

A Present Conflict Analysed in the light of a Shakespearean Scene.

Introduction

This paper attempts to analyse the present Palestinian- Israeli conflict with specific reference to a significant dramatic scene in Shakespeare's *1 Henry VI*, III,i. Occasional references are made to a similar scene in *Othello* I,ii whenever a comparison between the two scenes is required. The study seeks to link the present with the past to draw the analogy, learn the lesson and see where the present repeats the errors of the past. We live in a present that Homi Bhabha sees as "culturally collusive"¹: a world that sees injustice everywhere, a world where racial discrimination is tearing society apart. As Akbar S. Ahmad observes:

problems are interwoven, binding Muslims and non-Muslims together. There can be no just and viable world order - let alone a New World Order - if these wrongs are not redressed.²

The paper sheds light on the many sources of the above conflict and sends the message that unless the root causes of the problems are addressed, any superficial solutions that do not take into account the grievances of the oppressed are not likely to work. The Middle East is a turbulent and unstable region. The roots of that violence have to be extirpated if peace is to be achieved. What may be viewed by the West as violence is interpreted by many Arabs as legitimate self-defense or the counter-reaction of the oppressed who see their rights denied and their lands appropriated for building Jewish settlements. In solving the above conflict, the world turns a deaf ear to its real causes and fails to render a balanced verdict as to who is to blame for the current stalemate in the Peace Talks. The hard-line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu insisted that "it was the Palestinians not the Israelis who were breaking Middle East peace accords".³ While Netanyahu connects the resumption of the peace process with the commitment on the Palestinian part to fight 'terrorism', he does not grasp that his adamant determination to carry on with the construction of the Har Homa suburb is the basic reason for the breakout of such terrorism. We are entering a 'Netanyaean maze'; what should precede what: cause or effect?, the egg or the chicken? Logic says that mounting violence in the region is due to Israel's settlement policy. The recent three-day meeting of the 55 members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), [in Tehran, December 97] ended with a Declaration that "condemns the expansionist policies and practices by Israel, such as the establishment and expansion of Jewish settlements and emphasises the need for Israel to desist from state terrorism".⁴ Since Muslims and Israelis differ in their views over the factors that lead to terrorism, this paper addresses the legitimate causes for extremist action in the light of the above Shakespearean scene. Knowledge of the causes puts us in a better position to propose solutions.

Past & Present Related

Before we delve into an analysis of the scene, it is appropriate to talk about the present in relation to the past. In fact, the Shakespearean scene taken from the First Tetralogy, though it depicts the bitter conflict between the Yorkists and Lancastrians during the War of the Roses, it is intended to be related to problems during Elizabeth I's reign. Thus the past is not divorced from the present. Critics, like Tillyard, make startling, yet inherently logical, associations between Richard II's problems and those of Queen Elizabeth. These include the problem of succession, the problem of evil government versus wholesale rebellion and the difference between the martial spirit

of the crusading Plantagenets versus the self-centeredness of the 'new man'.⁵ Similarly, Lily B. Campbell equates Richard with Elizabeth and sees in *Richard II* Shakespeare's warning against transgressing Tudor doctrine on the rights and duties of a monarch. She cites numerous pamphlets, tracts or homilies of the time which were concerned directly with Elizabeth's rule, and presents a succinct, yet convincing case that *Richard II* is Shakespeare's profound probing of a political problem uppermost in men's minds at that time.⁶ David Bevington traces what he believes to be Shakespeare's attitude towards the protagonists and issues in *Richard II* and concludes that "tactfully, then, Shakespeare warns both monarch and people of the dual peril attendant upon royal willfulness and rebellion".⁷ Shakespeare goes back into the past in order to relate it to the present. Both form a cycle of continuity and therefore one can not be treated in isolation from other. In fact, Shakespeare attempts in the History plays to place man at the centre of the past, a past that man looks at with an open mind, a mind free from the prejudice of writing history to serve contemporary needs. Shakespeare also recognizes the inter-relationship of past and present unlike the Western bloc of today that severs past from present and forces the weak to live in what Bhabha calls the "Benjaminian present" (*LOC*, p. 8).

This is the present that Walter Benjamin "describes as the blasting of a monadic moment from the homogenous course of history, 'establishing a conception of the present as the "time of the now" "*(LOC*, p. 4). Since the word 'monad' connotes unity, as if an element is an integral part of a whole, diaspora signals a break as if parts of a planet have been forced into a divorce from one body. With diaspora comes the blasting out of "the continuum of history"(p. 8). In other words, the continuity of the cycle of history is discontinued due to the dispersal of atoms or parts

from one large body. These insignificant parts are none other than the present culturally displaced people who suffer ruthless social discrimination in many parts of the world and who can never receive reciprocal recognition. Thus they are forced to live in a present that Superpowers and decision-makers dictate for them. The "Benjaminian present" can also be understood by the reference to the well-known story of Joseph and his brothers. The two sons of Isaac, Joseph and Benjamin, felt a close attachment in spite of the remote distance that separated them: Joseph lived in exile in Egypt and his brother in Palestine where people starved during a famine and were driven to escape to a land of more abundant provision. The weak of today or what Esposito calls the (mustadhafin)⁷, originally an Arabic word used in the *Qur'an* in conjunction with the "one reckoned weak, and therefore ill-treated and oppressed"⁹ are forced to live in the "Benjaminian present" because Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and Esposito's 'mustadhafin' are in the same boat regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, geographical or linguistic backgrounds. They have an archetype in the story of Joseph and the natural instinctive bond that he feels for a far away brother. Thus what binds the weak of today together is similar to the close intimacy that the Captain of the ship in Conrad's *Secret Sharer* has for his double, Leggatt. The weak of today therefore experience an emotional link with their brethren worldwide whilst being helpless to change this present predicament. The present is a creation of the West, the symbol of power and strength that plays a deceitful game by forcing the weak to live in a present that they can never belong to, or feel in harmony with. They feel out of tune with this modern era, and helpless to combat or influence policies being imposed by the present superpowers. Bhabha sees the present as a stage in-between two fixed poles. Thus he says:

