# Blaming the Victims Revisited:

## Fantasy and Politics in the Context of Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

**Michal Ginach**

*Boston Graduate School of Psychoanalysis*

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mginach@rcn.com

*Each age and society re-creates its "Others"* —Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Blame is an ominous word, pregnant with the weight of wrongs that can neither be forgiven nor forgotten. It is a word beyond which there is no relationship. Blame is the justification most Israelis, and some factions of the Palestinian people as well, use in order to maintain the status quo of war between them.

When Edward Said titled his book *Blaming The Victims* (2001), he meant it literally. Seeing the Palestinians as the real victims, he protested against the world conspiring to blame them for the bloody impasse in the Middle East. I revisit his writing with the idea that if we are to understand the reality of Palestinian victimization at the hands of Israel, which Said's book seems to call for, it is not enough to talk in terms of injustice and blame. In *Reflections On Exile*, a book of collected essays published in 2003, paraphrasing Jacqueline Rose, Said emphasizes the need "to make connections" between the normally disparate realms of states and fantasy, "unavoidable for us all"(2003:498). It is upon this elusive connection between fantasy and politics that I want to elaborate.

The British literary critic, feminist and psychoanalyst Jacqueline Rose observes that fantasy, far from fleeing reality "plays a central constitutive role in the modern world of states and nations" (2003:494). "Politics," she observes "is not only, but also, a matter of fantasies, in which the way that people 'imagine' themselves occupies a crucial place" (Rose 1993:45). Referring to the re-election of Margaret Thatcher, she rhetorically asked: "More fundamentally, can her re-election be used to understand something about the place of fantasy in our collective political life?"(1993:44). In his meditation on Rose's writing, Edward Said notes that fantasy brings to the present a historical reference. As well, Rose notes, it leads us to what is at the heart of violence itself—"To the 'victim/executioner' in all of us"(1993:43).

Recently, I was running a psychoanalytic group in which two male patients were fighting bitterly. They both felt abused and exploited by the other, each convinced to his core that he did nothing to deserve that treatment. Each was in such a state of rage at the other that both were incapable of looking at their roles in what took place between them. In witnessing this interaction, my thought was that they both had valid complaints against the other; each was being, in some sense abused by the other. Yet, it was also clear to me, and the rest of the group, that each was, as well, an abuser.

On a social level what we observe is very similar. There, too, we are committed to our victimization to the exclusion of our participation, or possible contribution to it, "to the victim/executioner in all of us." More specifically, I argue that it applies to the Jewish-Israeli sensibility. The following is an example of how propaganda is used to enhance the Jewish sense of victimization. In an OpEd published by the Jewish newspaper *The Forward* (March 6th, 2005), Alisa Solomon, a professor at CUNY, discusses the latest uproar at Columbia University involving Rashid Khalidi, the director of the Middle East Institute. She notes that while "Khalidi has spoken of discriminatory laws within Israel that

favors Jews, and the discriminatory laws that have governed the occupied territories, it is an observation no Israeli will contest." She goes on to say that Khalidi "consistently condemned suicide bombings as "war crimes" while asserting the right of Palestinians to violent resistance against soldiers within the West Bank and Gaza." She observes that "in an atmosphere poisoned by nonstop smear campaigns against professors expressing pro-Palestinian sentiments, it's hardly surprising that nuance, good judgment and truth get lost in the smog."

Edward Said was a Palestinian thinker of nuance, good judgment and truth: qualities that were missing in the common Israeli understanding of his positions. In his writing Said insists on thinking about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict without bathing in his—and his people's—own victimization. Even though most Israelis remember him as a staunch proponent of the Palestinian cause and have concluded that he was incapable of understanding the Israeli sense of victimhood, his writing suggests otherwise. Further, it appears that this common Israeli opinion about Said is symptomatic of their sense of victimization and refusal to consider any presentation of the conflict more complex than one that presents them as the ultimate victims. However, in Said's insistence of calling the Palestinians the ultimate victims he inadvertently might be contributing to maintaining the impasse between the two nations. It appears that fantasy might explain this deadly fight for the status of the superior victim.

