# Hydrofictions: Water, Power and Politics

# in Israeli and Palestinian Literature

## Hannah Boast

**PhD**

**University of York**

**English and Related Literature**

**October 2015**

# Abstract

This thesis examines the representation of water in Israeli and Palestinian literature, from the early years of Zionist settlement at the start of the twentieth century, to the daily violence of today's ongoing occupation. It takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on disciplines including cultural geography, science and technology studies, and, inevitably, politics. At the same time, it situates these explorations in the context of the increasingly fevered contemporary debates on 'water wars', global water crisis, and the Anthropocene. In doing so, it demonstrates the many ways in which water intersects with Israeli and Palestinian cultures, at the same time as indicating the potential for literary approaches to deepen and critique existing political, scientific and corporate discourse on the future of the world's water.

Literary critics have so far had little to say about water. Land has always seemed more politically important and cultural meaningful. The significance of land appears dramatically amplified in the context of Israel/Palestine, where issues of land, borders and sovereignty remain painful and unresolved. This neglect of water exists in spite of a growing trend towards reading literature for its representations of resources, most prominently in the subject of 'petrofiction'. No resource, however, is more fundamental than water.

In bringing water to the forefront, this thesis has significant implications for future research in Israeli and Palestinian literary studies, postcolonial ecocriticism, and the environmental humanities. It demonstrates the potential for a focus on water to open up an array of new texts for exploration, and for literary research to productively complicate and enrich our understanding of, as well as our relationship with, the ubiquitous, and far more than merely 'natural' substance of water.

# Contents

# Acknowledgements

# Author's declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, all of the work contained in this thesis is my own. Parts of Chapter Three are forthcoming in a 2016 article *for Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, titled '"A river without water": Hydropolitics and the River Jordan in Palestinian Literature'. No part of this thesis has been previously published, or submitted for examination at the University of York or any other institution.

# Introduction

In his 2008 eco-thriller *Hydromania*, the Israeli novelist Assaf Gavron imagines a dystopian vision of a future Israel/Palestine in the aftermath of dramatic climate change.[1] Set in the worryingly close year of 2067, Gavron's novel presents a drastically altered political scenario, in which Palestinians have won the conflict, claimed Jerusalem as their capital, and become the regional power. In a reversal of the current territorial situation, Israelis have been left with a narrow coastal strip of territory, comprising the two now-overcrowded cities of Caesarea and Tiberias. The novel's main theme however, as its title suggests, is water scarcity, with Gavron presenting an Israeli version of the ecologically-inclined sub-genre of science fiction increasingly termed 'cli-fi'.[2]  In *Hydromania*, the world is effectively governed by corporations from three countries, China, Japan, and, more surprisingly, Ukraine, who exercise control over every aspect of Israeli citizens' lives through their monopoly on the highly scarce commodity of water, now known by its brand names of 'Ohiya Water' or 'Gobogobo Water'. Rainfall is rare, with each event timed using sophisticated technologies, and citizens are prevented from collecting their own water, leaving them constantly thirsty. This state of affairs is policed through heavy surveillance, including tracking and identification chips in every person's arm.

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[1] Assaf Gavron, *Hydromania [Synopsis, Review Quotes, Sample Translation]*, trans. by Assaf Gavron (Unpublished manuscript, 2010)

[2] The word 'cli-fi' is generally acknowledged as having been coined in 2007 by journalist and activist Dan Bloom, who maintains a website tracking uses of the term. Dan Bloom, *The Cli-Fi Report* (2015) <http://cli-fi.net/index.html> [accessed 11 May 2015].

Inbal Malka, reviewing *Hydromania* for the left-wing Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, described Gavron's novel as tapping into contemporary Israeli fears. She cautions that '[t]he future that Assaf Gavron depicts in *Hydromania* is a prospect familiar to every anxious Israeli'.[3] Indeed, stories about the exhaustion and contamination of Israel/Palestine's freshwater sources appear frequently in the local and international press. Most days, we can read about topics from the water shortages experienced by Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, to the apparent promise of Israeli water technology, to fevered predictions, by both left and right, of climate change-induced political destabilisation in Israel/Palestine, and the wider Middle East.[4] Renowned Israeli architect and theorist Eyal Weizman turns in his latest work from questions of the spatial politics of occupation to the intersection of Israeli mechanisms of territorial control with conceptions of weather and climate.[5] The water of Israel/Palestine has long been the focus of discussion by social scientists, activists, and politicians, most notably in the debates on the extent to which past or future violence in

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[3] Inbal Malka, 'To the Last Drop', *Haaretz*, 8 December 2008 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/to-the-last-drop-1.259092> [accessed 11 May 2015].

[4] Peter Beaumont, 'Welcome to Shuafat, East Jerusalem: Where Water Comes Only after Dark', *Guardian*, 14 April 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/14/welcome-shuafat-jerusalem-camp-water-palestinians-israel> [accessed 31 July 2015]; Ilana Curiel, 'Israel, a Water Superpower, Is Helping California Fight Drought', 23 July 2015 <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4683198,00.html> [accessed 31 July 2015]; Nafeez Ahmed, 'The Anglo-American Empire Is Preparing for Resource War', *Middle East Eye*, 7 July 2015 <http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/anglo-american-empire-preparing-resource-war-1170119289> [accessed 31 July 2015]; Daniel Pipes, 'The Middle East Runs out of Water', *Washington Times*, 8 May 2015 <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/may/8/daniel-pipes-middle-east-runs-out-water/> [accessed 31 July 2015].

[5] Eyal Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change at the Threshold of the Negev Desert* (pre-publication draft, 2014).

the region represents a 'water war'.[6] Israel/Palestine has become the site at which global

anxieties about future water scarcity coalesce, as well as seeming to offer the ecologically

dubious hope, in Israel's much-vaunted advances in desalination, of allowing the Global

North to continue its current unsustainable patterns of water use.[7]

Rarely, however, has water in Israel/Palestine attracted the attention of literary critics.

David Farrier is the sole critic to have incorporated hydropolitics into a discussion of

Palestinian writing, in a 2012 article, while Hannan Hever has examined the sea in early

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[6] Jan Selby, *Water, Power and Politics in the Middle East: The Other Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (London:

I.B.Tauris, 2003), pp. 47–52.

[7] Some terminological points: I use 'Israel/Palestine' to refer to the entire geographical area of Israel, the West

Bank and Gaza, to indicate the inseparability of the region in ecological terms. My use of the term 'Global

North' also needs qualifying. A well-known criticism of the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' is that they

fail to capture internal divisions within countries and continents (Chant and McIlwaine 2009: 10). The validity

of this criticism is sharply apparent in the case of Israel/Palestine, where vast discrepancies in standards of

living exist side-by-side within a very small geographic area – particularly, as this thesis shows, in terms of

water access. Alternative terms, however, also contain difficulties. In world-systems terminology, for instance,

Israel bears characteristics of both a core and a periphery country; Wallerstein classified it as 'semiperiphery',

albeit in 1976 (1976: 465). While these tensions would be productive to explore further elsewhere, for the

purposes of this study I retain and make occasional reference to the familiar, if flawed terminology of the

'Global North/South'. Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine, *Geographies of Development in the 21st Century: An*

*Introduction to the Global South* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009); Immanuel Wallerstein,

'Semiperipheral Countries and the Contemporary World Crisis', *Theory and Society* 3, 461 – 83. On Israel's

position in world-systems terms, see also Giovanni Arrighi and Jessica Drangel, 'The Stratification of the World-

Economy: An Exploration of the Semiperipheral Zone', *Review*, 10 (1986), 9–74.

Zionist poetry, albeit from a metaphorical rather than ecological perspective.[8] Even in

Farrier's article, water is taken for granted as a given natural element, without consideration

of the ways in which water apparently found 'out there' in the world as a potential resource

is defined, quantified and made usable by way of social categories and processes. As I

discuss below, crucial debates on this issue have been brought to the fore in recent years by

geographers such as Jamie Linton.[9] The critical neglect of water in Israeli and Palestinian

literature exists is in spite of an increasing trend towards reading literature for its

representations of resources. This move has been most evident in work on 'petrofiction', a

field of ecocritical study which tracks the imprint of oil on literary culture, and provides the

term from which I derive my title.[10] Still, it is one aspect of a wider literary critical tendency

to overlook the issue of water. This general absence is striking because of the widespread

literary debates presently emerging around the idea of the 'Anthropocene'.[11] This term was

first proposed in 2000 by scientists Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, as a way to

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[8] David Farrier, 'Washing Words: The Politics of Water in Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 48 (2013), 187–99; Hannan Hever, 'The Zionist Sea: Symbolism and Nationalism in Modernist Hebrew Poetry', *Jewish Culture and History*, 13 (2012), 25–41.

[9] Jamie Linton, *What Is Water?: The History of a Modern Abstraction* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2010).

[10] The term was coined in 1992 by Amitav Ghosh, in a review of Abdulrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*. Amitav Ghosh, 'Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel', *The New Republic* 206 (1992), 29–33. I am grateful to Dr Graeme Macdonald for suggesting this title to me.

[11] See, for example: Alison Carruth and Robert P. Marzec, 'Special Issue: Visualising the Environment', *Public Culture*, 26 (2014); *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis: Rethinking Modernity in a New Epoch*, ed. by Clive Hamilton, François Gemenne, and Bonneuil (London: Routledge, 2015); Adam Trexler, *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015).

designate the current geological era, in which they suggest that human activities have become a 'major geological force'.[12] Advocates of the term argue that the impact of our practices on the planet is now so great, particularly through anthropogenically-induced climate change, that they threaten even our own survival.[13] In this context, the lack of literary attention to the endangerment of the substance most fundamental to the continuation of human life, water, is conspicuous.

This thesis is the first critical study to examine the place of water in Israeli and Palestinian literature, and highlights the various and multilayered entanglements of water with power and politics in Israel/Palestine. In doing so, it brings to light texts that have barely been discussed in Anglophone literary criticism, if at all. My explorations are rooted firmly in literary studies, but draw heavily on and contribute to the field of cultural geography. In doing so, this work strengthens links between the two disciplines already foregrounded in the literary subject of ecocriticism. The thesis also brings together insights from anthropology, science and technology studies, and, inevitably, politics. This excursion into

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[12] Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, 'The Anthropocene', *IGBP [International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme] Newsletter*, 41 (2000), 17–18 (p. 18).

[13] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'The Climate of History: Four Theses', *Critical Inquiry*, 35 (2009), 197–222 (p. 213). The concept of the Anthropocene has also been subjected to considerable critique, notably from Jason W. Moore. Moore has made a compelling case for the 'Capitalocene' as an alternative framework, one which might provide a more nuanced model through which to account for the differential human responsibility for causing ecological degradation. Moore's term brings to the forefront historically specific relations of capital and power that the concept of the Anthropocene necessarily – in referring to all humanity – elides. See Jason W. Moore, 'Part One: The Capitalocene: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis', *Jason W. Moore*, 2014, p. 3. Available from: <http://www.jasonwmoore.com/uploads/The_Capitalocene__Part_I__June_2014.pdf> [Accessed 17 March 2016]

multiple disciplines reflects in part the paucity of existing work on water within literary studies. At the same time, it indicates the absolute necessity of interdisciplinary thinking in any consideration of water, a substance which intersects with our lives in a multiplicity of ways: biophysical, cultural, religious, and geopolitical, to name just a few.[14]

Literary studies has a vital role to play in deepening and critiquing the existing political, scientific, and increasingly, corporate dialogue on the world's water. It contains the potential to unearth and complicate a range of widespread and influential assumptions. Across the following chapters, I examine in particular the notions of 'scarcity' and the 'proper' quantities and behaviour of water. I demonstrate the potential for a literary approach to reframe these concepts in a way which brings to the surface the crucial role of narrative in hydropolitical discourse, and highlights the relations of power enacted in hydrological definitions. In this approach I build on longstanding insights of environmental history and, more recently, science and technology studies and the environmental humanities. These disciplines have, in different ways, examined how narrative practices are implicated in the ways in which particular epistemologies are produced and are made compelling, or, alternately, are disrupted and resisted.[15] I argue that reading water in

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[14] Matthew Gandy, *The Fabric of Space: Water, Modernity, and the Urban Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), p. 2.

[15] Samer Alatout, '"States" of Scarcity: Water, Space, and Identity Politics in Israel, 1948-59', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 26 (2008), 959–82; William Cronon, 'A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative', *The Journal of American History*, 78 (1992), 1347–76; Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur and Anthony Carrigan, 'Introduction: A Postcolonial Environmental Humanities', in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1–32 (p. 25).

literature, through foregrounding practices which are often taken for granted, can illuminate water's role in sustaining social and cultural relations and identities, as well as the human body. Finally, and critically, this thesis proposes that Israeli and Palestinian cultures, so long seen as defined by their conflict over land, are in fact equally defined by that ubiquitous and yet far more than merely 'natural' substance and medium we know as water.

The hydrological anxieties evidenced by Gavron's novel are not unwarranted. Israel/Palestine has four transboundary aquifers, which are subject to ongoing contestations over their ownership. These are threatened, to varying degrees dependent on location, by uneven distribution, overextraction and contamination.[16] The volume of the River Jordan, historically a major source of water for drinking and agriculture in Israel/Palestine, is vastly diminished, with a loss of 95 per cent of its flow since the 1950s.[17] The river is heavily contaminated by saline spring water, sewage, and agricultural chemicals.[18] The Jordan's reduced flow is a result of the diversion of much of its water into Israel's National Water Carrier, a network of pipes, tunnels, canals and reservoirs intended to redistribute the country's water to its populated coastal cities and arid south. The Carrier was completed by

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[16] See Mark Zeitoun, Clemens Messerschmid and Shaddad Attili, 'Asymmetric Abstraction and Allocation: The Israeli-Palestinian Water Pumping Record', *Ground Water*, 47 (2009), 146–60 (pp. 147–149, 154); Al-Haq, *Water for One People Only: Discriminatory Access and 'Water-Apartheid' in the OPT* (Ramallah: Al-Haq, 2013), pp. 28–31 <http://www.ewash.org/files/library/Water-For-One-People-Only.pdf> [accessed 5 July 2015].

[17] Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) and Water and Environmental Development Organisation (WEDO), *Integrated Trans-Boundary Regional NGO Master Plan for the Lower Jordan River Basin [Draft]* (FoEME and WEDO, 2014), pp. 14, 40-41 <http://foeme.org/uploads/FoEME_Baseline_Report_vs5_L.pdf> [accessed 31 July 2015].

[18] ibid., pp. 28, 53.

Israel's national water company Mekorot in 1964 after a construction period lasting ten years, and was the new state's largest and most expensive environmental undertaking at the time.[19] It redirects water from Israel's largest freshwater reservoir, Lake Kinneret (also known as Lake Tiberias and the Sea of Galilee), before it reaches the southern section of the Jordan.[20] The Kinneret, as Israel's largest freshwater reservoir, was the focus of drought fears in 2008, with concerns that its level would fall below the 'black line', beyond which the lake would become irreversibly damaged by salinisation, threatening Israel's drinking water supplies.[21]

Alarm over the Kinneret helped to prompt the Israel Water Authority's well-known 'Israel is drying up' campaign, which began in 2008 and aired regularly on Israeli television for several years.[22] Its adverts featured celebrities, including supermodel Bar Rafaeli, whose skin appeared to crack and peel away as they spoke about Israel's 'years of drought'. By emphasising the necessity of water to the survival of individual human bodies, the adverts materialised an abstract threat to the nation and made it emotionally compelling, heightening their impact through an association with celebrity glamour. This campaign seemed to reduce domestic use, yet made little difference to the major users of the Jordan's

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[19] Alon Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land: An Environmental History of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 209.

[20] ibid, pp. 207–13.

[21] Alon Tal and Alfred Abbed Rabbo, *Water Wisdom: Preparing the Groundwork for Cooperative and Sustainable Water Management in the Middle East* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), p. 28.

[22] A number of the videos are available on YouTube. See Israel Water Authority, *The Israeli Government - Israel Is Drying up* [online video] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rr5XGFgH8FA> [accessed 30 September 2015].

water: industry and agriculture.[23] Overuse of the Jordan's water continues to have a dramatic impact downstream, famously in the rapid shrinking of the Dead Sea.[24] The hypersaline Dead Sea is not, of course, drinkable, but it is a unique ecosystem, as well as a major tourist destination and source of mineral wealth, currently for Israel, but potentially, in future, for Palestinians too. Climate change, as Gavron's novel highlights, is often cited as a factor which will influence future water availability in Israel/Palestine, yet existing vulnerabilities mean that Palestinians are, as ever, likely to suffer the greatest impact – even if, as I discuss below, class differences within Palestinian communities mean that the risks will be unevenly distributed.[25] From all of this, it seems, the region's major water supplies are under threat.

Water management trends in Israel nevertheless indicate less cause for concern about supply in the immediate term than we might assume from the above – for Israelis, at least. Israel, like many countries in the Middle East, saves on local supplies by 'importing' water embedded in food, a form which influential geographer Tony Allan describes as 'virtual

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[23] David Horovitz, 'How Israel Beat the Drought', *Times of Israel*, 13 February 2013 <http://www.timesofisrael.com/how-israel-beat-the-drought/> [accessed 18 May 2015].

[24] Sharon Udasin, 'Despite Winter Storms, Dead Sea Water Level Continues to Fall', *Jerusalem Post*, 8 January 2014 <http://www.jpost.com/Enviro-Tech/Despite-winter-storms-Dead-Sea-water-level-continues-to-fall-337432> [accessed 11 May 2015].

