

Reading the Veil of Imperial Discourse: Shakespeare and Arab-English Accounts of the Death of Diana

Charles Campbell
Sultan Qaboos University, Oman

Abstract: *This paper applies literary reading techniques to journalism. The texts under study are British editorial essays reacting to Arab journalism about the death of Princess Diana, a British national tragedy, and also a moment of unique Arab/Western interface, since she died in a car crash with her Egyptian lover, Dodi Fayed. The texts are about Arabs: one a response to Arab publications on Diana's death, the other a tendentious consideration of the possibility of conspiracy in her death. Literary parallels are made with Othello and Antony and Cleopatra, and correctives offered from contemporary sources. Inspired by the work of Edward Said and Rana Kabbani, the study reveals the hidden desires that obscure western descriptions of Arab reality, how Orientalist stereotypes invade the most liberal western prose; and that the voice of Iago is still speaking.*

Keywords: Al-Ahram Weekly, Diana, Dodi Al-Fayed, Egypt, imperialism, orientalism, Robert Fisk

The day my words were made of anger
I was a friend to chains. –Mahmoud Darwish, “Psalm 3”
Hatred is a skillful compositor. –E.M. Forster, Howard's End

This study aims to bring the intelligence and insight of great literature to bear on the imperceptive and disastrous bias of Western news and journalistic discourse about the Arab world, and to reveal where it is “made of anger” and composed by unconscious hatred. This work is inspired by Edward Said's books *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, which show, respectively, the obtuseness and self-affirming bias of power at work in Western writing on the Middle East and on the colonized world as a whole. Representation of the Arab world is veiled by special interest, “according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments and projections” (Said 1979:8). As Said writes in *Covering Islam*, his title a revealing pun, “it is still possible to say things about Islam that are simply unacceptable for Judaism, for other Asians, or for blacks” (Said 1997:140). “What we have instead [of the truth] of Arab life is a limited series of crude caricatures of the Islamic world, presented in such a way as . . . to make that world vulnerable to human aggression” (Said 1997:26). I have applied these ideas in a study of *Othello* (Campbell 2011) and found that the play was not, as some critics have held, an apology for imperialism and racism but rather an analysis of those abuses of power which reveals, especially in the speeches of

Iago, their inherent evil as it is manifested in verbal representation. Earlier I did studies of Johnson's *Rasselas* (Campbell 1994; 1996) that show how a work can be anti-Orientalist, i.e. revealing and critical of the operation of Orientalist discourse.

In this essay I would like to show how such an anti-Orientalist literary text can help us read Western journalism about the Arab-Islamic world. The present work seeks to turn the insights into imperialist discourse offered by such works of literature to a study of contemporary journalism about the worthy but inevitable enemy of the West (according to Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations*, 1997), the Arab Muslim, since "blood and belief are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for" (Huntington quoted by Ali 2003:299). In doing so, I place emphasis, as did Said in replying to Huntington, "on the discontinuities and disruptions" in Western journalism (Said 13-19 Feb. 1997:13). I work towards what Said calls a "contrapuntal analysis," because "the job facing the cultural intellectual is . . . not to accept the politics of identity as a given, but to show how all representations are constructed, for what purpose, by whom, and with what intention" (1993:314).

The journalistic texts considered here are now nearly twenty years old; however the Shakespearean texts compared to them are five hundred years old. The study is, in this sense, a cultural study and not a matter of current events but of recurrence and continuation. Considered historically, another reason that writing on Diana's death holds interest is that the event is unprecedented and probably never to be repeated: the violent death of a British royal along with her Arab Muslim lover. The event stands out as historically unique; however the commentary on that event that I have analyzed herein parallels plot elements and language in two of Shakespeare's plays. Thus the British writers compose the event in an archetypal or, at least, typical fashion.

1. Two Western texts

The Independent is a liberal British paper, and the first writer I find of interest there is none other than Robert Fisk, known for his sympathetic coverage of the Arab world and his books on the Lebanese civil war (*Pity the Nation*) and on the western conquest of the Middle East during and after WWI (*The Great War for Civilisation*). That the distortions of imperialist discourse can be found in such a writer argues its near inevitability in Western writing about those over whom it exerts power. In October of 1997 Fisk took up the matter of Arab reporting on the death of Diana. The following week Chris Blackburn wrote a follow-up article to Fisk's. There the plot thickens and yields material for the application of the deeper insight of great literature, particularly Shakespeare's *Othello*.