The present of the world, that appears through the breakdown of temporality, signifies a historical intermediacy, familiar to the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachträglichkeit* (deferred action): 'a transferential function, whereby the past dissolves in the present, so that the future becomes (once again) an open question, instead of being specified by the fixity of the past.

(*LOC*, p. 219)

The present is therefore hybrid. It is between a past that has a definite identity and a future that remains obscure and unknown. The present is continuously on the move. Because time is in constant flux, the present can be different from one place and culture to another. It does not happen immediately or at any one specific point. For that reason some may argue quite convincingly that the present does not exist as it is beyond the strict rules of time. Because the present is controlled by the West, the East is culturally displaced by being forced to live within the limits of an alien time. It is inevitable that it feels a present loss. It is natural that it experiences a lack of harmony with what goes on around it. Forcing the East to live in a Western manipulated present that the West has created and manipulated is like taking a bedouin out of the scorching desert and dressing him in an elegantly tailored suit. This new-imposed disguise would cause intense discomfort. Release could only come from a return to his natural habitat and a removal of such an artificial constriction. Happiness therefore depends on a sense of cultural comfort. Hence there is nothing left for the Arab but to recoil in on the self and to attempt to find refuge in a fixed, well-defined time; that is, the past, for the present is a high risk game of inevitable loss.

Thus what Bhabha sees as the breaking of 'the time-barrier' is one way the weak of today may escape from participation in a present that has been fixed and directed by the strong West. In tribal times in the heart of darkness, life has been rolling on in the same manner for thousands of years. Such primitive people are beyond the reach of any superpowers because they are set apart from the competition by their voluntary existence on the periphery of the time factor. But if there was a diaspora where they are forced to abandon their retreats, they would be blasted out of this continuum of history. Cultural displacement and racial discrimination would naturally follow. If that were to happen, would Fanon's solution of "negating activity" work? Fanon sees this as one way to assert cultural presence. By an adamant refusal to participate in the 'culturally collusive present', the displaced of today draw attention to an awareness that fraudulent strategies are being manipulated to force the weak to continue negotiations they instinctively know will have a disastrous outcome: that such negotiations will bring only humiliation. Thus Fanon's 'negating activity' is a withdrawal from the contemporary scene and not a direct involvement in it because he

pursue(s) something other than life; insofar as (he does) battle for the creation of a human world - that is a world of reciprocal recognitions.....

And it is by going beyond the historical, instrumental hypothesis that I will initiate my cycle of freedom.

(*LOC*, pp. 8-9)

If Arabs today were to act on Fanon's advice, they would refuse to resume any talks that only continue to make fools of them. The West wants the talks to proceed

without showing any willingness to address the serious problems that hinder the forward movement of such talks. It is as if there is a fear that with an exploration of the roots of the current problems, the double standards that characterize Western policies will become obvious. It is as if the arms that hurl the stones of the Intifada are also sending a message that a careful look into the present deteriorating situation is needed more than at any time heretofore. The Shakespearian scene conveys this lesson also and teaches man how to avoid in the present the follies and errors of a deplorable past.

Shakespeare begins by focusing attention on a crucial moment of significant historical change. By beginning his History plays with *Richard II*, he testifies to the reality of such a change and he starts an attempt through the means of drama to represent it. Thus Alvin B. Kernan sees *Richard II* as a prologue to an 'epic' i.e., "a large scale, heroic action, involving many men and many activities, tracing the movement of a nation or people through violent changes from one condition to another" 10. By delving into the past, we stand in front of a mirror that reveals what is wrong with the present. We can not see that wrong because we are deeply immersed in it. Only by distancing ourselves (both East and West) from the painful present reality can we see without prejudice, like Shakespeare who is totally removed from the centre of strife, the terrible mess that encircles us and the faulty vision we use to see others. Only then when we take a balanced overview can we realize the disastrous consequences of the present. While Ranna Kabbani asserts that "the gaze into the Orient had turned, as in a convex mirror to reflect the Occident that had produced it" 11, a look into the mirror that reveals the hidden past should hopefully teach both Orient and Occident the inseparability of the two. By looking into the First Tetralogy,

we get a picture of a disordered world characterized by violence, greed, thirst for revenge and atrocities. Images of a civil war which pits father against son, son against father, and brother against brother shock us and fill us with a sense of horror.