[25] Eran Feitelson, Abdelrahman Tamimi and Gad Rosenthal, 'Climate Change and Security in the Israeli–Palestinian Context', *Journal of Peace Research*, 49 (2012), 241–57; Michael Mason, Mark Zeitoun and Ziad Mimi, 'Compounding Vulnerability: Impacts of Climate Change on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 41 (2012), 1-16.

water'.[26] Mekorot reports that Israel recycles 75 per cent of domestic water in agricultural irrigation.[27] Israeli innovations in drip irrigation, a technique which feeds plants directly at the roots, have increased agricultural water efficiency.[28] Cloud seeding is used in Israel on a small scale.[29] However, the most significant technological development in Israeli water management of recent years is unquestionably desalination. As in many arid countries, most famously the Gulf, desalination has become an increasing priority for Israel. Israel has undertaken desalination research since the early 1950s, but, largely due to cost, use of the technology did not become widespread until the early 2000s.[30] This was prompted by the severe drought of 1998-2001, which followed a series of droughts from the late 1980s onwards, and caused the Knesset to override Treasury fears.[31] The first major plant was completed in Ashkelon in 2005, and the Israeli government states that it intends to supply fifty per cent of the country's freshwater through desalination by 2020.[32] Desalination is seen as having a key future role to play in Israel's attempt to construct new towns in its

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[26] Tony Allan, *Virtual Water: Tackling the Threat to Our Planet's Most Precious Resource* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2011).

[27] Mekorot, 'Wastewater Reclamation', *Mekorot* <http://www.mekorot.co.il/Eng/newsite/Solutions/WastewaterReclamation/Pages/default.aspx> [accessed 14 May 2015].

[28] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, pp. 228–30.

[29] ibid., p. 218.

[30] Yaakov Garb, 'Desalination in Israel: Status, Prospects, and Contexts', in *Water Wisdom: Preparing the Groundwork for Cooperative and Sustainable Water Management in the Middle East*, ed. by Alon Tal and Rabbo (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), pp. 238–45 (p. 239).

[31] ibid., p. 240.

[32] Eran Feitelson and Gad Rosenthal, 'Desalination, Space and Power: The Ramifications of Israel's Changing Water Geography', *Geoforum*, 43 (2012), 272–84 (pp. 275–76).

spacious but arid south, as part of the Jewish National Fund's 'Blueprint Negev'

programme.[33] Desalination technologies seem to have the potential to change not only the

sources of Israel's water, but its landscape, too, opening up new territory for settlement as

never before and exacerbating existing conflicts over land use and ownership.[34]

The advent of desalination has led to a curious state of affairs in Israel. Fears of dramatic

water shortages now coexist with apparently contradictory expectations of limitless supply.

The only constraint to the perpetual manufacturing of 'new' water seems financial. As Israeli

environmental engineering Professor Hillel Shuval declares: 'Of course there is so much

water, water is an endless resource. You can have all the water of the sea, if you can afford

it, that is.'[35] Shuval's optimism reflects the wider discourse on desalination. Here, the sea is

portrayed, Erik Swyngedouw notes, as a 'seemingly endless, free, and uncontested source of

unlimited supplies of water'.[36]At the same time, Shuval's comment recalls the hopes

invested in desalination by Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion, who initiated the

country's early 1950s experiments with desalination. Ben-Gurion saw desalination as a

crucial element in Israel's attempts, in the famous Zionist slogan, to 'make the desert

bloom'. Desalination, he believed, would open up the space needed to accommodate large

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[33] Jewish National Fund, 'Blueprint Negev', *Jewish National Fund* <http://www.jnf.org/work-we-do/blueprint-negev/> [accessed 21 April 2015].

[34] For a critical perspective on Israel's contemporary efforts to 'make the desert bloom' which examines these issues at greater length, see Rebecca Manski, 'Blueprint Negev', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 256 (2010), 2–7.

[35] Cited in Samer Alatout, 'Towards a Bio-Territorial Conception of Power: Territory, Population, and Environmental Narratives in Palestine and Israel', *Political Geography*, 25 (2006), 601–21 (p. 613).

[36] Erik Swyngedouw, *Liquid Power: Contested Hydro-Modernities in Twentieth-Century Spain* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), p. 194.

numbers of anticipated Jewish immigrants, as well as allowing access to the Negev's

potential mineral 'treasures', and providing 'defensive depth' for the newly-formed state.[37]

On top of this, Ben-Gurion saw the 'redemption' of the desert as a process through which

the 'redemption' of the Jewish population in the land of Israel would be achieved, and

demonstrated to the world.[38] It is not a surprise that references to Ben-Gurion feature

heavily in the publicity materials for Israeli organisations seeking to populate the Negev

today with a new generation of 'Smart Cities'.[39] Israel's historic attempts to irrigate the

desert take on a new meaning in the light of the prominence of concerns about

desertification in debates over climate change, and it seems that escaping the local impacts

of a future global crisis (and marketing this success worldwide) may become an increasingly

significant motivation for Israel's efforts to develop desalination technologies.[40]

Ben-Gurion's plans for drastic alterations of the Palestinian environment reflected a

longstanding Euro-American faith in the human domination of nature, which remained

unchallenged until very recently. In a provocative and highly influential 1967 article, Lynn

White Jr famously traced the origins of this attitude to Judeo-Christian theological

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[37] David Ben-Gurion, *Recollections*, ed. by Thomas M. Bransten (London: Macdonald Unit 75, 1970), pp. 145, 148, 137.

[38] ibid.., p. 147–49.

[39] Halaza Smart City, 'Welcome to Haluza – Israel's First Smart City'
<http://www.haluzasmartcity.org/smartcityen-welcome-welcome_to_haluza_%E2%80%93_israels_first_smart_city> [accessed 9 July 2015].

[40] Ed King, 'Desertification crisis affecting 168 countries worldwide, study shows', *Guardian*, April 13 2013
<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/apr/17/desertification> [Accessed 17 March 2016]

instructions to 'master' nature.[41] Ecofeminist and Marxist scholars have emphasised the

relevance of secular trends to understanding the historical predominance of this way of

thinking, highlighting the ways in which forms of scientific and capitalist rationality have

enabled the instrumentalisation of nonhuman nature.[42] In the mid-twentieth century, this

anthropocentric attitude found expression in the statebuilding ideology identified by James

C. Scott as 'high modernism', an idea to which I return in Chapter Two.[43] Ben-Gurion offered

grand pronouncements, asking: 'Should Israel be afraid of dreams that can transform the

natural order by science, imagination and pioneering? Of course not, for that is our

vocation'.[44] Statements like this recall a wider post-war discourse on the purposes and

ambitions of large-scale national engineering projects, notably found in calls for

megadams.[45] At the same time, Ben-Gurion's visions represented an environmental

inflection of a specifically Zionist utopianism, indicated by his reference to 'dreams'. This

recalls Herzl's famous saying, '[i]f you will it, it is no longer a dream', the legend included on

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[41] Lynn White, Jr, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science*, 155 (1967), 1203–1207.

[42] John Bellamy Foster, Brett Clark and Richard York, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 2010); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1980), p. 182; Jason Moore, 'Ecology, Capital, and the Nature of Our Times: Accumulation and Crisis in the Capitalist World-Ecology'*, Journal of World Systems Research*, XVII (2011), 108–47; Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 110–111.

[43] James C. Scott, *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), chap. 3.

[44] Ben-Gurion, *Recollections*, p. 148.

[45] Maria Kaika, *City of Flows: Modernity, Nature, and the City* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 3; Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), chap. 5.

the title page of his 1902 utopian novel, *Altneuland*.[46] As such, the transformations hoped

for by Ben-Gurion were not merely motivated by an Enlightenment desire to master nature

in the service of nationalism, but coloured too by Zionism's own messianic ambitions and

sense of its historical destiny.[47] The aim of irrigating the desert formed part of Zionist claims

to be acting out a divinely ordained plan, even if, as Zionism's religious critics warned, it

seemed an usurpation of God's powers.[48]

The comparison between Shuval and Ben-Gurion's comments on desalination illustrates a

shift in Israeli conceptions of water scarcity which has taken place since the establishment

of the state in 1948. As Samer Alatout notes, water scarcity has changed from an issue

primarily associated with territorial expansion, property ownership, and the display of

national technological ability, as referred to in Ben-Gurion's remarks, to one with which, as

Shuval's comment hints, neoliberal economics and the process of globalisation are now

intertwined.[49] Israeli narratives of water scarcity and potential water abundance today need

to be understood as a product both of local discourses such as Ben-Gurion's religio-national

rhetoric of 'redemption' and Jewish 'destiny', and of global trends in resource economics,

particularly the increasing commodification of water and the growth of the 'sustainability'

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[46] The line is also sometimes translated as '[i]f you will, it is no fairy-tale.' Theodor Herzl, *Altneuland*, trans. by Paula Arnold (Haifa: Haifa Publishing Company, 1960), p. 1.

[47] Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), chap. 1.

[48] ibid., pp. 43, 119. See also Yakov Rabkin, *A Threat From Within: A Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (London: Zed Books, 2006)

[49] Alatout, 'Towards a Bio-Territorial Conception of Power', p. 613. On these trends in Israel more generally, see Guy Ben Porat, 'Political Economy: Liberalization and Globalization', in *Israel Since 1980*, ed. by Guy Ben Porat, Yagil Levy, Shlomo Mizrahi et al (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 91–116.

industry. In recent years Israel has become a major developer and exporter of desalination and water conservation technologies, assisted by the Israeli government's significant support for water start-ups.[50] This trend forms part of the country's ambition to become, in a phrase which recurs in newspaper profiles, 'the Silicon Valley of water technology'.[51] In the governmental promotional materials encouraging investment in Israeli 'cleantech' and 'blue-tech' companies, we find Ben-Gurion's nation-building discourse, originally articulated as part of the process of creating an ostensibly socialist state, repurposed to serve the needs of Israel's neoliberalising economy, providing Israel's tech exporters with a compelling heritage narrative which authenticates their claims of expertise.[52] Water may be, as Karen

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[50] William Sarni and Tamin Pechet, *Water Tech: A Guide to Investment, Innovation and Business Opportunities in the Water Sector* (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 48–50.

[51] See, for instance The Economist, 'Striking the Stone; Water Technology (Israel Aims to Be the Silicon Valley of Water Technology)', *The Economist*, 14 May 2011, p. 81; Sarni and Pechet, pp. 48–50.

[52] Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Israeli Ag-Tech Is Feeding Investment Hunger', 2015 <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/InnovativeIsrael/Agriculture/Pages/Ag-tech-is-feeding-investment-hunger-1-April-2015.aspx> [accessed 9 July 2015]; Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labour, *Israel's Water Industry: A History of Turning Desert into Oasis*, 2011 <http://www.investinisrael.gov.il/NR/rdonlyres/3C616667-C84C-4246-A64B-D77D3A9E88BC/0/NewTechWaterbrochureforwebsinglesfinal.pdf> [accessed 9 July 2015]. The much-proclaimed 'socialist' character of the Zionist movement and early Israeli state has been the subject of considerable debate and dispute among historians. Ze'ev Sternhell frames socialism as a Zionist 'mobilizing myth' rather than a concrete commitment, while Gershon Shafir and Zachary Lockman highlight the ways in which early twentieth-century Zionist Labour unions actively marginalised Mizrahi Jewish and Palestinian Arab workers. Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 81, 115; Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 50; Ze'ev Sternhell, *The*

Bakker notes, an 'uncooperative commodity', with a degree of resistance to being privatised and commercialised inherent in its fluid materiality.[53] Nevertheless, Israel's government and start-ups are trying and, so far, succeeding, with exports of water technology and expertise contributing two billion dollars to the economy in 2013.[54]

The Israeli government's emphasis on Israel as the home of sustainable water management practices might be read as an example of 'greenwashing'. This phrase, typically used to highlight the corporate use of misleading environmental claims to sell products or disguise environmentally irresponsible practices, has been applied to Israel by the international Palestinian solidarity movement with increasing frequency over recent years.[55] It has arisen in response to the fact that Israel's 'green' credentials have been, along with gay rights, at the forefront of Israel's attempt to reframe itself internationally through the 'Brand Israel'

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*Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State*, trans. by David Maisel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 20.

[53] Karen Bakker, *An Uncooperative Commodity: Privatizing Water in England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[54] William Booth, 'Israel Knows Water Technology, and It Wants to Cash in', *Washington Post*, 25 October 2013 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/israel-knows-water-technology-and-it-wants-to-cash-in/2013/10/25/7bb1dd36-3cc5-11e3-b0e7-716179a2c2c7_story.html> [accessed 9 July 2015].

[55] For example: Judith Deutsch, 'JNF Greenwash', in *Greenwashing Apartheid: The Jewish National Fund's Environmental Cover Up*, ed. by Jesse Benjamin and others (Online: International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), 2011), IV, 23–37 <http://stopthejnf.org/documents/JNFeBookVol4.pdf> [accessed 20 March 2015]; *Enduring Roots: Over a Century of Resistance to the Jewish National Fund*, dir. by Alex Safran (International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, 2014).

campaign, which began in 2006.[56] 'Brand Israel' represents an attempt to portray Israel as a

country which shares European and North American values, encouraging political and

military support and economic investment.[57] Indeed, water has been turned into a means of

performatively demonstrating solidarity with Israel by the American company Genesis

Waters, which exports bottled water extracted from the contested Mountain Aquifer to

consumers around the world. Its website boasts: 'While our pure, crisp, great tasting water

is bottled right here at the source, it quenches the thirst of Israel's admirers thousands of

miles away.'[58] Even if its product, bottled water, is notoriously harmful to the environment,

Genesis Waters proudly declares on its website its support for 'green' and water

conservation projects in Israel, along with its donations to Israeli victims of terror attacks.[59]

Supposed concern for the environment works here to smooth over much greater acts of

Israeli violence against Palestinians which might decrease support for Israel in Europe and

North America, at the same time as disguising harmful environmental practices, because of

the assumption that 'green is good'.[60] Concern for water in particular, given its nature as a

mobile substance which is globally shared and universally needed, seems to suggest a

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[56] See Sarah Schulman, 'Appendix: Brand Israel and Pinkwashing: A Documentary Guide', in *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 179–86.

[57] ibid.

[58] Genesis Waters, 'The Source', *Genesis Waters* <http://genesiswaters.com/source.php> [accessed 9 July 2015].

[59] ibid.

[60] On declining support for Israel among American Jews, see: Peter Beinart, *The Crisis of Zionism* (Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, 2012).  On the effects of the Gaza war on European and American public support for Israel, see: The Economist, 'Us and Them', *The Economist*, 2 August 2014, p. 16.

morally praiseworthy lack of national self-interest, on the part of Genesis Waters and on the part of Israel.

Many of Israel's water practices are not especially environmentally friendly. For instance, celebrations of the potential of desalination tend to minimise or ignore its negative environmental effects. These include its high energy input, and the discharge of hypersaline and potentially contaminated effluent back into the ocean.[61] The impact of desalination on the Mediterranean and Red Sea ecosystems has not yet been fully determined.[62] A key concern with Israel's water strategy is that the emphasis seems largely on developing the next technological fix to maintain or increase supply, rather than reducing demand. These criticisms were levelled at the second iteration of the 'Israel is drying up' campaign, which suggested that Israelis only need reduce their water use until new desalination plants were online.[63] Worryingly, Israel's successful implementation of desalination technologies is regularly cited as a reason for Californians not to change their water-intensive lifestyle patterns, or be concerned about the state's ongoing drought.[64] The most glaring contradiction in Israel's self-representation as a country which uses water responsibly, however, is its treatment of Palestinians.

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[61] Garb, p. 243.

[62] Garb, p. 243.

[63] Ehud Zion Waldoks, 'Erdan Attacks Water Authority Ads', *Jerusalem Post*, 22 July 2010 <http://www.jpost.com/HealthAndSci-Tech/Health/Article.aspx?id=182180> [accessed 12 May 2015].

[64] Mark Zeitoun, *Power and Water in the Middle East: The Hidden Politics of the Palestinian-Israeli Water Conflict* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2012), p. 71; Alisa Odenheimer and James Nash, 'Israeli Desalination Shows California Not to Fear Drought', *Bloomberg*, 13 February 2014 <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-02-13/israel-desalination-shows-california-not-to-fear-drought> [accessed 24 April 2015].

For Palestinians in Israel/Palestine (as opposed to in the significant Palestinian diaspora) the often daily difficulties in accessing water mean that shortages are not an issue for speculative fiction such as Gavron's, but realism. As discussed above, the division of ground and surface water resources is highly unequal, the result of both military campaigns and political, legal and bureaucratic mechanisms of control. I examine all of these factors in Chapter Four. As a result of these practices, there are massive disparities in daily water consumption by Israelis and Palestinians. As a benchmark, the World Health Organisation recommends a minimum of 100 litres of water a day per person, for basic drinking and hygiene needs.[65] Palestinians in the West Bank who are connected to the water supply use an average of 73 litres per day; those who are not use around 20-50 litres.[66] Following the infrastructural devastation wrought by Operation Protective Edge in July and August 2014, Gazans currently receive less than 50 litres per day.[67] These figures pale in comparison to the average 183 litres used each day by each Israeli.[68] Palestinian water supplies are also costlier, less reliable, and lower in quality, leading to the widespread occurrence of water-associated disease.[69] This is notoriously the case in Gaza, where over 95 per cent of the

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[65] B'Tselem, 'Discriminatory Water Supply', *B'Tselem*, 2014
<http://www.btselem.org/water/discrimination_in_water_supply> [Accessed 20 March 2016].

[66] ibid. Figures from Mekorot.

[67] United Nations, General Assembly, 'United Nations Seminar on Assistance to Palestinian People Considers Gaza's Critical Water Crisis, Infrastructure Rehabilitation, Development (Press Release)', *United Nations, General Assembly*, 1 April 2015 <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/gapal1330.doc.htm> [accessed 28 August 2015].

[68] B'Tselem, 'Discriminatory Water Supply'.

