

Othello in zion: overview

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The prophet of God (saw) said, 'a time will come when the killer will not know why he struck the fatal blow and the person who was killed will not know for what cause he was murdered... This will be a time of great ambiguity and a time when people will take the Error (the soul) lightly, spilling blood freely. - Width Why does Israel not desire peace? No conflict has been more intractable perhaps than that between Israelis and Palestinians. For over 60 years the two sides-unevenly matched and unevenly affected (if mere numbers are anything to go by)-have been locked in one of the most acrimonious conflicts in the region.

A recent article on Islamic asked whether Israel knows the meaning of peace, a question it takes seriously by cataloguing the infractions Israel has committed from the demolition of 4000 Palestinian homes to the many UN resolutions it has ignored (Hussein, 2014). But the question also worth asking is: why does it not desire peace (the insinuation of the article)? In what rational imagination can the current status quo of perpetual conflict be deemed preferable to peace? There are of course some strong and plausible answers to these questions.

They can range from historical, gee-political and ideological, to those that are anti-Semitic (in that they ground the answer in the 'nature' of the 'Jew-an egregious conclusion). Such answers still beg the question though: why is peace less profitable than war? To argue that Israelis want all Palestinians to disappear, either off the face of the planet or just that strip of land on which Israel has drawn its borders, is to wonder about this desire in all its impossibility. Is the expulsion of Palestinians a real option? Surely only the most extreme and warped mind could imagine this.

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That being so, could this reasoning truly account for the millions of individuals who serve in the Israeli army-both as careersoldiers, conscripts and reserves-not to mention the pride of place the military has in Israeli society, influencing the political, cultural and economic spheres of life in the Jewish state. If it were not so (or so the argument goes), why are there not more right minded Israelis opting out-becoming conscientious objectors (that conflicted symbol of courage)? Of course, one answer may lay the blame not with the Israelis but with the Palestinians ND its Arab neighbors.

Were Israel not to feel so threatened; were political organizations like Hams not to have as their objective, dissolution of the state of Israel; had not the Arab states invaded their nascent Jewish neighbor, Israel may not have been locked in such a relentless conflict. Yet this again merely raises more questions and problems. Many sympathizers with Israel, for instance, (as indeed many of its critics too) cannot understand why countless Israelis fail to link their occupation of Palestinian territories, the building of illegal settlements and their ill retirement of their non-Jewish population with the precarious security they enjoy.

Another answer may in fact take up this last point: the so called precarious security. Some may well see the continuation of Israeli aggression and the Israel-Palestinian conflict as owing to the fact that Israel's security is not precarious. Only when another rival, equal to Israel rises in the region to challenge Israel's military supremacy, will Israel desist from its injustices. This answer, clinical in its logic and evocative of the simple analogy of the

playground bully, is worrying nonetheless, because for it, the answer to the violence of this conflict is greater violence still.

As such, it is less an answer to our original question (why does Israel not desire peace?) and more a form of eschatology. In seeking answers it seems, answers simply proliferate-Israel wants to be dominant in the region; Israel wishes to colonies more and more land; Israel wishes for security; Israel's politics is driven by hardliners and fundamentalists (secular and religious) who want to re-create some lost biblical kingdom. So on and so forth. Add to these, issues about American support and theories of international inspiration against Muslims, and the picture is hardly any clearer.

Indeed, when these answers are taken all together (some contradictory, some mutually supporting) it appears to be a case of 'shooting in the dark. No wonder the conflict appears utterly beguiling. Yet the question remains: why does Israel not desire peace? Let's be perfectly clear. The question is one for Israel because Israel is founded on land where there were people already living. One isn't going to set historical wrongs right by insisting on winding the clock back of course, but that said, the onus must be on Israel for this historic reason.

