularity, a unique event. Singularity should then be a novel kind of subjectivity, namely a deterritorialized subjectivity predicated on the concept of differences rather than on the concept of rigid identities (Aurora 11). However, practically speaking it does not appear feasible to be able to follow this rationale of the Deleuzian concept of singularity premised upon the possibilities of continual transformations. It is at this very juncture that the issue of "nomadism" assumes its primary role and that the triad of "territorialization," "deterritorialization" and "reterritorialization" becomes crucial (Aurora 12). Similarly, Dabashi contends that the most destructive accomplishment of "Orientalism" was not that it was a discourse of domination - but that it was a discourse of alienation. The ideological indoctrination in the form of rigid civilizational binaries has successfully estranged the colonial corners of capitalist modernity from their indispensable links to capital. As a consequence of the ideological machinery, the labour occupying the colonial spaces has been alienated from the labour inhabiting the heart of the metropolitan capital. A false binary has been manufactured between the working class in the heart of capitalism and those in its colonial fringes, because of thinking in terms of watertight compartments of "the West" and "the Rest." The deliberately constructed distinction between metropolitan and colonial labour has been rendered redundant now (*Islamic Liberation* 245). Dabashi compares and contrasts the native informers and the comprador intellectuals who have sustained the illusion of the binary divides with the revolutionary intellectuals who have linked the binaries and exposed the hypocrisy of such civilizational divides. To demonstrate his point, Dabashi analyses Malcolm X and recuperates his legacy as a Muslim revolutionary in the heart of the empire and foregrounds how he is a paragon of a radical epistemic shift in the fabricated dialogue between "Islam and the West." He sees Malcolm X as a significant revolutionary character whose conversion to Islam and the massive epistemic shift that

it occasioned enabled him to link the alienated colonial corners of capitalist modernity and the underprivileged communities in its metropolitan centre (*Islamic Liberation* 22-23).

Whenever Deleuze talks of the nomadic, it is understood in the form of a multiplicity distributed in an open space. In this respect, each nomadic multiplicity does have an identity, but an identity that is characterised by multiplicity and open to change as its components increase or decrease. Secondly, nomadic multiplicities consist of what Deleuze and Guattari call “rhizomes.” In direct opposition to arborescent structures which comprise a vertical, hierarchical and centralized setup, rhizomes are horizontal, non-hierarchical formations with no centre and no systematised network among its constituent elements. Thus nomadic multiplicity can be said to sprawl over an unlimited and undivided space, constitute a multiplicity with an identity that is irreducibly plural and form a rhizome without centre or hierarchy, in which each element is in close proximity with every other element (Bogue 12-13). In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari explicate nomadism by the deployment of two complex ideas: the “war machine” and the “smooth space.” Deleuze and Guattari oppose “smooth space” to “striated space,” identifying “smooth space as nomad space . . . the space in which the war machine develops,” and “striated space” as “sedentary space . . . the space instituted by the State apparatus” (*Thousand* 474). The distinction appears to be quite simplistic: “smooth space” is space undivided and unmeasured whereas “striated space” is marked with networks of demarcating lines. But there is more to this distinction than what meets the eye. Firstly, it is only a theoretical difference, as Deleuze and Guattari explicitly state: “the two spaces in fact exist only in mixtures: smooth space is constantly being translated; transversed into striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space . . . and the two can happen simultaneously” (*A Thousand* 474-475). “Smooth” and “striated” describe not simply space per se, but also manners of occupying and utilising space, and in this sense, manners of creating a smooth or striated space. Smooth space, then is both occupied and constructed and that which inhabits and creates such a space is the “war machine.” The concept of the “war machine” as defined by Deleuze implies that nomads invent the “war machine,” that the State merely co-opts and subdues the “war machine” by reducing it to conventional armies, and that war, in the commonly accepted sense of the word is not the aim of the “war machine” per se, but the goal of the “war machine” as appropriated by the State apparatus. Deleuze and Guattari deploy the term, “war machine” to elaborate upon a transformative force - hence Deleuze's remark that, “A war machine tends to be revolutionary or artistic, much more so than military” (*Negotiations* 33). They also argue that the “war machine” “constructs itself on lines of flight.” A “line of flight” is a means of liberation from any crystallised configuration. It is a line between things, between rigidly defined entities and identities that ruptures the structured space. The “line of flight” is synonymous with the nomadic line of a “smooth space.” Most importantly, this “line of flight” is a line of becoming, of perpetual flux and interminable fluctuations (Bogue 16-18). Dabashi's understanding of what he celebrates as a revolutionary intellectual can be juxtaposed with Deleuze's

notion of "war machine." Dabashi demonstrates that how with every crossing of the border, Malcolm X became less authentic about the claims of his identity, be it black, American, or even Muslim - and more of a revolutionary in his commitments to a global movement against the systematic subjugation that privileged a few at the cost of the disenfranchisement of the majority all over the globe (*Islamic Liberation* 246-47). In the contemporary world where fundamentalist tendencies and claims of ideological purity are on the rise, Dabashi posits an urgent necessity for revolutionary intellectuals like Malcolm X, who can facilitate the creation of regional sites of cross-cultural modes of dialogue that can initiate a possibility for the re-construction of reality beyond these rigid binaries. Of course, like "war machines," intellectuals also run the risk of getting co-opted and appropriated by the State machinery to facilitate their vested interests as the native informers and comprador intellectuals have often colluded with the empire and function to advance its interests.