A Weak King's Dilemma

Unfortunately the highest authority, represented by the king, stands with hands tied incapable of restoring order or bringing about peace. England has a weak king whose role is reduced to a mere theatricality and whose words reflect all the hollowness of modern rhetoric as his words fail to carry any weight or action. This is the language of a king whose mere presence ought to instill fear and yet it turns out to be nothing but the idle chatter of a child. The relevant scene that elucidates the above is Henry VI's way of handling the inveterate strife of warring members of the two sides. In his shallowness and weakness, he attempts desperately to appeal with tears that do not fit in the political arena let alone from a king to put an end to their bitterness. His attempt to reconcile them, his mistaking of the depth of their enmity and his call for a mere hypocritical show of affection pleases only an effeminate king. His strenuous, yet futile, efforts to bring them to an artificial peace bear striking resemblances to the situation discussed earlier where warring nations are officially shown in the media to be reconciled in a world that moves toward democracy and understanding. In such a world, dialogue is viewed as the only possible solution to racial and cultural problems. For that, such nations are willing to brush aside any impediments toward peace and progress and ignore the past in a contrived attempt to head for an optimistic future. Returning to the turbulent world of Shakespeare's history plays, King Henry addresses the participants in the conflict thus:

Uncles of Gloucester and Winchester,

The special watchmen of our English weal,
I would prevail, if prayers might prevail,
To join your hearts in love and amity.
O, what a scandal is it to our crown
That such noble peers as yet should jar!
Believe me, lords, my tender years can tell,
Civil dissention is a viperous worm
That gnaws the bowels of the commonwealth.¹³

(*J. Henry VI*, III.i.65-73)

Because of his weakness, Henry is completely oblivious to the importance of language in the struggle for social, and in his case political, change.¹⁴ Language makes the connection between intention and deed. It is interesting to compare Henry's language with Bolingbroke's for example. The latter's is that of a leader who asserts his political will to command. When he changes the name Lancaster to the name King, he does it with such facility and ease that it shows the speed with which he can move within the political arena. It becomes the measure of his strength in deeds rather than words. As Bevington observes, "once (Bolingbroke) is in power, England's citizens have no responsible alternative other than to submit"¹⁵. One way he manages to succeed and show authority is through the language he employs. Though Bolingbroke has few, but rather productive words, they are charged with a sense of authority. In spite of his taciturnity his language weighs the scale in favour of a ruler in a position to command. His opposite is Richard II whose language aspires to a private self-expression, ultimately apolitical and hence produces *status*.¹⁶ Both Richard and Henry share a common weakness. In the latter's case, weakness is reflected in the kind of language he uses. It is sentimental and emotional. Such

language is better reserved for the altar or a Friday sermon to move the pious to action against the conspirators of Islam. The above speech is densely imbued with phrases coming from a purely innocent heart. It is probably the latter which distinguishes Henry's rhetoric from that of cunning modern politicians with their slyly spun and well-manipulated words. Henry appeals to the two lords' emotions and that is all the weak can do to win the favour of the strong. But ironically speaking, Henry's empty words cannot stop the conflict among the servants of the two lords, let alone the lords themselves.

Hollow Versus Commanding Speech

How far Henry's words are from the impact of Othello's commanding and eloquent speech that brings an end to a situation where friction and quarrel are near! Talking to Brabantio, Desdemona's father, who happens to meet Othello on his way to the Duke upon "a business of some heat" (*Othello*, I.ii.40) regarding the disturbing military reports of the mighty preparations of the sole enemy of Christendom, who are none other than the menacing ~~Turks~~, against the Venetians (I.iii), Othello superbly manages the situation that he brilliantly turns to serve his ends and confirm his loyalty to the Venetian state. His readiness to take the lead in the ensuing delicate action that requires the adroitness and manipulation of strategy of a successful politician, if not the warrior. His noble and heroic action is in proportion to what he rightly claims to be when he says to the sly Iago: "I fetch my life and being / From men of royal siege, and my demerits / May speak unbounded, to as proud a fortune / As this that I have reach'd;" (I.ii.21-24).

In his meeting with the Moor, Brabantio uses the language of force and violence. It is obvious that he puts Othello on an equal footing with criminals and outlaws with the assistance of the officers who are commanded to seize him. Brabantio's empty language offers a stark contrast to Othello's confident aura of command. Pretending to be on Othello's side, the hypocritical Iago skilfully employs a strategy that divides people into two distinct groups: wronged and evildoers, oppressed and oppressors, the grieved and the tyrants. Then he deceptively throws himself in sincerity to the Moor's side to win an early favour as the scapegoat who offers his life for the Moor's protection only to have a thorough domination over him later on facilitated in this early scene by the façade of affection he shows the Moor. Thus we have a scene of opposed forces with the Moor and Iago on one side and Brabantio, Roderigo and the officers on the other. Logically speaking, victory is in favour of the second more numerous group backed up by the authoritative power of the state.

But this group is stunned by the power of Othello's words. This is the language fit for a leader who transforms words into weapons and reduces actual weapons into powerless toys. Thus Othello's forward military march to decide the issue and his ironic "Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them."(59) is all that is required to render powerless the host confronting him. This is the powerful impact of eloquence that functions as action and carries more weight than action at times. Probably Aristotle's statement taken from *Politics* on the impact of speech in human affairs serves as a good commentary on Othello's language. He says:

Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, therefore likewise the just and the unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state.¹⁷

(I, ii, 1253, 7-18)