Furthermore, Israel is in a position of power and as the more powerful party, Israel must do more to broker peace, which its actions seem incompatible with. So again, why does Israel not desire peace? Beyond the empirical In his contributing chapter to mm Divide's *The Other India* (2012), Facial Devil reflects on the move away from representing conflict through the genres of

epic and myth, towards the occupational practices of the historian. What is at stake is the possibility of deriving meaning of and from conflict in some broader sense than what the conventions of historical analysis allows. The Iliad, for example, which served as one of Rupee's most important myths of conflict, allowed violence to be thought of in a more complex fashion than any historical account of modern time would have permitted'. The reason for this, Devil avers, is that under the rubric of historical analysis 'accounts of conflict are capable of producing only a certain kind of meaning, generally having to do with assigning causes and culpability for some episode of violence' (27).

Myths and epics themselves however, are not without their problems and Devil is fully aware of this. After all, narratives of conflicts may be mythologized in the sense of forming false representations and memories of reality. Another, more insidious outcome of the favoring of myths and epics over history-proper, is imagining conflict as some cosmic force whence the protagonists become wholly heroic or wholly demonic. Distilling conflict through the lens of myth can thus transform conflict from the worldly into the epic confrontation of good versus evil.

This in fact is significantly the case with the Inhabitant (Iliad's Sanskrit counterpart'), which Devil's essay focuses on and another Indian epic, the Ramayana. For the Hindu right in India, especially in the late 19th century, both epics were harnessed for a communal-nationalism that saw the emergence of Yatra (religion-national processions) crisis-cross the country, mapping it aggressively as Hindu (Oz 2012). Devil is not unaware of this and, quite

rightly, may claim such cynical appropriation of these sacred texts or great feats of Indian literature, as a form of bastardization.

What value then do myths and epics have over history as the lens through which we should see conflict? For one thing, the two may not be as different as this opposition implies. If Devil claims for myths and epics the privilege of providing a more complex cogitation over the perennial problem of conflict, a certain historical analysis allied with a postindustrial genealogical method, seeks the network of deeper, disparate influences that shape the nature conflicts take.

It is the oblique perspectives, the off- centre views that such an approach to the issue of conflict provides that makes cultural narratives like myths and epics instructive. A genealogically driven historical approach on the other hand, helps lend methodological weight to an enterprise seeking to delve beneath the avowedly empirical towards the murky depths of the unconscious, where strange impulses provide grit for the continuation of conflict. Writing in a different context, Terry Galleon suggests that sometimes there may be 'no clear line between the pragmatic and the non-pragmatic' (2010, 98).

We should take this view seriously when trying to find an answer to the question regarding Israel's inability to seek peace, for it helps move our focus from the empirical and pragmatic (as if one could finally fathom the answer once and for all) to what may be the conditions that underlie Israel's approach to the conflict in the Middle East. Opting for this does not mean one resigns themselves to the situation given that if the cause(s) are not

empirical one cannot hope to make concrete changes, since unconscious impulses seem too esoteric to alter.

The unconscious may well be a mysterious place but it is not irrational and by that I mean random and inscrutable. Rather, the inclusion of the unconscious may open up new ways to approach an intractable conflict such as the one in which Israelis and Palestinians have been locked. It is here that myths and epics may prove insightful in that, being literary pieces, these texts figure conflict as a condition of human attitudes instead of a catalogue of cause and effect.

In the Inhabitant, for instance, conflict is both an explicit result of contingent actions but also the conspicuous outcome of mental attitudes and human impulses that drive actions in certain directions. To ask why Israel does not desire peace is (as I am approaching it) to ask what are the unconscious impulses that are driving Israeli actions away from peace? Israel and the Holocaust A discussion about Israel cannot take place for long without the necessary mention of the Holocaust.

Indeed, Dilly Hussein's article featured (perhaps by intent or by chance) a picture at the top of the page made of two images. One is a grainy black and white image of a smiling boy, no older than eleven or twelve, dressed in an AS uniform belonging to the German Youth (Deutsche Conjugal), a wing of the Hitler Youth organization under the Nazi party. The second image is of Israeli youths writing messages on missiles. Both photographs are dated, the one depicting a longed-haired-blue-eyed-boy more so than the one showing

Israeli children, but even this is an image that has done the rounds on the internet.

Nonetheless, framing the two images side by side says much: Israel's actions are deplorably similar to the Nazis in terms of their callous attitude towards the Palestinians; there is a strange cycle of violence and visitation at play with regards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; the shadow of the Holocaust looms large. What led the moderators of the website to place these images, in this way above this article? Was it intentional or unconscious? Did he, or she, or they, discuss the images before they went up?

