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**‘Bulwark against Asia’: Zionist Exclusivism
and Palestinian Responses**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a consideration of how the ideological foundations of Zionism determine the movement's exclusive relationship with an outside world that is posited at large and the native Palestinian population specifically. Contesting Israel's exceptionalist security narrative, it identifies, through an extensive examination of the writings of Theodor Herzl, the overlapping settler colonialist and ethno-nationalist roots of Zionism. In doing so, it contextualises Herzl's movement as a hegemonic political force that embraced the dominant European discourses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including anti-Semitism. The thesis is also concerned with the ways in which these ideological foundations came to bear on the Palestinian and broader Ottoman contexts. A closer consideration of Ottoman Palestine reveals a hidden history of imperial inclusivity that stands in stark contrast to the Zionist settler colonial model. The thesis explores the effects of the Zionist project on Palestine's native population, highlighting early reactions to the marginalisation and exclusion suffered, as well as emerging strategies of resistance that locate an alternative, non-nationalist vision for the future of the region in the collective reappropriation of a pre-colonial past. The question is broached about the role that Palestinian literature can play within the context of such reclaiming efforts. More precisely, it debates whether Palestinian life writing emanating from the occupied territories contributes, in its recording of personal history, to the project of re-writing national history in opposition to the attempted Israeli erasure. Finally, by drawing a direct line from original Zionist thought to the politics and policies of the state of Israel today, the thesis suggests an on-going settler colonial structure that has become increasingly visible through the state's use of spatially restrictive measures in order to finally conclude its settlement project. Israel's obsessive 'walling' is discussed in that context as the physical escalation of Zionism's founding ideological tenets.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Where I have cited from collected works and diaries, I have given abbreviations as follows. I have also abbreviated some of the core literary texts studied. Full references appear in the Works Cited.

<i>CDI-V</i>	<i>The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl</i> Volumes I-V (Herzl, Theodor, ed. Raphael Patai)
<i>ZWI-II</i>	<i>Zionist Writings</i> Volumes I-II (Herzl, Theodor)
<i>Anl</i>	<i>Altneuland (Old New Land)</i> , Filiquarian Publishing (Herzl, Theodor)
<i>DNG</i>	<i>Das Neue Ghetto (The New Ghetto)</i> (Herzl, Theodor)

1 INTRODUCTION

Herzl's Colonial Idea

In his 1896 *Der Judenstaat*,¹ Theodor Herzl laid out his Zionist vision for a future Jewish state in Palestine ('state for/of Jews' would be a literal translation of '*Judenstaat*') by highlighting his scheme as a venture beneficial to both the 'current sovereign authority' [*jetzige Landeshoheit* (34)], that is, the Ottoman sultan, and the European colonial powers 'under whose protectorate' [*unter dem Protektorate* (34)] the new state would come into being and continue to exist:

If His Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could offer to resolve Turkey's finances. For Europe, we would form part of a bulwark against Asia there, we would serve as the advance post of civilisation against barbarism.²

With this early articulation of his Zionist blueprint, the Austro-Hungarian lawyer, writer and journalist who is today remembered as the founder of political Zionism, would firmly position his movement as a distinctly European settler project: what he needed from the Ottoman government was the land, a piece of its territory for the establishment of a Jewish sovereignty that the Ottomans would cede in what amounted to an indirect purchase; Europe, more importantly, would be the polity's guiding ideological model and protector. In his pioneering exposé *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* French Marxist historian and sociologist Maxime Rodinson recognised in Herzl's propositions a clear manifestation of Zionism as a 'colonialist phenomenon' (25): 'It would have been difficult to place Zionism any more clearly within the framework of European imperialist

¹ All subsequent references are to *Der Judenstaat: Text und Materialien, 1896 bis heute*. Ed. Ernst Piper. Philo Verlag, 2004. The original German text is given in brackets. For my translations, I consulted a 2008 English edition by Wildside Press and modified where I deemed necessary.

² [*Wenn seine Majestät der Sultan uns Palästina gäbe, könnten wir uns dafür anheischig machen, die Finanzen der Türkei gänzlich zu regeln. Für Europa würden wir dort ein Stück des Walles gegen Asien bilden, wir würden den Vorpostendienst der Kultur gegen die Barberei besorgen* (*Judenstaat*, 34).]

policies' (42).³ Although Herzl also sought to obtain Palestine through direct talks with the Sublime Porte, his alliance was from the start and unequivocally with imperial Europe. At a time when the Ottoman Empire was in Europe widely perceived to be declining, suffering from a well-publicised public debt crisis and further weakened by internal nationalist challenges to its imperial authority, Herzl's positioning of his movement cannot solely be explained in terms of a posited ideological kinship; he also sided with what he recognised as the locus of contemporary world power. Rodinson argued that,

the [Zionist] perspective was inevitably placed within the framework of the European assault on the Ottoman Empire, this "sick man" whose complete dismemberment was postponed by the rivalries of the great powers but who, in the meantime, was subjected to all kinds of interference, pressures, and threats. An imperialist setting if there ever was one.

(43)

The support of those powers could only be guaranteed, according to Herzl, if the Zionist cause were to 'make sense to them' [*wenn diesen die Sache einleuchtet*' (*Judenstaat*, 34)]; in other words, only if they saw its realisation serving their own interests. It was in view of this that Herzl's portrayal of Zionism as a European settler colonial initiative that followed in the footsteps of other such colonisation projects became the key selling point in promoting Zionism to Christian-colonial Europe. In Rodinson's words:

The Europeanism of the Zionists made it possible for them to present their plan as part of the same movement of European expansion that each power was developing on its own behalf.

(43)

Indeed throughout his writings and speeches, Herzl did not tire of presenting the Zionist idea as a quintessentially colonial one, that is, one that held implied gains for Europe, and indeed the whole of the 'civilised' world: 'The world will be liberated by our freedom, enriched by our wealth, magnified by our greatness' (*Judenstaat*, 89). In a

³ With his 1967 article 'Israël, fait colonial' (Israel, a colonial fact), Rodinson is commonly credited as the first contemporary 'Western' scholar to have re-placed Zionism/Israel within its colonial, and more specifically settler colonial, context. The original French article first appeared in a special issue on the 'Israeli-Arab conflict' of *Les Temps Modernes* in June 1967. In 1973, it was published in English in book-form under the title *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* All citations are from the 1973 English edition.

speech he delivered in London in 1899, he reiterates the colonial trope of the civilising mission and attaches it to the specific interests of imperial Britain:

We want to carry culture to the East. And once again, Europe will in turn profit from this work of ours. We will create new trade routes – and none will be more interested in this than England with its Asiatic possessions. The shortest route to India lies through Palestine.⁴

The Zionist movement, so Herzl continues in his speech, will be driven by the new spirit of progress and industry, of which he places Britain at the forefront:

What could I, poor barbarian from the Continent, tell the inhabitants of England about these things [progress and industry]. They are our superiors in all technical achievements, just as their great politicians were the first to see the necessity for colonial expansion. That is why the flag of Greater-Britain waves over every sea.⁵

Herzl ends with a direct appeal to his British audience on the basis of a shared colonialist-progressivist perspective:

And so I should think that here in England, the Zionist idea, *which is a colonial one*, should be easily and quickly understood in England, and this in its most modern form [emphasis added].⁶

A year later, he would repeat such plea in the opening address to the fourth Zionist Congress in London proclaiming: ‘England, mighty England, free England, England that surveys the seven seas, will understand us and our aspirations’ (*ZWII*, 154).

In a conflation unexceptional for the time, the notions of progress, civilisation and colonialism merge into one in Herzl’s rhetoric: what qualifies Great Britain as the spearhead of modernity is exactly its vast empire, the success of its colonial ‘exploits’ a manifestation of the country’s technological and commercial advance. It is herein that

⁴ [‘Cultur wollen wir nach dem Osten tragen. Und wieder wird Europa davon profitieren. Dem Verkehre werden wir neue Wege erschliessen – und niemand hat daran ein grösseres Interesse, als England mit seinen asiatischen Besitzungen. Der kürzeste Weg nach Indien führt durch Palästina’ (Herzl, ‘Dr. Herzl in London’, 5).] All translations of quotations taken from *Die Welt* newspaper are my own.

⁵ [‘Was könnte ich armer Barbar vom Continente den Bewohnern Englands darüber sagen. Sie sind uns in allen technischen Errungenschaften weit überlegen, gleich wie die grossen Politiker Ihres Landes die ersten waren, welche die Notwendigkeit der colonialen Ausbreitung erkannten. Darum weht die Fahne Grösser-Britanniens auf allen Meeren’ (5).]

⁶ [‘Und so wollte ich meinen, dass hier in England die zionistische Idee, die eine coloniale ist, leicht und rasch verstanden werden muss, und zwar in ihrer modernsten Form’ (5).]

Herzl's often commented upon Anglophilia resides.⁷ His Zionist scheme for 'land appropriation' [*Landergreifung*] (76) and Jewish settlement would, so Herzl insists in *Der Judenstaat*, follow the British model in that they were to be effected according to 'scientific principles' [*nach wissenschaftlichen Grundsätzen*] (76); Zionism would be colonialism 'in its most modern form'. He exemplifies this new approach by contrasting the old, chaotic and 'marauding' [*räubernässige*] (76) gold-digging ventures in California during the mid-nineteenth century, to the new, flourishing gold mining industry in the British South African colony of Transvaal where, 'there are no romantic vagabonds anymore; instead, sober geologists and engineers manage the gold industry'.⁸ 'And thus', Herzl concludes, 'the new Jewish land must be researched and appropriated by means of every modern aid'.⁹

Herzl did not stop there. The new Jewish state would in time overtake not only Great Britain, but the whole of Europe and indeed the 'New World', as the most modern nation.¹⁰ In his utopian Zionist novel *Altneuland* (Old New Land) which was first published in 1902 and outlines in selective detail the creation and nature of what is described in the book as a Jewish 'commonwealth' in Palestine,¹¹ the European visitors to the commonwealth are amazed to find 'the most up-to-date technical appliances' in this stretch of land in the middle of the Orient (149). Baffled by the country's state-of-the-art electric train network, one of the visitors, a German nobleman no less who years earlier had emigrated to America (he is in fact referred to as 'the American'), exclaims: 'You're a damned shrewd nation. Left us with the old scrap iron, while you travel about in the latest machines!' (150) Amongst the representatives of the suggestively named 'New Society' that functions as the governing body of the commonwealth, are an architect, a scientist and a doctor, in short, precisely the technocrats that Herzl places at the centre of

⁷ Mark Levene for example contends that, '[c]ertainly everything we know suggests that Herzl was unashamedly enthusiastic about Britain, but most especially about its industry, commerce and imperial world power' (212). Desmond Stewart and Eitan Bar-Yosef make similar statements in their respective publications. See also Steven Beller's 'Herzl's Anglophilia' in Robertson and Timms (eds.), *Theodor Herzl and the Origins of Zionism*, 54-61.

⁸ [*Keine romantische Strolche mehr, sondern nüchterne Geologen und Ingenieure leiten die Goldindustrie*] (*Judenstaat*, 76).]

⁹ [*So muss das neue Judenland mit allen modernen Hilfsmitteln erforscht und in Besitz genommen werden*] (*Judenstaat*, 76).]

¹⁰ 'Because we are a modern nation and want to become the most modern one'. [*Denn wir sind ein modernes Volk und wollen das modernste werden*] (*Judenstaat*, 79).]

¹¹ All subsequent references are to a 2007 Filiquarian Publishing reprint of the 1929 English translation of *Altneuland*.

any successful modern colonisation. These representatives take their turn in explaining to their ‘incredulous’ guests that what they see is not new (282), but merely a ‘new arrangement of things that existed [before]’ (319). In the ‘old order’ of Europe (92), these new developments and methods were ‘sporadic and unharmonious’ (95); in Palestine in contrast, a truly new society could be built, ‘without inherited drawbacks’ (93), that is, with complete ‘freedom from inherited burdens’ (103):

There was one of the great advantages of having begun from the beginning. Just because everything here had been in a primitive, neglected state, it had been possible to install the most up-to-date technical appliances at once. So it had been with the city planning, [...]; and so it had been with the construction of railways, the digging of canals, the establishment of agriculture and industry in the land. The Jewish settlers who streamed into the country had brought with them the experience of the whole civilized world.

(149)

‘Now’, one of the Jewish settlers confirms, ‘Palestine is a model country’ (163). Already in *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl had highlighted his future creation as both an ‘experimental country and model country’ [‘*Versuchsland und Musterland*’ (85)] in which the latest science, as well as newest socio-political ideas would be applied. *Altneuland*’s New Society is based on a system of affiliated co-operatives, or ‘mutualism’, which Herzl conceptualises as an ideal middle ground between capitalism and socialism: ‘Here the individual is neither ground between the millstones of capitalism, not decapitated by socialist leveling’ (107).

Strikingly, the phrase ‘New Society’ appears as such, in its English form, in the original German edition of *Altneuland*. Indeed throughout his Zionist career, Herzl would persistently propose a ‘Society of Jews’ and ‘Jewish Company’ as core Zionist organisations (*Judenstaat*, 32). This is an odd use of English terminology for Herzl for whom, although multilingual, the English language was certainly not a forte. Considering in addition that these institutions were to be established in London, it serves as further proof of Herzl’s wish to imitate a British style of colonialism, one he had indeed studied closely. This orientation comes to the fore very clearly in his insistence on the British colonisation model of the ‘chartered company’ in which the government awarded a charter to a company for the exploration, trade and/or settlement of a certain territory. In *Altneuland*, the vehicle that created the Jewish commonwealth was a ‘stock corporation’

(221), ‘The New Society for the Colonization of Palestine’ (215); only later, so we are told, was this corporation turned into the co-operative ‘New Society’. Herzl makes his character Kingscourt, the German-American aristocrat who functions within the story as the critical, sometimes patronising voice of Christian Europe-America, laud this approach as a proven and pragmatic method: ‘there are plenty of examples in history of such stock companies for colonization. The East India Company was not at all bad’ (222).¹² It was Herzl’s insistence on such a charter as a prerequisite for any Jewish settlement that would set him against the so-called practical Zionists who called for an immediate start to the colonisation work, independently of such backing and protectorate.

During the years of the so-called Scramble for Africa in the late nineteenth to early twentieth-century, the chartered company had become the most popular medium for colonial exploitation, having been adopted by most of the key colonial players. In view of this, Herzl did not mind which European power would provide him with the charter for his Zionist enterprise. In a meeting with the German ambassador in Vienna in September of 1898 in which he hoped to secure a meeting with Kaiser Wilhelm II, Herzl assured the ambassador that, despite Britain’s colonial prowess, he would in fact favour the Germans as his imperial sponsor. He noted in his diary:

[...] I think I made the strongest impression on [the ambassador] when I said: “Our movement exists; I will expect that one or another of the Powers will espouse it. Originally I had thought that it would be England. It lay in the nature of things. But it would be even more welcome to me if it were Germany. The Jews of today are predominantly German in culture. But I am not saying this because I am at the

¹² There are suggestions that Herzl wrote Kingscourt with Kaiser Wilhelm II in mind. In an early scene during Friedrich and Kingscourt’s first arrival in Palestine prior to Jewish colonisation, the latter expresses his belief in the transformative capability of the at present desolate land: ‘This country needs nothing but water and shade to have a great future’ (51). These were allegedly the very words spoken by the Kaiser to Herzl upon their brief meeting in Palestine in 1898. (See Herzl, *Altneuland: Ein Roman von Theodor Herzl*. Eds. Goldberg and Seelig, 1962, 33-34.) While in the novel Kingscourt’s assertion signifies a sanctioning of the Zionist plan by an authoritative European figure, the subtext to the actual exchange between Herzl and Wilhelm II seems to have been quite different. In its cover story on Herzl from 1967, German magazine *Der Spiegel* narrates the encounter as an embarrassing episode for Herzl. At their first meeting earlier that same month in Constantinople, the Zionist leader had been assured personal help from the Kaiser in securing talks with the Ottoman Sultan; now, he was being brushed off by the German monarch with a trivial remark about the weather. The article relates the exchange between the two men as follows: “‘It is very hot, but the country has a future. It needs water, a lot of water.’” The Zionist obediently: “‘Yes, Your Majesty, canalisation on a grand scale.’” [*“Es ist sehr heiß, aber das Land hat eine Zukunft. Es braucht Wasser, viel Wasser.” Der Zionist gehorsam: “Ja, Majestät, Kanalisation großen Stils.”* (“Mächtige Legende”, available at < <http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-46196237.html> >]. A photograph printed in the above-cited 1962 Israeli edition of *Altneuland* depicts the moment of the encounter and tellingly shows a mounted Kaiser who appears to be addressing Herzl on the ground almost in passing (33).

German Embassy, but because it is true. Proof: the official language of the two Basel Congresses.”

(*CDII*, 664)

It is certainly fair to say that because of his personal background, Herzl felt most comfortable with the idea of a Jewish state rooted in German culture. His allegation, however, of the predominant German character of contemporary Jewry was, if anything, wishful thinking rather than reality.¹³ Herzl was acutely aware of the very distinct and prevalent culture of Eastern European Jews who he knew had to provide the numbers for the realisation of the Zionist plan. His attitude towards the ‘*Ostjuden*’ (a term often used derogatorily to refer to Eastern European Jews, literally ‘East-Jews’) was highly ambivalent: they embodied for Herzl both the cause of and the solution to the ‘Jewish problem’. They were his poor brethren, ‘beggars and starvelings’ [‘*Bettlern und Hungerleidern*’ (‘Dr. Herzl in London’, 5)], who, because of their poverty and persecution, had retained a striving for national restoration and were therefore the carriers of the Jewish national character. At the same time, it was precisely their ‘Jewishness’ (read Judaism) that, in Herzl’s eyes, made them backward and defective, and in need of reformation. (Some of them were even beyond reformation; their purported degeneration for Herzl a marker of a different race altogether.¹⁴)

My point here is that Herzl’s false insistence on the authenticity of German Jewish culture in his tête-a-tête with the German ambassador, although a seemingly minor aside, is in fact symptomatic of Herzl’s Zionist work at large. As with his speeches in London, Herzl, in his concerted public relations campaign to gain support for Zionism, mindfully tailored his presentations to his respective audience. Concurrently courting both German and British colonial secretaries, he wittingly used existing rivalries between the two countries to incite each side for the Zionist colonial plan in a bid to outdo the other. About that same meeting with the German ambassador, Herzl goes on to remark:

¹³ Herzl saw himself as German in culture and wished to remain so. Indeed as Daniel Boyarin argues in *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, the Zionist relocation of the Jews to a territory (or territories) outside of Europe would give him, and assimilated Jews like him, full access to their respective European societies. More will be said about this paradoxical theory in Chapter 1.

¹⁴ Chapter 1.1 will discuss in detail Herzl’s internalisation of anti-Semitic stereotypes as embodied in the image of ‘*Mauschel*’ as the racial Other – a recourse to race that was untypical for Herzl, but which he used in his attempt to delegitimise Jewish anti-Zionist positions.

The mention of England, in which I have been mistaken thus far (but which might still come through after all), was the *coup final* [clincher]. (bracketed addition in original)

All of a sudden [the ambassador] declared that he would welcome my speaking with Bülow tomorrow.¹⁵

Herzl biographer Desmond Stewart comments that, '[t]he mention of England was clever. England stirred a complex of reactions in the Kaiser and his circle, admiration and jealousy warring for first place' (262). Furthermore, Stewart adds, 'the notion of penetrating the Middle East as the friend of the Sultan, then transforming the Ottoman ruins into a German equivalent of British India was one of the Kaiser's daydreams' (262). When Herzl eventually got to meet the Kaiser (they met on three occasions), Herzl again roused Germany's rivalry with Britain by putting his plan to the Kaiser in the explicit terms of a 'British Chartered Company':

Herzl informed the Kaiser that his plan was "to create a 'Jewish Chartered Company' for Palestine patterned after the 'British Chartered Company' for South Africa."¹⁶

(Stewart, 188)

The recent success of the British South Africa Company would indeed be Herzl's greatest inspiration for his Zionist project. Founded by mining magnate and colonialist entrepreneur Cecil Rhodes, the South Africa Company had in 1899 secured a Royal Charter from Queen Victoria for the exploitation and settlement of parts of southern Africa. (Indeed it was Rhodes who had led the successful mining ventures in Transvaal that Herzl praises in *Der Judenstaat*.) A few years earlier, the name of 'Rhodesia' had officially been bestowed on the region of southern Africa comprising Mashonaland and Matabeleland in present-day Zimbabwe, in honour of Rhodes who had acquired the land for the British Empire. A key figure during the British expansion into southern Africa, Rhodes embodied British Imperialism like no one else: 'I contend that we are the first race in the world, and that the more of the world we inhabit the better it is for the human race' (qtd. in Gross, 61). His mission, he furthermore declared, was to work 'for [...] the furtherance of the British Empire, the bringing of the whole uncivilized world under

¹⁵ At the time, Bernhard von Bülow was Germany's Imperial Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He would in 1900 go on to become Reich Chancellor under Kaiser Wilhelm II.

¹⁶ Stewart's source for this is the unpublished memoir of Kaiser Wilhelm II, quoted in 'Memoirs and Documents about Herzl's Meetings with the Kaiser' in Alex Bein, ed. *Herzl Year Book* 6 (1965): 61.

British rule, the recovery of the United States, the making of the Anglo-Saxon race but one Empire' (qtd. in Gross, 61).

That Herzl looked to Rhodes as a colonial mentor comes to light in a letter recorded in his diaries that Herzl intended to send to Rhodes. Herzl begins by bluntly pleading with the Englishman, 'you are the only man who can help me now', before making his case:

You are being invited to help make history. [...] It doesn't involve Africa, but a piece of Asia Minor, not Englishmen, but Jews.
How, then, do I happen to turn to you, since this is an out-of-the-way matter for you? How indeed? Because it is something colonial, and because it presupposes understanding of a development which will take place over twenty or thirty years.

(*CDIII*, 1193)

The help that Herzl sought from Rhodes for his plan 'to settle Palestine with the homecoming Jewish people', was a public endorsement from *the* colonialist of his time:

And what I want you to do is not to give me or lend me a few guineas, but to put the stamp of your authority on the Zionist plan and to make the following declaration to a few people who swear by you: I, Rhodes, have examined this plan and found it correct and practicable. It is a plan full of culture, excellent for the group of people for whom it is directly designed, not detrimental to the general progress of mankind, and quite good for England, for Greater Britain.

(*CDIII*, 1194)

What Herzl the Viennese journalist lacked in credibility with regard to matters entrepreneurial and colonialist, he sought to compensate with a commendation from an influential figure such as Rhodes, in the hope of opening the doors to the key investors and government backing he so crucially needed for his colonial scheme.

For reasons unknown, Herzl did not send the letter; and, despite trying to get access to Rhodes through third parties, he never got to meet him. Rhodes died in March of 1902.

An obituary for Cecil Rhodes published in *Die Welt* (The World), the newspaper founded by Herzl in 1897 as the mouthpiece for his Zionist movement, leaves no doubt as to the extent to which Rhodes, his colonialist entrepreneurship and imperialist faith, were to serve as direct models for the Zionist undertaking. For the piece entitled 'Cecil Rhodes

als Colonialpolitiker' (Cecil Rhodes as colonial politician), the author is merely given as 'Dr. M.W.'¹⁷ We know that Herzl wrote using pseudonyms in his Zionist weekly for fear of angering his employer, the *Neue Freie Presse* (New Free Press), Vienna's most popular liberal newspaper at the time;¹⁸ we also know that 'Benjamin Seff' was the pseudonym he used most frequently. The name 'M.W.' however is to my knowledge nowhere traced back to Herzl and therefore cannot with certainty be attributed to him. Nonetheless, the content, overall style and tone of the article, together with what we know about Herzl personally, all make his authorship of this article a very likely assumption. Even without being able to decisively claim Herzl as the author, it is certainly fair to argue that the views expressed in *Die Welt* at this time would closely correspond to those held by Herzl himself.

In the article, the author celebrates Rhodes for his 'great, colonial-political work' [*'grosses, colonialpolitisches Werk'* (12)], that is, 'the idea, for which he sacrificed his life, that now exists and will continue to exist'.¹⁹ After all, he reminds his readers, only man's lifework lasts eternally [*'nur des Menschen Werk und Wirken [ist] das ewige Bestehende'* (12)]. The author goes on to acknowledge that Rhodes was a controversial figure, 'much admired and much criticised' [*'vielbewundert und vielgescholten'* (12)]; but, what his critics decried as recklessness, the author defends Rhodes, was in fact a realism and single-mindedness necessary in view of the greatness of the man's objective. Rhodes did not pursue 'parish-pump politics but world politics' [*'nicht Kirchthumpolitik sondern Weltpolitik'* (12)]:

[...] he looked to the big ocean, he looked to the whole of the world, looked and searched and found: a part of the earth that had not yet been apportioned. "This is my field of work," thought Rhodes, "all of this must become English." So he began, starting from the great idea of what to do with the new generations of Englishmen who cannot find work in their home country, his great colonial-political work.²⁰

¹⁷ In *Die Welt* 13 (28 March 1902): 12-14, available at < <http://www.compactmemory.de> >.

¹⁸ In 'Zionist Images in Herzl's *Die Welt*', Paul Kerry explains that Herzl 'was strongly discouraged' by its editors 'to write about Zionism in the *Neue Freie Presse*. The word "Zionism" would never be mentioned in that paper until Herzl's death' (113). In addition, 'Herzl, who oversaw the Zionist weekly until his untimely death on 3 July 1904, never held the official title of editor or publisher as he did not want to jeopardise his position at the *Neue Freie Presse*' (114-115).

¹⁹ [*'(...) die Idee, der er mit Aufopferung seiner selbst Leben eingehaucht, besteht und wird bestehen'* (12).]

²⁰ [*'(...) er blickte auf den grossen Ocean, er blickte auf die ganze Weltrunde, blickte und forschte und fand: einen Erdteil der noch nicht aufgetheilt war, „Das ist mein Wirkungsfeld,“ dachte Rhodes, „das alles muss englisch werden.“ So begann er, von der grossen Idee ausgehend, was mit den überflüssigen neugeborenen*

Rhodes had started with but an idea and had turned it into reality. Herzl would do the same – and in the same manner. The ‘Jewish problem’, for Herzl, could be solved by a similar process of ‘draining off the surplus Jewish masses’ (*CDII*, 666). The restoration of the Jewish nation, through a relocation of the majority of Europe’s Jews to a territory outside of Europe, would not only save the Jews, but also benefit the world at large. Herzl’s life’s work, it is implied, could thus leave an even greater legacy: if successful, he would be remembered for all time as the man who had solved a world problem.²¹ Not only did Herzl’s idea surpass that of Rhodes in ambition and effect, but it could also offer his followers something Rhodes’ venture had fundamentally lacked. Noting the limited success of Rhodes’ settlement program (in contrast to the Company’s commercial success), with the number of settlers much lower than expected, the author argues that what Rhodes forgot was that, ‘with all great foundations, there must be an ideal, a holy and unshakable ideal, if it is to follow the planted flags in droves’.²² The implication of course is that Zionism offers exactly such ‘higher idea’ [*höhere Idee* (13)]: the idea of the restoration of the Jewish nation will attract, the author is convinced, those masses of zealot ‘pioneers that will transform the land into a Gan Eden’ [*die Pioneere, die das Land zu einem Gan Eden gestalten*] (13).²³

It has, I think, already become apparent, and will even more so in the course of the first part of this thesis, how much, with Herzl, the political was personal, and vice versa. A self-styled Rhodes in the making, Herzl sought personal recognition from, and full access to, the elites of anti-Semitic Christian Europe. In addition, Herzl related to Rhodes in that he too felt misunderstood and unacknowledged for the ‘visionary politician or [...] practical visionary’ that he perceived Rhodes – and indeed himself – to be (*CDIII*, 1194). In his earlier quoted London speech, he thus felt it necessary to respond to ‘insults’ [*Insulte*] (4) that had been levelled against him from within Jewish quarters. These were in the main accusations of financial profiteering and dishonesty about the movement’s

Engländern die keine Arbeit in der Heimat fänden, anzufangen sei, sein grosses colonialpolitisches Wirken (12).]

²¹ As early as June 1895, Herzl had written the following in his diary: ‘I believe I shall be named among the greatest benefactors of mankind’; ‘I believe that for me life has ended and world history has begun’ (*CDI*, 104; 105).

²² [*(...) dass (...) bei allen grossen Gründungen dem Volke ein ideal, ein heiliges and unverückbares Ideal vorschweben müsse, wenn es den aufgepflanzten Fahnen in hellen Scharen folgen soll*] (13).]

²³ It is this implicit aggrandisement of both the Zionist movement and its founder, reminding one of the (self-)grandeur exhibited by Herzl himself, that particularly points to the latter as a likely author of the article.

progress. Herzl, proclaiming himself the ‘servant of a national movement’ [*‘Diener einer Volksbewegung’* (4)] and ‘worker for the national cause’ [*‘Arbeiter der Volkssache’* (4)], responded in dismay at such ingratitude. In this light, the defence of Rhodes that is mounted in the obituary is easily read as a defence of Herzl – whether it was penned by the Zionist leader himself or one of his supporters.

Most importantly for the Zionist movement, Rhodes had achieved what the Zionists were dreaming of: the formation of a country. And this he had, so the latter hailed, through the modern and decidedly enlightened medium of a colonial-commercial venture:

Cecil Rhodes’ chef d’oeuvre is and remains the foundation and creation of Rhodesia [...]. Rhodes took possession of this vast wasteland as a modern man, not with the bayonet, not with the violence of guns, but through the means of paper, through shares. He founded a company of men of peace who had never carried nor fired off a gun in order to conquer a country; and he succeeded, at least to a certain extent.²⁴

The author’s addendum, ‘at least to a certain extent’, raises the question as to what is, knowingly, left unsaid here. The intrusion into southern African lands brought the British South Africa Company, like all other settler colonial ventures, into direct conflict with the indigenous populations over whose land it now claimed sovereignty; and Rhodes, with the help of British soldiers, dealt with ‘the natives’ in the tried and tested manner. According to Stewart,

with fruitless courage the Matabeles made a desperate attempt to evict the invaders. They were inevitably crushed, “machine guns,” one account telling us, “being used with terrible effect upon the enemy.” The country was then thrown open to white settlers. The best land was later set aside for their permanent exploitation.²⁵

(190)

²⁴ [*‘Das Chef d’oeuvre Cecil Rhodes’ ist und bleibt die Gründung und Schaffung Rhodesias, eines Landes (...). Rhodes erschloss diese weite Einöde, als ein moderner Mensch, nicht an der Spitze von Bajonetten, nicht mit der Gewalt der Kanonen, sondern vermitteltst papierner Mittel, vermitteltst Actien und Shares. Er gründete eine Gesellschaft von Friedensmännern, die nie ein Gewehr getragen, noch eine Flinte abgeschossen, um ein Land zu erobern, und es gelang ihm, bis zu einem gewissen Grade wenigstens’* (‘Cecil Rhodes als Colonialpolitiker’, 13).]

²⁵ Stewart refers for this quotation to several sources, among them an article on Rhodesia by Alfred Peter Hillier and Frank R. Cana in the thirteenth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (359, note 44).

For Stewart, there is no doubt that ‘Herzl’s stencil for obtaining a territory and then clearing it for settlement was cut after the Rhodesian model’ (190). Levene equally argues that Herzl ‘had an agenda that closely followed and sought to emulate the essential contours of European empire-building in Africa’ – with all that it entailed (206). Herzl would have been aware, Levene further contends, of the ‘extremely bloody extirpation of [...] [native] revolts’ in the southern African territories henceforth known as Rhodesia, which ‘involved scorched earth tactics and, [...] a general lack of a distinction between combatants and non-combatants, whether men, women, or children’ (205). Rhodes’ colonial activities in Africa were thus nothing but exemplary of other settler colonial projects that used military subjugation to dispossess and/or eliminate the native population. The author's silence on this subject reveals a quiet acceptance of these standard colonial practices as necessary means to a moral end.

The obituary concludes with a final reminder of Rhodes’ colonial legacy for the future of the Zionist movement:

For our Zionist idea, Cecil Rhodes’ work has not been in vain. He was our great guide; he showed us how to create the means necessary today for the exploitation of uncultivated²⁶ territories by means of corporations, that is, by the founding of limiteds [limited companies]. Rhodesia is for us an invaluable example for the future development of Palestine. Great, productive colonial thoughts are in the air. The astute Englishman has used this thought for the benefit of his homeland; we, who strive for a similar thing for our brethren, will, in the cultivation of our ancestral land, imitate a great deal of what he has achieved already. Thus, Cecil Rhodes has been our colonial-political role model.²⁷

The rapport that the Zionist movement saw between itself and the British in specific, but also European colonisation projects in Africa at large, could not be spelled out any clearer. Stewart poignantly qualifies how Herzl personally related to Rhodes when he writes that, ‘his hero Cecil Rhodes had shown what white men could achieve [in Africa]’ (324).

²⁶ The German word ‘*unkultiviert*’ can refer to both ‘uncultivated’ and ‘uncultured’.

²⁷ [‘Für unsere Zionistische Idee ist Cecil Rhodes’ Wirken nicht umsonst gewesen. Er war unser grosser Wegweiser, er zeigte uns, wie man durch Vergesellschaftungen, wie man durch Gründungen von limiteds heutigen Tages die Mittel, welche zur Erschliessung uncultivierter Territorien nothwendig sind, schafft. Rhodesia ist uns ein wertvolles Beispiel für die kommende Entwicklung Palästinas. Grosse, fruchtbare coloniale Gedanken liegen in der Luft. Der kluge Engländer hat diesen Gedanken für seine Heimat glücklich ausgelöst; wir, die für unsere Brüder rein Gleiches anstreben, werden bei der Cultivierung des Landes unserer Väter vieles von dem, was er bereits geschaffen hat, nachahmen. So ist Cecil Rhodes unser colonialpolitischer Vorbildner gewesen’ (13-14).]

Indeed, it was within the context of Western imperialist intervention in Africa that the idea of acquiring a territorial basis for the establishment of an autonomous Jewish entity was most conceivable. The other territories that Herzl envisioned for possible mass settlement, Palestine but also Argentina – both with already existing small-scale Jewish colonies – constituted at the time highly improbable targets for such national immigration. Although faced with many problems, the Ottoman Empire was for the moment there to stay and the sultan, not seeking to invite another such problem, showed no interest in Herzl's offers. Contrary to Herzl's prejudices, the sultan perfectly understood the Zionist plan as an imperialist European one: supporting a European scheme that would only further increase foreign influence in his empire was thus out of the question for the Ottoman leader. Argentina, for its part, had its own troubles, as Levene points out:

The Argentine republic, over the course of the previous generation, had been involved in some extraordinarily bloody conflicts, both internal and inter-state, over the very issue of territorial control and border consolidation [...]. The idea thus, that Argentina would somehow relinquish part of its territory in favour of another putative polity was entirely in the realm of cloud-cuckoo-land.

(206-207)

In contrast, both the British and German colonial governments showed some interest, albeit changeable and for the most time non-committal, in Herzl's Zionist plan as an opportunity to expand their own imperial reach.

Herzl understood that Palestine would be the most powerful asset in attracting a Jewish mass following. As the Jews' 'ever-memorable historic home', he writes in *Der Judenstaat*, '[t]hat name alone would be a tremendously stirring rallying cry for our people'.²⁸ Equally however, for Herzl, the Zionist scheme did not live or die by the question of Palestine. 'The Society', he adds, 'will take what it will be given and for which Jewish public opinion will lend its support'.²⁹ His colonial-Zionist idea could be projected onto any, as he called it, 'neutral land' [*neutralen Landes*' (*Judenstaat*, 33)] that they would be given under a charter.

Unsurprisingly then, when the British offered such a territory in Eastern Africa to the Zionist movement for Jewish settlement, Herzl could not but have deemed it a huge

²⁸ ['(...) unsere unvergeßliche historische Heimat. Dieser Name allein wäre ein gewaltig ergreifender Sammelruf für unser Volk' (34).]

²⁹ ['Die Society wird nehmen, was man ihr gibt und wofür sich die öffentliche Meinung des Judentums erklärt' (34).]

success for the movement, and for him personally. Mislabeled as Uganda, the land in question was in fact in the Uasi Ngishu plateau, not far from Nairobi, Kenya. Herzl brought the notorious Uganda Proposal to the Sixth Zionist Congress in 1903, presenting it in terms of an ‘emergency measure designed to allay the present helplessness of all the philanthropic undertakings and to keep us from losing scattered fragments of our people’ (ZWII, 229). More precisely, it could provide an emergency shelter for the persecuted Jews of Russia. Careful not to alienate the large number of fervently Palestine-centric Russian delegates, Herzl stressed that any consideration of the British offer would in no way signify an abandonment or substitution of Palestine as the only true Jewish national home, the only ‘Zion’ (ZWII, 229). (Contemporary German Zionist leader Max Nordau, second in line to Herzl, coined in his defence of Herzl’s proposition the term ‘*Nachtasyl*’, ‘night shelter’, that became widely adopted in discussions about the so-called East-Africa question.) Overall, Herzl put the Uganda Scheme to the Zionist Congress in terms of an offer too generous and a chance too great not to be considered.

Rather than drawing the outright rejection that Israeli state mythology postulates, the offer sparked a lively debate in which many indeed followed Herzl’s line of argumentation. While the reaction amongst the delegates was divided to start with, ‘[a]fter a heated debate, the Congress voted to send a group of experts to British East Africa to explore the possibilities for Jewish settlement there’ (ZWII, 221, editor’s note). Only a minority of mostly Russian delegates was starkly opposed.

Today, Eitan Bar-Yosef remarks, ‘[t]he Uganda affair is very often presented either as an embarrassment for Herzl or as a marginal episode in Zionist history’ (87). Levene similarly maintains:

In mainstream Zionist annals, however, one senses here not so much a sense of oddity as sheer embarrassment that anybody might think that Zionists, let alone Herzl, might have seriously considered the creation of an autonomous Jewish entity anywhere other than in Palestine. [...] [T]he apparent mistake is airbrushed out of the saga altogether [...].

(202)

Contemporary sources provide evidence of the receptiveness with which various Zionist circles received the British East-Africa offer. Under the headline ‘*Zion und Ostafrika*’ (Zion and East-Africa), *Die Welt* reprinted in its issue of 13 November 1903, that is, almost three months after the sixth Congress, a communiqué by the Zionist District

Committee of Warsaw to its local branches, in which it welcomes the offer as a first and crucial step towards accomplishing the Zionist dream. The communiqué admits that the offer has caused a split in the Zionist camp, but argues that this divide relies on a misunderstanding. Accordingly, those who reject the offer out of hand see a false dilemma that pits Palestine against Africa: ‘The question is not, as it is formulated by many: “Zion or East-Africa”, but: “Should we, before we succeed in attaining Palestine, make efforts to acquire another land, or not?”’³⁰ For the Varsovian Zionist leadership, in agreement with the Congress’ majority decision, the answer is an emphatic yes. The statement ends on a triumphant note, urging all members to fully grasp the unique opportunity: ‘It is no longer a dream! Zionism has won! And now, brethren, let’s set to work!’³¹

This brief extract is followed in the same issue of *Die Welt* by a more exhaustive defence of the Uganda scheme. For its author who is named as Mosche Secharjah, it is, as the title suggests, ‘*Uganda und Palästina, Zwei Jüdische Staaten*’ (Uganda and Palestine, Two Jewish States), equally not a question of either Uganda *or* Palestine: since Palestine is and will remain unavailable in the near future, it has to be a question of Uganda *and* Palestine. He writes: ‘Not “Palestine or Uganda”, but “Uganda and Palestine” must be our political aim’.³² The author goes even further by rejecting the notion of a future Zionist colony in Africa as but a ‘night shelter’ [*Nachtsyl*]. Such terminology, he argues, is misleading, as the majority of Jews who would settle in Africa would not be able to eventually move on to Palestine. Thus, he proclaims, ‘Uganda will be a permanent residence for a part of the Israeli people’ [*Uganda wird ein Daueraufenthalt für einen Teil des Volkes Israel werden*] (4).

In their conceptualisation of the East-Africa offer, not as an alternative, but as a supplement to the eventual institution of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the above excerpts express the colonialism embraced in Herzl’s Zionist concept of a Jewish nationalism. Whilst publicly defending the British proposal by invoking the urgency and temporariness of Nordau’s *Nachtsyl* metaphor, Herzl discloses the underlying strategy in his private correspondence with Nordau whom he reassures as follows:

³⁰ [‘*Es ist nicht die Frage wie sie von vielen stilisiert wird: „Zion oder Ostafrika?“ sondern: „Sollen wir, bevor es und gelungen ist, Palästina zu erlangen, um uns ein anderes Land bewerben, oder nicht?“*’ (3)]

³¹ [‘*Es ist kein Traum mehr! Der Zionismus hat gesiegt! Und nun, Brüder, an die Arbeit!*’ (3)]

³² [‘*Nicht „Palästina oder Uganda“ sondern „Uganda und Palästina“ muss unser politisches Ziel sein*’ (4).]

Where we will first break ground is only a question of opportunity, if only we are clear in our minds what kind of house we are building on the foundation. The settlement between Kilimanjaro and Kenya could be our first *political* colony. You already guess what I mean: a miniature England *in reverse*.

(qtd. in Elon, 376, emphases in original)

This vision of ‘a miniature England in reverse’ reveals, not a scheme limited to providing a safe haven for a persecuted people, but the fantasy of fashioning a far-flung colonial empire. With Palestine out of reach for the time being, the creation of colonies would have to precede the establishment of a motherland; once Palestine could be obtained, it would function as the metropolitan centre for the new Jewish colonial nation.³³

In the end, the East-Africa bid did not materialise both because of a lack of support by the critical mass of Russian Jews and because the British government faced a strong local opposition (meaning opposition by British settlers in its African territories) to the idea of a Jewish colony in the area. In fact, by the time of Herzl’s death the following year, the East-Africa question had all but vanished from the Zionist agenda. No longer restrained by Herzl’s insistence on securing a charter, the new Zionist leadership would dedicate its efforts to a practical approach on the ground in Palestine.

The re-writing of this significant chapter in Zionist history into a negligible, almost laughable episode proceeded at remarkable speed. In an article in *Die Welt* from July 1914, a special issue on the tenth anniversary of Herzl’s death, Herzl’s East-Africa proposal is already firmly dismissed as a ‘historical derailment’ [*historische Entgleisung*] (Bernstein, 676)], a desperate and well-intentioned, but ultimately misguided attempt at providing emergency help to Eastern Europe’s persecuted Jews:

Herzl grasped the Uganda-straw immediately after the pogrom in Kishinev. [...] [H]e impatiently searched for a quick rescue [...] even if only in the form of a

³³ It is worth detailing in this respect, as Amos Elon does, the ‘fantastic’ scope of Herzl’s diplomatic efforts to turn his colonial dream into reality: ‘As [Herzl] prepared to secure a British charter for Uganda, he struggled at the same time to obtain similar concessions in the Congo from the Belgian government, from Portugal in Mozambique, and from the Italian government in Tripoli. He proposed to create half a dozen Jewish colonies in Africa and elsewhere, to be used as national bases and training stations for the eventual repossession of Palestine by the Jews. [...] At the same time Herzl renewed his contacts with the Turkish Sultan, whose offer of Mesopotamia he had rejected in the past’ (375).

“night shelter”. It was the greatest sacrifice that Herzl has made for his people. He sacrificed, even if only for a moment, his life’s ideal.³⁴

In an early 1920s issue of Martin Buber’s monthly *Der Jude* (The Jew), a thitherto-unpublished letter by Herzl in which he retrospectively clarifies his position on the East-Africa question a few months after the dispute at the Zionist Congress, is introduced with the claim ‘that Herzl has never been a proponent of the Uganda-Plan’.³⁵ The editors see this claim substantiated in the letter; in fact, however, the letter merely reiterates the same points Herzl had made throughout, stressing the centrality of Palestine for Zionism and his duty of having brought the generous British offer to the attention of the Congress for the sake of the suffering Jewish masses. In addition to what has already been highlighted, the attempted dissociation of Herzl from the East-Africa offer is absurd not least because Herzl, as the leader of the Zionist movement, had personally (and through representatives) negotiated the deal with the British government.³⁶

The distortion of the Uganda affair is symptomatic of a comprehensive decontextualisation of Zionist history that seeks to erase the colonial dimensions of foundational Zionist ideology and practice. The dreaded c-word, ‘colonialism’, like the idea of an ‘African Zion’, are banished to the realm of absurdity, because of course admitting to such roots holds damning implications for any evaluation of not only the Zionist movement, but also its subsequent incarnation the state of Israel.

A common way to discuss the movement’s early enamourment with European imperialism – the evidence of which is after all overwhelming – that does not implicate the present, has become to perform a compartmentalisation of Zionist history into the sphere of ideas on the one hand, and that of reality on the other. In other words, what Zionism imagined itself to be is separated from what it was; it is the difference between what could have been, and what actually was. In this light then, the African Zion becomes

³⁴ [*Herzl ergriff den Uganda-Strohalm unmittelbar nach dem Pogrom in Kischinev. [...] [E]r suchte voll Ungeduld nach einer schleunigen Rettung [...] wenn auch nur in Form eines “Nachtasyls” [...]. Es war das größte Opfer, das Herzl seinem Volke gebracht hat. Er opferte, auch wenn nur für einen Augenblick, sein Lebensideal*] (Bernstein, 676).]

³⁵ [(...) *dass Herzl niemals ein Anhänger des Uganda-Planes gewesen ist*] (Herzl, ‘Theodor Herzl über Uganda’, 448).]

³⁶ The Uganda offer was in fact the result of failed negotiations that Britain had facilitated between the Zionist leadership and Egypt, in which Herzl sought to obtain the area of El Arish in the North Sinai for autonomous Jewish settlement. When these negotiations proved fruitless, Britain re-made the offer of a plot in Eastern Africa.

the path, fortunately, not taken; and with it, so it is implied, the dark road of colonialism has been avoided.³⁷

For Daniel Boyarin for example, Zionism is a case of ‘almost, but not quite colonialism’ (307-308, emphasis in original). In his *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, he thus argues that ‘it is through mimicry of colonization that the Zionists seek to escape the stigma of Jewish difference’:

If, one can almost hear Herzl thinking, being civilized means colonizing, then we too will be colonizers. [...] Herzl had finally found a way for the Jews to become Europeans; they would have a little colony of their own.

(303-304)

A Talmudic scholar who has written extensively on the relationship between Judaism and psychoanalysis, and specifically on male gendering in Judaism versus Zionism, Boyarin draws his conclusion from his interpretation of Zionism as, in its first drive, an assimilation project that sought to civilise or ‘normalise’ the European Jews in terms of gender and race. Accordingly, Zionism ‘[signified] a masculinization of the allegedly feminized–queer–Jewish male’ that was to allow the latter’s full Europeanization (272). Put differently, Zionism’s project was to make the Jew manlier and whiter; and colonialism promised to be the medium to achieve both these things.³⁸ By becoming not merely colonists, but colonisers, the Jews would take their place as equals amidst white male European society. Suggesting thus that ‘Herzlian Zionism imagined itself as colonialism because such a representation was pivotal to the entire project of becoming “white men”’ (302), Boyarin concludes that ‘Zionism is thus the ultimate version of that practice dubbed colonial mimicry by Homi Bhaba’ (305).

In ‘A Villa in the Jungle: Herzl, Zionist Culture, and the Great African Adventure’, Eitan Bar-Yosef follows Boyarin in his framing of early Zionism as a case of colonial mimicry. ‘This mimicry’, he writes, ‘which is parodic, flawed, demonstrates the limited extent to which Zionism could take on, or adapt, colonial features’ (99). Bar-Yosef also

³⁷ Self-identifying ‘liberal Zionists’ in particular still vehemently reject any such charge. For an example of this, see Zeev Sternhell’s ‘In Defence of Liberal Zionism’ in *New Left Review*, in which he insists on Zionism’s historical origin as ‘a simple radical nationalism’ (100).

³⁸ This twofold reformation program was in the main directed at the *Ostjuden* who, for the early Western European Zionist leaders like Herzl, were the bearers of this Jewish difference and therefore the very cause of European anti-Semitism.

emphasises ‘the ambivalence that characterizes the Jew’s interaction with the British Empire on the one hand, and the dark continent on the other’:

By transforming them into colonists, Herzl may have hoped to convert the effeminate Jews into white virile men: but this process, by definition, was doomed to fail. Even in Africa, there was always someone whiter. (99)

He goes further by locating in the Jew’s position of ‘racial indeterminacy’ (98) the explanation for what he sees as the ‘humanistic aspect of Herzl’s work’ (96). Thus, he writes,

[...] while Herzl dreamt about being Rhodes, he could never become Rhodes, his unique position as carrying both burdens – the white and the black – also allowed him to see what Rhodes and the British could not.³⁹ (102)

Bar-Yosef argues that Herzl felt uncommonly sympathetic towards the Black struggle and that this solidarity was integral to his Zionist vision. He bases these claims mainly on a scene in *Altneuland* in which the European visitors are taken to the laboratory of the bacteriologist Professor Steineck who, renowned for having cured Palestine of its malaria, now prepares to do the same for Africa. Explaining that he is working ‘[a]t the opening up of Africa’, he reveals his grand plans:

That country [i.e. Africa] can be opened up to civilization only after malaria has been subdued. Only then will enormous areas become available for the surplus populations of Europe. And only then will the proletarian masses find a healthy outlet. Understand?” (192)

Upon further questioning by the incredulous Kingscourt who exclaims, ‘[y]ou want to cart off the whites to the black continent, you wonder-worker!’, Steineck details his plan to settle ‘[n]ot only the whites’ but ‘[t]he blacks as well’ in the newly ‘opened up’ Africa (193). ‘There is still one problem of racial misfortune unsolved’, Steineck educates his guests:

³⁹ Herzl had himself used this terminology, having referred in an early speech in London to Zionism as a ‘burden that the Jews were assuming for the wretched and poor of all mankind’ (qtd. in Boyarin, 310).

The depths of that problem, in all their horror, only a Jew can fathom. I mean the negro problem. Don't laugh, Mr. Kingscourt. Think of the hair-raising horrors of the slave trade. Human beings, because their skins are black, are stolen, carried off, and sold. Their descendants grow up in alien surroundings despised and hated because their skin is differently pigmented. I am not ashamed to say, though I be thought ridiculous, now that I have lived to see the restoration of the Jews, I should like to pave the way for the restoration of the Negroes.

(193)

Commenting on this passage, Bar-Yosef argues that 'Herzl stresses the affinity between Jewish and African histories – centuries of persecution and subjugation', while admitting at the same time that '[Herzl] is also careful to position the Jews and the blacks on opposite sides of the racial spectrum [...]'. The Jew is cast here as the civilized colonist whose sacred duty is to bring civilization, first to the desolate plains of Palestine, then to the darkness of Africa' (94). Despite this revisory qualification, Bar-Yosef goes on to confidently claim that 'Herzl exhibits a much more ambiguous moral and racial stand towards the Africans' (96), leading him as far as to declare 'the truly altruistic basis of Herzl's black Zionism' (96).

The obvious problem with these conclusions is that they presuppose the acceptance at face value of the colonial rationale of the *mission civilisatrice*. Colonial ventures commonly presented and justified themselves in humanistic and/or humanitarian terms. This is for example how Stewart describes the professed conditions of the Royal Charter granted to Rhodes' British South Africa Company:

It was furnished with a sword and a veil of morality. [...] A pledge to respect native civil law (subject to any British legislation that might be introduced) and to maintain freedom of trade and religion was linked with the expectation that in due course the blacks would be rescued from slavery and alcohol. [...]

(190)

The 'solidarity' that Bar-Yosef invokes as an integral part of Herzl's Zionist project is thus indeed so, but because it is integral to the colonial discourse in which Zionism was located. The 'restoration of the negroes', just like Zionism's main avowed objective, the 'restoration of the Jews', needs to be understood as an expression of the colonial civilising mission.

Equally flawed is Boyarin's reference to the merits of a fictional eye clinic in *Altneuland* to argue Herzl's 'liberal' brand of colonialism which, according to Boyarin,

‘was not intended to be of the violent kind’ (309). Described in the novel as ‘the greatest eye clinic in the world’, it was set up by Jewish settlers in Jerusalem, so the European guests are impressed to learn, for the benefit of the whole of the region:

You can imagine what a benefaction that clinic is for the Orient. People come to it from all over Northern Africa and Asia. The blessings bestowed by our medical institutions have won us more friends in Palestine and the neighboring countries than all our industrial and technical progress.

(133)

For Boyarin, Herzl’s ‘liberalism’ surfaces in his ability to imagine such an inclusive appeal for his Jewish colonisation plan, bringing wealth and health to the new territory and its people. Again however, to validate such a portrayal of the Zionist leader means to subscribe to colonialism’s contemporary self-representation as a progressive force; it also, inexcusably, means to ignore the well-known violent reality of all colonial intrusions and occupations, and their devastating consequences for the subjugated native populations.

To further support his claim of Herzl’s liberally intended colonialism, Boyarin also cites Herzl’s famous 1899 letter to the Mayor of Jerusalem Yusuf Zia Al-Khalidi in which he assures the latter that ‘no one wishes to remove [the non-Jewish population] from [Palestine]’ and that, to the contrary, ‘[t]heir well-being and individual wealth will increase through the importation of ours’ (qtd. in Boyarin, 310). Boyarin’s uncritical use of this source is somewhat surprising as Herzl’s true plans with regard to Palestine’s non-Jewish population are well-documented in his diary, where as early as 1895 he put forward the idea of transfer: ‘We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country’ (*CDI*, 88). The stark discrepancy between what Herzl professes to the Palestinian leader and what he writes in his diaries raises an additional problem with the above portrayal of Herzl and Zionism at large, as it is reflective of the discrepancy between the public and private faces and modes of the Zionist movement. Astute political tactician that he was, Herzl knew that the true and ultimate objective of the Zionist movement, the creation of an exclusive – or near-exclusive – Jewish state,

could not be broadcast publicly without stirring protests by local and world leaders alike.⁴⁰ Instead, Herzl initiated the Zionist party line that would stubbornly declare the inclusively beneficial character of Zionist settlement for the respective region and its people.⁴¹ *Altneuland*, with its outstanding utopian qualities, must be seen as part of this promotional effort which aimed at appeasing local resentments and attracting wide-spread support for what the author hoped to portray as a colonisation program that was harmless at its least, and could be of universal value at its most.

In truth then, one struggles to find any evidence at all of the inclusive, egalitarian New Society anywhere else in Herzl's Zionist writings, and even less so in the actions of the Zionist movement on the whole. Indisputably, the universalism purported by *Altneuland* did not extend to the Palestinian Arabs that were to become Zionism's primary victims.

The ways in which Boyarin and Bar-Yosef present Herzl's outlook and that of Zionism at large are symptomatic, I would argue, of the dilemma inherent in what has misleadingly been named 'liberal Zionism'. This liberal Zionism is nothing other than mainstream political Zionism as instituted by Herzl, making Herzl therefore, rather nonsensically, the first liberal Zionist. The dilemma of those that followed Herzl consists in their failure to reconcile their 'liberal' values with the settler colonial reality of Zionism, and later the state of Israel.⁴² While Herzl could unashamedly declare Zionism a

⁴⁰ This strategy of wilfully keeping the explicit aim of the movement obscure would continue to be pursued by all subsequent Zionist leaders up until shortly before the establishment of the state of Israel. In many ways, it is still operative today with Israeli government actions often in direct contradiction to its public statements. This is especially true with regards to Israel's on-going expansionist politics in the occupied Palestinian territories and the statements released to international audiences.

⁴¹ This narrative is still recognisable today in Ehud Barak's famous mid-1990s 'villa in the jungle' analogy, according to which Israel stands as 'the only democracy in the Middle East'. This in turn is seen to have allowed Israel's 'Arabs' to prosper to the point that Arabs in Israel are much better off than anywhere else in the region.

⁴² Arthur Ruppin, who would become a key figure in the Zionist movement from 1908 and who is today popularly known as the 'father of Zionist settlement', stands out for the frequency with which he voiced his personal doubts about the ethical viability of Zionism. Unlike Herzl, Ruppin, who dismayed Herzl's pursuit of a 'shadowy charter', was in his approach led by considerations for the conditions on the ground in Palestine (Ruppin, *The Jews of To-Day*, 287). This would, again contrary to Herzl's viewpoint, inevitably put the 'Arab Question' at the top of his list of concerns. The most compelling expression of Ruppin's doubts can be found in a diary entry from May 1928, where, of a meeting with two co-members of *Brit Shalom*, a political group Ruppin had co-founded in 1925 to advance the idea of a bi-national state in Palestine, he noted:

The conversation [...] revealed [...] how difficult it is to balance the realization of Zionism with general ethical considerations. It left me rather depressed. Is Zionism really to end up as shallow chauvinism? Is it impossible to provide ever-growing number of Jews in Palestine with a field of

colonial idea embedded in European imperialism, changing attitudes towards colonialism made subsequent Zionist leaders increasingly reluctant to publicly acknowledge any such kinship.

Looking at the heirs of Herzl's Zionism today, their struggle to reconcile the irreconcilable is ongoing. This is manifest specifically in the way in which Zionism's early attention to Africa is seen as having been irrelevant to Israeli self-fashioning, when the many allusions in modern Israeli culture to 'Africa', that is, the idea of it, and often more concretely in the form of references to former settler state and close ally South Africa, hint at a visceral recognition of some sort of meaningful connection. A striking example of this can be found in the writings of popular Israeli writer Amos Oz who is perhaps today's most internationally known voice of this liberal Zionism. In his writings, Jacqueline Rose and Eitan Bar-Yosef have noticed Africa as a subliminal, occasionally eruptive/disruptive, presence. With reference to the novels of Oz, Rose thus writes that 'South Africa appears as the unlived life of Israel: mundanely, almost contingently, as the place where the Israeli might have chosen to go; more troublingly, as the sign wherever it appears - hysteria, fanaticism, apocalypse - of the barely imaginable, barely acknowledgeable, political consciousness of the nation' (*States of Fantasy*, 45). Bar-Yosef adds that 'Africa, for Oz, is a "foreign country, utterly other and strange," but also conspicuously familiar; a magnificent daydream, but also a nightmare; a sin, but also a punishment' (86).⁴³

Interestingly then, Rose and Bar-Yosef read an ambivalence in the way the idea of Africa appears in Oz's texts. Vacillating between (romantic) familiarity, alarm and outright horror, suggestions of an African Zion evoke both a dystopian 'what could have been' and an equally haunting utopian 'what could have been'. The traumatic quality that

activity without oppressing the Arabs? I see a particularly difficulty in the limited amount of land. Before long, the time will probably come when no vacant ground will be available, and every Jew who settles will cause the removal of a fellah [...]. What will happen then?

(*Memoirs*, 236-237)

Ruppin's personal trajectory is also exemplary in the way that his failure to reconcile the Zionist aims with 'ethical considerations' led not to his renouncement of Zionism, but instead to a hardening of his Zionist credo. From his conciliatory call for a bi-national state, he soon adopted an approach not unlike that of Vladimir Jabotinsky's 'iron wall', which posited the need for military might and unilateral creation of facts in the subjugation of the Palestinians (see for example *Memoirs*, 277).

⁴³ Rose applies her observation to Oz's books in general, referring among others to *My Michael*, *The Hill of Evil Counsel* and *In the Land of Israel*, while Bar-Yosef is commenting specifically on Oz's lesser-known 1978 children's novella *Soumchi*.

Rose ascribes to Israel's un-lived African life reveals an unease looming underneath the surface of Israeli society that transpires in moments of self-awareness about the nature of the collective, that is, in moments of recognition of its own colonial 'political consciousness'.

While Rose in her psychoanalytical analysis of Oz's African motif thus establishes a link between Zionism's colonial past and Israel's colonial reality, Bar-Yosef performs the above-mentioned disconnect that, I argue, masks Zionism's actual lived colonial life in Palestine. Constrained by his overall argument of Zionism as colonial mimicry, he presents Zionism's intellectual foray into Africa as 'the specter of an alternative Zionist history' that, despite its 'disturbing affinity with history as we know it', as he admits, seems to have no real consequential bearing on the situation in Israel/Palestine today, or an evaluation of it. He concludes his article by rhetorically asking: 'What would have happened, had an African Zion been established? Could we imagine »the horror« of it all?' (102)

It is fair to complicate early Zionism's relationship with the European nations it sought to recruit as sponsors for its colonial project by drawing attention to the ways in which European anti-Semitism shaped the movement's drive for recognition and assimilation. Much of the first chapter of this thesis indeed explores in agreement with Boyarin various facets of the assimilationist ideology of foundational Zionism. To conclude however, as Boyarin does, that Zionism amounts to but a 'masquerade colonialism' (309) that does not fit the category of other white settler colonialisms but instead 'occupies a peculiar interstitial position' (279), is, despite his declaration to the contrary,⁴⁴ to make a case for Israeli uniqueness that reinforces the self-validating exceptionalist claim typical of settler colonial mythology. John Collins thus argues that '[s]uch exceptionalism [...] is actually integral to the ideological armature of settler colonialism' (9), while Gabriel Piterberg conceptualises 'the uniqueness of each settler nation' as one of the 'fundamentals of hegemonic settler narratives' (*Returns*, 55). The comparative approach, according to Piterberg, undermines these narratives:

⁴⁴ In Boyarin's view, '[t]he fact that Zionist theory and practice cannot be easily classified does not in any way constitute an apologetic for the effects of Zionism, and little is gained politically for the Palestinian people by simply categorizing Israel as a "white settler state."' (308, note 117).

The comparative studies of settler nations undercut the claim to uniqueness not because they find all settler nations identical; in fact many of these comparisons result in underscoring historical specificity as much as similarity. What they do, however, is to offer a language that, like the popular joke about the giraffe, identifies a white settler trajectory when it sees one and renders it reminiscent of other trajectories.

(Returns, 55)

My point is that, crucially, despite any ambivalence there might have been in the relationship between Zionism and its benefactors, there was no such ambivalence in the movement's development as a settler colonial movement and its colonial practices in Palestine. Zionism was and is not a failed colonial project, a pretend colonialism or harmless daydream. The Zionist settler colony came into being and grew into the state of Israel almost exactly as Herzl had predicted it, under a de-facto protectorate of Great Britain. With Herzl gone, the new leadership of the World Zionist Organisation (WZO) turned their attention away from the British colonisation model in Africa, but soon found for their practical approach a new colonial model in the German settlement project in the Ostmark, the eastern territories of Prussia acquired as a result of Poland's partitions. This shift was led by the in the main German-Jewish colonial technocrats who would formulate the agro-economic settlement strategies for Jewish nation-building in Palestine. Among these were botanist Otto Warburg, physician Franz Oppenheimer and most prominently sociologist Arthur Ruppin. Appointed head of the Palestine Office in 1908, soon after which he created the colonisation company Palestine Land Development Company, Ruppin would play a key role in developing the Zionist settlement strategy (Piterberg, 80; Reichman and Hasson, 61). For his colonisation approach, Ruppin looked to his native Posen, then part of the Polish provinces targeted by the German government for its Germanisation plan. Piterberg provides the following context:

The purpose of the [German] state project – the wider background of which was the crisis of German agriculture and the attendant *Landflucht* (land flight) – was to effect a demographic transformation in Posen first and foremost, and in the Ostmark more generally, by dispossessing the Polish majority of its hold on the land and settling Germans in their stead.

(Returns, 79)

In their 1984 study 'A Cross-Cultural Diffusion of Colonization: From Posen to Palestine', Shalom Reichman and Shlomo Hasson have shown how closely the

colonisation policy of the Palestine Office and the Palestine Land Development Company followed that of the Prussian Colonization Commission in Posen. They uncover various references by Ruppin to Posen as the direct inspiration for the Zionist settlement strategy in Palestine. ‘In a letter to the President of the Jewish National Fund (JNF), established a few years earlier with the aim of purchasing land in Palestine’, Ruppin wrote in 1907:

I see the work of the JNF as being similar to that of the Colonization Commission working in Posen and Western Prussia. The JNF will buy land whenever it is offered by non-Jews and will offer it for resale either partly or wholly to Jews.