Rana Kabbani, in a book inspired by Said, *Europe's Myths of Orient*, finds that "the European narration of the Other" expresses two principle themes: "The first is the insistent claim that the East was a place of lascivious sensuality, and the second that it was a realm characterized by inherent violence" (Kabbani 1986:6). I will focus in this essay on these themes in considering the two articles. Diana's death is an Oriental tale in these texts for two reasons: (1) She

died with an Arab, the Egyptian Dodi Al Fayed, who was her lover at the time and (2) because certain Arab conspiracy theorists saw her possible marriage plans (and her consequent conversion to Islam) as the reason her death was engineered by agencies of the British government.

The intercultural nature of this event and these responses was reported on in a far-fetched and inaccurate article in *The Independent on Sunday*, entitled “Her Majesty the Terminator” (Fisk 12 Oct. 1997:15-16). The lead-in to that piece reads: “Almost every Arab is convinced the Queen ordered Diana’s death to stop the royals converting to Islam, Robert Fisk discovers.” The trouble is Fisk discovered this declared truth by talking with one friend of his in Lebanon and by perusal of two pot-boiling paperbacks churned out in Egypt to capitalize on the death of the princess and her Egyptian companion. With this data as evidence, Fisk denounces “Arab authors” in general for behaving “so cringingly” towards “their local dictators” while taking such a free hand with “the British Royals.” If they said such things about their own leaders, “they would find themselves behind bars (and possibly without heads) within hours.” Here we have several “discontinuities and disruptions” in the text. His hyperbolic figure is faulty, putting the writers in jail after being decapitated, and is based on a derogatory and false generalization: Beheading is not the form of capital punishment in Egypt or any other Arab country, except Saudi Arabia. The worst distortion, however, is his generalization about what “almost every Arab” believes based on “Arab writers” as a group identified with journalism at the level of supermarket tabloids, the anonymously authored articles, “Who Killed Diana?” and “Did Diana Die a Muslim?” and the content of those articles.

Perhaps there were no other Arab writers on this issue available to Mr. Fisk’s research. Alas, that is not the case. In an article that appeared three weeks before Fisk’s, the English-language edition of the foremost Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram Weekly* published Mohammed Sid Ahmed’s essay “The Diana Phenomenon.” It is illuminating to read Sid Ahmed’s article in opposition to Fisk’s. The Arab essay spends four lines out of 135 discussing Diana’s hypothetical marriage to Dodi Al-Fayed as a possible motive for assassination, only to dismiss the whole idea of conspiracy:

Still, this in no way implies that they were the victims of a conspiracy to eliminate them, even if their eventual marriage would have been an embarrassment for the British ruling establishment. (Sid Ahmed 18-24 Sept. 1997:8)

The rest of the article presents a first-hand account by an Arab journalist present in London at Diana’s funeral and seeks “to explain why the British people identified so strongly with a woman who was, after all, merely the ex-wife of their heir to the throne.” Far from opposing or attacking British institutions, Sid-Ahmed finds Diana to be “a symbol for post-Modern Britain—an inspiration for greater unity” and observes that “Diana’s funeral brought out the best in the British people, who displayed remarkable self-restraint and dignity in the midst of overwhelming grief” (18-24 Sept. 1997:6).

Certainly such a piece would prove a treasure-trove to a western journalist intent on analyzing Arab attitudes to Diana's death. Why was it not found by Fisk? Perhaps it is unreadable in the West under the veil of preconceptions; perhaps it is not crazy enough to be read as an Arab text. It seems even Robert Fisk must compose his writing within the confines of western Orientalist/Imperialist discourse. The follow-up to Fisk's article appeared in the next issue of *The Independent on Sunday*. "Was Diana Murdered" by Chris Blackhurst (9 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 1-2) falls into the pattern of Western writing that Rabbani classifies in her book under "Lewd Saracens" and provides an opportunity to use Shakespeare as a corrective lens by means of which we can see through the veil of Orientalist writing. Blackhurst makes more specific and also more general accusations about "what occurred in the Place d'Alma Tunnel." In an astounding and illogical reversal of Fisk's assertions in the previous issue of the weekly, Blackhurst is in favour of the idea of a conspiracy or, at least, of a murder. The guilty party, however, as we find by analyzing the metaphorical language of his text, is the Arab--which, after all, is where Fisk pointed the finger of guilt, as well. Behind such writing, as with Huntington's, lies "the fundamentalism of the Empire" which "can disregard all conventions," such as logic, consistency and plausibility (Ali 2003:331).