In the introduction to his book *Blaming the Victims (*2001) Edward Said accuses the West of "applauding the conquerors, and blaming or ignoring the victims almost entirely" (2001:5). However, Said does not condone the attacks on innocent Israelis by Palestinian militants. What should be focused on, Said argues, is "two peoples locked in a terrible struggle over the same territory." Further, Israel, for Said, is no South Africa but rather "a real state with real society ... bent beneath a horrific past of systematic persecution and extermination … " yet also a society that is presently "an oppressor towards the other people (the Palestinians)…"(2001:9). Said observes that the Jews, who were the victims in the past, have turned into victimizers in the present. Said concludes by calling for his readers to recognize the legitimacy and honesty of the Palestinian's national aspirations and the integrity of their process. "The Palestinian people," Said argues, "has spoken of its national destiny collectively in terms accommodating the fundamental human rights of others"(2001:292).

Here, Said acknowledges the Jewish past suffering as a motivating factor leading up to their occupation of his people's land. Further, he calls for a Palestinian national destiny that respects the human rights of those presently abusing Palestinian human rights. These words, indeed, are conciliatory, yet Said's undertone understandably is in the blame realm. Further, Said seems to warn against blaming the Palestinians suggesting that presently the blame lies with Israel. While I identify with putting the blame exclusively at the Israeli lap, and as the stronger party in this conflict it is clearly a justifiable claim, my argument is that blame and injustice cannot be solved without an understanding of the Other and perhaps more importantly, without an even deeper understudying of ourselves, and the underlying fantasies that constitute our psychic reality. In studying the Israeli psychic reality, one can observe with incredulity how facts evaporate in the face of the intensity of people's feelings; indeed, in the face of their unconscious fantasies.

Illustratively, how can we explain the Republican Jewish Coalition publishing an advertisement in newspapers around the country at the end of February 2005, associating Howard Dean, the recently elected chair of the Democratic National Committee, with Hamas suicide bombers? (Solomon, *The Forward*, March 6th, 2005) Aside from sheer malice, it would seem that the next best explanation would have to do with unconscious fantasies. Tragically, some Jews honestly believe this kind of skewed propaganda, indicating the power of fantasy. On this issue, Rose quotes the Marxist journalist Stuart Hall, who said after the re-election of Margaret Thatcher that "the left weakens itself politically by failing to take images seriously, leaving the important field of these symbolic identifications to the right"(1993:44-5). Clearly, the same sentiment could be applied to the failing of the Democrats in the last presidential election here, as well. To make a political impact, it is imperative that we understand and address what exists, seemingly as reality, in the unconscious minds of a people.

In describing Rose's argument, Said comments that it "quite remarkably forces the embarrassments of fantasy on to the project of statehood" (2003:496). Said's use of the word "embarrassment" indicates, I think, his resistance to the importance of fantasy (see also how critical Said was of Benedict Anderson's concept of 'imagined communities').

Said's resistance to fantasy is also quite evident in the way he tells his own life story, which more in tone than in content avoids his longings and his conflicts and leaves the reader feels somewhat unsatisfied.

The story of Edward Said as a person is uniquely Palestinian in that it is a story of displacement and exile caused by the establishment of Israeli in 1948. In the introduction to his seminal work *Orientalism,* Said explains his reasons for writing the book. He quotes Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks,* in which Gramsci says that "the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory." Gramsci's imperative is that the first order for a critical thinker is to compile his own inventory (1979:25). In *Orientalism*, Said compiled his inventory as a Palestinian Arab living in the West, a culture "whose domination has been so powerful a factor in the life of all Orientals" (1979:25). Orientalism, Said explains, is part and parcel of the idea of Europe: the idea of "us" Europeans against all "those" non-Europeans (1979:7). For Europe, Said argues, the Orient represents the ultimate 'Other',

yet it is in relation to this 'Other' that Europe defines itself as a hegemonic world power. Culture, to Said, is deeply imbedded in the politics of power. What we observe, then, is a dialectic where the Occident and the Orient need each other to define themselves. The resulting definitions set Europe as hegemonic in this duality. It is the underpinning of this dialectic of superior and inferior, or rather, as Said suggests, the representations of this construct, that is one of the underlying fantasies behind the Israeli pattern of encounter with Palestinians.