Did their discussions engage the polymeric nature of images and thus draw out the many interpretations such imagery could evoke? Whether conscious or not, it is fair to say that the Jewish experience in Europe is always implicit in discussions of Israel. Moreover, the Holocaust-its memory and its symbolic power-pervades Israel's social imaginary and its public discourse. As I have written elsewhere (*The Politics of a Psychosis*, 2009), the land that was supposed to be a refuge from a (European) Jewish past, has tied the Jewish population of Israel ever more closely to those horrors.

Instead of escaping them, they have to be evoked to assuage criticisms of its policies and actions towards the Palestinians. The trauma of the industrialized pogrom of European Jewry has produced (in part) two distinct attitudes within certain sectors of Israeli society. Owen Jones (2014) touches on these by quoting Angela Goodbye-Goldstein (a peace activist in Jerusalem) who says, '[the persecution the Jews faced has] bred a sense that people owe us, of " who are you to tell us what to do? This bitter attitude is

purported by another attitude expressed by an unnamed human rights activist quoted in the same article: In Israeli society there is a victim mentality that is deeply, deeply rooted in the Holocaust and encouraged by those in power, even though at the moment we're not victims, we're an incredibly powerful country with an incredibly powerful military. This notion of victimized is clear, and why should it not be. The Jewish experience during the Holocaust and, the numerous other historical pogroms they faced, was horrific.

Anyone who has heard the testimonies of survivors cannot help but be moved. Admitting this of course does not (should not) diminish the horrors that others across the world have faced or are facing. Nor is the trouble merely one that the activist in Jones' article highlights—that Israel is not a victim today but a powerful country with one of the most heavily armed militaries in the world. In fact, the memory of the Holocaust is more complex than merely one of victimized. Furthermore, it isn't simply (or only) appropriated by a Zionist discourse cynically, as a way to cover its own perambulations of the Palestinians.

Instead, it operates in an intricate network of ideas and emotions, memories and experiences, fears and anxieties, pride and prejudices. The network. In an interview with *Queering* magazine (2013), Air Shaves, author of *My promised land: the triumph and tragedy of Israel*, acknowledges that Palestinians deserve national and individual rights but demands of Palestinians that they grow up. 'There is a tendency in their political culture to be addicted to victimized. And at the end of the day, with all due respect, the Jews are the ultimate victims of the twentieth century. What Shaves

represents here is the strange dialectic that the memory of the Holocaust is engaged in. The claim of 'ultimate victimized' stands uneasily with the claim that others are addicted to victimized. It should be noted also that (politically) Shaves is a 'progressive', highlighting the degree to which this dialectic pervades the political imagination within Israel and its Zionist Diaspora. Shaves continues with his advice to the Palestinians: ... The Jews who came to Israel are amazing proof of how people do not get addicted to their victimized.

They build a future. The Jewish- Zionist revenge was to live. Not to kill, not to commitsuicide, and not to keep telling he story [of persecution and loss] over and over again. I wish that the Palestinians would learn from that side of Zionism. Because in this sense, Zionism was remarkable. Here you had the ultimate victims of the twentieth century who were saying, " Let's move on. " People who came out of the [concentration] camps, and within a year or two got married and made children and sent their kids to schools, and from nothing did something.

That's what the Palestinians should do now. It is my moral commitment and obligation to recognize Lydia [a Palestinian village that was estrogen by Israeli forces during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war], but it's their commitment to overcome it. In a sense, I did my share, they must do theirs. The horror of the Holocaust confers upon Shaves his sense of (ultimate') victimized, but offers Israel the discursive privilege of becoming an emblem of triumph. The victim turns victor. Yet, this curious discursive gymnastics forever hides the victim inside the victor too.

What is also hidden is a 'lack within the social imaginary shaped by discourses (of which Shaving's book is both product and participant) that fashion these outworks of associations. Another such example of 'hiding is Assignees Holland Golden Globe winner, *Europe Europe* (1990). Championed in David Denies review (1991) for depicting the Holocaust as a trauma that was survived, Denny fails to mention (much like the film itself) that the triumph is premised on the devastation of another people.