"Diana said that one day 'they' would get her. There are plenty of people who think they did," according to Blackhurst. He presents us with the mystery of the pronoun's reference. Who are "they"? To guide our search for the antecedent, he reiterates Fisk on the Arab writers as conspiracy-mongers and adds western internet junkies, "students in their anoraks" who are "desperate, like the fundamentalist Muslims" (19 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 1). Reading this simile, we must keep in mind that "images of 'terrorism' and 'fundamentalism,'" like Blackhurst's "they," "lack discriminate contents or definition, but they signify moral power and approval for whoever uses them, moral defensiveness and criminalization for whomever they designate" (Said 1993: 310). So far, then, he is consistent with what the paper had printed before, in blaming Arabs and their ilk for blaming the British. Yet Blackhurst does not want to drop the idea of conspiracy. While most Western newspapers have considered it an easily explained crash, he writes, "people who read serious newspapers and watch serious television programmes still have their doubts. Perhaps . . . they need to find a perpetrator." Blackhurst sets out to satisfy that need for a guilty party. After implicating "the Arab press" and the Muslim-like students in the idea of conspiracy, he proceeds, in a text printed between photographs of Diana on one side and Dodi on the other, to weave a weird veil of Orientalist discourse—in the words of Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, to make a "web" to ensnare his enemies (2.1.166), "the net/ That shall enmesh them all" (2.3.361-362).

2. A web of imagery

The article begins with the Who? What? Where? and When? of responsible journalism, but it is couched in a style which places the reader in the action and uses a distinctive and rhetorical imagery:

Next time you are driving along a fast road, look around. Try and imagine that big limousine over there hurtling at 90-100 mph. Then make the bigger car even heavier by giving it armour plating. Now you have a rough idea of what occurred in the Place d'Alma tunnel in central Paris at 12:21 am on 31 August when the reinforced Mercedes S-280 of Dodi Fayed (right) overtook a slow-moving Fiat-Uno, clipped it, and careered out of control. (Blackhurst 19 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 1)

This is “what the world knows” about “what happened to the Mercedes and its occupants,” according to Blackhurst. Presented as entirely factual, this text evinces a strong rhetorical effect that arises from its style, diction and figures of speech.

The words here explicitly evoke pictures, as does the reference to the photograph of Dodi. This, together with its placing the reader at the scene, insists on our considering the language as visual, and ourselves as eye witnesses. “Driving along a fast road,” the reader is asked to “imagine” the scene and “make” scenic changes, like a conscious dreamer or movie director, wholly involved in the rhetoric of the imagery. The passage emphasizes progressive comparative adjectives: “big” becomes “bigger,” and “heavier” becomes “even heavier”; and, although these are balanced by the contrasting adjectives “small” and “slow-moving,” the narrative thrust is signaled by the ominous growth pattern of “that big limousine over there” into the grotesquely large and heavy limousine belonging to, or more intimately identified as “of Dodi Fayad (right)”. The prevalence of action verbs is also noteworthy, as the juggernaut “of Dodi Fayad” is described as “hurtling,” striking, clipping and “careering out of control.” Since the object of all these violent actions by this armour-plated and reinforced German vehicle is “a small hatchback,” “a slow-moving Uno-Fiat,” the comparison between great and threatening and small and harmless is insistent, as if a grazing fawn were being cut down by “the Mercedes S-280 of Dodi Fayed.” All other conspiracy theories aside, the Uno is here the innocent victim, and the perpetrator or cause of the accident is a very heavy, aggressive, even militaristic, vehicle “of” an Arab.

Blackhurst does not refer to Diana’s death as an accident, rather he refers to “the deed” and notes that “Dodi set the agenda [for the fatal trip], not MI5 or some other hidden assailants” (19 Oct. 1997:sect. 2, 2). Thus encouraging the conspiracy theories *The Independent on Sunday* had seemed so set against in the previous issue, Blackhurst presents a systematic examination of the possibility of an Arab conspiracy paradoxically derived from the MI5 theories--how it would fit in with the victim, the motive, the place and “the deed.” His evidence is supported by a very special authority, the voice of the dead princess: “Diana feared she would be killed. She once, apparently, confided in friends that the security services would dispose of her because she was a ‘loose cannon’” (19 Oct. 1997:sect. 2, 2). Then Blackhurst concocts a metaphor: “The Uno is Princess Diana’s grassy knoll.” Identified parenthetically as “the site of Kennedy’s alleged second assassin,” this pastoral image joins with the voice of the victim (“Diana thought ‘they’ would get her too”) to implicitly endorse the

conspiracy theory insofar as it points to an Arab perpetrator. Blackhurst leads the reader further in this direction by figurative sensuality, until we realize that Diana died because of her entanglement with lying, violent, pushy and branded Arab sensualists.