In putting an end to the intended assault on him through an eloquent command of language, Othello represents the State or authority in a scene where a chaotic scuffle could have occurred had it not been for the Moor's powerful words. Founded upon speech, the state is an extension of human language, an indispensable means of communicating issues of justice and injustice. Thus language, particularly the rhetorical aspects of it, should be used to advance the cause of justice. It should not be manipulated to coerce and humiliate the weak as is the case now. Othello uses it to restore a just order. He does not reply back using Brabantio's phrases. He abstains from that to show how language commands. Othello's rhetoric confirms his Oriental affinity. This is too one of the areas where Arabs ever since the Age of Ignorance, the Pre-Islamic era, have distinguished themselves. It is as if Othello's eloquence has its deep roots in his original culture as a Moor and that he has the spark of the power of verbal expression still burning in him, and with its rekindling, comes nostalgic feelings for an eloquent past, when according to Atiyah, "Rival masters competed for pre-eminence in what was becoming the Arab's chief source of aesthetic and creative

delight - the use of their language."¹⁸ It is therefore an established fact that Arabs excelled in language and literature, particularly poetry. A well-circulated saying gives Arabs the credit for being excellent rhetoricians and masters of language usage. The saying goes: "Wisdom, alighted to three: the brain of the Frank, the hand of the Chinese, and the tongue of the Arabian."¹⁹

A Lost Eloquence

One wonders where that long and eloquent tongue is now! It looks as if the three above talents have been appropriated by the West and used to out-wit Arabs with a sly manipulation of words to reach their objectives while Arabs seem utterly speechless as this distinguishing feature has long abandoned them. And finally, it is the West that dictates what the verdict is. So it is all written by the West unless out of kindness and sympathy, it condescendingly allows the Arabs to write the minutes of meetings. Diplomats may make the decisions while beautiful Arabic calligraphy merely writes them down. The irony lies in the fact that the culture that at one time has surpassed all others in the skills of language is tied to a stake as its people become the 'Subaltern' of Spivak who cannot speak now.²⁰ But in the past, Professor Hitti states that "it was not only in the field of verbal expression that Pre-Islamic Arabians distinguished themselves." He goes on to praise the Arabs for their refined and sophisticated etiquettes related to speech:

No people in the world, perhaps, has such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and is so moved by the word, spoken or written, as the Arabs.

Hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such irresistible influence as Arabic. Modern audiences in Bagdad,

Damascus and Cairo can be stirred to the highest degree by the recital of poems, only vaguely comprehended, and by the delivery of orations in the classical tongue,.....The rhythm, the rhyme, the music, produce on them the effect of what they call "lawful magic" (sihr halal) 21

He expresses his utter astonishment that Arabs distinguish themselves in such matters when most of them are unlearned. Thus he says: "How illiterate camel breeders living in scattered tribes, with no political cohesion to unite them, could develop a refined, richly worded means of expression remains a mystery" (p. 25). It too remains a mystery that Arabs are reduced to such a humiliation now when in the past they used to launch severe wars to protect their honour and preserve their dignity. In those times they never stooped to degradation as it was inherent in their nature to reject any subjugation or enslavement. How they have lost that sense of pride and that eloquent command of the language can never be explained!

With the loss of the command over language comes the loss of command over identity and integrity. Language is therefore more than a means of communication but a vehicle for the preservation of culture and a protection of identity. Without it or in case of its weakening, comes the threat of cultural assimilation and the feelings of one's own vulnerability in the face of any external threats. Through language, a certain society is subjected to the control of another more powerful culture. While it is natural that the colonized attempt to escape from the grip of the colonizer's dominance, many weak nations that have been colonized for so long forget that through language they can still be invaded culturally and politically. Young generations of Indians, for example, are not aware of the fact that they are being manipulated by history. Self-

autonomy therefore goes beyond a mere formal and artificial declaration of independence because as Bhabha, who quotes Fanon, states "The time of liberation is ... a time of cultural uncertainty, and, most crucially, of significant or representational undecidability" (*LOC*, p. 35). Furthermore, it is a time of fluctuating movement and occult instability as those who were under an alien rule undergo extremely radical changes. Whether the colonized in Africa, Asia or the Caribbean will be able to restore their native culture, assert their independence and shake off the yoke of thralldom and confront the new obstacles that accompany the liberation of the post-colonial states are issues that will take post-colonial literature that focuses on the colonial period years to answer 22.

But one may convincingly argue that in spite of an attempt to retrieve a lost identity and regain a feeling of nationalism reflected in the way the African or Asian accepts the challenge to document and narrate his own experience from his own perspective as a colonial subject, that attempt is not wholly successful. He is still under bondage and thus his freedom is far from being complete. One reason that liberation is never achieved is that the language of the colonizer is the vehicle through which the colonized are controlled. When the colonized's own native language is replaced by the colonizer's, a cultural and identity crisis is inevitable. But a command over one's own native language is an indication of strength and cultural superiority for with it comes power and independence of personality and consequently the ability to act independently. Perhaps this can be illustrated in Othello where we see him in complete command of both language and situation in the incident that brings him face to face with Brabantio who brings the charge against him of having enchanted Desdemona and resorted to foul means such as magic and witchcraft to win her, when

the only magic he uses is the 'lawful magic', i.e., 'sihr halal', referred to above, of the eloquent Arabic tongue which he possesses. Thus the Moor reveals eloquence which confirms Shakespeare's "decidedly ambitious attempts at copious and ornate style"²³ But later on, when Iago poisons his mind with foul thoughts, he loses first of all his command over language and consequently, he loses command over self and integrity. Thus the crisis of those who have identity problems, like the Arabs of today, lies in the loss of command over language which they used to have in the past and which accounted for their strength and heroism. Now they have lost the command over words, they are classified as culturally and politically weak. Their loss of command over language classifies them with Henry whose loss confirms his inability to resume a position of authority. Arabs emerge weak in any peace negotiations because of their loss of command over language which naturally leads to a loss of authority over the course of action while Israelis are masters of verbal manipulation which accounts for their strength. Albert Hourani sees the seeds of weakness in the kind of language some Arabs use to talk about either themselves or others. Talking about Egyptians, he says:

