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Critical Solidarity:
Regarding the bipolarity of anti-Arab anti-Jewish racisms in the Guardian and the Independent newspapers

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} A SHORT SUMMERY OF THE RESEARCH

IN THE IMAGE: Othello and Shylock from various Guardian's theatre review section

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

This study looks into the coverage of the al-Aqsa Intifada since July 2000 in the *Guardian* and the *Independent* newspapers. This research's underlying question examines how non-elite people in non-elite countries are covered in the British liberal press not only in relation to violence and disasters but also in relation to peace and complex processes (see Galtung and Vincent, 1992). The main hypothesis of this work examines the overlapping or intersections of anti-Arab and anti-Jewish racialised discourses as produced in a specific relationality (one of bipolar oppositions) in the reviewed coverage. Hence, this research rationale is not between centre and periphery as in 'self and Other', but rather horizontally, or "sideways" to quote Brah (1996), between self and Other*s* and in relation to multiple historic racialised speech and action and multiple modalities of marginalization and discrimination. Although focusing on the British part of this tri-focal examination, this research is about the "*painful listening*," to quote Daniel Birenbaum, between three forms of hegemonic spheres; the European, the Jew and Arab, each embedded within its own discursive modes of power relations, truth claims and myths.

MAIN HYPOTHESIS

This research main hypothesis suggests that through the conflict's 'packaging', the sides are reduced into two sedimented polarised identities (Anidjar, 2003), where no Palestinian exists outside the articulation of being oppositional to the Israeli through difference marked by violence, and vice versa. Orientalist notions of childlike irrationality and dependency are depicted in bipolar opposition to anti-Semitic notions of an ultra-manipulative world power motivated by possessive greed and religious zeal. The more opportunist, materialist, and possessive Israeli colonialism is said to be - the more Orientalised, enchanted, unreasonable, and child-like the Palestinian image is constructed as. The calculated, technical, and deliberative nature of one side instantaneously implies the irrational, irresponsible and impenetrable nature of the other. Mutual recognition or reconciliation are presented as impossibilities, as going against the very 'nature' of each side. A news-values model of two oppositional ideological icebergs emerges (van Dijk, 1991, see figures *1* and *2* below). *Only that*

which represents Palestinian-Arabs as entirely opposite to Israeli-Jews floats up and becomes amplified while that which does not is suppressed. Both peoples are essentialised, stereotyped and inferiorised, the discourse aimed against one always implicating the other. *The linkage is imposed from 'above', by Eurocentric voyeurism, and hence generally external to both.*

To clarify, I do not believe that current anti-Arab racism has replaced historic anti-Jewish racism and took its already existing form. Rather, I would suggest that these forms of racialised discourse and imagery intersect as bi-polarities. Thus, to use Barthes, representations of the Arab and Jew reduce History into Nature: flattened into a-historical and eternalized "ephemeral concepts," both appear as a rhetorical contrast, as oppositional finite 'Natures' or essences (see Barthes, 1977: 164). Charts *1* and *2* below, the result of the dialectics of theory and preliminary empirical work, review such hypothesis.

Chart 1. The strategic editorial construction of the Palestinian-Arab as diametrically oppositional to the Israeli-Jew (see Dan Rabinowitz, 2002)

| *The 'Palestinian'*	*The 'Israeli'*
Muslim (almost never Christian, for example)	*Jew (almost never Muslim, Druze, Christian Arab or other)*
Arab (omitting a European image)	*European (omitting Jews of Arab descent which make 60% of the population)*
Dark-skinned Middle Eastern	*White-skinned European*
Poor, agrarian, peripheral, dependant, classless	*Rich, industrial, metropolitan, independent, classless*
Child, elderly, or female	*Adult male*
Families, not individuals; fixated with reproduction	*Individualistic*
Exotic, romanticised	*Forbidding (worldview limited to the written word of the law)*
Timeless, synchronic, existing before history	*Diachronic, material logic*
Feminised passivity	*Masculinised bellicose vigorousness*
Rootedness. Under the sign of 'nature' - essentialised as 'natural' to the land like flora and fauna	*Uprootedness. Under the sign of 'excessive-culture' - foreign colonialisation, religion and biblical occupations*
Irrational, emotional, uncontrolled rage	*Ruthless efficiency, ultra-manipulative, ultra-calculative*
"The Arab street", the 'masses'. Lack of organisation. Unrealistic, ideological politics. Political structure based on traditionalism and customs. Subordination of public life to the culture of honour and shame	*Ruthless hierarchical pragmatism, absolute organisation. World moving power, capable of shaping international policies and priorities*
Biblical sticks and stones, organic	*Inhumane, mechanical, robot-like*