“Diana’s grassy knoll” is itself a suggestive sensual image and so takes on diverse meanings. On the one hand Our Diana is the victim, the Uno, Desdemona. The grassy knoll is the site of conspiracy and also the image of the innocent victim of the grossly oversized Mercedes. However, at the center of the article’s rhetoric of blame lies an explicitly sexual image that takes a different view: “Why not sit back and let her become entwined with the son of a tycoon branded a liar by an official government inquiry?” (19 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 2). This is how Blackhurst represents the personal relationship between Diana and Fayed, as if he were Cleopatra and she Antony sinking into the pleasure of the East. The physicality of “entwined” pairs, along with the luxury of “tycoon,” and the setting for this entwining as “abroad,” in some tawdry, non-British, locale, “in California or Paris,” heightens the sensuality. As the text further darkens the mysterious perpetrators it seeks to uncover, the violence of the opening section gives way to an imagery of sexuality, license, wealth and undeserved luxury. The figure of entwining reflects on how the text makes father and son indistinguishable in their guilt, an effect heightened by the violent image of branding. Dare the reader ask, at this breathless point in the sub-textual argument, what is the relevance of Dodi’s father’s disputes with the government to Diana’s grassy knoll and the cause of the crash? And how does he merit, in this context, a ten-word epithet? In the guilty place of Diana’s grassy knoll, we find the Fayed, father and son.

What hidden purpose and attitude can cause such logical inconsistency and barely restrained anger as to blame it all, ultimately, on Dodi’s father? Her reprehensible coupling would have resulted in a welcome change, the writer reasons, in Diana’s popularity: “Her appeal in this country would have diminished rapidly”--speed again, as in “hurtling at 90-100 mph,” but now in a dying fall, a fall in appeal and power. Inter-racial sex floats as a shadowy subtext in both of *The Independent*’s articles on the conspiracies of “Arab authors,” “fundamentalist Muslims” and Egyptian poseurs. Shakespeare, who has written of the sexual allure of the Egyptian and of the murderous passion of the Moor, can help us untangle the web of words. If the Uno-Fiat is Diana’s grassy knoll, then the Mercedes is Dodi’s black beast.

3. A Shakespearean perspective

Said uses Iago’s metaphor for verbal deception to describe “the web of racism, cultural stereotypes, political imperialism [and] dehumanizing ideology holding in the Arabs or the Muslims” (1979:27). In Blackhurst’s web of words the guilt of the entwined lovers and the hulking, “hurtling” beast-car are connected by his references to “the more excitable elements of the Arab press” and the “fundamentalist Muslims” and thereby to the reprehensible “Arab authors” and “the ruthless way of life” in the Arab countries of Fisk’s article (12 Oct.

1997:16). In the first installment of this consideration of the Arab-Diana phenomenon, the perpetrators were anonymous Arab writers, anonymous Arab dictators and Arab culture in general. Blackhurst hones in on a more specific target; the fault lies ultimately with the Egyptian, as a representative Arab interloper. In Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, "a firm Roman" falls, as Rana Kabbani puts it, "into the East (which is set up as a foil to Rome)" (1986:20). The images associated with this fall are the iron chains of desire in which Antony becomes entwined: "These strong Egyptian fetters I must break,/ Or lose myself in dotage" (1.2.122-123). In the contemporary story it is the European woman, the People's Princess, a popular royal, who loses herself in the loose, luxurious East. Mark Antony manages to "break off" "from this enchanting queen" (1.2.135), returns to Rome and makes peace with Caesar. However, although he marries Caesar's sister Octavia, he soon realizes "I' the east my pleasure lies" (2.3.39) and goes back to Egypt, to Cleopatra and to his death. Cleopatra, in turn, kills herself "after the high Roman fashion" (4.15.91) but with "the pretty worm of Nilus" (5.2.242). Complex and humane is Shakespeare's account of an inter-cultural love affair; not so *The Independent on Sunday's*.