Weare hypocritical in our desire to praise and flatter those who are strong, and that is because we do not believe in ourselves as independent human beings. We are easy-going, we say 'never mind' - ma'liysh - to whatever happens; that is a sort of virtue, but one which is rooted in the weakness of the soul.... We do not trust each other, we speak evil of others..... we worship strength.²⁴

Physical weakness, in military terms, is therefore reflected in the emptiness of meaningless words spoken by people to whom a certain language belongs. Initially,

Othello has physical prowess as he distinguishes himself as a warrior of a great service to the Venetian state. That power reflects itself in his commanding verbal expression. Without the first, the second would not have existed. Thus he derives the influence of his words that have a weight of their own and constitute an action from the fact that he is in a position of power. If one is not in that position, one's words remain hollow having a ring of emptiness about them even if shouted. The downtrodden of today act this way. Arabs excel even now in delivering emotional speeches encouraging people to rise in opposition to the West but all of that eloquence remains hollow because it lacks the real physical power to back it up. Since modern Arab rhetoric is empty, it is ignored by the West. As far as the West is concerned, it should realize that such rhetoric is just as empty as Henry VI's or Brabantio's words.

Thus the scene shows Othello in complete command. He has the military reputation to back up his words. To further illustrate his point and prove that command here is more related to physical prowess, self-discipline, far-sightedness, wisdom and eloquence rather than the actual physical might of ancient wars, he turns to Brabantio and addresses him thus: "Good Signior! you shall more command with years than with your weapons." (60). Ironically, Brabantio fails to grasp the sophisticated strategy of the Moor whom he regards as the alien Other against whom abusive language can be directed and insubstantial crimes charged. In other words, Brabantio fails to rise to what his Western upbringing would have inclined him to achieve, the power of words and years of experience and wisdom to command and not the barbaric language of the uncivilized whose brandished swords and sharp lances are the only language they know when all means to let their grievances be heard are bolted tight. And quite the reverse, Othello whom he regards

contemptuously, rises to a level in front of which modern diplomats would turn pale. Thus we end up with a situation where words constitute action. They have hidden power in them that transcend the physical power of weapons.

A Violent Scene

Returning to Henry VI, his words share the hollowness of Brabantio's language in the failure of both to lead to action. The difference in the tone of each remains obvious as Henry's words arouse sympathy and Brabantio's call for violence though eventually Brabantio and the officers are rendered powerless by Othello's superb command. If we think of officers as servants to the state, the analogy can be extended to compare the situation in the two different plays. In Othello, the 'servants' abide by the law once it comes from the mouth of an authoritative leader like Othello, in Henry VI, even the servants of the hostile lords are involved in the fight and they show total disregard for Henry's authority by continuing the conflict in spite of the king's futile attempts to mitigate it. The depth of animosity that turns into an obsession for revenge is clear when the Mayor of London comes to report what bears a striking resemblance to today's Palestinian Intifada with all its destructiveness and ugliness as the wretched are left with nothing to combat with but stones. Addressing the powerless king in such horrifying imagery of what strife can lead to if not properly controlled, he says:

The Bishop and the Duke of Gloucester's men,
Forbidden late to carry any weapons,
Have fill'd their pockets full of pebble stones;
And, banding themselves in contrary parts,

Do pelt so fast atone another's pate
That many have their giddy brains knock'd out;
Our windows are broke down in every street,
And we, for fear, compell'd to shut our shops.

(3.1.79-85)

This is a frightening scene that shocks the king. It reminds us of the utter ruin left behind after a riot. One wonders how it can be controlled. The fear of what the unjustly treated may be led to do looms in the background and shatters the possibility of permanent peace. Violence and rage linger in the air particularly when the grieved is left defenceless in utter humiliation and defeat. Surely an explosion of some kind is inevitable and if his hands are tied behind his back, he will kick with his 'hooves' and if his legs are pinioned, he will speak and shout with his tongue, and if his mouth is sealed up, there is nothing left for his peers to do in a desperate, though unequal fight, but to throw stones at windows in a paroxysm similar to what the servants of the warring lords are doing. Thus violence is never without an apparently legitimate cause.

How the West Views Violence

It is the only language of aggression, initially fit for the jungle that the world turns into, left for the lords and those who fall under their category to retaliate for the grievances their hearts and brains contain. But these are the violent actions fueled by the upsurging Islamic Fundamentalism that does nothing but disturb the peace and engender havoc and dissention. The threat of the wronged mobs instills fear into the hearts of their oppressors, and sometimes yesterday's rebels are today's rulers. It is a surfeit of tyranny and silence that breeds hatred and inevitably leads to atrocity and

violence still seen by the powerful Other as a strong connection with a militant and menacing past. But what else is left for angered Paléstinians when they are provoked to take action which the spin masters of the West will condemn the following day as Terrorism? Be on your guard, these hungry martyrs for Jihad and blood will shake the very foundations of the earth and topple down every existing governmental system to establish a reign of Terror and Death taking the whole world by the muzzle to the dark ages. What an exaggeration! What a strategy manipulated to misguide the multitudes! This is the kind of language that the French thinker, Count de Marenches, uses in his memoirs titled, "Diplomacy and Espionage in the Age of Terrorism" where he predicts that the next world war will be waged against "our enemies (Muslims who) are all around willing to sacrifice (their lives) and prepared to die for their beliefs. We (Christians) are not. Our beliefs, are too deeply based on material happiness".²⁵