(Reichman and Hasson, 61)

Of the ‘proposed method of settlement’, Ruppin furthermore wrote that it ‘is not an innovation’:

[...] it is being used whenever latifundia (large estates), which were badly cultivated are divided up and sold to small farmers. It is in particular, the method used in disposing the Polish latifundia in the East Marches to German farmers".

(qtd. in Reichman and Hasson, 64)

The similarities between the underlying objective and methodology of both settlement projects become evident in Reichman and Hasson’s characterisation of the German colonisation model in the Province of Posen. The aim, they write, was to achieve ‘a German population majority by encouraging internal migration’ (57):

The German method of settlement was intended to produce a new space that on the one hand would check the geographical expansion of the Poles and on the other would strengthen the German presence in the area. To attain this goal the German Colonization Commission embarked on a comprehensive program that included land purchasing, planning and development, land parceling, selling and renting land to German colonists, and provision of administrative services and guidelines for new colonists.

(63)

‘In both areas’, Reichman and Hasson conclude, ‘a deliberate geographical policy was adopted to attain demographic supremacy on a regional scale’ (66). This geographical policy was guided by two main principles: ‘avoid penetration into areas densely populated by another national group and form contiguous blocks of settlements’ (66). Most

significantly for Reichman and Hasson, the colonisation projects in Posen and Palestine shared the national dimension of their goals, both ‘elevating the national interest above the economic one’ (65):

[t]he adoption of the Posen model involved something much deeper than a transfer of a specific colonization technique. Essentially it meant the acceptance of or agreement with a political philosophy that assigned a leading role to the national needs and thus was congruent with the goals of the Zionist movement.

(64-65)

In his 1919 *Der Aufbau des Landes Israel* (The Building of the Land of Israel), Ruppin formulates the uniqueness of the Zionist project in terms of its distinctly national character:

[...] the Jewish colonisation is also a matter “of a very special kind”, because, unlike other colonisations, it does not pursue economic but national aims, and because it does not want to use and exploit the already resident population as a “working mass”, but it wants to realise the entire colonisation from the basis to the top with new Jewish immigrants.⁴⁵

Ruppin describes here what Reichman and Hasson identify as a ‘closed colonization system’ (67). (They go on to argue that the specific political-national needs of Zionist settlement in Palestine demanded, in contrast to the requirements in Posen, such a degree of closure.⁴⁶) Elsewhere, Ruppin demands ‘the creation of a Jewish milieu and of a closed Jewish economy in which producers, consumers and middlemen shall all be Jewish’ (qtd. in Reichman and Hasson, 66).

⁴⁵ [‘Und schließlich ist die jüdische Kolonisation in Palästina auch eine Sache „von ganz besonderer Art“, weil sie nicht wie eine sonstige Kolonisation wirtschaftliche, sondern nationale Zwecke verfolgt, und weil sie nicht die bereits in Palästina ansässige Bevoelkerung als „arbeitende Masse“ verwenden und ausbeuten, sondern die gesamte Kolonisation von der Basis bis zur Spitze mit neuen jüdischen Einwanderern durchführen will’ (110).]

⁴⁶ As Gabriel Piterberg has commented, Reichman and Hasson ‘write from a clearly Zionist perspective’ (*Returns*, 85). ‘The result’, Piterberg elaborates, ‘is rather curious. Although the material they themselves furnish, and not infrequently even their own analyses, show how both projects – Prussian and Zionist – were colonial, something happens to the model upon travelling from the Ostmark to Palestine: it ceases to be colonial and mysteriously becomes something else, which is non-colonial’ (85). Thus, they contend that, while ‘[f]or the Germans, colonization meant expansion and containment of Polish nationalism’ (67), the Prussian Commission ‘[having] sought to dominate the Poles politically and economically’ (66), the purpose of the Zionist Organisation, ‘[i]n sharp distinction’, ‘was primarily to secure the territorial basis for national revival’ (67).

Most pertinently for the scope of this thesis, Reichman and Hasson thus expose what Gershon Shafir calls ‘the WZO’s “pure settlement methodology”’ (154). The ‘basic principles’ of the ‘pure settlement theory’, Shafir explains,

were that the political questions would find their solution once most of the land in Palestine was in Jewish hands, most of the population was Jewish, the Jews dominated the economy, especially agriculture, and the Jewish residents demanded autonomy. Demography and agricultural work were interconnected in assuring control of the land.

(154)

Instead of proving the uniqueness or indeed non-colonial nature of the Zionist approach, Zionism’s intended closed, non-exploitative system is exemplary of the pure form of settlement colony in which, as George M. Fredrickson writes,

[...] European settlers exterminated or pushed aside the indigenous peoples, developed an economy based on white labor, and were thus able in the long run to regain the sense of cultural or ethnic homogeneity identified with a European conception of nationality. [...] Exploitation of the environment would take the form of expanding the settler frontier [...]. If not totally exterminated, the indigenes would likely be confined to reservations in areas so remote or unproductive as to be of little interest to white settlers.

(221)

Fredrickson followed in his conceptualisation of the pure settlement colony the five-way typology established by D.K. Fieldhouse in 1966 which has since been widely adopted and further developed in the comparative study of colonialism. In *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century*, Fieldhouse thus defined five types of colonies: mixed settlement, occupation, plantation, trade, and pure settlement. The differences between these arise from variations in the relationship between the settler community and the indigenous population, in turn determined by the colonising power’s intentions, but also the geographic and demographic conditions on the ground (11-13).

Among these different types, the pure settlement colony stands out for the degree of its exclusivism, it being driven more than any other colonisation type by a logic of elimination and replacement: it ‘destroys to replace’ (Wolfe, ‘Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native’, 388). In other words, the aim of the pure settlement colony is not to assimilate, integrate or even exploit, but to ‘create an entirely new society in place of, or on the ruins of, an existing one’ (Collins, 32). Intrinsic to this type of colony is thus

a zero-sum mentality, or as Lorenzo Veracini puts it, a “winner takes it all” [...] frame of mind that demands that settler sovereignties entirely replace indigenous ones or *vice versa*’ (Bateman and Pilkington, 211).

In the case of Zionism, the history of its settlement activity in Palestine is filled with exclusionary strategies and practices that manifest its pure settler colonial trajectory. In his ambition to create a closed settler economy, Ruppin supported the militant workers’ strategy of ‘Conquest of Labour’, also known under the contemporary slogan of ‘Hebrew Labour’. In *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914*, Gershon Shafir provides a detailed account of the history of the strategy, an early propagation of which he traces back to the Jewish-Zionist workers’ party *Hapoel Hatzair* (The Young Worker) and their 1905 slogan: ‘A necessary condition for the realization of Zionism is the conquest of all branches of work in Eretz Israel by Jews’ (60). The main meaning of Conquest of Labour was thus this:

[It] signified the taking away of the work in the moshavot from the Arab workers and transferring it into the hands of the Jewish workers. This aim, found in a number of multi-ethnic societies, and especially settler societies, was the struggle for the exclusion, or alternatively the caste binding of the Arab workers.

(Shafir, *Land*, 60)

The term ‘*moshavot*’ describes here the earliest Jewish farming colonies established in Palestine during the first wave of Jewish immigration from 1882 to 1903, that is, before the start of Zionism’s institutionalised colonisation work. Shafir characterises these early colonies as ‘ethnic plantation settlements’, a sixth, ‘hybrid’ type he adds to Fieldhouse’s classification that was distinct from the pure form in that it ‘employed local rather than imported labor’ (*Land*, 9). Despite their pure settlement drive, these early settlements depended on indigenous labour both for demographic and economic reasons (Shafir, *Land*, 17). This reliance, according to Lorenzo Veracini, could in those early stages ‘be rationalised as temporary, a ‘temporary exploitation’’ (Banivanua Mar and Edmonds, 186).

Shafir shows that Hebrew Labour in fact failed to achieve the complete exclusion of the Palestinian workers from the labour market. The Jewish workers ‘successfully monopolized skilled jobs’, he explains, ‘[u]nskilled wages, however, did not reach a

European standard of living and remained insufficient to support a family' ('Settler Citizenship', 45). This necessitated a revision of the meaning and aim of the strategy, 'from total exclusion to the creation of a caste-based system' ('Settler Citizenship', 45). The lasting result then of Conquest of Labour, Shafir argues, was that it split the labour market, effecting a caste binding of the Arab workers. The limited success of the Hebrew Labour campaign was indeed a major concern for Ruppin throughout his years as the representative of the WZO in Palestine. His writings reveal a persistent criticism of the shortcomings with regard to the application of the Jewish-only labour policy and an insistence that the continued use of non-Jewish workers in the colonies threatened the national, that is, Jewish, character of the entire colonisation program.

The failure to economically exclude the Palestinians made apparent the need for a political, non market-based approach in developing and entrenching the Jewish settler collective's ethnonational aspirations. Pivotal was in this respect the creation of the Jewish Labor Movement in Palestine by the settlers of the second immigration wave. This Jewish Labor Movement, Shafir argues, 'was not a labor movement at all. Rather, it was a colonial movement in which the workers' interests remained secondary to the exigencies of settlement' (Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 37). Thus, 'the laborer became for all practical purposes a settler' (Shafir, *Land*, 189). Shafir prefers in this respect the designation of 'Labor Settlement Movement' (LSM) as 'a more accurate alternate term' which was also but less commonly employed and is a free translation of the original Hebrew name, *hityashvut ovedet* (*Being Israeli*, 37).

Two additional and interrelated strategies that were also framed in terms of a conquest came into play in all of the above: 'Conquest of Land' and 'Conquest of Guarding'. The first meant the concerted effort to acquire land in Palestine for exclusive Jewish ownership. The main instrument for this was the Jewish National Fund (JNF) which was established in 1901 by the WZO to purchase and 'nationalize land in Palestine': '[I]and purchased by the JNF [...] became the perpetual and collective property of the Jewish people: it could only be sublet, and only then to Jews' (Shafir, 'Settler Citizenship', 49). Conquest of Guarding, embodied by 'the paramilitary Hashomer (The Guard), an elite organization of workers who sought to monopolize the role of the *moshava* guards', was intimately allied to the Hebrew Labour policy in its pursuit to bar Palestinian guards from employment in Jewish settlements (Shafir, 'Settler Citizenship',

47). Furthermore, *Hashomer* contributed to the Conquest of Land effort by forming ‘conquest groups’ to take possession of land for Jewish settlement (Shafir, *Land*, 139). Like the Zionist Labour movement that was not really a labour movement, *Hashomer*, Shafir insists, ‘was not a professional guard organization, but was established to obtain and to ensure exclusive Jewish access to land and labor markets’ (*Land*, 142). Although short-lived, *Hashomer* would lay the foundation for the subsequent paramilitary Zionist organisations and later the Israeli army which still today upholds a near-exclusive Jewish-only admission policy.

Next to the already-mentioned JNF which assumed the key role in acquiring land and keeping control over it, Shafir identifies a second Zionist body as one of pillars of Zionism’s ‘*separatist method of pure settlement*’: the General Federation of Hebrew Workers in Eretz Israel, or Histadrut (*Land*, 19, emphasis in original). The Histadrut was founded in 1920 as an umbrella organisation of the Labour Settlement Movement and its institutions with the aim of uniting all Jewish worker-settlers in Palestine. Throughout the 1920s and 30s it would spearhead the re-emerged call for Hebrew Labour. Shafir highlights the Histadrut’s leading role in the nation building process in his designation of it as ‘the Israeli-state-in-the-making’ (*Land*, 193). The breadth of the organisation is made clear in the following helpful explications:

The Histadrut bore the imprint of the colonial project in many [...] unusual ways, being not only a trade union but also an employer and a provider of social services. It ran labor exchanges and producer, consumer, and marketing cooperatives and provided social housing, access to (frequently subsidized) employment, and unemployment and health benefits to its members – that is, all that was necessary for an immigrant to sink roots into a low-wage country. By using its WZO subsidies to shield workers and their dependents from competition with Palestinians in the labor market, and by providing them with the social resources needed to maintain their European standard of living in Palestine, the Histadrut became the tool of Zionist colonization.

(Shafir, ‘Settler Citizenship’, 49)

Together, Shafir argues, the JNF and the Histadrut worked for ‘the removal of land and labor, respectively, from the market, closing them off to Palestinian Arabs’ (‘Settler Citizenship’, 50). As such, they were ‘the two pillars of the separatist method of Jewish state formation around which the practice of Israeli nationalism evolved’ (*Land*, 145).

Finally, it was in that most Israeli of institutions, the *kibbutz*, that the Zionist colonisation project in Palestine realised its purest settlement structure. Shafir strongly emphasises the colonial-national character of the *kibbutz* and its centrality for the successful formation of the settler state, arguing that '[t]he *kibbutz* became the cornerstone of a vertically and horizontally integrated network of Jewish-owned and Jewish-operated economic enterprises and social institutions' ('Settler Citizenship', 49). As 'the most homogenous body of Israeli society', the *kibbutz* still serves today as one of the clearest manifestations of Zionism's ongoing white settler project, excluding not only the Palestinian Arabs (on whose exclusion the *kibbutz* was constructed in the first place, as Shafir stresses), but also refusing access, with some very few exceptions, to Middle Eastern and North African Jews ('Settler Citizenship', 50).

Shafir's seminal scholarship reveals how early Zionist colonisation in Palestine was shaped in its conflict with the native Arab population over labour and land. In other words, in configuring and implementing its strategies of exclusion, the settler community was influenced most by the very presence of those it wished to exclude, their responses and resistance. Gabriel Piterberg has in this respect lauded Shafir's work for offering an unyielding refutation of what he terms the 'dual society paradigm', which he identifies as one of the 'fundamentals of hegemonic settler narratives' and which denies exactly the above-described intimate relationship in the development of both communities. In Piterberg's words, it is 'the denial of the fact that the presence of the colonized has been the single most significant factor in determining the structure and nature of the settler society' (*Returns*, 62); or, slightly differently, it is the 'denial that the interaction with the dispossessed is the history of who the settlers collectively are' (*Returns*, 57). Piterberg's additional explications are worth quoting in full:

The most important assumption underpinning the dual society paradigm [...] is the purportedly extrinsic nature of indigenous Arab society and its conflict with the very essence of the settler nation. What I mean by dual society is the emergence of two completely separate and self-contained entities in Palestine: the Jewish Yishuv (the settler community) and the Palestinian Arab society (the indigenous community). Each developed according to their own trajectory, which is explicable in the former case by a combination of European origins, Jewish essence and internal needs in Palestine. Each trajectory is unrelated to the other, and in the only meaningful relations between the two societies consisted in a struggle between two impregnable national collectives (if, that is, the national authenticity of the Palestinians is not altogether denied). It cannot be sufficiently stressed that what is

denied by the settler society is not the mere presence of Arabs in Palestine, but rather the fact that their presence and resistance were consequential to the institutional dynamics and collective identity of the settler community and later nation-state. It is clearly the ultimate scholarly articulation of the empty land concept.

(*Returns*, 64)

The dissociation that Piterberg describes allows thus for an emptying of the land performed on the level of the collective settler imagination. The ‘empty land’ thus imagined represents the settler colonial ideal: an empty space there to be appropriated and reorganised, a reorganisation that is often articulated in terms of a revitalisation. Zionism created its own empty land myth propagated in the enduring slogan of Palestine/Israel as ‘a land without a people for a people without a land’. Borrowing extensively from biblical narratives and imagery, the Zionist movement claims to have transformed the Palestinian land from a barren desert into the land of milk and honey it once was under its rightful (Jewish) owners.

Much of what has been discussed here in relation to the early stages of Zionist colonisation in Palestine, its pure settlement methodology and ideology, are brought to life in an insightful documentary by Israeli filmmaker Eyal Sivan, *Jaffa, the Orange’s Clockwork*. Tracing the history of the famous Jaffa Orange, the film follows the development of the Palestinian citrus industry from a flourishing and collaborative Arab-Jewish economy, to a site of growing separatism instigated by Labour Zionism’s call for Hebrew Labour (the attempted enforcement of which included from the late 1920s the tactics of boycott and the picketing of Jewish-owned plantations employing Arabs), to eventually a symbol of Palestinian dispossession with the Israeli appropriation in 1948 of the Jaffa orange, the brand, and the land on which it grew.

Most striking for our interests here are the contrasting colonial visions that emerge out of a comparison between the Zionist and British Mandate approaches to the citrus economy in Palestine. In view of ever-growing tensions, the British colonial administration actively tried to safeguard the integration between Arabs and Jews that had always existed in this sector. It did this through the creation of the Palestine Citrus Board which imposed uniform, anti-discriminatory regulations in the marketing of the Jaffa orange on all those involved. A British propaganda film from the time of the Mandate shows an idealised version of this integrated Palestinian market. The footage depicts

Arabs and Jews working together, picking oranges in the orchards and packing them for transportation to be exported to places all over the world. A voice-over provides the following commentary: ‘Men and women, Arab and Jew, old and young, here is work for them all in raising oranges that grow sweeter and juicier in this favoured soil!’

There are of course many problems with these scenes of apparent equality, most notably its underlying Orientalism that portrays the modern Jewish worker next to a primitive, highly romanticised Arab peasant. However, what these images do reveal is, as one of the expert contributors in the film remarks, an inclusivity inherent in the British colonial construction of Palestine that Zionism all but lacks:

This [British] colonial dream calls forth a kind of vision of Jewish-Arab commonality at the same time. [...] [It] is a dream which ultimately conjures up some kind of a vision of shared life.

The Zionist-socialist dream is devoid of such a partnership.

With regret he goes on to state that ‘this dream’, that is, the British colonial dream, ‘could have produced something’; from it, ‘a different future might have arisen.’ Without invalidating the above observations, there is however a crucial flaw in the commentator’s conceptualisation of Zionism as something non-colonial, something worse-than-colonial: starting from the false premise that ‘colonialism always has a place for the native’, he is led to conclude that, ‘Zionism with its ideology of Hebrew Labour even rejected that colonial frame of existence’. He misses thus the point of the pure settlement frame of colonial existence which, precisely, does not allow a place for the native but is built on his exclusion, elimination and replacement. The settler colonial dream abhors the hierarchical, exploitative coexistence encouraged by most other colonial models; its dream is the empty land.

This introduction has tried to lay bare the colonial fabric of original political Zionism. Both in thought and practice, it has been argued, the Zionist movement has fashioned itself in comparison to other European settler ventures.

In defence of this early alignment, Herzl is often presented as a man of his time who, pragmatically, identified colonialism as the solution of his time. If Zionism was to achieve anything, so this argument goes, Herzl had to ally his movement with the locus of

contemporary power. The racist prejudices and assumptions of the early Zionists become in this light mere expressions of the *zeitgeist*. Maxime Rodinson, who as we have seen at the beginning of this introduction was an early modern critic of Zionism, presents – although not defends – the attitudes of Herzl and his contemporaries as products of their time that should not be subject to ‘moraliz[ing] by applying [...] criteria that have become common today’ (44). Indeed, Rodinson goes further by claiming that Zionism was inevitably set to become a settler colonialism:

Once the premises were laid down, the inexorable logic of history determined the consequences. Wanting to create a purely Jewish, or predominantly Jewish, state in an Arab Palestine in the twentieth century could not help but lead to a colonial-type situation and to the development (completely normal, sociologically speaking) of a racist state of mind, and in the final analysis to a military confrontation between the two ethnic groups.

(74)

Emphasis needs to be placed on Rodinson’s starting qualification, ‘once the premises were laid down’, for his claim to be apt. Implicitly, Rodinson is making an important point here, namely that the root cause of all of Zionism’s future failings is to be found in its specifically colonial founding vision. Today, Gabriel Piterberg still agrees with Rodinson’s early analysis:

From the moment Zionism’s goal became the resettlement of European Jews in a land controlled by a colonial European power, in order to create a sovereign political entity, it could no longer be understood just as a central or east European nationalism; it was also, inevitably, a white-settler colonialism.

(‘Settlers and their States’, 116)

What Piterberg is however very clear to stress in contrast to Rodinson, is the existence of alternative premises for modern Jewish nationalisms, that is, of ‘other, more progressive and less *völkisch* Jewish nationalisms in Europe at the time – Autonomism, Bundism, or Bernard Lazare’s anarcho-revolutionary Judaeo-nationalism – which were not at all colonial’ (‘Settlers and their States’, 115). ‘Inherent in these modern expressions of Jewish nationalism’, Piterberg elaborates, ‘was the resolution to change the societies within which the Jews existed and to challenge the exclusiveness of the European nation-state. Equally central was the willingness to work with Jews as they actually were, even if this was

accompanied by a modernizing confidence in collective and individual improvement' (116).⁴⁷

Significantly, a fact that has become obscured is that these alternative ideas for Jewish national or autonomous movements exceeded Zionism in popularity with European Jews. In his introduction to Rodinson's *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* Peter Buch objects to the author's omission of the fact that a majority of European Jews were indifferent or even hostile to Zionism, arguing that these 'alternative movements for socialist and anti-imperialist liberation [...] were attracting far more of the Jewish youth than was Zionism' (10). The observation of this discrepancy makes Levene recognise 'a terrible irony' in Herzl's project:

At the very time when Jews throughout the world were reeling from what had been done to their kith and kin in Kishinev, when the whole thrust of the East European Jewish experience - overwhelmed, that is, by the impact of tsarist persecution, prejudice, and violence - was driving vast multitudes of *yidn* into the ranks of left-wing, anti-imperial movements, a Viennese Jewish journalist was busy promoting a quintessential imperial project.

(216)

Considering this context then, statements by Zionist apologists like Zeev Sternhell who argue that, 'Herzl drew the appropriate conclusions' in the *völkisch* nationalist society he found himself in, are truly misleading (105). Even by the standards of the day, and especially against the backdrop of contemporaneous European Jewish public opinion, the Zionists surface as a starkly reactionary and essentially hegemonic political group. (Chapter 1 will explore in detail Zionism's hegemonic character through its perception of anti-Semitism.)

Two central assumptions underlie this thesis as a whole: first, the only way to understand Zionism properly is within the comparative context of settler colonialism, and second, following Patrick Wolfe, settler colonialism is 'a structure, not an event' (*Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, 2).

⁴⁷ In *The Returns of Zionism*, Piterberg highlights the hegemonic nature of the Zionist movement by contrasting it to the revolutionary ideas of Bernard Lazare, a French Jewish literary critic and anarchist, and contemporary of Herzl. Decidedly proletarian and anti-imperialist, Piterberg argues, Lazare's vision for Jewish emancipation was humanist and universal, reflecting the position of the 'conscious pariah' in opposition to Herzl as the 'sovereign settler' (117). Lazare's brand of Jewish nationalism was, he concludes, 'a progressive foundation from which to challenge the nation state's assumptions of homogeneity' (13).

This thesis sets out to expose Zionism's settler colonial structure within which it locates its continuing exclusivism. The main aim is to trace and explore the extensiveness and consistency of Zionism's exclusionary project, from the movement's inception until today, and to investigate in turn some of the responses and strategies of resistance of its primary target, the Palestinian Arabs. The objective is not to offer a comprehensive history of Zionism's exclusions, but rather to spotlight such moments in Zionist-Palestinian history through the study of both literary and non-literary texts that bear particular meaning for the development of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Chapter 1 proceeds by exploring the ideological foundations of the kind of Jewish nationalism proposed by the Zionist movement at the turn of the twentieth century. Returning to Theodor Herzl, the chapter will examine Zionism's extended notion of security as a manifestation of the dominant ethno-nationalist discourses of the time that posited the idea of the endangered nation (*Volk*) in need of protection by a racially and culturally exclusive nation-state. In its adoption of this hegemonic European narrative of natural belonging, Zionism would also accept the premise of Christian anti-Semitism, identifying the Jew as an alien and anomalous body to be removed and returned to its own homeland. The foundations that will be discussed in the first chapter represent the fundamental parameters of Zionist and Israeli collective thought: the view of an intrinsically hostile world that makes the existence of a state for and of Jews indispensable for the survival of the Jewish people.

In Chapter 2, the focus will shift from Europe to Palestine. Through an exploration of the erased, intertwined histories of Ottoman Palestine and Arab Jews, Zionism's earliest ventures onto Ottoman ground, traced in its recorded interactions with local officials and the population at large, will be uncovered as colonial encounters that hinged on a perception of the Arab's essential Otherness. Conversely, this chapter will also be concerned with early Palestinian perceptions and experiences of an encroaching Zionist presence, and the responses and forms of resistance that this elicited. Finally, while offering its own assessment of Palestinian Ottoman history, this chapter also highlights such re-evaluation of Palestine's pre-colonial past as an emerging strategy of resistance that signifies a reappropriation of Palestinian history and that pits the inclusivity of the Ottoman imperial model against the segregationist reality in Israel/Palestine today.

Chapter 3 will come full circle by looking at the current Israeli practice of walling as a direct progression, indeed escalation, of the exclusivist ideas found in early Zionism. Starting from a close analysis of Vladimir Jabotinsky's suggestively termed 'iron wall' strategy, the first part of this chapter will highlight manifestations in recent Israeli history of the isolationism exacted by Jabotinsky's approach. The second part will bring to light the flip side of Israel's isolationist drive, namely the imposed isolation and enclosure of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Within that context, final attention will be given to the emergence of what will be described as the genre of the 'occupation diary'. Against the backdrop of escalating Israeli attempts to physically and rhetorically exclude Palestinians from their land, the role of Palestinian life writing, as the recording of personal history, will be discussed in terms of its potentiality as a project complementary to the subversive (re-)writing of a collective, national history.

2 FOUNDATIONS

Zionist Constructions of Jewish Difference and Security

Zionism as a modern political idea did not originate with Theodor Herzl. Some of its earliest expressions are Moses Hess's 1862 *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last National Question*, Leo Pinsker's 1882 *Auto-Emancipation: An Appeal to his People by a Russian Jew*, and the late articles by Peretz Smolenskin in his Hebrew monthly *Ha-Shahar*. All of these already propagated the familiar call for the national organisation of Europe's Jews on their own territory, framed as a return to the Jewish homeland.¹ The breeding ground of the Zionist idea, as Aamir Mufti has argued, was post-Enlightenment Europe and its 'crisis of minority' (82), which created and sustained 'the problematic of Jewishness' (41), or, the 'Jewish Question'. What Mufti means, to be more precise, is that there was (and is) a constitutive failure of liberal-secular society and state to include Jews as Jews, that is, as bearers of a particular and separate collective identity. In post-revolutionary Europe, the emergent 'nation-thinking', as Mufti describes it, that is, 'the normalization of European selfhood in terms of national identities' (41), provided a fertile soil for Jewish identity to become an intensifying site of crisis:

The question around the Jews is reinscribed and renewed in the new nation-thinking, with its emphasis, on the one hand, on equality, and other the other, on organic community and the bonds of common descent.

(Mufti, 69)

Zionism grew out of this nationalism emanating from Romantic culture and its belief in the 'uniqueness and coherence of national genius' (Mufti, 69): the nation was thus imagined as an undividable entity of organic belonging founded on, above all, historical

¹ For extracts from Hess, Pinsker and Smolenskin, see Arthur Hertzberg (ed.), *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*.

continuity, which in turn, as Mufti also shows, relied on coalescent notions of language, territory and race (71-75).

This, then, was the political discourse that Herzl embedded his Zionist movement in when, in his opening speech to the first Zionist Congress in 1897, he started from the premise of the *Volkstum* of the Jews, ‘the scattered fragments’ of which had survived despite the many vicissitudes of fortune suffered and could now finally be re-united by Zionism [‘*die versprengten Theile des jüdischen Volkes*’ (Herzl, ‘Rede von Dr. Theodor Herzl’, 3)]. The German words ‘*Volk*’ and ‘*Volkstum*’ connote, more so than their English equivalents ‘nation’ and ‘nationhood’, or ‘people’ and ‘peoplehood’, the idea of a national collective rooted in a racial essence that is intrinsically tied to a specific territory.² By proclaiming Europe’s Jews a separate *Volk*, this chapter will argue, Zionism in effect accepted and adopted the hegemonic ethno-nationalist discourse that also produced anti-Semitism. Within this discourse, Jewish difference was used to legitimise Jewish persecution and Jewish separatism respectively. Rather than expressing this difference in religious or cultural terms, political anti-Semitism and Zionism shared their framing of the Jews’ difference in distinctly secular, political-nationalist terms that positioned Europe’s Jews as foreigners among the various nations they resided in, and as potential threats to these countries’ national character and unity. For Zionism, the key marker of Jewish difference was located in this purported homelessness, that is, in the anomalous minoritarian existence of European Jews that was in turn directly responsible for their fundamental insecurity. Both cause and cure in this light, nationalism would offer a solution – indeed the only solution – to the Jews’ vulnerable status by providing them with a state of their own; and colonialism would make it possible. This chapter will explore the key facets of foundational Zionism’s constructions of Jewish difference and security that pivot around these nineteenth-century notions of home and homelessness, and that this thesis understands as the lasting ideological tenets of Zionism and its manifestation, the state of Israel.

² This would later find expression in the ‘*Blut und Boden*’ (blood and soil) designation of the proto-Nazi ideology of early twentieth-century Austro-German nationalism.

2.1 Zionism and Anti-Semitism

Herzl did not always support a national-colonial answer to the developing crisis of Jewish life in Europe. Until shortly before his espousal of Zionism, which at its latest can be pinpointed to May 1895 when he began his ‘Zionist diary’, he was a firm believer in Jewish assimilation. In his first diary entry, he admits to his previous plan that envisaged ‘the free and honorable conversion’ of Austria’s Jews to Catholicism: ‘Free and honorable by virtue of the fact that the leaders of this movement – myself in particular – would remain Jews and as such would propagate conversion to the faith of the majority’ (*CDI*, 7). For his ambitious scheme, the Austrian feuilletonist counted on the help from none other than the Pope himself whom he would approach directly. Furthermore, ‘[t]he conversion was to take place in broad daylight [...] with festive processions and amidst the pealing of bells’ (*CDI*, 7). Equally elaborate and theatrical was his preceding plan to duel, Herzl himself, the leaders of Austrian anti-Semitism, amongst them most notorious the Viennese mayor Karl Lueger (Elon, 113). Herzl’s beliefs during these pre-Zionist years are highlighted in a correspondence dating from 1893 that both Amos Elon and Jacques Kornberg draw attention to in their respective studies of Herzl (Elon, 114-115; Kornberg, *From Assimilation*, 115-118).³ The representatives of a defence association, the Viennese Society to Combat Anti-Semitism, had thus approached Herzl and invited him, as a renowned journalist and public figure, to contribute to their weekly newspaper. Dismissing the scope and reach of the society’s campaign, Herzl declined and instead proposed that ‘half a dozen duels might raise the social position and prestige of the Jews immensely’ (qtd. in Elon, 114). ‘Furthermore’, Elon relays Herzl’s response, ‘Jews simply must cast off all these “peculiarities for which they are rightly resented.” The only real solution would be the complete disappearance of Jews through conversion and intermarriage’ (Elon, 114).

Herzl however soon discarded these plans as he moved from this religious understanding of the Jewish Question, to a social one, or, as he put it, ‘a question of the people’s daily bread at lunch’ (qtd. in Elon, 117), until eventually adopting the view of the

³ Herzl himself makes reference to this correspondence in his diaries (see *CDI*, p. 6).

national dimension of the Jewish Question that characterised the Zionist position. The pages with which he introduced his diary in the late spring of 1895 provide the first account of his Zionist transformation which he narrates as a coming-of-age, a gradual process that reflected his maturing consciousness about the true nature of anti-Semitism: ‘Anti-Semitism has grown and continues to grow – and so do I’ (*CDI*, 7). He goes on to retrace how he came to understand anti-Semitism as an unstoppable and inescapable force – inescapable even for someone like him, as anti-Semitic slurs directed at him in Germany and Austria had painfully reminded him. Such is the force of anti-Semitism, Herzl became convinced, particularly so in his native Austria, that it will preclude all attempts by Jews to achieve full assimilation into Christian European society on the individual level, which, after all, was what Herzl was striving for. This realisation had left him in the end, as he writes, to ‘[recognise] the emptiness and futility of efforts to “combat anti-Semitism”’. Declamations made in writing or in closed circles do no good whatever; they even have a comical effect’ (*CDI*, 6). His criticism here was directed specifically at the ‘peace societies’, as he called them dismissively, such as the one that had contacted him a couple of years earlier. ‘These resemble’, he writes, ‘the “relief committees” formed after – and before! – floods, and they accomplish about as much. [...] A man who invents a terrible explosive does more for peace than a thousand gentle apostles’ (*CDI*, 6). These small-scale attempts at fighting anti-Semitism appeared not only ‘feeble’ and ‘foolish’ to him (*CDI*, 6), but he would also increasingly condemn such campaigns on the whole as nonsensical, even detrimental to the Jewish cause, as he began to believe that anti-Semitism worked to the advantage of the Jews, as a productive ‘pressure’ that would force the needed reformation of the flawed Jewish character, itself a product of history (*CDI*, 9). While Herzl describes the process by which he developed his ideas relating to anti-Semitism as a conscious one, he concludes his explanations of his Zionist path by declaring the formulation of his practical program, that is, his proposals for a Jewish state, a ‘mystery’ to him, consigning it to ‘the realm of the Unconscious’ (*CDI*, 13).

The depiction of his own transformation into a Zionist that Herzl offers in 1895 contradicts his later claim that his conversion was the product of a sudden and momentous epiphany prompted by one dramatic event in France, the Dreyfus trial. In an article dating from September 1899, he thus wrote: ‘[W]hat made me a Zionist was the Dreyfus trial [...] which I witnessed in 1894’ (*ZWII*, 112). In *Theodor Herzl: From Assimilation to*

Zionism, Kornberg convincingly refutes Herzl's retrospective claim – an attempt at self-mythologising most likely, but a version that had been widely accepted and disseminated by Herzl scholars. Kornberg draws attention to the fact that Herzl's 1895 account, by all means the most immediate account of his conversion, contains no mention at all of the Dreyfus case; in addition, while Herzl had indeed covered the Dreyfus trial for the *Neue Freie Presse*, Kornberg's research found that, '[n]one of his dispatches suggest the trial led to a new realization on his part, to some great awakening' (191). Kornberg accuses Herzl of having 'assumed the mantle of a prophet after the fact', that is, of having retrospectively 'conferred historical significance on the Dreyfus Affair' (199). He is furthermore unambiguous in his assessment of Herzl's Zionist transformation as 'a lengthy process, abounding in inner conflict and contradiction as he struggled with his ambivalence over both Jewishness and assimilation' (190). Kornberg concludes that Herzl 'was chiefly reacting against Austrian anti-Semitism' (190).

Of interest for the scope of this study are Herzl's pre-Zionist years for allowing us to trace some of the ideas that Herzl had grappled with for some time – such as questions relating to the limits of assimilation, the nature of anti-Semitism and the meaning of Jewishness – and that would come to significantly inform his Zionist position and indeed that of the movement as a whole. I will thus argue here that it was not a complete break with his previously held convictions that led him to Zionism as the solution to the Jewish Question, but that it was rather the result of a progressive development of those beliefs within his broader Austro-German nationalist outlook. Herzl's early fixation with the duel, for example, a practice firmly situated within this Austro-German nationalist culture of male honour, would later translate into the gendered Zionist discourse that posited the need to restore the Jews' pride and honour by making them – again – into a fighting nation, a nation of men. There is also a lot to be said about the suicidal aspect contained within Herzl's projection of the fighting Jew and the fighting Jewish nation-state. When writing about Herzl's initial proposal to duel the foremost Austrian anti-Semites, Elon thus recognises such 'suicidal' element, along with the 'flamboyant', to have been 'entirely in his character' (113). The duel's win-or-die premise is traceable in Herzl's inflexible view of anti-Semitism that will be developed throughout this chapter and that in turn is responsible for the uncompromising all-or-nothing mentality that would find its way into the collective Zionist psychology and Israeli state rationale. The suicidal

component of Zionist dogma and politics will be explored in more detail later in the chapter and will indeed remain of interest throughout this thesis.

The notion of honour was also at the heart of Herzl's conversion plan which, he stressed, would not be an 'act of cowardice or careerism': the openness and grandeur with which he would stage this mass conversion would see Austria's Jews convert, '[n]ot in shame, as individuals have converted up to now, but with proud gestures (*CDI*, 7). As alluded to above, Elon emphasises what he calls the flamboyancy of Herzl's character that he sees evident already in his pre-Zionist plots. With reference to Herzl's duel idea, Elon thus writes: '[Herzl] envisioned a scenario of flamboyant heroes and sensational effects. [...] The idea was to create a stir and so catch the conscience of the world' (113). With the mass conversion scheme that followed, Herzl similarly fashioned an opportunity to place himself at the centre of 'an extravaganza with a cast of millions' (Elon, 115). These personality traits, that is, a taste for the grand gesture and self-display, would remain defining features of Herzl's work as a Zionist. Although his main strategy consisted in secretive diplomacy, these invisible efforts were eventually to lead to the realisation of his grandest, most elaborate idea as yet, a state for and of Jews; and Herzl would be revered forever as the man who had dreamt up the idea and made it into a reality. In his own words, he would be 'named among the greatest benefactors of mankind' (*CDI*, 104).

Herzl's dramatic streak would surface more visibly in his staging of the first Zionist Congress that took place in Basel in late August of 1897. As the first official gathering of the supporters of Zionism, the event was fundamental in institutionalising the movement, which, retrospectively, set it on its course toward the creation of the state of Israel. Herzl was aware that he had to create something out of nothing, without not only a territory to show for, but also without even a unified Jewish people to speak for or lead. The ceremonial tone that he had designed for the congress was to compensate for this lack of authority and lend the event the weight of an established political organisation. In his narration of the events in Basel, Elon uses again the analogy of a theatre production in which Herzl 'was not only playwright, but also the director, stage manager, and leading actor' (237); he also notes that '[Herzl's] acute sense of ritual and decorum was especially evident in the *mis-en-scène*' (236). As was typical for him, Herzl had thought about every little detail, down to the clothes to be worn by the delegates: he insisted on mandatory black formal attire for everyone. What might appear as an incongruous and trivial request,

served not only the purpose of creating uniformity among the diverse groups of delegates, but it was also part of Herzl's concerted effort to make the congress appear as 'the most exalted and solemn thing'; formal dress, he was convinced, would contribute to 'heighten [the] tone to the point of solemnity' (*CDII*, 581). Herzl's aim was to impress the delegates by giving them a sense of importance and unity, as well as to fashion an image for the outside public of a serious representative political, see national, body.

A couple of days after the congress, Herzl recorded its success in his diary: 'At Basel I founded the Jewish State' (*CDII*, 581). By this he meant that he had founded the 'abstraction' necessarily underlying all states: 'The foundation of a State lies in the will of the people for a state, yes, even in the will of one sufficiently powerful individual [...]' (*CDII*, 581). His grand motive emerges most clearly when he adds: 'I gradually worked the people into the mood for a State and made them feel that they were its National Assembly' (*CDII*, 581). More than just a personal penchant or eccentricity of character, Herzl's use and reliance on pomp and circumstance was also a highly calculated tactical tool to create the mood, as he words it, for political action. Arguably, the force of Herzl's voice lay in his ability to conflate the pragmatics of power politics with the fanciful and visionary. He knew that only under the guidance of powerful visions could the masses be stirred into supporting a political cause. Herzl saw himself as the provider of such a vision: the idea of the (re-)unification of the Jewish people would have the force to grasp the minds and hearts of Jews all over Europe; and Herzl, certainly in his own opinion, possessed the qualities needed to lead them, as he implied in a letter dating from his Zionist beginnings:

Visions alone grip the souls of men. And whoever does not know how to deal in visions may be an excellent, worthy, practical-minded person, and even a benefactor in a big way: but he will never be a leader of men and no trace of him will remain.

(*CDI*, 28)

To his critics – even, or perhaps particularly, within the Zionist movement – Herzl's governing style was pompous and self-important, and overall dictatorial. Arthur Ruppin, one of the leading Zionist figures of the post-Herzl generation that had forced a shift away from the chasing of charters to practical settlement work in Palestine, decried the deceased Zionist founder as a dreamer and fantasist, targeting especially what he saw

as the quixotic quality of the Austrian's diplomatic pursuits. For Ruppin, Herzl had failed to produce practical results during his time at the head of the movement. Ruppin furthermore accused Herzl of 'superficiality' and dismissed the 'pedantic ceremonies' of subsequent Zionist congresses as an unbearable legacy of Herzl.⁴

Both before and after his adoption of Zionism, Herzl sought a grand gesture with which to restore the honour of the Jews. Honour was what the Jews lacked in Herzl's eyes; it was what kept them from being absorbed by mainstream society. A close reading of Herzl's controversial play *Das Neue Ghetto* (The New Ghetto),⁵ which dates from 1894 and thus represents the transitional phase in Herzl's development towards Zionism, will highlight in particular this continued preoccupation of Herzl to transform, that is, to reform the allegedly flawed Jewish character. This concern was indicative of a compliant view of anti-Semitism that accepted the basic accusations levied against Jews. *Das Neue Ghetto* thus anticipates Zionism's accommodation of the dominant anti-Semitic discourse by seeking fault not with contemporary society, but with the Jews themselves. In its representation of anti-Semitic stereotypes, the play brings to the fore Herzl's core belief that Jewish difference, as the root cause of rising anti-Semitic sentiments, precluded assimilation and thus had to be eradicated through corrective measures. *Das Neue Ghetto* also foreshadows a related ambivalence central to Zionist ideology, the source of which Kornberg summarises as follows:

⁴ Frustrated with what he felt were slow and unproductive proceedings at the thirteenth Zionist Congress taking place in August 1923, Ruppin noted in his diary: 'The first meetings, with their pedantic ceremonies (one of Herzl's legacies, I think), were particularly unbearable' (*Memoirs*, 209). In October of the same year, he records a visit with Ahad Ha-Am in London: 'I talked to him about the superficiality in Herzl's diaries, which I have just started to read' (*Memoirs*, 211); and a few years later, in a diary entry from 20 April 1929, Ruppin leaves this damning review of, not merely Herzl's diaries, but his Zionist work in general:

I have read a little in Herzl's diaries. They have confirmed my previous opinion of Herzl: he was obsessed by an idea and faithfully clung to it against a hostile and scornful world. His ideas, however, were based on very shallow foundations. The whole diary is superficial, too much like *feuilletons*. How could Herzl have spent years dealing with all sorts of Levantine adventurers and chased the shadow of an audience with the sultan? I am also repelled by his vanity and his tendency to boast, perhaps because I see my own faults mirrored here. But my sense of reality stops me from spending years in a fantasy world, as Herzl did. He would have suffered the most serious disappointments if he had not died at the critical moment.

(*Memoirs*, 244)

⁵ All subsequent references will be to a Kessinger Publishing reprint of *Das Neue Ghetto* originally published in Vienna in 1903. All translations of the original German text (given in brackets) are my own.

Herzl concluded in 1893 that antisemitism foreclosed Jewish improvement and acceptance through assimilation. Rejected by Gentiles, Jews would have to transform themselves, both rid themselves of their faults and find sources of pride and self-respect in themselves. In shedding their faults and becoming more self-assertive, far less dependent on Gentiles, Jews would win – almost command – admiration and acceptance. Only then would they be “reabsorbed” in Europe.

(*From Assimilation*, 130)

The ambivalence in the relationship between Gentile rejection and acceptance within Herzl’s view of the Jewish Question lies in his appeal to Jews to become stronger and more independent in order to gain respectability in the eyes of the majority society and, consequently, be allowed full entry. At the end of this self-transformative process thus still stands assimilation, be that on the individual level as Herzl had initially pursued, or collectively, as a nation amongst nations, as would become his Zionist goal. With Zionism, the above-described ambivalence would subsequently take the form of a paradoxical formula that dictated that Jews would have to leave Europe in order to become part of it. An additional role plays in this respect the way in which the construction of a new Jewish identity, secular and respectable, was at the same time construed as a return to a former, ancient Jewishness – a paradox recognisable in the foundational Zionist motif of the ‘old-new land’ and, equivalently, the ‘old-new Jew’.

Set in the Jewish upper middle class of fin de siècle Vienna, *Das Neue Ghetto* opens just before a lavish wedding reception is about to take place. It is the wedding of the young lawyer Jacob Samuel and Hermine Hellman, the daughter of an established textile manufacturer. Fritz Rheinberg, married to Hermine’s sister and thus Jacob’s new brother-in-law, is a wealthy stock exchange speculator. Rheinberg’s agent, Emmanuel Wasserstein, recently lost his fortune in the stock market and now finds himself forced to work for Rheinberg.

The Hellmans and Rheinberg are made to represent the archetypes of assimilated bourgeois Viennese Jewry. They are parvenus who worship money and material goods more than anything else. The men are caught up in dubious financial deals; in their midst, even the rabbi Friedheimer plays the stock market, albeit, as he justifies, to gain the funds to support the poor and persecuted Jews. The women are vain and greedy, their conversations reduced to trivial discussions about the latest Parisian fashions and social

gossip. Most fatefully, they all are deluded in thinking that they have achieved complete acceptance by Viennese Christian society.

The two characters that stand out within this pervasively negative portrayal are Wasserstein and Jacob. Wasserstein is the first of the central characters to appear on stage: too depressed by his recent financial misfortune to witness the ceremony, he had left the temple early. (It also later emerges that he himself had in fact intended to marry Hermine. For this purpose, he had worked to amass the fortune that would have been expected of him to bring to an engagement within these circles. Now, having lost his money, marriage with someone of the standing of the Hellman sisters has become out of his reach.) When he arrives at the reception before all the other guests, he is met with great suspicion by the household staff. Described as ‘worn, but carefully kept’ [*in abgenützten, aber sorgfältig gehaltenen Kleidern*] (3), his clothes reflect his recent financial ruin. What marks him however even more so as an outsider to the awaited wedding party is his discernible ‘Jewishness’ that is enhanced by a strong accent. Despite his assurances that he is a guest and well-wisher, one of the maids closely follows him around the room, fearful he might steal something. Herzl plays up Wasserstein’s fixation with money to the point of caricature. Wasserstein thus inspects the lavish interior appraising the value of everything that he sees, proceeding to do the same upon discovering the display of wedding gifts:

Table pieces! Silverware - psss for twenty-four people! And these girandoles!
Solid! Silver is still beautiful – despite its cheapness!⁶

Grasping one of the candleholders, he is promptly rebuked to put it back. Wasserstein’s role in these opening scenes is an overtly comical one, as the audience watches this seemingly creepy but nevertheless amusing character prowl around the stage, followed ‘three steps behind him’ [*drei Schritte hinter ihm*] (4) by the overly protective maid.

To the guests at the wedding reception, Wasserstein is at first glance but a harmless figure of ridicule, ignored by most, and for the greatest part of the play, laughed at by the Hellman sisters and shushed by his new boss Rheinberg. Even judicious Jacob initially refers to him as ‘that odd one’ [*dieser Komische*] (19). On second glance however, Wasserstein is much more of an unsettling presence as he is, amidst this group

⁶ [*Aufsätze! Ein Besteck – psss für vierundzwanzig Personen! Und diese Girandolen! Massiv! Silber ist doch schön – trotz Billigkeit!*] (DNG, 4).]

of parvenus, a painful reminder to them of their own Jewishness from which they so desperately have tried to distance themselves. Over the course of the play, Wasserstein's lack of pretence, that is, his self-awareness and perceptiveness about the society he lives in, emerge as his redeeming qualities. This is highlighted when Count von Schramm makes an appearance at the reception. Proud to have the nobleman attend his family celebration, Rheinberg boasts to Wasserstein that Schramm is his friend, lecturing his agent further that 'the finest people attend my soirees' [*(...) dass auf meinen Soiréen die feinsten Leute sind*' (21)]. In fact, Rheinberg and Schramm's shared stakes in the latter's coal mine are revealed shortly afterwards, somewhat dwarfing Rheinberg's boastful claims. Schramm excuses himself shortly after his arrival telling Rheinberg that there are for his liking 'too many – people' [*Es sind mir zu viele – Leute da . . .*' (27)]. With Schramm gone, Wasserstein accurately reads the count's pause, remarking to Rheinberg: 'He meant to say too many Jews!' But Rheinberg dismissively responds: 'Wasserstein, you are an ass! ... By the way – if one sees you, one could turn into an anti-Semite'.⁷ Indeed, increasingly over the course of the play, Wasserstein emerges as a teller of uncomfortable truths.

The character that Herzl more obviously elevates above the corrupt milieu depicted in *Das Neue Ghetto* is newly-wed Jacob. As the hero of the play, he is imbued with qualities that show him to be different from his environment. Of modest beginnings, his marriage to Hermine marks his entry into the moneyed Jewish society of Vienna. The first thing we hear about him is that he is indeed 'different' (9). This is shown through his open dislike for the type of financial dealings many of his fellow Jews are involved in. To his stockbroker brother-in-law he declares: 'I don't do business' [*Ich mache keine Geschäfte*' (49)]. His refusal is rooted in his belief that those activities are harmful to the Jews' collective reputation. He confronts Wasserstein:

Don't you understand me? You harm us! The Jews! Because these monetary flows ruin people. And the victims accuse the Jews . . . Who is big enough to understand

⁷ [*Er hat sagen wollen: zu viel Juden!*
'Wasserstein, Sie sind ein Esel! . . . Übrigens – wenn man Sie sieht, kann man ein Antisemit werden' (DNG, 27).]

the bigger context of things? People only see people . . . That is why I deplore my people's involvement in the stock exchange.⁸

Rather than chasing money, Jacob values honour above all else. As a lawyer, he is known to regularly offer his services pro bono to the poor and working classes.

What additionally sets Jacob apart is that he is extremely proud. His mother thus advises Hermine to be mindful of her new husband's pride which, already as a young boy, had made him more restless and suffer more than anyone else (16). This pride indeed transpires as Jacob's foremost virtue as it stirs him in the end into action. Jacob understands his own pride to be directly connected to his being Jewish. He remembers an encounter years ago with Schramm that ended in the latter challenging Jacob to a duel. Instead of facing the challenge, Jacob, due to the ill health of his father, had to back down and therewith offer his apologies to Schramm. The spat that had led to the challenge, Jacob acknowledges today, was not worth fighting over. However, this episode still tortures Jacob and fills him with shame. In his own words, he cannot forget because he is a Jew [*Ich kanns nicht – weil ich ein Jud bin*' (25)]. 'You people', he tells his Catholic friend Franz Wurzelechner, 'can take something like that easier':

When you, Franz Wurzelechner, settle an affair in such a way, you are a calm, sensible person. I, Jacob Samuel, am [considered] a coward.⁹

The implication is that underlying Jacob's enduring trauma is the anti-Semitic charge of an emasculated Jewish manhood against which he needs to prove himself.

The title motif of the play encapsulates the key knowledge Herzl confers upon his hero: Vienna as the new ghetto. Jacob thus sees the Jews of his city forced back into a ghetto existence by the powerful rise of political anti-Semitism: although the visible walls of the old ghetto no longer exist, new, invisible walls have been created in their place that work in the same way to hinder the Jews from taking their position as equals in Christian society. The rabbi Friedheimer agrees with Jacob's analysis: he also sees the old physical

⁸ [*Verstehen Sie mich nicht? Sie schaden uns! Den Juden! Denn diese großen Geldbewegungen richten auch Menschen zugrunde. Und die Opfer klagen die Juden an . . . Wer ist gross genug, den Zusammenhang der Dinge zu gewahren? Die Menschen sehen nur die Menschen . . . Darum bedaure ich es, wenn meine Leute in der Börse stecken*' (DNG, 54).]

⁹ [*Ihr könnt so etwas leichter nehmen. Wenn Du, Franz Wurzelechner, eine solche Geschichte gütlich beilegst, bist Du ein ruhiger g'scheiter Mensch. Ich, Jacob Samuel, bin ein Feigling*' (DNG, 25).]

ghetto replaced by a new ‘moral ghetto’ [*moralisches Ghetto*] (30)]. It is however in the juxtaposition of the two men’s diametrically opposed responses to these observations that Herzl makes his point. The rabbi’s reaction is one of passive acceptance and, in Herzl and his hero’s opinion, one of cowardice. The rabbi, who tells Jacob that, ‘we are too weak’, is resigned to what he sees as the unchangeable destiny of the Jewish people (75). He even declares that, ‘this moral ghetto is our mandatory place [*unser vorgeschriebener Aufenthaltsort*]’ (30)], and welcomes the surge of anti-Semitism for promoting Jewish ‘piety’ [*mehr Frömmigkeit*] (29)]. In a parable he tells Jacob, he warns of the dangers of venturing outside the protective bounds of the ghetto: a brave young Jewish boy by the name of Moses ben Abraham heard screams coming from beyond the ghetto walls. As the cries intensified, so grew the boy’s distress – until he finally went outside: ‘The next morning Moses was found stabbed in front of the torn open gate of the ghetto [...]’.¹⁰

Jacob despises the docility and weakness embodied in the rabbi’s position. For him, there can only be one solution: ‘Out of the ghetto!’ [*Hinaus – aus – dem – Ghetto!*] (100)]. In order to break these new walls however, a new approach is needed: ‘we have to break these barriers in a different way. The visible walls had to be destroyed from the outside – but we must pull down the invisible barriers ourselves. We ourselves! Out, we must break out!’¹¹ Jewish self-help and will are here thus already at the heart of Herzl’s Zionist vision of, what Kornberg calls, ‘a new Jewish possibility’ (*From Assimilation*, 146). He would later end *Der Judenstaat* with the echoing rallying cry: ‘The Jews who wish for a State will have it’ [*Die Juden, die wollen, werden ihren Staat haben*] (89)]. Herzl calls upon Jews to stop relying on the goodwill and tolerance of their societies. This kind of dependence, as Herzl writes elsewhere, is ‘breeding *schnorrers* [beggars]’ (*CDI*, 20). Indeed, the corrupt Jewish characters in *Das Neue Ghetto* are presented as the products of their new ghetto existence of which they themselves are unaware. The constraints of this invisible ghetto still lead them to seek in money the source of both security and honour. Jacob, in stark contrast, provides the model for the moral improvement needed for the kind of Jewish emancipation Herzl envisages. This improvement will be the result of Jewish self-reliance and self-reassertion through which

¹⁰ [*Am anderen Morgen fand man Moses erstochen vor dem aufgerissenen Thore des Ghettos (...)*] (*DNG*, 74)].

¹¹ [*(...) diese Schranken müssen wir nur anders brechen, als jene alten. Die äusseren Schranken mussten von aussen hinweggeräumt werden – die inneren müssen wir abtragen. Wir selbst! Aus uns heraus!*] (*DNG*, 30).]

Jewish pride will be restored. Jacob is made to exemplify this new Jewish identity; he represents Herzl's 'ideal of a new Jew, heroic and idealistic' (Kornberg, *From Assimilation*, 2).

As the plot of the play unfolds, Jacob is pushed closer to acting upon his convictions. What brings him, quite literally, to breaking(-out) point, is the accumulative effect of two events. Firstly, it is the personal hurt from being rejected by his childhood friend Franz Wurzelechner who ends their friendship out of fear it could endanger his political career when associated with Jacob's new Jewish circle. Deeply humiliated, Jacob furiously reconsiders his loyalties:

It's all over with us, Wurzelechner! And if you pressed me now to choose between you and Wasserstein, I would choose him. I belong with Wasserstein, be he poor or rich. I cannot reproach him with anything, just as I cannot praise you. We all just find ourselves where our history put us. But one has to move further. Do you understand? Further, higher! Then you are a human being!¹²

Wurzelechner's rejection, symbolising Gentile rejection in general, drives Jacob back to Wasserstein, that is, back to his Jewishness. Jacob proclaims his solidarity with Wasserstein with whom he now feels an inherent connection. It is Wasserstein's basic acceptance of his Jewishness that Jacob respects and sees as a mark of honour when contrasted with the charade performed by his new parvenu friends and family. Jacob also recognises Wasserstein as a victim of history – a history they both share. As Kornberg puts it, what attracts Jacob to Wasserstein is that he 'carries the germs of Jewish redemption. Not only is he acutely aware of the Jewish condition, but he harbors the memory of ancient Jewish greatness' (*From Assimilation*, 138). Kornberg does not provide any specific textual evidence for his argument, but I would suggest that Wasserstein's redemptive qualities lie in his transformative capacity that clearly surfaces toward the end of the play, when he is able to show compassion for Rheinberg and chooses honour over money. (The specifics underlying this transformation will be detailed below.)

Wurzelechner's rejection makes Jacob also re-evaluate the friendship they had:

¹² [*'Aus ist's mit uns, Wurzelechner! Und wenn Du mir jetzt die Wahl stellst, mit wem ich gehen will – mit Dir oder mit Wasserstein, so hab' ich gewählt. Zum Wasserstein gehör' ich, ob er reich oder arm ist. Ich kann ihm nichts vorwerfen, so wenig wie ich Dich loben kann. Ihr steht jeder nur dort, wo Euch Eure Geschichte hingestellt hat. Aber weiter muss man kommen! Verstehst? Weiter, höher! Dann ist man ein Mensch!'* (DNG, 36).]

He meant a lot to me. Actually more than I ever showed him. [...] He was not only a friend to me, but also the 'Christian citizen' who liked to consort with me. It was so flattering – after all we still have something of the ghetto in us. Gratitude, if one treats us like other people. For that, I wanted to show him my gratitude by modelling myself after him, assume his habits as far as I could, speak his language, think his thoughts . . . And he abandons me, he simply abandons me.¹³

Jacob's mother, set apart, like Jacob's father, from the milieu their son married into by their – implied honest – working class background, offers her devastated son the following words of guidance: 'When you have betrayed yourself, my child, you cannot bemoan when others betray you too.'¹⁴ In an article Herzl wrote several years later for *Die Welt* on the subject of the Dreyfus affair, Herzl's accusations concerning the failure of Jewish assimilation would sound very similar. He retrospectively sees this failure exemplified in the trial of Alfred Dreyfus, the French Jewish Artillery officer wrongly convicted of treason:

Dreyfus is only an abstraction now. He is the Jew in modern society who has tried to adapt to his environment, who speaks its language, knows its thoughts, sews its insignia on his tunic – and who has these stripes ripped off him by force.
(*ZWII*, 128)

He goes on to claim that 'Dreyfus represents a position which has been fought for, which is still being fought for, and which – let us not delude ourselves – has been lost!' (*ZWII*, 128) In *Das Neue Ghetto*, Wurzlechner's rejection personalises for Jacob the ideas he had formed already about the shortcomings of assimilation and pushes him onto his new, combative path.

The arrival of the destitute Polish worker Peter Vednik prompts the second sequence of events that drives Jacob over the edge. Vednik seeks the lawyer's assistance in fighting against the exploitative and unsafe working conditions he and his fellow miners suffer at Schramm's coal mine. Jacob is appalled by Vednik's story and promises

¹³ [*Er war mir viel. Eigentlich mehr, als ich ihm je gezeigt habe. (...) Er war mir nicht nur ein Freund, er war mir auch der "christliche Mitbürger", der gern mit mir verkehrte. Es war so schmeichelhaft – wir haben ja doch immer was vom Ghetto in uns. Dankbarkeit, wenn man uns wie andere Menschen behandelt. Dafür wollte ich ihm dankbar sein, indem ich mich nach ihm modelte, seine Gewohnheiten annahm, soweit ich es vermochte, seine Sprache redete, seine Gedanken dachte . . . Und er lässt mich stehen, er lässt mich einfach stehen*' (*DNG*, 41).]

¹⁴ [*Wenn Du Dir selbst untreu wurdest, mein Kind, so darfst Du Dich nicht beklagen, wenn auch andere Dir untreu werden*' (*DNG*, 41).]

to help. His sense of horror is heightened by the knowledge of Rheinberg's financial involvement in Schramm's mine, revealed earlier to have been in a deplorable state for some time. Jacob now finds himself confronted with the human cost of his brother-in-law's ruthless business venture. In an act symbolic of Jacob's new self-reliance, he immediately returns the money his wife had asked him to borrow from Rheinberg for her to spend. Jacob then accompanies Vednik back to the mine to help organise the workers' strike.

Jacob's involvement in the coal miners' protest triggers the speedy denouement of the plot: the suspension of work in the mine causes a water inrush killing many miners. With Rheinberg and Wasserstein's fiddling, the share price of Schramm's mine dramatically decreases; Schramm is financially ruined. He blames Jacob as the instigator of the workers' strike and calls him 'Jewish rabble' [*'Judenpack'* (84)], upon which Jacob slaps him. In the duel that ensues, Jacob is injured and dies. With his last words, Jacob cautions his people: 'Jews, my brothers, they will only let you live again until you . . .'.¹⁵ His last appeal: 'Out of the ghetto!' (100).

How Herzl had intended his ending to be understood transpires from the words that originally appeared in place of the ellipsis in Jacob's final cautioning. Herzl's first script thus read: 'Jews, my brothers, they will only let you live again – *until you know how to die*' (Le Rider, 24-25; Kornberg, *From Assimilation*, 146, emphasis added). By facing the fight with Schramm, Jacob proves himself not only worthy as a man, but as a Jewish man worthy of Gentile acceptance. It is his readiness to die that shows he has attained the height of true manhood; he dies a hero and martyr, fighting not only on behalf of his own honour, but also of Jewish honour. With his dying words, Jacob directs his fellow Jews to acquire the same virtue.

Herzl removed his hero's instruction telling Jews to learn how to die upon the objection by Arthur Schnitzler, the famed Austrian dramatist and contemporary of Herzl. The latter had sent Schnitzler his manuscript with a view to obtaining his help in getting the play to the stage. Schnitzler agreed but had some reservations about the play overall, and the ending in particular.¹⁶ For Schnitzler, the ending was unsatisfactory and conveyed a contradictory message: the pathos of Jacob's dying words did not reflect, in his eyes, the

¹⁵ [*'Juden, meine Brüder, man wird euch erst wieder leben lassen – wenn Ihr . . .'* (DNG, 100).]

¹⁶ Jacques Le Rider sketches in some detail the strained relationship between Herzl and Schnitzler during the time of *Das Neue Ghetto* (see pp. 11-30).

circumstances of his demise. In a letter he pointed out to Herzl that, '[Jacob's] death speaks: That poor devil and noble soul is made to bear being shot down by a pitiful good-for-nothing – just because he is born a Jew! There was a time when Jews were burnt at the stake in their thousands. They knew how to die. And they still weren't allowed to live' (qtd. in Le Rider, 24).¹⁷ Schnitzler thus criticises the inadequacy of the opponent Jacob has in Schramm who, betrayed by Rheinberg and Wasserstein, has lost everything by the end of the play. Schramm therefore does not provide the type of antagonist needed to elevate Jacob's death to the display of heroism Herzl wanted it to be. Schnitzler also rejects Herzl's underlying accusation that the Jews are to blame for the anti-Semitism they suffer because of their unwillingness to fight and self-sacrifice.

There are additional inconsistencies: Jacob's death is just as easily read as a punishment for overstepping the bounds, just like young Moses did in the rabbi's cautionary tale. Indeed, this parallel seems encouraged when Jacob in his last moments is made to murmur: 'Tell the rabbi: like Moses' [*Sag' dem Rabbiner: wie der Moses*' (100)]. One is led down the same line of interpretation by Wasserstein's metaphorical reflection near the end of the play: in awe of Jacob's dedication to the miners' plight, Wasserstein tells Hermine that he feels weighed down, stuck to the ground: 'And someone next to me suddenly starts to fly, like a bird! [*Und Jemand neben mir fangt auf einmal an zu fliegen, wie ein Vogel!*' (91)] Did Jacob, then, fly too close to the sun?