The disastrous plot of *Othello* offers a closer parallel to *The Independent on Sunday's* tale of Diana and Dodi. Rana Kabbani's remarks on this play are strikingly close to the underlying attitude of Fisk and Blackhurst to the tragedy of Diana: "The play ultimately condemns the idea of inter-racial sex, for such intercourse can lead only to tragedy, upsetting as it does the status quo. . . . Both [lovers] must be punished for such transgression" (1986:20). However, Kabbani simplifies the play, which is the tragedy of a black Arab, a Moor, in a world controlled by Europeans. Shakespeare isolates the voice of racism and imperialist discourse in one evil character, Othello's treacherous ensign Iago. Further, he makes the composing of a text by that character the main cause of the tragedy. Shakespeare thus provides us with a model of Orientalism in action as it reshapes Arab reality.

In *Othello*, in the words of Iago, the "black ram" dares to "tup" the "white ewe" (1.1.85-86), and both lovers come to death by textual means in the form of a web of deceit and rampant sensuality woven by Iago into the fabric of meaning of a symbolic handkerchief:

Iago. Have you not sometimes seen a handkerchief
Spotted with strawberries in your wife's hand?
Othello. I gave her such a one; 'twas my first gift.
Iago. I know not that; but such a handkerchief--
I am sure it was your wife's—did I today
See Cassio wipe his beard with. (3.3.431-436)

Iago has stolen the handkerchief and planted it in Cassio's chamber, and he uses Cassio's possession of it as false evidence of Desdemona's adultery. He then images the sex act for Othello against the background of the lost object: "Or to be naked with her friend in bed/ An hour or more, not meaning any harm? . . . 'tis a venial slip:/ But if I give my wife a handkerchief --" (4.1.3-10). An Arab

reader of an Orientalist text that distorts his own experience, Othello is caught up in the imagery and meaning added to the handkerchief by Iago.

The significance of the handkerchief as a text originates in a story Othello tells of his eastern and African background; it represents Othello's Arab life before becoming an employee of Venice. The handkerchief is first a love charm given by an Egyptian to Othello's mother in order to "subdue my father/ Entirely to her love"; when she dies, she gives it to her son to give to his wife (3.4.55-65). Othello narrates the story of the origin of the fabled textile: "And it was dyed in mummy which the skillful/ Conserved of maidens' hearts"; "a sibyl/ . . . in her prophetic fury, sew'd the work" (3.4.70-75). Othello tells Desdemona, "There's magic in the web of it" (3.4.69), unwittingly repeating Iago's word for his plot to destroy the Moor. Reading the handkerchief as Iago has repurposed it, Othello suspects, grows jealous, lapses into an epileptic fit, rages and then murders his wife: "Lie with her? Lie on her?—We say 'lie on her' when they belie her . . . Pish! Noses, ears, and lips! Is't possible?—Confess?—Handkerchief?—O devil! (Falls in a trance)" (4.1.36-45). Befuddled by a new reading of the text of his own life recomposed by his tormentor to show that, since Desdemona's love for a black man is unnatural and she is therefore capable of anything, the handkerchief, "boding to all," like "the raven o'er the infectious house" (4.1.21-22), "tell[s] the tale" of her adultery (4.1.86): "He had my handkerchief" (4.1.22). As a result, the "Barbary horse" runs amok and murders his love and, in the very act, cites the handkerchief as the cause (5.2.48, 62 and 66). In Blackhurst's Orientalist text, a luxurious, violent, juggernaut Arab (automobile) hurtled and "careered out of control," bringing on the violence that killed the new Desdemona. This tragic couple's unnatural conjunction, not in Cyprus but similarly "abroad," has resulted in a disaster that the mysterious "they" have brought about. The mystery of the indefinite antecedent of the pronoun is central to *The Independent on Sunday's* embroidering of the originally Egyptian tale of conspiracy and death in this East-West love story.

Blackhurst's article, for all its early confusion over whether to come out for or against conspiracy theories, follows on Fisk's dismissal of Egyptian writers on the topic but concludes with an indeterminate support of conspiracy theories consonant with its seductive Iago-like leading of the reader (Othello, Iago says, can be led by the nose, "as asses are"), in his description of the crash:

Diana thought "they" would get her, too . . . Diana knew you see. [However] not even "they" would kill her in public in a car in a tunnel in the centre of Paris with a witness who lived. Would they? (19 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 2)

We come again to the problem of pronoun reference. The last word of the article is Diana's "they" and the writer's. The reader who has read this two-part text with awareness from an opposing point of view will place the pronoun's antecedence—given the pillorying of Arab writers and society, with the Arabs and their "ruthless way of life" (Fisk 12 Oct. 1997:16) and will place the sensual

shaming and death of a British Royal with the branded, lying Arab tycoon and the monster Mercedes “of Dodi Fayed.”