The film tells the story from the point of view of Solomon Perl, who is mistakenly identified as a gentile and sent to a Nazi military school. As a result, much of the narrative is concerned with his efforts to hide his Jewish identity. The story is narrated in retrospect from Israel, where Solomon escaped to at the end of World War II, but neither the film nor Denies review points to the obvious problems in presenting Israel as a silver lining. Taken differently, perhaps it is only through the erasure of Palestine that Israel could emerge.

Shaves acknowledges something like this when he writes about the destruction of Palestinian towns and villages during the 1948 war: 'The Jewish state about to be born would not survive the external battle with the armed forces of the Arab nations if it did not first rid itself of the Palestinian population that endangered it from within' (2013, 110). In the Israeli-Zionist imagination, Palestinians need necessarily to be erased-figuratively-in order for the Jewish state to be born (and indeed for it to be sustained).

Yet how do you erase (by one estimate) 3.9 million people? The simple answer is: you don't. The erasure is discursive. In Israel's political discourse,

the notion of erasure is displaced on to concrete symbols like weapons and tunnels, and only occasionally, by the more zealot commentators at least, extended in rhetoric to the Palestinian population. Yet this does not resolve the problem, it merely displaces it.

This displacement can only occur if the foundational premise (taken quite literally)-the need for an erasure of Palestine/Palestinians for the emergence of Israel-is repressed. Such repression creates an unease; a lack, whereby one's self-identity remains forever incomplete. 'Purges and pogroms generally have some political point', writes Galleon, but being true to his belief that the line between the pragmatic and non-pragmatic is often unclear, he avers that such heinous actions cannot be reduced to the desire to seize land or eliminate enemies of the state. If they are as savage as they are', he entities, 'it is because they usually involve not just land or power but people's identities' (2010, 98). This seems to me to be even truer when there is a lack at the very heart of one's identity, for then the harm and devastation one inflicts on those who incarnate the sign of one's lack is as a way to purge oneself of it. In the Israeli- Zionist imaginary, Palestine and Palestinians threaten to bring to the fore the repressed, unconscious network of associations lurking and directing Israel's actions.

If to ask why Israel does not desire peace is to ask what are the unconscious impulses that are driving its actions away from peace, part of the answer must be to do with a lack, a void, a deficiency at the very heart of Israel's national identity. Identity as Fetish This lack or void is not an easy answer and it is certainly not to deny the devastating effect Israel has. There may be

a frightening void within Israel's social imaginary, but that should not be taken to mean Israel's political actions are innocuous. 'A hole is not something you can put in your pocket' writes Galleon, 'but a hole in the head is real enough' (127).

The lack at the heart of Israel's national identity can be seen vividly in a video produced by Israeli Journalist David Sheen and American author and Journalist Max Blumenthal. Sheen has been documenting issues relating to non-Jewish, mostly African, immigrants in Israel for years. What the video reveals in part is the way identity functions in Israel; it is an underlying factor that affects Israel's actions even beyond Palestine and Palestinians.

However, what on the surface is a loud protestation of affirming one's identity (national/Jewish) reveals more and more to be the outcome of (what I am terming) a dangerous inner lack.

In one extract, a woman at an anti-African rally shouts loudly how frightened she is of Africans outside her home and believes they want to kill her: 'you can see it in their eyes' she says. Then, emboldened by the cheers of the crowd she declares, 'We're racist because we want to preserve our lives and our sanity. So I'm proud to be a racist-and it's our right to be racist!' This notion of 'right' resonates well with Angela Goodbye-Goldstein's view that there is a certain bitter defiance in Israeli society ('who are you to tell us what to do').