After reading Said's autobiography, *Out Of Place* (1999), one is struck by the feeling that *Orientalism* (1979) is his true autobiography. In it, he tells the emotional story of his exile, irrespective of where he was living. Growing up with the identity of an "Arab," a derogatory word in the European expatriate community of Cairo in the 1940's and 50's, he was just as much an exile there as he was in his birthplace, Jerusalem. He was a virtuoso in his use of the English language, and a Renaissance man in the breadth of his reading. His nuanced, very rich use of the English language almost feels as though he is marveling in a new-found territory. It is in language that Said seems to find refuge, if not a home; yet, it is in his battle with Orientalism and Orientalists that he is most passionate. On the surface, and intellectually, Orientalism to him is nothing more than 'a community of interpretation;' that is, a designation representing "interests, claims, projects, (and) ambitions' (2003: 201). However, it is in his struggle with Orientalists where he launches into "open warfare." Aligning himself with Frantz Fanon and others, in *Orientalism,* Said seems to be fighting for his own self-definition. "Challenging the authority, provenance, and institutions of the science that represented them to Europe, (they, the intellectuals of the Orient) were also understanding themselves as something more than what this science said they were"(2003:202). It is interesting to note Said's ambivalence about where he belongs when he uses the word 'them' (rather than 'us') to designate the denigration of intellectuals of an Oriental origin by the science of Orientalism. Still, in *Orientalism*, Said fights against a framework of thought that excludes intellectuals like himself, just as he fights against the superiority of the Occident over the Orient.

A stark example of the use of Orientalism to degrade the Orient, according to Said, is in its use in Israel. Pointing at the commonalities of what he calls 'islamophobia' and anti-Semitism, presently (and here he quotes the Israeli journalist Dani Rubenstein) Orientalists, Said argues, lead the Zionist assault on Palestinian nationalism, bringing the destruction of the Palestinian society (2003:208):

> Rubenstein notes with some sorrow that the Hebrew University's Islamic studies department has produced every one of the colonial officials and Arab experts who run the Occupied Territories. (2003: 208)

An exile at heart, Said's *Reflections on Exile* is one of the more moving pieces of his prolific writing. In exile, Said found his true ideology and perhaps his deepest mission. In my understanding, Said had a much more complex relationship to statehood and nationalism than he appeared to have as a spokesman for the Palestinian cause. As a representative of the Palestinians he spoke eloquently and passionately about their desire and right to establish "an independent Palestinian state on their historical national soil" (2001:292). Personally, however, it appears that Said was, at his core, identified with being an exile, and no statehood or nationalism could have taken that away from him. As he says in his autobiography *Out Of Place*(1999):

> It was in those Washington discussions that the inherent irreconcilability between intellectual belief and passionate loyalty to tribe, sect, and country first opened up in me and have remained open. I have never felt the need to close the gap but have kept them apart as opposites, and have always felt the priority of intellectual, rather than national or tribal, consciousness, no matter how solitary that made one. (1999:280)

Tellingly, Said concludes his autobiography by saying that "with so many dissonances in my life, I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place" (1999:295).

Writing about his mother's profound influence, he allows us to take a deeper look into the blueprints for who he had become:

> I feel imprinted and guided by several of (my mother's) long-standing perspectives and habits: A paralyzing anxiety about alternative courses of action; chronic, mostly self-inflicted sleeplessness; a deep seated restlessness accompanied by an unending supply of mental and physical energy; a profound interest in music and language as well as in the aesthetics of appearance, style and form; perhaps overelaborate sense of the social world, its currents, delights, and potential for happiness and grief; and finally a virtually unquenchable, incredibly various cultivation of loneliness as a form of both freedom and affliction. (1999:12)

Home was associated with a longing he had foreclosed on, and yet he could talk about it passionately. Perhaps this is why he was such an effective speaker for his people; he understood longing, but had given it up for himself. Refer-

ring to the English boys in his class in Egypt, he wrote: "I cannot recall even hearing any of them refer to "home," but I associated the idea of it with them, and in the deepest sense "home" was something I was excluded from"(1999:42). "Cairo," he continued, was "a city I always liked yet in which I never felt I belonged (1999:43).