Western media persistently and deliberately depicts Muslims in that light as if the West can never get rid of the medieval polemic with all its bias, hostility and stereotypes no matter how it claims that it heads for the future and intends to forget the past. It is all too clear that the coverage of Islam in Western media is that of exaggeration, criticism and distortion. Unfortunately, whenever Muslims go to either extremes, Western judgements grossly distort Islam "by taking the extreme to be the norm"²⁶ in the Islamic world. In an attempt to correct such erroneous Western conceptions, Prince Charles pleads to the audience not to label or categorize all Muslims alike as "Devout Islamic revivalists should not be confused with fanatics and extremists"²⁷ In addition to the deliberate muddle in the media that tends to classify Muslims together and treat them collectively rather than individually, there is never a marked separation between what some Muslims do and what Islam instructs them to

do. Western media portrays Muslims in a negative light and there seems little hope or even indication that this will ever change. But on an official level, what is being reiterated is that the West wants to take the East by the arm to set out for a new future. There is a great divergence between the picture of how East and West can get along with each other transmitted on a governmental level and the stereotypical images of the past transmitted by the media. The irony of the whole thing is that the West on the political level expects the East to ignore what its media depicts. It expects the East to behave in a way which it has shown itself as incapable of acting. Thus before the Orient can apply such strategies, the West should take the initiative and prove that the past can be thrown aside. But that remains a dream, an ideal similar to what Arabs think they can reach in a world of fantasy. Thus the painful reality is that feelings of hostility and oppression can not be obliterated.

Though the West may sympathize at times, the overall tendency is to interpret any violent action committed by Muslims as terrorism while the same action, if committed by Israelis, is self-defense. This is the all too familiar Western double standard that is largely responsible for much of the agitation that rages in the Islamic world and forces many from time to time to carry anti-Western slogans expressing frustration, disappointment and rage. As Bernard Lewis observes "Today much of the Muslim world is again seized by an intense - and violent resentment of the West. Suddenly, America has become the arch-enemy, the incarnation of evil, the diabolic opponent of all that is good, and especially, for Muslims, of Islam. Why?"²⁸ The answer to Lewis's 'Why?' is communicated by the two pictures used in the article rather than words. Thus pictures emerge here as a more powerful weapon than language itself. They depict the nature of the relationship that links the Muslim world

with the United States. The first serpent that menacingly crosses the Arabian desert tells us how far the West has gone in tightening its poisonous grip over the Arab world to the degree that it has been subdued and consequently annexed by the Western imperialistic activities. The second serpent attacks from behind a Muslim at prayer. This transmits the message that the threat to the West is eliminated once Islamists or activists are wiped out. If this is how Muslims are represented by the West, what does the West expect in return? The rage and animosity that boil in the hearts of many Muslims are a natural instinctive response to the way the West persistently represents Islam and Muslims. Such hostile sentiments are not created out of the blue. Radical Islam is unconsciously being fueled by unjust Western foreign policies that ignore the feelings and opinions of the majority and deal exclusively with the elite. The West must realize that there is no fire without smoke, and no smoke without wood.

Violence Has Causes

The Palestinian Intifada is therefore not without a cause. As Yusuf al-Qaradawi points out: "Extremism does not originate haphazardly. It has causes and motivation, events and actions do not come out of the blue. Knowledge of the causes in this respect is essential to enable us to understand" 29. It is high time that the West addressed the causes of the grievances of the oppressed that disturbed Henry VI but was powerless to address. The West is now in a position of power to address such issues seriously but that requires a courage equal to the courage of those who signed peace treaties. The Intifada is the language of the oppressed who know deep in their hearts that others' ears are deaf to their grievances in an adamant resolution not to give them the chance to express their deeply held concerns. Esposito points to the primary

cause of Intifada that the Western media never disentangles from its negative portraits of terrorists and fundamentalists. He says:

The primary cause of the Intifada was not Islam or Islamic fundamentalism but continued Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the desperation of young Palestinians in particular. The Islamic dimension (Hamas and Islamic Jihad) of the confrontation increased significantly when the Palestinian leadership proved unable to effectively resolve the situation.³⁰

At least in our situation, the weak King listens to the servants. They are admitted to his presence to express an opinion when all doors are barred in front of Hamas to enable itself to be heard. The whole world conspires to bolt off any possible channels whatsoever for the media to allow these dissenters to appear on the international stage to defend themselves, explain their case and pour out their grievances. The counter activities of Hamas, and not Israel's stubbornness to yield to what the world asks for in empty words, are seen as if they impede the progress of the Peace Process. Hamas foils what the West attempts to achieve. Thus Lisa Beyer states that what hampers a smooth movement toward peace are "Arafat loyalists and Hamas exchanging threats"³¹ and consequently turmoil intensifies in the Gaza strip. The loyalists or nationalists who are striving for the establishment and defence of an independent country and the Islamic activists who fight against tyranny and sacrifice for the sake of an Islamic state are therefore seen as obstacles that foil peace and create disorder. Why not let such dissenters file their complaints! What we see in Henry's case is the natural response of a weak king who cannot tolerate what he sees and thus resorts to tears and sighs in a desperate attempt to stop the unbearable

catastrophy. At least he is given credit for his genuine emotional concern that puts him on a higher rung on the ladder than the cunning politicians who denounce an action with their tongue whilst wholeheartedly approving it in their hearts. One other good reason for sympathizing with Henry is that he listens to grievances and to what the seditious servants have to say. In other words, the powerless Other's voice is heard and the fact that Shakespeare writes this scene is meant to allow the suppressed voices be heard. Nowadays, such rebellious people neither win a tear from the eyes nor are their grievances heard or allowed to be voiced in a world that claims that all are granted freedom of expression. What a fallacy! What a deception!