But as the video shows, this extends beyond the public to many mainstream Israeli politicians and state appointed Rabbis too. In an interview shown within the video, Michael Ben-Ari, a far right politician who until recently was

an elected member of parliament, speaks candidly about the dangers of immigration into Israel. He suggests that a policy of welcoming different people from different parts of the world is one way to destroy Israel, a strategy he suggests of those hostile to the state. When questioned about this, he says that it will destroy Israel because it will cease to be a Jewish state. Our country,' he explains, 'is different from other countries. Our entry is a Jewish state; a Jewish and democratic state. It's a very delicate balance. In some cases the two contradict each other. If you bring in a million Africans it will no longer be Jewish.... This means Israel will soon be no more. Israel is dear to me. ' The 'delicate balance' is not just one that is political but mental. A certain care must be taken to ensure that what is unconscious remains so. Great energy is expended to maintain this balance or 'sanity (in the words of the female protestor above).

The specter of losing Israel's Jewish identity-Zionism leading claim-must be held at bay, or 'if Zionism dies', writes Shaves, 'What will happen in the Land of Israel will be what has happened time after time in Europe: Jews will be Jews again' (2013, 113). Once again, the victim must hide in the victor; the foundational premise for the Land of Israel must be repressed; the experience from Europe, so potent, belongs 'outside' and must not be brought 'inside' through the vectors of immigration and the Palestinian diasporas right of return.

Indeed, the latter two are mutually connected. In 2012 the Israeli parliament amended a 1954 law that was passed to prevent Palestinian refugees returning to their property. This law, termed the Anti-limitation Act, now

amended is applied to new groups threatening Israel's Jewish identity by giving stringent powers to law enforcement agencies against those Israel terms 'infiltrators'. This label is particularly revealing since it casts refugees and economic migrants as something surreptitious.

An extreme expression of this suspicion of African immigrants is captured in a clip in Sheen and Blumenthal video where, at another anti-immigration rally, Mir Regret (the then [2012] Chair of the Interior Committee) says, 'Friends, today in the Nested [Israeli Parliament] I said: the Sudanese are a cancer in our body. Such inflated and nephritic rhetoric rises from that very lack that gnaws away at Israel's social imaginary. It is a rhetoric that Israel's spokespersons have perfected through practice against Palestinians.

The zealousness with which it is applied is directly proportional to the growing chasm within Israel's social imagination from where such bile rises. Galleon again: the kind of others who drive you to [the type of savagery Israel is perpetrating against Gaza] are usually those who for some reason have come to signify the terrible non-being at the core of oneself. It is the aching absence which you seek to stuff with fetishes, moral ideals, fantasies of purity, the manic will, the absolute state, the phallic figure of the F; here' (100).

Towards the end of Sheen and Blumenthal video, the crew follow a gang of ultra-nationalists marching through south Tel Aviv and then, in the next shot, inside a convenience store where they harass frightened African customers and tell them to get out of their country. Actions like these spring directly from the racist colonial attitudes and apartheid policies which Israeli

public figures reportage, beginning with Palestinians and now directed against African immigrants too.

Such hatred, I argue, is born from an inner lack; a chasm within the social fabric of Israel and its social imaginary. Like all fundamentalists then, those who cling so monstrously to their own identity seek to compensate a deep rooted deficiency by transforming identity into a fetish. Far from resolving the angst caused by this unconscious lack within the self, the fetishism of identity feeds an overblown fear of dissolution making self-preservation an all-consuming virtue.

Looking at Israel in this ay-through the oblique, off-center perspective offered by an approach that draws on disciplines as varied as anthropology, postindustrial (genealogical) historical analysis and psychoanalysis-does have precedence, most notably in early Zionist intellectual tradition itself. Reran Rollick (2012) has written about Freud and the popularity of psychoanalysis in Israel, claiming that at the start at least, Zionism was characterized by an ideological eclecticism.

Works by Darwin, Marx, Nietzsche, Spinal and Freud were widely discussed and debated within the Jewish community. Zionist discourse deemed especially important those scholarly works that could offer alternatives to the traditional religious explanations for the existential plight of the Jewish people'. What was clear to the pioneers of Zionism though was that, as an ethnic minority in Europe, the Jew represented an 'atrophied and sickly body that required different physical and cultural conditions... To restore it to normality.