[69] World Bank, *Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development* (Washington, DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2009), pp. 23–24, 30–31

main aquifer's water is undrinkable, and 26 per cent of disease is water-related.[70] The lack of drinkable water is one of the main reasons why the United Nations has offered the stark warning that Gaza may be 'unliveable' by 2020.[71] As well as creating significant health risks, water shortages are a major constraint on the Palestinian economy, restricting the economic potential of Palestinian agriculture.[72] This can be seen as an aspect of what political economist Sara Roy has called Israel's strategy of 'de-development', in which Palestinian development is not just delayed, but effectively reversed.[73]

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<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WaterRestrictionsReportJuly2009.pdf> [accessed 9 July 2015]; Al-Haq, pp. 48–49.

[70] Palestinian Water Authority, *Water Sector Damage Assessment Report* (Gaza: Palestinian Water Authority, 2014), p. 10 <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/assessments/20140819 _PWA%20Water%20Sector%20Damage%20Assessment%20-%20August%202014_0.pdf> [accessed 27 August 2015]; World Bank, p. 30.

[71] United Nations Country Team for the occupied Palestinian territory (UNCT oPt), *Gaza in 2020: A Liveable Place?* (Jerusalem: UNCT oPt, 2012) <http://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/publications/gaza/Gaza%20in%202020.pdf> [accessed 3 September 2015].

[72] Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), *The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Ramallah: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and ARIJ, 2011), p. 16 <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/docs/2012Cairo/p2%20jad%20isaac%20e.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2015].

[73] Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-Development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), pp. 3–5; Sara Roy, *Failing Peace: Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto Press, 2007), pt. 3.

There is not one 'Palestinian experience' of water shortage. Experiences vary widely, influenced by the different natures of occupation in the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, as well as in the Palestinian communities who remained in what became Israel after 1948. Availability of water can diverge sharply even within these localities. The most immediately apparent division is between Palestinians in Gaza and in the West Bank. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Palestinian access to water in Gaza is heavily affected by Israel's targeting of water infrastructure, during its cyclical attacks on the territory.[74] In the West Bank, institutions such as the Joint Water Committee, created during the Oslo Accords of 1993–1995, serve to perpetuate unequal water pricing and access between Palestinians and their settler neighbours.[75] Palestinians in occupied East Jerusalem similarly endure water shortages, even while Israel's Water Authority and Ministry of Infrastructure are ostensibly responsible for providing services. In March 2014, residents of Jerusalem neighbourhoods east of the separation wall went three weeks without water, and by January 2015, almost a year later, were still without regular supplies.[76] The water infrastructure of Palestinian neighbourhoods in Israel proper has been similarly neglected by the Israeli authorities, while the Israeli state refuses to provide any water at all, along with other services, to Bedouin living in 'unrecognised villages' within Israel, whose living conditions as a result can be dire

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[74] Ali Abunimah, 'Water Disaster Hits Every Single Person in Gaza', *Electronic Intifada*, 13 August 2014 <http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/water-disaster-hits-every-single-person-gaza> [accessed 20 August 2014].

[75] Jan Selby, 'Cooperation, Domination and Colonisation: The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Water Committee', *Water Alternatives*, 6 (2013), 1–24.

[76] Mairav Zonstein, 'Palestinians in East Jerusalem Go 10 Months without Water', *+972 Magazine*, 18 January 2015 <http://972mag.com/palestinians-in-east-jerusalem-go-10-months-with-no-water/101508/> [accessed 24 April 2015].

in the extreme.[77] Disparities in water access exist within communities, with, for instance, families living on higher ground often receiving less water because of low water pressure.[78] This topic, along with many other ways in which unequal water access causes social divisions within Palestinian communities, is examined by Guy Davidi, the Israeli co-director of the acclaimed documentary *5 Broken Cameras* (2011), in an earlier documentary also set in the West Bank town of Bil'in, *Interrupted Streams* (2010).[79] This shows that water inequalities in Israel/Palestine are not merely an issue with a simple divide between Israeli and Palestinian experiences, even if inequalities within the Palestinian community are the result of the differential impacts of Israeli occupation.

Over the past twenty years, the issue of water scarcity in Israel/Palestine has become the focus of considerable debate in academia, politics, and the public sphere, locally and internationally. As noted above, the rhetoric of 'water wars' has been prominent. The 'water war' in Israel/Palestine is taken as an exemplar of a wider phenomenon, according to which, as then-World Bank Vice-President Ismail Serageldin predicted in 1995, 'many of the wars of this century were about oil [...] wars of the next century will be over water'.[80] Former Israeli President Shimon Peres emphasised the significance of water in an apparently changing global economy in his 1998 text *The Imaginary Voyage*, stating that he

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[77] Jonathan Cook, 'The Negev's Hot Wind Blowing', *Middle East Research and Information Project*, 25 October 2011 <http://www.merip.org/mero/mero102511> [accessed 2 September 2015]; Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 335.

[78] *Troubled Waters: Palestinians Denied Fair Access to Water* (London: Amnesty International, 2009), p. 16.

[79] *Interrupted Streams*, dir. by Guy Davidi and Alexandre Goetschmann (unreleased, 2010).

[80] Cited in Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, pp. 50, 49.

'could foresee the day when aquadollars would replace petrodollars on the world market.'[81]

While Peres stressed the potential for water shortages to become both a cause and a

consequence of political instability, he portrayed this shift as a possible source of regional

peace and prosperity, drawing on an argument made previously in *The New Middle East*

(1993).[82] This argument has been reiterated by a smaller group of scholars, politicians and

activists, who believe that water cooperation may lead the way to understanding on 'higher'

political issues, laying the groundwork for a future peace deal in the region.[83] More recently,

the advent of desalination has caused some optimists to argue that this technology might

contain the possibility of entirely circumventing the problem of limited water supply.[84] This

turn to desalination is not only a technological fix, but what Neil Smith described as a 'scalar

fix', seeming to prevent conflict through generating new scales according to which estimates

of water potential can be calculated.[85]

There is scant historical evidence for the occurrence of water wars between states.[86] More

accurately, water infrastructure is frequently an indirect or direct casualty of war, and

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[81] Shimon Peres, *The Imaginary Voyage: With Theodor Herzl in Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Zoland Books, 2000), p.

105.

[82] Shimon Peres, *The New Middle East* (New York: Holt, 1993), chap. 9.

[83] For discussion, see Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, pp. 52–56.

[84] Ralph Sanders, 'Water Desalting and the Middle East Peace Process', *Technology in Society*, 31 (2009), 94–

99; Hillel Shuval, 'Conflict over Water: An Obstacle to Peace?', in *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: Parallel

Discourses*, ed. by Elizabeth G. Matthews (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 93–111 (p. 95); Alon Tal, 'Shifting

Sands: Land and Water Management in the Middle East', *Harvard International Review*, 2013, 37–41 (p. 39).

[85] Erik Swyngedouw, 'Into the Sea: Desalination as Hydro-Social Fix in Spain', *Annals of the Association of

American Geographers*, 103 (2013), 261–70 (p. 262).

[86] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, pp. 49–52.

water-related violence is common between different interest groups within nation-states.[87]

Selby highlights the residual Orientalism in the frequent portrayal of Israel/Palestine as the archetypal 'water war', noting that this likely derives from a myth of the inevitability of water conflict in the Middle East.[88] It is worth adding that the tendency to essentialise water conflict in the Middle East is not exclusive to European and American writers. The Palestinian nature writer and human rights lawyer Raja Shehadeh makes a similarly deterministic assertion in his 2008 memoir *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, writing that: 'Perhaps the paucity of rain is what makes us, the inhabitants of this land, Jews and Arabs, so anxious and temperamental that peace continues to elude us.'[89] Selby, along with Mark Zeitoun, sounds an equally sceptical note regarding the prospect of 'water peace'. As he suggests, the continued promotion of 'cooperation', just as in the emphasis on desalination as a magic bullet, ultimately skirts the questions of rights and justice.[90] These issues are crucial for Palestinians, but have, unsurprisingly, left previous negotiations at a stalemate.[91]

As suggested by the above discussion of desalination, freshwater is not the only type of water implicated in Israeli and Palestinian culture, economics, politics and ecology. The sea, too, is significant. The advent of desalination technologies has meant that these categories are not as easily separable as they might once have seemed. The Mediterranean in

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[87] Zeitoun, p. 4; Aaron T Wolf, 'Conflict and Cooperation along International Waterways', *Water Policy*, 1 (1998), 251–65 (p. 255).

[88] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 51.

[89] Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* (London: Profile Books, 2008), p. 43.

[90] Zeitoun, p. 81.

[91] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 144.

particular is a zone of political and ecological conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Israel's naval blockade on Gaza, part of the land, sea and air blockade imposed following the

territory's takeover by Hamas in June 2007, extended existing restrictions on Gazan

movement which had been in place since the early 1990s.[92] The naval blockade, imposed,

like the land and air blockades, under the pretext of security, has had severe effects on

Gazan livelihoods. This is seen starkly in the Gazan fishing industry, which has suffered a

rapid decline since the Israeli military began restricting Palestinian movement to a range

which currently stands at four nautical miles, but has been as little as three.[93] Fishermen

who approach the edge of this range are warned with live fire, which has caused damaged

boats, injuries, and even deaths.[94] As well as increasing unemployment in Gaza – which is

already at the highest level in the world – this practice limits Palestinian access to an

important food source.[95] The restrictions on fishing zones have meant that areas closer to

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[92] United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (UN

OCHA oPt) ,*Locked In: The Humanitarian Impact of Two Years of Blockade on the Gaza Stri*p (East Jerusalem:

UN OCHA oPt, 2009), p. 2

<http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_impact_of_two_years_of_blockade_august_2009_engl

ish.pdf> [Accessed 10 September 2015].

[93] B'Tselem, *Press Release: Lift the Restrictions on the Gaza Fishing Range* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 2013)

<http://www.btselem.org/gaza_strip/20130324_restrictions_on_fishing_should_be_lifted> [accessed 18 May

2015]; Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 'Israeli Attacks on Fishermen in the Gaza Sea', *Palestinian Centre

for Human Rights*, 14 January 2016 < http://pchrgaza.org/en/?p=7753> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[94] ibid.

[95] ibid.; Peter Beaumont, 'Gaza Economy "on Verge of Collapse", with World's Highest Unemployment', *The

Guardian*, 22 May 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/22/gazas-economy-on-verge-of-

collapse-jobless-rate-highest-in-world-israel> [accessed 2 September 2015].

the shore are dangerously overfished, and catches are small.[96] These areas are heavily

affected, too, by the 33 million cubic metres of untreated or partially treated sewage which

flows into the Mediterranean from Gaza every year, the result of Palestinians' inability to

repair damaged, degraded and overloaded infrastructure.[97] On top of these issues is an

additional factor likely to become of heightened importance as competition increases for

depleting global and regional energy reserves. The coast off Gaza is home to large and

recently discovered natural gas fields, which promise riches and energy independence for

whichever party can stake the strongest claim.[98]

Water, then, is a major feature of Israeli and Palestinian politics, economics, and ecology,

while Israel/Palestine occupies a prominent position in global water debates. In

Israel/Palestine and more widely, water is also a substance invested with a range of cultural,

religious and national significances, shaping what Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard describe

as our 'life-worlds', or 'worlds of water'.[99] Tvedt and Oestigaard's multi-volume *History of*

*Water* series represents one example of a rich body of work in the social sciences on the

social and cultural aspects of water, found in disciplines including geography, anthropology,

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[96]  B'Tselem, 'Lift the Restrictions'.

[97] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Report on UNCTAD Assistance to the*

*Palestinian People: Developments in the Economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Geneva: UNCTAD, 6

July 2015), p. 12 <http://unctad.org/meetings/en/SessionalDocuments/tdb62d3_en.pdf> [accessed 3

September 2015].

[98] Anais Antreasyan, 'Gas Finds in the Eastern Mediterranean: Gaza, Israel, and Other Conflicts', *Journal of*

*Palestine Studies*, 42 (2013), 29–42.

[99] Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard, 'Introduction', in *A History of Water: Volume III: The World of Water*, ed.

by Terje Tvedt and Terje Oestigaard (London: I.B.Tauris, 2006), pp. ix – xxii (p. xv).

political ecology, and science and technology studies (STS).[100] Recent conferences in these fields have abounded in panels on the theme of water, while many edited collections and special issues have appeared or are forthcoming.[101] Collaborative initiatives such as the White Rose Hydropolitics Network, to which this project belongs, and the new 'Hydrocitizenship' network, indicate a growing concern in these disciplines with the meanings of water. As noted above, in spite of the primacy of water as a political issue in Israel/Palestine and beyond, and the prominence of this theme within related disciplines, there has been next to no engagement with water by critics working with Israeli and Palestinian literature. In fact, there has been very little discussion of water in literary criticism more widely. I will now turn to some possible reasons for these striking absences.

The first reason is that critics have barely begun to approach Israeli and Palestinian literature from an environmental perspective. Postcolonial ecocriticism might seem to be

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[100] A selection of examples includes: Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press, 2002); Gandy, *The Fabric of Space*; *People at the Well: Kinds, Usages and Meanings of Water in a Global Perspective*, ed. by Hans Peter Hahn, Karlheinz Cless, and Jens Soentgen (Frankfurt-on-Main: Campus Verlag, 2012); *Water Worlds: Human Geographies of the Ocean*, ed. by Kimberley Peters and Jon Anderson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014); Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

[101] For instance, the three panels on 'Wet Geographies' at RGS-IBG, University of Exeter, 1-4 September 2015, and the multi-day panel on 'The hydrologic cycle: thinking relationships through water' at the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore (SIEF) congress, University of Tartu, Estonia, 1-3 July 2013. For special issues, see 'Water Worlds', ed. by Jessica Barnes and Samer Alatout, *Social Studies of Science*, 42 (2012); 'Virtual Issue: Water', ed. by Ashley Carse, *Cultural Anthropology*, 2010 <http://www.culanth.org/curated_collections/10-water> [accessed 10 July 2015]; 'Living Water', ed. by Veronica Strang and Franz Krause, *Worldviews*, 17 (2013).

the approach which would be most favoured by critics seeking to examine water in Israeli and Palestinian literature. Its analysis of issues including colonial environmental exploitation, the often troublingly close historical and contemporary relationship between imperialism and conservation, and indigenous resistance to environmentally and socially harmful colonial practices, seems highly pertinent.[102] Yet characteristics of both postcolonial studies and ecocriticism seem to have inhibited the translation of postcolonial ecocritical approaches to Israeli and Palestinian literary studies. Notably, Israel/Palestine has long been ignored in postcolonial studies, in spite of the founding influence of the Palestinian scholar Edward Said.[103] One way this absence might be understood is in relation to the complex and overlapping temporalities of colonialism and postcolonialism in Israel/Palestine. As Patrick Williams and Anna Ball note in a recent special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* on the theme of Palestine and postcolonial studies, an easy (if inaccurate) explanation might come from the fact that Palestine remains subject to the ongoing violence of Israeli settler colonialism and as such, is 'not yet"post-" the "colonial"'.[104] Neither can Israel, in pursuing a goal of maximal control of territory and resources with disregard for the cost to Palestinians,

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[102] Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1–4.

[103] Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), pp. 19–21; Patrick Williams and Anna Ball, 'Where Is Palestine?', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50 (2014), 127–33 (p. 128).

[104] Williams and Ball, p. 128. On the debate over the 'post' in postcolonial studies, see: Joseph Massad, 'The "Post-Colonial" Colony: Time, Space, and Bodies in Palestine/Israel', in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 13–40 (pp. 13–14); Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism"', *Social Text* 31/32 (1992), 84-98; Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the "Post-Colonial"', *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992), 99–113 (p. 104).

be described as 'post-colonial'.[105] This explanation is, however, inadequate since, as Ball and Williams point out, postcolonialism has never simply been about historical periodisation; major writers in the field wrote under conditions of colonial occupation, while earlier episodes of colonisation have long aftermaths in the present, just as forms of neocolonialism – along with new oppositional movements of struggle and resistance – continue to unfold.[106] A more pertinent issue may be the significant professional risks of appearing to criticise Israel.[107] Postcolonialists, perhaps unsurprisingly, may not be willing to enter an area of debate which might lead to attacks from pro-Israel lobby groups that could endanger their careers and livelihoods.[108] The same explanation seems transferable to ecocriticism. In spite of growing internationalisation, ecocriticism remains most well-established in American literature departments, and, as Rob Nixon has noted, has been largely reluctant to engage with the impact of U.S. foreign policy.[109] Unconditional support for Israel remains, as ever, a key pillar of North American Middle East policy.[110] As such, it

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[105] On Israel in the context of comparative settler colonialism, see: Gabriel Piterberg, *The Returns of Zionism: Myths, Politics and Scholarship in Israel* (London: Verso, 2008), p. 54.

[106] Williams and Ball, p. 128.

[107] ibid.

[108] See: Matthew Abraham, *Out of Bounds: Academic Freedom and the Question of Palestine* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Lara Deeb and Jessica Winegar, *Anthropology's Politics: Disciplining the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2015). The most infamous recent case is that of Steven Salaita, a university professor of American Indian Studies whose job offer from the University of Illinois was withdrawn after he used strong language to criticise Israel on Twitter.

[109] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 33.

[110] Bashir Abu-Manneh, 'Israel in US Empire', *New Formations*, 59 (2006), 34–51; Naseer Aruri, *Dishonest Broker: America's Role in Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2003).

seems predictable that there has been little ecocritical interest in Israel/Palestine. It is the context in which the stakes, for an American academic, are highest.