Shifting our focus, it is in fact Wasserstein whose development offers a more straightforward resolution. Inspired by Jacob's example, he commences a transformation that will, so it is implied, see him follow in the footsteps of Jacob. His chance at redemption comes when he has it in his hands to ruin Rheinberg. Wasserstein had sold his mine shares shortly before the accident and thereby managed to restore his fortune; Rheinberg, by contrast, is left in great financial difficulty, depending on Wasserstein to save his career and personal fortune. Instead of taking revenge on his former boss who had treated him with contempt, he shows mercy and forgiveness. The extent of Wasserstein's

¹⁷ [*Sein Tod aber spricht: Dieser arme Teufel und edle Mensch muß sich von einem erbärmlichen Haderlumpen einfach deshalb niederschießen lassen – weil er als Jude geboren ist! – Es gab eine Zeit, wo die Juden zu tausenden auf den Scheiterhaufen verbrannt wurden. Sie haben zu Sterben gewußt. Und man hat sie nicht leben lassen – deswegen*' (qtd. in Le Rider, 24).]

metamorphosis is anticipated in his remarkable insistence toward the end of the play that, '[t]here is something else too [besides money]: Honour!'¹⁸

Jacob's fate lacks such clear resolution. In the end, one is left struggling to find meaning in the young lawyer's death. As Jacques Le Rider pointedly comments, 'Jacob Samuel's death [is] not only tragic, it is also senseless.'¹⁹ Gabriel Piterberg similarly remarks that the play 'culminat[es] in the only fitting resolution Herzl could find for the breaking of the walls of *The New Ghetto*: a duel that makes little sense even within the narrowly masculine confines of the logic of duelling' (*Returns*, 35). Piterberg suggests an explanation by emphasising 'Herzl's obsessive need to prove and render complete his masculinity':

[A]ll his thoughts about the Jewish question and about politics [...] were fundamentally underlain by this one obsession, a central feature of which was the emphasis upon form at the expense of content, upon the vitalizing impact of the aesthetics of the violent gesture itself as an affirmation of masculinity at the expense of the purpose.

(*Returns*, 35)

Herzl himself suggested in 1895 that it had been his intention, in the words previously used by Elon, to create a stir. Selling *Das Neue Ghetto* as a 'Jewish sermon' ['*Judenpredigt*'] and 'a piece of Jewish politics' ['*ein Stück Judenpolitik*'] that 'cries for the stage' ['*schreit nach der Bühne*'],²⁰ he identifies the main purpose of the play as follows: 'It will in any case set the tone needed to solve the Jewish Question and lead the Jews out of the ghetto.'²¹

Herzl made these comments in May of 1895, that is, when he had already turned his attention to Zionism. In fact, he would even a couple of years into his Zionist commitment still actively pursue the staging of his play. Jacques Le Rider provides a detailed chronicle of the history of the production and publication of *Das Neue Ghetto* that will add some clarity to Herzl's relationship with his pre-Zionist piece. Completed in a matter of weeks in the autumn of 1894, in what Herzl describes as an 'eruption of

¹⁸ ['(...) alles dreht sich um Geld. Aber es gibt noch etwas anderes: Ehre!'] (*DNG*, 90).]

¹⁹ ['*Jakob Samuels Tod (ist) nicht nur tragisch, sondern auch sinnlos*'] (Le Rider, 40).]

²⁰ All quoted in Le Rider, p.33.

²¹ ['*Jedenfalls ist der Ton damit angeschlagen, der nöthig ist, um die Judenfrage zu lösen und die Juden hinauszuführen aus dem Ghetto*'] (qtd. in Le Rider, 33).]

playwriting' that was the result of mounting frustrations with the persisting Jewish problematic (*CDI*, 11), the play would not be staged for years. Theatres considered the subject matter too controversial; they feared protests by Jews and anti-Semites alike. It was not until January 1898 that *Das Neue Ghetto* premiered in Vienna; equally, it was first published later that same year in Herzl's recently founded Zionist mouthpiece *Die Welt*. Apart from the above-discussed change recommended by Schnitzler, Herzl had not made a single revision to his original manuscript. All of this shows that Herzl had in no way sought to distance himself from the play; on the contrary, it strongly suggests that he considered its ideas still relevant within the context of Zionism. In his research, Le Rider shows how *Das Neue Ghetto* was in 1898 in effect received by the contemporary critics as a 'Zionist manifesto' (47). By 1895, Herzl had thus managed to recode his play as a sort of prequel to the exodus of Europe's Jews (Le Rider, 24). Indeed, in the failure of Jacob, a honourable, good Jew, justification for Zionism is given.

As Le Rider further shows, *Das Neue Ghetto* did not cause the stir many had feared and Herzl had hoped for. It went on to become somewhat of a success as theatres throughout the region picked it up. Contemporary reviews however were largely negative: for most critics, it was indeed too much of a Jewish sermon and lacked in literary merit. Some lauded Herzl's courage in confronting the contentious topic (Le Rider, 37-47).

For the overall argument of this chapter, a contemporary critic by the name of Karl Kraus stands out. In his damning review of *Das Neue Ghetto*, he explicitly correlated Herzl's Zionism with the existing political anti-Semitism. These, Zionism and anti-Semitism, were for Kraus, in Le Rider's paraphrase, 'two sides of the same ideological coin' (47). To the anti-Semites' call, 'Out with you Jews!' [*Hinaus mit euch Juden!*'], Kraus sharply wrote, the Zionists cheerfully respond: 'Yes, out with us Jews!' [*Jawohl, hinaus mit uns Juden!*] (qtd. in Le Rider, 47)]. Kraus was not the only one to condemn the play's validation of the anti-Semitic point of view. In his first comments sent to Herzl, Arthur Schnitzler had already warned of what he saw as a lack of 'truth', that is, a lack of objectivity in Herzl's portrayal of Vienna's Jewish finance milieu (qtd. in Le Rider, 26). He told Herzl that, '[t]here are more likeable characters, even in the circles portrayed by the author [...] The lighting needs to be the utter right one. And in that respect I feel: too

murky.²² Kornberg traces Herzl's depiction of 'emblematic distasteful Jews' in *Das Neue Ghetto* to the author's personal prejudices: 'Herzl saw Jews through the eyes of the majority culture. For him too, the parvenu, not the other Jews, seemed to epitomize the Jewish essence' (*From Assimilation*, 138; 75). Herzl's target would continue to be the moneyed Jewish circles that he explicitly blamed for the rise of anti-Semitism: 'The [rich] experience nothing of anti-Semitism which they are actually and mainly responsible for' (*CDI*, 5). In his Zionist novel *Altneuland*, the protagonist, like Jacob, is enraged and feels alienated by the Jewish bourgeoisie's 'low ideals' and 'dubious money bags' (25).

Herzl classified the Jews that in his eyes provoked the Gentile rejection under the contemptuous category of '*Mauschel*':²³

Who is this *Mauschel* anyway? A type, my dear friends, a figure that keeps reappearing over the ages, the hideous companion of the *Jew* and so inseparable from him that the two have always been confused with each other. A *Jew* is a human being like any other – no better and no worse, possibly intimidated and embittered by persecution, and very steadfast in suffering. *Mauschel*, on the other hand, is a distortion of human character, something unspeakably low and repugnant.

(*ZWI*, 163-164, emphasis in original)

He goes on to list *Mauschel*'s characteristics: 'in poverty [he] is a despicable *schnorrer* [beggar]; in wealth he is an even more despicable show-off' and becomes 'insolent and arrogant'. He is 'weak', a 'crafty profit-seeker', and 'practices usury and speculates on the stock exchange' (164-165). Indeed, the rabbi Friedheimer and Rheinberg are clearly recognisable in Herzl's description of the passive, honourless and opportunistic *Mauschel*:

Mauschel has as good as come to terms with anti-Semitism. After all, in civilized countries only the honor of the Jews is being attacked. *Mauschel* shrugs his shoulders. What is honor? Who needs honor? If business is all right and one's good health is good, one can live with the rest.

(*ZWI*, 167)

²² [*Es gibt sympathischere Figuren, selbst in den von dem Autor geschilderten Kreisen. [...] [D]ie Beleuchtung müßte die völlig richtige sein. Und da hab ich nunmal den Eindruck: zu trüb*] (qtd. in Le Rider, 26).]

²³ An explanatory footnote in Herzl's collected Zionist writings provides this definition: '*Mauschel* [...] has been a German epithet for a haggling Jewish trader, or a Jew in general, since the 17th century, and *mauscheln* has meant "to speak German with a yiddish accent" or to speak the garbled German of such a tradesman. An English equivalent for *Mauschel* would be "sheeny," "yid," or "kike" (*ZWI*, 163).

In Herzl's rationalisation, anti-Semitism arises when mainstream Christian society confuses *Mauschel* with the 'good Jews', thus mistakenly assuming the former to represent a Jewish essence: '*Mauschel* has always supplied the pretexts under which we were attacked' (*ZWI*, 165). Among 'the first and most salutary results of our [Zionist] movement', Herzl further proclaims, will be to 'get rid of [*Mauschel*]', to 'purge ourselves of these shameful elements' (*ZWI*, 167). Zionism by its very nature effects this separation, since, '*Mauschel* is an anti-Zionist!' and 'we are anti-*Mauschel*': '[t]hey do not belong to us – but we do not belong to them either!' (*ZWI*, 166-167) In this way, Herzl extends his derogatory label to every Jew critical of his Zionist movement: 'no true *Jew* can be an anti-Zionist; only *Mauschel* is one' (*ZWI*, 167, emphasis in original). Herzl does not stop there: his loathing of this alleged type of Jew is such that he explains his existence in terms of a racial degeneration. He thus claims that, 'at some dark moment in our history some inferior human material got into our unfortunate people and blended with it', adding: 'Race! As if the *Jew* and *Mauschel* were of the same race' (*ZWI*, 165, emphasis in original).

Herzl was too much a man of his time and place – in fact, too desperate to play a significant part within this time and place – to question and challenge the prevailing anti-Semitic views. He had internalised these popular stereotypes and sought to improve the Jews accordingly, with the ultimate aim of gaining Gentile acceptance. As Kornberg puts it, he desired 'to remake [the Jews] in the Gentile mold' ('Reevaluation', 234).

Herzl's basic agreement with the dominant anti-Semitic discourse shows most clearly in his view of anti-Semitism. By the time Herzl had fully espoused Zionism as the only solution to the Jewish Question, he understood anti-Semitism as a natural Gentile response to the foreignness, that is, the national distinctness, of the Jews. Herzl thus argued that it is the Jews' natural status of non-belonging as a 'foreign body among the various nations' that inevitably gives rise to anti-Semitism wherever Jews appear (*CDI*, 9). He summarised the underlying dynamics of anti-Semitism as follows:

It exists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Where it does not exist, it will be brought into being by Jews in the course of their migrations. Naturally, we move to those places where we are not persecuted; and there our presence soon gives rise to persecution. This is true and is bound to remain true everywhere [...] until a political solution is found for the Jewish Question.

(*ZWI*, 22)

Jews in great numbers are thus perceived as a threat by the host nations: the Jewish ‘strangers’ (*ZWI*, 23) disturb the natural unity of the nations they reside in and are therefore repulsed. This line of thought leads Herzl to accept anti-Semitism as partly ‘legitimate self-defense’ (*ZWI*, 22): the organic national entity is defending itself against the intrusion of the alien Jewish body. If anti-Semitism is a natural response to Jewish foreignness, and if it emerges everywhere Jews appear in big numbers, it follows that anti-Semitism is an unchangeable, eternal fact. Herzl writes in *Der Judenstaat*: ‘Among the nations, anti-Semitism increases day by day, hour by hour, and is indeed bound to increase, because the causes of its growth continue to exist and cannot be removed’.²⁴ As indirect cause, he identifies ‘the loss of the power of assimilation during the Middle Ages’, whereas he sees the immediate cause to lie in the ‘excessive production of mediocre [Jewish] intellectuals who cannot find a healthy outlet in either direction’: ‘When we sink, we become a revolutionary proletariat [...]; and at the same time, when we rise, there rises our terrible power of the purse’.²⁵

Herzl’s views were embedded in the prevailing nationalist ideas of his time, in particular German Romantic nationalism which imagined the nation (*Volk*) as an undividable entity of organic belonging. Norman Finkelstein for instance claims that Romantic nationalism provided the crucial ideological context for Zionist thought and explains that ‘Romantic nationalists argued that more profound bonds both ‘naturally’ united certain individuals and ‘naturally’ excluded others. Ideally, they concluded, each such organically connected community ought to be endowed with an independent state’ (*Image and Reality*, 8). Piterberg similarly observes that Zionism adopted this ideology of natural belonging and exclusion which led it to ‘[presuppose] the existence of an organic Jewish nation’ (*Returns*, 16).

Writing that ‘no nation has uniformity of race’, Herzl accentuated in his Zionist writings the existence of the Jewish nation as a ‘historical unit’ (*CDI*, 276). For Herzl, Jewish national belonging was thus based on a shared past. This interpretation would

²⁴ [‘In den Bevölkerungen wächst der Antisemitismus täglich, stündlich und muß weiter wachsen, weil die Ursachen fortbestehen und nicht behoben werden können’ (*Judenstaat*, 30).]

²⁵ [‘Die causa remota ist der im Mittelalter eingetretene Verlust unserer Assimilierbarkeit, die causa proxima unsere Überproduktion an mittleren Intelligenzen, die keinen Abfluß nach unten haben und keinen Aufstieg nach oben – nämlich keinen gesunden Abfluß und keinen gesunden Abstieg. Wir werden nach unten hin zu Umstürzlern proletarisiert, bilden (...) und gleichzeitig wächst nach oben unsere furchtbare Geldmacht’ (*Judenstaat*, 30).]

leave the possibility for the moral improvement of the Jewish character Herzl so obsessively pursued. Herzl concluded that it is because of their existence as a defined and closed historical entity that Jews necessarily fail to assimilate and are met with Gentile rejection. Since Zionism was construed as the Jewish national revivalist movement, it was anticipated to work according to the same mechanism as Gentile nationalism: the organic Jewish collective needs to separate itself, needs in a sense to repulse itself out of the foreign body that keeps it from breathing autonomously. The Zionist desire to ‘re-establish’ the Jewish nation arises therefore as a natural request and even a ‘historical necessity’ (*Altneuland*, 169) that will guarantee the welfare and security, not only of the Jewish people, but also of the host nations that are relieved of their alien intruders. In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl thus proclaims that ‘[t]he world will be freed by our liberty’ [*Die Welt wird durch unsere Freiheit befreit*] (89); in Herzl’s mind, anti-Semites would be Zionism’s most fervent supporters.

It becomes clear that Herzl saw the anti-Semitism of his time and its related problems as symptoms arising out of the emergent nationalist ordering of the world. It therefore seemed logical to him that the response to anti-Semitism also had to be a national one. He states: ‘The Jewish question is no more a social than a religious one, even if it sometimes assumes such and other tinges. The Jewish Question is a national question, which can only be solved by making it a political world question to be discussed and solved in the councils of the civilized nations’ (*ZWI*, 23). Within this line of thought, the only option is Jewish separatism. By nationalising the persecuted minority group and removing them from their nations, Herzl believed that the Jewish Question would solve itself: anti-Semitism would ‘gradual[ly] decrease’ with the migration of Jews from Europe, until ‘the final cessation of anti-Semitism’ (*ZWI*, 137). In his diaries, Herzl refers to ‘[his] theory about draining off the surplus Jewish masses’ (*CDII*, 666), elaborating elsewhere that, ‘if the supply of Jews declines, the demand for Jews will increase. One will value us more. And we are indeed going to be of more value.’²⁶ Herzl explains the so-called ‘Jewish Problem’ thus as one of supply exceeding the demand, that is, one obeying rational laws. In *Altneuland*, in the only recently created New Society in Palestine, ‘anti-Semitism has ceased to exist’ (197).

²⁶ [‘(...) wenn das Angebot an Juden sinkt, wird die Nachfrage nach Juden steigen. Man kann uns für mehr Wert halten. Wir werden auch mehr Wert sein’ (‘Dr. Herzl in London’, 5).]

Zionism posited that, in a world of unwavering Gentile hostility and national power, Jews, if they wanted to live a free and secure life, had no choice but to remove themselves from their hostile environments and gather as a sovereign people on their own territory. The German-American Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt was overall sympathetic to the Zionist movement and praised Herzl's 'lasting greatness' as a man with a remarkable 'desire to act' (*Pariah*, 166). She saw however a basic fallacy in Herzl's view of anti-Semitism that she argued 'was based on his assumption of the essential honesty and sincerity of the anti-Semites, in whom he saw nothing but nationalists pure and simple' (*Pariah*, 172). She furthermore wrote: 'Since anti-Semitism was taken to be a natural corollary of nationalism, it could not be fomented, it was supposed, against that part of world-Jewry established as a nation [...]' (*Pariah*, 149-150). This reasoning led Herzl to his 'inescapable conclusion ['*Kombination*' (*Judenstaat*, 11)]. It was this notion of inevitability and the static view of reality based on 'irresistible laws and forces' that Arendt condemned in Herzl's foundational Zionist ideas (*Pariah*, 68). She exposed Herzl's failure to confront the complexities of minority politics. In a suggestively entitled article from 1946, 'The Jewish State: Fifty Years After, Where Have Herzl's Politics Led?', Arendt wrote:

The constant miscalculations that were to become so characteristic of Zionist policy are not accidental. The universality with which Herzl applied his concept of anti-Semitism to all non-Jewish peoples made it impossible from the very beginning for the Zionists to seek truly loyal allies. His notion of reality as an eternal, unchanging hostile structure – all *goyim* everlastingly against all Jews – made the identification of hardboiledness with realism plausible because it rendered any empirical analysis of actual political factors seemingly superfluous. All one had to do was use the "propelling force of anti-Semitism," which, like "the wave of the future," would bring the Jews into the promised land.

(*Pariah*, 174)

The rigidity of Herzl's worldview would become in Arendt's estimation the Zionist movement's key limitation. Herzl painted an uncompromising us-against-the-world picture that, as his attack on *Mauschel* makes evident, extended beyond the Gentile-Jew relationship: 'Anyone who is not with us is against us' (*ZWI*, 26). This would with Herzl from the beginning have the air of a personal crusade, as he wrote in the summer of 1895 that, 'you can only be my friends or my foes. There can no longer be anything in between' (*CDI*, 44). The deep distrust that defines these foundational Zionist designs are bound,

Arendt warned, to foster isolationism and prevent Jews from taking control of Jewish politics and assuming an active voice in world affairs.

For Herzl, it is in fact the hostility confronting Jews wherever they go that makes them a people in the first place: ‘We are one people – our enemy makes us one without our consent’ [*Wir sind ein Volk – der Feind macht uns ohne unseren Willen dazu*’ (*Judenstaat*, 31)]. It is thus a people defined externally by the antagonism it meets. Herzl combines essentialist and constructivist approaches to build a model of the Jewish nation that is based on an eternally hostile non-Jewish world. It is this hostility that provides the Jewish nation’s ‘propelling force’ [*treibende Kraft*]: ‘Distress binds us together, and, thus united, we suddenly discover our strength’ [*In der Bedrängnis stehen wir zusammen, und da entdecken wir plötzlich unsere Kraft*’ (*Judenstaat*, 12; 31)]. Herzl accordingly calls upon the Jews ‘to draw closer together and stick together, because we are being fought as a group’ (*ZWI*, 58). His definition of a nation is based on the same reasoning: he thus argues that a nation is ‘a historical group of people who clearly belong together and are held together by a common foe’ and that ‘every nation comes into being because of an enemy’ (*ZWI*, 52; 67). As a consequence, he claims that ‘[national consciousness] is based on the recognition by a number of people that historical circumstances have bound them together and that they are at present dependent upon one another if they are not to perish’ (*ZWI*, 67). This conception of a national belonging that forms out of an eternally antagonistic external has immense repercussions for this group’s view of itself and its position in the world: it cannot trust anyone outside the group and has to continually be on the defensive, always ready to fight and defend itself.

Herzl viewed anti-Semitism not only as a natural and legitimate self-defence, he also thought it helpful, even indispensable, for the Jewish regeneration he envisaged. He writes that anti-Semitism ‘will not harm the Jews. I consider it to be a movement useful to the Jewish character’ (*CDI*, 10), adding: ‘prosperity weakens our Judaism’ [*unser Wohlergehen uns als Juden schwächt*’ (*Judenstaat*, 31)]. It is on the grounds of the latter observation that he explains the, in his eyes, shameful behaviour of bourgeois Jewry. He furthermore claims: ‘In us Jews the force we need is created by anti-Semitism’ (*ZWI*, 31). It is for him the force needed to awaken the Jews into action, that is, into nationalism.

Herzl displays his belief that '[a]ntagonism is essential to man's greatest efforts'²⁷ in *Altneuland*, in which young David Littwak strives to escape his poverty-stricken existence in Vienna to a life of freedom and pride in Palestine. David later tells his benefactor Friedrich Loewenberg that it was the oppression of his native milieu he experienced as a Jew that made him 'save [himself]' (78).

Gathering the findings so far, this is how Herzl summarises the Zionist account of anti-Semitism:

I understand what anti-Semitism is about. We Jews have maintained ourselves, even if through no fault of our own, as a foreign body among the different nations. In the ghetto we have taken on a number of anti-social qualities. Our character has been corrupted by oppression, and it must be restored through some other kind of pressure. Actually, anti-Semitism is a consequence of the emancipation of the Jews. However, the peoples who lack historical understanding – that is, all of them – do not see us as an historical product, as the victims of earlier, crueller, and still more narrow-minded times.

(*CDI*, 9)

The conspicuous paradox inherent in Zionism's project is that it tried to solve anti-Semitism not only by accommodating the anti-Semitic view, but by operating within the framework of anti-Semitic discourse, leading it to seek ways to correct Jewishness in accordance with anti-Semitic prejudice. It is Herzl who actively shaped this paradox through his personal feelings of ambivalence about his own Jewishness. Kornberg claims that 'Herzl experienced intense Jewish self-disdain and feelings of inferiority, but he was also animated by feelings of Jewish pride, loyalty, and solidarity' (*From Assimilation*, 2).

Herzl's heroes in both *Das Neue Ghetto* and *Altneuland* carry the Zionist founder's personal struggle in them. They are afflicted with the kind of anti-Semitism Herzl faced in his native Austria and that, according to his own narration, propelled him to Zionism and back into his Jewishness. Jacob and Friedrich are young, bright and educated, but also deeply unsatisfied with the limitations imposed on them as Jews. They feel caged by the figurative ghetto walls that keep them from achieving their full potential and gaining a stake in the society they live in. Jacob thus laments: 'The Ghetto is the separation I don't want, that hurts me and that I am supposed to endure.'²⁸ They are part of what Herzl describes in *Altneuland* as the 'unfortunate surplus of trained men' who 'could not, like

²⁷ ['Der Feind ist nötig für die höchsten Anstrengungen der Persönlichkeit' (*Judenstaat*, 86).]

²⁸ ['Das Ghetto ist die Absonderung die ich nicht will, die mich kränkt und die ich ertragen soll' (*DNG*, 44).]

their Christian colleagues, slip into public posts; and became, so to say a drug on the market (*Anl*, 8-9). A discouraged Friedrich, whose clientele as a lawyer is restricted to the Jewish bourgeoisie he despises, remarks that ‘Christian society and a Christian clientele [are] the most unattainable things in the world’ (*Anl*, 25). ‘[S]ick of life’ (*Anl*, 26), he contemplates suicide but is saved by the lure of a newspaper advertisement that reads: ‘’Wanted, an educated, desperate young man willing to make a last experiment with his life. Apply N.O: Body, this office’’’ (*Anl*, 12). Feeling like he has nothing left to lose, Friedrich decides to take the plunge. Caroline Rooney argues that Herzl portrays Friedrich, and indeed young educated Jewish men in Europe as a whole, as the victims of what she terms ‘chronic disappointment’. This chronic disappointment is the result of a ‘lack of appointment, even categorical unappointability’ that leaves this entire class of men to feel increasingly disengaged from the centre of society, leading them ever further into an extremist position (Rooney, ‘The Disappointed’, 160). Upon agreeing to accompany the misanthropic aristocrat Kingscourt on his no-return travels far away from European civilisation, Friedrich would physically remove himself from the society that had created and sustained his disappointment.

Herzl denounced the waste of Jewish talent and positioned his Zionist movement as a political repository that could redirect this class of discontented young men away from the revolutionary movements. Zionism, he promised, would make full use of their potential: ‘no talent will go to waste just because it is of Jewish origin’ (*ZWI*, 40). More than that, Herzl saw in the frustration and anger of these men a major source of support for Zionism: ‘I am counting on all your ambitious young men, who are now debarred from advancement everywhere’ (*ZWI*, 28).

Herzl’s account of his own experience of anti-Semitism and consequent Zionist conversion closely resembles those of his fictional protagonists. Herzl felt socially and professionally held back. Elon claims that ‘he rationalized his years as a journalist as the direct consequence of his being a Jew’, and further quotes Herzl as saying: ‘What is left for talented Jews who are not interested in commerce? I would have been a minister of state long ago if I were not a Jew’ (156). Herzl saw himself as the victim of Viennese anti-Semitism. He wanted to climb the social ladder, wanted to circulate among the high society, even aristocratic circles, of Vienna and Europe, and be respected as their equal. In a diary entry from 5 July 1895, he confesses: ‘By the way, if there is one thing I should

like to be, it is a member of the old Prussian nobility' (*CDI*, 196). Kornberg argues that Herzl's admiration for aristocracy was 'driven by a Jewish outsider's idealization of secure status, as affording the freedom for devotion to higher values' (*From Assimilation*, 66). I would add that, as it has already surfaced a number of times, Herzl had very high ambitions and an almost obsessive need for personal recognition. It is Gentile rejection that, in Herzl's mind, kept him from obtaining the appreciation he craved for, and felt was his due, within Christian society.

The frustration and humiliation caused by Gentile rejection prompted in Herzl what he describes as a Jewish reawakening. He fictionalized his 'return to Judaism' in a short story that appeared in *Die Welt* in 1897 of which I give here the opening paragraphs:

Once there was a man who deep in his soul felt the need to be a Jew. His material circumstances were satisfactory enough. He was making an adequate living and was fortunate enough to have a vocation in which he could create according to the impulses of his heart. You see, he was an artist. He had long ceased to trouble his head about his Jewish origin or about the faith of his fathers, when the age-old hatred reasserted itself under a fashionable slogan. Like many others, our man, too, believed that this movement would soon subside. But instead of getting better, it got worse. Although he was not personally affected by them, the attacks pained him anew each time. Gradually his soul became one bleeding wound. This secret psychic torment had the effect of steering him to its source, namely, his Jewishness, with the result that he experienced a change that he might never have in better days because he had become so alienated: he began to love Judaism with great fervor. At first he did not fully acknowledge this mysterious affection, but finally it grew so powerful that his vague feelings crystallized into a clear idea to which he gave voice: the thought that there was only one way out of this Jewish suffering – namely, to return to Judaism.

(*ZWI*, 203)

Herzl was not interested in a renaissance of Jewish religion, writing in his diary: 'I was indifferent to my Jewishness [...]. But just as anti-Semitism forces the half-hearted, cowardly, and self-seeking Jews into the arms of Christianity, it powerfully forced my Jewishness to the surface. This has nothing to do with religiosity. Despite all my piety for the faith of my fathers I am not a bigot and shall never be one' (*CDI*, 109). Talking about himself and his closest ally in the Zionist movement, Max Nordau, he went on to profess that, 'only anti-Semitism had made Jews of us' (*CDI*, 196). Herzl's 'return to Judaism' had thus an altogether different meaning from its obvious religious connotation; in *Altneuland*, he illustrated what this return would look like.

In the first instance, it is striking that there are no specifically Jewish features in *Altneuland*'s new Jewish society, the 'New Society'; neither is this society shown to be influenced by its location or surroundings, namely the Eastern Mediterranean and broader Arab world. Herzl's model of the future Jewish state resembles a transplanted Western European enclave. In fact, he goes to some lengths to highlight the New Society as an improved version of Europe, where the latest technology and best 'human material' (an expression Herzl recurrently uses in his writings) have come together.²⁹ One of his protagonists accordingly declares that the New Society 'was not built in Palestine, but elsewhere. It was built in England, in America, in France and in Germany. It was evolved out of experiments, books, and dreams' (*Anl*, 165). From this lack of Jewish religion and tradition in Herzl's vision of the Jewish state emerges the question about the identity Jews would adopt in this new state. In order to be able to declare 'Zionism [...] a return to Jewishness even before there is a return to the Jewish land' (*ZWI*, 133), Herzl had to construct, as Kornberg argues, a new idea of Jewishness that would solve the paradox at hand:

Distant from – and even averse to – existing modes of Jewishness, Herzl had difficulty giving substance to his call for pride and self-assertion. But now he had made a breakthrough, for he had discovered in the biblical history of the Jewish kingdoms an alternative model of Jewishness and a countermyth to the history of Jewish materialism and timidity.

(*From Assimilation*, 130-131)

Adding paradox to paradox, Herzl would thus find in the Bible the basis for his secular Zionist identity. It is from the Jews' national past as it is alleged in the Bible narrative that Herzl can construct a new, strong and national Jewish identity. This is, as Herzl sees it, a Jewish identity to be proud of, one rooted in national power, independence and security, as opposed to the weakness, dependency and insecurity of the diaspora Jew. The nation becomes here the essence of what it means to be Jewish; Jewish identity is transformed into Zionist identity; 'Judaism' and 'Zionism' become interchangeable.

David Littwak provides the model for Zionism's nationalised Jewish identity. He is the young Jewish boy who, at the beginning of *Altneuland*, is seen living with his family in desolate conditions in Vienna. Once in the 'Land of Israel', he flourishes into the 'free,

²⁹ See for example, *CDI*, pp. 231, 243.

strong man' he had dreamt of becoming (*Anl*, 33). David is 'cheerful, energetic, self-confident, and yet modest' (*Anl*, 99), displaying thus all the characteristics Herzl attributed to his ideal of the 'new Jew'. Upon his return to the ancient homeland, David has regained the 'great strength' and 'inner unity' that characterised the past Jewish generations and made them great (*ZWI*, 57). Forced to assimilate, Herzl argued, Jews had lost not only the outward security provided by a sovereign nation, but also the inner sense of rootedness and self-confidence that is to be found in the assumption of a national identity. Herzl continued: 'A generation which has grown apart from Judaism does not have this unity; it can neither rely upon our past nor look to the future. That is why we shall once more retreat into Judaism and never again permit ourselves to be thrown out of this fortress' (*ZWI*, 57). Noteworthy in this statement is again the wilful confusion of Judaism with Jewish nationalism. In addition, the martial metaphor of the fortress deserves special attention.

Herzl's fortress of Judaism will follow us as an image and idea over the course of this thesis. Merging connotations of defence and conquest, the fortress visualises both the isolationist and combative aspects of the new Jewish nation and identity. The retreat into the Jewish fortress marks the Jewish people's separation from their damaging and hostile surroundings. Paradoxically then, rather than a return to the community of nations, the Zionist restorative program is described here as a process that is turned inward, closing the new Jewish society off from outside influence. From behind the fortress walls, the entrenched new Jew is ready to defend his nation at all times. Herzl's fortress appears in this light as an early indicator of Zionist, and later Israeli, militarism and their incarnations, the settler-soldier and citizen-soldier respectively. As we have seen, Herzl cultivated the idea of the Jewish fighter based on the envisaged regeneration of the male Jewish body. When he claims that Zionism will be the 'beginning of Jewish honor!' (*CDI*, 86), he is invoking the 're-activation', as it were, of Jewish strength and virility: Jewish men needed to be made, Herzl wrote, 'strong as for war' (*CDI*, 21-22). From what he saw as a group of weak and defenceless men, he called for a return to the men 'we were once [...], who knew how to defend the state in time of war' (*CDI*, 10) – a return to the men who once knew, like Jacob in *Das Neue Ghetto*, how to die.

Out of this emerges Herzl's fascination with nationalism as a mass medium. Herzl understood that, more than any other contemporary idea, 'the idea of the native land'

[‘*Vaterlandsidee*’ (*Judenstaat*, 86)], exerted power over people: ‘With a flag one can lead men wherever one wants [...]. For a flag men will live and die’ (*CDI*, 27). The myth of Palestine as the Jews’ historic homeland would thus be ‘a powerful, stirring rallying cry for our people’ (*ZWI*, 31). In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl wrote:

No one is powerful or wealthy enough to transplant a nation from one habitation to another. An idea alone can achieve that and this idea of a State may have the requisite power to do so. The Jews have dreamt this kingly dream all through the long nights of their history. "Next year in Jerusalem" is our old phrase. It is now a question of showing that the dream can be converted into a living reality.³⁰

To the French-Jewish philanthropist Baron de Hirsch he further wrote: ‘believe me, the policy of an entire people – particularly when it is scattered all over the earth – can only be carried out only with imponderables that float in thin air. Do you know what went into the making of the German Empire? Dreams, songs, fantasies, and black-red-and-gold ribbons [...] Bismarck merely shook the tree which the visionaries had planted’ (*CDI*, 27-28). Piterberg remarks that,

[f]or Herzl, one of the crucial ‘imponderables’ in this politics was the will to die [...]. Here too Bismarck was a role model. Bismarck, Herzl thought, knew how to harness the ‘stirrings, mysterious and undeniable like life itself, which rose out of the unfathomable depths of the folk-soul in response to the dream [of unity]’. He was able to demand great sacrifice for the Germans, who ‘joyfully rushed toward unification in war’.

(*Returns*, 32)

Rooney recognises in this an ‘admiration for life abandonment in order to vivify the ideal’: life is given up to ‘an idealized principle of collective selfhood’ (‘The Disappointed’, 166). Only nationalism could unite the heterogeneous and dispersed Jewish people, while at the same time provide power. Herzl recognised in nationalism the source of modern power and thus protection: ‘it would be foolish of us to reject this idea which could afford us protection’ (*ZWII*, 67). Herzl was going to make use of this power for his Zionist dream. It is indeed important to observe that what drove Herzl’s political thinking

³⁰ [‘*Niemand ist stark oder reich genug, um ein Volk von einem Wohnort nach einem anderen zu versetzen. Das vermag nur eine Idee. Die Staatsidee hat wohl eine solche Gewalt. Die Juden haben die ganze Nacht ihrer Geschichte hindurch nicht aufgehört, diesen königlichen Traum zu träumen: "Übers Jahr in Jerusalem!" ist unser altes Wort. Nun handelt es sich darum, zu zeigen, daß aus dem Traum ein tagheller Gedanke werden kann*’ (*Judenstaat*, 22).]

were considerations of power. He dismissed those who criticised nationalism for the exclusivism it engenders as ‘amiable visionaries’ [*liebenswerte Schwärmer* (*Judenstaat*, 86)]. Far from the uncorrupted idealist he is in Israeli state mythology, Herzl is best understood as a calculated pursuer of *realpolitik*.

Herzl’s call for Jews to retreat into a fortress-like state has far-reaching consequences for the Zionist perceptions of belonging and non-belonging. Who is allowed in and who is excluded? Who can be trusted? Elaborating on her concept of chronic disappointment, Caroline Rooney argues that ‘the real lack of appointment entailed in chronic disappointment is probably, most fundamentally, the loss of faith in humanity, meaning the loss of faith in our ability to meet with each other’; in short, ‘chronic disappointment certainly serves to foster radical distrust’ (*The Disappointed*, 167). Such distrust is evident in Israel’s highly exclusionary politics of identity. Beginning with Herzl’s disenfranchisement of ‘*Mauschel*’, today, we witness the escalation of Zionism’s comprehensive project of exclusion. In his *The Invention of the Jewish People*, Shlomo Sand highlights ‘the unique nature of Israeli identity politics’ for directing suspicion not only against outsiders, that is, non-Jews, but also drawing lines of exclusion internally amongst Jews. Sand illustrates the narrowness of Israeli conceptions of identity by opening his book with a number of personal accounts by Israeli residents who, with their hyphenated identities, challenge the Zionist state’s homogenous conception of belonging. Sand further observes that this conception reaches below the level of government into mainstream society, writing that an ‘essentialist identity [...] permeates the thoughts and actions of almost all Jewish Israelis’ (20). The chapters that follow will expand the issues raised here, in particular the persistent Israeli exclusion of Jews of non-European descent, as well as the wider significance and consequences of Zionism’s underlying isolationism. At this stage, it suffices to anticipate the irony of Zionism’s creation of ‘a new kind of ghetto, a “closed” society’ in which ‘[t]he assignment of an ethnic-religious *motif* as the guiding principle of national character and destiny separates Israel from other polities’ (Taylor, 152; 157, emphasis in original). This exclusivism, this chapter has argued so far, is the direct result of ‘Herzl’s notion of a hostile and inevitable anti-Semitic world, in which the Jews’ only recourse was an aggressive and uncompromising nationalism’ (Taylor, 165). Arendt’s warning that, ‘[f]ixating foreignness in something substantial

gives rise to a mad urge to define Jewry, Jew, Jewish, and so forth' (*Writings*, 56), it appears, went unheard.

As mentioned earlier, the Jews' exclusive national belonging is for Herzl based on their 'historic condition': the Jewish nation, thus, a group shaped and united by their common history of 'two thousand years of appalling suffering' ['*zwei Jahrtausenden unter ungeheuren Leiden*' (*Judenstaat*, 20)]. Kornberg criticises Herzl's emphasis on Jewish suffering and hostility as disproportionate:

Herzl's litany of Jewish suffering was wildly exaggerated, for he claimed that Jews were "always the carefully looked after and cultivated leeches or the . . . chamber serfs [servi camerae] of the powerful." In Herzl's view of Jewish history there were no periods of security or normality. Later this view was to become part of his Zionist conception of the Jewish dispersion as a two-thousand-year period of captivity and unfreedom.

(*From Assimilation*, 84)

It is this disproportion that makes Herzl's claims problematic. The fact that he sees the Jews united by a common antagonism is fair and understandable, because, as Donald Sassoon remarks in his contribution to *A Time To Speak Out*, '[i]t is undeniable that persecution and discrimination bind people together' (Karpf, 251). However, when this hostility is presented as natural and eternal, and indeed as the *only* thing that holds a group together, outside hostility is not only expected, but becomes a precondition for the unity, even the survival, of the group. In *The Question of Zion*, Jacqueline Rose identifies exactly this to be the core problem of Jewish identity as constructed by Zionism: because suffering is inherent in the collective Jewish Israeli identity, catastrophe is always lurking (115; 8). Indeed, Rose argues, 'today in Israel, catastrophe has become an identity' (8). From this, the need for collective self-isolation ensues, since the Jewish nation is destined to eternally meet with hostility. Thus, what we have here is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy that progressively spirals into forms of collective paranoia and hysteria. In *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl emphasises suffering as the mark of Jewish exceptionalism: '[n]o nation in history has survived such struggles and sufferings as we have gone through.'³¹ In his opening speech to the second Zionist Congress in 1898, he furthermore changed Descartes' famous philosophical declaration to say: 'I suffer, therefore I am!' (*ZWII*, 14)

³¹ ['*Kein Volk der Geschichte hat solche Kämpfe und Leiden ausgehalten wie wir*' (*Judenstaat*, 17).]

Suffering becomes in Herzl's conceptualisations the sine qua non of Jewish existence and redemption. In *Das Neue Ghetto*, Jacob's fighting death exhibits his readiness to embrace suffering as a way of achieving redemption for him personally, and his people collectively; his advice to other Jews to learn how to die appears in this light as a call to assume with courage and dignity the suffering they were chosen to endure. The religious notion of chosenness is nurtured here and transformed into the idea of an inescapable national destiny. Herzl reverts thus to a secular, political conception of messianism. Rooney links the concept of chosenness to the state of chronic disappointment and argues that 'the condition of disappointment becomes in itself a spiritual qualification, a state of being special or being chosen' ('The Disappointed', 163). Such identity of chosenness and suffering, Rose warns, necessarily breeds violence: 'when suffering becomes an identity, it has to turn cruel in order to be able to bear, or live with, itself' (115) – an observation only too fitting with regard to the situation in Israel/Palestine today. In a chilling display of the hysteria that chronically lingers beneath the surface of an identity as it has been described here, a professor of geography at Haifa University by the name of Amon Soffer is widely quoted as saying in 2004: '[...] if we want to remain alive, we have to kill and kill and kill. All day, every day. [...] If we don't kill, we will cease to exist' (qtd. in Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing*, 249).

What Zionism posits to be at stake is pure and simple survival. The aim of the Zionist state is thus nothing less than to secure the survival of the Jewish people; it is also, in the Zionist line of thought, the *only* way to guarantee its survival. Herzl visualises this inherent urgency with his metaphor of the '*historische Scholle*', a German expression he repeatedly used in his writings. The English translation of 'historic soil' in *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl* fails to convey the existential dimension contained within the word '*Scholle*' which most literally translates as 'floe' or 'clod'.³² The connotation is that of a saving piece of land that keeps someone from drowning. The 'return to the Jewish homeland' was thus construed as a saving act, the last solution to the existential threat facing Jews everywhere. '*Scholle*', in its island-likeness, also visualises the isolationist Zionist perception of an eternally hostile environment.

³² For the German version, see Herzl, *Gesammelte Zionistische Werke III: Tagebücher II*, p. 246. For the English translation, see *CDII*, 774.

The Zionist self-narration as it has been described here, combining the myths of chosenness, uniqueness of suffering and eternal hostility, constitutes an explosive mixture – especially if it gains power. Rose argues that ‘Herzl is laying down a line that will become central not just to Zionism but to the whole future of the Israeli nation, the line that runs from suffering to political power’ (*Question of Zion*, 113). When survival becomes the ‘rationale of statehood’, the result is the catastrophe we witness today (Rose, 106). Out of this survival narrative, ‘defence’ emerges as the core value. What has to be defended is not the individual persecuted Jew, but it is the survival of the Jewish nation or, more precisely, the newly constructed idea of the Jewish nation that needs to be secured at any price. What Herzl was interested in from the start was the security of the Jewish masses as represented in the nation, not the security of the individual Jew. To him, individual, stateless Jews could never be safe because they lacked the protective shield of the nation and were therefore destined to become prey to the shifting moods of their host nations. The national organisation of Europe’s Jews was construed in itself as an act of self-defence: only by making the Jews into a sovereign majoritarian national group could they be saved and protected permanently.

2.2 From Minority to Majority: a Question of Might

Suddenly, the majority realizes that we are different, that we are a minority, and then there arises anti-Semitism.

(Herzl, *ZWI*, 46)

The majority may decide which are the strangers; for this, as indeed every point which arises in the relations between nations, is a question of might.³³

(Herzl, *Der Judenstaat*)

While the previous section has shown how foundational Zionism identified Jewish difference as the root cause of anti-Semitism, the following will explore the fact that this difference was perceived to be located above all in the Jews' minority status. According to this line of thought, the most important thing that differentiated the Jews from all other nations was their being a minority. This meant in turn that, instead of exercising their own sovereignty and being their own masters, their dispersed minority existence made them dependent on the goodwill and tolerance of their host nations. The majority population viewed the Jews therefore with suspicion, a tension that could at any time escalate into violence against the alleged parasitic minority. Gentile rejection of this 'defective' group was thus once again posited as natural and Jewish assimilation to be doomed to fail. It becomes clear from this reasoning that foundational Zionism identified the Jews' alleged anomalous minority status to be at the very heart of the 'Jewish Question'.

Jewish minority existence was in fact used in a chain of blame upon which Zionist ideology is built: it is with the Jews being forcefully exiled and thereby turned into a dispersed minority that Jewish suffering begins; no longer a majoritarian society, the Jewish people are living thereafter in a powerless state of chronic insecurity; this insecurity is in turn seen as directly responsible for the supposedly flawed Jewish character. According to this, centuries of insecurity have led the Jews into resignation and degeneration. They are left weak and defenceless, vulnerable at all times to the shifting

³³ [*'Wer der Fremde in Lande ist, das kann die Mehrheit entscheiden; es ist eine Machtsfrage, wie alles im Völkerverkehre' (Der Judenstaat, 17).*]

moods of the majority population. Ahad Ha'Am, a contemporary of Herzl and main representative of so-called cultural Zionism, compared the Jews' diasporic existence to 'the position of a lamb among wolves' (Hertzberg, 270), a position thus of consistent danger, at the mercy of one's eternal enemies.

The Zionist remedy lies in, as Zionist parlance has it, 'reinstating' the majority status of the Jewish people. This, it is projected, will in turn, naturally restore security and lead to the renewal of the 'original' national character. Zionism promises to break what is perceived to be a two-thousand-year-long ordeal of Jewish suffering by 're-establishing' the Jewish nation-state, a state dominated by and for Jews, which will allow the Jewish people to 're-access' the political sphere and thereby 're-gain' political power and security. In other words, the creation of a Jewish state is construed as a return to the golden age of Jewish power, will and honour. In this old-new Jewish nation-state, the weak, power- and defenceless scattered Jewish individuals would gather and rise to a strong Jewish collective able to defend their land and citizens. This is the Zionist dream as envisioned by Herzl. In *Altneuland*, he pictures it as a transformation from 'small, helpless groups' into a 'powerful collective body' (159; 33).

By defining Zionism as the 'self-help of the Jews' (*ZWI*, 136), Herzl proclaims a radical change from dependence and submission, to self-reliance and self-determination. He furthermore declares that, 'the agreement [for a Jewish state] can only be based on right and not on toleration. By this time we have enough experience with toleration and with the status of *Schutzjude* which could be revoked at any time' (*ZWI*, 135). The German word '*Schutzjude*' can be translated as 'protected Jew'. The editor's footnote in Herzl's collected *Zionist Writings* explains that it is a '[t]erm used in Germany during the 17th and 18th centuries to denote Jews who were tolerated and who enjoyed special privileges because of their value to various rulers' (*ZWI*, 135). Herzl's rejection of the '*Schutzjude*', who, although privileged, remains merely tolerated and depends for his very existence on the mercy of the majority government, is a call towards the strong and proud Jewish soldier-citizen who is backed by a powerful Jewish state and can therefore live in autonomy, freedom and security.

Herzl's proclaimed vision of Jewish self-protection and self-reliance is however undermined by the alliance he sought with the European colonial powers. The following analogy reveals his flawed reasoning:

Let us assume that I wish to move into a house. How should I do it? Shall I simply take my furniture and put it in without asking the owner? Then he could pounce upon me and throw me out, furniture and all, and I would have to thank God if I got away unharmed. In any case, I would be at the absolute mercy of the owner, and I would have to accept all his terms. No, I shall not do things that way. Instead, I shall first make an agreement with the owner which will give me the right to live in the house permanently.

(*ZWII*, 131)

The owner in this analogy is not the actual native population inhabiting the region. Herzl is rather referring to the political power in charge of the territory which, at the time of this utterance, was the Ottoman Empire. Herzl therefore first concentrated all his diplomatic efforts on achieving a deal with the Ottomans, until, upon receiving the sultan's explicit rejection and amid a general perception of a weakening Ottoman Empire, he started to shift his main focus to Great Britain. He would thereby lay the groundwork for the notorious 'Balfour Declaration' of 1917, 'a simple articulation of colonialism' as Israeli psychologist Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi points out (61), in which the British government declared its 'sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations' and its favourable view and encouragement of 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people' (qtd. in Geddes, 38). In fact, it is because the Zionist idea is a 'colonial one', as Herzl did not tire of emphasising,³⁴ that the Zionist movement did not deem it necessary to reach an agreement with the native population, which could have provided real security. Herzl knew that an alliance with at least one of the colonial superpowers of the time had to be established in order to realise the Zionist colonial venture. His Jewish state would arise and exist under the protectorate of Europe:

As for Europe, we would there form a part of the bulwark that protects it from Asia. We would serve as an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism. As a neutral state we would retain a connection with all of Europe, and Europe would have to guarantee our existence.

(*ZWI*, 31)

Although Herzl declares a radical break with the model of the '*Schutzjude*', he is in fact working towards a return to exactly this kind of relationship of privilege, dependence and

³⁴ ['(...) *die zionistische Idee die eine koloniale ist*' ('Theodor Herzl in London', 5).]

toleration. Zionism is the attempt of such a relationship on a collective level: a Jewish state that is privileged and protected because of imperial and colonial interests, and can therefore, or indeed must, rely on outside support. The above statement reveals that, perceiving the future Jewish state to be a ‘bulwark’ between Europe and Asia, and an ‘outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism’, Herzl understood that by planting a Jewish state in Palestine, he would lead Jews not to a safe haven, but to hostile territory. In this position of heightened insecurity, the state’s safety would have to be ensured by constant protection by the European powers. The final outcome of the alliance of Jewish nationalism with colonialism is therefore the intensification of the relationship of dependency Jews had wished to escape from.

Herzl’s dismissal of the figure of the ‘*Schutzjude*’ reflects Zionism’s wider negation of the Jewish diaspora, seen to be the source of Jewish insecurity. This negation is based on the Zionist conception of the diaspora as *galut*, a Hebrew term literally meaning ‘exile’. Piterberg draws attention to the different meanings of ‘Diaspora’, or *golah* in Hebrew, and *galut*. *Golah*, he asserts, refers to ‘the actual circumstance in which Jews happen to reside outside the land of Israel’. *Galut*, on the other hand, ‘signifies something that is meaningful both literally and figuratively: it is exile as an experience, as a material circumstance, as an existential state of being, as consciousness’ (*Returns*, 95). Piterberg goes on to clarify that ‘[w]hat Zionism negates is, fundamentally, *galut*, not *golah*’ (95):

Zionists have always accepted the existence of a sizeable Diaspora, and have always mobilized it shamelessly and with huge success to strengthen the Israeli project. Yet Zionism perforce presupposes a hierarchy, by which existence of Jews within the land of Israel under Jewish sovereignty is the apex of collective Jewish experience, superior to the exilic experience, which is within this logic of necessity incomplete.

(96)

Piterberg’s observations are thus fundamental for any understanding of the Zionist self-perception in relation to diaspora Jewry.

It might further be said that the Zionist negation of exile arose out of a rejection of the traditional Jewish belief that declared it to be the fate of the Jews to live eternally as the minority amongst a majority population. In his diaries, Herzl records a conversation with the Chief Rabbi of the Jewish community in Vienna in which the latter ‘spoke about

the “mission of the Jews,” which consists of their being dispersed throughout the world’. Herzl dismisses this as an ‘absurd [notion]’ and criticises that ‘this mission is talked about by all those who are doing well in their present places of residence – but they are the only ones’ (*CDII*, 525). Hannah Arendt explains that within this belief system, the Jews are taken to be ‘the salt of the earth’, that is ‘a sort of incarnation of humanity, [...] in which all the persecution they suffer becomes a symbol of the sinfulness of the non-Jewish peoples or an expression of their unpreparedness for the actual vocation of mankind’ (*Writings*, 224). Arendt dismisses this as a ‘false doctrine’ and explains her rejection on the following grounds:

What occasioned this ideology was the need to justify the Jewish Diaspora, something that had been suffered as an affliction for millennia, since despair over the false Messiah had swept away the ancient hopes for redemption and a return to Palestine. This element of justifying the Diaspora and rendering it permanent was particularly convenient for the nineteenth century. For here an authentic possibility presented itself of making every country in Europe home without at the same time surrendering Jewish identity.

(*Writings*, 224)

Drawing on the traditional Judaic belief that sees the Jews as a chosen people, the salt-of-the-earth doctrine can thus be seen as a way for Jews to make sense of and adapt to their lives in the diaspora, to assimilate without losing a sense of their own Jewishness – a Jewishness that was seen to be located in a humanistic mission to better the world. Arendt however objected to the idea of a natural Jewish fate. This, she maintained, would endorse Jewish passivity and further the process of Jewish disengagement from the political spheres of their societies, and thus ultimately banish the Jews into powerlessness and worldlessness.

Imperative for our discussion is the Zionist conception of the Jewish diaspora as an exile. According to the biblical narrative, the Jewish people were expelled from their ancestral lands, which meant the forceful dissolution of the Hebrew nation and, ever since, a coerced life in exile. Although this myth has been debunked, most recently by Shlomo Sand in *The Invention of the Jewish People*, it is deeply anchored within the Zionist narrative. Piterberg identifies the negation of exile as one of the ‘three manifestations’ of the ‘Zionist foundational myth’, the other two being ‘the return to the land of Israel’ and ‘the return to history’ (*Returns*, xiii). As Julia Bard argues in *A Time to Speak Out*, the

negation of exile is still the dominant view held in contemporary Jewish Israeli collective thought. She notes that the underlying claim is that,

diaspora life leads to catastrophe, of which Auschwitz was the terrible, inevitable proof. Zionists right and left argue that a Jewish majoritarian state is essential to Jewish survival and to a flourishing future. Therefore, to break with Zionism means shattering Jewish identity individually, and placing Jews at risk of annihilation collectively.

(Karpf, 239)

In an address entitled 'The Jew in the World', another Austrian-born advocate of early Zionism, writer and philosopher Martin Buber, identified the concept of the 'Jew in the world' as the archetypal insecure man to have arisen from the following 'historical juncture': 'when Jerusalem ceased to be a Jewish city [...] it was then that [the Jew] was hurled into the abyss of the world' (Hertzberg, 453). It is important to note here that Buber differentiates between the destruction of the Jewish state and the loss of the Jewish home; it is the second one that he places at the origin of Jewish insecurity. Buber was not a man of politics and warned against the dangers of 'shallow nationalism' (Hertzberg, 459). What he saw in Zionism was an opportunity to reform and regenerate Jewish culture and religion. It is on these grounds that he, after working for a few months as an editor for Herzl's *Die Welt*, soon parted ways with the Zionist leader. As previously seen, Herzl excluded questions of Jewish culture and religion from his Zionist field of vision.

Buber treats the question of Jewish insecurity extensively. For him, this insecurity is inextricably linked to the Jewish exile and thus Jewish homelessness. Buber portrays Jewish life in exile as one governed by a chronic state of insecurity; he writes:

Ever since [exiled], [the Jew] has represented to the world the insecure man. Within that general insecurity that marks human existence as a whole, there has since that time lived a species of man to whom destiny has denied even the small share of dubious security other beings possess. Whether or not it is aware of it, this people is always living on ground that may at any moment give way beneath its feet. Every symbiosis it enters upon is treacherous. Every alliance in its history contains an invisible terminating clause; every union with other civilizations is informed with a secret divisive force. It is this inescapable state of insecurity which we have in mind when we designate the Jewish Diaspora as *galut*, i.e., as exile.

(Hertzberg, 453)

What needs emphasising here is that the Zionist construction of the diaspora as an experience of exile is essential to the movement's equating of 'minority' with 'insecurity', and therefore, must be seen to be constitutive to the movement's conception of security. Accordingly, it is because the Jews have been expelled from their 'home' that their current minority status as 'strangers' on 'foreign' lands is insecure. It is the idea of a lack of a home that is central here. From this narrative, the Jewish diaspora as the anti-model of Zionism follows logically: while Zionism represents the struggle to 'return' the Jews to their 'home', the diaspora means resignation and homelessness. This ideological construction explains the force behind Zionism's central motif of 'the return of the Jews to the Jewish homeland' which will be explored in detail in the final section of this chapter.

Buber continues his argument by presenting the corollary of the Jews' loss of home: they become unclassifiable. The Jews being a community of faith, as well as a (dispersed) nation, the non-Jewish world fails to categorise and understand them. Buber explains anti-Semitism therefore as 'a kind of fear of ghosts': '[t]he wandering, roving, defenceless group which is different from any other and comparable to none seems to the nations among which it lives to have something spectral about it, because it does not fit into any other given group' (Hertzberg, 454). The only way 'to apprehend the positive meaning of this negative phenomenon' of 'nonclassifiability', Buber continues, is to fully embrace it through 'the way of faith' (Hertzberg, 454). Thus, only if the Jewish people '*insists on its vocation of uniqueness*' can it find 'true security' and guarantee its survival (Hertzberg, 455, emphasis in original). He condemns the false security of power politics and its related reduction of the Jewish people to 'a political structure' (Hertzberg, 455). Buber's disagreement with Herzl becomes instantly palpable.

Summarising the condition of Jewish diaspora existence, Buber writes that 'a twofold desire comes to the fore in the history of Diaspora Jewry: the insecure Jew strives for security; the Jewish community which cannot be classified strives to be classified' (Hertzberg, 455). With this short statement, Buber provides a concise analysis of the ideological driving forces underlying Zionism. At the centre is the persistent quest for security. In Herzl's Zionism, this security means classifiability, that is, normalisation. Buber objects to this and criticises that '[i]n the late Diaspora the need for security assumed the anomalous form of a need to be categorized' (Hertzberg, 456). Buber dismisses this desire to be classified and classifiable, in other words, the desire to become

“like unto all the nations”, stressing instead the Jews’ uniqueness as the ‘cornerstone’ of their ‘salvation’ (Hertzberg, 457). One might add here that Buber recognised that ‘the search for security is itself quite legitimate’ and ‘unobjectionable’; he however insisted that ‘the means taken to arrive at this desired end may well be questioned’ (Hertzberg, 455). By limiting its agenda to a purely political one, Herzlian Zionism appeared fundamentally inadequate to Buber as it failed to ‘set the nation a true supernational task’ (Hertzberg, 459). Speaking in 1934, Buber retrospectively diagnosed the movement’s failure: he claimed that ‘nationalization [...] failed’ (457), since Zionism had ignored ‘God’, by which he explains he means something broader than religion, ‘the realization of the true communal living to which Israel was summoned by the Covenant with God’ (Hertzberg, 456). In fact, remembering Piterberg’s earlier observation of how Zionism still narrates itself as ‘the apex of collective Jewish experience’, Buber’s exceptionalist claim was very much part of the Zionist movement’s ideological formation.

American Zionist Judah Leon Magnes was the first chancellor of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a prominent Zionist figure during the British Mandate. Along with Buber, he was an early supporter of binationalism in Palestine. He provided an argument similar to Buber’s. Magnes also warned against the Zionist desire to become ‘normal’ and fall victim to nationalist chauvinism, highlighting the Jewish people’s alleged unique vocation as an element capable of countering these dangers. In an essay entitled ‘Like All the Nations?’, he writes in 1930:

Much of the theory of Zionism has been concerned with making the Jews into a normal nation in Palestine like the gentiles of the lands and the families of the earth. The desire for power and conquest seems to be normal to many human beings and groups, and we, being the ruled everywhere, must here rule; being the minority everywhere, we must here be in the majority. There is the *Wille zur Macht* [will to power], the state, the army, the frontiers. We have been in exile; now we are to be masters in our own Home. We are to have a Fatherland, and we are to encourage the feelings of pride, honor, glory that are part of the paraphernalia of the ordinary nationalistic patriotism. In the face of such danger one thinks of the dignity and originality of that passage in the liturgy which praises the Lord of all things that our portion is not like theirs and our lot not like that of all the multitude.

(Hertzberg, 447)

While both Buber and Magnes object to the narrative of normalisation predominant in political Zionism, they do not reject Zionism’s premise: they do not question its central

motif of a ‘return to the Jewish homeland’, but rather see it as a project justified by both historical and moral right. Although Buber is setting up what he terms ‘Hebrew humanism’ as an alternative to Jewish nationalism, his concept appears highly unsatisfactory in its exclusionary dimension, drawing on notions of Jewish exceptionalism that implicitly lend moral legitimation to the Zionist undertaking. Most importantly, and this will be discussed in more detail later, while both Buber and Magnes call for an agreement with the native population of Palestine based on mutual understanding and shared power, their failure to see that such a call is contrary to the inherent aims of the Zionist project, as a white settler colonial movement, exemplifies their fundamental eurocentrism, showcasing a lack of awareness about the true nature of the movement and their position within it.

Foundational Zionism negated not only the diaspora and construed it as its anti-model, but it also and specifically posited the diaspora Jew as its Other – a role that would later of course be imposed upon the Arab Palestinians. The Zionist Jew set out to be everything that the diaspora Jew allegedly was not: the main difference was construed as one of self-defence. Buber for example denounced that, ‘for centuries, we did not hit back when our face was slapped’ (*On Judaism*, 18). Zionism posited a binary choice between weakness and strength, powerlessness and power, between remaining a minority and fighting for a majoritarian state. As established earlier, Herzl termed this a choice between being a ‘Jew who is protected’ and a ‘Jew who protects’ (*CDI*, 261). The model for this defending or defensive Jew was to be found in a pre-diasporic model of Jewry, a model Max Nordau termed ‘*Muskeljudentum*’, translatable as ‘Judaism of the muscles’ or ‘muscular Judaism’.³⁵ The return to this old-new type of Jew was likened to the resurrection of the Maccabees. In Jewish mythological history, the so-called Maccabean revolt is recorded as a decisive historical juncture which saw the Jewish people and Judaism saved thanks to the brave intervention, that is rebellion, of the Maccabees. Zionism’s fight was likened to this revolt for its existential dimension: the Zionists became the heirs of the Maccabees, once again called upon to bravely defend the land of Israel: ‘a generation of marvellous Jews will spring into existence. The Maccabees will rise again’ (Herzl, *ZWI*, 33). Zionism was thus not only conceived to be the self-help of

³⁵ Nordau coined this term in his speech at the second Zionist Congress in 1898.

the Jews, but also, and more importantly, their self-defence. Picking up on Buber's analogy, under Zionism, the Jews would learn again to hit back when slapped in the face.

What was in fact negated and despised was marginality per se. Reacting against the generalised restrictions imposed on Europe's Jews, Zionism sought to position the latter at the centre of their own social and political realm by transforming them from a stateless minority into a majoritarian state. Kornberg explains that '[Herzl's] view of Jewry was influenced by European emancipationist ideology. The notion that Jewish faults stemmed from their exclusion from the political sphere and could be cured by full citizenship was a keystone of this ideology' (*From Assimilation*, 161). In Herzl's own words: 'to have security, you must be a citizen [with full rights]' (*ZWII*, 209). Full citizenship, the Zionists argued, was unachievable for Jews outside of a Jewish national space.

Zionism's attempt to collectively catapult the Jewish people into the centre of European politics was simultaneously construed as their return to history. Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling claims that the 'declared aim' of Zionism was 'the return of stateless and persecuted Jews to the political stage of history' (25). As mentioned earlier, Piterberg counts 'the return to history' among the three manifestations of the foundational Zionist myth; he argues that,

[it] reveals the extent to which Zionist ideology was underpinned by the emergence of Romantic nationalism and German historicism in nineteenth-century Europe. Its premise is that the natural and irreducible form of human collectivity is the nation. [...] The nation is the autonomous historical subject par excellence, and the state is the telos of its march towards self-fulfilment. According to this logic, so long as they were exiles, the Jews remained a community outside history, within which all European nations dwelt. [...] The return of the Jewish nation to the land of Israel, overcoming its docile passivity in exile, could alone allow it to rejoin the history of civilized peoples.

(*Returns*, 95)

States of marginality and minority were fundamentally unacceptable to Herzl, because what he strove for was power. In *Altneuland*, Herzl makes David Littwak, a founding member of the New Society in Palestine, assert: 'it is power that counts. Now and always, power is the thing' (168). In Herzl's thought, this power has to be understood in the physical sense, as we have seen with the desired transformation of the male Jewish body,

and also in the sense of political power, with the transformation of the political status of the Jews from ‘weak minority’ to ‘powerful majority’. In Herzl’s mind, nationalism was the only way for Jews to access this modern power; Jewish power was to be found exclusively in the modern nation-state, that is, only by joining the majoritarian states of Europe. While the Zionist leader cannot be blamed for identifying the majority-minority relationship as one of power, his shortcoming was to accept this reality as the product of immutable political laws. By seeking to establish a majoritarian Jewish state in Palestine, Zionism did not seek to challenge liberal Europe’s failing minority politics, but instead sought to join the side of power.

Writing in 1943, Hannah Arendt retrospectively conceded that ‘[t]he foundations of Zionism were laid during a time when nobody could imagine any other solution of minority or nationality problems than the autonomous national state with a homogenous population’ (*Writings*, 336). That did however not keep her from simultaneously offering a sharp critique of Herzl’s reactionary veneration of the position of power. In opposition to the latter’s equalling of marginality and minority with powerlessness, Hannah Arendt proposed the figure of the ‘conscious pariah’. It is against the Jewish parvenu, the one ‘ready to pay any price in order to be accepted by society’ (*Pariah*, 65) and who seeks protection in assimilation, that Arendt advanced her alternative position. Borrowing the term from Bernard Lazare, Arendt recognised in ‘the Jew as [p]ariah’ a long hidden Jewish tradition – ‘the tradition of Heine, Rahel Varnhagen, Sholom Aleichem, of Bernard Lazare, Franz Kafka or even Charlie Chaplin’, who, she argued, are ‘the very few among us who have tried to get along without all these tricks and jokes of adjustment and assimilation have paid a much higher price than they could afford: they jeopardized the few chances even outlaws are given in a topsy-turvy world’ (*Pariah*, 65-66). The conscious pariah is aware of his marginality and embraces it; he is a self-conscious pariah. Out of this self-consciousness about his outsider status, the conscious pariah’s political stance emerges: he is non-conformist and anti-assimilationist, in short, ‘a rebel’ (*Pariah*, 77) who, from his outer vantage point, does ‘not [see] through the prism of an ideology’ and therefore ‘[sees] further and clearer than others’ (*Pariah*, 73). In ‘exchange for [his] unpopularity’, the conscious pariah gets ‘one priceless advantage: history is no longer a closed book to [him] and politics is no longer the privilege of the Gentiles. [...] For the first time Jewish history is not separate but tied up with all other nations’ (*Pariah*, 66).