King's Failure To Solve the Conflict

Next we see the King assuming his mere ceremonial role and addressing the warring factions:

We charge you, on allegiance to ourself,
To hold your slaught'ring hands and keep the peace,
Pray, uncle Gloucester, mitigate this strife.

(86-89)

The fact that the servant, and not the uncle, answers the King points to a serious problem in the world of the play. First, it is utterly disrespectful to talk to the King particularly when permission is not yet granted and in this case of a servant daring to address the King before he is asked to speak, the absence of an observance of certain rules of etiquette is twice as bad. Second, the servant's reply confirms the nature of the topsy-turvy world of the First Tetralogy. Third, in assuming the lord's role and in

speaking for him or representing him, we get a better picture of the muddled situation here where there is a total disregard for a hierarchal system that may account for Henry's wishful thinking later on to exchange his position with the "homely swain" (Henry VI, II.v. 22). Fourth, in speaking directly to the King, the servant alerts attention to the seriousness of the problem at hand. At least it allows the voice of the downtrodden represented here by the servants to find its way to the surface.

The servant's reply draws an authentic picture of the profundity of the cause of the enmity that Henry lacks the strategies to smooth over easily as if it is nothing but a passing cloud of misunderstanding that will soon be blown away by the power of his empty words. He says: "Nay, if we be forbidden stones, we'll fall to it with our teeth." (90) In other words, a grievance is eventually settled according to the law of the jungle if it is not properly plucked out of its roots. This is what the West is reluctant to do nowadays and it seems to be happy and satisfied with the weak King's way of handling the enmity. Henry's repeated 'O's do nothing but deepen the tragedy, augment the sorrows and point to his utter inability to act:

O, how this discord doth afflict my soul!
Can you, my Lord of Winchester, behold
My sighs and tears, and will not once relent?
Who should be pitiful, if you be not?
Or who should study to prepare a peace,
If holy churchmen take delight in broils?

(106-111)

Finally the lords yield only to comply with a whimsical wish of a weak King who fails to understand that a genuine reconciliation goes deeper than a pompous shake of hands and a mere utterance by word of mouth that inveterate enemies of the past are the sincere friends of the future. Thus when Winchester says to Gloucester: "I will yield to thee; / Love for thy love and hand for hand I give.", Gloucester, in an aside, replies " Ay, but, I fear me, with a hollow heart.-" (134-36). Blessing the seeming settlement of the strife, the King says:

O loving uncle, kind Duke of Gloucester,
How joyful am I made by this contract!
Away, my masters, trouble us no more,
But join in friendship, as your lords have done.
(142-145)

But in response to the King's earnest plea to mend their differences, the servants ironically turn to go to surgeons and physicians to have their wounds dressed. There is no real indication of a genuine reconciliation amongst them. Their actions mirror those of their superiors. Next, we see the King restoring Richard to his earldom of Cambridge and dukedom of York in a futile effort to do justice and reconcile him with Somerset. But once more, Henry reveals his shallow understanding of the strife and dissention between the two. In fact, Somerset's aside "Perish, base prince, ignoble Duke of York" (177) points to Henry's mistake in not grasping the nature of the ill-feeling between them that cannot be plastered over by a mere hypocritical show of affection. As Exeter rightly predicts when he is alone on the stage, problems are more

than likely going to arise in the near future confirming Warwick's earlier prophecy in (2.4.124-127):

This late dissension grown betwixt the peers
Burns under feigned ashes of forg'd love,
And will at last break out into a flame:
As fest'ring members rot but by degree,
Till bones and flesh and sinews fall away,
So will this base and envious discord breed.

(188-193)

Forced Solutions Do Not Solve Conflicts

Thus it will not do to pretend to love when enmity and not amity is hidden in the labyrinth of the heart. Similarly, it will not do to appear to be sanctimonious and cordial when disdainful thoughts about the oppressed Other lurk behind the pleasant scene. It does not do either to attempt to ignore or wipe out the past because it is a part of the present that will trespass on its privacy and intrude into its secluded properties without warning. Only fools interpret the roar of the lion to be a smile and only the ignorant interpret a pretense of affection and an exchange of pleasant words between inveterate enemies as sincere signs of friendship. They put only a superficial end to profound hostilities. Behind the official shake of hands are volcanoes of rage and violence about to erupt and no power on earth can suppress them for ever. About twenty years ago, an effort to reach an agreement between president Sadat of Egypt and prime minister Begin of Israel during the presidency of Carter culminated in the

Camp David Accord. In his strenuous efforts to bring the two men together, Carter had to bring God into the picture. Thus he says:

The fact that we worship the same God and are bound by basically the same moral principles is a possible source for resolution of differences. I was always convinced that if Sadat and Begin could sit together, they would be bound by that common belief.³²