The small body of work on Israeli and Palestinian literary environments which does exist is, to borrow a term from cultural geography, markedly 'terrestrocentric'.[111] It tends to emphasise features of Israeli and Palestinian literature associated with the land, such as maps, soil, trees, and the land itself. This is not a false picture of Israeli and Palestinian writing, where these images certainly proliferate, unsurprisingly given that both literatures have been concerned, at different points in time, with articulating a relationship between a diasporic population and a longed-for homeland.[112] Liisa Malkki notes that this tendency is characteristic of nationalist writing, art and rhetoric more widely, with trees, for instance, deployed to project the qualities of 'temporal continuity' and 'territorial rootedness', which reflect back on the nation itself.[113] In the Israeli context, literature played a crucial role in a wider cultural movement aimed at cultivating a sense of belonging to Israel/Palestine, as well as a sense of ownership, in a recently arrived population of Jewish immigrants. Hebrew literature participated in the construction of a new, territorialised 'Hebrew' identity, and articulated in opposition to the 'exilic' way of life in the Diaspora, which Zionism was

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[111] Chris Bear and Jacob Bull, 'Water Matters: Agency, Flows, and Frictions', *Environment and Planning A*, 43 (2011), 2261–66 (p. 2261).

[112] Sidra DeKoven Ezrahi, *Booking Passage: Exile and Homecoming in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 3; Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), p. 70.

[113] Liisa Malkki, 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, 7 (1992), 24–44.

intended to negate.[114] This was accompanied by material trends, such as the revival of the

Jewish tree-planting festival of Tu B'shvat, as well as governmental afforestation policies, to

occupy the land and physically enact its 'redemption', and the renaming of vast areas of the

country to mark its new, Hebrew identity.[115] School teaching of the subject called 'knowing

of the land' (*yediat ha'aretz*), and youth movement hiking trips, also participated in the

cultivation and performance of attachment to the land of Israel.[116]

Many critics have examined Israeli literature's rural imaginaries. The role of tree-planting in

'rooting' Israeli identity in the land of Israel/Palestine, for instance, has been widely

discussed.[117] The kibbutz, and Israel's founding narrative of agricultural settlement have,

inevitably, formed a major part of this criticism, in works by Ranen Omer-Sherman, Joe

Cleary, and Eric Zakim.[118] The desert, too, has been a popular theme. It has ambivalent

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[114] Eric Zakim, *To Build And Be Built: Landscape, Literature, And the Construction of Zionist Identity*

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvannia Press, 2006), pp. 1–2.

[115] Yael Zerubavel, 'The Forest as a National Icon: Literature, Politics, and the Archaeology of Memory', *Israel

Studies*, 1 (1996), 60–99.

[116] Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land since 1948*, trans. by Maxine

Kaufman-Lacusta (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 57.

[117] Carol Bardenstein, 'Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges, and the Prickly

Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine', *Edebiyât,* 8 (1998), 1–36; Carol Bardenstein, 'Trees, Forests, and the Shaping of

Palestinian and Israeli Collective Memory', in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present*, ed. by Mieke Bal,

Jonathan V. Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), pp. 148–68; Hannah

Boast, '"Planted Over The Past": Ideology and Ecology in Israel's National Eco-Imaginary', *Green Letters*, 16

(2012), 46–58.

[118] Ranen Omer-Sherman, *Imagining the Kibbutz: Visions of Utopia in Literature and Film* (University Park:

Pennsylvania State University Press, 2015); Joe Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and*

associations, as a site detested as the opposite of agricultural settlement and home of a perceived Bedouin threat, yet viewed as a potentially redemptive space of national rites of passage, and a link to the ideologically vital presumption of Israel's ancient mythical roots in the land.[119] More recently, there has been a turn towards urban imaginaries, particularly of Tel Aviv, as seen in the works of novelists such as Yoram Kaniuk and Ya'akov Shabtai, and the contemporary writers Orly Castel-Bloom and Etgar Keret. This trend can be found in the work of critics including Barbara Mann, Rachel Harris and Karen Grumberg, with discussion often framed around specific locations in the city, such as the Old Cemetery, the Dizengoff Centre, Rothschild Boulevard, and the Central Bus Station.[120] Rarely does any of this work discuss waterscapes, such as the beach, the sea, rivers, lakes, or public fountains in urban spaces.

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*Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), chap. 4; Zakim, *To Build and Be Built*.

[119] Karen Grumberg, *Place and Ideology in Contemporary Hebrew Literature* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), chap. 1; Ranen Omer-Sherman, *Israel in Exile: Jewish Writing and the Desert* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Yael Zerubavel, 'Desert and Settlement: Space Metaphors and Symbolic Landscapes in the Yishuv and Early Israeli Culture', in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. by Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Aldershot and Burlington, VA: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 210–22.

[120] Barbara E. Mann, *A Place in History: Modernism, Tel Aviv, and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); Rachel Harris, 'Decay and Death: Urban Topoi in Literary Depictions of Tel-Aviv', *Israel Studies*, 14 (2009), 75–93; Grumberg, chap. 2.

Like Israeli writing, Palestinian literature features assertions of rootedness. Symbols such as the olive tree recur prominently in Palestinian nationalist poetry and art.[121] The proliferation of olive tree imagery is part of a wider focus on a romanticised image of rural village life, often presented as a 'lost paradise' from which Palestinians have been unnaturally separated.[122] The level of detail in these accounts, and their emphasis on sensory perception, serves as an aid to remembering a homeland which is no longer accessible and would otherwise remain abstract, and provides a rallying point for nationalist sentiment and hopes of return.[123] A related trope, discussed in Chapter Three, is the depiction of Israel as an 'alien' and ecologically damaging intruder, and 'nature' as aligned with the Palestinian cause.[124] Anthropomorphisation is another common element in Palestinian representations of nonhuman nature, in which nature is often portrayed as a woman who is lost, desired, or in need of protection.[125] Symbolism equating women, land and the nation is, of course, widespread in postcolonial literature and nationalist discourse, and these Palestinian examples can be viewed as instances of a broader trend.[126] These representations, while

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[121] Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, 'The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 7 (1978), 77–101 (p. 91); Parmenter, pp. 76, 79.

[122] Parmenter, p. 43.

[123] ibid., p. 44.

[124] Bardenstein, 'Trees, Forests', p. 152; Parmenter, p. 81.

[125] Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, p. 92; Anna Ball, *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (London: Routledge, 2012), chap. 1; Parmenter, pp. 53, 83; Tina Sherwell, 'Imaging the Homeland: Gender and Palestinian National Discourses', in *After Orientalism: Critical Entanglements, Productive Looks,* ed. by Inge Boer (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 123–45.

[126] Elleke Boehmer, *Stories of Women: Gender and Narrative in the Postcolonial Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 29; Anne McClintock, '"No Longer in a Future Heaven": Gender, Race

often affectively powerful, frequently involve essentialising and heteronormative tropes, such as the gendering of the landscape as passive and 'female', and its liberators, lovers or protectors as active and male. In doing so, as Anna Ball notes, such writing incorporates women as symbols while inhibiting their participation as active members of nationalist movements, whether in Palestine or elsewhere.[127] Again, the overarching importance of the lost land seems to crowd out any analysis of the place of water in Palestinian writing, yet land and water, as the following chapters demonstrate, cannot be considered separately.

In recent years, a small body of critical work in English has emerged which has approached Palestinian literature from an explicitly postcolonial ecocritical perspective. However, at present it remains almost entirely limited to the work of Raja Shehadeh, specifically *Palestinian Walks*.[128] This memoir documents the impact of Israel's increasing fragmentation of the West Bank on nonhuman nature, through tracking the gradual restriction of Shehadeh's ability to hike the area's hilly landscape.[129] It was awarded the Orwell Prize in 2008, an event which appears to have been the trigger for the growth of postcolonial ecocritical scholarship on this work. In spite of the prominence of nonhuman nature in almost all of Shehadeh's writing, this promising field largely fails to move beyond

and Nationalism', in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. by Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), pp. 89–112.

[127] Ball, *Palestinian Literature and Film,* p. 21.

[128] For example: Mohammad Sakhnini, 'Walking, Telling and Resisting in Raja Shehadeh's Palestinian Walks', *Settler Colonial Studies*, 4 (2014), 209–19; Charlotta Salmi, 'Reflections on a National Cartography: The Freedom to Roam and the Right to Imagine in Raja Shehadeh's Travel Writing', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 48 (2012), 431–42; Robert Spencer, 'Ecocriticism in the Colonial Present: The Politics of Dwelling in Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*', *Postcolonial Studies*, 13 (2010), 33–54.

[129] Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks*.

his most famous text, which happens to have had its legitimacy as an object of cultural value confirmed by a metropolitan literary prize. The accidental dominance of this field by a single text by a single writer confirms that knowledge of Palestinian literature in the Anglophone world remains limited, including within the academic sphere, even with the spike in interest in Palestinian writing which has occurred since the early 2000s.[130] It highlights the powerful and potentially limiting role played by literary prizes as 'gatekeepers' of postcolonial literature, indicating added practical reasons for the lack of scholarship on the topic of water in Palestinian writing.[131]

Further common elements of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism have perhaps inhibited the development of criticism on water in Israeli and Palestinian literature. I should note here that, while the Hebrew literary critics I discuss above do not align themselves with either of these fields, or indeed engage with them, my discussion of their work in these terms is less about their personal affiliations, and more the result of my identification of these themes in their writing. Nixon's 2005 account of the tensions and links between postcolonial and ecocriticism is widely known; in an essay written four years earlier, Susie O'Brien made a similar argument.[132] Still, what neither Nixon nor O'Brien discussed is that both schools share a preference for land, even if this emerges from very different origins. To begin with

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[130] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 4.

[131] On postcolonial literature and prize culture, see: Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 118; Sandra Ponzanesi, *The Postcolonial Cultural Industry: Icons, Markets, Mythologies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 49.

[132] Rob Nixon, 'Environment and Postcolonialism', in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, ed. by Ania Loomba (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 233–51; Susie O'Brien, 'Articulating a World of Difference: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism and Globalization', *Canadian Literature* 170/171 (2001), 140–58.

ecocriticism: as a result of the enduring influence of its founding interests in the Romantic

period, Heideggerean philosophies of 'dwelling', bioregions and national environments, and

insular fantasies of a self-sufficient 'return to the soil', ecocriticism has tended towards

representations of land over water.[133] In the past, this has been built into the scope of the

field, as in Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's definition of ecocriticism as having 'one

foot in literature and the other on land', as well as in attempts to describe its spread as part

of a process of 'greening' literary studies.[134] Greenness is, of course, only possible with the

supply of water; the hydrologists Malin Falkenmark and Johan Rockström coined the term

'green' water to describe the often forgotten freshwater embodied in soil, in contrast with

the liquid 'blue' water that flows in lakes and rivers.[135] This aspect of water is rarely

mentioned in ecocritical writing.

Water appears frequently in what is known as the 'new nature writing', indicating that we

may expect an increase in literary scholarship on this theme in the near future. It features as

a major element in works by writers such as Roger Deakin, Katharine Norbury, and Alice

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[133] Greg Garrard, *Ecocritism* (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 30, 34, 118; Graham Huggan, 'Postcolonial

Ecocriticism and the Limits of Green Romanticism', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 45 (2009), 3–14 (pp. 4–5).

[134] Ursula K. Heise, 'Greening English: Recent Introductions to Ecocriticism', 47 (2006), 289–98; Graham

Huggan, '" Greening" Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives', *Modern Fiction Studies*, 50 (2004), 701–33; Jay

Parini, 'The Greening of the Humanities', *New York Times Magazine*, 29 October 1995, 52–53 <

http://www.nytimes.com/1995/10/29/magazine/the-greening-of-the-humanities.html?pagewanted=all>

[Accessed 20 March 2016].

[135] Malin Falkenmark and Johan Rockström, 'The New Blue and Green Water Paradigm: Breaking New Ground

for Water Resources Planning and Management', *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, 132

(2006), 129–32.

Oswald, as well as anthologies by the group 'Caught by the River'.[136] It was even the theme of National Poetry Day in 2013, pointing towards a public appetite for literary approaches to water, even if these have not yet permeated into scholarship. In an academic context, Oswald is already discussed frequently, yet it seems plausible that any future watery turn may replicate the lack of political commitment for which the 'new nature writing' and its advocates are often criticised.[137] It may be that a genre which prefers to advocate for the sometimes fuzzy goal of renewing our attachments to nature on a local scale could be less willing to engage with the necessarily global, and much more politically fraught, issue of hydropolitics.

The preoccupation with land in postcolonial studies derives from the centrality of the issue of land sovereignty in anticolonial movements, which formed, in part, the origins of postcolonialism.[138] The prominence of land sovereignty in anticolonial debates is itself an outcome of the widespread land dispossession and expropriation initiated by colonial regimes, a practice that has more recently been evoked by peasant displacements in the name of postcolonial development, and international conservation projects initiated

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[136] Geoff Barrett, Robin Turner and Andrew Walsh (eds), *Caught by the River: A Collection of Words on Water* (London: Cassell, 2009); Roger Deakin, *Waterlog: A Swimmer's Journey Through Britain* (London: Vintage, 2000); Katharine Norbury, *The Fish Ladder* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Alice Oswald, *Dart* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010); Alice Oswald, *A Sleepwalk on the Severn* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009).

[137] Mark Cocker, 'Death of the Naturalist: Why Is the "new Nature Writing" so Tame?', *New Statesman*, 17 June 2015 <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/death-naturalist-why-new-nature-writing-so-tame> [accessed 3 September 2015].

[138] Robert J. C. Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), pp. 10, 20.

without local consultation or consent.[139] We might recall statements from central figures in postcolonial writing such as Frantz Fanon, who wrote that: 'For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.'[140] Here, Fanon identified land ownership as the fundamental material and psychological condition of postcolonial independence. While postcolonial literary criticism has more recently moved towards accounting for transnational phenomena including globalisation and climate change, it retains foundational concerns with debates over national resource sovereignty, and national cultures.[141] This seems an awkward fit with the study of water, a substance which crosses national borders, and seems as a result to necessitate differing conceptions of resource ownership. It is important to highlight that exceptions to these broadly sketched arguments about ecocriticism and postcolonialism do exist. A notable one is Pablo Mukherjee's powerful chapter on Indian literature in the context of the global crisis in access to water.[142] Found in his 2010 monograph *Postcolonial Environments*, the chapter stands out all the more starkly because

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[139] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 152; Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martínez Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism: Essays North and South* (London: Earthscan, 1997), chap. 5.

[140] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 34.

[141] For encouraging examples of how the field is changing, see Anna Bernard, Ziad Elmarsafy and Stuart Murray, *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say* (London: Routledge, 2015), pt. 3.

[142] Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee*, Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 163–187.

of the rarity with which the inextricable relationships between water crisis, structural

inequality and uneven development are articulated in ecocritical or postcolonial contexts.[143]

Before I lay out a theory of water in Israeli and Palestinian literature, it is worth considering

water itself. In particular, I want to briefly sketch what it might mean for the substance of

water, typically imagined as a substance which simply exists 'out there' in nature, to become

a managed and measurable 'resource'. The most immediately available way to understand

water is scientifically, as the compound $H_2O$, yet to perceive water as a mere natural 'given'

would be a mistake. Instead, as Linton notes, 'water is what we make of it'.[144] We must also

reflect on the multiple processes and discourses which participate in the production of what

we think of as plain 'water'. A vivid account of water's social circulation from Swyngedouw

emphasises the point:

> Nature's water is captured, pumped, purified, chemically adjusted, piped, bought
>
> and sold, regulated, used by households, agriculture and industry, transformed into
>
> electricity, biochemically metabolised by plants, animals and humans, integrated in
>
> public displays like fountains, often turned into sewage, eventually returned to
>
> "nature".[145]

We could extend Swyngedouw's list. For instance, bureaucratic, governmental and legal

processes determine our encounters with water, notably the way in which water has, from

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[143] ibid, p. 165.

[144] Linton, *What Is Water?*, p. 3.

[145] Erik Swyngedouw, *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water: Flows of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2004), pp. 1–2.

the very recent date of 2010 onwards, come to be understood as a human right.[146] Water, as Swyngedouw highlights, is one of a proliferating category of objects which appear to be unproblematically 'natural', but which are in fact constituted by a combination of 'natural' and 'cultural' elements; what Latour describes as a 'hybrid'.[147] As Linton and Swyngedouw argue, using Latour, the way in which we understand water simultaneously erases its social component. The resulting impression is of a world in which, in Latour's phrase, '[e]ven though we construct Nature, Nature is as if we did not construct it.'[148] The making of water 'legible' as a 'fact' of 'Nature' is what allows us to conceive of it as a resource, existing in quantities independent of human intervention, which we might access, exploit, or improve.[149] More than other resources, water's literal transparency and biophysical necessity disguises the ways in which it is produced through a lengthy chain of social and cultural processes, through which it is imagined, represented and managed.

Water's production as a resource through a series of social processes and relations is not unique. This is a characteristic of a 'natural resource', as Erich Zimmerman highlighted in his famous 1933 maxim, '[r]esources are not, they become'.[150] This approach to resources might seem to permit a worrying optimism about limitless resource potentiality, restricted

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[146] Sultana, Farhana and Alex Loftus (eds), *The Right to Water: Prospects and Possibilities* (London: Earthscan, 2012).

[147] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. by Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 1.

[148] Latour, p. 32.

[149] Linton, *What Is Water?*, p. 182. On 'legibility', resources and power, see Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, p. 2.