Chart 2. The thematic construction of the 'Palestinian'

Suppressed or Omitted	Amplified through repetition
Omission of conditions of Palestinian refugees in Syria, Lebanon or Jordan (Recently also Iraq, see UNAMI and UNCHR[1])	*Sole focus on refugees in the West Bank and Gaza (if discussed, the Palestinian Right of Return is mentioned devoid of discussion about those actual refugees aiming to return)*
Omission of (non-refugee) Palestinians in places such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Kuwait or even Jordan, where they make the majority of the population	*Sole focus on about 3.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, out of a total number of about 8.5 million Palestinians worldwide*
Omission of Christian Palestinians (and persecution of)	*Almost sole focus on Palestinians as Muslims*
Omission of Palestinian employment; banks; Judiciary; education; health; free media, or other essential Palestinian institutions	*Almost sole focus on confrontational issues with Israel. Internal or regional Palestinian issues are mostly omitted*
Omission of Palestinian moderates; the Palestinian peace camp, Palestinian human rights and aid practitioners; Palestinian academics and professionals; the Palestinian business sector	*Almost sole focus on Palestinians as ideologically violent or as affected by ideological violence*
Historical context is limited to fit the construct of a bi-polar endemic animosity between two clearly defined parties	*Systematic omission from the historical context of thousands of Palestinian casualties or the Palestinian leadership in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait or elsewhere*
Omission of Palestinian women issues	*The construct of the 'Palestinian cause' is genderless[2]*
The drama of the death of Palestinian children by Israeli forces had silenced debate on any other related issues such as failing healthcare or education systems under occupation. Reports on the Israeli army imprisonment of children or an organised criticism of Israeli armed forces beyond the 'inherent fault in the Israeli Nature' are nearly non-existent. The use of children in the violence or incitement aimed at children, despite reports by Amnesty International or the UN, are also omitted.	*Palestinian children stone throwers at Israeli soldiers or tanks are readily used as icons*
Omission of Palestinian (or generally Arab or Muslim) cultural or social sphere (Palestinians are denied "sameness", as well as difference; they are like us, but not quit)	*Palestinian social and cultural life are reported only through an Israeli news anchor*
Omission of Palestinian Diaspora in the West	*Obsessive focus on Jewish Diaspora*

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[1] For example (other than the overall silencing of Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria or even Jordan as already discussed above), a UNAMI report from December 2005 points to 198 casualties due to ongoing persecution of Palestinians in post-Saddam Iraq. Two phone calls I made to have the *Guardian* report such strife on days when Palestinian refugees fleeing Iraq appeared in the UNICEF website main story still did not get a single mentioning in the *Guardian*. The well documented plight of Palestinians in Iraq over the last two years is ignored just as other Arab-on-Arab violence are easily left out.

[2] *Gender being the Achilles heel of any male-lead liberation movement, in the Middle East or elsewhere*

Figure 1 and figure 2. The Two Oppositional Ideological Icebergs Model; that which is constructed as diametrically oppositional emerges, that which is not, suppressed
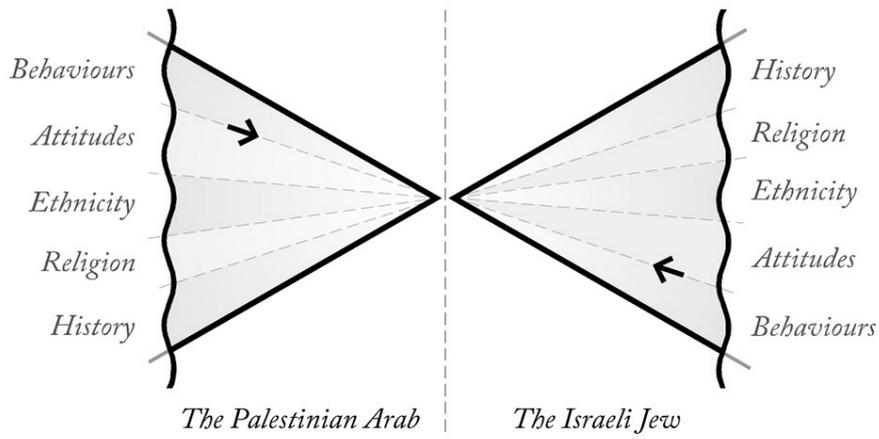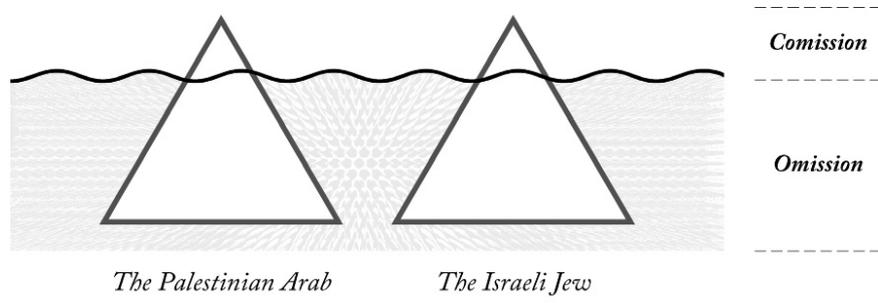
Another spatial metaphor, that of a shifting perspective, highlights the zero-sum game of a constantly altering imagined synthesis in relation to rigid and fixed thesis and anti-thesis. As put by John Berger (1972 :16)