“Making the beast with two backs,” Iago’s image of inter-racial sex (1.1.115), is the subtext of the articles in *The Independent on Sunday*. For Blackhurst, the Uno, Diana’s grassy knoll, is the “white ewe,” and the Mercedes is the “black ram.” If we ask of the Fisk article, what could inspire a principled and fair journalist to such unsubstantiated ranting and over-generalization, the answer lies in Blackhurst’s piece which pictures Diana “entwined” with an Arab much as Iago does Desdemona, “covered with a Barbary horse” (1.1.108-109). This sexual connection is the site of guilt and deceit in the second article—in a textual design woven around the Egyptian-inspired question, “Was Diana Murdered?” Illuminating the obscure workings of the contemporary web of deceit, Othello shows that the sexuality, violence and racism placed in the East is seen there as a projection which originates in the West. The brave, loving and good-natured soldier is typecast as “a lascivious moor” (1.1.123) and is “wrought” to Iago’s desire (5.2.341), the desire of the textual terrorist. His only effective opponent is his wife, Emilia.

The women in the play suffer from but also solve the mystery of the handkerchief. Desdemona dies due to Iago’s deceitful embroidery in weaving his web of deceit, as he says to himself, “out of her own goodness [I will] make the net/ That shall enmesh them all” (2.3.356-357). Then Iago kills Emilia, his own wife, when she, instead of Bianca, “take(s) out the work” (4.1.150-151), unraveling his fabric of lies. Before she dies she answers Bianca’s question, “What did you mean by that same handkerchief?” (4.1.148-149). These two female characters know the truth of the handkerchief; they alone are not shut inside the framework of Iago’s Orientalism. They are the aware Others in *Othello*.

Within the workings of imperialist discourse, “it is in the articulation of the other that the fracture of representation can be found” (Stratton 1993:72). According to Frederic Jameson’s theory of Modern style, “the unrepresentable totality” which has been projected onto “the person of the colonized” (2001:58) can sometimes be glimpsed “on the border or limit of representation,” “in the abyss” (2001:54). There is such a fracture and such a border in the Fisk/Blackhurst text which reveals the biased weaving of its web; and it lies in the image of another Egyptian handkerchief. An illustration in the “Terminator” article forms a counter-text to Fisk’s arguments against Arab conspiracy theories and Blackhurst’s shadowy tale of Arab betrayal, evil and violence. This takes the form of a photograph of Diana wearing the hijab (“the Muslim veil,” as the caption tells us) overwritten by Arabic characters (Fisk 12 Oct. 1997:16). Thus, the modern tragedy has its handkerchief as well, and its appearance marks the opposition of the Western text to itself. Iago, Fisk and Blackhurst weave a veil of otherness over the Arab world and over the Christian woman who mates with an Arab. The illustration reveals Diana under a veil of (mis)representation.

Before he kills her, Othello asks of Desdemona, in the textual metaphor of the play, “Was this fair paper, this most goodly book,/ Made to write ‘whore’

upon?” (4.2.70-71). The image of Diana under the Egyptian handkerchief is the inverse image of the British text about her death overwritten with an Orientalist superscript of violence, sensuality and guilt. The British writers use the occasion to write again the story of the seductive, corrupt and dangerous Arab Other. Iago-like, they weave a veil of misrepresentation to cover over the reality of the Middle East. In *Othello* we watch a verbal villain construct a veil of lies to cover the Arab world in Shakespeare’s study of this Western habit of misrepresentation.

The journalistic texts we have compared to Shakespeare’s possess no equivalent self-awareness, but sometimes a text reflects on itself unawares. In “Her Majesty the Terminator,” we read the following: “The cover photo shows Diana wearing a Muslim veil, taken when she visited the Al Azhar mosque in Cairo five years ago” (Fisk 12 Oct. 1997:16). The image creates first of all, seen in juxtaposition with that title, an aura of Lady MacBeth or of Astarte, the goddess as destroyer. Viewed alone, the picture evokes Garbo and Dietrich in Eastern drag, with a hint of Bette Davis as the adulteress in *The Letter*. She is distant, irresistible, powerful, cinematic, unattainable. In this image she is the inverse of Antony, the opposite of Desdemona; she is Salome.