[150] Erich Zimmerman, *World Resources and Industries: A Functional Appraisal of the Availability of Agricultural and Industrial Resources* (New York: Harper and Row, 1933), p. 3.

only by money and technology. Such fears would seem to be vindicated by the frequent

utopianism of discourse on desalination. More usefully, by allowing us to refocus attention

on the social processes through which resources are brought about, this approach

challenges the received wisdom that resources are merely naturally 'discovered'.[151] In

becoming aware of this, we can historicise assessments of resource potentiality, and

highlight the ways in which these are often harnessed to the production or legitimation of

particular social configurations, or can be incorporated into certain kinds of resistance.[152]

Famously, Karl Wittfogel claimed in his theory of 'hydraulic civilisations' that the need to

find the huge workforce for constructing major irrigation and dam infrastructures had

historically resulted in centralised and socially controlling forms of government.[153] It may

seem surprising that Wittfogel's thesis has not registered in postcolonial criticism. A

plausible explanation for this state of affairs seems to be found in Wittfogel's focus on

ancient Chinese empires. China has long been markedly absent in postcolonial discourse,

and the lack of existing scholarship on this topic may well be the obstacle that has

prevented Wittfogel's arguments being examined more widely in postcolonial studies.[154] We

would now see Wittfogel's argument as overly deterministic and his language of 'Oriental

Despotism' as clearly dated and essentialising. Other scholars have, however, developed

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[151] Tanya Richardson and Gisa Weszkalnys, 'Introduction: Resource Materialities', *Anthropological Quarterly*,

87 (2014), 5–30 (p. 14).

[152] For examples of both, see David Mosse, *The Rule of Water: Statecraft, Ecology and Collective Action in*

*South India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[153] Karl August Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism, a Comparative Study of Total Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale

University Press, 1957).

[154] Daniel Vukovich, 'Postcolonialism, Globalization, and the "Asia Question"', in *The Oxford Handbook of*

*Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Graham Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 587– 606, p. 593.

aspects of Wittfogel's work, in order to put forward more sophisticated perspectives on the ways in which the constitution of state and colonial power intersects with ways of managing water and defining its availability.[155] The relationship between water and power has a long and undeniable history, even if not quite in the terms proposed by Wittfogel.

In the context of Israel/Palestine, estimates of water potential have been closely tied to Zionist movement priorities and later, Israeli state policy. The belief in water scarcity today among Israelis and Palestinians is so widespread as to be unquestioned. However, as Alatout has argued, the opposite view prevailed among Zionist leaders until the creation of Israel in 1948, and formed a key part of the Zionist case for the feasibility of a Jewish state in Palestine.[156] As I discuss in Chapter Two, high estimates of Palestine's water potential were used by the Zionist movement prior to the creation of Israel, in order to contest the British government's claims that Palestine lacked the 'absorptive capacity' needed to receive any more Jewish immigrants.[157] By claiming abundant supplies of water, advocates of Jewish immigration were able to cite greater areas of land available for cultivation and

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[155] See Sara B. Pritchard, 'From Hydroimperialism to hydrocapitalism:"French" hydraulics in France, North Africa, and beyond', *Social Studies of Science*, 42 (2012), 591–615; Veronica Strang, 'Going against the Flow: The Biopolitics of Dams and Diversions', *Worldviews*, 17 (2013), 161–73; Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[156] Samer Alatout, 'Bringing Abundance into Environmental Politics', *Social Studies of Science*, 39 (2009), 363–94; Alatout, '"States" of Scarcity'; Alatout, 'Towards a Bio-Territorial Conception of Power'.

[157] Samer Alatout, 'From Water Abundance to Water Scarcity (1936 - 1959): A "Fluid" History of Jewish Subjectivity in Historic Palestine and Israel', in *Reapproaching Borders: New Perspectives on the Study of Israel-Palestine*, ed. by Mark LeVine and Sandy Sufian (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2007), pp. 199–219 (pp. 200, 208).

settlement.[158] It is true that early twentieth-century accounts of the Palestinian landscape by Zionist visitors and immigrants foreground its apparently desolate condition. Yet, as I discuss, this is generally to stress presumed Arab neglect, and the capacity for Jewish 'return' to restore Palestine to a 'natural' state of biblical 'milk and honey'.[159] This mirrors a broader European colonial discourse of indigenous environmental ruination, according to which perceived desertification and overgrazing justified European land expropriation.[160] As Alatout highlights, the present narrative of scarcity emerged after 1948, with the new need for state management of water resources facilitating the centralisation of institutions and the strengthening of the Israeli state.[161] The crucial lesson of this history is that 'water scarcity is not a fixed object, nor are relations of power that sustain it.'[162] Today, as Clemens Messerschmid points out, the rhetoric of climate change serves a similar role, allowing the Israeli authorities to depict scarcity as a permanent fact of life in the Middle East, a portrayal

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[158] Aaron T. Wolf, *Hydropolitics along the Jordan River: Scarce Water and Its Impact on the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: United Nations University Press, 1995), pp. 35–6. Walter Clay Lowdermilk, *Palestine: Land of Promise* (London and New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1944), pp. 223–29.

[159] Zerubavel, 'Desert and Settlement', p. 205. See also Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2010), pp. 15–53.

[160] Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke lll, 'Imperialism, Orientalism, and the Environment in the Middle East: History, Policy, Power, and Practice', in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. by Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke lll (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), pp. 1–22 (p. 2).

[161] Alatout, '"States" of Scarcity', p. 961.

[162] ibid., p. 979.

which enables its continuing denial of water resources to the Palestinians.[163] In the

Palestinian context, living under conditions of water scarcity has become an issue of such

national import that it has, as Heather Chappells, Jan Selby and Elizabeth Shove write, a

determining influence on 'the experience and idea of being Palestinian'.[164] Yet as the above

discussion indicates, the water shortages endured by Palestinians are not an inevitable

outcome of living in an arid region, but a result of Israeli policy. An explanation of

Palestinian water crisis as politically induced, rather than as an unalterable 'fact of nature',

offers some hope: the highly unequal state of affairs observed in the present does not need

to be permanent.

As well as being a resource used for drinking and agriculture, water can form part of a

landscape or 'waterscape', participating in the construction of senses of place. When

particular waterscapes become nationally or commercially significant, water can become a

more abstract kind of 'resource'. In Chapter One, '"Current Liquidisations Ltd.": the political

ecology and cultural economy of Mediterraneanism in Amos Oz's *The Same Sea*', I adopt this

latter approach. I examine the ways in which Israel's self-fashioning as a 'Mediterranean'

country, from the early 1980s onwards, served the country's political and economic aims of

aligning itself with Europe and America. The idea of Israel as a 'Mediterranean' country rose

to prominence in the 1990s under the slogan of 'Mediterraneanism', or *Yam Tikhonyiut* in

Hebrew.[165] Academic advocates of the idea drew on the work of French historian Fernand

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[163] Clemens Messerschmid, 'Hydro-Apartheid and Water Access in Israel-Palestine: Challenging the Myths of

Cooperation and Scarcity', in *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy*, ed. by Mandy Turner and Omar

Shweiki (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 53–76.

[164] Cited in Farrier, p. 5.

[165] Alexandra Nocke, *The Place of the Mediterranean in Modern Israeli Identity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), chap. 2.

Braudel in order to emphasise the Mediterranean as a connective space, rooting Israel in the region through networks of economic, political and cultural exchange. The popularity of Mediterraneanism was partly influenced by the optimistic political climate after Oslo, and the decline of mainstream Zionist narratives of national identity. As I discuss in greater depth in the chapter, this phenomenon is often characterised as 'post-Zionism'.[166]

This chapter is situated within a growing body of ecocritical work on the sea, which, I argue, represents the major way in which ecocritics have so far engaged with the topic of water. In this criticism, the sea is frequently presented as an archetypal 'postcolonial' space, facilitating unrestricted transnational mobility and communication, and standing in metaphorically for a kind of cultural openness. Through a discussion of Oz's text, this chapter offers a more cautious assessment of the liberatory possibilities seemingly promised by an oceanic turn. It presents some of the more troubling ways in which the novel incorporates a 'Mediterranean' aesthetic into a narrative of Israeli 'normalisation', which ultimately serves similar purposes to earlier, traditional Zionist articulations of Israeli national identity that Mediterraneanism professes to disavow.

In Chapter Two, '"The dense, murky water of the past": swamps, nostalgia and settlement myth in Meir Shalev's *The Blue Mountain*' (*Roman Russi*, 2004), I turn to the early period of Jewish settlement in Palestine, from the early-to-mid twentieth century. I examine the ways in which the creation of a new, 'Hebrew' identity in a Jewish homeland was accomplished through drastic alterations of the country's waterscapes, particularly its swamps, and most

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[166] Gil Z. Hochberg, '"The Mediterranean Option": On the Politics of Regional Affiliation in Current Israeli Cultural Imagination', *Journal of Levantine Studies*, 1 (2011), 41–65 (p. 41).

prominently those in the Jezreel and Huleh Valleys.[167] This association mirrors, as I discuss,

the ways in which hydraulic engineering projects have frequently been incorporated into

narratives of national self-construction, with displays of technological ingenuity and

dramatic visual changes intended to inspire national pride and international admiration for

a country's ability to control nature.[168] These politically motivated projects have not always

been ecologically successful. By the early 1990s, it had become apparent that the draining of

Israel's Huleh Valley had been a disaster, with the Valley becoming an emblem of Zionism's

ecological folly. I argue that Shalev's depiction of ecological crisis in Israel's swamps

highlights an intriguing, and neglected, environmentalist dimension of the post-Zionist

critique of Israel's founding myths which emerged over the 1980s and 1990s. Still, while *The*

*Blue Mountain* has been interpreted as dissenting, I demonstrate that its focus on politically

dubious environmental alterations in the past allows the ways in which this continues in the

present to be ignored, particularly the use of the rhetoric of conservation and sustainability

as tools for ongoing Palestinian dispossession in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

In Chapter Three, 'States of Scarcity: the River Jordan as national border and "natural"

resource', I turn to another body of water under ecological threat: the River Jordan.  The

chapter juxtaposes contrasting representations of the river found in the 1910 short story

'Hawaja Nazar' by the pre-State Hebrew writer Moshe Smilansky, with Palestinian poet

Mahmoud Darwish's 2008 poem 'A river dies of thirst' (*Nahr emout min al-atash)*, and the

2004 memoir *I Saw Ramallah (Ra'ayta Ram Allah)* by Mourid Barghouti, also a

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[167] Meir Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, trans. by Hillel Halkin (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2004).

[168] Maria Kaika, 'Dams as Symbols of Modernization: The Urbanization of Nature between Geographical

Imagination and Materiality', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 96 (2006), 276–301; Kaika,

*City of Flows*, p. 3.

contemporary Palestinian poet.[169] I examine the ways in which the three writers use

depictions of the Jordan to engage with ideas of home and exile, and to reflect on the role

of the Jordan – as both border and national resource – in the futures of their respective

national communities, at different ends of the twentieth century. In Smilansky's text, I

argue, the Jordan provides a site for the staging of a contemporary debate over the

appropriate borders of a future Jewish state, at the same time as indicating the

inappropriateness of judging waterscapes of the Middle East according to European-derived

standards of environmental aesthetics. In Palestinian writing, as I discuss, the Jordan is

typically portrayed as a symbol of national tragedy and displacement. This is due to its

history as a border which many Palestinians were forced to cross during the wars of 1948

and 1967, and which they can now cross only with difficulty, if at all. By examining Darwish

and Barghouti's texts, I demonstrate that the loss and ecological degradation of the River

Jordan proved as affectively and economically significant to Palestinian communities as the

loss of the more obvious nationalist symbols of olive trees, or the land of Palestine. I

similarly examine the ways in which Palestinian dispossession has come to be inflected in

recent years with ecological overtones, in what has been termed the 'environmental

Nakba'.[170]

In Chapter Four, 'Water Wars: Infrastructures of violence in Sayed Kashua's *Let It Be*

*Morning'*, I move to the present day.[171] I discuss the role of deprivation of water in Israel's

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[169] Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans. by Adhaf Soueif (London: Bloomsbury, 2004); Moshe Smilansky,

'Hawaja Nazar', in *Palestine Caravan*, translator unknown (London: Methuen, 1935), pp. 145–81.

[170] Abeer al Butmah, Bobby Peek and Eurig Scandrett, *Environmental Nakba: Environmental Injustice and*

*Violations of the Israeli Occupation of Palestine* (Amsterdam: Friends of the Earth International, 2013).

[171] Sayed Kashua, *Let It Be Morning*, trans. by Miriam Shlesinger (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

periodic assaults on the Palestinian Territories, particularly Gaza, as well as the everyday

bureaucratic and legal means through which the Israeli state uses water as a means of

control in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Palestinian communities within Israel. I focus

on Israeli Palestinian novelist and journalist Kashua's novel *Let It Be Morning* (*Va-Yehi Boker,*

2007), which depicts the social chaos produced in an Israeli Palestinian community after

their village is unexpectedly put under siege, and their water supply cut off. Through

examining the effects of water shortages in Kashua's novel, I highlight a number of aspects

of infrastructural warfare, including its role as a form of what Nixon describes as 'slow

violence'.[172] Crucially, I argue, Kashua's novel illustrates the close connections between

water infrastructure and citizenship, which render its destruction so powerful as a means of

waging war. It does so through focusing on a community whose citizenship – although they

refuse to recognise this – is already highly precarious. By placing Israeli Palestinians at the

centre of his novel, Kashua provides a valuable counterpoint to existing discourse on water

access, in which it is typically framed in terms of universal human needs. This emphasis

obscures the more complex nature of water crises, in which, I argue, building on work in

political ecology, lack of water intersects with and intensifies existing social tensions

brought about by the experience of occupation.

While researching Chapter Four, I was surprised to find very little creative writing available

in English on the topic of infrastructural warfare. One possible reason for the lack of literary

attention to infrastructural warfare may be the material restrictions which as Anna Bernard

notes, affect the production of Palestinian literature more generally.[173] Bernard cites Said,

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[172] Nixon, *Slow Violence*.

[173] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, pp. 2–3.

commenting after the 1982 Lebanon War on the paucity of Palestinian literature. Said

writes:

> I recall during the siege of Beirut obsessively telling friends and family there, over the
>
> phone, that they ought to record, write down their experiences [...] Naturally, they
>
> were all far too busy surviving [...] The archive speaks of the depressed conditions of
>
> the Palestinian narrative at present.[174]

While as Bernard highlights, the situation of Palestinian literature has since improved, she

maintains (rightly) that Said's observation remains relevant.[175] Additional pressures affect

the production and circulation of literature from Gaza, which we might have expected to be

especially likely to deal with infrastructural warfare. These include limitations on the entry

of books and paper for printing, both of which are restricted under Israel's blockade.[176] On

top of this, they include, inevitably, the 'thousand and one upheavals' endured by Gazans,

which as Arabic literature blogger M. Lynx Qualey notes, impact the kinds of literature that

can be produced.[177] These issues are examined at greater length in Chapter Four.

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[174] Edward Said, 'Permission to Narrate', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 13 (1984), 27–48 (p. 38), cited in Bernard,

*Rhetorics of Belonging*, pp. 2–3.

[175] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 3.

[176] Omar Robert Hamilton, 'At the Islamic University in Gaza' <http://www.lrb.co.uk/blog/2014/08/06/omar-

hamilton/at-the-islamic-university-in-gaza/> [accessed 25 August 2014]; UNISPAL, 'UNRWA Calls on Israel to

Lift Book Blockade of Gaza Schools', *UNISPAL*, 10 September 2009

<http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/EF3899AB900965618525762D0068D42F> [accessed 25 August 2014].

[177] M. Lynx Qualey, '"The Book of Gaza": Short Stories from Four Decades', *Arabic Literature (in English)*

<http://arablit.wordpress.com/2014/07/26/the-book-of-gaza-short-stories-from-four-decades/> [accessed 18

August 2014].

At the same time, it is important to note that my perception of the lack of literature on this topic may be conditioned by my limited access to Palestinian writing: this study focuses on texts available in English translation. The range of translated Arabic literature has expanded immensely over the past fifteen years, since the attacks on the World Trade Center of September 11 2001 triggered an increased interest in Middle East writing.[178] Still, the works translated into English are limited by publishers' perceptions of what will sell to an Anglophone readership. One of the popular forms in which Palestinian writing in translation has taken is autobiography of middle-class professionals. It is possible that the class position of the authors may mean that they are better insulated from the vulnerabilities of infrastructural warfare, meaning that it features less frequently in their narratives.

The issue of translation is certainly apparent in the context of Israeli literature. Gavron's *Hydromania* has still not been published in English, seven years after its publication in Hebrew (although it has been translated into other European languages). His latest novel, *The Hilltop* (2014), appeared in the UK within a year of its publication in Hebrew. *The Hilltop* is a comic chronicle of life in an illegal settlement in the West Bank, founded by accident by a hapless Israeli gardening enthusiast.[179] This delay might in part be due to *Hydromania* being a rather unusual combination of Israeli-Palestinian politics with science fiction, and perhaps for this reason less likely to sell to an Anglophone audience not already familiar with Gavron's work. However, Gavron makes another convincing argument, pointing out that water isn't what tends to come to mind when people think of Israeli literature.[180] Internationally, Israeli water seems to be seen as a subject for technical, managerial and

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[178] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 3.

[179] Assaf Gavron, *The Hilltop*, trans. by Steven Cohen (London: Scribner, 2015)

[180] Assaf Gavron, Interview, Tel Aviv, 2014.

political calculations, rather than a theme inspiring cultural reflection. Perhaps we just would not think to seek it in literature.

The selection of texts for a project such as this is difficult to narrow down. Water is at the same time everywhere and nowhere in literature. It provides the basis for a character's every coffee, meal, the sofa they sit on, and all of the activities involved in social reproduction which contribute to our 'water footprint'.[181] Water is an essential part of the manufacturing of physical books themselves, used and transpirated by trees in the forestry stage, and later, needed for industrial processing of wood pulp; the exact footprint depends on whether or not the paper is recycled.[182] As Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis note, a balance of water also factors into producing the appropriate conditions for reading, in that high levels of humidity or dryness, or feelings of thirst, can all prove distracting.[183] At the same time, there are few novels which take water as their theme, excepting works such as Gavron's exceptionally rare *Hydromania*. In some ways the dilemmas of attempting to establish the category of 'hydrofiction' mirror those described by critics working on 'petrofiction'. As Graeme Macdonald remarks, oil is everywhere trivially in the literature of a modern world premised on 'hydrocarbon culture', yet it is virtually

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[181] A. Y. Hoekstra and A. K. Chapagnain, 'Water Footprint of Nations: Water Use by People as a Function of Their Consumption Pattern', *Water Resources Management*, 21 (2007), 35–48.