In lieu of a conclusion, one would like to trace how Dabashi's argument about a paradigmatic shift in knowledge production post 9/11 or inauguration of "Post-Orientalism" needs to be problematized for two reasons. Firstly, as Said has argued, "Orientalism" as a form of knowledge production has always been a dynamic body that is manufactured and exists in a lopsided negotiation with the operations of many varieties of power emanating out of politico-historical, socio-cultural and moral domains. "Orientalism" as a mutating discourse of power has always been manufactured in institutionalized structures of power be it the Franco-British involvement in "the Orient" or the period of American ascendancy after the second World War to serve the contingent ideological legitimacy for economic concerns. Historical contingency is integral to Said's conceptualisation of "Orientalism" or in fact to any form of knowledge that is manufactured in bastions of power and diffused in the socio-cultural fabric to sustain the relations of domination and control. So by that logic, classical "Orientalism" getting transmuted to Area Studies and to what Dabashi designates by the term, "epistemic endosmosis" post 9/11, is in sync with the Saidian understanding of the discourse of "Orientalism" that has an inbuilt mechanism to adapt to the politico-economic conditions of the time. So maybe, instead of looking at "Post-Orientalism" as a radical rupture from the earlier modes of knowledge production, one can see knowledge production post 9/11 as a much more complex continuation of the erstwhile modes of knowledge production about "the Orient." Since anyway, Dabashi's entire oeuvre is premised upon a rebuttal of claims of authenticity and essentialist conceptualisations, so it would be more befitting to understand knowledge production post 9/11 as consisting of hybrid forms of classical "Orientalism," Area Studies and "epistemic endosmosis," because territorial conquests synonymous with classical colonialism have not come to a complete end.

Secondly, increase in religious authoritarianism and religious extremism in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring" protests have somewhat diluted the euphoria that Dabashi anticipated. Rise of Islamists to fill the void of the State's failure particularly

in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen and massive economic and demographic displacement crisis in the Arab countries fuelled by several civil wars makes one question the political and social relevance of the concept of “Post-Orientalism.” The Deleuzian understanding of constitution of new forms of subjectivity must take into account two disclaimers. Firstly, it is not practically viable to come up with a form of subjectivity that can absolutely remove power effects without receding into arid indifferentiation. Secondly, singularity as a subjectivity predicated on the rationale of difference and on the potential of transformation, must be comprehended in terms of a living process. The Deleuzian concept of “nomadism” implies a continuous process of carving a territory, retreating from it, re-creating a territory and yet eschewing every kind of obsessive belonging. Singularity is synonymous with this nomadic subjectivity; it is a subjectivity that has understood that the movement of “deterritorialization” must be ceaselessly carried on, the cycle of becoming must be re-activated in order to circumvent the stability of power structures. Moreover, such a conceptualisation generates a disavowal of every territorialized form of political action that demands rigid identities (Aurora 12). It is in this regard that Deleuze and Guattari introduce the dichotomy of “molar” and “molecular.” “Molar” is basically well-defined identities, clearly demarcated territories with clearly, stable institutions, whereas “molecular” refers to variables, the process of becoming, deterritorializing movements and unstable structures. However, it is almost not possible to do away with the cycle formed by the triad of “territorialization-deterritorialization- reterritorialization”. As a consequence, neither is a total “deterritorialization” possible nor is a total “territorialization” possible. In fact, every movement of “deterritorialization” is premised upon an assumption of a territory to reterritorialize, and manufacture in turn, a new territory. The crucial part is to keep the potential for movements favouring deterritorializations open. The threat basically lies in the possibility of hardening the “line of flight” one has chosen and obstruct movement and the becoming processes (Aurora 15-16). It is in this sense that the risk associated with the molecular comes into the picture and the importance of prudence as one of the primary concern of politics gets reiterated (Deleuze, Parnet 132). For instance, the transformation of the “Arab Spring” into “Arab Winter” demonstrates how the “lines of flight” unleashed as a consequence of massive uprisings against repressive regimes got subsumed within authoritarian structures, albeit with a difference. This reinstates the importance and urgency of viewing identities and entities as a fluid process in a perpetual state of negotiation with its socio-political climate because history bears testimony to countless examples of manufactured circumstances leading to a “willing suspension of disbelief” and absolutising identity claims and perhaps, no contemporary event illustrates this better than the popular and dominant narratives surrounding 9/11.

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### BIO-NOTE

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