Thus, in Arendt's conception of the conscious pariah, the return to history occurs from a position of marginality, independence and critical judgment. Marginality emerges in this view as a positive and enriching source of self-awareness that, in turn, allows a clearer perception and understanding of mainstream society, making the conscious pariah less susceptible to shifting moods. He is able to predict change and can therefore counter possible threats from a position of preparedness and defence. In contrast to this stands the parvenu: blinded by a false sense of belonging and security, he lacks the conscious pariah's foresight and remains therefore extremely vulnerable to, what appear to him, abrupt changes in the majority population's sentiments regarding minority cultures of which association the parvenu can never fully rid himself.

It has already been noted with regard to its view of anti-Semitism that Zionism was not a revolutionary movement, but that it adopted the dominant political discourses of its time. In chasing its dream of the majority, Zionism engaged in power politics and sought wrong alliances. The movement failed to see the connections between the discrimination and persecution of Europe's Jews, and those suffered by other minorities. In other words, it did not challenge the very politics of which they themselves were the victims.

It is therefore important to emphasise, as Aamir Mufti does, that Zionism emerged out of a sincere crisis in Jewish life. These 'crises around the meaning of Jewishness' were in turn the product of the failed minority politics of liberal, secular Europe (Mufti, 3). In his *Enlightenment in the Colony*, Mufti argues that '[t]he cultural position that eventually produces the idea of the Jewish nation and of a Jewish homeland is located within [the] constitutive failure' of nineteenth-century liberal European society to 'assume[] the existence of Jews in general, and of Jews as a question in general' (89-90). Because of this, Mufti concludes, Jewish emancipation and assimilation were 'almost *intended* to fail and to remain an open question' (90, emphasis in original). Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin similarly remark that, 'at the very heart of those most truly progressive discourses of Europe [...], the inability to accommodate difference provides a fatal flaw' (708). Arendt agreed with such critique of liberal society, also arguing that Jewish emancipation failed to be what it should have been, namely 'an admission of Jews as Jews' (*Pariah*, 68). Mufti furthermore reminds us that at the heart of this crisis in Jewish life was 'a perception of the maldistribution, as Said put it, of "power and powerlessness" in society, a perception of the unequal possibilities of relating self to world and collectivity' (252). Power thus

indeed emerges as a key consideration in a Jewish reaction that tries to fight exclusion. This power is, however, not achieved through separatism, not by choosing ‘the fullest possible assimilation of the Jews to Western modernity, as a (Western) nation among the nations’ (Mufti, 90), but by reforming the misdistribution of power in the relationship between majority and minority so as to allow Jews *as Jews* to fully access mainstream society.

Both Mufti and Arendt contextualise the Jews’ situation within the history of European minority politics to emphasise the universal implication of their struggle. To Mufti, then, ‘the troubled and recurring question of Jewish emancipation-assimilation [is] an early, and exemplary, instance of the crisis of minority that has accompanied the development of liberal-secular state and society in numerous contexts around the world’ (7). Equally, Arendt writes in the mid-1940s that ‘the Jewish people was merely the first to be declared a pariah people in Europe’ (*Writings*, 141), and that ‘the outlawing of the Jewish people in Europe has been followed closely by the outlawing of most European nations’ (*Pariah*, 66). This knowledge represents the vital insight gained by the conscious pariah who, because he sees these historical connections, becomes ‘the champion of an oppressed people’: ‘[h]is fight for freedom is part and parcel of that which all the down-trodden of Europe must needs wage to achieve national and social liberation (*Pariah*, 76). Through her figure of the conscious pariah, Arendt calls upon Jews to re-think their history of persecution within the broader context of exclusionary European minority politics.

Foundational Zionism failed to situate the ‘Jewish Question’ within such a broader context. Instead, it identified the Jews as a unique minority, of unique suffering and facing a unique threat of annihilation. Such claim of exceptionalism, Julia Bard argues, ‘undermines alliances with other minorities and paralyses or distorts communication with the wider society’ (Karpf, 237). It also, as Zionist/Israeli history has confirmed, reproduces exclusion. Israeli historian Anita Shapira has observed that, ‘from the moment Jews landed in Jaffa harbour, they did not behave like a small minority dependent on the good grace of the majority’ (*Land and Power*, 55). Zionist settlers came thus as masters, with the mentality of a majority and ready to replicate the chain of blame and oppression they were themselves the victims of in Europe. In *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, Joseph Massad identifies this change of identity as the core mission of the

Zionist project, namely the transformation of the Jew into the ‘anti-Semite or anti-Jew’; conversely, ‘the Palestinian Arab [was transformed] into the disappearing European Jew’ (169). Massad explains:

Much of what anti-Semitism projected onto European Jews would now be displaced onto Palestinian Arabs, who were seen to embody the attributes that both Zionism and anti-Semitism insisted had been previously embodied by diaspora Jews.

(175)

Equally, adding a slightly different angle, Europe’s Jews could, by leaving Europe, shed their difference and become true Europeans. Daniel Boyarin highlights in that respect Herzl’s ‘identification with the Germans and [his] desire to fully be one’: ‘Herzl had realized that only by leaving German soil and founding a Jewish State would he ever be truly German’ (279). Herzl himself wrote:

I am a German-speaking Jew from Hungary and never can be anything but a German. At present I am not recognized as a German. But that will come once we are over there.

(qtd. in Boyarin, 278)

He furthermore confessed in his diary:

Strange ways of destiny. Through Zionism it will again become possible for Jews to love this Germany, to which our hearts have been attached despite everything!

(*CDII*, 694-695)

For Boyarin, as the introductory chapter has discussed, Herzl’s desire is representative of Zionism’s project to escape from the stigma of Jewish difference through mimicry of ‘white man’ colonisation. This in turn means for Boyarin that Zionism cannot be ‘plain colonialism’ (279). He even reads Herzl’s blending of these antithetical ideas, where leaving Germany means becoming German, as ‘revolutionary’ (279).

As would remain true for his entire life, Herzl’s reasoning was driven by his desire for Gentile acceptance. Zionism represented for him a way to personally achieve this acceptance. Significantly, when he projects that full recognition ‘will come once we are over there’, he does not include himself in the masses of Jews to be leaving. Herzl never

intended joining the mass emigration to Palestine; he only visited the country once and generally showed very little interest in its overall situation and conditions for settlement. It was by the other Jews leaving Germany that Herzl could become German. The restoration of the Jewish nation through the colonisation of Palestine would raise the esteem of the Jews in the eyes of Christian Europe. Herzl, as their original leader, would stay behind and benefit from this new appreciation to finally be recognised as a fellow German. In fact, the same line of thought is already recognisable in Herzl's earlier solution of mass conversion. The way he had planned his mass conversion scheme was that he would stop short of converting himself. Instead, in a display of openness and integrity, and under the watchful eyes of the Gentile population, he would lead a critical mass of Jews into the church:

Free and honorable by virtue of the fact that the leaders of the movement – myself in particular – would remain Jews and as such would propagate conversion to the faith of the majority. [...]

And because the Jewish leaders would remain Jews, escorting the people only to the threshold of the church and themselves staying outside, the whole performance was to be elevated by a touch of great candor.

We, the steadfast men, would have constituted the last generation.

(*CDI*, 7)

Boyarin misreads Herzl's conversion plan when he suggests an outcome whereby Herzl and the other Jewish leaders would 'remain[...] tenaciously Jewish and presumably suffer[...] the consequences bravely' (283). The point of Herzl's idea was that the honourable act that the conversion signified would redeem the Jews of their negative standing. Herzl would be left to reap the fruit of this restored respect for Jews, annulling thereby the difference that had precluded his acceptance: finally, he would enjoy full recognition, not as a Jew, but as a German.

So far, Zionism's drive to establish a Jewish majority in Palestine has been discussed using a somewhat euphemistic language. The term avoided so far: Jewish supremacy.³⁶ It was not enough to merely settle in Palestine; the defining demand of the Zionists was to establish themselves as the dominant group. Indeed, one of the overall

³⁶ In a debate with Benny Morris, Joseph Massad, to the condemnation of the former, used the word 'supremacy' in relation to the Zionist/Israeli context. For the argument, see Andrew Whitehead et al., "'No Common Ground': Joseph Massad and Benny Morris Discuss the Middle East", 214. Massad would later make the same argument in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians*; see for example p. 152. An extract of the 2002 debate is indeed included in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question* (full citations in 'Works Cited').

arguments of this thesis is that any so-called ‘security problems’ that have plagued the Zionist colony in Palestine since its very beginnings, must be understood as manifestations of the antagonism created as a result of this demand. The security logic is turned on its head: what is declared a threat to the existence of the Zionist state and, in extension, to the survival of the Jewish people, is in truth any form of resistance targeting the Jewish supremacist structure in Israel/Palestine.

Herzl’s call for a *Judenstaat* was unambiguous in its demand for Jewish dominance in Palestine. Previous attempts to colonise Palestine failed in Herzl’s eyes because of the ‘smallness of scale’ (*ZWI*, 26). His uncompromising request is ‘colonization without restriction’ (*CPH*, 1224). Herzl was aware of the conflict this was bound to cause with the native population. He emphasised the necessity to establish a sovereign Jewish majority as quickly as possible: ‘I believe that as the settlers become more numerous they will be in increasing danger if they have no state to protect them’; this would be the case not only because ‘they will be dependent on the mercies of changing rulers’ (*ZWI*, 39), but also because, ‘[i]n the course of infiltration there always comes a point when the native population feels threatened and, in response to its demand, the government stops any further influx of Jews’ (*ZWI*, 30). A self-governing majority was thus needed in order to protect the expanding settler colony upon the Palestinian realisation of the Zionist intention to upend the prevailing power balance.

When historian and journalist Isaac Deutscher defends Zionism’s dispossession of the Palestinians on the grounds that, ‘[p]eople pursued by a monster and running to save their lives cannot help injuring those who are in the way’ (qtd in Massad, 21), he fails to take into account this demand for Jewish supremacy inherent in Zionism. Zionism was not a spontaneous movement of refugees, but an organised colonial project. By ignoring the pre-Holocaust ideological foundations of Zionism, Deutscher distorts the movement’s primary motives.

The dissenting voices from the camps of so-called cultural and spiritual Zionism, of which Buber, Ha’Am and Magnes were the most prominent representatives, opposed mainstream Zionism’s relentless pursuit of a Jewish majority and called instead for a focus on questions of Jewish culture and religion. For these minority groups within Zionism, Palestine should be developed as the centre of cultural and spiritual Jewish life. A Jewish majority was therefore not necessarily instantly needed. The growth of an organic majority

was instead envisaged. Magnes's assertion, 'poor and small and faithful to Judaism, rather than large and powerful like all the nations', summarises these groups' divergent outlook (Hertzberg, 446).

Magnes was particularly outspoken on the majority question. He was one of the few prominent figures in the history of Zionism to openly acknowledge the Zionist majority claim as the root cause of Jewish insecurity in Palestine.³⁷ He wrote that he was 'willing to yield the Jewish state, and the Jewish majority' in exchange for 'secure tranquillity and mutual understanding' (Hertzberg, 443). Magnes understood thus that the majority demand stood in the way of assuring true and long-lasting security for the Jewish settlers in Palestine. He warned against the dangers of persisting on their uncompromising path. He feared demoralisation and militarisation, the effects of an existence by the sword:

If as a minority we insist upon keeping the other man from achieving just aims, and if we keep him from this with the aid of bayonets, we must not be surprised if we are attacked and, what is worse, if moral degeneration sets in among us.

(Hertzberg, 447)

Despite his many enlightened assessments, Magnes failed to grasp the majority claim as the defining feature of the movement he was affiliated with. Historian of Zionism Yosef Gorny reiterates in this respect that, '[w]ithout [this desire to create a Jewish majority in Palestine], Zionism would forfeit its meaning, since the history of Exile had demonstrated the inherent danger in perpetual minority status' (2). In his willingness to sacrifice this principal Zionist demand, Magnes stood thus virtually on his own. The fundamental antagonism that existed between the two groups' interests seemed to evade him; he believed that these interests could ultimately be made to comply through compromises on both sides. The Palestinians too, that is, the Palestinian leadership, remained unresponsive to Magnes's binational proposals of sharing the country on an equal basis; of course, what would have been a gain for the Zionist settlers would still have meant a substantial loss for the Palestinians. The integrity of character that transpires from Magnes's writings exhibits a genuine and persistent, albeit misguided effort on his part to reach a lasting agreement. His vision of Jewish-Arab understanding remains within the realm of utopia as it fails to

³⁷ Vladimir Jabotinsky was another exception. As a closer study of his writings will reveal in the last chapter of this thesis, Jabotinsky would draw very different conclusions compared to Magnes.

understand that Zionism, as a colonial endeavour, did not seek agreement, but from the outset strove for the conquest of land and labour.

The Zionist principle of Jewish majority had direct consequences for the native Palestinian population. Gorny observes thus that, '[t]he significance of this demand [for majority], and of the untiring endeavour to realize it in various ways, lay in the annulling of the majority standing of the Arabs of Palestine' (2). In other words, the Zionist settlers' transformation into the majority meant the simultaneous transformation of the Arab population of Palestine into a minority. Zionist settlement thus meant from the start the de-Arabisation of Palestine and the externalisation, literal and figurative, of the indigenous people – a process typical of settler societies. This Zionist consensus, as Piterberg notes, still underlies Jewish Israeli identity today. He argues that,

the only facet of Jewish Israeli identity that is not fragmented is agreement upon the purity and exclusivity of the state as Jewish, or at least as an unassailable Jewish majority; put differently, the only facet of Jewish Israeli identity that is not fragmented is the agreement upon the sine qua non principle of distancing the Palestinians from the collective and, where possible, from the land.

(*Returns*, 200)

What is thus agreed upon is the existence of the Jewish state as a pure settlement colony. The colony aspires to Jewish homogeneity as its ideal, but Jewish majority and supremacy suffice to ensure the colony's 'national' character. The Zionist concept of security surfaces within this context as inextricably linked to considerations of demography. It is indeed, as Massad claims, 'the commitment to Jewish supremacy that makes the return of Palestinian refugees a "demographic threat" (*Persistence*, 152). As early as 1895, Herzl identified the population problem as one of the chief obstacles to the fulfilment of his Zionist dream. He noted in his diary:

We must expropriate gently the private property on the estates assigned to us. We shall try to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country.

(*CDI*, 88)

Herzl's solution was thus transfer, although this plan of action is all but absent from his public writings. Indeed, it stands in stark contrast to the harmonious vision of communal Jewish-Arab relations in *Altneuland*. Although we are told in the novel that the Jewish

settlers succeeded in ‘forming the majority in Palestine’ (203), we are left in the dark about how this transformation was brought about. We only learn that ‘things developed naturally’ and that ‘Jewish immigration took place in the full light of day’ (119). There are only a couple of instances where this utopian dream is disturbed: we hear for example someone refer to the ‘bitter days of the last struggle for independence’ (181). This mention happens only in passing and is not explained any further. It does however clearly contradict the previous portrayal of a peaceful and organic change of rule. A second instance involves Kingscourt as the disquieting agent. He is curious about the ‘transition period’ (213) and wonders about what happened to the native population, the ‘numerous Moslem Arabs’ (144). He asks: ‘Were not the older inhabitants of Palestine ruined by the Jewish immigration? And didn’t they have to leave the country?’ (142). Ironically, Herzl leaves it to Reschid, the only active Arab presence in the story, to reassure Kingscourt that, ‘[i]t was a great blessing to for all of us’ (142) and that, ‘[t]he Jews have enriched us. [...] They dwell among us like brothers’ (145). The native population, it is thus implied, happily agreed to their changed status because of the improved living conditions that the Jewish immigration created. However, the fact that Friedrich notices upon his second visit to Palestine that ‘[t]here were no longer private dwellings in the Old City’ (274), leaves one to wonder about what happened to those houses and their Arab inhabitants. These questions are left unanswered within the novel. We have to look to Herzl’s diaries to find answers. With regard to Jerusalem, he wrote that he ‘would clear everything out that is not something sacred, set up workers’ home outside the city, empty the nests of filth and tear them down, burn the secular ruins, and transfer the bazaars elsewhere’ (*CDII*, 746). His master plan for the transfer of the native population exposes the deceptive portrayal in *Altneuland* of the aims of Zionism most plainly. Herzl knew that the creation of a Jewish majority on Palestinian land would rely on the use of force and colonial practices of dispossession which, he also calculated, had to be enforced without raising the attention of the world public: ‘Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly’ (*CDI*, 88).

2.3 Homeland (In)Security: Rooting and Uprooting

Where will people want us so long as we have no homeland of our own? But we will give the Jews a homeland – not by uprooting them forcibly from their earth, but by carefully digging them up with all their roots and transplanting them into a better soil.

(Herzl, *CDI*, 149)

A home that my neighbour does not recognize and respect is not a home.

(Arendt, *Jewish Writings*, 235)

Herzl deemed the ‘transplantation’ of Europe’s Jews to a territory outside of Europe a straightforward affair: since they were but superficially and artificially settled, they would be effortlessly and painlessly removable. Behind this reasoning lies once again the Zionist conviction that Jewish national difference precludes the Jews’ absorption into mainstream society. Accordingly, Herzl lamented that the Jews’ desperate attempts ‘to strike root’ wherever they go were doomed to fail as long as they are on foreign and hostile land (*ZWI*, 46). Moses Hess preceded Herzl’s argument in his 1862 *Rome and Jerusalem* in which Hess claimed that the Jews ‘cannot become organically rooted within [the nations]’ (119). The vocabulary used by both Herzl and Hess – ‘roots’, ‘transplanting’, ‘soil’ and ‘earth’ – reveals the late nineteenth-century preoccupation with questions of national belonging. The social and political insecurity of the period created a society haunted by a sense of homelessness. It is this feeling of homelessness that arguably lent nationalism, and in particular its ethno-nationalist brand, its force. In ‘Zionism from the Standpoint of its Victims’, Edward Said uses George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* to highlight the epoch’s generalised sense of displacement and unsettledness. In the novel, the young protagonist gradually uncovers his hidden Jewish parentage. Deronda is shown to fully embrace his newly revealed Jewish identity in a way that suggests that this ‘Jewishness’ had always been a part of his inner self; it only had to be re-awakened. Deronda’s rediscovery is thus portrayed in a similar way to that of Friedrich in *Altneuland* where the latter inexplicably feels ‘old and forgotten things [stir] within him’ (34). *Daniel*

Deronda ends with the preparations for Deronda's prophet-like departure to 'the East' and thereby, as Mufti points out, '[anticipates] the settling of Palestine by European Jews and the birth of a cultural movement tied to that goal' (107). Said argues that '[t]he crucial thing about the way Zionism is presented in the novel is that its backdrop is a generalized condition of homelessness' and that 'Eliot uses the plight of the Jews to make a universal statement about the nineteenth century's need for a home [...]' (18-19). He concludes that '[Eliot's] interest in Zionism can be traced to the reflection, made early in the novel that,

human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge.

(19)

Romantic nationalism postulated that each nation, understood as 'the natural and irreducible form of human collectivity' (Piterberg, 246), had a land to which it was organically connected, its 'homeland'. This attribution of a specific group to a specific land followed the logic of unalterable hereditary rights: it is the mother- or fatherland. This formulation of nationalism offered thus a cure to feelings of homelessness by providing fixed categories of belonging.

Seeing the Jewish people bound together first and foremost by a shared history, Herzl was less explicitly interested in notions of race. However, his Zionist desire to create a Jewish national space is intrinsically situated within such ethno-nationalist framework. Fellow early Zionists such as Leo Pinsker and Martin Buber, respective representatives of the generation before and after Herzl, more fully embraced the racial nationalist discourse that came to be known as 'blood and soil'. Especially the early Buber stood out, as Sand puts it, as a 'bold and consistent Volkist' (259). Sand argues that a 'neo-Romantic mysticism of heredity and soil underlay the spiritual nationalism of this charismatic thinker' (260). In Buber's early writings, he revered blood as 'the deepest, most potent stratum of our being', as 'that something which is implanted within us by the chain of fathers and mothers, by their nature and by their fate, by their deeds and by their sufferings' (*On Judaism*, 17). He furthermore argued that, only 'when the homeland where [man] grew up is also the homeland of his blood; when the language and the ways in which he grew up are, at the same time, the language and the ways of his blood' (*On*

Judaism, 16); only then, the argument implies, a rooted, healthy life is achieved. He referred to this perfect union of blood and soil as the ‘natural objective situation’, ‘[a] life [that] runs its course in harmony and secure growth’ (*On Judaism* 18). For Buber, the Jews did not live in this ‘natural objective situation’: their existence was characterised by the lack of a homeland and thus inherently unhealthy. Accordingly, he talked about the ‘innermost sickness of the uprooted people’ (*On Judaism*, 53). Buber appears to have overcome his strong *Volkist* views at the later stages of his life and career when he would introduce Hebrew humanism and call for a Jewish-Arab agreement. His early beliefs however serve to provide an idea of the prevailing ethno-nationalist ideas of the time that have survived in Israel until today.

Once again, Zionism aligned itself with the anti-Semitic discourse by internalising the nationalist accusation of Jewish rootlessness. Beit-Hallahmi explains that ‘[t]he most hated and often mentioned image of the Diaspora Jews was that of the *luftmensch*, an ‘air-man’, who was engaged in *luftgeschehen*, ‘air-business’, thus ‘cut off from nature [and] the land’ (47). It is in opposition to this anti-Semitic stereotype that Zionism constructed its image of the ‘new Jew’ and his ‘return to the Jewish Homeland’. Magnes summarised the anti-Semite’s charge of Jewish rootlessness as follows:

The anti-Semite has accused us of being democrats and liberals and radicals everywhere on the ground that we are not deeply rooted in any soil. He has charged us with having no conservative instincts because we have no real hearth and home, boundaries and property of our ancestors to defend. We are spectators, onlookers, bystanders, he says.

(Hertzberg, 447-448)

Herzl’s response: ‘We don’t want to be sexless cosmopolitans.’³⁸ Typical in its assumption of a masculine ideal, Herzl’s statement lifts the cosmopolitan to the archetypal figure of distrust: the cosmopolitan arouses suspicion because he does not truly belong in any place; rootless, he is without one true home. Bringing back to mind Buber’s ‘fear of ghosts’, Herzl’s nightmare vision of the sexless cosmopolitan also expresses the fear of being judged abnormal, therefore unclassifiable and unfathomable.

Zionism set out to transform this perception of a rootless and homeless people into that of an uprooted people with a homeland to return to. Its self-proclaimed mission was

³⁸ [‘*Nur wollen wir keine geschlechtslosen Kosmopoliten sein* (Herzl, ‘Der Zionismus im Urtheile hervorragender Zeitgenossen, 3).]

‘the creation of a home’, ‘a legally secured, permanent homeland for the Jewish people’ (*ZWI*, 145; 146). Such ‘secure soil’ could only be found in the Jews’ ancestral birthplace (*ZWI*, 228), Eliot’s ‘early home’. In accordance with Romantic nationalist discourse, Zionism declared the Jewish people organically and eternally connected to *Eretz-Israel*, the Land of Israel, a continuity that was forcefully disrupted by the Jews’ expulsion two thousand years ago. This ‘organically coherent territorial narrative’ (Piterberg, *Returns*, 140), together with the myth of ‘unbroken ethnic continuity’ (Sand, 147), must be seen to form the two pillars of the Zionist story of exile and return. Beit-Hallahmi explains:

Zionism must claim continuity with the Jewish past, since it has presented itself as speaking for the Jewish people and as the culmination of their history, but also attempts to create discontinuity, through a new space of a national homeland and a new time of secular nationalism.

In order to solve the paradoxes and ambivalence, Zionism creates (or invents) a new Jewish history, based on two ideas: first the claim that Jewish identity was formed in Palestine and not in the Diaspora; second, the claim that Jews were forced into exile, or Diaspora, against their will, and they yearned to return to the homeland.

(47)

This narrative firmly implants the Jewish people into the Palestinian land, its history and culture, and thereby legitimises the Zionist colonisation project not only to the outside world, but also to the settlers themselves, providing inner security of identity and mission. Sand sees these ideological foundations clearly manifest in the political identity of the Jewish state today. He thus argues that Israel is an ‘unbridled ethnocracy that [...] rests on the active myth of an eternal nation that must ultimately forgather in its ancestral land’ (22). Furthermore he observes that, ‘[b]ehind every act in Israel’s identity politics stretches, like a long black shadow, the idea of an eternal people and race’ (280).

The return narrative authenticates the Zionist claim to Palestine: the Jewish settlers are, as Herzl stresses, returning ‘to [their] father’s house’ (*ZWI*, 133). They thus merely reappropriate what is rightfully theirs: ‘after all, we are the hereditary lords of the land’ (*CDII*, 517). Herzl’s rhetoric illustrates the inverted narrative upon which Zionism is built:

The colonization of Palestine proceeded always as a fact of repetition: The Jews were not supplanting, destroying, breaking up a native society. That society was itself the oddity that had broken the pattern of a sixty-year Jewish sovereignty over Palestine which had lapsed for two millennia. In Jewish hearts, however, Israel had always been there, an actuality difficult for the natives to perceive. Zionism

therefore reclaimed, redeemed, repeated, replanted, realized Palestine, and Jewish hegemony over it. Israel was a return to a previous state of affairs, even if the new facts bore a far greater resemblance to the methods and successes of nineteenth century European colonialism than to some mysterious first-century forebears.

(Said, *Question of Palestine*, 86-87)

In a spin exemplary of the ‘ideological acrobatics of the Zionist project’ (Massad, 26), Zionism proclaims the Jews’ ancestral home under foreign occupation by the Palestinian Arabs: the colonisers become the colonised, and the Jews emerge as the indisputable moral owners of Palestine.

To further reinforce its legitimacy claim, foundational Zionist discourse was keen to emphasise the exclusive connection that existed between the Jewish people and the ‘Land of Israel’, so that, as Herzl admits, ‘no one will be able to deny that there exists a relationship in perpetuity between our people and this land’ (*ZWII*, 19). This connection was portrayed as vital for the secure and healthy existence of the Jewish people. Without this union, as Jewish history had indeed proved, the Jews were led into degeneration. Pinsker had in that respect already argued that, ‘[w]ith the loss of their fatherland, the Jews [...] fell into a state of decay which is incompatible with the existence of a whole and vital organism’ (184). Sand notes that what is invoked is an ‘imagery of the “ethnic” people as a drifting body that cannot live or function until it returns to its purported birthplace’ (190). Herzl’s envisaged ‘system of transplantation’ [*System der Verpflanzung*] (*Gesammelte Zionistische Werke II*, 149)] into a ‘better soil’ (*CDI*, 149) was meant to halt and reverse this decay, and thereby keep alive the Jewish national organism. In *Altneuland*, we are told that ‘Jewish children used to be pale, weak, timid’ (94); now, on their ancestral land, they have grown strong and healthy. New Society member David Littwak tells the astonished European newcomers:

The explanation of this miracle is the simplest in the world. We took our children out of damp cellars and hovels, and brought them into the sunlight. Plants cannot thrive without sun. No more can human beings. Plants can be saved by transplantation into congenial soil. Human beings as well. That is how it happened!

(94)

The Palestinian soil, representing the nurturing womb of the motherland, is the most congenial of soils for the Jews. Even world-weary Friedrich soon feels the effect of the

homeland when he is suddenly overcome with a lust for life previously unknown to him: 'Friedrich was happy, inexplicably happy. He was young again, exuberant' (*Anl*, 137).

The exclusive relationship between the Jewish people and their ancestral land is shown to be reciprocal: Herzl thus anticipated '[t]he people [...] to be improved by the soil, and the soil by the people' (*ZWI*, 226). David Littwak encapsulates this belief when he says that, '[t]he "Old-New-Land" [has] been fructified into a garden and a home for people who had once been poor, weak, hopeless, and homeless', and adds: 'it has lifted us up!' (271). Herzl envisaged the Jewish redemption of the land along the following lines:

[...] "National Judaism" will make the ancient soil fertile. It seems miraculous. Everything natural is miraculous. Once the nation which we Zionists are arousing is fully awakened, things will happen swiftly and dynamically. Then the nation will behold its ancient land beautifully situated on the Mediterranean, with regions of cold, moderate and warm climate – a land suited for any kind of cultivation, with long-dormant natural resources [...].

(*ZWI*, 70)

In *Altneuland*, the Jewish settlers indeed manage to redeem the land. On his first visit to 'the old land of the Jews', Friedrich is horrified by the 'state of extreme decay' he discovers: 'If this is our land [...], it has declined like our people' (*Anl*, 51). The only glimmer of hope is found in the few Jewish colonies that 'lay like oases in the desolate countryside' (*Anl*, 57). On his second visit, this initial 'picture of desolation' (*Anl*, 51) has been replaced by the image of a 'new, vigorous, joyous life' (*Anl*, 273). The Arab population, within this depiction, is blamed for having 'neglected [the] soil' (*Anl*, 251), while they are at the same time denied the Jews' unique, almost spiritual connectedness to the land that allows the 'sacred soil' to flourish in the first place (*Anl*, 165). Thus, no matter how hard they try, they will never be able to 'make the desert bloom' in the way the Jews can: 'That soil was unproductive for others, but for us it was a good soil. Because we fertilized it with our love' (*Anl*, 165). Elsewhere, Herzl similarly writes that the land's natural resources are 'of no worth to others because those others are not able to divert to it the productive streams of humanity which are at the command of Zionism' (*ZWI*, 70). Where the Palestinians had failed, Herzl falsely claimed, the Jewish settlers had to be thanked for the fact that 'oranges [were] blooming in Palestine' (*CDII*, 517).

Invoking 'neglected soil' is, as Edward Said has shown, a typical articulation of the colonial belief that 'Europe understood the value of land in a way impossible for the

natives' ('Standpoint', 27). A marker of non-civilisation, 'neglected soil' justified colonial rule over both the land and the people. Said thus argued that '[a]mong the supposed juridical distinctions between civilized and non-civilized peoples was an attitude toward land, almost a doxology about land which non-civilized people supposedly lacked' (26):

A civilized man, it was believed, could cultivate the land because it meant something to him; on it accordingly he bred useful arts and crafts, he created, he accomplished, he built. For an uncivilized people land was either farmed badly (i.e., inefficiently by Western standards) or it was left to rot. From this string of ideas, by which whole native societies who lived on American, African, and Asian territories for centuries were suddenly denied their right to live on that land, came the great dispossessing movements of modern European colonialism, and with them all the schemes for redeeming the land, resettling the natives, civilizing them, taming their savage customs, turning them into useful beings under European rule.

(‘Standpoint of its Victims’, 26-27)

In the context of Zionism, the Arab Palestinians were not only portrayed as non-civilised, but as outright foreigners whose claims were built on conquest and therefore lacked the Jews' innate connectedness to the Palestinian soil. In other words, Palestine was not their homeland but merely their current residence. This narrative posits the 'Jewish homeland' against the 'Arab world': the Palestinians have their own homeland to return to, the 'Arab homeland'. Zionism's inversion transforms the Jewish settlers into the true natives. In *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness*, Baruch Kimmerling draws attention to the fact that 'the Palestinians are construed as "local" rather than "native"' (210). Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin further argue that inherent in the 'Zionist narrative of the Land' is a basic 'confusion of "indigenous" (the people who belong here, whose land this rightfully is – a political claim, founded on present and recently past political realities) and "autochthonous" (the people who were never anywhere else but here and have a natural right to this land)' (715-716); the Zionist narrative is based on the latter, the 'myths of autochthony'.

Even before the Jews became a numerical or power majority in Palestine, the Zionist movement thus realised what Herzl anticipated: it got to designate the stranger. Zionist discourse succeeded in alienating the native Palestinians and turning them into foreigners on their own land. The success of this strategy can be seen in the fact that this

perception of the Palestinian as a stranger has been internalised by the Jewish Israeli public, as Beit-Hallahmi reports:

The Palestinians are native aliens, who become foreigners by the mere act of being born. But they are not just foreigners; they are the enemy [...]. [...] Every Arab in Israel is by definition a threat, because he is part of the Palestinian people. (90)

As Beit-Hallahmi further points out, Zionist ideology imposes the externalisation of the natives because they complicate, ‘by mere presence,’ the Zionist vision of Palestine as the Jewish homeland: ‘[t]hey are the spoilers of the dream’ (90). In the imagined Jewish national-colonial space, there was and is no place for the indigenous population. In its settler colonial quest to root European Jews in Palestine, Zionism’s physical uprooting of the Palestinians through the appropriation of their land was preceded by the appropriation of native history and culture. One finds a striking example of such appropriation in *Altneuland*. While visiting a Jewish colony during their first stay in Palestine, Kingscourt and Friedrich are welcomed with ‘[a] sort of Arab fantasy’:

The youngsters galloped far off into the fields, threw their steeds about, and rushed back again shouting, throwing guns and caps into the air mid-career and catching them again. Finally, they rode home in single file singing a Hebrew song. (58)

Even this ‘Arab fantasy’, be it a highly romanticised, Orientalist vision of a supposedly Arab way of life, no longer belongs to the Palestinian Arabs. The Hebrew song at the end of the performance finalises the Zionist appropriation of Arab culture. The aim is to “‘autochthonize” Jewish identity’ (Stolow, 62), to embed it organically into the ‘Oriental’ setting.³⁹

It is not the literal presence of the native population that is denied, but their rightful ownership of the land. When Zionism declared Palestine ‘empty’, this meant in practical terms, as Gershon Shafir has pointed out, ‘that the newcomers viewed the native

³⁹ This scene is representative of the early approach by European Jewish settlers in Palestine who often selectively adopted Arab dress and other cultural signifiers in an attempt to establish their connection to the environment and visualise their ancient claim. The members of the settler defence organisation *Hashomer* for example widely wore Bedouin-style clothing in what amounted to an Orientalist projection of their mission as the autochthonous defenders of the land. The general settler population embraced a similar self-image. Eyal Sivan’s film, *Jaffa: The Orange’s Clockwork*, offers in this respect fascinating footage of a group of young settler women at the beginning of the twentieth century, dressed in Arab-style clothing and cheerfully engaged in a performance of some kind of communal folkloristic dance.

population as part and parcel of the environment that was to be subdued, tamed, and made hospitable for themselves' (*Land, Labor*, xii). The purpose of the Zionist rooting narrative was thus to make the native population disappear and replace them with the image of the natural and authentic presence – since time immemorial – of the Jews. Said argued that 'all the constitutive energies of Zionism were premised on the excluded presence, that is the functional absence of the "native people" in Palestine', to '[make] sure the natives would remain in their "non-place"' ('Standpoint', 29). In *Altneuland*, it is the almost complete, but never explained, Arab absence that redeems the land and civilises its residents.

From the inception of the Zionist movement, the notions of 'Jewish home' and 'Jewish homeland' were used ambiguously. They were used to denominate a future Jewish state without having explicitly to say so. Already in 1880, Pinsker's call for a Jewish home was in effect the demand for a Jewish state: 'we finally must have a *home*, if not a *country* of our own' (193). Under Herzl, this covert use became strategic. He knew that an explicit call for the establishment of a Jewish state would alarm the Ottoman Empire, under whose rule Palestine still was, and of course the native population of Palestine who he rightfully expected to revolt against the Zionist seizure of power. Following Zionist terminology, the notorious Balfour Declaration from 1917 would thus promise the Zionists a 'Jewish National Home', without any further clarification as to what this meant. Since 'national home' is not a legal term, it is open to interpretation. Magnes criticised the vague Zionist employment of 'Jewish home', as well as the conscious adoption of this ambiguity by Great Britain in the Balfour Declaration. On the latter, he remarked: 'What the "Jewish National Home" means has never been made clear. It can be made to mean anything which British imperialism finds it to its advantage to mean' (*Dissenter*, 187). Magnes argued that, just as the Zionists used the notion's ambiguity to hide their true intentions to the Ottoman officials and the Palestinian population, so did Britain make use of its indistinctness to guarantee the compliance with British imperial interests. Going again further than any other Zionist, Magnes appealed for the abandonment of the idea of a 'Jewish Home', insisting: '[i]t is time that we came down to realities' (*Dissenter*, 277). However, his appeal is complicated by his simultaneous rejection of the Palestinian homeland or, as he sees it, 'Arab homeland'. He declared Palestine '*sui generis*' in its 'internationalism', that is, it 'does not "belong" to anyone in particular in the spiritual

sense' (*Dissenter*, 271). This rejection of both the Jewish homeland and the Arab homeland allowed him to declare a situation of equal claims, thereby distorting the reality of the conflict.

The fundamental ambiguity of the notion of 'home' can be further illustrated through the contradictory definitions that Herzl and Arendt provided. Firstly, this is how Herzl defined 'home':

[H]ome is not merely a locality. It is, in fact, the narrowest conception of a home to define it only in terms of habituation to a city, a street, or a house. Home is the acknowledged connection with the thought and feeling of a national community. The emphasis is on "acknowledged;" without this acknowledgment there can be no home.

(*ZWI*, 171)

While his observation holds some validity, Herzl's focus is limited to the question of inner acknowledgment, completely ignoring the necessity of outside recognition. Arendt was keen to emphasise the latter aspect in her understanding of 'home': 'A home that my neighbour does not recognize and respect is not a home. A Jewish national home that is not recognized and not respected by its neighboring people is no home but an illusion – until it becomes a battlefield' (*Writings*, 235). When Arendt argues that the Jewish homeland lacks the recognition of 'the only partner who actually counts when it comes to recognition, because that partner is our neighbor', she is referring to the Arab world as a whole, ignoring thus also the specific presence of the Palestinians who are in fact not neighbours, but live within a shared space (*Writings*, 236).

There is further disagreement when it comes to the essential nature of 'home'. This disagreement can be seen to reflect Herzl and Arendt's differing conceptions of authenticity. As this section has shown, for Herzl, home is the place of natural belonging. Within his conception, the return narrative is essential in constructing the Jewish homeland. Jewish legitimacy to the land lies in this natural link. For Arendt on the other hand, as Ron H. Feldman emphasises in his introduction to *The Jew as Pariah*, 'home' should be 'a place that is *built*' (35). He furthermore explains that for Arendt, 'the greatness of the *Yishuv* was that it was the conscious product of the concerted will of the Jewish people and *not* the predestined product of any natural forces to which the Jewish people were subject' (36). Arendt herself wrote in 1950 that it is 'precisely this artificiality' of the Zionist enterprise that 'gave the Jewish achievements in Palestine their

human significance' (*Pariah*, 206). Arendt saw the establishment of a Jewish state as a profoundly political act: the Jewish homeland for her, a first and foremost political space. Furthermore, it is the building up of this homeland that gives in Arendt's view the Jewish claim to Palestine its authenticity. In what reminds one of the earlier discussed 'neglected soil' discourse, she argues that 'Jewish rights to Palestine [are] earned and founded on Jewish labour' (*Writings*, 236). Buber offers the same justification for the colonisation of Palestine when he writes that 'the right of productivity is the actual right of colonisation' [*das Recht der Produktivität ist das eigentliche koloniasatorische Recht* (*Judenstaat*, 150-151)]. Pervaded with colonial discourse as this chapter has shown, *Altneuland* also presents the recently built Jewish colonies like islands of productivity in a sea of decay and barrenness.

Both Herzl and Arendt failed to challenge the very notions of 'home' and 'homeland', as well as of 'authenticity'. In his *Enlightenment in the Colony*, Mufti calls for the renunciation of 'the certainties of "home"' and for resistance to 'the apotheosis of the nation-state as the only proper dwelling place of culture and self' (261). 'What is needed', he claims, 'is an immanent critique of the aura of authenticity itself, a critique that seeks to *displace* terms such as "tradition", "culture" and "homeland" in which the problematic of authenticity is produced' (21). While Zionism, along with other nationalisms, was looking for spaces of home, Mufti argues that one ought to be looking for unhomey spaces, since home is always but an unrealisable space, a utopia. In Mufti's eyes, the Jews have the capacity to challenge these categories through their ambiguous status of belonging. He claims that 'the Jews constitute a scandal in national life' (99) in the sense that they '[put] into question any settled identification of *this* place with *this* people and *this* language' (106). The Jewish example could thus have led to a re-evaluation of these certainties and offered an alternative association of place with people. Zionism fell short of engaging in such revolutionary reassessments.

3 ERASURES

Reappropriating Palestinian History

Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.

(Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 169)

. . . extraordinary *possibilities* wiped out.

(Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, 43, emphasis in original)

As the Zionist movement began appropriating and settling land in Palestine for the exclusive access of European Jews, there was already an indigenous population, Arab Muslims, Christians and Jews, that had lived and worked on this same land for generations and thus naturally viewed it as their home.¹ The Zionist leadership and Jewish settlers were necessarily aware of this presence, but, as the previous chapter has already shown, the majority Arab population was inconsequential to the Zionist imaginings of the future 'Jewish Homeland'. The picture of Palestine thus painted to the world public, and especially to European Jewry on whose active partaking the Zionist movement depended, was incongruous with the reality on the ground: Palestine was not, as Zionism's colonial invention of space posited, an 'empty land', free to settle and free of an existing sovereignty; nor was Palestine a vacuum in space and time, backward and stagnant, but,

¹ In *The Origins of Palestinian Nationalism*, Muhammad Y. Muslih provides the following population statistics for the mid-nineteenth century: total population of nearly 500,000 'of whom more than 80 percent were Muslims, about 10 percent Christians, and 5 to 7 percent Jews' (13). He furthermore notes that during the first two waves of Jewish immigration 1880-1914, 'the population increased to about 690,000. [...] The Arabs remained the predominant component of the population, with the Jews numbering no more than 60,000 in 1904, and nearly 85,000 ten years later, or about 12 percent of the overall population' (14).

like the rest of the Eastern Mediterranean not only affected by the social, economic and political developments of the region, but also increasingly implicated in world trends.

It is this distortion of Palestinian history – persistently propagated by Zionism since its inception and which has become cemented in public opinion in the years following the establishment of Israel – that came to shape Palestinian responses to Zionism. Against the European movement’s efforts to ideologically uproot Palestinians, that is, deny them any meaningful part in the historical narrative of the country, the latter early on adopted a defensive stance attempting to counter this misrepresentation, even erasure: not only were – and still are – Palestinians continuously asserting their very existence as a people on the land for generations, but also their significance as a polity that actively participated in the political, economic and social developments of the country. In his photographic history of pre-1948 Palestinian life, *Before Their Diaspora*, Palestinian historian Walid Khalidi thus deems it necessary to introduce his volume by stating what is taken for granted for most other peoples in the world, namely that ‘[t]he Palestinians were as deeply entrenched in their country on the eve of the Zionist venture as any citizenry or peasantry anywhere’ (33). Works such as Khalidi’s resist the Zionist discursive strategy of rejecting the Palestinians’ collective past before 1948 – in Fanon’s words, they resist colonialism’s ‘work of devaluing pre-colonial history’ (169) – by documenting the Palestinians’ emotional bond with the country as well as their collective political consciousness, and thereby re-root them firmly within the history of the country.

The *Nakba* of 1948, literally ‘catastrophe’, was the watershed moment for Palestinians that marked the complete upheaval of their society. Over half the country’s majority Arab population was driven from their homes.² Many Palestinian villages were not only depopulated but also completely destroyed.³ Already in 1961, Walid Khalidi had divorced these events from the context of the Arab-Israeli war and identified the Zionist actions as a premeditated campaign of ethnic cleansing. More specifically, he uncovered ‘Plan Dalet’ or ‘Plan D’ as the Zionist master plan for ridding Palestine of its Arab

² The exact number of Palestinian refugees is still disputed. Depending on the source, figures vary between half a million and a million displaced individuals. UN statistics estimate that more than 700,000 Palestinians had become refugees in 1948.

³ In his 2004 *Atlas of Palestine, 1948*, Palestinian historian Salman Abu-Sitta compiles demographic and statistical material on more than six hundred villages and towns depopulated in 1948, while the exhaustive 1992 project led by Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, details the destruction of 418 Palestinian villages.

inhabitants. The successive military offensives launched under Plan D ‘entailed the destruction of the Palestinian Arab community and the expulsion and pauperization of the bulk of the Palestine Arabs’, and ‘were calculated to achieve the military fait accompli upon which the state of Israel was to be based’ (8). Implemented in April and early May 1948, Plan D preceded the withdrawal of the British forces and thus also the outbreak of war. Truly revelatory is the name of one of the military operations that Khalidi lists as part of Plan D, ‘Operation Matateh’, ‘*matateh*’ being the Hebrew word for ‘broom’ as Israeli historian Ilan Pappé specifies in his more recent *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (108). In anticipation of the establishment of the Jewish state, the land was thus to be swept of its native population to make room for Jewish immigrants from Europe. Khalidi is adamant to emphasise in this respect that the ‘[t]he ideological premises of Plan D are to be found in the very concept of Zionism’, by which he means that the idea of transfer (or ethnic cleansing) has to be understood as intrinsic to the Zionist movement’s quest to appropriate a land already populated and governed (9).⁴ Disastrously for the Palestinians, the *Nakba* effected not only their physical displacement from their homeland, but it was also to entrench their disappearance from the country’s history.

The belatedness of the Palestinian response in the literary arena has been widely noted, without however offering a conclusive rationalisation. While of course acknowledging the dispossessor’s conscious efforts to suppress the voice of the dispossessed and the world’s complicit failure to listen to the latter, two additional factors are commonly suggested to explain the apparent Palestinian silence in the years following their disaster: the first one is straightforward and refers to the fundamental confusion and insecurity of the post-Nakba years during which Palestinian lives were governed by sheer survival and/or the struggle to make a new life in exile. These adverse conditions of life clearly did not facilitate or even allow much, if any, artistic output. The second explanation is of a psychological nature and highlights the traumatic dimension of the events of 1948 and its debilitating effect on the Palestinians. The added fact that the

⁴ Walid Khalidi’s ‘Plan Dalet: The Zionist Master Plan for the Conquest of Palestine’ was first published in *Middle East Forum* in November 1961. The article was reprinted with a new introduction and some appendices in a special issue of *Journal of Palestine Studies* in 1988. Since then, the planned expulsion of the Palestinians by Zionist forces in 1948 has been argued by a number of historians: see for example Nur Masalha’s seminal *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of “Transfer” in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. For more recent studies supporting these claims, see Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and Rosemarie M. Esber, *Under the Cover of War: The Zionist Expulsion of the Palestinians* (full citations for all of the above in ‘Works Cited’).

situation for a majority of Palestinians was and still is an unresolved one, further helps to explain the delay: since writing one's own history usually originates from a moment of closure and a position of stability and security, the lack thereof for many Palestinians necessarily made it difficult to commence a process of retrospection – personal or collective.

Today, the myriad of Palestinian life writing published since the early 1990s in particular documents a Palestinian urge to 'write back', to redress the picture of passivity, backwardness and desolation that Zionism has been painting of Palestinian life for over a century. Crucially, these memoirs reach beyond the personal sphere: by writing pre-1948 Palestine into existence as a vibrant and dynamic society, these life stories become politically meaningful by establishing a collective narrative in resistance to the hegemonic colonial account. Palestinian life writing emanating from the occupied territories and dealing with a contemporary reality will become the focus in the final part of this thesis. The (auto)biographical writings discussed in this chapter reach back to a more distant past and serve to highlight a new interest in and re-evaluation of Palestinian pre-colonial history. In *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle*, in which Raja Shehadeh sets out to remap his great-great-uncle's escape route from Ottoman police, the Palestinian lawyer-turned-writer suggests that this renewed look to the past is triggered by the continued failure of political progress in the resolution of the conflict, resulting in ever-growing frustrations for many Palestinians at their present situation of occupation, discrimination and/or exile. It was thus disappointment from 'the false peace heralded by the signing of the Oslo Accords' that prompted Shehadeh's own thoughts in the late 1990s to turn to the past, 'to the time where it all began', and made him embark on his literary project that not only rediscovers, but indeed re-appreciates, Ottoman Palestine (2). It seems that with no hope of any form of physical reappropriation of – or repatriation to – Palestine in the foreseeable future, attention necessarily turns to retrieving a collective history. However, much more than the mere product of desperation, this conquest of the past is, as Amilcar Cabral has remarked, indeed a primary task of the liberation movements: 'the foundation of national liberation lies in the inalienable right of every people to have their own history' (143). Faced with an ideological/cultural attack as much as with a physical one, this reclaiming of the past proves in fact the Palestinians' most effective weapon since it fights the settler colonial movement at its very root by

debunking the foundational myths used to this day to justify Israel's existence as a Jewish state in Palestine.

Palestinian efforts to reclaim their past have found recent support in a trend of revisionist works by Palestinian and other historians that reassess the rule of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in its outer domains such as the Arab provinces to which the geographical area of Palestine belonged. These studies manage to shed new light on Palestinian society prior to and during the early phases of Zionist immigration, often focusing on hitherto marginalised internal matters and thus highlighting the agency of the inhabitants in the moulding of their own history. It is on these revisionist studies that the historical narrative of this chapter draws.⁵

What follows in a first stage is a contextualisation of pre-1948 Palestine with a particular focus on the last fifty years of Ottoman rule. Such contextualisation is needed, not only to understand the conditions during which the Zionist movement laid the foundations for its future state, but also in order to fully comprehend the events of 1948, that is, realise its impact upon the region and the people. From such valuation, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing British rule over Palestine surface as the breeding ground for the fateful events of 1948. Rather than offering a comprehensive history of the late Ottoman Empire, my specific interest revolves around issues of identity: I attempt to establish a sense of the prevailing loyalties amongst the inhabitants of the country on the eve of Zionist immigration in order to trace and explain early reactions to Zionism and uncover emerging narratives of defence and resistance. Thus, I will be asking how Palestinians – Muslims, Christians and Jews – saw themselves in relation to Istanbul and

⁵ These studies include: Yuval Ben-Bassat and Eyal Ginio, *Late Ottoman Palestine: The Period of Young Turk Rule*. London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011; Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011; Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909*. London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011; Beshara Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995; Samih K. Farsoun and Naseer H. Aruri, *Palestine and the Palestinians: A Social and Political History*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2006 (chapter 2); Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010 (chapters 2-6); Ussama Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism'. *The American Historical Review* 107.3 (June 2002): 768-796; 'Adel Manna', 'Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Rebellions in Palestine'. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 24.1 (Autumn 1994): 51-66; Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009; Salim Tamari, *Year of the Locust: A Soldier's Diary and the Erasure of Palestine's Ottoman Past*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011.

positioned themselves in relation to the Jewish settlers and the Zionist movement at large, as well as in relation to the British during their Mandate.

3.1 Hidden Histories I: Ottoman Palestine

For 400 years (1517-1918), the area that was later to become Mandatory Palestine formed part of the Arab provinces under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.⁶ Spanning from Western Asia to the Balkans, Egypt and the coast of North Africa, the empire had its centre in Istanbul. From there, the autocratic sultan governed, with varying degrees of authority and force over the four centuries, his multi-ethnic Muslim and non-Muslim subjects.

When the first wave of European Jewish settlers arrived in Palestine in the late nineteenth century, the society they settled in was far from stagnant but changing rapidly. Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi identifies the last half-century of Ottoman rule as a period of comprehensive restructuring and indeed progress, with ‘Jerusalem and the rest of Palestine [...] in a nearly constant process of transition’:

As these transformations in government, administration, education, justice, communications, and transportation took place, and as the security situation in the country improved, the population grew, and the economy responded positively to these changes and to the blessings of the last lengthy period of uninterrupted peace in the country’s modern history.

(Palestinian Identity, 60)

⁶ Note here that under Ottoman administration, there was no political unit known as Palestine. The country was in fact ‘better known by its Arab-Muslim name of *al-Ard al Muqadassa* (the Holy Land). Palestine was also referred to as *Surya al-Janubiyya* (Southern Syria), because it was part of geographical Syria, namely the land mass that incorporated present-day Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan’ (Muslih, 11). On an administrative level, this area was divided into three districts towards the end of the nineteenth century: ‘the district (*sanjak*) of Jerusalem, comprising the southern half of the country; and the two northern districts of Nablus and Acre. The two northern districts were administratively attached to the province (*vilayet*) of Beirut’ (Walid Khalidi, *Before the Diaspora*, 32). Due to its special religious status, Jerusalem ‘was established in 1887 as an independent administrative unit and was made directly responsible to Istanbul’ (Muslih, 12).

Alexander Schölch has shown that these basic economic and socio-political transformations preceded Zionist immigration, discounting the preconception that the integration of the Palestinian economy into European markets, as well as the country's overall modernisation processes were the exclusive outcomes of outside intervention. Schölch ascertained that already during the 1856-1882 period, Palestine produced large agricultural surpluses and was incorporated into the world capitalist economy as an exporter of barley, wheat, sesame, olive oil, soap and cotton. Similar to Khalidi, Schölch characterises the period immediately preceding the arrival of the first groups of Jewish settlers as one in which 'a sense of security, progress, and reconstruction prevailed':

Palestine witnessed a remarkable upswing during the second half of the period we studied [i.e. since the 1860s]: agricultural production was extended considerably; sanitary and medical conditions improved; the faces of many towns changed within a short period [...].

(503-504)

These transformations were to some extent the result of a fundamental reform program launched by the central government in Istanbul in 1839, the so-called *Tanzimat*, most commonly translated as 'reorganisation' or 'reordering'.⁷ Muhammad Y. Muslih explains the *Tanzimat* as,

a sustained program of reform [...] that encompassed the main branches of government, including the administration of justice, finance, and security. The aim of the program was to centralize the various instruments of government, differentiate their functions on the basis of rational principles of justice, and apply these principles equally to all Ottoman citizens.

(21)

Most noteworthy among these reforms for the Palestinian context was the so-called Ottoman Land Code implemented in two stages in 1856 and 1862. While up until that point, all Ottoman land was under the sole ownership of the sultan, foreclosing thus the accumulation of private wealth, the Land Code reform privatised land tenure effecting thereby a feudal system. Because Palestinian peasants were however reluctant to register their land in their own names – mainly out of fear that such official records would make

⁷ Scholars disagree on the extent to which the *Tanzimat* reforms brought about these changes, some even arguing that the region's entry into modernity preceded any state interventions. (For the latter argument see Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture*, pp. 4-5.)

them vulnerable to persecution by tax collectors and to military conscription – many turned to the big influential families of the region to have their land registered for them. The system of absentee landlords thus created would later on play into the hands of the Zionist Organisation and crucially facilitate its acquisition of Palestinian land.

The *Tanzimat* was a program of modernisation and centralisation with which the Ottoman rulers sought to essentially defend and unify the empire. As such, it must be understood as a defensive strategy devised to guarantee the survival of the empire by protecting it against external influence and aggression, as well as internal division: with the empire's military might weakened and its finances in crisis, the great European powers started to look at the Ottoman territories with hope of expansion; at the same time, the empire was threatened from within by separatist nationalist movements, especially in its remaining European domains.

Such defence, as both Selim Deringil and Ussama Makdisi argue in their studies of the late Ottoman period, required the empire to re-position itself in relation to both its own subjects and the outside world. Regarding their subjects, the centralisation of Ottoman authority all over the empire was deemed necessary in order to consolidate Ottomanism, that is the cohesion of all Ottoman subjects through their shared loyalty to the empire and the dynasty. The motive behind this reinforcement of Ottoman identity was two-fold: concessions such as the granting of egalitarian legal rights to all of its subjects were made with view of fending off the growing menace from nationalisms springing up all over the empire. At the same time, Istanbul's deliberate efforts to secure loyalty and support in its outer provinces also served an external defence: with the empire's borders under increasing threat from without, these hitherto marginal populations had to be mobilised through the inclusive idea of Ottomanism.

To the outside world, the program of modernisation and indeed westernisation signalled the Ottoman state's desire to 'redefine itself as more than an Islamic dynasty, as a modern, bureaucratic and tolerant state – a partner of the west rather than its adversary' (Ussama Makdisi, 770). Makdisi further stresses the ambivalence of the empire's relation with the West: he thus argues that Ottoman modernity was envisioned as 'a state and civilisation technologically equal to and temporally coeval with the West but culturally distinct from and politically independent of it' (770). Deringil adds to this that, in their emulation of the West, 'the Ottoman elite conflated the ideas of modernity and

colonialism, and applied the latter as a means of survival against an increasingly hostile world [...]: this led them to '[adopt] the mindset of their enemies, the arch-imperialists, and [...] to conceive of its periphery as a colonial setting' ('Nomadism and Savagery', 311-312). Deringil identifies this as a form of 'borrowed colonialism', which he explains in the following terms:

For the Ottomans, colonialism was a survival tactic, and in this sense the Ottoman Empire can hardly be compared to the aggressive industrial empires of the West. In a sense theirs was much closer to the "borrowed imperialism" of the Russian Empire, another "also ran" compared to the British and the French. It was a survival tactic because the Ottomans were fully aware that if they were not to become a colony themselves they had to at least qualify for such "also ran" status. It is this in-between status that I will refer to as the "borrowed colonialism" of the Ottoman nineteenth century.

(‘Nomadism and Savagery’, 313)

Deringil thus explains the Ottoman adoption of colonial attitudes towards the end of the nineteenth century in terms of defence and survival. He puts this even clearer in the conclusion to his article:

In order to avoid becoming a colony, and to stake a legitimate claim to existence in an increasingly hostile world, the Ottomans decided that they had to become like the enemy, to borrow his tools, so to speak.

(‘Nomadism and Savagery’, 341)

Makdisi, placing less emphasis on the defensive nature of what he terms ‘Ottoman Orientalism’, nonetheless agrees with Deringil’s overall assessment: he thus argues that Ottoman modernisation led directly to ‘a complex of Ottoman attitudes produced by a nineteenth-century age of Ottoman reform that implicitly and explicitly acknowledged the West to be the home of progress and the East, writ large, to be a *present* theater of backwardness’ (769). The result, as Makdisi further points out, was the reinforcement of ‘an imperial relationship that explicitly separated a modernizing center from the rest of the empire’ (784). This modernising centre, as imagined by the Turkish Ottoman elite, was constituted by the Turkish nation; all other peoples of the empire – paradoxically in particular the fellow Muslim population – were marginal elements to be ruled, and since the start of the reform program, to be civilised. Makdisi rightly notes the inherent ‘paradox

of Ottoman reform' in that it was 'inclusivist insofar as it sought to integrate all provinces and peoples into an official nationalism of Ottomanism and yet also temporally segregated and ultimately racially differentiated' (770). The relation between Ottoman rulers and their subjects thus created was deeply ambivalent:

Beginning with the Tanzimat, Ottoman reformers identified with these subjects as *potential* fellow citizens with whom they should be united in a newly defined common modern Ottoman patriotism. They also saw them as fellow victims of European intrigue and imperialism. Yet at the same time, they regarded these subjects as backwards and as not-yet-Ottoman, as hindrances to as well as objects of imperial reform.

(Makdisi, 'Ottoman Orientalism', 770)

This 'not-yet-Ottoman' formula bears an obvious similarity to Homi Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry that he articulated as 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*' (122, emphasis in original).

Osman Nuri Paşa, a prominent Ottoman figure under the reign of Abdülhamid II, expresses such attitudes of Turkish inherent superiority and colonial difference very clearly in a statement from 1885:

Even if it were possible to blend all the Muslim tribes and nations together by causing them to lose their special characteristics through the application of rigorous policies, they would still be no more than the boughs and branches of the tree whose trunk will still be constituted by the Turks.

(qtd. in Deringil, *Domains*, 59)

Paşa's metaphor conveys the Ottoman elite's underlying understanding of the empire as essentially Turkish. Although other Muslim and non-Muslim peoples have their place within the empire – indeed constituting organic fragments of the overall structure – the Turks are seen to form the core part, not only holding the empire together, but also legitimately ruling over the non-Turkish subjects. Ottoman civilising efforts were thus aimed at integrating these peripheral populations so as to secure their loyalty, while at the same time reproducing them as colonial subjects, intrinsically different, that is, inferior, and therefore in need of ruling and enlightening.

According to Deringil, 'the mission civilisatrice mentality of the new Ottoman bureaucracy' was predominantly directed at the Arab population of the empire (*Domains*,

41). He thus identifies a downright Ottoman ‘obsession with bringing civilization and progress to the Arabs’, concluding that, ‘in a strange paradox, the Ottomans were viewing ‘their’ Arabs through the very same prism through which the Europeans viewed them’ (*Domains*, 41; 164). For the Arabs of the Ottoman Empire, Istanbul’s combined efforts to centralise its authority over what it considered its ‘marginal elements’ and civilise them, were felt directly: whilst having enjoyed a great extent of autonomy before the reforms, even something very close to self-rule in certain regions, they now were ‘administer[ed] and control[led] with hitherto unprecedented intensity’ (Deringil, *Domains*, 112; 14). Doumani explains that since,

[t]he program aimed at modernizing the armed forces, centralizing political power, and increasing revenues from agricultural production, trade and manufacturing’, [...] more knowledge about and greater control of the subjects of the empire [was required]: population counts, conscription, direct collection of taxes, and the establishment of political institutions which could facilitate direct central control.

(48)

These were, as Deringil stresses, ‘unprecedented demands [by the Ottoman state] on its people’, no longer merely demanding ‘passive obedience but conformity to a unilaterally proclaimed normative order’ (*Domains*, 9; 11).

However, despite the central government’s significant increase of control and supervision in its outer domains, historians Michelle U. Campos and Beshara Doumani disagree with Ussama Makdisi’s portrayal of the *Tanzimat* as a ‘a top-down project par excellence, “imagined by the centre, then unilaterally imposed on the periphery”’ (Campos, 65). This, Campos argues, ‘ignores the ways in which Ottoman subjects themselves adopted, finessed, and challenged the state project from the second half of the nineteenth century until the final years of the empire. [...] Ottoman subjects learned to “speak Tanzimat” skilfully negotiating the gap between official and subaltern versions of reform and state power’ (65). She concludes that the reform program was ‘not only a state project, but rather was adopted and propagated by a wide variety of Ottoman [...] intellectuals and the newly educated classes’ (68). In his social history of peasants and merchants in Jabal Nablus (Nablus and its hinterland), *Rediscovering Palestine*, Doumani equally draws attention to the fact that ‘the Ottoman reforms were filtered and reshaped by a local ruling elite, a religious leadership and a merchant community composed entirely of

native sons' (51). This local ruling elite, Doumani continues, showed a willingness and desire 'to be active participants in the molding of a new political landscape, along with the central government [...]' (51).

For Campos, the problem lies in the common misrepresentation of imperial relationships in general:

The relationship between empires and their subjects cannot be limited to inequity, coercion, and collaboration; rather, the relationship must be seen as historically contingent and dynamic, and in many cases ties of identification "thicker" than simple co-optation were born.

(250)

Against the prevalent top-down view of Ottoman rule as an era of oppression, which puts Ottoman subjects in a straightforward relation of passive subordination, Campos and Doumani stress the political spaces that the local elites in the outlying Ottoman provinces such as the area of Palestine could create – and were allowed to create – for themselves. As we have seen already, Deringil characterises the late Ottoman situation as a case of borrowed colonialism, and as such, he understands Istanbul's adoption of colonial attitudes as a survival tactic through which the empire sought to secure its legitimation of power, internally as well as externally. Deringil makes it clear however that in reality, the empire's centre-periphery relationship did not fit the colonial paradigm. He indeed questions the very model of centre-periphery within the Ottoman context. Deringil thus argues that the local Arab elites not only happily accepted the Ottoman state as an overarching structure, but they were indeed part of this very structure, that is part of the Ottoman ruling cadres. To illustrate his point, Deringil contrasts the experience of two prominent men of the Palestinian Khalidi family, Yusuf Dia' al-Khalidi and Ruhi al-Khalidi, to that of the native elites in colonial India. As members of the Ottoman parliament, the Khalidis ranked as equals amongst the highest Turkish-Ottoman officials and were even kept in their posts when outspokenly critical of the Hamidian regime. The situation for British Indians was notably different:

No matter how elite they were, it would have been inconceivable for a Raja Rammohan Roy or a Sir Syed Ahmad Khanto to sit on the backbenches of Westminster.