[182] P. R. van Oel and A. Y. Hoekstra, 'Towards Quantification of the Water Footprint of Paper: A First Estimate of Its Consumptive Component', *Water Resources Management*, 2012, 733–49.

[183] Cecilia Chen, Janine McLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, 'Introduction: Towards a Hydrological Turn?', in *Thinking with Water*, ed. by Cecilia Chen, Janine McLeod, and Astrida Neimanis (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), pp. 3–22, p. 3.

nowhere substantially, as Imre Szeman highlights in his claim that there is a 'dearth of oil in contemporary fiction'.[184]

In fact, there is nothing especially new about these questions, which mirror an old ecocritical debate. As summarised by Robert Kern: 'all texts are at least potentially environmental', since 'all texts are literally or imaginatively situated in a place, and in the sense that their authors, consciously or not, inscribe within them a certain relation to their place'.[185] In the following chapters, I have chosen texts in which water has been chosen by their authors as a major theme. Together, the texts illustrate key moments in the history of Israeli and Palestinian attitudes towards water, and illuminate the changing relationships between water, nationalism, and power over time. The chapters that follow lay out a template for hydrofictional criticism which offers many possibilities for a new environmental approach to literature, focusing on a substance which is crucial to life, but which in literary criticism has too often been overlooked. The increasingly pressing impact of climate change on water supplies, in Israel/Palestine and around the world, indicates, as a matter of urgency, that this must cease to be the case.

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[184] Graeme Macdonald, 'Oil and World Literature', *American Book Review*, 2012, 7 and 31; Imre Szeman, 'Literature and Energy Futures', *PMLA*, 126 (2011), 323–26.

[185] Robert Kern, 'Ecocriticism: What Is It Good For?', in *The ISLE Reader*, ed. by Michael P. Branch and Scott Slovic (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), pp. 258–81 (p. 259).

# 1. 'Current Liquidisations Ltd.': the political ecology and cultural economy of Mediterraneanism in Amos Oz's *The Same Sea*

'As we must make the Negev fruitful, so we must turn to profit the multitudinous sea.' –

David Ben-Gurion[1]

A summer 2011 advertising campaign produced by the Israel Ministry of Tourism for the UK market featured a striking image, which suggested a great deal about how Israel currently wishes to be seen by the international community.[2] Instead of the more familiar religious imagery of the Western Wall and Dome of the Rock, the image depicts a smiling man in a gleaming white chef's jacket and casual jeans, standing knee-deep in a calm and clear Mediterranean Sea, offering to the viewer a heavily-laden tray of seafood. His backdrop is the shoreline of Tel Aviv, with its sandy beach, decorative palm trees, and modern, white, high-rise hotels, cleanly defined against a cloudless sky. Tel Aviv's luxury Dan Hotel, with its famous and instantly recognisable rainbow facade, is visible in the centre. The accompanying text, entitled 'the story of the loaves and fishes', invokes the New Testament miracles of Jesus providing food for his followers as a biblical lineage for contemporary Israeli culture, reciting the common trope of Israel as exotically ancient and reassuringly modern. 'The masses have always been well fed in Israel', the text states. 'It's a melting pot

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[1] David Ben-Gurion, 'The Navy, Israel and the Sea', in *Rebirth and Destiny of Israel*, ed. by Mordekhai Nurock (New York: Philosophical Library, 1954), pp. 298–313, p. 312.

[2] The campaign was created by the company Souk Advertising. Images online: Claus Larsen, 'Israel Tourist Board' (London: Souk Advertising, 2011) <https://clauslarsen.carbonmade.com/projects/4444818> [accessed 23 June 2015].

of races and creeds, whose culinary traditions have turned simple home cooking into world class dishes.'

With its sun, sea, sand, international food, and conspicuous rainbow flag, the advert is an example of the attempted reorientation of Israel's image undertaken by the Israel government in recent years as part of the 'Brand Israel' campaign, discussed in the introduction. The image and text give an impression of an Israel which is open, welcoming, and cosmopolitan. At the same time, the advert is a descendent of the earlier Israeli discourse of 'Mediterraneanism', now less widely discussed. Mediterraneanism emerged in the early 1980s, and rose to mainstream prominence in the 1990s, as a loose collection of ideas which formed a new conception of Israel as a 'Mediterranean' country.[3] It was popular among academics, politicians, and the Israeli public, and foregrounded Israel's coastal location and seeming ethnic diversity as core components of a bold, pluralistic and outward-looking Israeli culture. The optimism about regional inclusion implicit in Mediterraneanism reflected the wider political climate following the Oslo Accords of 1993-1995. Indeed, Mediterraneanism has been cited as a cultural counterpart of the formal peace process. Much like the peace process, however, the benefits of Mediterraneanism have been unevenly distributed. As its incorporation into a tourism advert highlights, the ultimate value of this reorientation has largely been economic. Mediterraneanism has served to ease Israel's integration into global economic processes, much more than it has shown any substantive Israeli commitments to cultural reciprocity with Palestinians or the surrounding region.

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[3] See Nocke, chap. 2.

Israeli Mediterraneanism bears intriguing resemblances to the way in which California has,

from the late nineteenth century onwards, often been depicted in tourist literature as a

'Mediterranean' region. Often this discourse centres on California as an 'improved', or more

accurately, sanitised, version of the actual Mediterranean; in one publicist's words, 'the

climate of the topics without its perils'.[4] In this account, these 'perils' seem to be

discomfiting encounters with the local poor (Egypt's 'fellaheen' and Sicily's 'lazzaroni'), or

with racial and religious otherness (the 'oppressions' of Islam).[5] This Mediterranean imagery

has been widely used. As Mike Davis writes:

> '[f]or more than a century, this Mediterranean metaphor has been sprinkled like a
>
> cheap perfume over hundreds of instant subdivisions, creating a faux landscape
>
> celebrating a fictional history from which original Indian and Mexican ancestors have
>
> been expunged'.[6]

In both contexts, 'the Mediterranean' is deployed as a familiar and marketable commodity

which attracts tourist dollars and external investment, and enables local histories of

colonialist violence to be more effectively concealed.

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[4] Cited in William Deverell and Douglas Flamming, 'Race, Rhetoric and Regional Identity: Boosting Los Angeles,

1880–1930', in *Power and Place in the North American West*, ed. by Richard White and John M. Findlay

(Washington, DC: University of Washington Press, 1999), pp. 117–143, p. 118.

[5] ibid.

[6] Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (New York: Metropolitan Books,

1998), pp. 11–12.

Israeli Mediterraneanism has been studied by social scientists and is emerging as a field of

study within Cultural Studies, primarily in the work of Alexandra Nocke and David Ohana.[7]

Its literary manifestations have received little attention. In this chapter I examine

Mediterraneanism in Israeli literature through the novel *The Same Sea* (*Oto ha-Yam*), by

Amos Oz, often described as Israel's 'national novelist'.[8] *The Same Sea* is cited by Nocke and

Ohana as a characteristically 'Mediterranean' novel.[9] It was published in Hebrew in 1999

and in English translation in 2001, meaning that its inception dates to the peak of

Mediterraneanism's popularity. *The Same Sea* is something of an outlier in Oz's works in

terms of geographical setting and style, and it is perhaps for this reason that it has not been

discussed in any of the many studies of his writing. Set between the city of Bat Yam on the

Mediterranean coast, Tel Aviv, and various locations in South East Asia, the novel avoids the

more traditional 'Zionist places' of Oz's other works, such as the kibbutz, Jerusalem, and

Israel's 1950s development towns.[10] The novel's experimental style, in terms of structure,

narration, and alternation between poetry and prose, differs sharply from Oz's other works,

which tend to be written in a psychological realist mode.[11]

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[7] Nocke; David Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology: Neither Canaanites Nor Crusaders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); David Ohana, *Israel and Its Mediterranean Identity* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

[8] Amos Oz, *The Same Sea*, trans. by Nicholas de Lange (London: Vintage, 2002).

[9] Nocke, p. 148; Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 193.

[10] I take this phrase from Grumberg, p. 6.

[11] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 96; Cleary, p. 146.

Much to Oz's frustration of late, his novels have typically been read by critics as Jamesonian 'national allegories'.[12] The atypical setting and experimental form of *The Same Sea* led reviewers to interpret it differently; for instance, Jonathan Freedland in *the Guardian* described *The Same Sea* as 'avowedly, a work of art, not politics – a break from the din of the conflict, and a journey into the quieter, more elusive terrain of the heart.'[13] I am unable to draw on academic scholarship here because it does not exist, at least not in English. In what follows, I read the novel as much more continuous with Oz's earlier works, arguing that the sea in Oz's novel operates as 'a frontier of capitalism and colonial expansion'.[14] I demonstrate that Mediterraneanism corresponds to earlier Zionist settler-colonial ideologies in the ways in which it facilitates Israel's claims of sovereignty over the land and sea of Israel/Palestine. It does so through describing 'routes' across the sea, rather than 'roots' in the land, which seem to naturalise Israel's presence as part of the Mediterranean's long-term regional history.[15] In doing so, I highlight dubious aspects of Mediterraneanism often skipped over by its advocates, including its philosophical lineage in fascism and colonialism, and Braudel's own neglected intersections with this history.

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[12] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 95.

[13] Jonathan Freedland, 'Cease Fire', *Guardian*, 22 February 2001, p. 10.

[14] Margaret Cohen, 'Literary Studies on the Terraqueous Globe', *PMLA*, 125 (2010), 657–62 (p. 657).

[15] Here I refer to Elizabeth DeLoughrey's use of the phrase in the context of oceans, migration and literature. DeLoughrey herself is drawing on the work of the anthropologist James Clifford. Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and Roots: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007).

I argue that instead of representing a new integration into the region, the Mediterranean affiliation operates to exclude another 'imaginative geography', the Orient.[16] By this I refer both to the Eastern European Jewish culture rejected by Zionism, as well as the more familiar meaning, in this context, of an imagined and stigmatised version of the Arab world. Mediterraneanism produces an image of Israel which is attractive to, and aligned with, Europe and North America, and which facilitates the process of Israel's integration into the global economy that began with Oslo. At the same time, Oz's representation of a tranquil Mediterranean space becomes a means of covering the social and ecological violence caused by Israeli and European policies in the Mediterranean. In *The Same Sea*, these are displaced onto the developing world, through hydrological metaphors used to suggest the process of globalisation. My discussion of *The Same Sea* provides a reminder, in spite of the optimism of much criticism on the ocean's 'global connections', of the ways in which representations of the sea can be incorporated into articulations of state power. By foregrounding the reality of the sea as a lived, material space, this chapter challenges the widespread tendency to view the sea only as a metaphor, evident in Oz's text, and in criticism more widely.[17] Through a reading of Oz's text, this chapter offers a vital corrective to existing tendencies in scholarly work on literature and the sea.

**The Origins of Israeli Mediterraneanism**

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[16] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 49.

[17] On this tendency, see Philip E. Steinberg, 'Of Other Seas: Metaphors and Materialities in Maritime Regions', *Atlantic Studies*, 10 (2013), 156–69.

Academic advocates of Mediterraneanism stress its intellectual origins in the work of French historian Fernand Braudel.[18] Braudel was one of the leaders of the French Annales School, a group of historians distinguished by their focus on the long-term, or '*longue durée*'. More recently, Braudel was a founding influence on the fields of world history and world-systems analysis, particularly, in the latter case, on the work of Immanuel Wallerstein.[19] In Braudel's famous two-volume *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1949), he examined the history of the Mediterranean region in the sixteenth century, focusing on structural changes ('underlying currents') rather than individual events ('crests of foam').[20] Braudel saw his project as '*geohistoire*', or a process of historiography rooted in the particular geography of a region, developing what we might now see as an early theory of (limited) environmental agency.[21] Braudel's Mediterranean has fuzzy boundaries. It is a region for which, he wrote, 'we should imagine a hundred frontiers, not one, some political, some economic, some cultural'.[22] The looseness of the region's borders and their composition out of geography, politics, economics and culture, indicates that the idea of the 'Mediterranean' might productively be seen in relation to Said's 'Orient'.[23] Indeed, the anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, who first coined the term 'Mediterraneanism' in the early 1980s, intended this parallel with Orientalism as a comment on generalisations and

[18] Nocke, p. 26; Ohana, *Israel and Its Mediterranean Identity*, pp. 5–6.

[19] See *The Longue Durée and World-Systems Analysis*, ed. by Robert E. Lee (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012).

[20] Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2nd edn., 2 vols. (London: William Collins Sons & Co, 1976), I, p. 21.

[21] Chakrabarty, p. 209.

[22] Braudel, pp. 168–170.

[23] Said, *Orientalism*.

stereotypes in ethnographic work on the Mediterranean region.[24] Herzfeld's comments on the intersections between power, geography and epistemology in the Mediterranean idea remain pertinent in the Israeli context.

One change that Mediterraneanism initially seemed to offer was a new recognition of Israel's Mizrahi Jewish communities. These groups originate from Israel's local geographical region, the Middle East and North Africa, but have long been marginalised in Israel's national culture, dominated by Ashkenazi Jews of European origin.[25] As Nocke notes, mainstream Israeli interest in Mizrahi culture, particularly music, increased significantly in the 1990s, paralleling a rising Israeli curiosity about Arab culture more widely which followed the Oslo peace negotiations.[26] The increasing visibility of Mizrahi culture, which had previously been stigmatised, seemed to indicate a greater Israeli openness towards the surrounding region, as part of the Mediterranean phenomenon; indeed, this aspect of Israeli culture in the 1990s forms a primary aspect of Nocke's claims for Israel as a 'Mediterranean' country.[27] Commentators who professed suspicions about cultural appropriation and concessions to silence Mizrahi dissent were closer to the mark.[28] The 'Mediterranean' trend for Mizrahi music lent an appearance of inclusivity to contemporary Israel, while

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[24] Michael Herzfeld, 'The Horns of the Mediterraneanist Dilemma', *American Ethnologist*, 11 (1984), 439–54.

[25] On Israel's Arab Jewish population, see Ella Shohat, 'The Invention of the Mizrahim', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29 (1999), 5–20.

[26] Nocke, pp. 54–55.

[27] Nocke, p. 62.

[28] Motti Regev and Edwin Seroussi, *Popular Music and National Culture in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), pp. 230–31.

unsurprisingly failing to translate into any actual decrease in levels of social and institutional discrimination against Mizrahi communities.[29]

In spite of this, at least in its early years, Mediterraneanism seemed to offer a new conception of Israeli identity which moved beyond previously dominant, exclusionary national narratives. These earlier narratives had long been in decline, hastened by scholarly and social trends of the mid-to-late twentieth century. In the late 1980s, a group of predominantly Israeli academics known as the 'New Historians' or 'Revisionists' (not to be confused with Zionist leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky's right-wing Revisionists, discussed in Chapter Three) began to challenge dominant Israeli historiographical interpretations of the 1948 war, often relying on newly released archival material. Scholars such as Simha Flapan, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev and Avi Shlaim questioned accepted truths, including the assumption of Israel as an innocent victim of Arab aggression and intransigence, the claim of Israel as a home for all Jews (undermined, as noted above, by the negative experiences of Arab Jews), and the myth of Palestinian refugees as having willingly left their homes.[30]

This period saw considerable social and political change, which further diminished the appeal of earlier concepts of Israeli identity, and heightened the appeal of Mediterraneanism as an alternative. Developments included the decline of Israel's previously dominant Labour movement and the rise of the right-wing Likud party,

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[29] ibid.

[30] Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel: Myths and Realities* (New York: Pantheon, 1987); Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Ilan Pappé, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948-51* (London: Macmillan, 1988); Tom Segev, *1949: The First Israelis* (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement and the Partition of Palestine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988).

consolidated in Likud's election victory of 1977; the growth of Israel's settler movement and religious right; and the strengthening of Palestinian nationalism, paralleled by a growing unease among some Israelis with the country's historic and contemporary treatment of Palestinians.[31] Israel's Mizrahi Jewish population began to make greater demands for national recognition and inclusion, while the pace of economic liberalisation was hastened by the Oslo Process.[32] Traditional Zionist narratives of national identity based on Labour mythologies of settlement seemed inadequate as a way of accounting for Israel's increasingly disparate national collective. 'Post-Zionism' emerged at this time as part of a search for a new, liberal and democratic form of Israeli identity, with the term being coined in 1993 by Israeli sociologist Uri Ram.[33]

This is the point at which Mediterraneanism comes in. While earlier accounts of Israeli identity seemed ideologically tainted and artificial, the seashore – as a symbolically outward-looking space, and with its connotations of leisure and relaxation – represented the exact opposite of dated socialist Zionist narratives of building the land, furnishing it with considerable appeal. Ohana described the seashore as taking a prime role in the 'geography of collective redemption', because of its capacity to stand in for 'the new liberated Jewish existence'.[34] If the seashore seems materially very distant from traditional Zionist narratives

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[31] On these trends, see Uri Ram, 'From Nation-State to Nation-----State: Nation, History and Identity Struggles in Jewish Israel', in *The Challenge of Post-Zionism: Alternatives to Fundamentalist Politics in Israel*, ed. by Ephraim Nimni (London: Zed Books, 2003), pp. 20–41.

[32] ibid, pp. 25–26.