We have seen how one Arab writer, overlooked by Fisk, discounted the idea of a political conspiracy; however Sid Ahmed sees “the coming together of Diana and Dodi as not entirely a coincidence.” As the favorite prey of the media, there is a paradoxical way to consider the idea of conspiracy—as cultural fate, as a conspiracy of representation. Sid Ahmed writes:

In a way, each represented an anti-establishment “institution”: Diana because of her position as the divorced wife of the heir to the British throne; Dodi Fayed, in his capacity as son of the Egyptian billionaire Mohamed El-Fayed. (18-24 Sept. 1997:8)

Sid Ahmed’s article not only obviates Fisk’s, it also provides a reasoned alternative to Blackhurst’s. He considers the victims as media images who died accordingly. Diana was, above all, Western journalism’s most obsessive subject; and she died pursued by paparazzi. She was the victim of a need, even an anxiety, for representation, a need of hers and those hungry for her image. From such a perspective, a certain amount of self-reflection inheres in her picture under an Egyptian hijab in a Western newspaper discussing her death.

At the time of her death Diana epitomized journalism in the West. The Arab script written over her head and breast, along with the veil on her head, weaves her into the Orientalist text woven by the West as an image of its own cover-up and deceptive imagery. This Arab image of the focal point of western media within a British account of Arab writing on the death of a Western ikon forms a fracture in Fisk’s discourse, a kind of abyss of representation, countering his opposition to Arab writers and weaving “the articulation of the Other” (Stratton 1995:72) into his text, and here it has led us back to the insights of Sid Ahmed. The portrait of Diana on the cover of an Egyptian potboiler reprinted in an article critical of the Arab world in a British newspaper is the clue of the handkerchief in this Orientalist text.

Fisk's article assigns guilt to Arab writing and culture. However, the image of Diana under the hijab invades that rhetoric with its opposite: the entwining of West and East as mutually attractive, the seductiveness of the Eastern veil over the Western woman and of the veil the West puts over the East and vice versa. The allure of this image may have turned the heads of the British writers, as evidenced by lapses in logic and common sense. Resistance to the attraction of an Eastern Diana launched a projective search for the guilty "hands of dark mysterious forces," as Blackhurst puts it (19 Oct. 1997: sect. 2, 2). Losing the rationality they claim as their own, the British writers follow their denunciation of Arab suggestions of conspiracy with an argument for the necessity of conspiracy and a quest to find the "perpetrator" at any cost to reason and consistency—thus joining in the views of theoretical Arab conspirators and inane, loony conspiracy theories. By the intervention of Arabic writing into the Orientalist discourse, an irrational opening appears in the design so that the operation of Western reading of the East becomes itself readable.

In its desire to image Her Majesty the Terminator, *The Independent on Sunday* comes out for and against Arabs (writing) on Diana, for and against conspiracy. In terms of our comparison to *Othello*, this account of the Arab/Diana phenomenon becomes suspended between the discourse of Cassio and that of Iago. Like Desdemona to Cassio, Diana is "one that paragon's description and wild fame;/ One that excels the quirks of blazoning pens" (1.1.61-63) to Fisk and Blackhurst; but, at the same time, she is, as Desdemona is represented by Iago, a woman with an unnatural "appetite" whose "eye must be fed" (2.1.223-224) and who can therefore be imagined as guilty of "lechery" and involved in "a history of lust and foul thoughts" (2.1.248-249). Both are true of the West's imaging here of the People's Princess linked with the Arab Other. This makes for a complex web of misrepresentation. Fisk is pious about Diana only to attack Arab writing and culture. Blackhurst makes the Princess his authority on conspiracy theory only to reinforce his image of her as entwined with the guilty Arab Other. However, in the illustration of Diana under the veil, the original argument against Arab writing collapses as the text yields to its desire for Diana as an uncontrollable Muslim woman and thereby embraces its own opposition, indulging its desire for censored sexuality as it searches for a perpetrator.

The allure of the equivocal western woman makes the reader a viewer of veiled sex and a fellow-conspirator with Arab conspiracy theorists. These strange bedfellows entwine in the faults of the text. Diana has coupled with the Other and thus become a powerful and fearsome thing—textually, the site of contradiction and reflexivity (her image the revealing mirror in the text). Operating in the abyss, she disorients the logic of Orientalist discourse in its yearning for the odalisque. Her Majesty the Terminator, "this enchanting queen," "makes hungry/ Where most she satisfies," as Shakespeare puts it in *Antony and Cleopatra* (2006: 2.2.247-248).