(‘Nomadism and Savagery’, 336)

Deringil concludes that Bhabha's concept of colonial mimicry is in fact not applicable to the Ottoman context, precisely because it lacks the 'difference' inherent in Bhabha's formulation of colonial relationships:

For the Khalidis or their other Arab Ottoman cohorts, mimicry of the Ottoman elite would not have been an issue, they *were* the Ottoman elite. The Khalidis would not have to "mime" nor would they have to "fetishize." They, along with their Turkish, Albanian, Armenian, and Jewish fellow Young Turks or Young Ottomans, were already *within* the Ottoman system; Istanbul was not Gandhi's London or Ho Chin Minh's Paris – it was *their* city.

(‘Nomadism and Savagery’, 337, emphases in original)

This form of indirect rule through local notables might then explain the widespread loyalty to and identification with the Ottoman Empire even amongst the Arab population at large. Against today's prevailing popular view in the Arab world that the four centuries of Ottoman rule comprise the Arabs' Dark Ages, Deringil notes that 'the majority of the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire stayed loyal right to the bitter end' (*Domains*, 175). While the allegiance of the Muslim Arabs can be explained partly by the sultan's status as caliph and head of the Islamic community, the 'umma', Walid Khalidi adds that Ottoman Arabs generally,

felt like citizens rather than subjects of the empire. Their feeling of citizenship derived from the fact that the Ottoman Turks had never colonized the Arab provinces in the sense of settling in them; thus among the Arabs Ottomanism had acquired the connotation of partnership between the peoples of the empire rather than that of domination by one ethnic group over another.

(*Before Their Diaspora*, 32-33)

As we will see, it was only during the empire's very last years of existence that Arab-Turkish relations drastically and irrevocably deteriorated.

As for the non-Muslim population, their loyalty to the empire can be rationalised by the relative freedom they enjoyed under Ottoman rule. Muslih explains that, '[w]ith respect to the treatment of their non-Muslim subjects, the Ottomans adopted the *millet* system (from the word *milla* in Arabic which means religious community)':

This system [...] granted the Christians and Jews a large measure of religious, cultural, and legal authority. As a result of this, the Jews and Christians living in

the Ottoman Empire were divided into separate communities, each administered locally by its religious leaders and represented at Istanbul by an official spokesman.

(14-15)

Campos points out in this respect the ‘institutional difference’ maintained by the Ottoman Empire as an Islamic empire between its Muslim and non-Muslim subjects (8) – this difference indeed being embodied by and regulated through the millets which in this respect functioned as barriers. She however also makes it clear that at the same time,

non-Muslim communities were allowed a tremendous degree of self-governance and autonomy in the realms of communal institutions and religious law, and comparatively speaking, the status of non-Muslims in the Ottoman Empire was far better than that of non-Christians in Europe.

(8-9)

Campos further argues that, rather than caring about its population’s identity per se, that is rather than actively pursuing a specific identity politics, ‘the Ottoman state throughout much of its existence looked upon ethnic and religious diversity among its subject population and state officials in an altogether pragmatic fashion’ (9). Considering that the empire had for most of its existence a non-Muslim majority population, she explains, ‘this political pragmatism [...] was born of demographic realities’; even in the early twentiethcentury, after substantial territorial losses in its south-eastern European domains, it still had a population of about 25 percent non-Muslims (9).

While it is thus true, as Muslih claims, that for most of its history ‘identity in the Ottoman Empire was defined along religious lines’, it is also true, as he clarifies, that ‘the political identity of all the inhabitants of the empire, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, was Ottoman’ (15). This, he furthermore notes, ‘was at variance with the idea of nationality and the nation-state the way it was developed in Western Europe in the nineteenth century and the way we understand it today’ (15). In his study of the emergence of Palestinian identity, Rashid Khalidi talks in this respect about several overlapping and at times competing senses of identity that characterised Palestinian self-definition during the late Ottoman period. He thus maintains that prominent local figures who were ‘instrumental in the evolution of the first forms of Palestinian identity’ – such as the Khalidis – could identify ‘with the Ottoman Empire, their religion, Arabism, their homeland Palestine, their city or region, and their family, without feeling any contradiction, or sense of conflicting loyalties’ (*Palestinian Identity*, 19). Most of the time, these different foci of identity

complemented one another; but even if a contradiction between them arose, they could be reconciled (*Palestinian Identity*, 85).

It seems however that, away from the local centres of power, the level of direct Ottoman identification was much more varied and overall less strong. This is certainly the picture that Saïd K. Aburish paints of Palestinian rural life at the beginning of the twentieth century in his family memoir *Children of Bethany: The Story of a Palestinian Family*. Recounting the story of his family who for generations headed the small village of Bethany near Jerusalem, Aburish stresses the disaffection of rural headsmen like his grandfather with the town officials:

The few Palestinians who gained representation to the Turkish parliament represented a city bourgeois minority who had more in common with the Turks than their own people. Their status was more symbolic than real.

(154)

What his ancestors believed in, according to Aburish, was ‘their family, perhaps their village and tribe, and naturally enough, in Arab legend and in Allah [...]’ (154):

If there was any loyalty beyond that to one’s own family and village then it didn’t reach far, and loyalty and identification with a country didn’t exist. The idea of a country, a central government, was alien.

(155)

Doumani confirms this highly localised consciousness in certain, often rural, settings of Ottoman Palestine. In his study of central Palestine, he thus discovered ‘a common sense of identity, which ranked loyalty to Jabal Nablus far above that to the Ottoman Empire’ (52). Particularly in times of an increased threat – real or imagined – the local tribal identity trumped all others, the primary concern becoming the protection of the respective village or area. The people of Bethany and Jabal Nablus, as presented by Aburish and Doumani, certainly stand as examples of one extreme within the spectrum of Palestinian identities at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the figure of Najib Nassar, we will later encounter an embodiment of the opposite extreme.

Despite the varying degrees of Ottoman identification – which in addition to geographical and social factors, also strongly depended on historical and political developments – most historians maintain that a latent loyalty to the empire existed among Ottoman Arabs. This loyalty could develop and last for so long because of the inclusive

identity construct prevalent in the imperial Ottoman realm: seeing themselves as part of the Ottoman state did not negate or even challenge their identities as, for instance, Jerusalemites, Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims; rather, all these different elements of identity could coexist alongside or on top of each other, in a kind of layered, overlapping and, only at times, competing configuration.

Campos shows that the same was true for the Christians and Jews of the Ottoman Empire who could also think of themselves as Ottomans, in addition to their ethnic/religious and local identities. Similarly to Khalidi, Campos notes that ‘in the Ottoman imperial world one could definitely have more than one collective identity, whether *umma* or *milla*, and there was no inherent contradiction between them’ (69). Astonishingly, these overlapping foci of identity could stretch as far as to allow Ottoman Jews to support Zionism not only simultaneously with their declaration of Ottoman allegiance, but also by invoking their very ‘Ottomanness’ as the basis for their support. The special case of Ottoman Jews and their at first glance conflicting loyalties will be discussed in more detail below.

In her study of the development of Ottoman collective identity, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century*, Campos puts particular focus on the period following the July 1908 revolution, the so-called Young Turk revolution, as a ‘a dynamic and vibrant period of imperial reform and political engagement that was underpinned by an ideological commitment among Muslims, Christians, and Jews to a shared homeland and a shared empire’ (245). The most significant result of the revolution was the re-opening of the Ottoman parliament and the restoration of the Ottoman constitution that had been suspended by the sultan in 1878. For the first time, the Ottoman state promised full equality to all of its subjects – now citizens – opening up opportunities for many. For Campos, this was a time when the new Ottoman citizens – Muslims, Christians and Jews – embarked on, as she writes elsewhere, ‘a shared civic project’ to construct a new and ‘active imperial citizenship’ (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 20). Naturally, it was the non-Muslim population who had most to gain from this revolution that promised to replace tolerance with equality. Campos thus highlights the Sephardi community’s ‘enthusiastic support for the Ottoman revolution’, adding that ‘the approximately four hundred thousand Jews of the empire were consistently among the most loyal supporters of the new regime’ (199): their ‘faith in the future of Ottomanism’ was shown in the fact

that ‘Jews participated widely in the new institutions established after the revolution’ (200). The Jews and Christians of the Ottoman Empire thus clearly wanted to be part of, and have their stake in, this newly reformed empire. The revolution not only reinforced the relation between non-Muslim communities and the Ottoman state, but it also sparked internal reform within the different religious groups. Campos insists that the language of liberty and equality ‘inspired and gave succor to internal efforts to reform and reinvent their communal lives, not only as Ottomans, but also as Ottoman Christians and Jews’ (52).

Throughout her study, Campos’ main concern is to show that, although the empire was retrospectively very close to its demise, the 1908 revolution sparked an atmosphere of optimism and promise that managed to actively engage the various population groups in envisioning a new collective Ottoman identity. She thus seeks to disprove the decline theories long prevalent among ‘Western’ and nationalist historians in particular that narrate the Ottoman Empire in a continuous and inevitable state of deterioration. Against such portrayals, Campos contends that ‘the pre-war Ottoman public was preoccupied with envisioning, claiming, implementing, and contesting what it meant to be an imperial citizen, rather than plotting the Empire’s demise’ (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 21). Campos does acknowledge the shortcomings and the ultimate failure of ‘civic Ottomanism’: it was incomplete and short-lived, non-Muslim groups soon losing their new-found political and social status; it also ‘promoted rivalries around measuring each group’s contribution to the ottoman nation – in essence, of measuring ottoman-ness itself’ (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 29). However, she maintains that these internal tensions were essentially ‘competing visions of imperial citizenship’ directed at reforming the Ottoman structure and not aimed at destroying it (28). Within this light, the growing criticism and calls for decentralisation and cultural rights in the Arab provinces in the years after the revolution must be understood as expressions of a desire for internal reform rather than the manifestation of resistance to the Ottoman Empire as a whole. Campos warns then not to confound cultural Arabism and calls for reform with Arab nationalism: ‘the Arabs’ demands for cultural autonomy were intended to uphold rather than challenge the civic Ottomanist vision’ (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 27).

In Najib Nassar, Raja Shehadeh’s great-great-uncle and the subject of his book *A Rift in Time: Travels with my Ottoman Uncle*, we find a perfect example of this attitude

and indeed of Khalidi's related notion of overlapping identities. As owner-editor of the influential Palestinian newspaper *Al-Karmil*, Nassar was an important historical figure of late Ottoman and Mandate Palestine. The re-imposition of the 1876 Constitution in 1908 led to the freeing of party political activity and the abolition of censorship, which in turn resulted in the proliferation of newspapers and periodicals that same year – amongst them, Nassar's paper. Agreeing with Campos, Shehadeh describes the years immediately following the implementation of the constitution as 'an active time of hope and change' in which his great-great-uncle enthusiastically participated, shaping popular opinion on the future of a new Ottoman Empire (8-9). From Nassar's autobiographical novel published in the early 1920s and his other writings, Shehadeh assembles a picture of his ancestor as a loyal Ottoman and at the same time outspoken critic of some of the central government's policies, particularly regarding Zionism. In his review of the treatment of Zionism in the Arab press after 1908, Rashid Khalidi highlights *Al-Karmil* as 'by far the most outspoken in its opposition to Zionism' and notes the 'sophistication and tenaciousness of [Nassar's] opposition to Zionism' (*Palestinian Identity*, 124; 126). It is however Nassar's public condemnation of Ottoman participation in World War I on the German and Austro-Hungarian side that got him into serious trouble and made him the target of Ottoman persecution for alleged treason.

Despite all this, Shehadeh discovered that up until the end of the war, his great-great-uncle, a Christian Palestinian Arab, 'had insisted on defining himself as 'the Ottoman'' (8). Neither his religion, nor his Palestinianness negated or posed a conflict to him also being an Ottoman: '[h]e saw no contradiction between being a Christian and an Ottoman, because the empire was multi-ethnic [...]' (92). Despite his at times fierce condemnation of the Ottoman rulers, '[he] had always thought of himself as a loyal Ottoman citizen' (20). His criticism was meant to bring about reform, not the disintegration of the empire: he 'advocated strong Arab independence, but within the Ottoman structure' (20). Shehadeh argues that other contemporary critics shared this position:

[They] did not consider themselves enemies of the Ottomans or desire the defeat of the Sultan. Even though he was a Christian in a Muslim state headed by a Sultan claiming to be the Caliph of the Muslims, Najib believed that it was possible for the three 'Religions of the Book' to coexist and live freely within the Ottoman system he sought to perpetuate. His call was reformist in nature and not based on

religion. As a Christian he did not seek to separate from the Muslim Ottomans. He wanted decentralisation and a greater measure of autonomy for the Arabs, who to his mind included Muslims, Christians and Jews, all of them Ottoman citizens belonging to different millets.

(20)

The struggle of Nassar and his contemporaries was not against the Ottoman structure, but against what they perceived as the outside threat of European colonialism, to which Zionism was only the latest addition. Within such perception, the Ottoman umbrella was even seen as a protective framework, a shield against an encroaching European influence that, in addition to threatening the very existence of the empire, also endangered the Palestinians' secure status as Ottomans. Shehadeh thus relates how Nassar saw his destiny as intimately linked to the survival of the Ottoman state, framing the danger of Zionism within the threat to the Ottoman Empire at large:

His main concern was what would happen to his country if the Ottomans were no longer there to protect it from the onslaught of the colonialists and in particular the Zionists, whose plans for Palestine he was more familiar with than most. To him the true fight was against colonialism. Whether victory in the Great War went to the British or the Germans, the collapse of the Ottoman Empire would open the gates for the colonisation of the Levant. The Ottoman regime might need reforming but it was a multi-ethnic system that never attempted to colonise the land.

(20-21)

Nassar clarifies this distinction in the following statement in which he contrasts the differing natures of Ottoman and a potential European rule:

To a large extent we have now self-rule. The hand clutching our throat might be coarse but it is not an iron grip. This is because it is weak and has an eastern character. If we should be gripped by a European hand it will surely be bronze even if it wore a silk glove.

(21-22)

Rashid Khalidi points out that this fear of foreign conquest and the resultant latent defensive attitude have to be understood within the context of the region's special religious significance which, before the arrival of Zionism, had led to 'the conception of Palestine as a land under threat' (*Palestinian Identity*, 30). The appropriation of the area by the three monotheistic religions as the 'Holy Land', with Jerusalem at its centre, made Palestine a unique focus of foreign attention within the empire. Christian Europe in

particular manifested its interest early on and started to penetrate the region from the mid-nineteenth century onwards through pilgrimage, tourism and the establishment of missionary schools, as well as by laying claim to the control of the Christian holy places. Walid Khalidi thus notes that ‘of all the Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire, with the exception of the Maronite sections of Mount Lebanon, Palestine was the most exposed and accessible to Christian European influences’ (*Before Their Diaspora*, 32). This intense foreign penetration helped to create and reinforce a conception of ‘a sacred place to be protected’ (Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 30). The growing real threat to the empire’s borders, as well as the capitulations system that granted foreign nationals special status and protection, all contributed during the empire’s last fifty years of existence in reinforcing the population’s suspicions of outside influences and intentions.

The advent of Zionism in Palestine was at first perceived within this tradition of ‘long-standing ideas about Palestine as a holy land under threat from without’, Zionism having been considered only the latest addition to the dangers facing the region’s inhabitants (Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*, 32). That is probably why the true extent of this new danger was only slowly being understood by mainstream society. Those however who came in direct contact with the Jewish settlers, such as the Palestinian peasants who were dispossessed by Zionist land purchases, and those Palestinian elites – such as Najib Nassar – who followed closely the development of the Zionist movement, read their pamphlets and yearly congress transcripts, knew full well that the Zionists’ ambitions exceeded their proclaimed aim of a ‘Jewish homeland’ under Ottoman governance. The repeal of censorship in 1908 revealed an established notion of the existential threat of Zionism in the two most influential contemporary Palestinian newspapers *Al-Karmil* and *Filastin*, the latter warning its readers in 1914: ‘We are a nation threatened with disappearance in the face of the Zionist tide in this Palestinian land’ (qtd. in Khalidi, *Iron Cage*, 94). Istanbul’s early awareness of the Zionists’ intentions is also well recorded. Mim Kemal Öke investigated the Ottoman elite’s initial responses and found that the ‘Ottomans had no illusions’ regarding the true aims of the Zionist movement: ‘[a]lthough the Zionist Program (1897) spoke of a Jewish "home" in Palestine secured by "public law," the Ottoman authorities were not naive enough to accept these declarations prima facie’ (331). Abdülhamid II thus refused Herzl’s offers precisely because he understood

perfectly well what the Zionists really wanted – a fact that completely eluded Herzl at the time of his negotiations with the sultan:

Abdulhamid II admitted in his memoirs that the Zionists were not only interested in agricultural pursuits, as Herzl had argued, but were aiming to establish a government of their own in Palestine. As early as 1895, the Sultan claimed that he understood their "evil projects," and he added that the Zionists were too naive to think that he would accept their proposals. He stressed that as much as he protected his Jewish subjects and respected the competent Jewish officials in the service of the Porte, he was still the enemy of those Jews who entertained certain ideas over Palestine. Abdulhamid II thought that the immigration and settlement of Jews in Palestine was harmful to the interests of the Ottoman Empire insofar as they would lead to the emergence of a "Jewish Question," and especially dangerous at a time when the Turkish Government had Armenian troubles on its hands.

(Öke, 331-332)

While the sultan was aware of the Zionists' covert aspirations for a Jewish state in Palestine, his fear of a 'Jewish Question' shows Istanbul's failure to truly understand the nature of Zionism and separate it as a movement of European Jews from the empire's indigenous Jewish population. This distinction, as Louis Fishman shows, is one that the local Palestinian officials were very clear to make. In his contribution to Ben-Bassat and Ginio's volume *Late Ottoman Palestine*, Fishman contrasts the local Palestinian representatives' stance to that of the Turkish-Ottoman elites in the 1911 Ottoman Parliament debate over Zionism. He argues that while, '[f]or the Palestinians, Zionism was a tangible problem, one that was taking its toll on their daily lives', for the officials of the central government it was merely another 'national' problem that they had to deal with (104). Most significantly, while Istanbul had by then adopted elements of European anti-Semitism, Palestinians' anti-Zionism 'was removed from anti-Semitic sentiments' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 104):

[T]he Palestinian representatives were forced to stress that the debate was only about Jewish immigration to Palestine, and that it was not directed against Jews in general, whether in Palestine or other regions of the Empire. In other words, the Palestinians had to take a two-tiered approach: on one hand voicing their opposition to immigration of Jews to Palestine but on the other hand stressing the fact that they were not anti-Semitic but merely anti-Zionist; a distinction blurred among some of the Istanbul Muslim Ottoman elite.

(Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 111)

Salim Tamari supports this interpretation of early Palestinian anti-Zionism. Citing an anti-Zionist manifesto issued by the First Palestinian Congress in 1919, he shows that the native Palestinian Jews of Sephardic-Oriental distinctions were indeed considered fellow Arabs. In this manifesto, the Palestinian delegates reject Zionist immigration while welcoming those Jews ‘among them who have been Arabicized, who have been living in our province since before war; they are as we are, and their loyalties are our own’ (qdt. in Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea*, 165). Importantly thus, Palestinian resistance arose from what was perceived as an under-hand attempt of foreign take-over by European Jews. This resistance was shared by all Palestinians – Muslims, Christians and Jews alike – a fact that indeed proves the successful integration of these different groups into Ottoman Arab society.

The responses by native Palestinian Jews, and by Ottoman Jews in general, is worth considering here in more detail because theirs is a history commonly forgotten or distorted. Campos thus argues that ‘[m]uch of the scholarship of Sephardi and Middle Eastern Jewry has been nationalized and mobilized for the Zionist movement and sees Middle Eastern Jews as “strangers” in their countries of origin’ (296, note 3). In actual fact however, the story of the Jews of the Ottoman Empire is a very different one: less caught up in the sporadic ethnic tensions than the Christian minorities, they were well rooted within the communities they lived in and had overall good relations with Istanbul and the sultan whom they often regarded ‘with a great deal of gratitude and affection as their historical savior’ (Campos, 199). Furthermore, Tamari argues that a substantial body of Jews native to the Arab Ottoman domains saw themselves as essentially Arabs of Jewish extraction, in other words, as Arab Jews, and as such did not perceive themselves to be in exile, nor therefore in need of a return. Since this continuity of the history of Middle Eastern Jews ‘challenges the basic Zionist tenet that the history of the Jews was “frozen” in the years of exile’, Zionism had to rewrite their history in the Arab lands to fit the Zionist narrative (Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea*, 155).

Campos rectifies this falsified history by uncovering the attitudes of some of the leading Jewish figures of the late Ottoman period, a majority of whom she claims were enthusiastic Ottomans. She identifies two main positions adopted by Ottoman Jews regarding Zionism: the first most common one, which she terms ‘Ottoman anti-Zionism’, was the straightforward rejection of Zionism as a threat to the stable relations enjoyed

with Istanbul. Campos thus refers to a ‘wave of anti-Zionist publishings in the Sephardi press’ following the revolution of 1908 in which ‘prominent Ottoman Jews denounced the Zionist movement’ (210). The Izmir poet Reuben Qattan for instance called upon fellow Ottoman Jews: ‘before everything we should live Ottoman lives, cultivate the language of the Ottomans, form an integral part of the Ottoman nation, and sincerely love the Ottoman patria (qtd. in Campos, 210). Another staunch anti-Zionist and highly influential figure in the Ottoman Jewish world was David Fresco, editor of the Istanbul Judeo-Spanish newspaper *El Tiempo*. In a passionate article he warns against the dangers of Zionism for Ottoman Jews in particular, a potential ‘catastrophe’, asserting over and over again the ‘faithful[ness] [of half a million Jews] to their homeland’:

Not one of our five hundred thousand Ottoman Jews and not a single Ottoman Jewish child that will be born tomorrow [!! – editor’s note] will agree to that [Zionist] program. The Ottoman Jews do not have, and will not have, another homeland other than the Ottoman homeland. Every part of the national land must be sacred to him without any difference. . . .

To work against this truth is to betray the homeland [!!], betray the Ottoman Jews, since the land belongs to the Muslims, to the Christians, to the Jews, all of them partners and related in the same social tie, and when one insists on ignoring this truth then not only will he be seen as disregarding the social tie through injustice, but he will also be seen as a rebel against the state and traitor to his partner brothers; he will cause shame and dishonour and provoke an awful hatred against the Jewish people in the empire. All the Ottoman Jews and Arabs are related to each other so it is incumbent upon us to prevent this rebellion, to ban this disgrace, and to take refuge from the catastrophe that can fall on our heads.

(qtd. in Campos, 216, additions in original)

In Palestine, Albert Antébi was the ‘local spokesman for an Ottomanist anti-Zionism’: ‘[m]uch like Fresco’, Campos writes, ‘Antébi viewed these European Zionists who were resident in Palestine as troublemakers who threatened the communal equilibrium in the Ottoman Empire’ (218). Campos further notes that, paradoxically, ‘in practice [Antébi] helped the Zionist movement a great deal’, serving as an intermediary in land sales for the Zionist organisations (219). In Antébi’s highly contradictory attitude towards Zionism, we have struck a major ambivalence at the heart of Ottoman Jews’ view of the movement: while a majority was either indifferent or hostile and rejected the political aims of the movement, some still supported Zionism as a cultural movement. Their experience of the Ottoman Empire’s multi-cultural make-up led them to view Zionism predominantly in

cultural terms. Since other communities could also freely express their culture and religion under the sultan, the Zionists' publicly proclaimed desire to regenerate the Jewish nation by facilitating Jewish immigration was by many not seen to be in any conflict with their Ottoman status. Fishman explains the Ottoman Jewish support for Zionism as follows:

[...] Jews in the Ottoman lands adopting a Zionist ideology differed from their European Zionist counterparts; for them, Zionism was a cultural form of nationalism, an emerging identity which did not clash with their loyalty to the Ottoman state and which did not require moving to the far-off lands of Ottoman Palestine.

(Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 105)

Ottoman Zionist supporters believed thus, in stark contrast to the Zionist Organisation, 'that Zionism was not bound by borders, and that any mass migration of Jews to the Ottoman Lands was within the realm of Zionism' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 106). Moiz Kohen who would later become one of the founding fathers of Turkish nationalism explained his form of Zionism as follows:

Zionism was a movement of Jewish immigration to Turkey and preferably to Palestine, which holds a certain historical attraction for the Jews. [...] I have always favored, with great insistence, this immigration – from an Ottoman as well as Jewish point of view – since I am convinced that it can greatly contribute to the progress of the country and guarantee the security of thousands of our unfortunate coreligionists.

(Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 106)

Sephardi Jew Shimon Moyal was a prominent Palestinian spokesman for this 'Ottoman Zionism':

Our Hebrew national ambitions do not oppose [the Arabs'] own ambitions and we have the ability to work with energy and a devoted spirit for the shared homeland [...] and for the foundational level of the Ottoman people under whose umbrella we live, at the same time that we desire to be a special Jewish nation concerned with its own language, its own style, its own past, its own future, and its own customs.

(qtd. in Campos, 163)

Abigail Jacobson, speaking specifically about the Palestinian Sephardi milieu, also emphasises the essential difference in the two brands of Zionism. She thus stresses the Sephardi Jews' 'inclusive Zionism' in contrast to the Ashkenazi Jews' exclusive ideology, the first being a Zionism 'attuned to local conditions in Palestine, the existence of two

peoples in the country and the need to live together in one locale' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 177). The voice of Sephardi Zionist activists, as Jacobson adds, was 'a complex one that combined Zionism and Ottomanism, Jewishness and Arabness (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 175). They could thus call upon European Jews to integrate by learning Arabic and adopting Ottoman citizenship, while at the same time actively support Zionism which they equated with the regeneration of Jewish culture and the rescue of persecuted European Jews.

For those Ottoman Jews supporting Zionism then, their divergent understanding of Zionism led them to take the European movement's foundational slogan of security at face value, divorcing the movement from its separatist aims. In addition to this, Campos has uncovered that the Zionist leaders purposely deceived the Ottoman Jews:

In its appeal to high-ranking Ottoman Jews, the Istanbul office [of the Zionist Organisation] carefully spun the goals of the Zionist movement to be more in line with what it perceived to be within the range of acceptability – Zionism within the boundaries of Ottoman patriotism.

(205)

David Wolffsohn, who followed Herzl as president of the Zionist Organisation, wrote to the Ottoman Jews in an attempt to reassure them of the movement's benign aims:

I know that in Turkish circles, even the most enlightened, Zionism is known in the form of a movement that wants to found a Jewish state in Palestine, its separatist aspirations and as a consequence will constitute a danger to the Ottoman Empire. . . . In my capacity as president of the Executive Committee of the ZO, I affirm completely and officially that Zionism does not have anything to do with these tendencies, which from our point of view not only are unrealizable but by no means correspond to the real interests of the Jewish people.

(qtd. in Campos, 206)

Campos argues that, despite this persistent lobbying, the leading Zionist figures showed little sincere interest in the Jews of the Ottoman Empire. She thus claims that Victor Jacobson, the representative of the Zionist Organisation in Istanbul, 'was indifferent to the Jewish masses of the Ottoman Empire, who he did not think would be "useful" to the Zionist movement', while Wolffsohn 'considered the empire's four hundred thousand Jews entirely irrelevant to the Zionist program' (207). One of the most prominent Zionist figures and contemporary of Herzl, Max Nordau, even 'told Ottoman Jews who voiced

criticism to stay out of internal Zionist affairs' (207). Campos rightly remarks that this 'in effect disenfranch[ised] them from the very movement which sought to speak and act in their name' (207) – a disenfranchisement that directly reflects Herzl's dismissal of anti-Zionist European Jews as 'Mauschels'.

While Palestinian disenchantment with Ottoman rule began to grow with the intensification of Zionist activities in Palestine which in turn had led to accusations of Ottoman inaction, as well as with the Ottoman persecution of the widely popular decentralisation movement, it is only with the Ottoman entry into World War I that a definite shift of mainstream Arab loyalties began to take place. While Arab loyalty remained strong even in the war's early phase, Issam Nassar suggests that 'the concept of 'Ottoman identity' appears to have gradually diminished as the War progressed' (Ben-Bassat and Ginio, 137). The hardships of war, famine and disease, as well as Ottoman wartime policies embodied in the emphatically hated figure of Ahmet Cemal Pasha, took their toll on people's trust in Ottoman governance. In his wartime diaries, the Spanish Consul to Jerusalem from 1913 to 1919 who held the title of Conde de Ballobar, documents an escalating discontent among Palestinian Arabs with what was perceived as the Turkification of the Ottoman state reflected in the widespread feeling that they, Arabs, were being sent to their deaths (52). The hanging of some of the leaders of the decentralisation movement further fuelled this irritation and created general unrest among the Arab population. By 1915, a young conscript from Jerusalem by the name of Ihsan Tourjman would in his diaries express his anger at the 'barbaric Ottoman state' and his outrage at Ottoman brutality against Arab leaders: 'How can we support this state after it killed our best youth?' (Tamari, *Locust*, 156; 155) Tourjman exemplifies the growing resentment and dissent among the Arab troops, some of whom, as Ballobar reports, '[went] over to the English' (106). For the first time, Ottoman rule was seen as alien and Turkish-dominated. The final rupture of Ottoman identity is most clearly expressed in the young soldier's entry from 22 April 1915, where he writes:

Isn't it time for us Ottomans – or should I say "them Turks" – to leave this farce behind us and conclude a peace agreement?

(Tamari, *Locust*, 106)

Those last four war- and poverty-stricken years came to dominate the view of Ottoman rule over its Arab domains as a whole. Tamari points out that already during the war, 'an

anti-Ottoman rewriting of history took place’ and cemented itself in the collective memory of the Arab population: ‘four centuries of relative peace and dynamic activity, the Ottoman era, [were replaced] with what was known in Arabic discourses “the days of the Turks” (*Locust*, 5). According to Dr. Sonia Nimr of Birzeit University, the anti-Ottoman sentiments of these years were covertly expressed in Palestinian folklore songs, sung by Palestinian children for decades after the demise of the empire. My own research in the occupied Palestinian territories has shown that this resentment of the ‘Turkish occupation’ is indeed still firmly entrenched in collective Palestinian memory amongst all classes of society.

The carnage and devastation of war explain then why a majority of Palestinians were relieved upon the Ottomans’ eventual defeat which in practical terms meant the end of conscription and a return to a certain normalcy. This relief was reflected in the veritable scenes of jubilation that the Spanish consul Ballobar recorded on the day of General Allenby’s entry into Jerusalem on 9 December 1917:

Really, I have never seen a popular enthusiasm so spontaneous and great. Every British soldier that passed by was followed and escorted by a throng of admirers that touched his uniform, caressed his horse, talked to him in all the languages of the Orient and admired him like a hero. [...] The balconies were full of people. Many people were hugging each other in the street, others were mutually congratulating each other and all were walking around in their best clothes, smiling at the English and greeting them as beloved liberators.

(186)

Rather than proving Palestinian euphoria for the new rulers however, these scenes reflect the resentment for the old one. Ballobar thus deems the Jerusalemites’ enthusiasm ‘understandable and excusable’, ‘[b]ecause it is impossible to imagine a government more detested and detestable than the Turkish’ (186).

In Bethany, the Aburishs welcomed the British with a mixture of juvenile admiration and opportunism. In a small village like Bethany where, as Saïd Aburish claims, the limits of the chief’s concern were ‘the security of Bethany and the well-being of its people’, and where immediate effects mattered more than some political ideology, the British presence was not perceived as a threat as long as village affairs were not intruded upon (36). Aburish, revealing perhaps his personal admiration for the British, maintains that his family appreciated the new rulers for ‘[t]he improvement of everyday

life brought about by an enlightened British administration' (33). The Aburishs for their part did indeed do very well under the British, a 'general well-being' that, according to the author, 'extended beyond the Aburishs' (43). Employment at the British colonial institutions was extremely sought after and some of the young men of the Aburish family managed to acquire these highly prestigious Mandate jobs. It is only in the early 1930s, according to the memoirist, that the Aburishs turned against the British in what was a general wave of anti-British sentiment transported from the towns to the villages, the result of increasingly biased and brutal British policies such as the collective punishment of Arab villages (44). The growing resistance came to the fore with the publication in 1937 of the British Peel Commission Report which proposed and advocated partition; now, as Aburish's uncle explains, 'the land was threatened in actual everyday terms' (50). Despite these antagonistic sentiments toward the British by that stage, the Aburishs, like many Palestinians, 'continued [their] social and business intercourse with the British' (47), that is, they kept for instance working for the Mandate administration. Aburish's father explains this apparent contradiction with what the author calls the 'Arabs' inherent inferiority complex toward the British':

Yes, we lived at many different levels which were contradictory. . . It was a love-hate relationship with the British. We admired their ways, acknowledged their superiority but at the same time wanted to be independent. These things are not mutually exclusive.

(92)

With the issuing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917 – a document that as Joseph M.N. Jeffries has shown was to a substantial degree co-authored with the Zionist movement – the British officially positioned themselves on the side of the Zionists and put their mandate in the service of the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. By declaring to 'view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people', Britain revolutionised the position of the Zionist Organisation that now finally had the sponsor Herzl had so desperately pursued. The obvious contradiction between Britain's promise of support to Zionism and its simultaneous guarantee not to do anything to alter the status quo of the country's population, soon not only raised the resistance of the Palestinians, but it also caused frustration and disagreement amongst the British Mandate

workers on the ground. A number of British soldiers and policemen noted a clear bias in favour of the *yishuv* in their day-to-day work; one former soldier writes in his memoir:

Our British attitudes towards both Arabs and Jews were confused. Officially, our role was to keep the peace between the two conflicting sides, punishing terrorists of both races. Yet in practice the British showed marked favouritism towards Jews. I resented this fact, believing that the Arabs always seemed to get a raw deal. A curfew operated from five in the evening till five in the morning and if Arabs broke the curfew they could be shot. Arabs carrying knives over four inches were shot, but not the Jews doing the same. Once two Jews were captured after having fired at a bus full of Arabs. The resulting trial lasted two weeks, during which there were mass Jewish demonstrations, the Jews were released. Many of our blokes used to say, "If you run over an Arab make sure you kill him, even if you have to reverse over him. If you injure him you've got to pay his hospital bills."

(Sherman, 110-111)

British policeman in Palestine Robin H. Martin equally records in his memoir the growing frustration among the British police force in dealing with Zionist crime and terrorism. Instead of pursuing and arresting Jewish perpetrators, they had orders to protect the Jewish colonies against the Palestinian Arabs. Martin remembers how two of his colleagues even wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail* in an attempt to counter the dominant pro-Zionist portrayal of the situation in Palestine in the British media. In this letter they wrote that they were 'stationed in, and guarding the Artuf Settlement, and not allowed to go outside the barbed wire at night. We do not feel it is right to just be guarding the Jewish settlement while some Arabs are being attacked by armed bands and we are doing nothing to protect them' (80-81). Martin shared his colleagues' frustration to the point that he temporarily resigned from his office in the mid-1940s. He explains the underlying reason in a section of his memoir suggestively entitled 'Disillusionment led to Resignation':

[...] I was very disheartened and ashamed by the way the situation was going in Palestine. Pressure from America and Zionist support in Britain took no account of Arab rights and resulted in a lack of even-handedness from the British Government in the way Arab rebels were treated in comparison with the militant Zionists.

(197)

Such disillusionment with pro-Zionist British policies seems to have been relatively widespread amongst the British Mandate forces, and resignation on ethical grounds was not uncommon even amongst higher ranks. The first High Commissioner of Palestine, pro-Zionist Jewish Englishman Samuel Herbert, dismissively remembers in his memoirs

that ‘one or two of the officers resigned, being out of sympathy with the policy of the Balfour Declaration and honourably preferring to leave’ (155). In his study of the British Mandate years, A.J. Sherman claims that two British generals resigned as soon as July 1919, ‘frustrated by their vain attempts to carry out a pro-Zionist policy with which they were in profound, irreconcilable disagreement’ (53). It appears that while many had arrived in Palestine latently sympathetic to the Jewish settlers, most soon altered their sympathies when confronted with the situation on the ground.

Most radical among the British Mandate voices in his criticism of both the British and Zionist policies in Palestine was Thomas Hodgkin. In his letters from Palestine to his family, Hodgkin, who was a cadet in the Palestine Government Service from 1934 to 1936, and briefly the private secretary to the High Commissioner General Wauchope, clearly sides with the Palestinian Arabs. He saw the Palestinians as ‘victims of imperialism’ (194) and their revolt justified as ‘the natural response to the Government’s continued frustration of all peaceful efforts of the Arabs towards independence’ (196). Hodgkin stressed the imbalance of Arab-Jewish relations throughout his letters, writing in 1936 for example that the Jews ‘control the country’s industries and share with the British control of its finance’ (194). He also observed how the citrus fruit plantations were increasingly being bought up by Jewish settlers, the Arabs in these areas thus rapidly ‘becoming a slave population’ (118). In an article published anonymously in *Labour Monthly* in 1936, Hodgkin furthermore emphasised the fundamental dependency of the Zionist movement on the British support: instead of two ‘separate act[s] of aggression’ – a distinction that was according to him erroneously made by the Palestinians – Zionism and the British colonial government had to be understood ‘as a single enemy’ (193). Hodgkin understood that the British Mandate government essentially functioned as a protectionist installation for Zionist state building. Leading Zionists were acutely aware of this vital relationship, although only the Revisionists headed by Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky admitted to it publicly. In his 1923 essay ‘The Iron Wall’ in which he argues a strategy of military power and unilateral action in the subjugation of the Palestinian Arabs, Jabotinsky, who, like Herzl was an outspoken supporter of British imperialism,⁸ bluntly stated the indispensability of the British presence in Palestine for the creation of a Jewish

⁸ See Lenni Brenner, 75-78.

state as envisioned by Zionism. He explicitly characterised the ‘value’ of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate as follows:

Their value to us is that outside Power has undertaken to create in the country such conditions of administration and security that if the native population should desire to hinder our work, they will find it impossible.

And we are all of us, without any exception, demanding day after day that this outside Power, should carry out this task vigorously and with determination.

In this matter there is no difference between our "militarists" and our "vegetarians". Except that the first prefer that the iron wall should consist of Jewish soldiers, and the others are content that they should be British.

Arthur Ruppin was another Zionist leader who, albeit only in his personal records, conceded the importance of the British protection for the Zionist project. On the eve of the Second World War, Ruppin recorded his anxiety about what the likely outbreak of war in Europe would mean for the future of Zionism: ‘Everything we have established in Palestine may be lost if Britain should have to withdraw its troops from here’ (*Memoirs*, 294). Using a metaphor related to that of Jabotinsky, Rashid Khalidi conceptualises the British Mandate government as an ‘iron cage’ that stifled Palestinian development, all the while encouraging the *yishuv* to build and expand its para-state structures (such as the Zionist Agency that coordinated Jewish immigration and settlement). This iron cage and the subsequent Palestinian revolts against it, Khalidi further maintains, significantly weakened Palestinian society and explain its rapid demise in 1948 (*Iron Cage*, 31-64). The collapse of the Ottoman Empire appears in this light as the critical moment when Palestinians lost their previous, albeit flawed, agency and self-determination: the British takeover meant the complete loss of access to state structures and must therefore be regarded as the decisive step towards the Palestinian dispossession in 1948.

3.2 Hidden Histories II: Arab Jews

What do you call someone who lives in an Arab country, who prays and dreams in Arabic, who reads Arabic poetry and papers, whose mother and her mother cooked Arabic food, who loves Arabic film and music, and who lives by the customs of the Arab world?

(Rachel Shabi, *We Look Like The Enemy*, 222)

Palestine's Ottoman history of ethnic diversity and religious syncretism came to an abrupt end with World War I and the ensuing British takeover. Salim Tamari emphasises World War I as the crucial moment of rupture for Palestinian development: it was the moment when Palestine 'was forcibly separated' from its Arab context, particularly from the Syrian provinces with which it shared the same 'cultural and social patterns' (*Mountain Against the Sea*, 4-5).⁹ While for a majority of countries involved, Tamari further argues, World War I had an emancipatory effect, in Palestine and Syria, 'it undermined progress toward a multinational, multiethnic state and gave rise to narrow and exclusivist nationalist ideologies and provincial affinities' (*Locust*, 11). He traces the various visions for a future of the country at the beginning of the war and discovers that, 'contrary to the ideological vision of nationalist historians, the debates among the urban population about the future of Syria and Palestine were highly diversified':

[T]here was little accord among the Syrian and Palestinian intelligentsia and political leadership about what should come next. While the Arab population was restless with heavy expectations for peace and a return to normalcy, supporters of Syrian independence were only one current among others. For example, one contingent wanted Palestine to become part of an Egyptian union, while many others continued to favor a decentralized Ottoman system until the last years of war and beyond.

(*Locust*, 86-87)

Tamari concludes that '[these] amorphous possibilities that existed during the war' – amongst which Palestinian independence was only supported by a small minority – 'were sealed by the coming of the Mandate' (*Locust*, 88).

⁹ In the post-WWI peace settlement, the League of Nations divided Syria and Palestine into French and British mandates respectively.

The artificial division of the Eastern Mediterranean region and its people implemented by the colonial powers also forcefully ended the fluid forms of identity possible under Ottoman governance. A striking example of this is the almost complete disappearance in contemporary parlance and thought of ‘Arab Jews’.¹⁰ While Arabness and Jewishness could be mutually inclusive during the Ottoman era, they are now widely seen to be contradictory, even antagonistic categories of identity. Indeed the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is today, as Yehouda Shenhav notes, ‘often represented as an ancient, insurmountable [one] between Arabs (who are not Jews) and Jews (who are not Arabs)’ (2), erasing thus in one devastating sweep the long history of Jews in the Arab and Islamic countries and their shared Judeo-Islamic culture.¹¹

Yerach Gover very tellingly points out that ‘[t]he term *Arab Jew* does not officially exist in Israel, nor does *Israeli Palestinian*’ (126, emphasis in original). Because both these terms project fluidity and hybridity, and in the case of ‘Arab Jew’ refers to a communal history, they threaten Israel’s narrow Eurocentric nationalism. Consequently, the way that the Zionist establishment dealt with non-European Jews before and after the creation of Israel mirrors its treatment of the Palestinians: while the latter were turned into ‘just Arabs’ in an effort to delegitimise their political claims as a people to the land of Palestine, Arab Jews were by a similar process dissociated from their Arab origins and identities, and became ‘just Jews’ in order to allow for their absorption into the hegemonic ‘Jewish Euro-Israeli’ collective (Shohat, *Taboo Memories*, 214). Shenhav explains that,

[T]he category of the Arab Jew was particularly troubling, because it posed a threat to the purity of the Zionist project – as Western and modern – and to the “great divide” that Zionism attempted to carve out between Jews and Arabs. Thus, while European Jews remained a legitimate identity category, the Arab Jews were

¹⁰ My use of the term ‘Arab Jew’ here follows that of Ella Shohat. Although I have chosen not to hyphenate the noun as she does, her application remains valid for this context: it is thus ‘not intended to suggest a reductive or essential Jewish or Arab identity. The aim in hyphenating Arab-Jewish identity is to call into question the Eurocentric nationalist paradigm that erased the hyphen and made it taboo. The term “Arab-Jew” obviously assumes an Arab cultural geography and therefore is not meant to cover, in a global sweep, the histories of *all* Jews’ (*Taboo Memories*, 336, emphasis in original). I also do not intend to exclude the Jews from Islamic countries that are not Arab, such as Iran and Turkey, many of whom immigrated to Israel in the years after its creation. Indeed most parts of the following discussion apply to the Jews of the Islamic world at large. My specific focus here on Arab Jews is with a view of highlighting the separation created by Zionist historiography between these two formerly mutually inclusive categories of identity, and the term’s resultant subversive potentiality.

¹¹ For detailed studies about the history of Jews in the Arab world, see Ammiel Alcalay, *After Arabs and Jews: Remaking Levantine Culture*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993; and Yehouda Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity*. Stanford University Press, 2006.

transformed by the state and the Zionist scholars into *edot ha'mizrah* ("oriental communities"), a category denoting an intra-Jewish ethnic group. The term *edot* has a constraining effect in the Israeli context, since it depoliticizes ethnicity and relegates it to the domain of folklore and tradition.

(193)

Shenhav further clarifies that 'the transformation of the Arab Jews into an *eda* constituted an act of orientalization that enabled the erasure and denial of their Arab-ness yet at the same time was still founded on the distinction between East and West' (193). Instead of becoming 'one of us', Arab Jews were thus turned into the internal other, and henceforward assumed within the Israeli framework as 'Sephardim', and later 'Mizrahim'; today, both categories are often used interchangeably to designate all non-Ashkenazim, that is, all Jews of non-European descent.¹²

This terminology-based de-Arabisation went hand in hand with a systematic campaign of cultural de-Arabisation, understood by the Zionist establishment as a necessary process of purification 'in order to abolish any hybridization and to perfect the dichotomy between Arabs and Jews' (Shenhav, 193).¹³ In her 1988 article 'Sephardim in Israel', Ella Shohat outlines the ideology behind these practices of purification and their effects on the new immigrants:

As an integral part of the topography, language, culture and history of the Middle East, Sephardim were necessarily close to those who were posited as the common enemy for all Jews – the Arabs. Fearing an encroachment of the East upon the West, the [Zionist] establishment repressed the Middle Easternness of Sephardim as part of an attempt to separate and create hostility between the two groups. Arab-ness and Oriental-ness were consistently stigmatized as evils to be uprooted. For the Arab Jew, existence under Zionism has meant a profound and visceral schizophrenia, mingling stubborn self-pride with an imposed self-rejection, typical products of a situation of colonial ambivalence. The ideological dilemmas of

¹² Joseph Massad explains that '*Sephardi* referred initially to Ladino-speaking Spanish Jews exiled from Spain in 1492 as well as to the specific religious customs of Ladino-speaking and some Arabic- and Persian-speaking Jews, whose religious customs differed from Yiddish-speaking Jews and often among themselves' ('Zionism's Internal Others', 66). In contrast, the term 'Mizrahim' (which literally means 'Orientals' or 'Easterners') is a fairly recent invention that has been in wide usage only since the early 1990s (Shohat, 'The Invention of the Mizrahim', 13). The subversive quality of the Mizrahi identity will be discussed later in the section.

'*Ashkenazi*', for its part, derives from the Hebrew word for the German territories in the 10th and 11th centuries and came to designate Jews of European descent in general. (See Ilan Halevi, *A History of the Jews*, 89; and Shlomo Swirski, *Israel: The Oriental Majority*, 2.)

¹³ For a detailed study of the systematic campaign of cultural oppression and discrimination suffered by non-Ashkenazi Jews at the hands of the Zionist (Ashkenazi) establishment, see G.N. Giladi, *Discord in Zion: Conflict between Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews in Israeli*. Buckhurst Hill, Essex: Scorpion Publishing, 1990.

Sephardim derive from the contradictions inherent in a situation where they are urged to see Judaism and Zionism as synonyms and Jewishness and Arab-ness as antonyms (for the first time in their history), when in fact they are both Arab and Jewish, and less historically, materially and emotionally invested in Zionist ideology than the Ashkenazim.

(25)

The problem that Israel faced with the mass immigration of non-European Jews in the years after its creation was, as Shenhav points out, that '[r]ecognition of the Arab Jews as a collectivity (and not only as individuals) would require rearticulation of Israeli society's basic assumptions and its reorganization' (8). The core assumption that came under threat was the alleged essential antagonism between Jews and Arabs; the invention of the Arab as an enemy of all Jews was indeed instrumental in the way Zionism narrated and thereby legitimised its conflict with the Palestinians and the surrounding Arab states, while it was at the same time a natural manifestation of the movement's 'basically orientalist mentality' (Shenhav, 3).

Through a case study of the Palestine-based construction company Solel Boneh and its covert Zionist mission in the region of the Iran-Iraq border in the 1940s, Shenhav uncovers how this orientalist mentality came to define the encounter between Zionism and Middle Eastern Jewry:

The group in question was a "labor battalion" of the Solel Boneh construction company, which won a public tender issued by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company to build and maintain oil-refining facilities next to the city of Abadan on the Iranian side of the Shatt al-Arab waterway. The Solel Boneh personnel remained in the region for three years under the auspices of imperial Britain, and their stay involved more than economic reasons. In addition to British colonial interests [...], the project reflected certain national and colonial interests of the Zionist enterprise itself. Some of these were known before the group set out, and others emerged and took shape in the course of the group's stay at Abadan, though not without internecine strife within it and between its members and the Jewish leadership in Palestine.

(19-20)

More precisely, the members of this labor battalion 'served as agents of the first concrete encounter between the Zionist movement and Arab Jews, at a time when the Jewish leadership was making serious plans to bring these Jews to Palestine. The presence of the Solel Boneh group in the region provided a cover for the illegal entry of Zionist emissaries into Baghdad, Tehran, Mosul, Khorramshahr, Basra, Kirkuk, and other cities where

Jewish communities existed' (Shenhav, 20). Most revealingly, Shenhav found that '[t]he reports filed by the Solel Boneh emissaries display a distinct use of orientalist categories that were applied to Arab Jews' (72). Thus, Enzo Sereni, according to Shenhav the first emissary to be positioned in Baghdad in the early 1940s in the guise of a Solel Boneh construction worker, warned the Zionist leadership in Palestine of the non-European nature of 'this material' [i.e. the Arab Jews], 'a material that is quick to become enthusiastic, but also quick to despair. . . . unable to keep a secret, unable to keep their word' (Shenhav, 116; 72).¹⁴ They can however, Sereni added, 'be turned into "human beings" if they are brought to surroundings that will make them "human beings"' (Shenhav, 74). Another covert Zionist emissary reported back from Iraq: 'The Jews here are base and stiff-necked, but despite everything they are Jews and we can find ways to approach them' (Shenhav, 73).

The ambivalence displayed in these statements epitomises the fundamental difference in Zionism's view and treatment of Arabs and Arab Jews: while both were orientalised, the former – as Arabs – were (and still are) intrinsically and irredeemably 'Other'; the latter on the other hand, could be – as Jews – transformed by being 'cured' of their Arabness, only however to be accorded a subordinated position within Israeli society. As Shenhav puts it, it was a matter of 'recruit[ing] the "other" into its ranks' (71). Paradoxically, what Arab Jews could offer Zionism was that which the movement simultaneously sought to erase in them, namely their long history in the region. This connection provided the European movement with the authenticity it lacked for its claims to Palestine. Arab Jews thus became instrumentalised in Zionism's legitimisation project, while at the same time being treated with suspicion and superiority:

The Arab Jews supplied the tribal and ancient legitimacy for Jewish nationalism. Thus, for example, Zionism identified the Yemenites as part of the ten lost tribes and as an integral part of the continuity of the nation. At the same time, however, it constituted them as inferior culturally, religiously, and nationally.

(Shenhav, 71)

Shenhav develops this paradox further:

The Arab Jews were perceived in two different paradigmatic contexts by the Zionist consciousness. On the one hand, they were seen as Arabs, and hence as an

¹⁴ In his study, G.N. Giladi draws attention to Enzo Sereni as the 'head of the secret mission in Iraq' (73).

“other” of Europe and Zionism, and, on the other, as ancient Jews, hence exalted, holy objects of the Zionist national-religious discourse. The dichotomy gave rise to a confused and conflicted perception of reality. From the colonial point of view, for instance, the Arab Jews’ religiosity was seen as superficial; from a national point of view, it was considered ancient and authentic. [...] “true religiosity” served as a marker of the depth of the Arab Jews’ Zionist commitment and of the erasure of their Arabness. The Solel Boneh emissaries were engaged simultaneously both in Orientalizing the Arab Jews and in marking the difference between them and the Arabs – that is, with establishing themselves as Western Jews.

(70)

With non-European immigration soaring in the first decade of the state’s existence, the ‘difference’ of these new immigrants – and how to reduce it – became a major concern for the Ashkenazi establishment. Israeli historian Tom Segev describes the elaborate theories Israeli academics constructed:¹⁵

Some time after the number of immigrants from the Arab countries began to exceed that from Europe, the quarterly *Megamot* approached five prominent scholars of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Ernst Simon, Natan Rotenstreich, Meshulam Groll, Yosef Ben-David (Gross) and Karl Frankenstein, all of central or east European origin, and asked them to consider this new problem. They approached it with appropriate academic rigor, their articles bearing such titles as “Absolute Criteria” and “The Dignity of Man.” Karl Frankenstein’s article ended with the sentence: “we must recognize the primitive mentality of many of the immigrants from the backward countries.” The others were of the same opinion. Frankenstein proposed that in order to understand the mentality of the immigrants it should be compared, among others, to the primitive expression of children, the retarded, or the mentally disturbed. Yosef Gross was of the opinion that the new immigrants from the Arab countries were suffering from “mental regression” and “a faulty development of the ego.” His colleagues discussed “the nature of primitiveness” at great length. As a whole these articles project an Ashkenazi consensus, which was partly paternalistic and benevolent as well as being supercilious and contemptuous.

(157-158)

¹⁵ Ella Shohat explains that Israeli discourse today still maintains that ‘ethnic Jews’ suffer from ‘the problem of the gap’: ‘not simply that between their standard of living and that of European Jews, but also from the problem of their “incomplete integration” into Israeli liberalism and prosperity, handicapped as they have been by their Oriental, illiterate, despotic, sexist and generally pre-modern formation in their lands of origin, as well as by their propensity for generating large families. Fortunately, however, the political establishment, the welfare institutions and the educational system have done all in their power to “reduce this gap” by initiating the Oriental Jews into the ways of a civilized, modern society’ (‘Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish Victims’, 3).

The language used by none other than Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion similarly reveals that the process of de-Arabization applied to the new immigrants was understood 'as enhancement based on modernization to create good human material' (Shenhav, 140). At a meeting with the army high command in 1950, Ben-Gurion thus described Arab Jews as 'human dust, with no Jewish or human culture. They need a long course of education and civilization before they can occupy their proper place in society' (qtd. in Giladi, 209). Ben-Gurion's language further shows that, more than just a problem, the mass immigration of 'Eastern' Jews was perceived by the Ashkenazi elite as a threat to the European or 'Western' character of the state. Ben-Gurion thus proclaimed:

We do not want the Israelis to be Arabs. We are in duty bound to fight against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and societies, and preserve the authentic Jewish values as they crystallized in the [European] Diaspora.

(qtd. in Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 57)

The notion of an 'Eastern' threat to the envisioned European-Jewish state can be traced back to the *yishuv*'s earliest recruitment of non-European Jews, which were 'two thousand Yemeni Jews between 1910 and 1914 [whose] immigration was proposed in 1907 in a debate over the use of Arab labor in Ashkenazi settlements' (Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 54). Joseph Massad has shown that the presence of Yemeni Jews was disturbing to the Ashkenazi leadership across 'all political currents irrespective of ideology' (54). So-called cultural Zionist Ahad Ha'Am thus worried that 'Yemenite immigration affects *the nature* of the Zionist settlement by dint of their different culture and mentality' (qtd. in Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 54, emphasis in original). At the opposite end of the political spectrum, revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky wrote in 1926 that the 'Jews, thank God, have nothing in common with the East. We must put an end to any trace of the oriental spirit in the [native] Jews of Palestine' (qtd. in Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 55). Underlying these expressions of concern is a racialised view of Jews that spans all ideologies within the Zionist discourse.

For Shenhav, 'it was a clear case of Jewish orientalism, where one Jewish group orientalized another' (71). Gover similarly maintains that within modern Israeli society today, the ethnic Sephardi and Mizrahi are still posited against and subordinated to 'a putatively nonethnic *Ashkenazi*, which is taken to define authentic Jewish culture and

identity as such. The term *Ashkenazi* or *Ashkenazim* is synonymous with *Israeli*, thus colonizing all other Jewish identities' (Gover, 125-126). Considering that the majority of Israeli Jews today are of non-European descent or background, Israel is not only *not* the state of its non-Jewish citizens, but also not even the state of most of its Jewish citizens.¹⁶ The 'integration [of Arab Jews]' that, as Giladi stresses, 'formerly existed in the Islamic world', has thus failed in Israel (7).

As we have seen already, Zionism's ambition was never to create a state for *all* Jews, but rather envisioned itself, remembering Herzl's words, as 'an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism', protecting Europe from the East (*ZWI*, 31). This vision actively excluded, using again Herzl's terminology, the '*Mauschels*' of Europe, that is, the 'bad Jews' unfit or unwilling to participate in Zionism's colonial state-building project; at the same time, it did not even take into consideration the Jews of the Arab and Islamic world. It was only when, as Shohat convincingly argues, European immigration failed (even in the post-Holocaust years most European Jews chose to emigrate elsewhere), that the Zionist establishment decided to bring Sephardi immigrants en masse ('Sephardim in Israel', 16). The covert Solel Boneh mission starting in 1941 represents one of the earliest such attempts as part of a concrete immigration plan. Zionism's European exclusivism is clearly displayed in an article by Ben-Gurion from 1949 in which he identified the Jews of Europe as 'the leading candidates for citizenship in the State of Israel' and explained the meaning of the Nazi holocaust for Zionism as follows:

But more than Hitler hurt the Jewish people, whom he knew and hated, he injured the Jewish State which he never anticipated. He had annihilated the carrier and the main and central constructive power of the Jewish State. The state was established and the people who longed for it were not there.

(qtd. in Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 56)

Far from being the first choice, Arab Jews were however urgently needed in order to boost and consolidate the new state's Jewish numbers. They were also needed, within the Zionist policy of Hebrew Labour, as a replacement for the cheap Palestinian labour.

¹⁶ Already in 1985, Shlomo Swirski could write that '[t]he Oriental Jews now constitute the majority of the Jewish Israeli population - 43.3% of first- and second-generation Israelis' (3). In his 2002 *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine*, Oren Yiftachel provided the following Israeli Jewish population statistics: about 38 percent Ashkenazi and about 40 percent Mizrahi (103).

Zionism's attitude to and treatment of Arab Jews displays its consistent and utter disregard for the realities of the region in which it sought to implant itself. As it already did with European Jewry, it also transformed and appropriated Arab-Jewish histories and identities. Finding that the reality of Arab Jews did not fit the Zionist narrative, their history had to be re-written and falsified; and, as Giladi notes, Zionism was once again successful in imposing its narrative upon the world:

Despite the evidence of historical facts, Zionist propaganda in the domestic and foreign media continues to nourish the legend of Muslim oppression of Jews in the Islamic world.

(33)

Zionism thus applied and transferred its European rescue fantasy onto the well-integrated and sometimes even assimilated Jews of the Islamic countries:

According to the mythic discourse, European Zionism "saved" Sephardi Jews from the harsh rule of their Arab "captors". It took them out of "primitive conditions" of poverty and superstition and ushered them gently into a modern Western society characterized by "humane values," values with which they were but vaguely and erratically familiar due to the "Levantine environments" from which they came.

(Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 105)

The immigration of Iraqi Jews to Israel for example is today 'known in the Zionist epos as "Operation Ezra and Nehemiah" - as "rescue aliyah" [...] that saved harassed Jews yearning to return to their ancient homeland after enduring ethnic suppression and discrimination' (Shenhav, 112-113).

Indeed, the case of the Iraqi Jewish community as a whole illustrates very well the reality of Arab Jews in their home countries prior to the creation of Israel: the Jews of Iraq were a long-established community, overall well-integrated and relatively prosperous. Giladi and Alcalay show in their respective studies that Iraqi Jewry did not constitute an exception, but that throughout the Arab and Islamic world, Jews participated significantly in the cultural, social and political lives of their home countries. Alcalay thus maintains that,

[fa]r from being an unobtrusive, silenced, or submissive minority, the Jewish presence and way of life were not simply tolerated but were always acknowledged and recognized as part of the texture of the Levant itself.

(*After Jews and Arabs*, 136)

The question of what motivated the Jewish population to leave Iraq en masse is still disputed amongst historians. In Zionist(-friendly) discourse, the two-day episode of anti-Jewish mob violence in 1941, known as the *farhud*, is narrated as the critical evidence proving the Arab Jews' urgent need to escape their intrinsically hostile countries of residence.¹⁷ Shenhav argues that '[i]n Zionist memory, the *farhud* ratifies the "from the Holocaust to the revival" narrative' (141):

Zionist historiography treats the *farhud* as watershed event in the history of Iraqi Jews that occurred within the framework of the European Holocaust. It is cited as proof that the life of the Jews in Iraq was intolerable, that they were persecuted by Muslims, and that the inevitable result was their immigration to Israel.

(Shenhav, 140)

Research however shows that, however unsettling these events must have been for Iraqi Jews, the vast majority of them did not show any desire to leave their homes. What seems to at least partly explain the Jews' resolve to stay is that the attacks were 'confined exclusively to Baghdad' and that they constituted 'an exceptional event in the history of Jewish-Muslim relations in Iraq' (Shenhav, 43). The way the reinstated government dealt with the attacks afterwards – compensating the victims and punishing the perpetrators – also appears to have contributed to restoring some level of trust vis-à-vis the political leadership. This came to the great surprise and disgruntlement of the Zionist emissaries stationed in Iraq, one of whom later that same year wrote: 'There are no Jewish young people who think of defense. [...] The youth here are degenerate and dissolute' (qtd. in Shenhav, 45). Head of the secret Zionist mission in Iraq Enzo Sereni also wrote to the leadership in Palestine to complain that, even after the *farhud*, Zionist propaganda work was only 'generating a passing enthusiasm', and with disappointment he concluded that, 'not even the young people are "Zionist". They have a sense of national and human pride, but they do not think like Zionists or even have a Zionist instinct' (qtd. in Shenhav, 45). Almost a year after the *farhud*, Sereni attributed the lack of Zionist fervor among Iraqi

¹⁷ Shenhav narrates the backdrop to the events of June 1941 as follows: 'It occurred a few hours before the British entered Baghdad in the course of the war [i.e. the Anglo-Iraqi War], after the pro-Nazi Prime Minister Rashid Ali al-Kilani had fled the country, causing a state of anarchy in Baghdad. For reasons that are unclear, the British delayed their entry into the city by forty-eight hours. According to some testimonies, they made no effort to calm the surging passions in the city and prevent the clash between Jews and Muslims. [...] 160 Jews and unknown number of Muslims were murdered while the political anarchy lasted' (43).

Jews to failings in Zionist strategy (he thought that they acted too slowly in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, thus missing out on a crucial and potentially beneficial window of Iraqi-Jewish instability); but the most significant hindrance to the Zionist recruitment mission in Iraq for Sereni was simply the inadequate nature of the local Jews:

By the time we arrived, in April 1942, the first impression of the pogrom had already been forgotten. The Jews had “adjusted” to the new situation that was created by the entry of the English. . . . True, we had thought, before coming here, that masses were waiting to immigrate at any price, and that our task was simply to come, organize, and arrange the immigration, to direct the moves. We very quickly discovered that the situation was not like that and that the move to Palestine had actually become more difficult at that time. . . . Mainly, we found an absence of any Zionist and pioneer education that would enable us to form “core groups” for [illegal] immigration. . . .

All the weak, the doubters found themselves an “ideological” foundation for rejecting the idea of the difficult and dangerous pioneering immigration. Physical labor holds no charm or attraction for the young Iraqi. Every “respectable” person here shies away from even the lightest work as something despicable. “Workers,” “laborers” are “coolies,” the lowest of the low. So, when the first young people immigrated after the pogrom and discovered that their lot in Palestine would be hard work, they quickly despaired [and] in many cases returned home, slandering the Land of Israel, [or] writing harsh letters.

(qtd. in Shenhav, 46)

Sereni’s use here of the term ‘pogrom’, with its integral connection to the European context, exhibits again Zionism’s imposition of the European paradigm onto the Jews of the Arab and Islamic world. The discourse in relation to Jewish opposition to Zionism was also the same: Sereni thus dismisses these ‘doubters’ as ‘weak’ and explains their lack of any Zionist pioneering spirit with cowardice and idleness. Despite the Zionists’ best propaganda efforts, the Iraqi Jews’ unwillingness to leave is recorded in a British newspaper article as late as December 1949:

[T]he Chief Rabbi and Iraqi Jews do not like Zionism since it has caused difficulties for them. They prefer to stay in Iraq and live under the patronage of Islam and its tolerance. They are attached to their houses and traditions, and to the graves of their prophets in Iraq. They have no desire to leave their country and live in refugee camps in Israel. They believe that people there are not too friendly towards oriental Jews.