[33] Uri Ram, *The Changing Agenda of Israeli Sociology: Theory, Ideology, and Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[34] Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 192.

of land and nation, it ultimately plays a similar role. The reframing of Israel as the sunny home of tanned beachgoers, and natural destination of Europeans on their summer holidays, works to demonstrate, as Ohana writes, 'the normality of the life lived by the Jews', an end which earlier Zionists sought to accomplish.[35]

The peak in popularity of the Mediterranean idea in the 1990s coincided with a period of political optimism in Israel, and needs to be understood in relation to this background.[36] The ostensibly conciliatory politics of the Rabin and Peres administrations of the early 1990s, and the Oslo Accords, appeared to promise – in spite of how distant these hopes now seem – an end to the conflict with the Palestinians. For Ohana, these peacemaking possibilities came in the opportunity provided by Mediterraneanism to view contemporary Israel as part of the region's Braudelian *longue-durée*, and outside the framework of the comparatively recent conflict. He writes:

> The Mediterranean option offers a dialogue, not a confrontation. It proposes a voyage, a slow and reflective cultural journey rather than a civil war in which, as in all wars, there must be only losers. It is a journey from the shores of Israeli identities to their mental and intellectual sources, the landscape of *mare nostrum*. It is a journey with, not a flight from, the Israelis' immediate neighbours, the Arabs and Palestinians. It is a journey to the space where everything was born: western and eastern civilization, monotheism and Hellenism, the polis and the Renaissance, the Old and the New Testaments.[37]

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[35] ibid.

[36] Hochberg, '"The Mediterranean Option"', p. 41.

[37] Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 225.

This view of the Mediterranean as an asset in peace negotiations draws in a number of ways on the metaphorical connotations of water, specifically its behaviour in the Mediterranean basin. The Mediterranean is a semi-enclosed sea, with a narrow connection to the Atlantic Sea via the Strait of Gibraltar. This structure means that water molecules can remain in the Mediterranean basin for up to a century, a measurement known as 'residence time'.[38] Ohana's account romanticises these physical characteristics by representing the Mediterranean as a site of movement, flows, and circulations. In his metaphorical sea, water's property of being a 'universal solvent', and a material medium of connection and communication, becomes the basis for a poetic imagination of ancient cultural intermingling and exchange.[39]

At this time, the benefits of peace for Israelis and Palestinians were increasingly being articulated in economic terms, largely by Israelis, but also by some Palestinian leaders.[40] Peacemaking was seen by growing factions within the Labour party and Israel's new 'business community' as the route to future prosperity for both Israelis and Palestinians, leading to the end of the damaging Arab boycott for Israel, as well as increased regional

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[38] Andrés Cózar Marina Sanz-Martín, Elisa Martí, J. Ignacio González-Gordillo, and others, 'Plastic Accumulation in the Mediterranean Sea', *PLoS ONE*, 10 (2015), 1–12 (p. 2).

[39] Astrida Neimanis, 'Feminist Subjectivity, Watered', *Feminist Review*, 103 (2013), 24–41 (pp. 30–31).

[40] Joel Beinin, 'The Oslo Process and the Limits of a Pax Americana', in *The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993-2005*, ed. by Rebecca L. Stein and Joel Beinin (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 21–27 (p. 21).

trade, and greater investment by multinational corporations.[41] This linkage between regional cooperation, globalisation, and economic prosperity was the basis of Peres' vision of a 'New Middle East'.[42] The European Union, too, has been a major influence on the growth of the Mediterranean idea in Israel. It has acted through the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, formerly known as the Barcelona Process when initiated in 1995, and relaunched in 2008 as the Union for the Mediterranean. The project professed grand ambitions of nurturing regional economic prosperity, political stability and cultural understanding.[43] I return to the relationship between Europe and the Mediterranean towards the end of the chapter.

The familiar narrative of Israeli-Palestinian politics in the 1990s is that the early optimism of the era turned out to be short-lived, dissipating with the Second Intifada.[44] Since the fortunes of the Mediterranean idea were so closely tied to the era's political processes, it has, unsurprisingly, fallen out of favour in contemporary Israeli political discourse. In the context of the violence of the early 2000s, ideas about Mediterranean cultural unity, exchange, or even a neoliberal peace premised on unsustainable economic growth, no longer seemed tenable. In retrospect, the period never really promised as much for Palestinians as it seemed. Edward Said's outspoken critique of the Oslo Accords as a

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[41] Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled, 'Peace and Profits: The Globalisation of Israeli Business and the Peace Process', in *The New Israel: Peacemaking and Liberalisation*, ed. by Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000).

[42] Peres, *The New Middle East*.

[43] These are referred to as the three 'baskets' of the Process.

[44] Jan Selby, 'Dressing up Domination as "cooperation": The Case of Israeli-Palestinian Water Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 29 (2003), 121–38 (p. 121).

'Palestinian capitulation' has since proven an accurate summary of the vastly unequal benefits offered to Israelis and Palestinians.[45] It is often forgotten that even in the immediate wake of Oslo, Israel continued to pursue its policies of closure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, hitting Palestinian economic life severely, while the settler population grew dramatically over the course of Rabin and Peres' supposedly left-wing administrations.[46] The 'peacemaking' discourse of Mediterraneanism made very little impression on the situation on the ground. It is telling that it has never been adopted by Palestinians.[47]

While the political currency of Mediterraneanism has dissipated, it retains an ongoing commercial and cultural afterlife, as in the tourism advertisement discussed above. The mass-market airline easyJet began flying from London to Tel Aviv in 2009, suggesting the country's emergence as a 'Mediterranean' holiday destination.[48] The idea of Israel as a Mediterranean country featured in two Channel 4 television series presented by Israeli chef Yotam Ottolenghi at the height of his fame in 2012 and 2013, in which Ottolenghi acted as an insider 'guide' to the region's culinary cultures for UK audiences.[49] It is difficult to imagine a programme framed in terms of 'Israeli' rather than 'Mediterranean' food being quite as palatable to European viewers, even if hosted by the phenomenally popular

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[45] Edward Said, 'The Morning After', *London Review of Books*, 21 October 1993, pp. 3–5.

[46] Beinin, p. 29.

[47] For Palestinian perspectives on the Mediterranean idea, see 'Is There a Mediterranean Identity?', ed. by Ghassan Khatib and Yossi Alpher, *Bitterlemons*, 2 (2004).

[48] easyJet, 'easyJet to Fly to Israel with NEW London Luton - Tel Aviv Service', *easyJet,* 30 September 2009 <http://corporate.easyjet.com/latest-news-archive/news-year-2009/30-09-09.aspx?sc_lang=en> [accessed 23 June 2015].

[49] Yotam Ottolenghi, *Ottolenghi's Mediterranean Island Feast* (London: Channel 4, 2013); Yotam Ottolenghi, *Ottolenghi's Mediterranean Feast* (London: Channel 4, 2012).

Ottolenghi, with his skilful ability to excavate the political content of the most controversial topics, through clichéd gestures to the peacemaking possibilities of hummus and falafel.[50] This apparent distance from politics is a core element of Mediterraneanism's appeal. Its current incarnation, as an advertising discourse, seems perhaps more honest than its earlier, vastly more ambitious form, as 'proof' of Israel's ethnic diversity and tolerance, and a potential route to peace.

**Ecocriticism and the Sea**

The sea has been the main way in which literary critics have engaged with the topic of water. Much like Israeli advocates of Mediterraneanism, critics have tended to present the sea as a transnational, connective, potentially even 'postcolonial' space, which contains the potential to unseat the divisive politics associated with land. For instance, in her introduction to an influential issue of the journal *Atlantic Studies* on the theme of 'Oceanic Studies', Hester Blum states that focusing on the sea could replace 'land- and nation-based perspectives' with 'a constitutive position of unboundedness, drift, and solvency', which might offer 'capacious possibilities for new forms of relationality' derived from 'the fluidity of its object', the ocean.[51] In an introduction to a collection of essays on the sea in South African literature, Herman Wittenberg similarly takes the sea's liquid and mobile materiality as a starting point for positing it as 'a space of alternative imaginative investment'.[52]

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[50] A typical line: 'hummus will eventually bring Jerusalemites together, if nothing else will.' Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi, 'Introduction', in *Jerusalem* (London: Ebury Press, 2013), pp. 8–21 (p. 13).

[51] Hester Blum, 'Introduction: Oceanic Studies', *Atlantic Studies*, 10 (2013), 151–55 (p. 152).

[52] Hermann Wittenberg, 'Editorial: Coastlines and Littoral Zones in South African Ecocritical Writing', *AlterNation*, 2013, 1–8 (p. 3).

'[W]riting the sea', he argues, has the potential to be a subversive or even liberatory act, one which 'undoes topographies of power' associated with questions of land and nation.[53]

The sea has recently risen to the forefront of research agendas in the humanities more widely. Here too, there has been a tendency to take the sea as the basis for regional imaginaries which seem to challenge the boundaries of the nation-state. In History, for instance, Paul Gilroy, Marcus Rediker and Peter Linebaugh, and Arif Dirlik, take the Atlantic (Gilroy, Rediker, Linebaugh) and the Pacific (Dirlik) as units of analysis for studies of communities and cultures which travel beyond borders.[54] In Geography, Lambert, Martins and Ogborn argue that the turn to the sea represents a 'radically decentring – and postcolonialising – move that marginalises nation-state centred historical master narratives.'[55] By portraying the sea as a 'postcolonialising' space, a term which Lambert, Martins and Ogborn seem to use in order to indicate the potential for critical engagements with the sea to recover neglected histories, their article mirrors the oceanic optimism, even utopianism, of Blum and Wittenberg.

Others have called for moderation of discourse surrounding the sea's emancipatory potential. Geographers Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters acknowledge that the sea's

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[53] Ibid., pp. 5, 2.

[54] *What Is in a Rim?: Critical Perspectives on the Pacific Region Idea*, ed. by Arif Dirlik, 2nd edn (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The Many-Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2000).

[55] David Lambert, Luciana Martins and Miles Ogborn, 'Currents, Visions and Voyages: Historical Geographies of the Sea', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006), 479–93.

liminality can certainly allow it to become a site of subversive political practices.[56] However,

they caution that overgeneralisations from these instances often fail to consider the

perspectives of those who live in close proximity to the sea and depend on it for their

livelihoods.[57] Such extrapolations neglect the ocean's material and metaphoric

inextricability from the rather less liberatory processes of contemporary capitalism.[58] Even

in the age of hegemonic finance capital, around ninety per cent of the world's goods still

travel by container ship.[59] The ocean, too, plays a crucial role in imagining the global

economic order. It is, as Christopher Connery notes, 'capital's favoured myth-element.'[60]

Ecocritics who have brought the relationship between capitalism and the sea to the fore, as

Patricia Yaeger does in her excellent editorial to a *PMLA* special section on Oceanic Studies,

can still perpetuate a view of the sea which erases the nation.[61] Yaeger for instance

discusses 'the tragedy of the oceanic commons', without a crucial analysis of the unequal

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[56] Philip Steinberg and Kimberley Peters, 'Wet Ontologies, Fluid Spaces: Giving Depth to Volume through

Oceanic Thinking', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 33 (2015), 247–64 (p. 1); Steinberg, 'Of

Other Seas', p. 158.

[57] Ibid.

[58] Ibid. Steinberg has written widely on this theme. His most influential work remains *The Social Construction

of the Ocean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[59] Rose George, *Ninety Percent of Everything: Inside Shipping, the Invisible Industry That Puts Clothes on Your

Back, Gas in Your Car, and Food on Your Plate* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2013).

[60] Christopher Connery, 'Pacific Rim Discourse: The US Global Imaginary in the Late Cold War Years', in

*Asia/Pacific as Space of Cultural Production*, ed. by Rob Wilson and Arif Dirlik (Durham, NC: Duke University

Press, 1995), pp. 30–56 (p. 56).

[61] Patricia Yaeger, 'Editor's Column: Sea Trash, Dark Pools, and the Tragedy of the Commons', *PMLA*, 125

(2010), 523–45.

responsibility for bringing about this 'tragedy'.[62] A critic who has questioned the nation's

disappearance in the turn to the sea is Elizabeth DeLoughrey, who examines the American-

led militarisation of ocean space.[63] In this chapter I build on DeLoughrey's rare sceptical

approach to the literary maritime turn, and draw from Steinberg and Peters' geographical

emphasis on the sea as both a metaphor, and a lived, material space.

**Israel and the Sea**

Before examining Oz's text, it is useful to briefly consider the longer historical context for

Israel's present-day interest in the Mediterranean. The recent turn towards the sea follows

a long period during which the sea was typically viewed as marginal to Israeli history and

culture. Accounts of early Zionist perceptions of the sea often describe Zionism as premised

on a rejection, or as Hannan Hever writes, a 'repression', of the sea.[64] The sea is usually

described in relation to Zionism's founding national narrative of clandestine Ashkenazi

Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s, known as the 'Aliyah

Bet'.[65] In these histories, the sea is portrayed as a mere route to the longed-for land of

Palestine, and the dangerous maritime voyages as a continuation of the existential

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[62] Yaeger, 'Sea Trash, Dark Pools', pp. 528, 524. For a critique of this concept, see Rob Nixon, 'Neoliberalism,

Genre, and "the Tragedy of the Commons"', *PMLA*, 127 (2012), 539–99.

[63] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Heavy Waters: Waste and Atlantic Modernity', *PMLA*, 125 (2010), 703–12 (p. 705).

[64] Hannan Hever, 'They Shall Dwell by the Haven of the Sea: Israeli Poetry, 1950-60', *Mediterranean Historical

Review*, 17 (2002), 49–64 (p. 51).

[65] Gilbert Herbert, 'A View of the Sea: Jews and the Maritime Tradition', in *Jewish Topographies: Visions of

Space, Traditions of Place*, ed. by Anna Lipphardt and Alexandra Nocke Julia Brauch (Aldershot and Burlington,

VA: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 181–200 (p. 191); Hannan Hever, 'The Zionist Sea: Symbolism and Nationalism in

Modernist Hebrew Poetry', *Jewish Culture and History*, 13 (2012), 25–41 (pp. 27–28).

uncertainty of life in the diaspora at this time.[66] Some of the discourse around Israelis'

apparent lack of interest in the sea relies on an uncomfortable geographical, even genetic,

determinism. In remarks which are essentialising and highly speculative, Gideon Ofrat

argues that the relatively few portrayals of the sea in Israeli art may be because '[f]rom our

very roots, it may be that the Jewish genes, which never liked the sea, recoiled from it'.[67]

The experience of living in 'little Jewish shtetls far from the seashore' led, Ofrat claims, to a

distaste among immigrants to Israel/Palestine for the open sea.[68]

As writers in the newly emerging field of 'Jewish maritime studies' have highlighted, the

above gives a partial picture of early Zionist perspectives on the ocean.[69] In the pre- and

early state period, imagining Jewish relationships to the sea provided a way to establish a

'native' Israeli identity. This can be seen in Moshe Shamir's 1951 novel *With His Own Hands*,

which famously opens with the line 'Elik was born from the sea', suggesting a Hebrew

*creatio ex nihilo* in the land of Israel.[70] Members of the Canaanite and Revisionist

movements invoked the sea in efforts to establish the ancient roots of the Jewish people in

Palestine. They did so through attempts – again, highly speculative – to recover an ancient

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[66] Herbert, p. 191.

[67] Cited in Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 194.

[68] ibid.

[69] Maoz Azaryahu, 'The Formation of the "Hebrew Sea" in Pre-State Israel', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 7 (2008), 251–67; Joachim Schlör, 'Tel Aviv: (With Its) Back to the Sea? An Excursion into Jewish Maritime Studies', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8 (2009), 215–35; Joachim Schlör, 'Towards Jewish Maritime Studies', *Jewish Culture and History*, 13 (2012), 1–6.

[70] Moshe Shamir, *With His Own Hands*, trans. by Joseph Shachter (Jerusalem: Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature and Israel Universities Press, 1970), p. 1; Nocke, p. 13.

Hebrew maritime tradition.[71] This maritime heritage was an institutional priority. As Maoz

Azaryahu notes, the Palestine Maritime League was founded in 1937 with the aim of

encouraging Jewish seafaring.[72] It seems improbable now, but one prominent early

twentieth century settlement movement promoted the idea that being a fisherman or

dockworker was as worthwhile an occupation for pioneers as farming.[73]

Ben-Gurion is the Zionist leader most associated with the ideologies of settling the land and

making the desert bloom, but he thought of the 'conquest of the soil' and 'conquest of the

sea' as complementary.[74] For Ben-Gurion, the value of the sea was more pragmatic. He

described Israel's Mediterranean coastal location as 'a fact of economic, political and

strategic moment'.[75] As indicated by this chapter's epigraph, Ben-Gurion believed the sea to

be a major potential source of income, filled with exploitable natural resources.[76] In

addition, the Mediterranean provided something that the land could not: a 'bridge' to the

world, and particularly, to Europe.[77] Maritime connections would allow Israel to maintain a

European identity, and 'preserve [its] connection with the centres of culture in the west',

while 'returning to the east'.[78] Routes across the sea were important to maintain given

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[71] Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, pp. 188–190; Hever, 'The Zionist Sea', p. 65.

[72] Azaryahu, 'The Formation of the "Hebrew Sea"', p. 262.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Cited in Azaryahu, 'The Formation of the "Hebrew Sea"', p. 259.

[75] Ben-Gurion, 'The Navy, Israel and the Sea', pp. 312, 310.

[76] ibid.

[77] Cited in Azaryahu, 'The Formation of the "Hebrew Sea" in Pre-State Israel', p. 259.

[78] Cited in Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 186.

Israel's recent war with the Arab states, which surrounded Israel on land.[79] Global maritime travel paradoxically promised to reinforce Israel's hold on the land of Israel/Palestine: Ben-Gurion argued that the 'conquest of the sea' would allow the Jewish people to travel the world and attest to Israel's success.[80] While he made optimistic claims about the capacity of the sea to increase global unity, stating that 'the sea unites [nations] and brings them close', Ben-Gurion was more invested in the potential of the sea to unite Israel with certain nations over others, and to aid Israel's project of securing control over the land.[81] These cautions are pertinent when discussing the contemporary phenomenon of Mediterraneanism.