Even Said's name suggests a split between East and West. As he tells it: "It took me about fifty years to become accustomed to, or, more exactly, to feel less uncomfortable with, "Edward," a foolishly English name yoked forcibly to the unmistakably Arabic family name Said"(1999:3). Said tells us that language was also a source of conflict for him:

> The travails of bearing such a name were compounded by an equally unsettling quandary when it came to language. I have never known what language I spoke first, Arabic or English, or which one was really mine beyond any doubt…each can seem like my absolutely first language, but neither is…"(1999:4)

In Adorno's autobiographical work, *Reflection From a Mutilated Life*, Said finds the sense of loss as well as the moral authority of exile. Adorno, an exile as well, turns exile into ideology. He argues that "everything that one says or thinks, as well as every object one possesses, is ultimately a mere commodity. Language is a jargon, objects are for sale. To refuse this state of affairs is the Exile's intellectual mission" (2003:184). Exile to Said is an alternative way of living, one that rejects mass institutions of all kinds, including what he calls 'statism'. Said adds poetically: "What is true of all exiles is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both."(2003:185) The tragedy of Said's life is indeed a case study of the Palestinian tragedy. As Simon Weil noted, "the exile's predicament is… as close as we come in the modern era to tragedy"(2003:183). As an exile even with his own people, Said's ultimate conflict is demonstrated when he asks:

> How, then, does one surmount the loneliness of exile without falling into the encompassing and thumping language of national pride, collective sentiments, group passions? What is there worth saving and holding on to between the extremes of exile on the one hand, and the often bloody minded affirmations of nationalism on the other? (2003:177)

The profundity of how one is marked by the landscape of one's upbringing was noted by a poet of early Zionism, Saul Tshernikhovsky. He wrote the following poem while still in Russia, dreaming of a new land yet recognizing the unavoidable impact of one's original imprints:

*Adam eino ela*
*Adam eino ela karka eretz ktana*
*Adam eino ela tavnit nof moladeto rak ma shkalta ozni odena raanana*
*Rak ma shsafga eino terem savaa lirot…*

(A man is nothing but the soil of a small country; a man is nothing but the patterns of his motherland, only what the ear had heard is still fresh; only what the eye has seen it never tires of).

In attempting to understand Said's emotional landscape, it appears that displacement was at his essence. Born in Jerusalem to Palestinian Christian parents, and raised in Egypt as an Arab with European expatriates, Said, with no motherland, grew into a man full of longing. Questioning Orientalism is at the essence of his existence, and his deepest conflict. Reading his work, one senses his longing for the Orient. Mourning the loss of an organic sense of belonging to it, Said turned to intellectual pursuits and became the master of representations, the master of language. The Orient, in its unmediated form, was forever taken away from him in his own personal Diaspora when his parents left Jerusalem for Cairo in 1948. In Israel he was accused of not being a real Palestinian; but, indeed, he was the ultimate Palestinian—his displacement the major stamp of his existence, as it is inherent in the definition of the Palestinian predicament.

In Said's life, Israel was the agent of his displacement. Moreover, Israel, in its very essence (ruled by an Ashkenazi hegemony repressing its own oriental Jews as well), represents the superior attitudes of the Occident towards the Orient. Researching this question, I have examined the fundamental assumptions and fantasies of the Israeli-Jews, and their attitudes towards the Palestinians as the 'Other'. Israelis, I find, are deeply anxious, constantly living under the perception of a threat, where survival seems temporary. This perception resists experience and is both fed and instrumentalized (coined by Moshe Zuckermann, a social philosopher and head of German studies in Tel-Aviv University, and meaning a cynical political use of deep sited anxieties) for political purposes.

For Jews, the Holocaust is a defining trauma in their collective psyche. In the reenactment of a trauma, the English Professor Cathy Caruth observes a destructive core she ascribes to the inability or refusal to-metabolize the trauma (1996:63). It is in the refusal to speak about, work through and eventually understand, that one sees the destructive insistence on remembering in action, which results in staying in the repetition. Thus, the un-metabolized experience

of the Holocaust, as well as other 'chosen traumas' and myths, are an unending source for the present day paranoid features of Israeli political behavior.

Indeed, the Holocaust is a defining trauma in the Israeli psyche, yet one that might be used as a screen for an earlier trauma that is reenacted in their present day suicidal/homicidal political behavior. Vamik Vulkan defines this dynamic as "a chosen trauma," meaning a trauma that has lingered and influenced the interpretation of history in the collective psyche of the people to the point that it impacts their present day political behavior. For psychoanalysts, the best reconstructive tool of a patients' history is not what he says about his history but rather the way he acts it out in his present life. In examining the political acting out of Israel, its homicidal /suicidal features suggest a repetition of a very unique 'chosen trauma'. The features of that trauma were first a homicidal impulse, and then a suicidal one. In Jewish history, the Masada is the story of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in 73 AD (in itself both homicidal and suicidal) that ends in a collective suicide of the last survivors of the revolt.