> Perspective makes the single eye the centre of the visible world. Everything converges on to the eye as to the vanishing point of infinity. The visible world is arranged for the spectator as the universe was once thought to be arranged for God.

Thus, the illustration below exemplifies the exclusive place, as if a universal Archimedes' point, of the gaze in perspective. Any movement automates a shifting worldview; what appears insignificantly small or even entirely out of sight can suddenly fill the entire viewpoint – thus making objects on the opposite end appear small or out of sight.
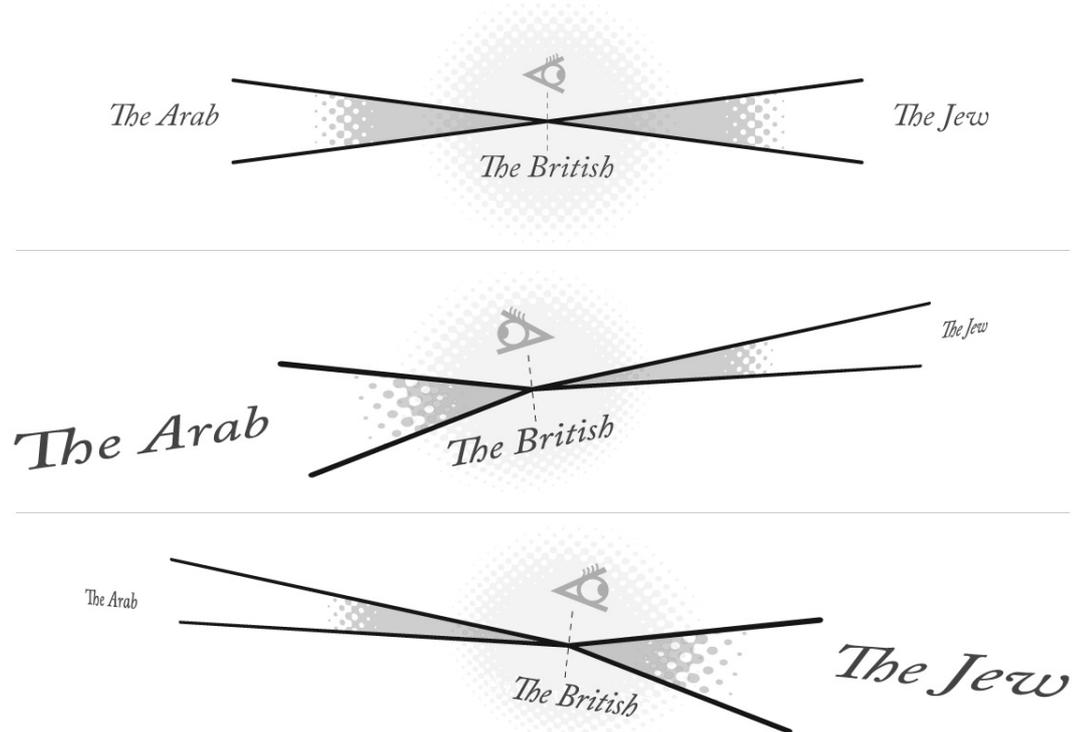
CRITICAL SOLIDARITY: PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

Addressing racism in the news media against *both* Arabs and Jews at times of ongoing violence in the Middle East. For centuries Arabs and Jews were hated in Europe via different histories and geographies: the Arab as the external (eventually 'weak') political enemy and the Jew as the ('all powerful') internal religious enemy. Thus different forms of racisms such as racialised indifference ('tolerating' anything about one group, including wrong doings by authorities) and racialised demonisation (demonising anything about another group, including non-elite people) can indeed overlap. Both presume the superiority of a third party dictating the terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Critical Solidarity suggests: *Empathy with all non-elite people on all sides and at all times since promoting the human rights of one group while denying those of another culminates in their instrumentalisation for political aims.*

And: *Criticism of all authorities on all sides and at all times since indifference to authorities or politicians' wrong doing or 'putting up with anything' is not an act kindness but an insult.*