(qtd. in Giladi, 74)

The actual reasons then for the mass exodus of Arab Jews, among them Iraqi Jews, during the years after the establishment of Israel are manifold and complex, as Shohat argues:

The displacement for most Arab-Jews was the product of complex circumstances in which panic and disorientation, rather than desire for *aliyah* in the nationalist sense of the word, was the key factor. The “ingathering” seems less natural when one takes into account the circumstances that forced their departure.

(*Taboo Memories*, 337)

Shohat goes on to provide the following comprehensive list of attributing factors and circumstances that led to the departure of Arab Jews from their home countries:

[...] the efforts of the Zionist underground in Iraq to undermine the authority of community leaders such as hakham Sasson Khduri; the Zionist policy of placing a “wedge” between the Jewish and Muslim communities, generating anti-Arab panic on the part of Jews; the anti-Jewish propaganda, especially as channeled through the Istiklal, or Independence Party; the failure of most Arab intellectuals and leaders to clarify and act on the distinction between Jews and Zionists; their failure to actively secure the place of Jews in the Arab world; the persecution of communists, among them Jews who opposed Zionism; the secretive agreements between some Arab leaders and Israeli leaders concerning the idea of “population exchange”; and their misconceptions, on the part of many Arab-Jews, about the differences between their own religious identity, affiliation, or sentiments and the secular nation-state project of Zionism, a movement that had virtually nothing to do with those sentiments, even if it capitalized on a quasi-religious rhetoric.

(*Taboo Memories*, 337-338)

The final straw that drove the majority of Iraqi Jews to take up the government’s denaturalisation offer seems to have been a campaign of bombings targeting Jews in the city of Baghdad in 1950. While Zionist historians read these attacks as further proof of a latent Islamist anti-Semitism, Zionist-critical historians point the blame towards the Zionist underground (whether these attacks were known to the leadership in Israel or not). Indeed two Jewish men were officially charged and convicted of the bombings. No further documentation however proves these claims. That the Zionist leadership was aware of its failure to attract Iraqi and other Arab Jews, and that it considered extreme methods to encourage their immigration, is however rather well documented. Giladi thus cites Berl Locker, the chairman of the executive committee of the Zionist Organisation, as saying in

regards to the Jews of Yemen that, ‘even the Jews who do not want to emigrate will have to’ (90). Giladi also cites Yitzhak Menahem, one of Israel’s agents abroad, as writing:

[...] far reaching emigration will only occur due to extreme hardship. This is the bitter truth, unpalatable as it may be. We must study the possibility of *manufacturing this hardship ourselves*. We must give impetus and be the catalyst in the various Jewish diasporas . . . for the Jews need to be pushed involuntarily into leaving their places of residence. We must give them a shock and rouse them from their indolence [...].

(90, emphasis added)

The point here is not to idealise the situation of the Jews within the Islamic world, but rather to challenge the Eurocentric Zionist historiography and show that a great number of them felt at home in their respective countries and did not want to leave; that in contrast to the Zionist narrative, they had a native space in which they were deeply rooted. Because of this sense of belonging, they by and large did not feel any yearning to ‘return’, nor the need of being rescued. Most certainly, they did not embrace Zionism with open arms; most either felt indifferent or outright rejected the Zionist movement and its ideas, and did not consider Palestine an attractive option for immigration (Shenhav, 115). Zionist agent Enzo Sereni thus had to admit that they failed to establish a local Zionist movement in Iraq mainly ‘due to native Jewish apathy’ (qtd. in Giladi, 73). Shohat argues that, because of the different position that Jews occupied in the Muslim world in contrast to Christian Europe, ‘one that did not necessarily require a nationalistic articulation of their identity’, ‘the concept of Jewish nationalism was politically irrelevant to their existence as Jews within the Islamic world’ (*Taboo Memories*, 342). Israeli writer Sami Michael who was born in Baghdad in 1926 describes the prevalent view among Iraqi Jews at the time as follows: ‘In our view, the Zionist idea was no solution for the Jews. Rather it would cause far more trouble and harm’ (Samir, *Forget Baghdad*). Many Iraqi Jews, including Michael, instead joined the local Communist Party in search for political change. Of these, many were also supporters of ‘The Anti-Zionist League’ (AZL) which, as Giladi explains, was formed in 1946 by Iraqi Jews, Muslims and Christians ‘to oppose Zionist plots and the smuggling of Jews to Palestine as well as to preserve their Iraqi identity’ (74).

In the end, it was necessity rather than ideology that led most Jews from Iraq, and the Arab and Islamic world at large, to Israel. Michael, for instance, tailed by the Iraqi

secret police for his Communist involvement, first fled to Iran where he soon became in danger of being handed over to Iraq. In order to avoid arrest, he fled to Israel. Shimon Ballas, another Israeli writer of Iraqi-Jewish origin, admits in an interview that his life-long dream had been to go to France, but because of financial reasons, he had to settle for Israel: ‘Instead of the Sorbonne, I ended up in a transit camp’ (Alcalay, ‘At Home in Exile’). The fact that, as Shenhav points out, ‘[th]ose Jews who did leave Iraq settled mainly in Europe and North America, not Palestine’, reflects once again the Zionist movement’s failure to attract Jews for its project, causing an obvious problem for the Zionist master narrative of one Jewish people and their two thousand year-long yearning for a return to the Jewish homeland (116).

Those Middle Eastern Jews who in the end did follow Israel’s call, whether out of ideology or necessity, were soon to find out that, in contrast to the Zionist propaganda, their arrival in the Jewish state was anything but a return home. Instead of being greeted like the long lost Jewish brothers and sisters, they were welcomed with DDT spray and transit camps.¹⁸ The treatment suffered in those years still haunts Sephardi and Mizrahi collective memory. The following first-hand account by a Baghdadi woman of her arrival in Israel vividly captures the disillusionment and humiliation suffered by the new immigrants:

We were wearing our Sabbath clothing. We thought as the plane landed that Israel would welcome us warmly. But, goodness, how wrong we were! When the plane had landed at Lod airport, a worker approached us and sprayed us all over with DDT, as if we were lice-infested. What sort of welcome was that? We felt that they were spitting in our faces. When we disembarked from the plane, they herded us into a train, which was so crowded that we were stepping on each other and our fine clothes were dirtied. [...] Finally we reached the “Sha’ar Ha’aliya” camp and we were taken in with other families, then they wrote down our names and “gave” us new Hebrew names. “Said” became “Hayyim”, “Su’ad” became “Tamar” and I was renamed “Ahuva” and so on. Then we had to wait in long food queues, as if we were beggars. We had no idea what was to become of us.

[...]

As I wandered amongst these tents an elderly Iraqi waylaid me. “I have just got one question,” he said. “Are we immigrants or prisoners of war?” My tongue was tied and I could not reply. The old man spat on the ground and cursed Israel and everything to do with Israel.

(qtd. in Giladi, 103-104)

¹⁸ DDT is an insecticide with which Arab Jewish immigrants were sprayed upon arrival in Israel before being transferred to the transit camps.

Disillusionment quickly turned into anger, further fuelled by the knowledge of the differential treatment of Ashkenazi immigrants, who, in contrast to the Arab Jews were spared the transit camps and given the homes of the displaced Palestinian population (Massad, 'Zionism's Internal Others', 58). The mood in the camps soon turned violent: camp residents started organising angry demonstrations that were met with uncompromising force by the new state police. Giladi quotes 'a very popular song in the camps in those days' that poignantly illustrates the immigrants' anger at the Jewish state and its failed promises:

Look what you've done to us, Ben Gurion,
You smuggled us out,
Because of the past, we have renounced our (Iraqi) citizenship
and come to Israel.
If only we had come by donkey
We never would have made it!
What a wretched time!
What a wretched plane that brought us here!

(117)

In another folk song, the Iraqi immigrants also expressed a sense of betrayal in relation to their own government which they believed had secret agreements with Israel:

They sold us there!
They bought us there!
Then they brought us here!

(Giladi, 117)

Largely absent from the works of the Israeli (dominantly Ashkenazi) literary establishment, it is only in the literature of a handful of Israeli Arab-Jewish writers that the early plight and ongoing discrimination of Arab Jews in Israel is brought to the surface. Among these writers are Sami Michael, Shimon Ballas and Samir Naqqash, all of whom share strikingly similar biographies: they were born in Baghdad where they were active

members of the Communist Party and started their literary careers, before immigrating to Israel during the Jewish mass exodus of 1948-51.¹⁹

Both Ballas and Michael wrote about the experience of the transit camp in their first novels in Hebrew (both novels, perhaps unsurprisingly, remain unpublished in an English translation). Ballas' 1964 novel *Hama'bara* (The Transit Camp) recounts according to Giladi the true story of 'the struggle of the Iraqi transit camp residents to elect a committee to represent their interests to the authorities. Balas [sic] describes the bloody clashes between Sephardim on the one hand, and the police, hired ruffians and the Ashkenazi camp director on the other' (339). Yerach Gover stresses the significance of Ballas' novel noting that it was the first Hebrew novel 'in which Sepharadi [sic] and Arab-Jewish newcomers spoke with their own voice and from their own point of view' (127). In the short translated extract Giladi provides, camp residents directly confront the camp director with their grievances and accusations. The wretched living conditions which have already spread disease and caused fatalities, the daily insecurity and violence, as well as the overall unequal treatment suffered at the hands of the Ashkenazim, are all on top of the residents' list of complaints. One camp resident thus summarises everyday life in the camp as 'quarrels, fights, disturbances, police!' Another one complains about Ashkenazi superiority: 'The Ashkenazim are laughing at us. They say that we Iraqis are primitive' (qtd. in Giladi, 340). What transpires most strongly from Ballas' Arab-Jewish characters is their deep regret at having left their homes in Iraq, at having abandoned their relatively prosperous and respectable lives, for poverty and discrimination in Israel. Abu Nu'man thus longingly recounts his life as a well-known and respected merchant in Iraq:

Whenever I came to a Muslim village, the men and women would rush to tell the Sheikh that Ezra the Jew had arrived. The Sheikh would receive me in his guest room and would put me up in his house as long as I had business in the area.

(qtd. in Giladi, 340)

Addressing the camp director, he exclaims:

¹⁹ Due to the unavailability of English (or other) translations, my focus in the following will be restricted to the later works of Shimon Ballas and Sami Michael, the novels of the latter having become the most widely translated due to his recent popularity. Samir Naqqash's work in Arabic on the other hand is wholly unavailable in translations. I therefore rely on secondary commentary on his literature when necessary, but will mainly use his articles, interviews and other statements for the purpose of my argument.

You made our lives hell in Iraq. We had been independent there, living by the sweat of our brows. We were our own masters until you brought us this catastrophic Palestine thing of yours. You said we had to get up, leave everything and come here . . . And what did you do? We got up and came - to graveyards.

(qtd. in Giladi, (340)

In Michael's novel *Shavim ve-shavim yoter* (Equal and More Equal), protagonist and narrator David, also of Iraqi-Jewish descent, 'recollects the course of his life in a series of time frames' (Gover, 137). In one such time frame he looks back at his family's experiences in Israel after they arrived from Baghdad in 1950. Giladi again provides a short translated excerpt in which David remembers how the transit camp essentially broke his father who was an affluent merchant in Iraq. As in the extract of Ballas' novel, it is the degradation and racism experienced upon arrival in Israel that has the most devastating effect on the Iraqi immigrants:

My father wept! [...] Father's body was still alive but his spirit was dying inside him. He was a new immigrant from Iraq, this old man, burdened with a family, short of money and transplanted amongst a group of people with no hope of supporting his family honourably. All of this formed the base of another revelation which was many times worse: it transpired that he belonged to an inferior race . . . and he could not get over this burning humiliation.

[...]

We thought that our arrival in Israel would be like a homecoming. Jews among Jews. One nation. But it wasn't like that. Someone has split us up into two nations. I remember the troubles we went through in Iraq – but we were never inferior! They don't persecute Jews here, thank God, but before we arrived they had decided to make us second class people.

(Giladi, 124-125)

Intra-Jewish Israeli relations, troubled by the invented contradiction between Jewishness and Arabness, have continued to be a focal theme in Michael's work since. The sustained tension between these formerly inclusive and overlapping identities comes to the fore in his 1977 novel *Hasut* (published in English in 1988 under the title *Refuge*). *Refuge* is set in the Arab *wadi ein nisnas* quarter of Haifa and explores the relationships in the Israeli Communist Party against the background of the 1973 war. At the heart of the novel are two intermarried Arab-Jewish families. There are former kibbutznik Shoshana and her Palestinian husband Fuad; because of this liaison, Shoshana was cast out from her kibbutz and rejected by her family as 'the whore who ran off with an Arab' (32). Shoshana

occasionally helps her friend Shula take care of her mentally disabled son. Shula, like Shoshana, is an Ashkenazi Jew and Communist Party member. She is married to Marduch, an Iraqi Jew, who, we are told, 'had been brought to Israel against his will' (5). After traumatic years of imprisonment and torture in Iraq for his Communist activities, Marduch somehow ended up in Israel: 'I was dumped, by surprise, against my will, into this country' (160). He even confesses: 'I felt nothing for Israel. As far as I was concerned it was deportation, another exile, another arbitrary order determining my fate' (162).

The Ashkenazi characters, including his wife Shula, repeatedly refer to Marduch as '[coming] from back there' (14), mystifying thereby his origin and casting a veil of suspicion over him in relation to the Ashkenazi Jewish collective. In other words, the reference persistently reasserts his Otherness as an Arab Jew. Marduch's difference is further articulated through his relationship with 'Israeli Arabs' and Arab culture in general. He thus holds a deep love for Arabic poetry which he shares with Shoshana's Palestinian husband Fuad. To Shula's dislike, they spend whole nights together reciting Arabic verses. Recounting his arrival in Israel, Marduch says: 'I arrived here without a penny, without family, and worst of all, without a language' (162). In this situation of distress and alienation, he is desperate to find something or someone familiar, and he finds it in the Palestinians left inside Israel after 1948:

I went to the Arabs in Haifa, I saw the Arabs in Jaffa, I visited the Arabs in Umm-al-Fahm, I stayed in Kfar Yassif, and it seemed to me that I had seen and spoken to them before. I came back and lay on the sofa in the Party clubhouse in Haifa and I thought, Marduch, you're going crazy. The desert sun and the loneliness here have added your brains.

Then I suddenly remembered where I had seen them before, where I had spoken with them. It was in the ancient quarter of my native town. They were the remnants of that strong body that had picked up and departed.

(163)

Those are the people he knew and lived with in Iraq. In an otherwise alien country, Marduch recognises in these Palestinians – their language and culture – remnants of home.

Marduch is the only character in Michael's novel, despite the more mixed milieu of the Israeli Communist Party, who can truly transcend the newly invented contradiction, because he comes from a world where this contradiction did not exist. Alongside his love

for Arabic poetry, he can also show a sincere interest in the Yiddish language and literature, recent passions of his father-in-law who fails to enthuse any of his family for their ancestral language: ‘Only Marduch, who came from Iraq, Marduch whose eyes were like a gypsy’s and whose skin was like an Arab’s, showed an interest in Yiddish literature’ (29). Marduch’s hybrid identity, a vestige of his previous life as a Jew in an Arab country, is most clearly revealed when contrasted with his wife’s unease towards Arabs and Arabness:

Shula hesitated. She was always conscious of her Jewishness in the presence of Arabs. Marduch, too, was conscious of his Jewishness, yet had no difficulty establishing connections with the Arabs. He considered them as equals. She did not. Every time she dealt with them, she felt she had to descend to their level. When Marduch chided her, calling her a racist, Shula was unable to defend herself, save with a smile.

(313)

Despite his initial – and perhaps ongoing – sense of alienation, Marduch has, out of gratitude, come to accept Israel as his new home. Shula says this about her husband:

Israel gave him a refuge. He feels deep in his heart that he owes a great debt to this country. He sees the faults, all right, but he’ll never forget that this was the only state to give him a home.

(302)

His new loyalty is tested and sanctified with the outbreak of war: Marduch is called into the reserves of the Israeli army and does not hesitate to go and fight for his new country.

With Marduch gone, Shula is asked by the Party leadership to provide refuge in her house to Fatkhi, a prominent but vain Palestinian poet, in an attempt to resist the common Israeli practice of preventive detention of Palestinians at the beginning of war. The implications of this request surface violently for Shula: ‘Marduch’s gone off to fight [Arabs]’: ‘[g]iving refuge to an Arab poet like Fatkhi would be like a bullet in Marduch’s back’ (197). Conflicting loyalties also erupt in Shoshana’s family during that time. Her son, born of a Jewish mother and a Palestinian father, suddenly decides that he is a Jew, ‘an Israeli patriot’, eager ‘to go and die’ with his Jewish fellows (159). The war plays itself out on a microcosmic level in Shoshana’s family:

All of a sudden Amir’s decided that he’s a Jew, and his two little brothers are playing the part of the poor, screwed Arabs, no less. Their father descends from the

heights only when their shouting drowns out the news. Then he jumps up from the armchair and yells at them, and my miserable Arabs and Jews turn on him and open their own yaps. It's been like that since the siren went off this afternoon. They almost tore the house apart.

(158)

Shoshana contemplates the absurdity of her son's epiphany:

All these years they've been spitting at him. Ever since he was a child he's been hearing about his Jewish whore mother who sleeps with an Arab. Suddenly he's Jewish? [...] He and his brothers both know that if he went to the recruitment station he'd get a kick in his Arab *fellah*'s behind.

(158)

For all the characters in *Refuge*, war abruptly and painfully brings the tensions and divisions that existed hidden during times of peace to the forefront. It forces them to decide who they are and where their loyalty lies, opening deep divides even within the intimate structure of family relationships.

The *wadi nisnas* quarter and the Israeli Communist Party provide Michael with the rare settings for meaningful and intimate encounters between Jews and Arabs in Israel. By exploring these fringes of modern Israeli society, Michael breaks down the rigid Zionist construct of identities, where 'Arab' and 'Jew' have become impenetrable and irreconcilable categories. At the same time, he displays the insurmountable rifts that have indeed become entrenched in people's minds and keep them eventually separated.

Similar themes emerge out of his 1987 novel *Hatsotsrah ba-Wadi* (published in English under the title *A Trumpet in the Wadi* in 2002). Also set in the *wadi nisnas* quarter of Haifa, it depicts the relationships between Jews and Arabs in the light of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Protagonist Huda, a Christian 'Israeli Arab', lives with her sister, mother and grandfather in a block of flats owned by shady Palestinian landlord Abu-Nakhla. In the room above them live Palestinian workers from the occupied West Bank, to the great displeasure of Huda and her family.

Right from the start, Huda confesses her fundamental alienation from her Arab background:

We've been living in the wadi for many years, but I have no Arab friends, male or female. I'm trying to be more Israeli than the Jews themselves. Like a fisherman whose nets keep coming up empty, I've wandered from one fishing ground to the

next, and now Yehuda Amichai is nearer to my heart than any Arab poet.

(1)

Like Marduch's unusual interest in Yiddish, Huda's love for Hebrew poetry crosses the rigid borders of identification. In her case however, the embrace of Hebrew poetry denotes a simultaneous rejection of Arab culture, both apparently mutually exclusive in Huda's mind. The extent of Huda's estrangement from her Arab identity is strikingly illustrated in an early scene in which we follow her on her way to work; the shortest route takes her across an 'Oriental' market. She admits that she only chooses this path when '[she] feel[s] strong enough':

That morning my senses must have been dulled, otherwise I'd have taken the long way. I realized my mistake as soon as I entered the market.

(17)

Her walk across the market soon turns into a nightmarish fantasy in which she imagines being chased by the Palestinian boys living in her building. The vendors become grotesque and threatening figures in Huda's vision, 'their comments and laughter' like 'hunting cries' to her (17):

The comments, jokes and stares felt like a barrage of stones. In my imagination I skimmed over the smooth road and Abu-Nakhla's boys ran after me, puffing in my ears and laughing at the blouse that clung to my skin. As I ran I saw the Moroccan mint seller holding up a bunch like a bouquet of flowers, and I wanted to shout to him that I did not need mint, I needed to huddle in his winter coat and moisten my lips on the damp sack lying before him. He grinned at me, showing four teeth around a hollow darkness, and I was shocked – he too, this worn-out old man? I was offended and was about to scold him, but he went on smiling darkly. He was not really smiling. His mouth was open in an effort to draw breath. And none of the vendors had taken notice of me. I had been running, or imagining that I was running, for no reason. The Moroccan waved at me to attract my swimming glance, but I didn't have the strength to bend down and take the mint. I was also afraid to open my bag, my hands were so shaky. I struggled to get out of the place before I found myself sprawling among the cigarette butts and rotting cabbage leaves. I closed my eyes and opened them again. The dizziness had not passed. The fingernails of my hand gripping the handbag strap dug to my palm, and aided by this pain I reached Independence Street.

(17)

Instead of rescuing Huda from her pursuers, the Moroccan mint seller seems to be, along with the rest of the market vendors, part of a conspiracy against Huda. What exactly this

conspiracy entails is not explicitly revealed; but it appears that the threat that the Palestinian boys and the vendors pose to Huda is their Arabness or 'Easternness', which in turn menaces to expose hers. Only when she reaches Independence Street, 'the mostly Jewish street' (16), a sense of relief sinks in and the combination of paranoia and self-consciousness that overcame her subsides.

That this sense of alienation is symptomatic of her generation rather than an isolated case is made clear when Huda relates how her sister Mary is detached even further from her Arab roots: 'Mary makes no effort. She's the most Israeli offshoot of this family. Two years younger than I, she's bold and reckless' (1). Mary is a doer, while Huda is a dreamer as she herself stresses: 'I fantasize and she tries. I dream and she tastes' (1). Their different personalities surface most clearly in the way they react to the Palestinian boys from upstairs. The alleged noisiness of their daily return from work makes Huda 'retreat at once into [her] body' (5). Again, Huda's imagination takes over and she transforms the boys, in an imagery imbued with strong sexual undertones, into 'demons who operate in Abu-Nakhla's dark dens' (5). Huda's mother also perceives the boys who she alternately refers to as 'savages' and 'animals', as a threat and is seized by a 'flooding feeling' upon hearing them enter the building (2). In contrast to both Huda and her mother, Mary 'yields to the vibration of the flat, like a child yielding to the rising and plunging of a roller coaster' (2). Her fearlessness is linked to her earlier qualities of boldness and recklessness which qualify her as 'the most Israeli' of the family. Only the grandfather defends the boys: 'Work is work, never mind what other people tell you. [...] When I was young I also felt like singing and running at the end of the day' (2). And he reminds the girls' mother that when her deceased husband 'was a boy he also ran and yelled a bit' (2). He can sympathise with these young men because, like Marduch, he comes from a world that did not demand exclusive identification. Of Egyptian origin, he most likely would have experienced the last years of Ottoman rule and therefore does not seem to carry the burden of conflicting loyalties like the rest of the family does. As already with Marduch in *Refuge*, it is through the character of the grandfather that Michael hints at a common Arab-Jewish past and even friendship. While attending an Ashkenazi funeral, Huda notices that her grandfather obeys the traditional Jewish attire for the occasion: 'Clearly this was not his first Jewish funeral, and it was strange to see him thus when most of the Jewish men present remained bareheaded' (221). The grandfather's adherence to Jewish

religious practice refers not only to the mutual respect that existed in the past between Arabs and Jews, but it also seems to suggest a closeness to and understanding of Judaism that are lacking in the (presumably secular) Ashkenazi Israelis present at the funeral.

Although Huda and her sister are trying so hard to fit in, to, in Huda's own words, 'be more Israeli than the Jews themselves', they are, on her own admission, living in Israel's 'backyard' (165). Huda works at a travel agency where she is the only Arab amongst her colleagues and was initially hired specifically to deal with Arab customers only – 'the Arabs being the easiest to deal with' due to their inferiority complex, as Huda herself alleges (20). Although she likes and gets on with her co-workers, there is an unspoken rift between them that again forcefully opens up at the outbreak of war. Huda's attempts to establish intimate relations with her Jewish colleagues, to become one of them, are abruptly halted, because ultimately, as Huda realises, 'what can an Arab woman say to a Jewish mother?' (20)

When a young Russian immigrant named Alex takes over the top room of their building, Huda shows an immediate interest in the stranger and it does not take long for the two to get involved in a relationship. Like with so many of Michael's characters, Alex's reasons for coming to Israel challenge the Zionist master narrative:

Alex did not come to Israel because he was a Zionist. His mother, who today loathes Israel and would flee from it as from a leper colony, is considered a Zionist and enjoys the privileges of a "Prisoner of Zion." She was the one who maneuvered everything and brought him and his father against her will. (146)

When Alex is called on reserve duty and stationed in the Golan Heights, Huda's repressed Arab identity fully surfaces for the first time:

I was ironing Alex's uniform in his room when the significance of what I was doing came home to me. Many Israeli men dressed in these uniforms had killed Arabs. I went on working mechanically, smoothing the cloth in front of the iron, smelling the rising steam. And once in this uniform, Alex would be a target for any Arab soldier or Palestinian fighter. (211)

Huda is forced to choose between her allegiance to the Jewish state and Alex who is fighting on its side, and her Arab identity:

I had linked my fate to a Jew, but my fears were still that of an Arab. I didn't dare to stop and ask the worried-looking passersby what was happening. I was sure that they would know me for what I am. I felt like I was walking like an Arab, looking around like an Arab, thinking like an Arab. The men and women on the pavement were gazing with Jewish eyes at sons and brothers, husbands and fathers, being led to fight a Jewish war. My alienness intensified with every step. My legs turned boneless. I reminded myself that Alex was a Jew, but what came to mind were some Arabic lullabies from my early childhood. Then suddenly they disappeared, leaving me blank, neither Jew nor Arab, in a street that was a solid mass of anxiety and fear, hatred and anger. In this war-minded street the Jews might let me share their laughter but not their sorrow, whereas the Arabs would eject me from their laughter but expect me to participate in their sorrow.

(232)

Alex does not return from Lebanon and Huda is left with a child born of an Arab mother and a Jewish father, an embodiment of the in-between-state of Israeli Palestinians and Arab Jews alike.

With both *Refuge* and *A Trumpet in the Wadi*, Michael paints a picture of Israel as an acutely fragile and divided society. The divisions exist at every level, between Arabs and Jews, between Arab Jews and European Jews, and even between 'Israeli Arabs' and Palestinians in the occupied territories. Michael's Israel is essentially a country at war with itself, with those caught in the middle of Israel's identity politics, like Marduch and Huda, struggling the most.

After years of marginalisation as an 'ethnic' writer, Michael has recently enjoyed a belated success and canonisation in Israel. Some anti-Zionist critics have noted a turn away from his Arab-Jewish identity and socialist politics in his latest works, and have even accused him of having adopted the Zionist master narrative.²⁰ Speaking in 2003, Michael himself argues that he has found a way of combining his Arab and Jewish identities under the Israeli umbrella: 'I'm living in two worlds. The Arab and the Jewish world. Half of me is Arabic and half of me is Jewish. But it's not a struggle like a political rivalry. No, more like Baklava. Each level loves the other level of my personality' (Samir, *Forget Baghdad*). In the same interview as part of a documentary on Israeli Iraqi-Jewish writers, he relates how the birth of his daughter, in Israel, brought about this turning point

²⁰ See for example Snir Reuven, "'Religion Is for God, the Fatherland Is for Everyone": Arab-Jewish Writers in Modern Iraq and the Clash of Narratives after their Immigration to Israel' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 126.3 (2006): 394.

in his relation to the country which now, through his daughter's connection, became his as well.

Fellow Iraqi-born Jewish writer Shimon Ballas has not seen the success and popularity of Michael's recent years. He has remained outside the Israeli literary establishment because, I would argue, the counterhegemonic depictions of self-identity, although also present in Michael's novels, reach further in Ballas' work in their suggestions of alternative views of history – views that are too challenging to the Zionist limits of Hebrew literature (Gover, 125). Because of these ideological limitations, Ballas deliberately positions himself outside of Hebrew literature: 'Even though I am a Hebrew writer and I write in Hebrew, I am not affiliated with Hebrew literature' (Alcalay, 'At Home in Exile'). Alcalay argues that 'Ballas has forged a possibility unusual for Hebrew fiction, that of the internal exile attempting to reenact the political complexities of a surrounding world that has been declared forbidden territory' (*After Jews and Arabs*, 11). His 1991 novel *Outcast*, one of the very few of his novels to have been translated into English, thus 'explores aspects of Jewish identity that do not exist for Israeli Ashkenazi readers, or for Zionist historiography' (Gover, 129).

Outcast is narrated by civil engineer, historian, and Jewish convert to Islam, Haroun Saussan who has just finished his life's work, *The Jews and History*. The novel consists of Haroun telling his life story, the trajectory of which he summarises as follows:

The story of a Jewish boy from a sleepy town on the bank of the Euphrates, put through the trial of breaking two frames that held him tight, like bands, the tribal separatist frame, and the local traditional frame; from Jewish existence to existence in general, and from the latter to the expanses of human civilization.

(25-26)

Through a series of discontinuous memories, Haroun provides a history of modern Iraq, from the end of the Ottoman Empire, through the *farhud* and up to the Iranian revolution. In the narrator's own words, it is 'a written testimony about [him] and [his] era' (69).

Significantly, Haroun's view of history is that of an Arab nationalist who has, mid-life, turned his back on Jewish life and Judaism. Accusing the Jews of tribal separatism and of having 'misappropriated the historical role they had been given' (92), Haroun is today convinced that 'as a Jew, in those years, [...] [he] could take no other road than the one [he] took' (28). Following the advent of Zionism in the region, his Jewishness had

become a burden to him: his identity as a Jew threatened, in Haroun's eyes, to erase in one sweep his strong national allegiance and cultural roots in the Islamic world. His professor at John Hopkins University where he completed his doctoral dissertation thus asked Haroun upon finding out that he was a Jew some years later: "Why don't you go to Palestine?" (20) This confirmed Haroun's concern: 'look what happened as soon as he found out I wasn't a Muslim like he thought. All of a sudden I don't belong to a people, a homeland, a culture, I'm just a Jew!' (21)

Haroun came to perceive his Jewish and Iraqi identities as 'two contradictory identities' (90), ultimately forcing him to choose between them. In a move that felt natural to him, he decided to break out of what he experienced as a parochial Jewish community and embraced his Iraqi, Arab and later Muslim identities. Although this decision gave him a sense of freedom, it did not result in the acceptance he had hoped for. As did already the Jewish community, Muslim society also viewed him with suspicion. At the late stage of his life from which he is writing his story, Haroun has come to accept himself as 'a hybrid' (120), as someone who is 'outside, on the threshold, on the border between acceptance and rejection' (76). He further explains this in-between state that has defined his life: 'I had to [...] carry my foreignness wherever I turned, accept not being just the way I had been in the past, a Jew from without, [...], and now I was a Muslim come from without' (124). Gover argues that by '[insisting] that Iraqi Jews should not collaborate in the destruction of their own ancient, and yet modern and flourishing, community', Haroun '*chose* to be "other"' (130, emphasis in original).

Next to Haroun's life trajectory, the novel also presents the paths taken by his closest childhood friends, Qassem Abd al-Baki who ends up as a militant communist in political exile, and poet Assad Nissim. Like Haroun, Assad finds himself, with the Israeli-Arab conflict escalating, torn between his Jewishness and his cultural and emotional ties with Iraq and the Islamic world (67). Contrary to his friend, Assad chooses to retain both his Jewish and Iraqi identities, an attempt which Haroun ridicules and deems impossible due to what he sees as clashing loyalties. It is over Haroun's criticism of Iraqi Jews and Zionism that the two childhood friends fell out. Although Assad shares Haroun's rejection of Zionism, he refuses, in his own words, to 'write a single world' '[a]gainst the Jews' (93). In fact, he accuses Haroun of doing exactly that, thereby feeding and inciting anti-Jewish sentiments. Haroun comes under attack by other members of the Iraqi-Jewish elite;

one of his staunchest critics condemns his latest book as ‘a jihad against the Jews’ (76). Haroun however rejects any of these accusations, describing *The Jews and History* and previous writings as ‘a platform for a comprehensive campaign against Zionism and Western dominance’ (76).

In the early 1970s, Assad finally decides to leave Iraq and go to Israel which by then, Haroun claims, ‘he saw fit to call “the land of promise”’ (66). It is from there that Assad reminisces about his (and Haroun’s) native town of al-Hila in a broadcast over the Voice of Israel. Listening to his former friend’s yearning recollections, Haroun contemplates:

Does anything refute Zionist propaganda about Jews yearning for the land of their fathers more than this strong connection to the homeland, expressed by someone who had been one of its most loyal sons? [...] Only someone who grew up in al-Hila could speak of his childhood with such feeling, and Assad is a genuine Hilawi, even now in the land of his migration, before enemy microphones that so often broadcast lies, he sticks to his first love, the place that cradled him at birth.

(55)

Although he never left Iraq, Haroun can identify with the feeling of exile Assad conveys in the broadcast. It prompts his own memories of a world that no longer exists, ‘far away from the new winds that begun to blow in Baghdad’ (59), and of a time before he started to feel the foreignness that was to take over his life. One memory in particular, that of his town ‘celebrating the renewed flow of water in the dried up creek’, evokes intense emotions in Haroun:

The water festivities lasted well into the night. Sheep were slaughtered and peasants sang and danced around the camp fires, a cloud of smoke hanging above their heads. No one stayed home that day. Muslims and Jews celebrated together and even though they didn’t taste each other’s foods, the joy was general and carried everyone along in a major celebration.

(57)

Haroun concludes: ‘Indeed, al-Hila is not just a place to be born and die in, it is much more, it is an everlasting belonging’ (66).

What makes Ballas’ work ‘virtually unique’, Gover argues, is that ‘an Israeli Hebrew writer has produced narratives in which the state of Israel and its Jewish society are not presented as the final metahistorical agency’ (128). Rather, ‘[t]he characters see

Israel as a proportional unit in a transnational geography, a rather parochial and somewhat suspicious presence, which is looked at with detachment, with some distance, and through a critical prism' (128). Thus, 'Haroun sees Israel from the perspective of an Arab nationalist. For him, Zionism and Israel are objects of apprehension and appear as two of many historical possibilities [...] His perspective is critical and anti-colonial' (128). For all of that, Gover concludes, *Outcast* is 'an unprecedented challenge to Zionist ideology' (130).

Ballas expands his moral and political challenges to Zionist ideology and Hebrew literature in an interview in which he discloses his understanding of Zionism, the premise of which he rejects:

Zionist ideology is essentially an Ashkenazi ideology that developed in a different culture, in different surroundings, in a different world and which came to claim its stake here in the Middle East through alienation and hostility toward the surroundings, with a rejection of the surroundings, with no acceptance of the environment. I don't accept any of this, this is all very different from what I am. I am not in conflict with the environment, I came from the Arab environment and I remain in constant colloquy with the Arab environment. I also didn't change my environment. I just moved from one place to another within it. The whole project of a nationalist conception, of Zionist ideology, of the Jewish point of view, the bonds between Jews in the diaspora and Israel, all of this is quite marginal for me and doesn't play a major role, it's not part of my cultural world.

(Alcalay, 'Home in Exile')

In another interview, Ballas further breaks the great taboo in modern Israeli discourse about Jews from the Arab world:

I have never denied my Arab origins or the Arabic language, despite also having had a French education. The Arab identity has always been a part of me. And I have said and I say: I am an Arab who has taken up an Israeli identity, but I am no less an Arab than any other. That's a fact, and I have nothing to be ashamed of about it. If Arabs are perceived as inferior, then it seems as if I am doing this as a provocation. But there are Arab Jews, just as there are French Jews: How come a Christian can be an Arab but a Jew cannot? Why should it arouse such amazement, then, when I say that I am an Arab Jew? I am always told that I am Iraqi. Where is Iraq – on the moon?

(Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs*, 244)

By explicitly presenting himself as an Arab Jew and by ‘[projecting] alternative, multinational sources of identity for Jews’ (Gover, 131), Ballas’ voice offers a truly subversive counternarrative to the Zionist master narrative.

While both Michael and Ballas have, although perhaps in different ways, come to terms with their lives in Israel, fellow Baghdadi-born Jewish writer Samir Naqqash expresses nothing but bitterness in relation to his new country of residence. For him, his immigration to Israel was a ‘catastrophe’ that destroyed his life and that of his family, condemning them to a life in exile:

All the problems, which I and my family went through after the catastrophe of being uprooted from Iraq and transplanted here, have made me more nostalgic. My love for Arabic was redoubled and I made an effort to absorb every word of classical and colloquial Arabic that I come across. I have never been become assimilated in this country. On the contrary, I have opposed everything ‘Israeli’, and I, like many people of Iraqi origin, still consider myself an Iraqi.

(qtd. in Giladi, 281)

Naqqash sees himself and his Iraqi compatriots as victims of Zionism, having been uprooted from their prosperous lives in Baghdad and transplanted to a destitute existence in Israel: ‘We’d lived in palaces, and they put us into tents. Instead of bringing us home after 3000 years, they sent us 100,000 years back’ (Samir, *Forget Baghdad*). In the same interview, Naqqash accuses Israel of ‘[having] done injustice to [him]’, adding: ‘And I’m afraid it will do injustice to my children, too.’ He rejects any identification with the Israeli state, proclaiming after half a century of living in Israel that, ‘[t]his country is not my country’.

In contrast to Michael and Ballas, Naqqash never switched to Hebrew but continues to write in Arabic to this day. Although he has received great critical acclaim, his work is hardly read, not in Israel or the Arab world. In Israel he is unread because he writes in Arabic (only one of his books has so far been translated into Hebrew). Naqqash expresses his frustration at the marginalisation he suffers as an Arab-Jewish writer within a society dominated by an Ashkenazi Jewish elite that has posited and sustained the idea of Arabs as the enemy:²¹

²¹ In *Exile From Exile: Israeli Writers from Iraq*, Nancy E. Berg discusses in detail the various problems faced by Iraqi-Jewish writers and their roles within the context of Israeli literature.

I feel discriminated against for a number of reasons: first, a Jew writing in Arabic is not read in Israel and gets no international support from the literary establishment. Alongside sales in the thousands by Israeli writers, I barely expect to sell over a hundred copies of those books of mine that appear in Israel. Secondly, the general attitude towards a writer like me is not positive. The question always looms in the background: why should a Jew write in Arabic?

(qtd. in Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs*, 237)

In the Arab world, Naqqash is unread because he is 'Israeli'. Shohat notes how indeed 'Arab Muslim historiography [...] has ironically echoed the logic of Zionist paradigms, looking only superficially into the culture and identity of Arab-Jews both in the Arab world and, more recently, within Israel' (226):

The amnesia of this recent history in most contemporary Arab culture has fed into an Israeli and Arab refusal of the hybrid, the in-between. Even Israeli Arab-Jews, such as the Iraqi Israeli writer Samir Naqqash, who still writes his novels in Arabic, are "rejected" from membership in the Arab geocultural region seen simply as "Israeli".

(*Taboo Memories*, 227)

An additional factor that limits Naqqash's readership is, as Alcalay points out, that the Arab-Jewish world that he writes about and references in his novels no longer exists as such, making it as time goes on increasingly challenging for people to relate to his work: 'he sometimes blends the standard literary language of narrative with dialogue written in the peculiar Jewish dialect of Baghdad, making his work even more demanding to an audience less and less familiar with the context that vanished world provided' (*After Jews and Arabs*, 237). Naqqash is thus a victim of the nationalist historiographies on both sides – a fate which I argue reflects indeed the position of Arab Jews at large – leaving him with a bitter feeling of exclusion and non-belonging:

I don't exist in this country, not as a writer, a citizen nor human being. I don't feel that I belong anywhere, not since my roots were torn from the ground.

(qtd. in Berg, 3)

3.3 Reimagining the Land as One

Who will make peace with the Arab countries? The Ashkenazim? No – we will. We know who the Arabs are. We can speak to them. They’ll listen to us and trust us. That’s what we’ll do, Abu-Suhayl – not just sit in transit camps.

(transit camp dweller in Shimon Ballas’ *Hama’bara*, qtd. in Giladi, 340)

The ‘gap’ between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim, which Israeli officials and academics had predicted would close as the latter benefited from Ashkenazi-induced modernisation, showed no sign of diminishing (Massad, ‘Zionism’s Internal Others’, 61). On the contrary, the tensions that had been growing continually were exacerbated in the late 1960s with the ‘royal reception’ that the Israeli government extended to the Soviet immigrants arriving during 1969-70 (Giladi, 254-55). This reception included ‘luxurious furnished housing and jobs with matched their qualifications’, as well as a personal greeting by Prime Minister Golda Meir, herself of Russian origin, who rushed to Lod airport to welcome them with proclamations such as: ‘You are the real Jews. We have been waiting for you for twenty-five years. You speak Yiddish! [...] You are a superior breed – you will provide us with heroes’ (Giladi, 255).

This was the breeding ground for an escalating Sephardi anger: ‘the Sephardi community started looking at its own cultural heritage as a challenge to the Ashkenazi cultural establishment. The search for their roots was instigated by the appearance of the Black Panther movement’ (Giladi, 196-197):

In 1971, Sephardim from the Musrara district in Jerusalem formed the largest protest organisation – the Black Panthers. They adopted the name of one of the black organisations in America because they believed that there was no fundamental difference between anti-black discrimination in the United States and anti-Sephardi discrimination in Israel in the fields of occupation, education, housing, etc. They set out to challenge the ‘Labour’ establishment’s concepts of ‘equality’, ‘socialism’, ‘democracy’, ‘Jewish liberation’, and ‘ingathering of the exiles’.

(Giladi, 254)

Joseph Massad adds:

Musrara, originally a Palestinian neighborhood near the 1948 armistice line, acquired sudden strategic importance following the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967. When the government moved to raze the old Palestinian houses now inhabited by Mizrahim and build luxury housing for new Ashkenazi immigrants, Mizrahi anger swelled.

(‘Zionism’s Internal Others’, 62)

As Ella Shohat stresses, the Black Panthers ‘sabotaged the myth of the melting pot by showing that there was in Israel not one but two Jewish communities – one white, one black’ (*Taboo Memories*, 222). Giladi furthermore highlights that they ‘were among the first Israelis to challenge the Ashkenazi Zionist establishment by declaring that Sephardim constituted part of the Arab world’ (303). This in turn led them to see connections between their treatment and that of the Palestinians at the hands of the Jewish state. In other words, they understood that,

[t]he same historical process that dispossessed Palestinians of their property, lands, and national-political rights was intimately linked to the process that affected the dispossession of Arab-Jews from their property, lands, and rootedness in Arab countries, as well as their uprootedness from that history and culture within Israel itself.

(Shohat, *Taboo Memories*, 222)

As a consequence, the Black Panthers ‘were not struggling for the Sephardim alone, but for the rights of the Palestinian Arabs also’:

Their leaders started to be proud of their Middle Eastern origin and their Arab ethnicity, which sent a shiver through the Ashkenazi ruling establishment which had been relying on ‘divide and rule’.

(Giladi, 258)

One of the leaders of the Black Panthers, Kochavi Shemesh, explicitly stated that ‘the problem of sectarian inequality between the Ashkenazim and the Sephardim can only be solved after the solution of the Palestinian problem’, and he ‘accuse[d] the government and the media of inciting the Sephardim to hostility against the Arabs’ (qtd. in Giladi, 261). The following quote by Shemesh displays the full extent of the movement’s revolutionary views:

Anyone who understands Zionist ideology knows that it is based on the culture of the European Jews and stands in direct contradiction to the native culture of the area. One of the establishment's greatest mistakes, for example, was to state that Sephardi culture is no more than a Jewish folk culture, for they were afraid that we would accept the concept that our culture is Arab. This is where the huge gap appears between Ashkenazi and Sephardi culture. We do not have any theatres or newspapers and so on, our customs, traditions and culture were Arab, whether we came from the Yemen, Iran, Iraq, the Middle East or Morocco. We are culturally part of the Arab world. That is what the Zionists fear most. Accordingly, they have done everything possible to deprive us of our past. In other words, they have presented a distorted image of Arab culture as "backward" . . . they ridiculed our accent . . . they despised us . . . if I were to support Zionism that would mean that I would be working against my own identity. We Sephardim must sever our connections with the Zionist movement and say to them: Yes. We are Sephardim. Yes. We are 'Orientals'. This term is positive and not negative. We are not against Arab-Oriental culture, on the contrary we are part of it. I believe that we must make it easy for the Sephardim to reclaim their identity.

(qtd. in Giladi, 262-263)

The Black Panthers failed to become a mass movement and disappeared from the Israeli political scene during the 1980s.²² However, the legacy of the movement is still reverberating within the Sephardi/Mizrahi communities. The invention of the Mizrahi identity in the 1990s thus followed the Panthers' example in that it sought to reclaim an Israeli Eastern-Jewish identity by affirming and embracing Arabness/Easterness. It is in this context significant to know that the term 'Mizrahi' (literally 'Easterners' or 'Orientals') was first used by Arab Jews themselves. Shohat explains that '[t]he term began to be used only in the early 1990s by leftist non-Ashkenazi activists who saw previous terms such as *bnei edot hamizrah* ("descendants of the oriental ethnicities") as condescending' ('The Invention of the Mizrahim', 13). As such, the term 'references more than just origin':

[I]t evokes the specific experience of non-Ashkenzi Jews in Israel. "Mizrahim" took on some of the resistant quality of the black/white discourse established by the Black Panther movement in the early 1970s, itself a proud reversal of the Ashkenazi racist epithet *schwartzte khayes* (Yiddish for "black animals") and an

²² G.N. Giladi offers a comprehensive list of the reasons for the movement's failure to attract and sustain mass support, amongst them: the lack of an economic base, the successful policy of 'divide and rule' employed by the left-wing parties which eventually resulted in the integration of most of the Panthers' leaders into Israeli party politics, as well as the general marginal status of the movement's leaders, 'having very little education and being alienated from the trade unions, the professions and Sephardi bourgeoisie' (266-267).

allusion to the black liberation movement in the United States. "Mizrahim," I would argue, condenses a number of connotations: it celebrates the Jewish past in the Eastern world; it affirms the pan-Oriental communities developed in Israel itself; and it invokes a future of revived cohabitation in the Arab Muslim East. All these emergent collective definitions arose, as often occurs, in diacritical contrast with a newly encountered hegemonic group, in this case the Ashkenazim of Israel.

(Shohat, 'The Invention of the Mizrahim', 14)

What I argue here is that the use and affirmation of the term 'Arab Jew' constitutes a vital strategy in resisting Zionism and its separatist ideology. Gayatri Spivak has referred to such an approach as 'strategic essentialism', by which she meant a conscious and most importantly critical application of essentialist categories, not in order to assert and validate them, but with the strategic aim of deconstructing them. As we have seen, writers like Shimon Ballas and Samir Naqash, and scholars such as Ella Shohat, indeed already 'use "Arab Jews" as a political category to challenge the discursive structure of the Zionist lexicon' (Shenhav, 10). Unlike the Mizrahi terminology and identity which, although counterhegemonic, are situated within the Israeli framework, the Arab Jew designation operates outside the Israeli paradigm and therefore poses a truly revolutionary challenge to the Zionist appropriation of Arab-Jewish identities and the resultant division of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean and wider Middle East. Reviving the historical links between Arabs and Jews poses a real threat to Zionist Israel because it reconnects Israeli Arab Jews (Palestinian and others) who for some time now constitute the majority population in Israel, and Palestinians under occupation or in exile. Put more sharply, the worst that can happen to Israel is for its victims to unite and revolt, a joint resistance which undoubtedly has the potential to bring about the disintegration of Zionism.

The reappropriation of Ottoman history and its related Arab-Jewish histories explored in this chapter form part of a larger Palestinian strategy that aims to reclaim the continuity and hybridity of the region's past, freeing it from what is perceived as the narrow nationalism that the Palestinian ruling elites have been engaged in during the past decades. It is within this context that Raja Shehadeh has emerged as a resolute voice offering an important counter-narrative to the hegemonic nationalist discourse. Within this discourse, not only the contradiction between Arabness and Jewishness has been accepted, but also the division of the region imposed by the colonial powers and Zionism. For

Shehadeh, the most significant and devastating effect of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was indeed this fragmentation of the land.

Throughout *A Rift in Time*, Shehadeh sets up a comparison between his great-great-uncle's life and his own, revealing many similarities – both not only writers but political activists which made/makes them targets of persecution by the controlling authorities of the day – but also pointing towards the crucial difference that characterises both men's experiences four generations apart:

Najib might have had other problems to contend with, but they did not include the fragmentation of the land and the tormenting restrictions on movement that plague my life and the lives of most Palestinians, many Arabs and to a lesser extent Israeli Jews in the Middle East.

(35)

Shehadeh's book in fact reads as a lament for the undivided and open land of the Ottoman era, where Najib and his contemporaries could travel freely without being restricted by the artificially and arbitrarily imposed borders Palestinians have to deal with today: 'They didn't have to cross any border, while I'll have to cross three' (35). Without romanticising Ottoman rule – his book after all narrates his ancestor's political persecution by Ottoman police – Shehadeh sees the main virtue of the Ottoman system in successfully safeguarding the wholeness of the land, protecting it from division: the Ottomans' 'most important legacy', he writes, 'was uniting the region and relieving it for four centuries from the horrors of exterior invasions that had devastated it for many years before' (94).

Shehadeh's insistence that he lives in the 'region of Greater Syria along the Great Rift Valley' and not 'the tiny area of the West Bank [which] has become separated into 227 geographical areas', must be understood as a strategy for resisting the feeling of 'claustrophobia' that Israel has managed to instil in Palestinians through its colonial dissection of the land (55). By recovering the pre-colonial history of Palestine, Shehadeh seeks to free Palestinians from this distorted geography:

My hope is that I'll succeed in imaginatively recreating the region as it existed at the time of the Ottoman Empire, when the land was undivided. This will be my way of resisting what Israel has long tried to drill into my head about my place in this ancient land after the fragmentation of our territory by borders, roadblocks, zoning, the building of Jewish settlements and the creation of a new geography that has left me utterly confined. Everything has been designed by Israel to make Palestinians feel like strangers in their own country.

By refusing to accept the artificial division of the region, Shehadeh resists what Palestinian academic Basem L. Ra'ad has called 'the trap of self-colonization':

In the case of oppressed and subjugated colonized people, self-colonization means that they internalize facts and values that run counter to their own national or cultural interest.

(146)

Following Frantz Fanon and Albert Memmi, Ra'ad warns:

Self-colonization has dangerous and debilitating long-term effects on the minds and souls of the oppressed, and on their future hopes and prospects. [...] Paramount in the work of liberation is to avoid falling into the traps set by what we are told repeatedly about our history and identity, by what the colonizer wants us to perceive, absorbing what we are not, unwittingly internalizing bias in what we learn and teach.

(158-159)

Critical in avoiding these traps is therefore the knowledge of one's own past. Ra'ad indeed accuses Palestinians and the people of the region at large of not knowing their own history, more precisely, of not knowing and upholding the region's long history of continuity. As a result of this failure, they have become 'absorbed in self-colonizing identities that shorten their deep history' (Ra'ad, 2). Ra'ad further warns of the devastating effects of self-colonization on identity: 'When one is self-colonized', he writes, 'identity is subverted and one accepts its destruction, swallows it' (168). In an earlier work, Shehadeh has described the process by which the (self-)colonised are dispossessed of their natural identity as coming to see the land with a 'political pornographer's eye' (*Third Way*, 89). Shehadeh admits that he himself has fallen into this trap by imposing symbolic meaning onto the land, thus no longer '*seeing the land as it really is*' ('In Pursuit', 89, emphasis in original):

I find myself looking at an olive tree, and as I am looking at it, it transforms itself before my eyes into a symbol of the *samidīn* [²³], of our struggle, of our loss. And at that very moment, I am robbed of the tree; instead, there is a hollow space into which anger and pain flow.

²³ '*Samidīn*' is the plural form of '*sāmid*' meaning the 'steadfast'.

I have often been baffled by this – the way the tree-turned-symbol is contrasted in my mind with the sight of red, newly turned soil, barbed wire, bulldozers tearing at the soft pastel hills – all the signs that a new Jewish settlement is in the making. This must be the beginning of pornography; the pains of a people have become my own personal, private ones. And the beauty of the hills and the olives have become symbols of my people.

(*Third Way*, 87)

For Shehadeh, the source of this perversion is nationalism: ‘It is not any symbolism, but national symbolism that makes you into a land pornographer’ (*Third Way*, 87). Shehadeh accuses Palestinian nationalism of having fallen into the trap of self-colonisation; for him, the Palestinian nationalist narrative is self-colonising in that it has accepted the borders imposed by the colonial forces. Instead of answering Israel’s ethnic nationalism with a similar version of exclusivist Palestinian nationalism – still the mainstream Palestinian consensus – Shehadeh draws attention to the possibility of alternative visions for a future Palestine through a re-evaluation of the region’s pre-national past. For Shehadeh, the future of the country lies outside nationalist constrictions:

[I]t is my hope that if there should be a Palestinian state, it will be short-lived conceived not to add to the fragmentation, but rather as a stepping stone to something larger, a beginning perhaps for a federation that would allow for the region to exist as one, in some form.

(‘In Pursuit’, 93)

Shehadeh’s ‘no-state solution’ finds support only by a handful of Palestinian intellectuals; among them are some of the authors of the works used in this chapter, most outspokenly Basem Ra’ad. Ra’ad thus declares that the aim of his research is to ‘reinstate the continuity of our region with its ancient cultures. That continuity has been made difficult to see, and is unfortunately not widely recognized, in the separate “countries” that were created by colonial imposition’ (45). His wish is to eventually return to a ‘regional, more nuanced, culturally oriented identity – transcending narrow nationalistic or religious lines’ that indeed existed before the division ‘along arbitrary geographical lines designed by colonial powers’ (119-120). Expressing a comparable sentiment to both Shehadeh and Ra’ad, Palestinian author Mourid Barghouti writes in his autobiographical novel *I Saw Ramallah*:

Am I hungry for my own borders? I hate borders, boundaries, limits. The boundaries of the body, of writing, of behaviour, of states. Do I really want boundaries for Palestine? Will they necessarily be better boundaries?

It is not only the stranger who suffers at the border. Citizens too can have a bad time of it. There are no limits to the questions. No boundaries for the homeland. Now I want borders that later I will come to hate.

(38)

Shehadeh summarises the overall appeal of the Ottoman Empire to him as follows:

[...] what concerns me here about the Ottoman Empire is that it offers the *precedent* of a time when the entire region, which is now fragmented into many political entities, was under *one* political entity, a multi-ethnic system that never attempted to colonize the land and whose goal was not domination or exclusivity; there were no plans to deprive people of their lands or drive them off or exploit their resources. The people of the region were able to move freely. Different religions were able to interact and coexist without problem. It's important to keep all that in mind while trying to work for a new Middle East. Indeed, the empire was a bulwark against colonialism [...].

(‘In Pursuit’, 92, emphases in original)

Shehadeh’s ‘quest for Najib’ becomes thus more than a simple attempt at retrieving family history (*Rift in Time*, 4). It is the quest for Palestine: not only a past Palestine, but also an alternative, future Palestine in which the people of the region are once again united in one open, undivided space and where, as a consequence, the former ‘diversity of human cultures’ can thrive all over (*Rift in Time*, 48). In its reliance on the imagination, Shehadeh sees his quest as quintessentially Palestinian: with most of the villages of Najib’s ‘travels’ now gone, and many of those that still exist no longer accessible to him, Shehadeh, like most Palestinians, has to resort to imagination in order to literally re-member not only his ancestor’s life and travels, but also the landscapes he would have seen and experienced a century ago. This juxtaposition or ‘rift’ between Ottoman geography and demography, and today’s reality, runs throughout Shehadeh’s narrative.

Shehadeh’s book is ultimately an attempt, as he clarifies, to ‘emerge from the political despair that has become our lot by going back into the past and reimagining our region’ (‘In Pursuit’, 84). Through such a reappropriation of Palestinian history, he hopes to trigger a process of mental decolonisation, a first and vital step towards political liberation; he hopes, in his own words,

that travellers to and inhabitants of the Great Rift Valley [...] will lift up their eyes and try, as I did, to imagine the whole of this valley as one, a land without any borders where everyone is free to travel and enjoy all the wonderful pleasures it

has to offer. Those able to succeed in looking with new eyes might share my experience when writing this book, of a momentary rift in time, a respite from the terrible confines of the dismal present. After all, change only comes thanks to those, like Najib, who are capable of imagining a different world.

(Rift in Time, 232)

4 ESCALATIONS

Israel's Walling

To date, Zionism has not realised its settler colonial ideal of European-Jewish exclusivism in Israel/Palestine. Spoiling the dream is not only the Oriental majority in Israel proper (comprised of both Jews and Palestinians), but also the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank who keep resisting their dispossession and displacement. This failure, which is the failure to create the empty land the settler movement imagined and still desires, has led, I argue here, to an escalation of Israeli policies that reflects an intensification of a collective Jewish-Israeli exclusivist mind-set.

This chapter will highlight 'walling' as an ideology intrinsic to the isolationist settler colonial formation and as a practice showcasing the escalation thereof. By walling I mean the systematic creation of exclusionary spaces, both physical and ideological; in the same way, walling is achieved through both straightforward physical means (walls, checkpoints, roadblocks) and more subtly through socio-political administration and architectural planning (permits, road system, control of water). Significantly, walling turns both outwards as well as inwards. It is on the latter, what I call 'walling out', that I will focus on in a first stage. I will argue that after over a century of walling itself out, the Zionist colony in Palestine has effectively created what Israeli anti-Zionist activist Michel Warschawski has described in *On The Border* as a 'new Jewish ghetto' (190) and 'an immense bunker, hyper-armed and paranoid in the extreme' (ix), inside of which its 'garrison-dwellers' are unable to think and act outside their 'clan mentality' (ix; 190).

What follows will be conceptually and structurally guided by Frantz Fanon's elaborations on the Manichaeic model as an allegory for the colonial world. In his seminal work on the revolutionary process of decolonisation, *The Wretched of the*

Earth, Fanon thus suggests that '[t]he colonial world is divided into compartments' (31): it is 'a world cut into two' where the space of the settler diametrically opposes that of the native (29). These spaces do not meet or cross, nor will they ever do so. In an extract worth quoting in full, Fanon visualises the underlying 'principle of reciprocal exclusivity':

The zone where the natives live is not complementary to the zone inhabited by the settlers. The two zones are opposed, but not in the service of a higher unity. Obedient to the rule of Aristotelian logic, they both follow the principle of reciprocal exclusivity. No conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous. The settlers' town is a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. The settler's feet are never visible, except perhaps in the sea; but there you're never close enough to see them. His feet are protected by strong shoes although the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes and stones. The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. The settlers' town is a town of white people, of foreigners. The town belonging to the colonized people [...] is a place of ill fame, peopled by men of evil repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other. The native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light. The native town is a crouching village, a town on its knees, a town wallowing in the mire.

(30)

This final chapter will follow Fanon's antithetical structure of his allegory of the two colonial towns, exploring in each section one of the two compartments created by Zionism with a special focus on the spatial configurations and their impact on each community.

While the binary structure of Fanon's model can be deemed inadequate in representing the specificity of the settler colonial ideal of the empty land, it does however describe the reality of an ongoing settler colonial campaign in which the persistent presence of parts of the native population creates the kind of antagonistic, binary relationship that defines the colonial Manichaeic world. In the specific context of settler colonialism, separation is in contrast however only a dialectical stage in the development of the settler colony: the restrictions imposed on the native population do not reflect a mode of governance for the sustaining of the exploitative colonial system,

but form part of the overall efforts to empty and appropriate the land. The application of Fanon's model to the Israeli/Palestinian context is useful in opposing Israel's exceptionalist claim by making visible the colonial structure that defines its relationship with the Palestinians – but that it fundamentally denies. As Caroline Elkins and Susan Pederson point out, while metropolitan colonialism is aware of itself, the settler colonial collective, because it seeks precisely the replacement of the indigenous population over the establishment of a relationship of domination, 'seems defined mostly by its efforts to escape this very category' (2).

Israel's walling surfaces in this light as a manifestation of the colonial structure itself. Israel's largest construction, the wall in the West Bank, embodies the specific dialectical nature of its settler colonial project: it enforces separation, not in order to manufacture partition, but as a strategy for the abolition and annexation of Palestinian land.

4.1 Walling Out: Fortress Israel

If you wish to colonize a land in which people are already living, you must provide a garrison on your behalf. Or else – or else, give up your colonization, for without an armed force which will render physically impossible any attempts to destroy or prevent this colonization, colonization is impossible, not ‘difficult’, not ‘dangerous’ but IMPOSSIBLE! . . . Zionism is a colonizing adventure and therefore it stands or it falls by the question of armed force.

(Vladimir Jabotinsky, ‘The Iron Law’ [1925], qtd. in Brenner, 78)

In his 1923 essay ‘The Iron Wall (We and the Arabs)’, leading ideologue of the Zionist right, the so-called Revisionists, Vladimir (Ze’ev) Jabotinsky argues that any ‘voluntary agreement’ between the Zionist settlers and the Palestinian Arabs is impossible because the aims of Zionism are inherently antagonistic to those of the native population.¹ He accordingly warns that the Palestinians, like any other indigenous people in the ‘history of colonisation’, will vehemently resist foreign occupation:

Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of "Palestine" into the "Land of Israel".

This frank admission and indeed accurate representation of the root problem of Zionist-Palestinian relations leads him however not to the conclusion that Zionism is immoral and therefore should be abandoned; instead, he claims that since Zionism *is*

¹ ‘The Iron Wall’ was first published in the Russian journal *Rassvyet* in November 1923. All quotations used here are taken from the English translation as it appeared in the South African *The Jewish Herald* on 26 November 1937.

For Jabotinsky’s follow-up essay ‘The Ethics of the Iron Wall’, also first published in *Rassvyet* later that same month in 1923, I refer to the version printed in *The Jewish Standard* on 5 September 1941. Both translations are available at < <http://www.jabotinsky.org> >.

moral – dogmatically so² – and since it is questionable ‘whether it is always possible to realise a peaceful aim by a peaceful means’, Zionist colonisation ‘can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population - *behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach*’ [emphasis added]. In other words, Zionist settlement in Palestine can only be carried out against the wishes of the country’s Arab majority, which means, only by force. At its core, Jabotinsky’s ‘iron wall’ is thus, as Nur Masalha puts it, a ‘doctrine of military might’ (*Bible and Zionism*, 29).

Jabotinsky further articulated his ideal of militant Jewish politics in the novel *Samson* that he wrote in 1926. His novel is a re-telling of the Old Testament tale of Samson, one of the last leaders (or ‘Judges’) of the Israelites on whom superhuman strength was bestowed by God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Philistines. His infatuation with Philistine Delilah, who seduces and betrays him, eventually brings about Samson’s downfall. In the end, imprisoned and blinded by the Philistines, he redeems himself in one last heroic and sacrificial act, killing himself along with his tormentors.

Considering Jabotinsky’s firm secular disposition, his revival of this religious legend might on the surface seem like an odd choice. However, as Masalha shows in

² On the subject of the morality of Zionism, he interjects:

Two brief remarks: In the first place, if anyone objects that this point of view is immoral, I answer: It is not true; either Zionism is moral and just or it is immoral and unjust. But that is a question that we should have settled before we became Zionists. Actually we have settled that question, and in the affirmative. We hold that Zionism is moral and just. And since it is moral and just, justice must be done, no matter whether Joseph or Simon or Ivan or Achmet agree with it or not. There is no other morality.

In ‘The Ethics of the Iron Wall’, it becomes clear that Jabotinsky bases his moral claim on the argument that the Palestinians have all of the Arab territories as their national homeland, in contrast to the Jews who do not possess any land that they can call their own. When he writes that ‘[s]elf-determination means Revision’, he means that,

[t]he earth does not belong to those who possess too much of it: the first claim is to those who do have nothing. It is an act of simple justice to take a little from the land-richest race of the Eastern hemisphere (that is what the Arabs are), in order to provide a refuge for a homeless have-not race. And if the rich land-owner tries to resist the act of simple justice by force, Justice which has to be enforced does not cease to be justice.

For Jabotinsky, the Zionist claim to Palestine represents thus a simple case of, as he puts it, enforced justice. The above lines contain indeed the crux of Jabotinsky’s ideology which he would reaffirm in his last (posthumous) publication, the 1942 *The War and The Jew*.