Jacqueline Rose takes the fantasy-state formula even further into the realm of the repetition compulsion in the context of the Jewish national revival:

> But Israel came into being to bring the migrancy of one people to an end. Uniquely perhaps, it saw its task as the redemption, not just of that people, but of the horrors of modernity…Displacing the Palestinians, it then produced on the spot a new people without statehood, not just by oversight or brutal self-realizing intention, but as if it had symptomatology to engender within its own boundaries the founding condition from which it had fled. (2003:496)

Israeli symptomatology is to be understood as the transformation from the abused to the abusers; thereby creating in the 'Other' the victims they have recently been themselves. The particular Israeli mechanism of this repetition uses aggression under the disguise of victimization. After the 1967 War a book was published in which soldiers and officers of the IDF (the Israeli army) confessed the pain they experienced while observing the suffering they inflicted on their enemy. Called 'Yorim vebochim'-- shooting and crying—it engendered tremendous national pride because it showcased the humanity of the Israeli soldiers. Here again the perception of themselves is that of victims of their own aggression forced upon them by an external threat to their survival. It is crucial for the Israeli sense of self to see themselves as humane; therefore, any suggestion to the contrary is intolerable to Israeli consciousness.

Let us look briefly at how this repetition works itself out in present day Israel. As amply displayed in the data analysis of my study, the major narrative of the Israeli discourse is a victim narrative—we are victims of the circumstances, of the Jewish history and of the Palestinians aggression against us supported by world opinion. The data reveals repeated phrases that confirm a victim's posturing (e.g., "the whole world is against us," "we have to live on our swords," "they want to throw us to the sea," "we won't go again like lambs to the slaughter," "they want to annihilate us"). This victimology narrative serves well as a defense against knowing their own aggression, their unacceptable wishes and, most particularly, their wish to turn from the victim to the victimizer.

These unacceptable wishes have stemmed from a culture that, as Moshe Zuckermann pointed out, has been soaked with guilt. Even the room in which I interviewed him in Tel-Aviv University sat on the ruins of a Palestinian village. According to Zuckermann, the Israeli Jewish culture also harbors guilty feelings towards the Sephardic tradition, which was trampled on in the name of a forced cohesion and homogeneity in the name of creating 'a melting pot', albeit an Ashkenazi one. The biggest Israeli guilt, Zuckermann argues, has been towards its religious home, and its sense of self as weak and vulnerable. Zionism rejected the sense of Jewishness that fashioned its self image as weak and ugly. And, in this rejection, the Zionists made clear their abhorrence of the Judaism of their parents. According to Zuckerman, this rejection was the psychological equivalent to patricide. Indeed, Zionism in its early years—to the late 50's—rejected the Holocaust survivors (the last "real" Jews) by marginalizing and shaming them, trying to erase their memory and existence in the name of creating a virile, brutal, new Jew. Ariel Sharon, with a history of massacres under his belt, and a widening appeal in the Israeli electorate, is a representation of this new Jew. The Holocaust as the fulfillment of the Oedipal wish of Zionism to do away with the father (i.e. the religious Jewish home) is another very heavy layer of guilt and a source of grandiosity. This grandiosity probably stems from the fulfillment of the wishes: where the Zionists succeeded at doing away with the image of the weak Jew and in becoming the brutal presence in the region. Israelis often express disgust with the Charedi Jews (the ultra orthodox), the 'real Jews' in everybody's minds. Both the survivors and the Charedi Jews, Zuckermann points out, stand for the part of the self in Israeli consciousness that they need to reject and expel. Could it be that Israeli political and military brutality is a form of reaction formation? This brutality may be an attempt to overcompensate for feeling weak and un-sexy, to undo that part of oneself one needs to expel but cannot.

There is a famous Hebrew short story called "The Sermon," penned in 1942 by the Israeli author Haim Hazaz. The scene is a kibbutz meeting: Yudka, a rock-hewer by trade, Russian by birth, and unaccustomed to public speaking, delivers a long riff on the Jewish condition. "I want to state," Yudka spoke with an effort, in low, tense tones, "that I

am opposed to Jewish history... What I mean is, I don't accept it." "Jewish history," he goes on, "has no glory or action, no heroes and conquerors, no rulers and masters of their fate, just a collection of wounded, hunted, groaning and wailing wretches, always begging for mercy." In place of this sorry state, Yudka wants the Jewish state: "When a man can no longer be a Jew, he becomes a Zionist." (Stuart Schoffman, *The Jerusalem Report*, December 27th, 2004)

This story humorously tells us something about the insecurities, inferiorities and fantasies with which Israel brought to the table of building its statehood, indeed about the patricide embodied in Zionism.