While the rhetoric of Iago dominates Fisk's and Blackhurst's articles, the argument against Arab writers, lovers and interlopers becomes veiled by

images of Orientalist desire worked into the text. A key figure in the play of images, as often in Shakespeare, is reflection. Iago denies being subject to unbidden lusts but he is caught in the web as much as anyone. He identifies the source of his desire to build his web of deceit as based in his own self-image as a cuckold. Like Othello, Roderigo and probably Cassio, he too loves Desdemona, “not out of outright lust” but out of the idea of “the Moor” having “leapt into my seat” (2.1.293-294). Therefore the “dangerous conceits which are in their natures poison” which burn “like mines of sulphur” that Iago places in Othello’s mind (3.3.329-333) originate in “the poisonous mineral” which “doth gnaw [Iago’s own] innards” (2.1.295). Iago creates Othello in his own image. In the reflected images, we see beneath Iago’s surface poise to his own inner torment. By a similar specular logic, in this late twentieth century newspaper rewrite of Near Eastern texts, “The Tale of Diana and the Arab,” the picture of the European woman under the veil of Arab dress and Arabic script opens a reflective view into the text’s unconscious. The veiled Diana overwritten with Arabic is the mirror in the text of its own overwriting (in the name of “covering”) Arab reality as a violent, lubricious Eastern Tale, while also suggesting a hidden desire for the East as woman. While on the rhetorical level unattached libido searches for an Arab perpetrator, the text’s imagery entwines itself with the discourse of the Other in a forbidden embrace of the East illustrated by a sexy, slightly quizzical, Diana under the veil.

With the oppositional reading made possible by an analysis of the imagery and embodied in the photograph from *Did Diana Die a Muslim?*, *The Independent on Sunday*’s Arab/Diana text interweaves with the complex patterns of comparisons and contradictions, “discontinuities and disruptions,” in *Othello*. Again, the clue of the handkerchief affords a glimpse of an alternative reading, beyond the framework of Orientalism, of a representation of the East not made by anger, suspicion, lust and fear. The picture of Diana under the veil, as the central image of this Orientalist text, forms a self-reflection, the opposite, the other, of projection. It is the site of love in a composition of hate, where we cannot take ourselves seriously and the Other smiles back at us in the fracture of our own discourse.

Charles Campbell
 Sultan Qaboos University, Muscat
 Oman
 Email: campleosa@yahoo.com

References

- Ali, Tariq.** (2003). *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihads and Modernity*. London: Verso.
- Blackhurst, Chris.** (19 Oct. 1997). 'Was Diana murdered?' *The Independent on Sunday*, Section 2, 1-2.
- Campbell, Charles.** (2011). 'Iago's Orientalism: Imperial discourse in *Othello*.' *International Journal of Arab-English Studies*, 12:9-23.
- Campbell, Charles.** (1994) 'Johnson's Arab: Anti-Orientalism in *Rasselas*.' *Abhath Al-Yarmouk*, 12 (1):51-66.
- Campbell, Charles.** (1990). 'Image and symbol in *Rasselas*: Narrative form and the flux of life.' *English Studies in Canada*, 16 (8):263-77.
- Darwish, Mahmoud.** (1994). *Psalms*. Trans. Ben Bennani. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Fisk, Robert.** (12 Oct. 1997). 'Her majesty the terminator.' *The Independent on Sunday*, 15-16.
- Fisk, Robert.** (2003). *Pity the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fisk, Robert.** (2005). *The Great War for Civilisation: The Conquest of the Middle East*. London: Fourth Estate.
- Forster, E. M.** (2010). *Howard's End*. Ed. Douglas Mao. New York: Longman.
- Huntington, Samuel P.** (1997). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. London: Simon & Shuster.
- Jameson, Frederic.** (2001). 'Modernism and imperialism.' In Terry Eagleton, Frederic Jameson, and Edward W. Said (eds.), *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, 43-66. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kabbani, Rana.** (1986). *Europe's Myths of Orient*. Bloomington: University of Indiana Press.
- Said, Edward.** (1997). *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Random House.
- Said, Edward.** (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage.
- Said, Edward.** (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Knopf.
- Said, Edward.** (13-19 Feb. 1997). 'Which West was that?' *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 5.
- Shakespeare, William.** (2006). *Antony and Cleopatra*. Ed. John Wilders. London: Arden.
- Shakespeare, William.** (1998). 'Othello, the Moor of Venice.' In *Four Great Tragedies*. New York: Signet.

Sid-Ahmed, Mohamed. (18-24 Sept. 1997). 'The Diana Phenomenon.' *Al-Ahram Weekly*, 7-8.

Stratton, Jon. (1993). *Writing Sites: A Genealogy of Post-Modern Writing*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.