Zionist thinkers therefore 'conceptualized the Jewish problem in medical or psychiatric terms' seeing as integral to the healing process the refurbishing of the Jewish mentality (xvii). Yet what the intellectual project of Zionism did was create a social imaginary in Israel plagued with doublethink. The victor hides the victim; the premise upon which Israel (in its current form) must necessarily exist, needs also necessarily to be repressed; Jewish experience of Europe is to be excised, and yet European ideas Jewish and gentile) are courted as attractive.

Such discontinuities within Israel's social imaginary leads to an inner lack which drives the actions of Israel away from peace, even when a fair and peaceful settlement of its conflict with the Palestinians is its only true hope of survival. Whatever its supporters say, the appearance of vibrancy (a vibrant democracy; a vibrant LEGIT destination) is the 'deceptive glow of the diseased. It is fever rather than vitality that lies beneath the 'hectic flush on its visage' (Galleon 2010, 123).

Discontinuities are integral to the characterization of Shakespearean Othello, the Moor of Venice. Measured and Judicious at the start the play, Othello is the story of the slow demise of its namesake. The audience witnesses his downfall but whether Shakespeare intends for us to feel simple pity at his tragedy is harder to say. Why does this noble Moor, whom everyone praises, tear himself apart? Othello is unique amongst Shakespearean tragedies in many respects. Unlike Macbeth, Hamlet or King Lear, Othello is not noble by birth.

He is a protagonist who is self-made; someone who has come through many adversities to arrive at a point in his life where, against all odds, he has reached a position of authority within a society that is neither his, nor particularly open to his kind. Indeed, when the Duke defends him against Barbarian (his father-in-law), who has brought him before the court on account of covering the secret marriage between his daughter (Desman) and the black general, his praise is paradoxical: 'noble signor; if virtue no delighted beauty lack, your son-in-law is far more fair than black. For Barbarian, who before he knew of their love affair, welcomed Othello into his house and befriended him too, the interracial marriage is too much to stomach. Enraged, he confronts Othello with a group of soldiers, but unlike the violence for which Africans and Moors were known in Elizabethan society, Othello response is poetic; 'keep up thy bright swords', he intones, for the dew will rust them'. His charisma and charm is plain to see and yet he proclaims to be 'rude in speech and little blessed with that soft phrase of peace'.

When Barbarian warns him about Desman (look to her Moor if thou hast eyes to see, she has deceived her father and may thee') his response is an unshakeable conviction in her love for him (my life upon her faith! '). Soon though he begins to have serious and increasingly impulsive doubts-'I think my wife be honest, and think she is not'. He is full of confidence and demonstrates great authority, as in act 3 scene 1 when a brawl breaks out among the officers in Cyprus, where Othello and his en have been sent to secure the colony against the Ottoman Turks: Why, how now, ho! From whence airiest this?

Are we turned Turks, and to ourselves do that Which heaven hath forbid the
Atomizes? For Christian shame, put by this barbarous brawl... Now, by
heaven, My blood begins my safer guides to rule; And passion, having my
best Judgment collide, Assays to lead the way: if I once stir, Or do but lift this
arm, the best of you Shall sink in my rebuke. Give me to know How this foul
rout began Still later on, when doubt about Adhesion's fidelity begins to
plague his mind, he fleets upon what may have driven her away from him
and returns to his race: 'Haply, for I am black, and have not those soft parts
of conversation that chambers have. Commentators and literary theorists as
different as Harold Bloom, Anne Whitehead and even W. H. Aden have long
suggested that one of Othello insecurities is his lack of refinement. His
marshal qualities are developed in lieu of his social skills and this, they
suggest, is one reason for his insecurity-when it comes to human relations,
he is less confident and commands less authority. There is another way to
look at these discontinuities in Othello character though, and each of the
commentators mentioned above is not unaware of this. They, along with the
likes of T. S.

Elliot and playwright Carry Phillips, also posit Othello pride and race
respectively as factors in his downfall. I want to draw these works together to
draw a parallel between Israel and Othello in order to argue that both are
prompted by a deep rooted lack that leads to both being murderously violent
in their action. In drawing this parallel, I appeal to Facial Devil's suggestion
that myths and epics-which I interpret to signify cultural narratives (hence
my use of Shakespeare: profoundly foundational for modern Western culture

and those who aspire to be included in this club)-offer unique insight into the nature of conflict.