Jacqueline Rose tells us that "War makes the 'other' accountable for a horror we can then wipe out with impunity, precisely because we have located it so firmly in the other's place…"(1993:19). Similarly, being the victim, for Israelis, is an operation whose psychic aim is to displace and deny their aggression, and keep it out of their mind. As victims, their ultimate goal is not to know their own aggression. True to their position as the eternal victims, "History, according to Zionism," the Israeli historian, Idith Zertal tells us, "always starts at the moment we are attacked" (Interview in Tel-Aviv, 6/3/03). Becoming the victimizer is permissible in our consciousness only when we are attacked. This is also how the Zionist ideology serves the psychic function of the need not to know one's aggression.

We have examined the Palestinian experience of displacement through Said's life and work, and then looked at some of the Israeli underlying fantasies and assumptions. But as Said poignantly points out, no one in a state of acute misery can tolerate this talk about fantasy, when "injustice is meted out on all sides, in the name of justice"(2003:498). Indeed this is the luxury and, perhaps, the duty of conferences such as this, to indulge in such a talk so we can come to discuss "Just, lasting, comprehensive settlement" with a deeper understating of the impediments.

In conclusion, about a year ago, at the same time that the torture of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison was dominating the news, quietly and unnoticed, a great number of Palestinian homes around Gaza were systematically destroyed by Israelis under the pretext of security (which some Israelis honestly believe). Israeli 'symptomatology' was in full force, dehumanizing the 'Other'. Commenting about the American behavior in Iraq, Susan Sontag wrote in *The New York Times Magazine*:

Looking at these photographs, you ask yourself, How can someone grin at the sufferings and humiliation of another human being? Set guard dogs at the genitals and legs of cowering naked prisoners?…and you feel naïve for asking, since the answer is, self-evidently, People do these things to other people ... Americans, too, have done and do them when they are told, or made to feel, that those over whom they have absolute power deserve to be humiliated, tormented. They do them when they are led to believe that the people they are torturing belong to an inferior race or religion. For the meaning of these pictures is not just that these acts were performed, but that their perpetrators apparently had no sense that there was anything wrong in what the pictures show. (May 23rd, 2004 "The Photographs Are Us")

The Abu Ghraib photographs are the 'us' of America while the photographs of the destroyed lives of the Palestinians are the 'us' of Israel. Further, for the Israelis, these destroyed lives are a picture of themselves just a half-century earlier, a picture of a repetition they refuse to address.

The power of the victim fantasy is so strong in Israel that one cannot call their atrocities by name. This article in *The New York Times* is a prime example:

Israel's justice minister, a Holocaust survivor, started a political uproar on Sunday when he attacked an Israeli plan to demolish Palestinian homes in Gaza and said that a suffering Palestinian woman reminded him of his grandmother … Another cabinet minister, Danny Naveh, who also lost relatives in the Holocaust, rejected any comparison to the Holocaust, even implied. "Any analogy, even hinted at and—I am convinced from my acquaintance with Mr. Lapid—unintentional, creates greater anger and has no place in any form," he said. (5/24/2004:A6)

Edward Said refers to Vico when he observes that "men make their own history, that what they can know is what they have made" (1979:5). The photographs of the suffering of the "other" are "us," and the Jewish-European "us" held against the oriental "otherness" of the Palestinians is part of ourselves we have created. It is man-made, as Said observes. This dichotomy of the superior European and the inferior Oriental is so much a part of the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian situation; yet, as we have seen, it only tells part of the story. Guilt is another part of this story, as well as past traumas, repetitions, and fantasies about oneself and one's 'Other'.

"Enemies, like possessions," writes Gertrude Stein, "allow us to forget the fear of death"(1993:19). Tragically, in its desire to forget, Israel orchestrates a repetition in its political behavior, where fantasy is taken for reality unto its most disastrous consequences, both for itself and for the Palestinians, bringing death closer still.

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