But as this paper illustrates, neither a meeting around the negotiating table nor a signature on a peace agreement is a guarantee that hostilities will cease. The warring lords pretend to be friends when by the end of the scene the worst that is to come is predicted. Peace cannot be forced. It has to come naturally at a propitious moment when not only the leaders of state decide it, but when everything around them including the multitudes feel ready for it. The West can help bring about peace. But it must change its current policies where it is conspicuous that its double perspectives are at work to coerce the Arabs to fight the terrorism conducted by Hamas and the angry present Palestinian street scenes only to allow Israel the chance to emerge as the most powerful country in the region. To let Israel emerge as a power, that can build more settlements and allow it to do what it likes. While the West encourages dialogue and the continuation of peace talks, Western strategies and skillful manipulation of language leave Arabs stunned and at a loss. Arabs have lost command over language and with this loss comes the inevitable loss of authority. The use of force becomes the language of the oppressed who compensate for their loss of control over a verbal language by resorting to the language of street violence. The Jews, by contrast, are ingenious rhetoricians and their command over language links

them with Othello, before Iago poisons his mind, and certainly Bolingbroke. Such a command becomes a measure of their strength in conducting a political dialogue while the Arabs side with Henry and Richard in their highly sentimental language that does not suit the political arena. In a conflict where the Israelis are bound to win, it becomes essential for the West to play a more influential and impartial role in the region.

Conclusion

The West is expected to use a language as heavy as explosives to force the more powerful Israel to comply with UN resolutions. The West should draw the line where all the sensible deem it fit to be drawn. It is only then, when language assumes its proper role of forcing the aggressor to stop, that the uncivilized language of stones will come to a halt. But how can the Israelis and America expect the Palestinians to practise self-discipline and remain calm when every Israeli action spurs them to retaliate! The West has to take into account the long grievances on the part of the Palestinians who are depicted as terrorists but with no serious attempt to address why terrorism exists. The Middle East is certainly a region of a turbulent conflict that requires courage and honesty to face if the West wants to maintain its role as a mediator who keeps one eye on its security and interests with its second eye directed towards the source of trouble and applicable solutions. Perhaps the former US Secretary of State James Baker's analysis of mounting problems is a fitting conclusion to this paper that stresses the need for solving conflicts comprehensively and justly at their roots. Even if answers cannot be given, an investigation of deep causes is an evidence of bravery and a positive forward move. Thus Baker says:

We are entering an era in which ethnic and sectarian identities could easily breed new violence and conflict.... The combination of unresolved regional conflicts, turbulent social and political changes, weapons of mass destruction, and much of the world's energy supplies makes the Middle East particularly combustible.³³

But before everything blows up, is the West willing to avert such a stupendous explosion? Can we all learn a lesson from that Shakespearcan scene!

Notes

- 1) Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London & New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 9. All other references to this book are abbreviated as LOC.
- 2) Akbar S. Ahmad, Postmodernism and Islam: Predicament and Promise (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 265.
- 3) Quoted in the Saudi Newspaper Arab News on 8.4. 97.
- 4) Quoted in the Saudi Newspaper, The Saudi Gazette on 12.12.97
- 5) E. M. W. Tillyard, Shakespeare's History Plays (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1964), pp. 234-64.
- 6) Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Histories: Mirrors of Elizabethan Policy (San Marino, Cal. : The Huntington Library, 1947), pp. 168-212.
- 7) David Bevington, Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard Univ. Press, 1968), p. 246.
- 8) John L. Esposito, The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality? (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 186.
- 9) Abdullah Yusuf Ali, The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an : Text, Translation and Commentary (Cairo: Dar Al-Kijab Al-Masri, 1934), IV. 75, p. 202.
- 10) A. B. Kernan, ed. "The Henriad: Shakespeare's Major History Plays," in Modern Shakespearean Criticism : Essays on Style, Dramaturgy, and the Major Plays (New York, 1970), p. 245.
- 11) Ranna Kabbani, Europe's Myth on the Orient (London : MacMillan, 1986), p. 85.
- 12) Robert B. Pierce, Shakespeare's History Plays: The Family and the State (Colombus, 1971), pp. 135-88.

- 13) G. Blackmore Evans, ed. The Riverside Shakespeare (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974). All subsequent references are to this edition.
- 14) Eldridge Cleaver, "My Father and Stokeley Carmichael" in Post-Prison Writings and Speeches (New York, 1967), pp. 43-65.
- 15) Bevington, p. 245.
- 16) James Calderwood, Shakespearean Metadrama (Minneapolis, 1971), p. 154.
- 17) Aristotle, The Basic Works of Aristotle, ed. with Introduction by Richard McKeon (New York, 1941).
- 18) Edward Atiya, The Arabs (Edinburgh: R and R Clark Ltd, 1955), p. 21.
- 19) P. K. Hitti, Islam : A Way of Life (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1970), p. 25.
- 20) Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in Marxism and the Interpretation of Cultures, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (London: MacMillan, 1988), pp. 271-313.
- 21) P. K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London: MacMillan, 1940), p. 90.
- 22) See E. Boehmer, Colonial and Postcolonial Literature (Berlin, Ibadan: Oxford Univ. Press, 1995).
- 23) William G. Crane, Wit and Rhetoric in the Renaissance (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1937), p. 85.
- 24) Alber Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 175.

25) Quoted in Syed Habibul Haq Nadvi, Islamic Fundamentalism: A Theology of Liberation and Renaissance (Durban: The Centre for Islamic, Near and Middle Eastern Studies, Planning & Publication, 1995) p. 68.

26) The Guardian, 28. 10. 93.

27) Ibid.

28) Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage", Atlantic Monthly 226: 3 (September 1990), p. 2.

29) Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1989), p. 49.

30) Esposito, The Islamic Threat, pp. 200-201.

31) Time International, 5. 12. 94.

32) Jochen Hippler and Andrea Lueg (eds), The Next Threat: Western Perceptions of Islam (London: Pluto Press, 1995), p. 140.

33) Ibid., p. 120.

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