Like Israel's constant appeals to its status as the only democracy in the Middle East, its humanitarian nature and, more recently, its claims of being a safe outpost for LEGIT communities amidst hostile and homophobic Psalmists (see Jabber Purr, 2007), Othello too boasts his credentials: 'My parts, my title, and my perfect soul shall manifest me rightly and, a little later, 'My arrives which I have done the state shall out-tongue his [Barbarians] complaints'.

This self-referential rhetoric is accompanied by expressions of false modesty, as when Othello proclaims a lack of refinement in speech, despite many an example to the contrary. This is partly what irritates Ago, the villain of the piece. For him, Othello seems too 'enraptured by the integrity of his own being (Galleon 2010, 87). There is, writes Galleon, 'an air of monumental self-satisfaction' about Othello that is captured in his 'rotund, oratorical speech' in which Ago sees an exalted but bogus idealism (88). Nowhere is this captured better than at the end of the play.

Driven by a furious Jealousy that is aided by Lagos lies, Othello ends up killing Desman violently. When it dawns on him that he has been duped by Ago into murdering his innocent wife, he appeals to those around him: Soft you; a word or two before you go. I have done the state some service, and they Knott. No more of that. I pray you, in your letters, When you shall these unlucky deeds relate, Speak of me as I am; nothing extenuate, Nor set down

aught in malice: then must you speak
Of one that loved not wisely but too
well; Of one not easily Jealous, but being wrought

Perplexed in the extreme; of one whose hand, Like the base Indian, threw a
pearl away Richer than all his tribe; of one whose subdued eyes, Albeit
unused to the melting mood, Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees Their
medicinal gum. Set you down this; And say besides, that in Aleph once,
Where a malignant and a turban's Turk Beat a Venetian and traduced the
state, I took by the throat the circumcised dog, And smote him, thus. Here
again he begins by reminding his listeners of the 'service' he has done the
state before venturing on a long, lyrical posturing.

With an eye to his audience as Galleon observes, Othello not only performs a
coup De theatre (in the words of F. R. Leavis [1952]) but attempts to leave
reality itself. As T. S. Eliot (1927) put it, What Othello seems to be doing in
making this speech is cheering himself up. He is endeavoring to escape
reality, he has ceased to think about Desman, and is thinking about himself.
Humility is the most difficult of all virtues to achieve'.

Isn't something like this at play when Israeli spokespersons insist that Hamas
use human shields; that they happily-willfully endanger civilians by insisting
they remain in places that Israel has synonymously warned it will mercilessly
shell? An escape from reality for sure if not a cheering oneself up (where
'cheering oneself up' is read as assuaging one's own guilt). Israel's
persistence and doggedness for identity, for the need to narrate/iterate her
uniqueness is not dissimilar to Othello self-proclamations. Because
[Toeholds] identity is so wholly externalities', writes Galleon, 'it leaves a kind

of absence or vacuum behind.... [What] Othello represents [is] a pompous plenitude of being which conceals an inner lack. Just like Israel then, 'his exalted sense of self is a way of not avian to confront the chaos of his inner being (88-89). The discontinuities in Othello character arise precisely because of this inner lack and like Israel, this lack arises from his unconscious realization of his precarious situation as a black man in white-Venetian society.

At moments of anxiety and tension, he returns time and time again to his being black. Pitying Adhesion's supposed infidelity Othello says that her 'good' name is now 'begrimed and black as my own face'. Born a Muslim-as many have suggested-Toeholds conversion is one attempt at his assimilation. Another is his acceptance of European views regarding black people-their barbarism, cannibalism and practice of 'arts inhibited' (black magic).

In his speech before turning the knife on himself, he recalls how in Aleph he once smote a turban's Turk for beating a Venetian. Quite apart from his antipathy for the Turk-a military and cultural rival of European states in the 16th century-this story may also refer allegorically to what he has just committed, namely, the murder of the white-Venetian Desman. In this interpretation, Othello may be speaking of himself in a double sense; in killing his