The Bible and Zionism, non-religious or even anti-religious Zionist leaders – David Ben-Gurion being another notorious example – commonly invoked biblical myths to mobilise European Jews for the Zionist struggle in Palestine. What attracted them to the Bible was the militarist tradition of the Old Testament. The figures of Samson and Joshua in particular, with their respective narratives of heroism and conquest, were appropriated and transformed into icons of Zionist muscle and courage (Masalha, *Bible and Zionism*, 35).

Jabotinsky's novel largely follows the main thread of the Bible narrative. In order however to transform Samson into the 'secular national hero' he wanted him to be, David Fishelov points out, Jabotinsky had to secularise the religious text (91). Most notably, Jabotinsky thus changed the circumstances of Samson's conception: while Samson's birth is the result of divine intervention in the Bible, Jabotinsky made his hero the product of adultery (Fishelov, 94). This change implies that Samson's strength is not God-given, but rather the manifestation of a different sort of, arguably inherently national, quality. We are thus told that Samson possesses 'that intangible quality, dwelling in the soul of a whole people, that distinguishes it from all other nations of the earth' (347-348). Jabotinsky's recurrent references to Samson's 'superhuman' physical features should therefore not be read as connoting divine election, but as an early sign and constant reminder of Samson's natural leadership status amidst his own people (82; 137).

What qualifies Samson for such a leadership position is first and foremost his physical strength; nearly all of the descriptions of him focus thus on his physical superiority. For instance, he is described as a 'giant' (61) and a 'youth with shoulders of copper, favoured with great strength, as though he had two hearts in his breast instead of one' (49). In a striking early scene, Samson displays his extraordinary strength by killing a panther with his bare hands (35-37). Samson's physicality, his big stature and deep bass voice, are accentuated throughout the narrative. His image is clearly designed to represent an epitome of masculinity. In the tradition of Herzl and Nordau, Jabotinsky presents with Samson his ideal of the new, muscular Jew: strong, courageous and most importantly, fighting.

The obvious thread that runs through Jabotinsky's novel and that exposes most clearly the writer's political agenda is Samson's transformational discovery of a

political consciousness. We thus follow Samson from his initial displays of individual strength (underlying a motive of personal vengeance) to his eventual sacrificial suicide for the collective good of his people. Over the course of the novel, he is made to realise that ‘iron’, used throughout as a symbol of military might, is ‘the secret and foundation of the Philistine power’ (224). In other words, he comes to understand that the scattered and disunited Israelite tribes have to come together as one nation and, like the Philistines, live by the sword, if they want to become free and independent like their rulers. Samson’s initial political naivety is implied in his aforementioned early encounter with a panther, when, in a retrospectively symbolic act, Samson discards the sword he stole from a Philistine acquaintance and chooses to kill the beast by strangling it with his bare hands. Imprisoned and blinded, Samson has in the end painfully learnt the vital value of the sword for the liberation of his people. In a last message to the Israelites, he asks an old friend to ‘[t]ell them two things in [his] name—two words’:

The first word is Iron. They must get iron. They must give everything they have for iron—their silver and their wheat, oil and wine and flocks, even their wives and daughters. All for iron! There is nothing in the world more valuable than iron. [...]

The second word they will not understand yet, but they must learn it, and that soon. The second word is this: a king! Say to Dan, Benjamin, Judah, Ephraim: a king!

(330)

After a short pause, he adds: ‘and they must learn to laugh!’ (331) The symbolism of Samson’s first two words is clear by now: as Fishelov puts it, they ‘encapsulate Jabotinsky’s belief that the most important factors determining a nation’s fate are its ability to gather its vital forces and translate them into military might and unified political action’ (93). Samson’s belated addition of ‘laughter’ is not as straightforward however. Fishelov reads it as advocating ‘a sense of *joie de vivre* that the Israelites seem to lack’ (93). In the Bible, Samson’s relationship with the Philistines is very clearly defined as one of antagonism, Samson’s hatred for them being based on revenge for an initial wrong inflicted on him. In Jabotinsky’s novel, the relationship is more ambivalent:

Throughout the novel, Samson is quite friendly with the Philistines, joins in their festivities, tells jokes and riddles, takes part in athletic competitions and of course makes love to Philistine women. Even after he is captured and blinded, the Philistines and he still maintain a reasonably amicable relationship.

(Fishelov, 93)

Samson indeed seeks out the company of the Philistines in order to participate in behaviour deemed improper amongst the members of his own tribe. Interestingly, the narrative voice does not condemn Samson's 'need for laughter'. On the contrary, the Israelites are portrayed as overly puritan and out of touch with worldly matters, the root cause indeed of their political failures. I would therefore argue that Samson's instruction to his people to 'learn to laugh' is made to echo the Zionist call upon Jews to secularise and normalise, so as to take their place as a nation amongst nations.

In the end, as in the Bible, Jabotinsky's Samson kills himself along with the Philistine elites and masses gathered in a Gazan temple. In one last display of strength, Samson collapses the pillars of the temple, burying himself and a crucial number of his people's oppressors. To this last scene, Jabotinsky adds however a significant twist by making Samson's former lover Delilah reappear and present the Israelite with their common child. Sparking Samson's climactic self-sacrifice, Delilah taunts him by threatening to 'teach [the child] to hate its father's race' (341). Fishelov comments on the implication of this last encounter:

The motivation for his suicidal act is thus presented as an outcome of his outrage on hearing that his own son was to be turned against his people. Throughout the novel, Samson is quite friendly with the Philistines [...]. Only here, when he is faced with a dire and irreconcilable conflict between his role as a national leader and his role as a father, does he revert to basic tribal loyalties and destroys the temple, himself, Delilah, the child, and the Philistines in a fatal outburst of rage.

(96)

The antagonism between Samson and the Philistines arises thus not out of some inherent fundamental difference between the two peoples – unlike the good versus evil narrative in the Bible – but is the result of a basic conflict of interests. In a world where military might is right, the Philistines behave like any other nation would in order to ensure its freedom and survival. This portrayal is directly representative of

how Jabotinsky perceives the Zionist-Palestinian enmity: a matter-of-fact conflict over land ownership where both sides have justifiable claims. Conceding much more than most Zionist leaders who either ignored the native population or demonised them, Jabotinsky maintained that, because the Palestinians are ‘not a rabble, but a living people’, they will never agree to something that is fundamentally against their own interests. In a way, it is merely Jabotinsky’s tribal/national allegiance that makes him side with the Jewish settlers and Zionism, as they represent his interests.

On the whole, Jabotinsky’s *Samson* is an ambitious attempt at creating a tale of Jewish heroics emblematic of the Zionist venture that would inspire a new generation of Jews to take up arms in Palestine. Jabotinsky sets out to provide ‘a model hero for contemporary Jews’ with his portrayal of Samson, who, by sacrificing himself, weakens his people’s enemy and thus paves the way for the rise of a united Israelite nation (Fishelov, 92).

On the ground in Palestine, Jabotinsky’s program of Jewish might meant, in a first stage, separation and fortification. In ‘The Iron Wall’, Jabotinsky thus calls for the Jewish settler colony to entrench itself behind what is best described as a protective wall of force (a phrase that renders the oxymoronic Zionist slogan of ‘defensive aggression’), which will allow it to grow strong undisturbed by the natural resistance of the indigenous population. Whether revisionists or moderates, whether ‘militarists’ or ‘vegetarians’, in Jabotinsky’s words, Zionists have to openly acknowledge that such is indeed already the de-facto Zionist policy in Palestine. (Jabotinsky makes it clear in his article that, for the time being, the Zionist settlers still rely on the British to provide this necessary ‘independent’ force.) Once a majority, the colony would be able to rely on its own strength to enforce its hegemony over the natives, by then a *fait accompli* that the latter would have no choice but to accept. Jabotinsky’s reasoning boils down to the conclusion that, ‘the only way to reach an agreement in the future is to abandon all idea of seeking an agreement at present’ (‘The Iron Wall’).

Often neglected is the second stage integral to Jabotinsky’s iron wall blueprint: the initial hermetic enclosure and separation that are meant to break all native resistance are thus to lead to an ‘eventual agreement’. Realising their inability to overthrow the new Jewish rulers, the defeated Palestinians would in the end willingly settle for such a forced agreement. At this point, the iron wall approach could be

abandoned and the two nations would start negotiating ‘mutual concessions’, albeit in a now fundamentally transformed polity:

And when that happens [i.e. when the Palestinians have succumbed to Jewish hegemony], I am convinced that we Jews will be found ready to give [the Palestinians] satisfactory guarantees, so that both peoples can live together in peace, like good neighbours.³

We know of course that, over ninety years on, such an agreement has not been reached. Jabotinsky’s iron wall strategy, adopted in practice by all Zionist political factions,⁴ has proved fundamentally flawed in its optimistic prognosis of eventual Palestinian compliance. Because Palestinian resistance has continued to flare up ever since the Zionist settlement in Palestine began, and because the respective Zionist leaderships have persistently refused to deviate from their policy, the Jewish settler state has remained cocooned behind its self-imposed iron wall up to this day. More than that, Israel has indeed become increasingly entrenched over the years, stubbornly pursuing a politics of unilateral action and aggression vis-à-vis the Palestinians. Citing the lack of a worthy partner on the Palestinian side, the Israeli leadership still continuously postpones any future agreement. In a brazen reversal, the aggressor shifts the responsibility for its crimes onto the victim’s shoulder, each bout of violence

³ Earlier in ‘The Iron Wall’, Jabotinsky qualifies the nature of this future relationship in no uncertain terms. ‘Good neighbours’ to be sure, but not with equal stakes in the new country: ‘There will always be two nations in Palestine – which is good enough for me, provided the Jews become the majority’. It is also important to understand that Jabotinsky’s vision for a Jewish state in Palestine was always maximalist in its claim for an undivided land. This included not only today’s occupied territories but also all of, what was then, Transjordan. His assurances that no Arabs would have to be forcefully expelled in the process of creating a Jewish state were based on the idea that this whole territory was big enough to accommodate the ‘two nations’. That does not mean however that he thought so-called ‘voluntary transfer’ should not be encouraged. Indeed a substantial number of Palestinian Arabs, not wanting to lead the lives of a minority, would certainly wish to leave for Arab territory, he concedes in *The War and the Jew*, adding that he ‘refuses to see a tragedy or a disaster in their willingness to emigrate’ (218).

⁴ Writing in the mid-1940s, Hannah Arendt declared Jabotinsky’s Revisionist strand of Zionism (which she roots in Herzl) ‘victorious’ and warns of the dangers for any Jewish project in Palestine under the leadership of those ‘extremists’. This victory, she writes, ‘is a fatal blow to those Jewish parties in Palestine itself that have tirelessly preached the necessity of an understanding between the Arabs and the Jewish peoples’ (*Jew as Pariah*, 131). I would dispute, as I do in Chapter 1, that the kind of Zionism Arendt favoured ever existed – or at least that it was ever significant enough to have an impact on the direction of the movement. I also generally deem inappropriate and misleading any discussion that juxtaposes moderate versus extremist Zionism (a debate that is rather tellingly only led internally), as it translates into the inaccurate portrayal of a benign and worthy Zionism that came to be hijacked by extremists. Arendt’s recognition here, be it belated and based on an inherent misconception, is nevertheless a significant indicator of the politics dominating the Zionist movement at the time.

becoming ‘solely [...] determined by the Arab’s [sic] attitude towards Zionism’ (‘The Iron Wall’) – Jabotinsky’s phrasing indeed an early version of today’s common Israeli lamentation of ‘shoot and cry’: ‘*they* make us do this’.

Crucially, with his formulation of the ‘iron wall’, Jabotinsky openly showcases the logic of exclusion inherent to all settler colonialisms based on the fundamental antagonism that defines their relationship with the native population. It is out of this logic that the ideology and practice of walling emerge as a means of survival for the settler colony. ‘Survival’ is here to be understood as a euphemism for the creation and maintenance of ethnic homogeneity, a desire paradoxically also driven by an uncompromising expansionist ambition.

As was to be predicted, Jabotinsky’s theoretical wall rapidly materialised into actual physical walls. Of these, the West Bank Wall is but a recent and conspicuous example. Already in 1994, Israel started erecting an electronic fence around the Gaza Strip, turning the small piece of land along the Mediterranean, with help from the Egyptian government, into what Iran-born political commentator Hamid Dabashi has called the ‘largest prison camp on planet earth’ (7).⁵ One needs to go back further however to find the first evidence of concrete Zionist walling. Although all Zionist settler colonies were by definition from the start highly exclusionary spaces reserved for European-Jewish habitation only, the so-called ‘Wall and Tower’ settlements of the mid-1930s stand out as the blatant physical embodiment of Zionism’s program of conquest and exclusion. Taking its name from the characteristic wooden perimeter wall and watchtower that surrounded it, this particular type of settlement was conceived in response to the organised Palestinian resistance of the Arab Revolt (1936-1939). Israeli architect Sharon Rotbard explains the context behind ‘Wall and Tower’:

Facing Palestinian resistance to Jewish settlement in rural areas, and growing difficulties in the purchase of lands, the Zionist organizations elaborated a coordinated strategy of “settlement offensive” throughout the country. The idea was to establish, in the shortest time possible, a chain of new settlements that would create a Jewish continuum and define the future borders of the state. [...]

⁵ Additional recent Israeli walling projects include a barrier construction along its border with Egypt. The five-metre high fence stretches from the Red Sea port of Eilat to the Gaza Strip. Its proclaimed aim: to keep out African migrants and ‘Islamist fighters’. There is also a new wall in planning along the eastern edge of the occupied Golan Heights and PM Netanyahu has even talked about a similar fence along Israel’s desert border with Jordan, which would indeed complete Israel’s self-enclosure.

In this settlement offensive the main tactical tool was *Homa uMigdal* – Wall and Tower.

(Misselwitz and Rieniets, 104)

‘[S]eemingly defensive, but in fact offensive’, these fortified settlements were clandestinely erected overnight and resembled more a military outpost than a civilian habitation; their principal objective was to ‘seize control of land’ (Misselwitz and Rieniets, 105). Father of the Zionist settlement program in Palestine, Arthur Ruppin, reveals in a brief diary entry from May 1939 the systematic nature of the approach when he writes in reference to ‘the first of a group of settlements [...] being planned’ in the north of the country: ‘we occupied the place today in the usual manner, through erecting a watchtower and barracks and putting up a barricade around the farm’ (*Memoirs*, 298).

Parallels between these early Jewish colonies and the West Bank structure are easily drawn. As principal tools of colonisation, they both serve the appropriation and fortification of land. Rotbard therefore sees in the West Bank Wall a ‘current and tragic reincarnation’ of Wall and Tower (Misselwitz and Rieniets, 106). He further argues that Wall and Tower was an early manifestation of the Israeli practice of *fait accompli*, that is the strategic unilateral creation of facts on the ground (Misselwitz and Rieniets, 107). As such, *fait accompli* is clearly identifiable as the crux of Jabotinsky’s revisionist credo in which unilaterally imposed separation and force necessarily preclude any negotiations. It is however important to understand that both walling systems do not represent official state borders, nor were they intended to be. Rather, as Weizman argues, they are embodiments of a ‘shifting colonial frontier’ (*Hollow Land*, 179). In other words, both Wall and Tower and the West Bank Wall are best understood as colonial outposts in disguise, not seeking to resolve state borders but to nullify and expand existing delineations.

Rotbard further outlines the implications of Wall and Tower for both the settler and native communities:

[T]he priorities of Wall and Tower outposts stipulated that first the wall was to be built, then the observation point, and later the houses. In contravention of its expansionist ambitions, the Wall served to perpetuate the resident’s ghetto mentality and impulse for enclosure. Seclusion within the wall separates the

settlement from its environment and defines the new community not only as those who choose to live “inside”, but also as those who are under threat from “outside”.

(Misselwitz and Rieniets, 108)

Again, Jabotinsky’s doctrine clearly surfaces in the conception behind Wall and Tower: first build the wall, then develop the colony and only then, as a last step, deal with ‘the outside’. Although Rotbard is right in claiming that the architecture of Wall and Tower necessarily reinforced an exclusivist mentality among the settlers, he misidentifies the causality when he writes that, ‘[t]he wall was a program destined to become an “ideology [...]”’ (Misselwitz and Rieniets, 111). I argue the exact reverse, namely that it is Zionist foundational ideology that inevitably translated into a program of walling.

What has been described above, then, is the legacy of Herzl’s fortress of Judaism. Hannah Arendt was a sharp critic of Zionist isolationism which she saw rooted in Herzl’s postulation of an invariably and comprehensively hostile world. In 1946, she ascertained with worry that ‘Herzl’s picture of the Jewish people as surrounded and forced together by a world of enemies has in our day conquered the Zionist movement and become the common sentiment of the Jewish masses’ (*Jew as Pariah*, 175-176). Writing prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, she warned of the type of state current Zionist politics were bound to produce. A Jewish state declared unilaterally and established by war would be a land ‘quite other than the dream of world Jewry, Zionist and non-Zionist’ (*Writings*, 396): it would be an introverted and armed society in which ‘political thought would centre around military strategy’ (*Writings*, 396) and that risked to degenerate into ‘one of those small warrior tribes about whose possibilities and importance history has amply informed us since the days of Sparta’ (*Writings*, 397). Arendt also identified the lasting ‘Arab problem’ – ‘the only real moral and political issue of Israeli politics’ (*Writings*, 451) – that the creation of such a state in Palestine would cause. Israeli writer Rachel Shabi confirms the essence of Arendt’s predictions, writing of contemporary Israeli society: ‘An entrenched self-perpetuating narrative has taken hold in Israel, whereby everyone is against Israel and, even though the country is trying its best, it is surrounded by hostility (‘Wrong side of the Fence’). To Arendt, isolation, or even worse self-

isolation, was the worst path that Jewish politics could take. Indeed her support for the Zionist movement was based in the main on her belief that Zionism could end Jewish isolation and allow Jews to become part of the world again. This could only happen however if Jews realised that, Arendt insisted, '[w]hatever else it may be, Palestine is not a place where Jews can live in isolation [...]' (*Jew as Pariah*, 175).

The one-way road of self-isolation that Zionism chose to embark on, Arendt further warned, would eventually lead to self-destruction. She thus highlighted the suicidal psychology underlying Herzl's credo: 'If we are actually faced with open or concealed enemies on every side, if the whole world is ultimately against us, then we are lost' (*Jew as Pariah*, 175). Arguably, the escalation we witness today is the direct result of such, probably subconscious, realisation: the realisation of fighting a losing battle, the realisation perhaps of a battle already lost. The Zionist dream of a Jewish state in Palestine has ultimately turned out to be unattainable. However, a blend of Herzl's hostile world and Jabotinsky's militarism – notably reinforced by the post-holocaust Zionist slogan of 'Never again!' – has been internalised by the Zionist collective to the point that simply abandoning Zionism seems impossible at this stage. Since the struggle is conceived as an existential one, the only choice left is to, like Samson, go down fighting, eliminating as many enemies as possible in the process.

So far, we have seen how Israel walls itself *in* in order to keep 'enemies' out. Israel's internal walling follows however an additional, parallel logic by which it walls itself *out* in an attempt to prevent integration into the region where it has implanted itself. Both practices are two sides of the same coin, at the root of which lies once again the settler colonial drive for an ethnocratically exclusive European-Jewish collective. This dual walling turns the colony, as John Collins puts it, into a 'garrison state in permanent war' (Bateman and Pilkington, 183), while simultaneously making it turn inwards, creating thereby a ghetto – albeit a voluntary one. The irony of this self-ghettoisation does not escape commentators on both sides. Israeli activist Michel Warschawski for example writes:

It is a great historical irony that Zionism, which wanted to tear down the walls of the ghettos, has created the biggest ghetto in Jewish history, a super-armed ghetto, capable of continually expanding its confines, but a ghetto nonetheless, turned inward upon itself and convinced that outside its walls lies a jungle, a

fundamentally and incurably anti-Semitic world whose sole objective is the destruction of Jewish life in the Middle East and elsewhere.⁶

(*On The Border*, x)

Palestinian writer Mourid Barghouti similarly notes: ‘the victims of the ghettos of the West reintroducing them in the East! In the third millennium, the Jews putting themselves in a ghetto again! And of their own free will this time’ (*Born Here, Born There*, 129).

In fact, Israel’s voluntary self-enclosure epitomises the realisation of Herzl’s colonial ambition to provide, with a Jewish settler state in Palestine, ‘a bulwark for Europe against the East’ that would stand as ‘an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism’ (*ZWI*, 31). Underlying this foundational Zionist self-perception is a eurocentrism typical of colonial discourse: it is the image of a European island of civilisation amid a backward and hostile, because ‘Eastern’, environment. Despite her informed criticism of certain aspects of Zionism, Hannah Arendt reveals in her own writings a Eurocentric view in line with Herzl. After all, one must not forget that Arendt supported the Zionist movement in principle and saw its value precisely in the settler colonial transformation of a neglected land. Her criticism of Zionist tactics was based partly on her concern that its Eastern environment could absorb the European-Jewish enclave. She thus drew attention to the vulnerable position of the Israeli state as ‘a Jewish island in an Arab sea’ and ‘a Westernized and industrialized outpost in the desert of a stagnant economy’ (*Pariah*, 220-221). In the same article dating from 1950, she also expressed her fear that, as a result of the potential ‘Balkanization’ of the country, ‘Tel Aviv could become a Levantine city overnight’ (*Pariah*, 222). In later years, as her support for Israel grew increasingly unambiguous, her Orientalist attitudes became more exposed. Yehouda Shenhav quotes an extract from a letter Arendt wrote to the German philosopher Karl Jaspers during the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem in 1961:

⁶ Contrary to my argument, Warschawski identifies this as a recent development and traces the origins of this new ghetto merely back to Israel’s construction of the wall in the West Bank. Although taking a decidedly anti-Zionist stance, both of his books that I use in the chapter are problematic in their concern for what is posited as a rapid decline in morality within the Jewish-Israeli community. He thereby juxtaposes, at times explicitly, this recent corruption with the betrayed ideals of an earlier Zionism.

Fortunately, Eichmann's three judges were of German origin, indeed the best German Jewry. [Attorney General Gideon] Hausner is a typical Galician Jew, still European, very unsympathetic, . . . boring, . . . constantly making mistakes, Probably one of those people who don't know any language. Everything is organized by the Israeli police force, which gives me the creeps. It speaks only Hebrew and looks Arabic. Some downright brutal types among them. They obey any order. Outside the courthouse doors the oriental mob, as if one were in Istanbul or some other half-Asiatic country.

(qtd. in Shenhav, 6)

As Shenhav comments, Arendt's letter reveals her image of a quintessentially European Israeli society that is deeply disturbed – giving her the creeps – by the presence of Arab Jews. Shenhav goes on to remark that, 'as a European Jew (of German origin), she expresses a quintessential Orientalist reading of Israeli society': '[s]he ranks Jews on a scale based on the distinction between "Occident" and "Orient," with "European" at one end and "Arab" at the other' (6).

Over the years, the ethnocentrism of the Israeli collective has expanded its foundational picture of 'Europe' against 'Asia' (or the 'East') to a terminology of the 'West' versus the 'Islamic world', reflecting Israel's reorientation towards the USA and a generally changed political climate. The connotations are however still the same: a distinctly progressive, rational West is pitted against a fundamentally backward and irrationally hostile East. Within this Zionist-Orientalist dichotomy, the Jews – meaning European Jews – are firmly rooted within the West and its alleged values. Foremost Israeli critic of so-called liberal Zionism, Yitzhak Laor, observes that contemporary Israeli society today conceives itself more strongly than ever before in terms of such a clash of civilisations mythology. He offers the following pointed observations:

As Israel increasingly becomes a stronger regional superpower, our cultural need to build ourselves up as a separate, unique, foreign element in the region in which we live only grows. There is something in modern-day Israeli culture that emphasizes more than ever a fantasy for Western homogeneity, side by side with a lack of will—or lack of ability—to cease to live by the sword. Why disarm ourselves if the fences not only help us be safe, but also help us stay in "the West"? Or, in the words of the future historian: Why think of peace, if the price we will have to pay in return is a heterogeneous life? Better to rejoice that our region is becoming a frontier. Why have open borders? On the contrary, we want to close them down. We have an aerial line to the West, over the sea. Have we not thus fulfilled Theodor Herzl's vision?

(xxix)

At the heart of Israel's walling is thus the Zionist phantasy of separation, that is, the phantasy that it is part of the West; the walls are needed, and indeed ever more of them, to 'stay in "the West"'.

Herzl's fortress of civilisation has been perpetuated in modern Israeli political discourse through Orientalist articulations such as Labour politician Ehud Barak's notorious likening of Israel to 'a villa in the jungle'. The Palestinians in this analogy are transformed into savages, out for the blood of the refined and defenceless villa residents – a demonisation of the colonised that indeed forms part of Fanon's conceptualisation of the colonial Manichean model. Barak is also on the record for saying: 'We live in the Middle East, in a place where there is no mercy for the weak and there aren't second chances for those who don't defend themselves' (qtd. in Shehadeh, *Occupation Diaries*, 34). Instead of becoming the free and honourable men that Herzl promised Jews would become in the new Jewish state, they are shown to face the same existential threat in their new environment. Herzl's striking image of the European Jew as a drowning man was thus transposed to the Middle East where it became the image of a European man surrounded and threatened by a 'sea of Arabs'.

Warschawski stresses the psychological implications of such internalised self-perception, writing that: 'The demented person who builds his villa in the heart of the jungle is opting for a bunker and permanent war' (*On the Border*, x). Warschawski's use of 'demented' implies, as we suggested earlier, a seeming pathology that underlies the mental attitude and behaviour of the settler colony. Elsewhere, Warschawski indeed puts forward the explicit claim of a 'madness besetting Israeli society' (*Towards an Open Tomb*, 104). This is, according to Raja Shehadeh, a perception shared by the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation who grow increasingly fearful of 'living next to a mad people' (*Occupation Diaries*, 23). Noam Chomsky has in a recent context observed the systematic Israeli threat to 'go crazy' that he also relates to the "'Samson Complex': we will bring down the Temple walls if crossed.' The Israeli threat to go crazy is the threat to escalate the violence at any given time. Today, more often than not, this threat is put into action in a convincing way, most notably with the traditional colonial practice of collective punishments, as well as the general disproportionate use of military force against the occupied Palestinian

population. These practices make evident the Israeli case of calculated madness: the simulation of irrationality and unpredictability are aimed at destabilising and disorientating the occupied Palestinians and their resistance.

Israel's escalation of walling today must be seen as part of this excessive, punitive regime. It contains the threat to restrict Palestinian space in the occupied territories to the point of immobilisation and suffocation. The underlying message to the Palestinians is that the settler state is prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice: the sacrifice of the land that, in the process of creating an unliveable space for the Palestinians, is destroyed and rendered useless for the Jewish colonisers too – temporarily at least. For the Palestinians, then, who are walled in – against their wishes – and in the direct path of Israeli destruction, Israel's ongoing settler colonial campaign in Palestine presents a very real catastrophe.

4.2 Walled In: Occupation Diaries

The earth is closing on us pushing us through the last passage, and
we tear off our limbs to pass through.
The earth is squeezing us. [...]
Where should we go after the last frontiers? Where should the birds
fly after the last sky?

(Mahmoud Darwish, 'The Earth Is Closing on Us')

[A] Palestinian does not have the luxury of living quietly, creatively,
in his own country. He will be chased, choked, and hounded.

(Raja Shehadeh, *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing*, 43)

In the colonial Manichaean world described by Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the defining condition of the native is one of 'immobility' (40). 'The native', Fanon writes, is 'being hemmed in' in what has been transformed by the settler into a pervasively 'motionless' system of intransgressible borders (40). In this segregated, or to use Fanon's terminology, compartmentalised world, '[t]he first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place, and not to go beyond certain limits' (40). The inherently violent colonial policy of space appropriation and re-organisation that Fanon draws attention to is even more restrictive in the specific context of settler colonialism. As this thesis argues throughout, settler colonialisms are driven by a logic of exclusion and replacement (rather than exploitation), with the ideal of manufacturing an ethnically pure settler space. This drive is absolute, allowing no place for the native within the thusly-imagined geography. As a consequence, the native space – as long as it subsists on the colonised territory – is (and remains) the prime target of settler colonial policies. The native population in such contexts see their space under constant attack and continuously narrowing. Reiterated differently, what the settler colony wants is the land but without its people; and crucially, as I will argue here, the key strategy for fashioning this empty land is to destroy it so as to

transform it into an uninhabitable space for the native. The binary structure that settler colonialism creates is therefore not an end in itself – as it is with exploitative colonial projects which construct such binarism in order to sustain it long term for the benefit of the hegemonic coloniser group – but a means to an end; this end being the ‘disappearance’ altogether of the native from the settled territory. From this distinct settler colonial desire, space – its appropriation, destruction and reorganisation – emerges as the pivotal factor determining the settler group’s strategies and actions.

With reference to the ongoing Zionist project in Palestine, French-Palestinian sociologist Sari Hanafi has proposed the concept of ‘spacio-cide’ as a ‘framework for understanding the dynamics of Israeli territorial control over Palestinian territory’ (108). Most simply, spacio-cide describes in this context the ‘systematic destruction of the Palestinian living space’ (107). A ‘deliberate ideology, albeit with dynamic process’, spacio-cide involves, according to Hanafi, a combination of four main actors (military forces, settlers, urban planners and capitalist real-estate speculators) who often work closely to produce the widespread destruction (112). The interaction between the successive Israeli governments and Palestinian resistance additionally shapes the spacio-cidal tactics on the ground (Hanafi, 108). Hanafi furthermore conceptualises spacio-cide as involving a combination of three strategies: space annihilation, ethnic cleansing and creeping apartheid.⁷ These are in turn enabled by the

⁷ Hanafi borrows the phrase ‘creeping apartheid’ from Israeli sociologist Oren Yiftachel in his 2006 *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* in which the latter explains creeping apartheid as ‘a logical, though not inevitable, extension of an expansive ethnocratic regime’ (9); it is the process,

whereby the vast majority of territory and resources between Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea are controlled by Jews, while the Palestinians who comprise nearly half the population are constrained to several self-governing” enclaves, covering 15 percent of the land and lacking real sovereignty, freedom of movement, military power, control over water and air, and contiguous territory.

(82)

In his analysis, Hanafi conceives of ‘creeping apartheid’ as the ultimate spacio-cidal strategy which is ‘deployed in the face of resistance to space annihilation and ethnic cleansing’ and which ‘utilizes increasingly impregnable ethnic, geographic, and economic barriers between groups vying for recognition, power, and resources’ (Hanafi, 108). Hanafi thus appears to be using the concept in order to describe the style of colonial governance deployed predominantly since 1967 that has produced relatively low numbers of casualties but all the more destruction, discrimination and dispossession. Since then, and particularly over the last twenty years, the Israeli mode of rule in its occupied territory has markedly escalated into what can only be described as a fully-fledged system of apartheid. Writing

exercise of the state of exception and the deployment of biopolitics.

Hanafi's main contention is that 'the Israeli colonial project is 'spacio-cidal' (as opposed to genocidal) in that it targets land for the purpose of rendering inevitable the 'voluntary' transfer of the Palestinian population, primarily by targeting the space upon which the Palestinian people live' (107); spacio-cide is 'a spectacle of destruction without or with little death' (109). With his choice of terminology, Hanafi accentuates the absolute terms that underlie this strategy: spacio-cide does not seek 'the division of territory but its abolition' (110). What the term thus emphasises is 'both the magnitude of the wreckage and destruction, and the deliberate exterminatory logic employed against space livability that has underpinned the assault on the space, whether it is build/urban area, landscape or land property' (Hanafi, 111).

French writer Christian Salmon calls attention to the same distinction by identifying the war wrought by Israel as one 'seeking not the division of territory but its abolition' ('Bulldozer War'). Additionally characterising the situation in Israel/Palestine on the whole as 'an attempt at deterritorialisation without historical precedent' ('Bulldozer War'), Salmon's remarks followed his visit to the West Bank, Gaza and Rafah in March of 2002 as part of a delegation from the International Parliament of Writers. At the height of the Second Intifada and on the eve of the Israeli invasion of the West Bank which would leave Ramallah and most other major West Bank cities under siege for weeks on end, Christian Salmon, amongst others, followed an appeal by Mahmoud Darwish to reach out and, through their physical presence, show solidarity with their besieged Palestinian peers.⁸ Salmon recorded his impressions of the trip in an article entitled '*Sabreen*, or patience...' which would later appear in a different translation, as well as significantly abridged and revised, as 'The Bulldozer War' in *Le Monde diplomatique's* English online edition. In both versions of this short piece, what resonates most strongly is Salmon's bafflement at the 'scenes of destruction' encountered at every step of their way ('*Sabreen*'). To him, this 'mutilated' landscape is the result of a systematic destruction of Palestinian territory

in 2006, Yiftachel specifies his application of 'creeping apartheid' to 'the entire Israel/Palestine' and clarifies that '[i]n the West Bank and Gaza a full (not creeping) apartheid is well in place' (304).

⁸ The visit of the eight-strong group of international writers, amongst them Nobel laureates José Saramago and Wole Soyinka, is documented in the film *Writers on the Borders: A Journey to Palestine(s)* by Samir Abdallah and Josée Reynès (L'Yeux Ouverts/ Cyclope, 2004).

that markedly goes beyond other, comparable milieus ('Bulldozer War'). Both Salmon and Hanafi are in fact reminded of what has been named 'urbicide' in the wars in the former Yugoslavia, that is, the targeted destruction of Balkan cities as symbols of 'communal and cultural multiplicity' and as such, 'the antithesis of the Serbian [ethno-national] ideal' (Hanafi, 110). While in Bosnia, 'places and streets were [*also*] renamed or localities taken apart before being remade anew', in Palestine, Salmon writes in agreement with Hanafi, 'the violence has targeted the entire landscape', because what is sought is precisely 'the abolition of the land itself' ('Bulldozer War'):

Nothing but construction sites as far as the eye can see, gutted hills, deforestation. Ruined landscapes. Rendered illegible by what seems to be concerted violence. Not only the violence of bombs and war, nor the destruction inflicted by the incursion of tanks—the biggest and most modern in the world—but a violence that is active and diligent. Methodical. The ugliness of concrete and asphalt spreads over the most beautiful landscapes in the history of mankind. The hills are lacerated by "bypasses," built to protect the approaches to the Israeli settlements. In all the surrounding area, houses are destroyed, olive trees uprooted, orange groves laid waste... to improve... visibility. Empty terrain stretches out in their place, a no-man's-land scrutinized by watchtowers.

(*'Sabreen, or patience...'*)

Salmon's voice is that of the outraged outsider-visitor, incredulously looking on to the devastation wrought with impunity against Palestinian land and society. The Palestinian voices that will surface in the discussion of Palestinian occupation writing below serve as a contrast to this, although deeply empathetic, exterior view. What perhaps curiously dominates Palestinian narratives originating from the occupied territories is a determined attachment to the mundane. The destruction and 'ugliness' that Salmon highlights – and of course rightly so keeping in mind his activist agenda – becomes in these writings the background to the daily lives of millions of Palestinians under occupation. The terrain thus experienced every day is one overwhelmingly hostile, purposely fashioned so as not to facilitate life, but to obstruct it wherever and whenever possible. For many of the younger generation, this altered landscape is the only experience they have of their environment and it is only in the wistful memories passed down by older generations that they can access images of pre-occupation landscapes. In contrast to the present reality, those are images of openness, inclusivity

and simplicity; and it is the desire and hope for such a space that counteracts in significant ways the alienation Israel has been working to instill through its spatial tactics. In the perverted world then of military occupation, where the arbitrary and the absurd have been imposed as a daily, disorienting condition, ‘normality’ becomes the most immediate aspiration. Normality here refers not only to the simple possibility of leading everyday lives and meeting everyday needs. It also signifies a perseverance to ‘get on with things’ – no matter what; a perseverance which is often as we will see – perhaps necessarily – accompanied by a strong sense of notably self-deprecating humour. Indeed, it is arguably this struggle to uphold such normality that most basically unites an occupied population in a collective form of resistance, no matter their disagreements on other societal and political levels.

Salmon picks up on this determination during his brief visit. Particularly his original reflections in ‘*Sabreen*, or patience...’ pay explicit tribute to what he describes as the ‘dignity’, ‘cheerfulness’ and ‘tenacity’ with which ordinary Palestinians face everyday occupation. All of these qualities, he writes, are contained within the single word *sabreen*, or, ‘they who have patience’. This patience is grounded, as Salmon sees it, in the Palestinians’ knowledge that they possess ‘the authority of the story’, something which ‘the State of Israel with its measures of oppression, humiliation, devastation and pillaging is in the process of losing’.

What Salmon has observed finds expression in the Palestinian concept and strategy of *sumud*, literally ‘perseverance’ or ‘steadfastness’, that strongly resonates in Palestinian writing – particularly so in the genre of life writing which will be the focus of the following exploration and whose subject is of course precisely the personal and mundane. In his very first publication of diaries, *The Third Way: A Journal of Life in the West Bank*, prominent Palestinian lawyer and writer Raja Shehadeh concerns himself at length with the meaning of *sumud*. In the book that covers events in 1979-1980, Shehadeh declares himself ‘*Sāmid*’ (vii).⁹ For Palestinians living under occupation like himself, he explains, the stance of *sumud* means this: ‘to stay put, to

⁹ Derived from ‘*sumud*’, ‘*samid*’ is the singular masculine form, ‘he who is steadfast’. The feminine equivalent is ‘*samida*’ (Shehadeh uses the colloquial ‘*samdeh*’) and the plural form is ‘*samidin*’. In my spelling of these Arabic words, I will not follow the strict transliteration used in the 1982 edition of *The Third Way* which indicates long vowels (*sumūd*, *samīd*, etc.), but for the sake of simplicity and readability, I am using a primary transcription instead (*sumud*, *samid*, etc.).

cling to our homes and land by all means available' (vii). Aware that they are under attack from a state that '[pursues] a policy of driving [them] into exile – either by overt banishment or by making [their] life [...] progressively unbearable' (vii), and in realisation that they 'cannot fight the Israelis' brute physical force' (68), Shehadeh sees *sumud* as the best strategy for Palestinians in opposing Zionism. Deceivingly passive, staying becomes in this light an assertion of the native presence on the land and as such, a highly subversive act that impedes the settler colonial state's central project, the manufacture of empty land.

Shehadeh understands *sumud* as a primary form of resistance, 'practised by every man, woman and child here struggling on his or her own to learn to cope with, and resist, the pressures of living as a member of a conquered people' (viii). And yet, you are not born *samid*, you become *samid*: the initial defensive stance adopted intuitively in the face of the settler colonial attack has to be followed by the conscious decision to stay in order to resist. It is only through such a decision that staying develops from its passive, survivalist mode into the active form of non-violent resistance that *sumud* represents. Put differently, it is what could perhaps be described as the mental shift from defence to defiance that qualifies all *samidin*. Shehadeh visualises the interplay of necessity and choice at work in the embrace of *sumud* as follows:

Sumūd is watching your home turned into a prison. You, *Sāmid*, choose to stay in that prison, because it is your home, and because you fear that if you leave, your jailer will not allow you to return.

(viii)

Shehadeh would later revise the certainty with which he had insisted on the physical dimension of this choice, that is, the choice to remain in your house on your land under the hardships of occupation – *when you could leave*. Ten years down the line in *The Sealed Room*, facing a new reality in the wake of the First Intifada and in the midst of a fast escalating Gulf crisis, Shehadeh struggles to reconcile his formerly held belief that, '[i]f one had no other choice but to stay, one could not be *samed*', with a reality that has turned all the more physically constraining, precluding the freedom of movement, and thus of choice, that had still existed in the 1980s (*Sealed Room*, 159).

His limiting of who qualifies as *samid* and who not was of course problematic in the first place as it excluded large parts of the Palestinian population living in the occupied territories who for obvious economic reasons did not have the option of leaving and starting anew somewhere else. Shehadeh's sentiments in *The Third Way* were certainly informed by his own personal background and expose his notable middle class status. When he began work on *The Third Way* in late 1979, he had only recently completed his legal studies in London – where he indeed could have stayed – and had returned to practice law in the West Bank. He chose to return to a life under occupation because of his strong commitment to the strategy of *sumud*, a decision and personal sacrifice of which he noted at the time: 'It is strange coming back like this, of your own free will, to the chains of *sumūd*' (*Third Way*, 56).

By positing choice as a precondition for the stance of *sumud*, staying is elevated to an act of defiance, as opposed to desperation. The difference is psychological and bears a crucial significance for Shehadeh. The Palestinian display of mental resilience, and indeed superiority, becomes in this light a psychological weapon that has the power to 'make the Israelis wonder' (56); make them wonder, that is, about the futility of their efforts to rid the Palestinians off their land in the face of an adversary as unwavering as the *samidin* who, not only voluntarily remain in and come back 'to prison', but are also 'too stubborn to be put off my mere humiliation' (*Third Way*, 56). It is only within this psychological realm, Shehadeh maintains, that Palestinians can achieve the upper hand over their otherwise predominant oppressor.

Indeed, it is this aspect of *sumud*, as a state of mind, that Shehadeh emphasises most strongly. 'Between '[e]xile or submissive capitulation to the occupation, on the one hand – or blind, consuming hate and avenging the wrongs done to them, on the other', Shehadeh writes, the *samidin* reject what is presented to them as the only two available options and choose the 'third way', the way of *sumud*, in resistance to the coloniser's attempt to also occupy their minds (*Third Way*, 38). 'For it is this freedom [of the mind]', Shehadeh adds, 'that is most vulnerable under the long-drawn-out occupation' (*Third Way*, 39). Continuing with his prison analogy, and in the tradition of Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire who have highlighted the psychological effects of colonialism on the colonised, Shehadeh writes:

[...] Living like this [as *samid*], you must constantly resist the twin temptations of either acquiescing in the jailer's plan in numb despair, or becoming crazed by consuming hatred for your jailer and yourself, the prisoner.

(viii)

As much as a test of physical endurance, being *samid* thus represents the critical struggle against internalising the occupier's mindset. It is the determination to continue living by one's values and principles, despite suffering and witnessing daily injustice and humiliation. Shehadeh recognises the difficulty of this task, admitting that he 'fail[s] very often' (*Third Way*, 39). His self-confessedly biggest moment of such failure happened during the first Gulf War when he found himself cheering Iraq's show of force against Israel: 'I hoped Iraq would win and rid us of the occupation through force of arms' (*Sealed Room*, 159). By siding with the enemy's enemy, Shehadeh admits to having momentarily 'renounced' his *sumud* (*Sealed Room*, 159): his hatred for the oppressor came to overwhelm all sense of a wider perspective, blighted his judgment and led him to temporarily dismiss the principle of non-violence he advocates.

Still more so than in situations of heightened conflict, Shehadeh argues that it is during the drawn out phases of seemingly low-intensity conflict that remaining *samid* is most challenging. 'Day-to-day living', he writes, 'that is the test of *sumūd*', it being 'the accumulation of daily petty humiliations that makes a *Sāmid* or *Samdēh* crack under strain' (*Third Way*, 39; 30). In *The Third Way*, Shehadeh recounts many such instances of arbitrary harassment all too common for Palestinians in the West Bank. In one of those stories, he describes the 'tragi-farcical encounter' with a soldier at a checkpoint when he is ordered, in the middle of the night, to take off the wheels of his car (96). Having hardly completed the laborious work of unscrewing the wheels one after the other, the soldier prompts him to 'put them back on again': 'somehow', Shehadeh notes of this encounter, 'it assumed for me a sort of ceremonial air; the ritual of humiliation' (97). One is reminded of Fanon's description in *The Wretched of the Earth* of the policeman and the soldier as the 'official, instituted go-between, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression':

In the colonial countries [...], the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain contact with the native

and advise him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge. It is obvious here that the agents of government speak the language of pure force. The intermediary does not lighten the oppression, nor seek to hide the domination; he shows them up and puts them into practice with the clear conscience of an upholder of the peace; yet he is the bringer of violence into the home and into the mind of the native.

(29)

The daily encounter between the occupier and the *samid* becomes a performance that enacts and re-inscribes each time anew the status quo of colonial power relations. In this performance between unequals, each assumes their role. The occupier for his part has some flexibility in his interpretation: from the customary attitude of contempt, to the ‘sniggering’ sadist (32), to the most rarely chosen option of playing it ‘most [politely] and [soft-spokenly]’ (65). The *samid* knows his part too, but is limited in his delivery to a routine of overt compliance and covert defiance. It is upon reflecting the rare encounter with such a ‘most polite and soft-spoken soldier’, that Shehadeh notes:

His gentle presence started me thinking about the double face we samidin have acquired through the years of living as an occupied people. We have learned to fake a smile while cursing between our teeth - the duplicity of the weak.

(65)

In his work as a lawyer, Shehadeh finds himself in encounters with the coloniser that, unlike the ones at checkpoints or roadblocks, assume at least to the onlooker an air of equality. In truth however, Shehadeh realises that these constitute even more of a charade and expose most clearly his own ‘double face’. When he goes to the military government headquarters to inquire about a military order, he is faced with an ‘extremely polite and helpful’ officer called Alex who Shehadeh judges from his accent to be an immigrant from England (*Third Way*, 115). Handing the order over to Shehadeh, Alex ‘modestly’ tells him: ‘We didn’t do very much [...]. We simply amended a few existing Jordanian laws’ (116). In reality, the order considerably extends the military government’s control over education in the West Bank, signifying thus a further repression of Palestinian civil administration.

And I, privileged lawyer, must be careful to maintain polite relations. It is not everybody who is allowed to see the military orders. I keep a deadpan face and ask Alex about his plans, health, etc. He tells me that he has only a few months

left in the army. He has been working long hours and is exhausted. He can't wait to leave and set up his own office in Tel Aviv.

(116)

Although Shehadeh sees his continued work as a lawyer under the occupation regime as a way of building up society from within, he also understands that his privilege implicates him even further in these spectacles of colonial mimicry. Fully recognising the illegality of the military courts and his hopeless task of trying to protect elementary rights within a legal system designed to ensure failure, his *sumud* as a lawyer forces him to play the game:

No – I keep quiet about all of this in court, and revert to ingenious tricks, in the court's own tongue, to save a dunum here a dunum there. I go on in my *sumud*, prostituting my legal profession, myself, losing the land before my very eyes.

(125)

What comes to the surface in all of these scenes is Shehadeh's own ambivalence regarding the strategy of *sumud*. In fact, throughout *The Third Way*, the life of the *samidin* is set up in contrast – although not in opposition – to that of the *fedayeen*, or, resistance fighters; and it is in moments of acute self-awareness such as the above that Shehadeh comes to doubt the sacrifices suffered by the *samidin* and envies the *fedayeen* who in their armed struggle retain a 'freedom and self-pride' that the *samidin* cannot claim (58).

It is arguably such redemptive quality that Shehadeh sought out when he first turned to writing. Certainly, his literary motivation and agenda also arise out of his understanding of *sumud* as a struggle that is fought out on the level of the everyday. Documenting his life under occupation becomes in this light, like his work as a lawyer, another manifestation of his *sumud*, it being his duty as *samid* to 'remember and record' so as to 'keep the anger burning' (*Third Way*, 68). Alarmed at 'how anger has gradually, through the years of occupation, given way to despair', Shehadeh sees himself as writing against what he denounces as his people's defeatism:

Anger fuels memory, keeps it alive. Without this fuel, you give up even the right to assert the truth. You let others write your history for you, and this is the ultimate capitulation.

(*Third Way*, 67-68)

He exemplifies such capitulation and its various manifestations in the story of Um Hani. A Palestinian mother whose son was shot in the leg by an Israeli soldier, Um Hani refuses, despite Shehadeh's appeals, to file charges against the army. The widow of a Communist who 'spent his time in and out of jail', Um Hani had for years been 'very familiar with harassment by soldiers' (68). Shehadeh concludes that it was 'not mere physical fear of soldiers that has deterred her':

Um Hani's defeat frightens me because she is not easily intimidated. [...] It is not the soldiers *alone* who have defeated her. It is her feeling that there is no one but the soldiers, no one to appeal to against them.

(68)

Shehadeh diagnoses Um Hani with a deep sense of isolation that has caused her to give up and turn silent. Both this feeling of isolation and the silence it engenders are for Shehadeh endemic amongst his people and particularly so among his fellow *samidin*, who, as he puts it, 'move silently'; it is a society governed by fear that 'no one acknowledges . . . no one talks about' (62). By telling and publicising his stories and those of his people, Shehadeh wants to end the silence of the *samidin* and bring their daily suffering to the surface for the world and other *samidin* to see:

One of the greatest threats to our *sumūd* is the feeling of isolation. The Palestinians' political activities and demands are well known and reported. But we *samidīn* are silent about the actual day-to-day experience of living under occupation. It is not only military orders and the threat of banishment that make us keep our thoughts and feelings to ourselves. Our struggle is totally consuming. It was to break out of this silence that I began writing about my life and the lives of other *samidīn*.

(viii)

With *The Third Way* at large, Shehadeh appears to want to give a collective voice to the *samidin*. On one level, it is a collective voice in defence against accusations from within the Palestinian community itself. Shehadeh's cousin from Amman thus comes to stand for parts of the Palestinian community in the diaspora/exile when he accuses Shehadeh of weakness and passivity upon passing the construction site for a new Jewish settlement: 'Why don't you do anything about them

– don't you have any pride?' (9) The *samidin* face additional condemnation from those involved in the active resistance against Israel for which Khalil the *feda'i* becomes a spokesman. Just released from prison, Khalil accuses the *samidin* of disloyalty and collaboration, hurling the following charges at Shehadeh:

[...] that we *samidin* had become scared of our own shadows; that we have lost our pride, that it was we who really punish those amongst us who are brave enough to follow their conscience and risk jail. We shed a tear over our heroes, rely on them to keep up the myth of the Palestinian resistance, but turn a cold shoulder on them as soon as it becomes dangerous.

(25)

On another level, it is also a collective voice that speaks directly to the Israeli occupiers. Responding to the closure by the colonial administration of an exhibition of Palestinian culture at Birzeit University, Shehadeh addresses the coloniser in defiance of such suppression:

Out of lived experience, culture and folklore develop. Our ballad heroes now are those maimed and killed by Israeli soldiers. No matter how many more boys and girls will limp for Palestine, we will not forget who we are. You will just leave your scars on our faces and bodies, but they will remain Palestinian faces – and bodies. However many exhibitions you will close down, and however many soldiers you send out against us, we will not forget who we are.

(120)

Another such moment occurs when he contemplates the division between the *samidin* and the *fedayeen* that has occurred as the result of Israel's divide and rule tactics.

Again, Shehadeh turns in anger to the occupiers:

I have only this to say to them: I can see very clearly what you are up to; one hardly needs a subtle intellect for that. This is my answer. Your tactics only make the thought of collaborating with you more hateful than ever. And I will never leave this land.

As to the Fedayeen: the reason I don't join them is that I have a job to do here as *Sāmid*. They and I are fighting for the same thing. I admit that I am very afraid. I admit that I am confused. I admit that I envy the Fedayeen their freedom and their self-pride. You may have all that, but you won't have me; you won't have me condemning the Fedayeen; and you won't have my land

without me. I know no more now than this: I am Sāmid and you won't get what you want out of me.

(57-58)

Emotional outbursts such as these are rare within Shehadeh's body of work in which a calm and analytical voice prevails. In *The Third Way* in contrast, he constantly moves between defiance and despair. Even more uncharacteristic is his embrace here of a collective voice, of the defiant 'we', that surfaces in-between his deeply personal thoughts and fears, and through which he places himself within the collectivity of fellow *samidin*. Such self-inclusive positioning would all but disappear in his later books in which he would come to assume the stance of the outsider: not only that of the 'privileged outsider' as he acknowledges in *Occupation Diaries* (60), but also of someone who feels a growing estrangement as he watches his society go astray.

The defeat that Shehadeh fears manifests itself not only in the forms of waning anger, isolation and silence. When you give up, he warns, you also 'no longer care about [the truth]' (*Third Way*, 68). Shehadeh uses 'truth' here to refer to the straightforward but rather indefinite notion of 'what really happened' (68). The danger he sees is that Palestinians will come to accept the coloniser's binary world of 'us' and 'them' that does not allow for the complexities of reality. The result is again exemplified in Um Hani who has not only turned silent, but has also given in to hatred. When prompted by Shehadeh to press charges against the army, she replies:

'What does it matter? [...] What difference does it make? [...] Just keep those monsters out of my life.'

(67)

She was 'used to separating the army from the people',

[b]ut now she believes that they represent the attitude of all Israelis. She has given up, she doesn't care about what really happened, how it happened, she just wants to protect her son; to keep the monsters – by which she by now means all the Israelis – out of her life.

(68)

By telling the story of Um Hani and her son, and other similar stories, Shehadeh provides a record of 'what really happened' that would otherwise remain unheard.

In his commitment to present the struggle of the *samidin*, Shehadeh is self-conscious about not compromising this ‘truth’ himself. As a result, self-criticism pervades all of his books. *The Third Way* is particularly remarkable in that respect. Now written over thirty years ago, it was the first portrayal of Palestinian life under occupation by a Palestinian and aimed at an international audience. Instead of opting for a more favourable depiction in light of a predominantly negative image of Palestinians at the time, Shehadeh produced an uncompromisingly self-critical portrait of Palestinian society. Shehadeh sees his society as both patriarchal and paternalistic; he also criticises Palestinians for having fallen into the coloniser’s trap of internal division and notes a fundamental lack of solidarity. There is also no attempt by Shehadeh to glorify the status of the *samidin*; they are not immune to the errors of their society and like Shehadeh himself, they sometimes fail. In fact, he offers a particularly unadorned portrayal of their struggle: it is a struggle that does not produce heroes, but is on the contrary an unrewarded and unrewarding daily, scarring grind. In this poignant passage, he describes what it is like ‘being *samid*’:

It is like being in a small room with your family. You have bolted the doors and all the windows to keep strangers out. But they come anyway - they just walk through your walls as if they weren’t there. They say they like the room. They bring their families and their friends. They like the furniture, the food, the garden. You shrink into a corner, pretending they aren’t there, tending to your housework, being a rebellious son, a strict father or a anxious mother - crawling about as if everything was normal, as if your room was yours for ever. Your family’s faces are growing pale, withdrawn – an ugly grey, as the air in the corner becomes exhausted. The strangers have fresh air, they come and go at will - their cheeks are pink, their voices loud and vibrant. But you cling to your corner, you never leave, afraid that, if you do, you will not be allowed back.

(133)

The Third Way is noteworthy not only for rooting Shehadeh’s literary program in his commitment to *sumud* and retrospectively cementing his loyalty to the genre; in its recurrent imagery of suffocation and imprisonment, it also anticipates the very physical restraints that would come to define the lives of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza from the early 1990s when Israel shifted to a policy of closure in its occupied territories. In *The Third Way*, Shehadeh thus forebodingly warns of the stealthy, ‘slow

strangulation of [his] people' (4) and visualises the struggle of the *samidin* in spatial terms through his extended metaphor of Israel's occupation as a gradual, stifling invasion of the Palestinian home. As Israel would escalate its policies targeting Palestinian land, the land itself, its fragmentation and destruction, would become the focal concern of Shehadeh's observations.

Like Shehadeh, the two other Palestinian writers whose texts are studied in the following section, Mourid Barghouti and Suad Amiry, write about life in the Israeli-occupied territory west of the river Jordan, the area that has become known as 'the West Bank'.¹⁰ All three of them bear powerful testimony to a new reality that has gradually emerged over the last twenty-five years: the reality of an intensifying occupation that has left the Palestinians trapped to cope within an ever-narrowing living space. The world portrayed in these books is one of checkpoints, permits and curfews, where the concepts of time and space have been distorted to the point of almost complete unreliability; where rules change abruptly and arbitrarily at the whim of one soldier or one colonial administrator; where daily existence is constantly on the brink of catastrophe and where despite of all this, people continue with their lives. It is in such a world where it is easier for dogs to get passports than for people, as it is in Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*; or where an ordinary taxi ride transforms into an epic journey, the driver-turned-hero performing the miraculous task of leading his passengers to their destination – as it does in Barghouti's *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*.

In their attempt to narrate colonial occupation from the viewpoint of the individual, Shehadeh, Barghouti and Amiry have all turned to similar forms of literary expression, namely the genre of life writing, the diary and/or memoir more precisely. In her introduction to the anthology *Qissat: Short Stories by Palestinian Women*, Jo Glanville notes 'an increasing appetite for Palestinian memoir' that she partly places within 'the general trend in publishing for confessional, autobiographical literature'

¹⁰ Mourid Barghouti rejects the 'West Bank' designation as a misnomer, pointing to the eastern location of the area within historic Palestine. The general adoption of the terminology proves to him the success of Israel's linguistic warfare, the aim of which it was and is 'to wipe the name 'Palestine' off the map, from history, and from memory' (*Born There, Born Here*, 139-140). It also, one could add, makes evident the settler colonial reconfiguration of the native space, having successfully shifted its point of reference following the expulsion of the native population from the west of the country. Despite its problematic nature, I will continue to use the designation as I have done throughout for the sake of simplicity and comprehension, due to the lack of a substitute of equal recognition.

(9).¹¹ While praising Barghouti and Amiry for their respective accomplishments in the genre, Glanville sees a danger in what she qualifies as a lack of ‘literary imagination’: ‘a danger that, so long as the world outside limits its interest to factual accounts, then Palestinians will only ever be viewed in terms of the conflict, while culture, the wider society, remains unseen’ (9).

I would argue that the popularity of the genre within the Palestinian context stems exactly from its personalisation of Palestinian experience that manages to break with stereotypical representations of Palestinian identity. In her irreverent account of everyday life in Ramallah, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, Amiry is brought to breaking point, not by the forty-two consecutive days spent under Israeli curfew, but by having to put up with her obviously exacting mother-in-law. In Amiry’s book, humour becomes a tool wherewith the layers through which Palestinian identity are commonly perceived are lifted, allowing a fresh look at what it can mean to be Palestinian in the West Bank and shifting perceptions of Palestinian society as a whole. In an interview, Amiry argues for a novel approach in communicating the Palestinian cause:

I think we Palestinians have made a big mistake by only talking about politics and repeating the same five sentences: Jerusalem, the refugees, the right of return, etc, etc, and I think people got tired of us. I think the power of culture is much stronger than the power of politics, and culture reaches everybody.

(Abdualla and Sultan)

¹¹ A similar trend has emerged more recently in the Gaza Strip. Examples include Laila El-Haddad’s *Gaza Mom: Palestine, Parenting, Politics, and Everything in Between* and *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor’s Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity* by Izzeldin Abuelaish. Even a cookbook, *The Gaza Kitchen: A Palestinian Culinary Journey*, can be said to form part of these efforts to present a personalised view of life in Gaza: the recipes appear thus alongside explications about the adversities faced by the population due to the blockade of the Gaza Strip in something as everyday, yet vital as the procurement of ingredients and the preparation of food. Another recent publication worth mentioning is *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Gaza, Palestine*, edited by Refaat Alareer. Although a collection of fictional stories written by young Gazans mostly in English, it situates itself, in its dissemination of ‘unmediated voices’ (18), as part of a national project of ‘counternarrative attacks’ (25). My focus here on literature emanating from and/or about the West Bank is determined in the main by the specificity of the context that is studied here, namely the ongoing settler colonial targeting of space that aims at the appropriation of Palestinian land. The so-called Israeli ‘disengagement’ from Gaza has created a different situation there where annexation no longer appears to be desired. Having been cut off completely and reclassified as enemy territory, the Gaza Strip has since become subjected to all-out Israeli military warfare.

This leads her, in the same interview, to explain the success of her first book in the following terms:

[...] I think people saw the Palestinians as normal human beings: I talked about my mother-in-law, the traitors and collaborators, I talk about my dog. People relate to us on a human level. I receive many emails all the time: "You were reading that book? I was also reading that book!" "You like *La Traviata*? I also adore opera!" "You have a dog?"

(Abdualla and Sultan)

Similarly, when Shehadeh writes in *Occupation Diaries* of his love for Bach and D.H. Lawrence and his passion for gardening, he presents a view of himself that becomes in these moments divorced from the conflict. These first-person narrations thus challenge the reader to think beyond the common stereotype of the Palestinian as either violent militant on the one hand, or helpless victim on the other, presenting instead an ordinary person with very distinct likes and dislikes. The appeal of the diary and the memoir in this respect is that they achieve the balancing act between portraying an everyday reality that is very much defined by the occupation and reflects the plight of the Palestinians as a collective, and at the same time giving a voice to the narrator as an individual in his or her own right.

Reflecting the recent popularity of the Palestinian short story, Glanville notes that 'fragmentary, abbreviated' forms have generally come to dominate current literary production originating in the occupied territories and relates how one novelist 'has taken to writing short stories since she returned to Palestine in 1994 after the Oslo Accords, because she feels that the atmosphere is not conducive to writing novels' (8). If this is true, the diary form offers a particular appeal to Palestinian writers in its literary reflection of the fragmentation of Palestinian life under occupation. This fragmentation exists on the levels of both space and time: the rhythm of daily life is thus determined by the rhythm of the occupation, such as for example by the opening and closing of checkpoints. The very process of writing does not escape this control and is equally subjected to the unexpected and unforeseeable disruptions of occupation.

This applies even more so in the heightened situation of the curfew, during which the act of writing is directly timed by the repeated, abrupt imposition and lifting

of the curfew. *Sharon and my Mother-and-Law*, the second part of which Amiry wrote under curfew during the first Gulf crisis, contains thus forty-two stories in correspondence to the forty-two days of curfew. Other examples of ‘curfew diaries’ are Shehadeh’s *The Sealed Room*, also written during the 1991 Iraq War, and Shehadeh’s *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* which contains a selection of his diaries during the 2002 invasion of Ramallah. In all of these, the home transforms under the curfew into both refuge and prison, encapsulating on a microscale the paradoxical Palestinian experience of living under occupation on your own land. Through the immediacy of its first-person narration and its snapshots of what are often heightened states of minds, the diary manages to capture and convey not only the physical state of siege, but also a feeling of besiegedness that has come to symbolise Palestinian experience at large.

To summarise the above, I argue here that the diary speaks to the Palestinian writer as a literary medium in two different ways: firstly, the diary conforms in its formal requests to the very materialist conditions of life under occupation; secondly, it also offers an aesthetics that mimics, perhaps better than any other form of literary expression, the restrictions and disruptions of Palestinian experience.

The first proposition is challenging as it suggests that the choice of literary expression is restricted by the conditions of occupation, the literary imagination itself thus being subject to these restrictions – bringing back to mind Glanville’s earlier concern. Shehadeh appears to support such interpretation in his admission that he would prefer ‘to draw on [his] imagination for material, not record the difficult ordeals of [his] daily life’ (*When the Bulbul*, viii). His enduring adherence to the genre acquires a quality of the inevitable; that as long as the status quo of occupation persists, he is limited to this mode of expression; that he cannot yet move on. On a literal level, Shehadeh mirrors such feeling by expressing a yearning for the time when he can leave Palestine without his leaving having such a big meaning.¹²

Within the colonial context, the diary and the memoir gain additional significance as forms of self-writing that perform a ‘writing back’ to the colonial

¹² Comment made in a video interview with *The Guardian* UK website published 9 October 2012 under the title: ‘Every aspect of Palestinian life is affected by the occupation’ (available at <http://www.theguardian.com>).

centre's erasures and distortions of native history. In the ongoing settler colonial situation, these forms of writing inscribe on the land not only a native presence, but also a native past which is indeed equally threatened. After all, there is of course more to the settler colonial targeting of native space than just the physical dimension. Denying the Other's space/territory is intimately linked to the denial of their culture, history and political aspirations. With its program of destruction, Zionism ultimately sought (and seeks) the erasure of any traces of pre-colonial Palestinian history. Particularly places of collective, see national, significance – such as places of worship – are targeted in a first instance as inscriptions of native history on the land. Since settler colonialism destroys in order to make anew, the Zionist destruction of Palestinian land, carrying powerful biblical connotations of redemption, creates the *tabula rasa*, the empty land upon which the new and exclusive settler space is to be created. If we are, then, for the sake of argument, to give any credence to Zionism's foundational claim of having made the desert bloom, it only did so by turning it into a desert in the first place. Christian Salmon is again reminded of Bosnia where these dialectical 'twin mind-sets of construction and destruction' were known as "memoricide", the murder of the past' ('Bulldozer War'). In the case of the Zionist forces in Palestine, they destroy(ed) in order to Judaize. As has already been noted, this ongoing ethnicisation program has been accompanied by the selective appropriation of elements of Palestinian culture, examples of which can be found in the misappropriation of certain foods, styles of architecture and clothing. Although such appropriations are characteristic of settler colonialism engagements in general, Zionism's unique return narrative lends itself for an all the more aggressive and shameless theft of native culture, as it bases its legitimacy on the portrayal of the Jewish settlers as the land's true natives.

In the face of such a comprehensive attack that seeks the erasure of both the Palestinian past and presence, Palestinian life writing responds by affirming the vital connections between past and present, re-establishing thereby a continuity that has almost disappeared from Palestinian lives. Tellingly, Shehadeh describes *Occupation Diaries* as a book 'about memory, and a book of memories'.¹³ These memories include

¹³ Video interview: 'Every aspect of Palestinian life is affected by the occupation' (<http://www.theguardian.com>).

those of his grandmother Julia whom he is reminded of, along with her ‘generation of eccentric women’ (54), upon passing the garden of the Grand Hotel in Ramallah where she used to spend her summer afternoons. Similarly, the barbershop he has been going to since a he was a child sparks recollections of his father and family life in Jaffa before 1948:

Habib had been my father’s barber in Jaffa. His shop was just around the corner from the court, so my father would stop on his way to get a haircut or a shave. He continued to cut my father’s hair in Ramallah until Father was killed. Now his sons are my barbers and have been all my life.

(150)

Shehadeh’s body of work in its entirety is indeed remarkable for the continuity of its accounts that offers an invaluable record of life in the West Bank. Spanning over thirty years, from his first book of journals *The Third Way* covering events in 1979-1980 to his latest publication *Occupation Diaries* which chronicles the years leading up to the Palestinian UN statehood bid in 2011, his diaries trace an accelerated deterioration of living conditions for Palestinians over this period. It is the very physical nature of this decline that would come to dominate Shehadeh’s books, the changes to the land in many ways directly reflecting changes to his own life. He thus persistently laments the ‘vanishing landscape’ of his native Ramallah and its surrounding hills: not only are these lands of his childhood and ancestors becoming ever less familiar to him, but he also finds himself increasingly prevented from accessing them and confronted with sealed off land. Shehadeh is left to look on powerlessly as new Jewish settlements spring up, eating more Palestinian land and intruding ever further into his living space and that of all West Bank Palestinians. In a diary entry from August 1991 which would retrospectively only spell the beginning of things to come, Shehadeh vents his frustration at what he recognises as the concerted effort by Israel to alienate Palestinians from their land:

Wherever I look I see barbed wire. Unwanted guests now share our hills. And when we go on our walks we confront the army sign that reads ‘Halt, entry is prohibited’.

They are turning me into a stranger in my own land. In every direction, bands of new houses stretch ominously over the hilltops. Week by week they are

being ‘extended’. Each is sealed off from me. Each is a new Masada, another fortress of obdurate determination.

(*Sealed Room*, 180)

For Shehadeh the avid Rambler, the continuing colonisation of West Bank land has meant significant restrictions to his walking tours, or ‘*sarhat*’. ‘*Sarhat*’ is the plural form of ‘*sarha*’ which, as Shehadeh explains, connotes a traditional way for Palestinian men to spend time away from their towns and cities, and be in nature. ‘To go on a *sarha* [is] to roam freely, at will, without restraint’:

A man going on a *sarha* wanders aimlessly, not restricted by time and place, going where his spirit takes him to nourish his soul and rejuvenate himself. But not any excursion would qualify as a *sarha*. Going on a *sarha* implies letting go. It is a drug-free high, Palestinian style.

(*Palestinian Walks*, 2)

The freedom implied in the *sarha* has become difficult to realise in the West Bank where roaming freely can quickly and unknowingly lead onto prohibited and/or hostile terrain. In *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, we follow Shehadeh on seven separate ‘*sarhat*’ that take place over thirty years, during the course of which they evolve into increasingly dangerous ventures, increasingly interrupted or stopped by frightening encounters. As journeys ‘through time and place’ (2), Shehadeh’s *sarhat* showcase the ‘irreversible changes that [have] blighted the land’ (xii) and are testimony to the collective Palestinian experience of a ‘shrink[ing]’ Palestinian world, while ‘that of the Israelis expands’ (xvii).

The drastic narrowing of Palestinian living space, and the restrictions to the freedom of movement specifically, surface most strikingly when juxtaposing Shehadeh’s earliest published diaries with those that followed. While checkpoints, curfews, house invasions and demolitions already form part of the early 1980s reality of military occupation in *The Third Way*, freedom of movement does not yet transpire as a principal grievance affecting daily life in the West Bank. The reason for this is that *The Third Way* indeed reflects a time of open borders between the occupied territory and Israel proper/historic Palestine that gave Palestinians – notwithstanding the frequent, arbitrary harassment by Israeli soldiers – relative freedom of movement. Shehadeh can thus recount various trips during that time, including an all-day

excursion to Lydda, Jaffa and Acre to visit some of his family's former homes, '[stopping] off in Tel Aviv for lunch – to see the Israelis in their natural habitat' (*Third Way*, 21).

The open borders between Israel and the occupied territories also allowed a reverse influx of people into the territories. *The Third Way* thus showcases a diversity of regional identities that has all but disappeared from the streets of Ramallah; at the time, Shehadeh could for example still spot the 'Beirut girl' from the 'Arab girl from Haifa' (4). Israelis were also still allowed to enter the occupied territories; in a number of stories in *The Third Way*, Shehadeh tells of his Israeli friend Enoch with whom he would regularly 'roam the hills and the coast' (*Third Way*, 35). Not only have the coast and large parts of these hills become out of reach for Shehadeh, his Israeli friend would no longer be allowed to join him on those walks, his presence in all of the occupied territory today forbidden by law – unless of course, absurdly, if he were living in one of the illegal Jewish settlements.

The Third Way precedes the near sterile separation between Palestinians and Israelis in place today. Then, Palestinians from the occupied territories and Israelis still met, albeit mostly in exploitative relationships where Palestinian workers were, as cheap labour, 'bussed over to Israel from the occupied territories every morning' (*Third Way*, 27). Of course, Israel's concerted effort to '[keep] the two sides as far apart as possible' will never result in the complete separation it dreams of, both sides finding covert ways in and out of the other's space (Shehadeh, *Occupation Diaries*, 102). Shehadeh thus concedes that the threat of illegality does not keep 'those committed Israelis' from coming 'to see for themselves' (*Occupation Diaries*, 102). Equally, even after the construction of the Wall, those Palestinians desperate for work still find ways of crossing into Israel. The risks taken by a large number of Palestinian men for a day's wages is the subject of Suad Amiry's second book *Nothing to Lose but your Life*, in which she joins a group of them on their hazardous attempt through the night to make it to the other side.

At the time of *The Third Way*, even Palestinians and Jewish settlers were still within occasional eyesight of each other, and thus of the 'Other', inhabiting to a certain degree a shared space, before the walls, fences and roads that would help fashion today's structure of segregation. Although very rare, even direct contact – other than

violent confrontations – was still possible: Shehadeh relates the bizarre meeting with two settlers from the settlement of Ofra, known for being ‘the most violent of the lot in this area’, who came to his office in Ramallah seeking his services as a lawyer (90). Revealing their plan of wanting to register a computer services company, they not only proclaimed their intention ‘get into the business of selling [computers] to [Palestinians]’, but they also explained why they chose a Palestinian lawyer over an Israeli one with ‘[their] policy to use the professional skills of the locals’ (*Third Way*, 90). Shehadeh of course declined their offer, but this freak encounter illustrates how this relatively recent past in some aspects already appears as a remnant of an almost unimaginable world.

It was Israel’s shift to a policy of closure in the early nineteen-nineties that would set the course for creating the conditions as we know them today, a shift that would also, as Hanafi has argued, signal an escalation of Israel’s spacio-cidal tactics. At the height of the First Intifada and in the midst of the rapidly escalating Gulf War, Israel started to restrict the relative freedom of movement Palestinians had since 1967 by unilaterally imposing closures on its occupied territories. It was in 1991 that a general closure was for the first time implemented, sealing the Gaza Strip and the West Bank off from Israel proper. At the same time, the remaining Palestinian territories, Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, were cut off from each other. Passage between these territories and into Israel now required permits from the Israeli army. The introduction of the permit system was indeed complementary to Israel’s closure strategy, allowing the state to control and severely restrict – often prevent – Palestinian movement in the whole of the Israeli-controlled territory between the river Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea.

Shehadeh’s second book of diaries, *The Sealed Room*, picks up ten years after *The Third Way*, at precisely the time when these changes were first implemented. Chronicling the days leading up to and the tense months during the first Gulf War, *The Sealed Room* also portrays the repressive status quo of an ongoing Intifada, when reports of violent clashes between Palestinians and Israeli soldiers elicited in Israel an increasingly inflammatory public rhetoric that made permissible a ‘[shoot] to kill’ policy (*Sealed Room*, 34). ‘Another reaction of the government [to these outbreaks of

violence]’, Shehadeh writes at the time, ‘has been to cut the Occupied Territories off completely’:

Some 150,000 workers are kept away from the sources of their income. They have done this before, but this time it seems more serious. Some believe this is because they are losing control. Maybe so.

(*Sealed Room*, 35)

Meanwhile, the Palestinians in the West Bank, placed under curfew, were also caught in the firing line between Israel and Iraq, the impending escalation of the crisis viewed by most Palestinians with ambivalence, as Shehadeh remembers:

There were strong expectations that the gulf war would bring an end to the status quo that was enabling Israel to pursue its oppressive policies against the Palestinian residents of the occupied territories.

(*When the Bulbul*, v)

At the same time, ‘[t]here was also a lot of fear’:

We believed Saddam Hussein might use chemical weapons against Israel, which would mean against us also. But whereas every Israeli was provided with a gas mask to save his or her life in the event of a chemical attack, we had none. Instead we sealed ourselves in one room of the house, plastering all the windows, closing every possible hole, and placing wet rags soaked in chlorine underneath the doors, as we had been advised.

(*When the Bulbul*, v-vi)

Over the course of the book, the self-fashioned sealed room becomes a metaphor for how, in Shehadeh’s eyes, Palestinians, in addition to the physical confinement that the Israeli occupation imposes on them, seal themselves in of their own accord. He thereby reiterates his warning that pervades *The Third Way* of the danger of following the occupier’s path of self-enclosure. The longer the situation of the imposed curfew and the threat of an immanent gas attack continues, the sealed room transforms for Shehadeh from a protective space to one intrinsically hostile: presented as something that protects you from suffocation, the sealed room, in fact, will cause you to suffocate in the first place. This reveals itself to be true on a literal level, as the advice and instructions issued by the Israeli army to the Palestinians turned out to be not only ineffective in the case of an actual gas attack, but also

negligent, putting the Palestinians at serious risk of self-harming. Shehadeh would later remember:

Fortunately, no weapons were dropped on our region. However, many of us, myself included, suffered chlorine poisoning from the fumes of the door rags.

(When the Bulbul, vi)

Beyond the physical level, Shehadeh comes to identify a dual process of suffocation and self-suffocation that imperils occupied Palestinian society:

My mind goes back to the Warsaw Ghetto. It's no use denying the similarity, on the grounds of differences in the degree of suffering. Both cases are informed by the same spirit, to foster decay and collapse from within. The people who sounded the siren for us to go to our sealed room are the people with the Masada complex. They dragged us on. They dragged the world on and made it see their situation from the closed confines of their sealed mind.

(173)

The mention of Israel's 'Masada complex' is a reference to the suicidal political psychology as it has already been discussed in the context of the Zionist embrace of the Samson Bible legend. More than a symbol of Jewish fortitude and defence, it is the suicidal narrative that characterises the Masada myth as it has been nationally adopted: holding the fortress of Masada against an overpowering Roman force, the last stand of Jewish rebels chooses to kill themselves, their wives and children, rather than surrender. By invoking Masada, Shehadeh thus warns his fellow Palestinians not to be dragged down along on Israel's uncompromising path.

The Sealed Room ends with Shehadeh's symbolic refusal to enter the room upon the renewed sounding of the alarm: 'I was no longer prepared to play the game which the Israelis were playing' (138). This climactic moment signifies his defiant stance against the occupiers' attempt to corrupt him with their isolationist and suicidal mentality:

I know this is not how I want to live. I don't want to reach their conclusions. I don't want to believe that the world is against me, that no one understands [...]. I want to break out of the isolation of my sealed room. I don't want to confirm their victory over me by becoming their mirror image. Nor do I want to shut off

the rest of the world and creep into my Noah's Ark, as I did in these past months, hoping for the temple to fall and destroy us both.

(180-181)

Shehadeh's concluding stance is one of hope and anticipation, as he declares: 'The time has come to force open the doors of my mind and rejoin the world' (181). Not stopping there, he even extends a call to the other side to leave their sealed room too and 'meet [him] half-way' (181). Of course, little did Shehadeh know then that these doors were, at least on the physical level, to remain shut: the closure of the West Bank, which he understood to be but a temporary measure, was to become a permanent situation.

The Oslo Accords of 1993 promised to bring an end to this status quo of closure. In effect however, they neither reversed nor eased these restrictions, but extended, normalised and institutionalised them (Weizman, *Hollow Land*, 142; Usher, 31). Under the interim agreements, Palestinian territory became further divided: the West Bank was cut up into administrative zones (or areas) under varying degrees of Israeli and/or Palestinian jurisdiction. This temporarily agreed partitioning has left the majority of West Bank land under the exclusive control of the Israeli military until today.¹⁴ The post-Oslo years also saw a soaring of settlement activity in the West Bank. According to Oren Yiftachel, 'Israel has more than doubled the size of Jewish settlements since the signing of the Oslo agreement [...] while placing severe restrictions on Palestinian development and mobility' (8). Complementary to the extension of its settlement network, Israel instituted in the mid-1990s under Shimon Peres 'a system of "internal closure" within the West Bank and Gaza, separating villages from towns and people from their neighbors, fields, and orchards' (Usher, 31). This 'territorial and demographic segmentation' was achieved '[utilizing] a system of recently built and Jewish-only bypass roads as well as strategically located army bases' (Usher, 31).

In truth then, the 'peace process' provided Israel with the international stamp of approval for its program of unilateral separation and closure. Although heralded as a first step towards Palestinian independence, Israel was able, under the smoke screen of

¹⁴ By far the greatest proportion of West Bank land, over 60 percent, is considered zone C, 'where Israel retains near exclusive control, including over law enforcement, planning and construction' (see 'Area C of the West Bank: Key Humanitarian Concerns, January 2013', www.ochopt.org).

the ‘peace talks’, to continue and even accelerate its efforts to create the conditions for a gradual disintegration of Palestinian society. Sara Roy has in this respect written about the ‘accelerated de-development process’ of the Palestinian economy during the post-Oslo years (‘De-development’, 64). De-development, unlike under-development, she writes, ‘not only distorts the development process but undermines it entirely’, disallowing thus any ‘structural change or reform in the weaker economy’ (65):

The characteristic features of the de-development process – expropriation integration, deinstitutionalization – not only have continued but have accelerated since Oslo, their detrimental impact heightened by new economic realities, particularly closure.

(68)

Shehadeh, who initially joined the negotiations as a legal adviser, quickly became disillusioned and left the process, having, as he remembers, ‘lost all hope that there was going to be properly conducted negotiations that could possibly lead to a real peace’ (*When the Bulbul*, vi). For many Palestinians however, Oslo promised to be the start of a better future and specifically, the end of Israel’s siege on the West Bank. On the day of the withdrawal of the Israeli army from Ramallah, even Shehadeh, as he recounts in his memoir *Strangers in the House*, could not but be swayed by the prevailing ‘carnival mood’: ‘Untypically, I bought a plastic flag and stuck it in my breast pocket’ (231). However, this initial ‘[intoxicating] feeling of liberation’ was short-lived (231). The very same day while walking home, he became intrigued by ‘a single red light’ he perceived ‘in the distant hills to the west’, only to discover a new bypass road being built to serve the two settlements to the northwest of Ramallah and connect them to Jerusalem: ‘The carnival stopped for me then and there’ (231). Shehadeh immediately realised that with this new road on the border of zone A, the supposed Palestinian self-rule area, the hills where he went for walks would become out of bounds to him, ‘now [...] unsafe, with armed settlers and soldiers traveling the new road’ (232). Shehadeh identified the failure of Oslo in the Israeli negotiators’ attempt ‘to recast the occupation into different shapes, providing the Palestinians with mere symbols of liberation’ (*Strangers*, 230). His criticism of Oslo would grow as its consequences became manifest. In *Palestinian Walks*, he wrote that ‘[t]he agreement with Israel proved to be a false start, with disastrous consequences for the Palestinian

struggle to end the occupation and achieve statehood' (*Palestinian Walks*, 179). In his latest book, he refers to the Oslo Accords as 'the worst surrender document in [Palestinian] history' (*Occupation Diaries*, 160).

In addition to the physical fragmentation of Palestinian land, Shehadeh sees the legacy of Oslo most evident in the 'polarization of Palestinian society':

Throughout the First Intifada I had felt such oneness with everyone. We were all working together for a common cause, the end of the Israeli occupation. It mattered little that one was the employer and one the employee. There was a strong sense of solidarity among us. Before the Israeli oppressor we were all equal. [...] Now the false peace of Oslo had divided us, made some believe they could pursue their private life despite the continuation of the occupation while others suffered in the worsening economic conditions. The false peace had shattered us like pieces of that old pot.

(*When the Bulbul*, 7)

In *Occupation Diaries*, this sense of frustration has noticeably grown. Shehadeh feels alienated by how Palestinian society has developed since the Oslo deal. The influx of money by foreign investors that Oslo made possible created in his eyes a society driven by the acquisition of personal wealth; in turn, 'the atmosphere has become one of greed, bitterness and spite' (125). The visible result of the new economic situation is a building boom in and around Ramallah that, according to Shehadeh, 'happened in a frenzy of desperate hyperactivity' (43). Not only do the 'destructive methods' used in imitation of Israeli building projects 'damage [the] land and natural heritage' (158); Shehadeh also sees behind the money pouring in a larger plan by European and US funders to 'distract people and make them have a larger stake in economic development, so they would be harmed by strikes and resistance efforts. It is a sort of shock absorber' (43). Shehadeh's resentment is also directed at the new generation of West Bank Palestinians who have bought into the promises made by Oslo. He thus expresses his concern for 'the up-and-coming class living in our bubble' (43) who have become 'hostages to banks' (165): 'The present generation is that of Oslo, with its heavy toll of defeat disguised as victory and its measure of false glamour' (168).

Shehadeh's damning critique raises a number of issues that need to be addressed at this stage. Firstly, there is the question of the 'bubble'. When Shehadeh refers to 'our bubble', he assumes a metaphor that has become popular in discussions

about Ramallah and its post-Oslo development. Having been made the centre of the Palestinian West Bank polity, Ramallah has drawn international investors and organisations that make it distinct among the West Bank cities. The charge implied in declaring Ramallah a bubble is that it is not representative of occupied Palestinian society on the whole. I would argue that, while the bubble comparison might be fitting in economic and perhaps social terms, it has been overstated within the context of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank at large. Such statements that declare a ‘five-star occupation’ in Ramallah (playing on the recent construction of a five-star hotel there)¹⁵ are misleading in that they suggest that the city and its inhabitants are somehow exempt from the hardships of occupation. Without having to elaborate on the fragility of an economy wholly dependent on an occupying force, I would like to stress for our context the shared experience of restriction and insecurity. The people in Ramallah are as vulnerable to the persecution and prosecution by the Israeli state and army as anywhere else in the West Bank. Targeted arrests of Palestinians commonly happen in stealthy, nighttime incursions into the city by the Israeli army; at times of unrest, these invasions also occur during the day and make repeatedly visible the ongoing military occupation. Movement in and out of the city and its environs is also restricted and thus affects a considerable number of its residents on a daily basis. My point is that, keeping with the metaphor, the bubble is burst too frequently for it to retain its characteristic nature.

The diaries and memoirs discussed here, all of whom are Ramallah-centric, portray the dual physical and mental strain of daily life under occupation. They avoid the pitfalls of trying to represent an essence of what it means to be Palestinian, or indeed of what it means to be a Palestinian living under Israeli occupation in the West Bank, precisely in their focused, personalised angle from within a shared situation. Shehadeh’s books do not claim a representative quality. They are on the whole informed by a self-awareness of the position of privilege from which the author is writing – as a lawyer of prominent family descent, as well as an internationally known writer. His most tangible advantage as a Jerusalem ID holder is however made less obvious: this allows him, unlike the majority of West Bank residents, to travel to

¹⁵ See for example Naomi Zeveloff, ‘The Five-Star Occupation’ (<http://www.guernicamag.com/features/the-five-star-occupation>).

Jerusalem and thus beyond the Wall into Israeli territory. A brief mention is additionally due with regard to Shehadeh's failure to address, within the context of his condemnation of post-Oslo Palestinian society, that he is part of the class that arguably profited most in the aftermath of Oslo.

There is also in *Occupation Diaries* specifically, a sense that Shehadeh's condemnation of Palestinian society reflects the bitterness of the intellectual who finds himself side-lined in a changing dynamics of the Palestinian resistance struggle. A certain fatigue thus pervades *Occupation Diaries*. The development of his society that he sees as a Palestinian defeat is mirrored in his retreat into the personal space of his house and garden, which reads almost like a personal defeat and resignation. Shehadeh's physical withdrawal mirrors thus his disenchantment with a society and environment that have become chaotic, alien and 'obnoxious' to him (175): his house and garden providing a refuge from the 'uncertainty [all around]' (95).

The question of representation at large is indeed a crucial one within the context of Palestinian territorial fragmentation. Interesting in this respect is how a recent publication, *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Gaza, Palestine*, a collection of fictional stories written by young Gazans mostly in English, declares as its aim 'to unite and bring together the whole of Palestine in one narrative' so as to 'fight[] and refute[] the common misunderstanding that Gaza is a separate entity' (Alareer, 22). Because 'storytelling helps construct Palestinian national identity and unity', the book suggests that it is precisely in the recourse to fiction that these divisions and specificities of place can be transcended (Alareer, 26). The editor explains:

Most if not all the Gaza writers in this book have never been to other places in Palestine. The internet was the place where they managed to meet and interact with Palestinians from the Diaspora, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the territories occupied in 1948. Together they piece and construct the territorial fragments of Palestine into a fascinating entity that Israel still refuses to allow to exist in reality. In fact, they wrote about things they never experienced, like the Wall, the checkpoints, and the settlements.

(Alareer, 22)

This is thus a writing back against division that becomes a re-membering in its literal sense, like the piecing together of a puzzle, each story contributing to the reassembly of the complete picture.

With the outbreak of the Second (‘*al-Aqsa*’) Intifada in late 2000, Israel escalated its permanent closure policies further, most notably with the construction of its wall in the West Bank. Cutting deep into Palestinian territory east of the Green Line, the Wall has resulted in the most drastic deterioration in day-to-day life for Palestinians in the West Bank in decades. Severing East Jerusalem from Ramallah and its environs, the Wall is a further instalment in the state’s efforts of territorial and demographic dismemberment. It is Israel’s spacio-cidal strategy that determines the Wall’s route which is not exclusively directed at separating Palestinians from Israelis, but also Palestinians from Palestinians and, in many cases, Palestinians from their lands and livelihoods. Israel’s walling has confined Palestinians to disconnected population enclaves, disrupting thereby any contiguity of Palestinian territory that is needed for the creation of a viable Palestinian state. The altered geography that has been created as a result of Oslo’s zonification of Palestinian land and was entrenched further by the construction of the Wall exposes Israel’s politics of closure as a politics of enclosure that is aimed at controlling Palestinian movement.

Israel’s hold over Palestinian space today is therefore best understood in terms of a colonial system of control. Jeff Halper and Eyal Weizman have both emphasised the comprehensive reach of this system in their descriptions of Israel’s ‘matrix of control’ and ‘politics of verticality’ respectively. The matrix of control that American-born Israeli anthropologist and political activist Jeff Halper argues Israel has ‘quietly laid’ over the occupied territories is ‘an interlocking series of mechanisms, only a few of which require physical occupation of territory, that allow Israel to control every aspect of Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories’ (Halper, ‘94 Percent’, 14; 15):

[It] is a maze of laws, military orders, planning procedures, limitations on movement, kafkaesque bureaucracy, settlements and infrastructure – augmented by prolonged and ceaseless low-intensity warfare – that serves to perpetuate the Occupation, to administer it with a minimum of military presence and, ultimately, to conceal it behind massive Israeli “facts on the ground” and a bland façade of “proper administration.”

(Halper, ‘Introduction’)

Halper further explains that the matrix ‘works like the Japanese game of Go’:

Instead of defeating your opponent as in chess, in Go you win by immobilizing your opponent, by gaining control of key points of a matrix so that every time s/he moves s/he encounters an obstacle of some kind. [...] The matrix imposed by Israel in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, similar in appearance to a Go board, has virtually paralyzed the Palestinian population without "defeating" it or even conquering much territory.

(‘94 Percent’, 15)

Israeli architect Eyal Weizman adds that, in its aim to bring Palestinian movement to a standstill, Israel has reconfigured the space in the occupied territories so as to extend its control beyond the surface of the terrain alone (checkpoints, hill top settlements, roads), to the sub-terrain beneath (tunnels, aquifers, sewage systems), and the militarised airspace above. It is this three-dimensional mode of governance that Weizman terms the ‘politics of verticality’:

Revisioning the traditional geopolitical imagination, the horizon seems to have been called upon to serve as one of the many boundaries raised up by the conflict, making the ground below and the air above separate and distinct from, rather than continuous with and organic to, the surface of the earth.

(12)

As Halper stresses too, Weizman identifies in this a decisive shift in Israel’s mode of domination based on the process of ‘distanciation’ whereby Israel no longer relies on ‘territorial presence within Palestinian areas and the direct governing of the occupied populations’ (11). Instead, the Palestinians are controlled,

[...] from beyond the envelopes of their walled-off spaces, by selectively opening and shutting the different enclosures, and by relying on the strike capacity of the Air Force over Palestinian areas. In this territorial ‘arrangement’ the principle of separation has turned ninety degrees as well, with Israelis and Palestinians separated vertically, occupying different spatial layers.

(11)

To Weizman’s conceptualisation of a three-dimensional confinement of the Palestinians, John Collins adds the fourth dimension of speed. Following Paul Virilio’s elaborations on speed and politics, Collins applies the dromological perspective to Israel’s occupation of the Palestinian territories: ‘Possession and deployment of the weapon of speed allows Israel to move rapidly in transforming the objective geo-

political situation while also shrinking the existential space in which Palestinians operate' (92). In other words, Israel holds the power to accelerate and slow things down at will, and thereby 'controls confinement' (Collins, 95). One way by which the Israeli army exercises its power of speed over the Palestinian population has already become apparent in its use of the collective punishment of the curfew: with the start of the curfew, Palestinian movement is literally brought to a standstill, while during the periods in-between when the curfew is lifted for a few hours at a time, movement is forcibly sped up.

Israel's all-encompassing control over Palestinian life in the occupied territories is one of the central themes of Mourid Barghouti's two-part memoir, *I Saw Ramallah* and *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*. In a first instance, this is manifested in the novels as Israel's ability to control time which Barghouti indeed identifies as a defining feature of occupation. Waiting, in turn, becomes the defining condition of the occupied:

One of the Occupation's crimes is to compel people to wait. To wait at crossing points, borders, and checkpoints. To wait while permissions and permits are issued. To wait for the hours of opening and closing and the curfew and its lifting. To wait for the hellish interrogation at the end. To wait for the prison sentence to end. To wait for the electricity to come back on and for the water to come back on. [...] In addition and before all, to be forced to spend their lives waiting, year after year and generation after generation, for the Occupation itself to disappear.

(*Born There, Born Here*, 48)

Both of his novels are narratives of exile and return. *I Saw Ramallah* thus recounts Barghouti's return to Ramallah and his native village of Deir Ghassanah after thirty years of forced exile. *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* picks up a couple of years later and centres around Barghouti's renewed return, this time with his Cairo-born son Tamim for whom it is the very first experience of Palestine. For Barghouti the exile, it is the wait at the borders that dominates these return journeys. Waiting on the Jordanian side of the Allenby Bridge on his first return after the long absence of thirty years, he finds himself at the complete mercy of the soldiers who decide when, and if at all, he will be able to complete his journey. The longer he waits, the more he feels 'the anxiety of waiting' – which is the anxiety of uncertainty (7); he has 'nothing to do

except contemplate' (8). As he waits and contemplates his present situation and the past that has brought him there, not only is time slowed down, but distances are drawn-out. He can see the 'Occupied Territories' from where he is, and yet, it might still take him hours to get there; the land on the other side of the River Jordan that is so close may even remain unreachable to him. 'One of the Occupation's cruelest crimes', Barghouti writes in *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*, 'is the distortion of distance in the individual's life. This is a fact: the Occupation changes distances. It destroys them, upsets them, and plays with them as it likes' (79). For the displaced specifically, this means that 'here' is transformed into 'there': 'The soldier of the Occupation stands on a piece of land he has confiscated and calls it 'here' and I, its owner, exiled to a distant country, have to call it 'there' (*Born There, Born Here*, 80). Barghouti furthermore insists that displacement creates an abstraction of the homeland that furthers this distance, making Palestine a place 'somewhere at the end of the earth' (*I Saw Ramallah*, 6). As Barghouti looks at the Palestinian land from the other side of the bridge, it reassumes for him its physical shape, becoming 'touchable' and 'real':

When the eye sees it, it has all the clarity of earth and pebbles and hills and rocks. It has its color and its temperatures and its wild plants too.
Who would dare make it into an abstraction now that it has declared its physical self to the senses?

(*I Saw Ramallah*, 6)

When Barghouti speaks of distance, he invokes both space and time. Indeed, in his meditations on the meaning of occupation, the concepts of time and space constantly merge: what appear on the surface to be mere spatial restrictions reveal themselves as ruptures in time that have wider implications beyond the physical dimension of confinement. In fact, Barghouti stresses that it is the latter, the distortions of time, that cause the real and lasting damage to Palestinian life. On the level of the individual, this is shown firstly through the division of family, the consequences of which pervade both his books. Secondly, and connected to the first, it emerges through the author's alienation from the land – his homeland – and its people. Having been turned into 'that displaced stranger', a sense of unfamiliarity accompanies Barghouti on his rediscovery of his birthplace (*I Saw Ramallah*, 3). Now only a 'visitor' and 'guest' in Palestine, he finds it difficult to relate to and communicate with the people

he encounters (*I Saw Ramallah*, 11) In *I Saw Ramallah*, this unease is made evident immediately upon his arrival on Palestinian territory. Keeping ‘mute’ during the taxi ride to Ramallah (28), he is painfully self-conscious about his inability to engage with ‘his people’: ‘These are my people. Why do I not talk with them?’ (29) A similar sense of estrangement imposes itself between the author and the environment. Barghouti is thus struck and feels ‘let down’ by the landscape he is travelling through. What he sees around him is not the Palestine he remembered and told his friends and family in exile about. Instead of finding the ‘green’ Palestine ‘covered with trees and shrubs and wild flowers’, he sees ‘bare and chalky [hills]’: ‘Did I paint for strangers an ideal picture of Palestine because I had lost it?’ (28) Paradoxically, the distance he feels to the place and the people grows as he visits the village where he was born. He does not know the people there and they no longer seem to know him; but he ‘want[s] someone to know [him]’ and thereby expresses his desire for a connectedness that appears to have been lost (66). Disoriented in the streets of Deir Ghassanah and wanting to ask questions about the names of people and places, he comes to feel more like a tourist than a returnee: ‘How stupid in your own birthplace to ask a tourist’s questions: who’s this and what’s that?’ (66) This comparison is continued in *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* where a trip Barghouti makes with his son to Jerusalem is described in terms of a ‘tourist’ visit (76). They thus stop before entering the city to buy a camera – ‘just like any tourists’ (68); his son’s further request to take a picture of him beneath the *Via Dolorosa* sign is to Barghouti another tourist thing to do – ‘not our ‘thing’’ (71) – and thus a further symptom of their being out of place.

After a reading that was organised in Deir Ghassanah in honour of Barghouti’s return visit in *I Saw Ramallah*, the author is overcome by the realisation of the fundamental separation that exists between himself and the village and its residents as a result of the very different lives that the Israeli occupation has imposed on them: ‘What does Deir Ghassanah know of you, Mourid? What do your people know of you? What do they know of the things that you have been through [...]?’ (84-85) Reversely, and equally, he cannot relate to their experiences: ‘You too do not know the times they have been through. [...] Have they not changed also?’ (85) The missing fig tree in the garden of his old house that Barghouti had immediately noticed upon his arrival gains in this light a new meaning for him. Before, he had reproached his aunt for having cut

it down. Now, he concedes that the tree had meant more to his aunt than to him: ‘Cutting it down must have been necessary at a particular moment that I do not recognize because I was there and she was here’ (85). Barghouti’s initial reaction becomes thus symbolic of the distance that divides Palestinians under occupation and those in exile, the title motif of ‘here’ and ‘there’ designating a separation in time as much as in space: ‘They lived their time here and I lived my time there’ (85). Barghouti stresses the difficulty of patching the two times together (85): while space can be recaptured, time (and with it place) cannot (87). At the same time, the very realisation of the lost time spent together in the same place can, as in Barghouti’s example, carry the potential for a rapprochement to the other’s position and point of view.

Perhaps the most devastating effect of Israel’s control of Palestinian time (and space) in the long term and on the collective level of society is to Barghouti the arrested Palestinian development. Upon his first return to Ramallah, he is disappointed with what he perceives as ‘sad changes’ (67), namely precisely a lack of development, even regression, in the general infrastructure of the city: he finds the vegetable market in ‘the same decrepit state’, the ground ‘like the surface of a marsh’, ‘the facades of the buildings on the main street [...] resembl[ing] the ground of the vegetable market’ (147). This perception is reinforced when he arrives in Deir Ghassanah which, seeing ‘the decay in the arches and the gateways, the roofs, the thresholds, and the steps’, strikes him as a site of ‘desolation’ (67). He admits that while he was away in exile he ‘used to long for the past in Deir Ghassanah’:

But when I saw the past was still there, squatting in the sunshine in the village square, like a dog forgotten by its owners – or like a toy dog – I wanted to take hold of it, to kick it forward, to its coming days, to a better future, to tell it: “Run.”

(I Saw Ramallah, 70)

The degeneration he sees exemplifies to him ‘the extent of the ‘handicapping’ practiced by the Israelis’ (69). By this he means that ‘Palestine’s progress in the natural paths of its future was deliberately impeded’: ‘The Occupation kept the Palestinian village static and turned [the] cities back into villages’ (147). The tragedy

of this lies for Barghouti in that the Palestinian people were ‘forced [...] to stay with the old’ and thereby denied the possibilities of the future: ‘The Occupation [...] did not deprive us of the clay ovens of yesterday, but of the mystery of what we would invent tomorrow’ (69). Barghouti thus shares Shehadeh’s concern for the long-term effects of occupation on the occupied. While the latter articulates his concern in terms of a narrowing of minds, a growing inability to look beyond one’s own situation, Barghouti warns in *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* of the ‘narrowing of [the occupation’s] victims’ ambitions’ (130). Upon perceiving Israel’s wall in the West Bank, he reiterates his analysis of occupation as ‘stagnation and the inhibition of movement to the point of paralysis’ and adds that occupation is also ‘the inhibition of great ambitions and a decline into small dreams’ (130). Not allowed to develop their cities and villages, the occupied Palestinians are left to develop ‘merely symbols’, it indeed being ‘in the interest of any occupation that the homeland should be transformed in the memory of its people into a bouquet of ‘symbols’ (69). For the internally displaced thus too, the homeland is made into an abstraction that replaces to an extent the physical realities of the land and further halts the development of Palestinian land and society. This line of thought leads Barghouti to welcome the post-Oslo building activity in Ramallah that Shehadeh so abhors. He explains how ‘[his] friends are troubled by the concrete high-rises that have appeared everywhere’: ‘I did not share their troubled feelings – this is the way of development and the price for the growth of the city’ (*I Saw Ramallah*, 117). What Shehadeh objects to, and perhaps Barghouti’s friends too, is what he sees as the artificiality of this development. Barghouti, in contrast, situates it within the ‘natural development’ of Palestinian cities and societies (117). Arguably then, their disagreement on this subject is not indicative of opposing beliefs as such, but it rather reflects differing interpretations as a result of their distinct standpoints, exemplifying the distance between the exile and the internal exile.

Compared to both Shehadeh and Amiry, Barghouti’s two-part memoir is an all the more lyrical exploration of the meanings of occupation, displacement and return. Barghouti also most self-consciously situates himself as a writer, and his work as a writer, within a larger programme in opposition to appropriations of Palestinian identity and experience by both pro-Zionist as well as Palestinian and Arab discourses:

We shall tell our personal histories one by one and shall recount our little stories as we have lived them and as our souls and eyes and imaginations remember them. We shall not let history be the history of great events, of kings and officers and books on dusty bookshelves. We shall recount what happened to us personally and the life stories of our bodies and our senses, which to the naïve will seem trivial, incoherent, and meaningless. The meaning is etched upon each individual woman, man, child, tree, house, window, and on every grave before which the national anthem will not be sung and which the historian's blind pen will not describe. We shall retell history as a history of our fears, our anxieties, our patience, our pillow lusts, and improvised courage.

(Born There, Born Here, 59-60)

Suspicious not only of official history, but also of the symbolism and abstractions of nationalist Palestinian narratives and their resistance literature, his declared subject is the concrete, the physical, and hence necessarily, the personal:

I only started to believe in myself as a poet when I discovered how faded all abstracts and absolutes were. When I discovered the accuracy of the concrete detail and the truthfulness of the five senses, and the great gift, in particular, of sight.

(I Saw Ramallah, 74-75)

Claiming his right and that of all Palestinians to exist outside the bounds of the conflict and the occupation, his is a literal writing of the self:

I want to deal with my unimportant feelings that the world will never hear. I want to put on record my right to passing anxieties, simple sorrows, small desires, and feelings that flare up briefly in the heart and then disappear. [...] I want to write the history of things no one else will ever write for me. I want to carve the least of my feelings with a chisel on a stone next to the highway.

(Born There, Born Here, 45-46)

Barghouti's revolutionary literary agenda mirrors a larger revolutionary politics – 'we didn't lose Palestine in a debate' (*Born There, Born Here, 58*) – that challenges the validity of efforts such as Shehadeh's whose books speak a language of reform and compromise.

The opening chapter of *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* brings together many of the ideas that have been discussed so far and that dominate Barghouti's two autobiographical novels. 'The Driver Mahmoud' narrates Barghouti's journey from

Ramallah to Jericho, as he travels back to his new home in Amman, in one of the shared taxi services that connect all the major towns in the West Bank. As the title suggests, the focus of the episode is on the young but confident driver Mahmoud who impresses Barghouti with his calm determination to deliver his passengers to their destination against all the hazards the occupation throws at them. The party of seven sets out from Ramallah in heavy rain and fog; shortly afterwards, they go off course. With a casualness both admirable and bewildering to Barghouti, the driver informs his passengers of an impending Israeli attack that forces a change of route:

The army's on alert, the roads are closed, and there are flying checkpoints everywhere. The weather as you can see is bad but we'll definitely make it to the bridge, with God's help. Coffee?

(2)

What follows turns into a Palestinian expedition that exemplifies the distortion of distance Barghouti has identified as a central tactic of the occupation. Trying to avoid the Israeli checkpoints, they are forced into fields and onto unpaved roads. The taxi ride transforms into a veritable obstacle course as the route 'twist[s] and turn[s] and narrow[s]' (16). Barghouti's personal sense of alienation and disorientation, 'no longer know[ing] the geography of [his] own land' (10), is reinforced by a terrain that turns increasingly treacherous: '[p]uddles of water, stones, and wild plants, scattered through a fog that is starting gradually to lift' (10). When the car gets stuck in the mud, and at the driver's prompt, 'A little push, everyone' (12), the passengers collectively participate in the 'rescue operation' (13). Slowed down by these weather-induced hazards, it is a man-made obstacle that brings their precarious journey to a halt. They are stopped by a 'huge, impromptu, mud-filled trench that', in Barghouti's eyes, 'the car will not be able to cross unless a Greek god from the heavens of myth, capable of changing fates, appears and gets us out of this earthly fix' (15). While the author is despondent over this 'fissure of earth' that marks a geography altered by the occupation force in order to prevent Palestinian movement (18), the driver Mahmoud still 'looks as confident as if the Greek gods were his first cousins' (16). Help however does not come from the gods, but from a similarly unexpected source for Barghouti: 'a giant yellow crane appears from among the trees on the other side of the trench [...]. In it are two thin, poorly dressed youths, one of whom gestures to Mahmoud to prepare

for the rescue' (16). In Barghouti's description of how the car is lifted over the trench with all of its passengers inside – including the poet – the suspended state 'between earth and sky' becomes symbolic of the Palestinian condition (19). Squeezed by the earth, the Palestinians 'sink upward': 'The suspended bubble of air in which we seven are swinging is now our place of exile from this earth. It is our disabled will and our attempt, in a mixture of courage and fear, to impose our will through wit and cunning' (19). All Barghouti wants to be however is 'an ordinary traveler' (20).

Barghouti's invocation of the Greek gods reinforces his portrayal of the epic proportions of their expedition; it is a Palestinian odyssey. The mixed group of Palestinians become united in their struggle to complete their journey. At their head, the driver Mahmoud leads them safely through the hostile terrain to their destination. He becomes the leader of the nation, the taxi van a microcosm of Palestinian occupied society:

[T]his young Palestinian is trying to perform a small miracle without realizing it, is being a hero unaware that he's being a hero. He's only a hired driver but he wants to do the job that earns him his monthly salary. Right now, he's the leader of this trip and doesn't want to let us down. We are now his nation – an old man and two women (one of whom doesn't cover her hair and face while the other wears a full veil); a man who's short and another who's fat; a university student; and a poet who is amazed by everything he sees and doesn't want to spoil it by talking.

(14)

Having reached their destination against the odds, Barghouti admires the driver's 'poise and ability', his determination not to let any obstacle, indeed not to let the occupation itself, defeat him: 'his conduct, liveliness, youth, and confidence now seduce me into a burst of optimism that sees the Palestinians as the stronger side in this long conflict with the Occupation' (24). Being later told that what had happened on that day is an 'everyday experience' for Palestinians in the West Bank, somewhat weakens this feeling of optimism and triumph for Barghouti (22). He realises that what is in fact celebrated, 'like a historic victory' (20), is the most basic freedom of movement. With regard to Israel's wall in the West Bank, Barghouti writes that '[i]t tempts one to make an unparalleled victory of the simple ability to move' (*Born There, Born Here*, 130). This journey, and the meaning it acquires, becomes thus a

manifestation of the narrowing of ambitions and the creation of ‘small dreams’ that Barghouti identifies as the major debilitating effect of the occupation. The ‘most exalted aspiration’ of the group travelling together to Jericho that morning, he writes, was ‘to reach the asphalt, to reach, what, in the end, is no more than tar’: ‘Did it ever occur to you that a paved road with tar could become the dream of a nation?’ (22) In this light then, Barghouti’s Greek epic is reduced to absurdity by this most mundane of aims pursued by the group. Barghouti, of course, plays on this disparity with his use of language to highlight the absurdity of the situation in which the Palestinian insistence to keep moving indeed becomes a daily, gruelling battle. Interesting in that respect is Rema Hammami’s recognition of the ‘daily resistance of simply getting there’ as a new variation of *sumud* (257). She thus argues that *sumud* has come to connote something ‘more proactive’: ‘Its new meaning, found in the common refrain, “*al-hayat lazim tistamirr*” (“life must go on”) is about resisting immobility, refusing to let the army’s lockdown of one’s community preclude school or work’ (257).

In the absurd world created by the occupation, not only do everyday things become daily triumphs (or indeed daily failures); the hardships of occupation, even death, also become an unexpected source of humour. On the hazardous taxi ride to Jericho, Barghouti is struck by how, for the Palestinians who have continued to live under occupation, ‘everything has become food for jokes’ (3). The common occurrences of harassment and death are met with a casualness that is exemplified in the demeanour of the driver Mahmoud. In his own words: ‘they want us paralyzed and terrified. They don’t realize we’ve got used to it’ (10). Barghouti rationalises this attitude as a coping mechanism and mode of defiance that result from the daily absurdities of occupation and are rooted in the Palestinian desperation at the drawn-out experience of occupied life. Already in *I Saw Ramallah*, he notices in his own perception of events a ‘mingling of tragedy and comedy’ that he explains as follows (156):

The comedy of death, of funerals. Long struggles that take up tens of years of people’s lives leave shadows of courage and fortitude but also leave shadows of nihilism and a mockery of the available destinies. These shadows are darkened by the repeated retreats that follow each attempt to move forward. Mockery becomes one of the psychological tools that enable us to continue.

(*I Saw Ramallah*, 176-177)

In *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*, he similarly notes:

There have been so many massacres that they've become material for their victims' jokes. In this uneven conflict with the Occupation, which bears the most modern weapons of the age, the unarmed Palestinian hates to be an object of pity. He arms himself with laughter and irony, even at his own expense, and by making fun of his repeated tragedies under this seemingly endless Occupation.

(*Born There, Born Here*, 7-8)

Barghouti brings the absurdity of Palestinian life under occupation to the surface in a brief but striking stylistic, and indeed explicit, reference to Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. The reference is part of a central episode in *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* that sees Barghouti and a poet friend of his 'smuggle' themselves past and through the Israeli checkpoints into Ramallah inside the back of an ambulance. The sheer grotesqueness of their situation opens up a dialogue between the two writers in imitation of Beckett's characters as they wait at the Qalandia checkpoint, named 'Qalandahar' by the locals in allusion to the then embattled Afghan city and in demonstration of their sense of humour (127). Expressing a fear of 'go[ing] mad' and affirming to each other that they 'are talking nonsense', the absurdist back-and-forth is brought to an end by Barghouti's rhetoric question: 'What else do you expect from me when I'm creeping across the border in an ambulance like a mouse?' (131)

In his late poem 'The Wall', Mahmoud Darwish presents a bleak, nightmarish vision of Israel's Wall as a 'huge metal snake' that aggressively and relentlessly invades the most private spaces left to the Palestinians, to the point of 'nearly choking [them] to death' (*A River Dies of Thirst*, 55). He ends his poem by encapsulating the Palestinian response to the continuing brutal occupation: 'And we cannot help laughing' (55). In Darwish's poem, it is however not desperation and helplessness that keep the Palestinians laughing. Their laughter is an expression of the victim's confidence in his or her position of moral right in the face of outside aggression:

[W]ith a bit of effort we can see what is above [the snake]: a sky yawning with boredom at the architects adorning it with guns and flags. And at night we see it twinkling with stars, which gaze at us with affection.

(55)

Darwish's Palestinians also laugh at the occupiers' delusions, their madness; the Palestinians thus possess a clear-sightedness and understanding of the situation that evades the occupiers in their paranoiac obsession to eliminate the purported enemy:

We also see what lies behind the snake wall: the watchmen in the ghetto, frightened of what we're doing behind the little walls we still have left. We see them oiling their weapons to kill the gryphon they think is hiding in our hen coop. And we cannot help laughing.

(55)

Among the writers studied here, Suad Amiry most fully embraces the absurdities of occupation by presenting an overtly comical portrayal of everyday life in the occupied territories. Her book *Sharon and my Mother-in-Law* contains in a first part anecdotes that cover a period from the early 1980s to the First Intifada and the 1991 Gulf War, up to the immediate post-Oslo years. The second part consists of mostly emails that Amiry sent to friends and family while under curfew during the 2002 Israeli siege of Ramallah. Her writing succeeds in capturing a world in which uncertainty affects all aspects of Palestinian life; she narrates a world that is governed by the ridiculous and irrational, in which rules are not there to establish order and security, but are used to create chaos and instability. The permit system in particular surfaces in Amiry's accounts as an Israeli instrument to systematically obstruct Palestinian lives. Describing a Palestinian odyssey of a different sort, Amiry recounts the 'seven-year epic of [her] identity card' (38), that is, her quest to obtain a residency card that would allow her to live 'legally' (in the eyes of the colonial administration) with her husband in the occupied territories. These 'seven continuous years of agony over [her] residency' are later in the book contrasted to how easily and quickly Amiry's dog obtains a Jerusalem ID (34). All that is needed for the dog to acquire the precious document that many Palestinians wait years to get – if indeed they get it at all – is one visit to the (Israeli) vet. The Israeli permit system in its occupied territories is exposed as a colonial charade, hiding behind its façade of legitimate bureaucracy and rule of law a regime of oppression, harassment and discrimination. Amiry recounts another exemplary episode that occurred during the Gulf War when, expecting gas masks to be distributed to them, Palestinians were made to wait for hours outside the colonial administration compound amidst Israeli soldiers' shouting orders to form an

orderly line, only for all of them to be send back home empty-handed. Amiry pointedly remarks on this ‘tragicomedy’ (81): ‘They complicate our lives with all sorts of permits, make them unbearably chaotic, then insist we stand in straight lines’ (83).

Much of the comedy in *Sharon and my Mother-in-Law* arises out of Amiry’s refusal to comply with the unspoken rules of the occupation. She thus refuses to behave in the way expected of the occupied, that is, to suffer in silence the absurdities and tragedies witnessed everyday. In defiance, she instead uses these absurdities against the occupier. In a sense, Amiry’s acceptance of the irrationality of the situations she finds herself in, and indeed of the occupation at large, can be pitted against Shehadeh’s ‘reasonable’ approach, his concerted and persistent effort to make sense of the injustices all around him so as to fight them in a court of law – most often than not, as he himself would perhaps admit, this effort proves to be in vain. Amiry’s approach is articulated in a twice-repeated credo from her second book *Nothing To Lose But Your Life*: ‘Nothing around me made sense; why should I?’ (42; 107) To a certain extent, she thus gives in to the absurdity that the occupation has imposed on her life. While this attitude appears at first glance like a defeatist ‘going crazy’, it reveals itself as a deeply subversive tactic. Responding to the occupier’s nonsense with her own nonsense, she creates situations that take the colonial masters by surprise and manage to unsettle, momentarily even suspend, the established coloniser-colonised relationship.

There are many such instances in *Sharon and my Mother-in-Law*. With her dog’s newly-acquired Jerusalem ID, Amiry heads to the checkpoint that prevents Palestinians in the West Bank from reaching Jerusalem, herself without the required document, and declares to the soldier that she is ‘the driver of this Jerusalem dog’ (108); taken aback and clearly amused by the woman’s boldness, the soldier lets her pass. There is also the unlikely story of how Amiry eventually obtained her residency card, a story she introduces with: ‘After 7 years I decided to take control of my life’. With a packed suitcase in hand, she gained access to her ‘interrogator’ Captain Yossi’s office by lying about having an appointment (41). She ‘strode forcefully towards his desk’, insisting, ‘No more waiting’, and demanded: ‘Give me my *hawiyeh* (ID)’ (41). The suitcase, she let a ‘totally stunned’ Yossi know, was for her to take to prison after her trial: ‘Put me on trial, charge me for the crimes I have committed (so far)’ (42).

Amiry describes herself as ‘losing it’ (42) and ‘screaming [her] head off’, before ‘bursting into tears’ (43). The colonial administrator is left perplexed: ‘Yossi stood still; like all men, he didn’t know what to do with a crying woman’ (43). Not only does Amiry succeed in forcing a reversal of roles, she being the one in control and giving the orders, but she also manages to lift the confrontation out of its context of occupation, transforming the situation from one in which the occupier faces the occupied, to a man facing a woman. To Amiry’s own amazement, she leaves with her residency card in hand.

Another of her confrontations, this time non-verbal, also stands out: she thus challenges a soldier to what can only be described as a staring contest. This episode occurred during the Gulf War when, having lost track of time, Amiry, together with her husband, the academic Salim Tamari, and a female relative were still trying to make their way home after the curfew had already been re-imposed; Israeli soldiers stop their car. In what follows, it is being called an ‘old woman’ that triggers Amiry’s unconventional response (67). This insult brings to the surface all of her built-up frustrations; ‘full of anger’ (68), she decides to ‘tak[e] a long overdue revenge’ (71). She starts staring at the soldier, ‘[her] head literally an inch or two away from his head’, and, despite the latter’s repeated orders to stop, keeps staring. Amiry describes her staring challenge as both ‘[her] game’ (70) and ‘[her] passive resistance to occupation’ (71). All the bewildered and increasingly angry soldier can think of is reprimand her husband for not being able to ‘control’ his wife. With this extraordinary behaviour, she again takes control of the interaction by unsettling the soldier who turns utterly helpless in the face of a staring woman: ‘A stare, and you lose your mind!’ (68) As a result of Amiry’s behaviour, they are escorted to the military compound where Salim is taken inside; in the meantime, the two amused women ‘[are] soon concocting various Kafkaesque scenes for ‘Salim’s Trial’ (72). He is dismissed shortly afterwards and, struggling to contain his own laughter, reports how the soldier was instantly rebuked for presenting Salim to his superior with the words: ‘His wife was looking at me’ (74). By the end of it all, the three Palestinians are hysterical with laughter.

In all of the above examples, Amiry breaks out of the role ascribed to her by refusing to continue ‘acting deaf’ in the face of the occupier: ‘I have learnt how to act deaf, behave blind, pretend to be mute every time I encounter one of you in our towns,

our streets, our houses, our living rooms, or even our bedrooms' (69). Amiry creates for herself spaces of resistance from within the confines available to her. It is necessarily on the level of the everyday that these spaces open up and carry the potential for meaningful subversion, since, as this chapter has made apparent, it is there that the occupation manifests itself in its most debilitating form. It is, then, precisely because Amiry's challenges target the small daily interactions that they are so effective in disrupting entrenched behaviours: the Israeli soldiers know how to deal with demonstrators and rebels, but they do not know how to react to a staring woman.

Writing itself becomes in this light one such space of resistance that all of the writers discussed in this chapter have claimed for themselves. The writing of *Self* and of the everyday similarly carry the potential for disrupting entrenched outside perceptions and narratives. These writers become the ears, eyes and voices of a place and a people that have been hidden behind the walls of occupation. By transporting Palestinian stories beyond these walls, their writing contributes to the crucial opening and widening of narrative spaces in resistance to the settler state's escalating two-fold project of enclosure and self-enclosure, at the heart of which lies the persistent attempt at erasing native and alternative voices.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis has been to demonstrate the exclusivism that underlies Zionism, to trace its roots to the founding ideology of the movement, and explore how this came to affect the development of Zionism, its rationale and actions, up to its current manifestation as the state of Israel. It also sought to address the implications of the Zionist exclusionary project in shaping Palestinian responses and strategies of resistance.

Prompted by the observation of a status quo in Israel/occupied Palestine governed by an idea of security that demands increasingly rigid lines of exclusion and legitimises ever more restrictive measures in order to, literally, cement the structures of separation, this thesis set out to challenge common representations that explain Israel's heightened concern for security in terms of a self-defensive reflex in response to its existential conflict with the Palestinians, in turn narrated as a struggle representative of a global civilisational clash. The question that implicitly guided this study was as to the meaning of this almost obsessive invocation of security within the context of Israel/Palestine, that is, the meaning of 'security' beyond the framework of modern political discourses within which it has become so readily accepted. In trying to answer this question, it became apparent that there was a need to historicise Israel's security slogan and uncover the ideological impulses of the Jewish state in order to be able to make assumptions about the reality as it unfolds today.

Having spanned an arch from the European foundations of political Zionism to its expression on the ground in Palestine, and to the nation-state into which it has subsequently developed, this thesis found the lasting sources of Zionist exclusivism in its combined settler colonial and ethno-nationalist founding principles. Starting ironically from the problem of Jewish exclusion, the movement discovered in the writings of leading early Zionist figures, primarily amongst them Theodor Herzl, is one fundamentally built on exclusion. In its European context, this was shown in the movement's belief in a Jewish nation based on the Romantic notions of natural belonging and non-belonging. This belief, in turn, mirrored the way that political anti-

Semitism had formulated the Jews' position as strangers among the European nations and led it to its conclusion of the need for national segregation. The Zionist movement of those early years was thus revealed as a reactionary political force that failed to identify and challenge the systemic sources underlying the crisis of Jewish life in Europe. Instead it aligned itself with the dominant ideologies of the time, nationalism and colonialism, through both of which it sought to normalise the Jews and eradicate what it perceived as Jewish difference. This study also discovered that the Zionist brand of Jewish nationalism represented an appropriation of Jewish history and identity by dictating its narrow terms of what it means to be Jewish, disenfranchising large sections of European Jewry with its image of the 'new Jew', the secular, nationalist and fighting Jew. Zionism's transformation of Jewish identity surfaced as a representation of the movement's desire for normalisation, articulated in the gendered terms of a masculinisation of the Jewish male.

The dominant Zionist narrative created from these core foundational beliefs emphasised both Jewish exceptionalism and the imperative need for Jewish normalisation as they are encapsulated within the story of exile and return: facing an intrinsically hostile world, as its long and unique history of persecution and suffering in the diaspora had proven, the Jewish people could only guarantee its own survival by returning to the Jewish homeland. The most important part of this proposition was the formation of a nation-state that was to be a state for and of Jews. The majority claim contained within this was identified as the principal Zionist demand, since it promised the return to a position of power, the lack of which Zionism had identified as the crux of the Jewish problem. It is within that context that notions of Jewish weakness versus Jewish might, posited as a choice between the diasporic existence and Zionism, were shown to be central to the earliest self-representations of the movement.

Transported to the Palestinian context, this synthesis of exclusive ideas was further fuelled by the settler colonial perspective of a backward land and people, there to be appropriated and replaced. The demand for a majority Jewish state was fused with the pure settlement desire for an empty land, both of which put the European Jewish settlers from the very beginning into an antagonistic relationship with the native Palestinian population. The settler movement performed an Othering of the Palestinians that delegitimised their very presence on the land. Beyond its

confrontations with the Arab Palestinians, the Orientalist attitude with which the Zionist movement viewed the Ottoman environment and populace at large, including local Jews, exposed it as the white settler movement that it was, rather than the pan-Jewish liberation project for which it is often mistaken and as which it indeed would later present itself.

Within this exploration of Zionism's arrival on Ottoman lands, particular focus was put on the disruption caused by this intrusion to an Ottoman reality of coexistence. The inclusivity with which the different faiths and ethnicities by and large related to each other under the Ottoman umbrella presented an unfathomable and fundamentally undesirable mode of existence to the European nationalist-colonialist outlook of the Zionist settlers and their leadership who precisely sought to quite literally entrench themselves behind rigid community walls. Zionism, especially so with the help later of the British colonial Mandate government, created divisions where none had existed before, rupturing the fluid identity formations that had been common under Ottoman imperial rule. The case in point highlighted was the identity of the Arab Jew that contested by its very existence the premise of the need for Zionism on the land it had chosen to implant itself. The erasure of the Arab Jewish identity was used to exemplify the damage done to the whole of the Eastern Mediterranean and wider Middle East, as it came to represent a larger destruction of possibilities, that is, of alternative futures of openness and diversity for the region.

With these findings from the beginnings of the Zionist project in both Europe and Palestine, the thesis turned its attention in the final chapter to a consideration of the more recent reality in Israel and the remaining Palestinian territories it occupies. It highlighted a two-fold Israeli motion of walling, whereby, on the one side, Israel was seen to wall itself out of its Arab environment in an attempt to safeguard its self-image of a European outpost. The isolationism that surfaced in the discussion of the current Israeli outlook had already defined the early settler colony that had envisaged the need to entrench itself behind metaphorical walls of Jewish might in order to defeat all native resistance. Proving the failure of this strategy, these conceptual walls had now turned physical. On the other side, Israel was also shown to have walled the Palestinians in within ever narrowing spaces, with an immediate aim of establishing a colonial system of control that could obstruct Palestinians in all aspects of their daily

lives, and the long-term goal of ethnic cleansing and land annexation. In both directions, Israel's walling was identified as an intensification of its exclusionary policies and practices, and ultimately, an escalation of Zionism's founding ideological tenets.

Because the threat posed by Zionism to the native population of Palestine was from the start aimed at their very presence on the land, Palestinian responses were found to be characterised by their attempt to affirm and re-affirm their presence. An anti-colonial writing back against the persistent Zionist exclusion emerged as a vital strategy of resistance. First, this was shown in the form of a claiming back of Palestinian history. Against the narrow nationalist appropriations, the Ottoman past was rediscovered as a source for reimagining Palestine, in a process that ties together a pre-colonial reality with visions for the post-colonial future of the country. The opening up of space and identity thus performed directly subverts the Israeli colonial discourse, targeting the very *raison d'être* of the ongoing settler project. Secondly, from within the situation of occupation, the writing of Self, the writing of personal history in a sense, was highlighted as having gained particular significance. The popularity of Palestinian occupation diaries and memoirs was linked to their meaning as affirmations of Palestinian life. These books were identified as unsettling the grand Israeli narrative with their representations of the everyday and the personal. As with the resurfacing of hidden Palestinian histories, it was argued that the propagation of muted Palestinian voices achieves an opening up of narratives and perspectives that has the potential to dismantle the coloniser's ideological construct.

Crucially, the connections that this thesis established between the founding beliefs and motives of the Zionist movement and the politics and policies of the state of Israel today, confirmed the continuity of the settler colonial structure. In other words, it was shown that the core desires of the original settler collective still determine every aspect of Israel's relations with the Palestinians. This, then, means that Israel's inflated security concerns are still those of the pure settlement colony. The existential threat it postulates facing from the Palestinians is the demographic threat to its continued existence as a settler state with its Jewish supremacist structures. The meaning of security is thus twisted on its head, its persistent invocation by Israel successfully veiling the state's ongoing settler colonial agenda. (Indeed, much could be

said about the concept of security itself and the need for it to be challenged even within the context of ‘normal’ liberal nation-states – as Mark Neocleous does in his brilliant *Critique of Security* – that goes however beyond the scope of this thesis.)

The wider implication of the unresolved settler situation as this thesis concludes it, is that it makes evident the inadequacy of the contexts within which the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is still commonly discussed. The mainstream representation of an ‘endless ethno-national war’ (Bernard, 202), that is, a war of identities between two historical enemies, is – it has become clear by now – one manufactured by Zionism and perpetuated by the state of Israel. Anti-Islamic sentiments that were spread in the wake of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 were seized by Israel to bolster its image to ‘Western’ audiences of spearheading the defence of the ‘free world’ against ‘Islamist terror’ – this new Israeli front nothing but an obvious reincarnation of Zionism’s Orientalist positioning as a ‘European bulwark against Asia’. A less openly pro-Israel biased representation may present a conflict between two sides, two claims and two narratives, taken to mirror the complexity of a situation that precludes all straightforward solutions or laying blame. Suffering is highlighted on both sides; there is condemnation of the ‘cycles of violence’ and both parties are called upon to renounce their aggressions. Central to this ‘moderate’ political discourse that has become the consensus on the level of international politics are the ideas of dialogue and compromise, and the creation of two states as the only realistic solution that will be brought about by a ‘peace process’.

These contexts fail to identify the lasting settler colonial essence of the relationship between the Palestinians and the state of Israel. What is missed is exemplified in the unacknowledged difference, as it was highlighted in the last chapter of this thesis, between a nationalist division of land and the settler colonial abolition of land. Seeking the latter, not ‘peace’, nor the creation of a Palestinian state, nor indeed any political development that would see it permanently lose territory or see its control diminished in the territories it already occupies, is in the interest of the settler state Israel.

What all of the above frameworks for viewing and discussing Israel/Palestine also share, is that they delegitimise Palestinian armed resistance, which plays directly into the hands of Israel that can use its security card as an internationally recognised

nation-state and continue to act 'in self-defence' with virtually complete impunity. Current discourses thus help Israel to perpetuate its founding myths and maintain its position of colonial dominance, allowing it more time to actively change the demographic realities in the whole of the territory it controls.

This thesis, finally then, positions itself as a contribution to an emergent scholarship that re-places Zionism and Israel within their comparative settler colonial context and demands a reframing of current discussions in terms of a colonial situation that requires a political process of decolonisation, while conceding full international legitimacy to the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle.

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