**Amos Oz and Mediterraneanism**

A number of Israeli authors have engaged with Israel's apparent Mediterranean connections, including the poets Erez Biton and Natan Yonatan, and novelist A. B. Yehoshua.[82] I focus on Oz because of the significance of his Mediterranean turn in terms of international perceptions of Israel. While Yehoshua has a high public profile within Israel, none of these writers approximates Oz's international visibility. Oz is the most translated Israeli novelist, with works in 46 languages, and has received many awards, including the Israel Prize, the Goethe Prize (Germany) and the Prince of Asturias Award (Spain).[83] He is

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[79] Ben-Gurion, 'The Navy, Israel and the Sea', p. 310.

[80] ibid., p. 313.

[81] Ben-Gurion, 'The Navy, Israel and the Sea', pp. 311–312.

[82] On Biton and Yonaton, see: Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 190. See also: A. B. Yehoshua, *Mr. Mani* , trans. by Hillel Halkin (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1993).

[83] Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature, *Amos Oz* (Online: ITHL, n.d.), 2015 <http://www.ithl.org.il/page_13793> [accessed 8 June 2015]; 'Amos Oz Archive', *Amos Oz Archive*, Date Unknown <http://in.bgu.ac.il/en/heksherim/Archives/Pages/Amos-Oz-Archive.aspx>.

frequently mooted as a candidate for the Nobel Prize for Literature.[84] Oz's international

stature derives in large part from his reputation as a determined advocate of the liberal

values of reason and moderation in the fraught contexts of Israeli and Palestinian political

discourse, values which, as I discuss below, are less virtuous than they seem.[85] He has had a

long association with the Zionist left, frequently acting as its spokesperson. Oz opposed the

occupation of the Palestinian territories from early on, helped to found the organisation

Peace Now in 1978, and participated in the drafting of the unofficial Geneva Accords in

2003.[86] He has authored a number of non-fictional books on the conflict, and publishes

regularly in the international press, particularly during times of crisis.[87]

Oz's leftist image has been sharply criticised by anti-Zionists. The Israeli poet Yitzhak Laor, in

particular, has forcefully opposed the way in which Oz is 'taken for granted as a man of

peace'.[88] Oz, Laor writes, has never been as much of an outsider within Israel as he tends to

claim, and 'has always been a favourite son of the Israeli establishment, not least the

Army.'[89] In his commentary, Oz positions himself as a supporter of 'disappointing

compromise' as the ultimate outcome of the conflict, which he sees as an inevitable

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[84] Alison Flood, 'Amos Oz Is Bookie's Favourite for Nobel', *Guardian*, 23 September 2009

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/sep/23/amos-oz-nobel-odds> [accessed 8 June 2015].

[85] Bernard, p. 91.

[86] ibid.

[87] Amos Oz, *How to Cure a Fanatic* (London: Vintage, 2012); Amos Oz, *Under This Blazing Light*, trans. by

Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Canto, 1996); Amos Oz, *In the Land of Israel*, trans. by Amos Oz (San Diego:

Harcourt Brace, 1993).

[88] Yitzhak Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 73.73

[89] Yitzhak Laor, 'The Tears of Zion', *New Left Review,* 10 (July-August 2001), 47–60 (p. 54).

partition of the land into two states.[90] This support for partition indicates that Oz's

sensibilities are not as dissenting as they appear.[91] Indeed, Oz's reputation for compassion

towards the Palestinians comes from his frequent claim, first articulated after the 1967 war,

that the conflict is 'a clash between right and right', on the model of a Greek tragedy.[92]

While ostensibly speaking with what might appear to be the rare and admirable virtue of

'balance', Oz's remark depicts what Edward Said has described elsewhere as a 'false

symmetry' between two drastically unequal partners.[93] Elsewhere, Oz deploys aggressive

rhetoric against the Palestinians and Palestinian leadership. In a *Guardian* article cited by

Laor, Oz rails against Yasser Arafat, calling him 'a colossal tragedy for both peoples', and

claims that '[t]he Palestinian people are suffocated and paralysed by blind hate.'[94] This

characterisation by a writer renowned for his empathy towards Palestinians is little different

from the stereotype of the Palestinian 'terrorist'.[95] Such a combination of ostensibly

'progressive' sentiments with belligerent incitement and virtually unquestioning support for

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[90]  Amos Oz, 'The Meaning of Homeland', in *Under This Blazing Light*, trans. by Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Canto, 1996), pp. 77–101 (p. 91).

[91] On borders and partition in Oz's writing and political views, see Cleary, chap. 4.

[92] Oz, 'The Meaning of Homeland', p. 91.

[93] Edward Said, 'The Burdens of Interpretation and the Question of Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16 (1986), 29–37 (p. 33).

[94] Cited in Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism*, pp. 42–43.

[95] On this stereotype, see Anna Bernard, 'Another Black September? Palestine Writing after 9/11', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 46 (2010), 349–58; Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*, 2nd edn (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2009); Jack Shaheen, *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2008).

the actions of the Israeli state is, as Laor notes, typical of liberal Zionist discourse, which often seems, in practice, barely distinguishable from the language of the right-wing Likud.[96]

Oz's reputation as a conciliatory leftist, and its contradictions, makes his turn to Mediterraneanism significant in a number of ways. Mediterraneanism, as noted above, has been presented as a cultural counterpart to formal peace negotiations. The fact that it has managed to garner such an apparently distinguished spokesperson of the left as an advocate underscores its image, for international audiences, as a potentially peacemaking discourse. The criticisms of Oz's politics are similarly pertinent. While *The Same Sea* gestures towards a regionalism and Israeli multiculturalism in ways largely absent from Oz's other works, these differences prove superficial. Ultimately, the novel serves to naturalise Israel as a white, Western-identified, Jewish country.

The legitimating effect of Oz's endorsement of Mediterraneanism is heightened by his initial scepticism. Oz asserts that he once dismissed Mediterraneanism as an academic and ideological construct.[97] He now refers to the Mediterranean idea as 'the real Israel'. His comments in a 2009 interview with the *Jewish Chronicle* are typical:

> Some 70 or 80 per cent of Israelis live on the coastal plain. They are very
> Mediterranean. Secular to the bone. Noisy, passionate, materialistic, hedonistic,
> selfish. Coastal plain Israel — containing the bulk of the Israeli population — is like

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[96] Laor, *The Myths of Liberal Zionism*, p. 43.
[97] Nocke, pp. 147–148.

Piraeus, like Naples, like Barcelona. A warm-hearted, noisy Mediterranean

community.[98]

Oz juxtaposes this 'real' Israel with '[t]he Israel you see in the media', which he characterises

as a disparate and implausible grouping of fanatical settlers, cruel soldiers and a minority of

intellectuals, like Oz himself.[99] He also contrasts today's apparently Mediterranean Israel

with early Zionist aspirations 'of an Austria-Hungary in the heart of the Middle East', and

'the dream of reviving the biblical kingdom of David and Solomon, or replicating the Eastern

European shtetl.'[100] Mediterraneanism, for Oz, represents Israel's reality, rather than an

ideological imposition.

Oz continues to profess his support for the Mediterranean idea in interviews.[101] Indeed, he

has left his former desert home of Arad for an apartment in Tel Aviv with a view of the

sea.[102] Still, his literary engagement with Mediterraneanism was brief. It began with the

concluding chapter of his 1982 travelogue *In the Land of Israel* (*Poh ve-sham be-eretz Israel*),

was reiterated in the 1993 preface to its English translation, and gained fictional form only

in *The Same Sea*.[103] In the numerous works Oz has since published, the most prominent

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[98] Gerald Jacobs, 'Interview: Amos Oz', *Jewish Chronicle*, 26 February 2009 <http://www.thejc.com/arts/arts-interviews/interview-amos-oz> [accessed 28 February 2014].

[99] ibid.

[100] ibid.

[101] Sarah Ivry and Daniel Estrin, *Amos Oz, 74 Years Old and a National Treasure, Still Dreams of Life on the Kibbutz* (Online: Vox Tablet, 2013) <http://tabletmag.com/podcasts/145655/amos-oz-interview> [accessed 1 June 2015].

[102] ibid.

[103] Oz, *In the Land of Israel*.

settings have been the more traditional locations of Jerusalem and the kibbutz. This return

may be the result of Oz, now in old age, revisiting formative experiences, beginning with his

2002 memoir *A Tale of Love and Darkness (Sipur al Ahava ve-Hoshekh)*.[104] In another way,

we might see it as an acknowledgement of changing political times and their impact on local

and global literary trends. Even if Oz still finds Mediterraneanism personally appealing, its

wider political currency has dwindled inescapably since the 1990s, as Israel's shift towards

the right has hardened. Oz's return to these settings perhaps represents a pragmatic move

in terms of book sales, tapping into nostalgia for Israel's past, and facilitating an escape from

the violence of the present.

**Mediterranean Geographies**

Advocates of Mediterraneanism such as Nocke and Ohana often cite lived experience as the

main evidence for the claim that Israel is a Mediterranean country.[105] If *The Same Sea* is to

be read as a 'Mediterranean' novel, it is fitting that the main way in which the sea features

in the text is as a constant background which evokes a sense of location. This process begins

from the novel's very first lines: 'Not far from the sea, Mr Albert Danon/lives in Amirim

Street, alone, He is fond/of olives and feta'.[106] The sea is frequently referred to in relation to

the passing seasons, giving a sense of geographical permanence. This can be seen in the

lines: 'The winter is passing. The sea remains', and 'the sea is talking about autumn

already'.[107] Moments such as these lead Nocke to describe the sea in Oz's novel as 'a

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[104] Amos Oz, *A Tale of Love and Darkness*, trans. by Nicholas de Lange (London: Vintage, 2005).

[105] Nocke, pp. 145–148; Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 193.

[106] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 1.

[107] ibid., pp. 190, 97.

pleasing reality and symbol for everyday life in Bat Yam', the small Israeli coastal town in

which *The Same Sea* is set.[108] Oz's conception of Israel's Mediterranean identity derives,

Nocke writes, from his sense of this as merely 'a geographical reality linked to Israel's

physical location', and apparently detached from any 'ideological agenda'.[109] From an

ecocritical perspective, it is difficult to imagine that such an entirely apolitical environmental

description exists. As I discuss below, in Oz's text it clearly does not.

The sea is associated in the text with stereotypical elements of Mediterranean culture,

climate and diet. This begins from the first line, quoted above, and recurs elsewhere in the

text: in the salads the characters prepare for each other, and in the memories of home

recalled by Albert's son Enrico David (Rico) while away in South East Asia.[110] Rico spends the

entire duration of the novel on a backpacking trip which, like many Israelis, he embarks on

following his completion of Israel's compulsory military service.[111] From Tibet, Rico recalls

Israel in a sequence of associative sensory memories: 'A ruin. A church. A fig tree. A bell/A

tower. A tiled roof. Wrought-iron grilles. A lemon tree./The smell of fried fish. And between

two walls/a sail and a sea rocking.'[112] This repeated combination of different elements of

geography and culture leads Nocke to claim that Mediterraneanism for Oz is a means of

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[108] Nocke, p. 148.

[109] Nocke, p. 148.

[110] Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 32, 38, 51.

[111] Israeli backpacker experiences have become a growing field of sociological study. For a sample of work, see *Israeli Backpackers: From Tourism to Rite of Passage*, ed. by Erik Cohen and Chaim Noy (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005).

[112] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 5.

depicting Israel's 'rootedness in the region, the way of life, and state of mind'.[113] In this way, the acknowledgement of place and locality implied by Mediterraneanism can be seen as having ecological undertones, which contrast sharply with the drastic alterations of the Israeli/Palestinian environment motivated by earlier forms of Zionism, and described in Chapter Two.

Oz's links between the Mediterranean Sea and Mediterranean foods mirror a similar connection made in Braudel's work, a version of which advocates of Mediterraneanism refer to frequently. Ohana, for instance, cites the following passage from Braudel's *La Méditerrannée, l'espace et l'histoire*, his 1977 follow-up to *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, with approval:

> In this book, ships sail, the waves repeat their melody, the vines descend from the Cinque Terre to the Genoa Riviera. In this book, olives are harvested in Provence and Greece, the fishermen draw their nets from the silent lagoon of Venice or the canals of Djerba, and the carpenters still build ships similar to those of yesterday.... And at the sight of all this, we are outside time.[114]

There appears to be an affinity between quotes such as this, and the sense of ancient ways of life evoked in Rico's reflections, quoted above. Modern Israel, Oz implies, manifests timeless and permanent patterns of a wider Mediterranean region in its geography and culture, rather than being, as is often argued by Israel's critics, a comparatively recent construct, originating in nineteenth century central-eastern European concepts of

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[113] Nocke, p. 149.

[114] Ohana, *The Origins of Israeli Mythology*, p. 185.

nationalism and the nation-state.[115] It is pertinent to note, given the concerns of this chapter with the relationship between Mediterraneanism and Israeli economic growth, that Ohana completely evacuates the specific historicity of the development of capitalism in the Mediterranean from his depiction of Braudel's argument. This is in fact a major, structural theme of Braudel's writing on this topic. Its absence from Ohana's writing is indicative of the wider way in which advocates of Mediterraneanism have frequently worked to conceal the significant positive economic implications for Israel of its reframing as a 'Mediterranean' country.'

## Mediterraneanism and the Left

Through the character of Rico, Albert and Nadia's backpacking son, Oz puts forward a critique of Israeli leftism which ultimately offers Mediterraneanism as a 'mature' outcome for Israel. In many ways, Rico represents a typical left-wing Israeli youth. He is disillusioned with Israeli society and, Oz writes, 'thought the world/was in a bad way.'[116] Rico reads widely on political topics, in a somewhat scattergun fashion. His shelves are littered with 'piles' of:

> books,/pamphlets, papers, publications, on all sorts/of wrongs: black studies,
> women's studies, lesbians and gays, child abuse, drugs, race,/rain forests, the hole in
> the ozone layer, not to mention/injustice in the Middle East.[117]

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[115] Rose, p. 82; Sternhell, p. 55.

[116] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 3.

[117] ibid., p. 3.

Rico attends a 'left-wing rally' on an unspecified issue with his girlfriend Dita, bringing him

into conflict with his parents.[118] He neglects to tell his parents where he is going, comes

home late, and in doing so, as Albert pleads, is 'making it worse' for his dying mother.[119] As

Laor notes, it is telling that Oz gives no information about the rally, other than that Rico

attended while his mother was seriously ill.[120] Rico's attendance at the rally points towards

a selfish individualism which prioritises personal fulfilment over communal and family

responsibilities, an impression underscored by his disappearance, while Albert is still

grieving, on a family-funded backpacking trip, seemingly without end. Dita's attempts to

comfort Albert make the misguidedness, even narcissism, of their leftist commitments

explicit. She tells Albert: 'Now you're giving him guilt feelings;/after all, it's not his fault she's

dead. He has a right/to a life of his own.'[121] Dita's references to 'rights', and, later, Rico

being 'entitled to try to find himself', suggest the hypocrisy of their concern for an unlimited

number for social justice issues, a characterisation which functions as an implicit critique of

the Israeli left.[122]

Rico's personal trajectory mirrors a recurring narrative of Oz's novels, a resemblance which

is significant for the philosophy of Mediterraneanism in *The Same Sea*. As Bernard notes,

Oz's novels often stage a conflict between an individual and the collective, featuring an

alienated protagonist who struggles to feel at home in a society which he (or, less

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[118] ibid., p. 3.

[119] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 3.

[120] Yitzhak Laor, 'It's Wild. It's New. It Turns Men on', *London Review of Books*, 23 (2001), 23–24 (p. 23).

[121] ibid., p. 3.

[122] ibid., p. 3.

frequently, she) feels has very different values.[123] The depiction of such conflicts, which mirrors long-lasting tensions in Israeli culture between individual fulfilment and communal demands, has been a major impetus behind readings of Oz's novels as national narration.[124] Often the climax of these novels is a moment at which the protagonist's desires are revealed as somehow impracticable.[125] In this highly traditional narrative form, closure is achieved when the protagonist disregards their ideals and comes to 'realise the values of the domestic and the quotidian', leading to their reabsorption within a community and the reaffirmation of communal identity.[126]

Rico spends almost the entire duration of the book, save for flashbacks, backpacking around Nepal, Tibet, Bangladesh, Bengal and Sri Lanka. Backpacking, or *tarmila'ut* in Hebrew, has developed and become well-known as an Israeli institution over the past thirty years, even if its popularity is primarily restricted in practice to an elite group of Israeli youth: typically middle class, secular and Ashkenazi in background, with wealthy and well-educated parents.[127] In this way it mirrors the growth of the gap year among parallel population sectors in northern European countries, notably the United Kingdom, Ireland and Scandinavia, as well as among white middle class youth in Australia and South Africa.[128] As

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[123] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 98.

[124] ibid.

[125] ibid., p. 99.

[126] ibid., p. 99.

[127] Cohen and Noy, 'Introduction: Backpacking as a Rite of Passage in Israel', in *Israeli Backpackers*, ed. by Cohen and Noy, pp. 1–44 (p. 23).

[128] Camille Caprioglio O'Reilly, 'From Drifter to Gap Year Tourist: Mainstreaming Backpacker Travel', *Annals of Tourism Research,* 23 (2006), 998 – 1017 (1001).

Erik Cohen and Chaim Noy highlight, drawing on Victor Turner's work on 'liminality' and 'rites of passage', backpacking tends to be undertaken as an 'interlude' between two life phases.[129] It is particularly common for Israelis who have recently completed compulsory military service, to the extent that it is referred to as the 'postarmy trip'.[130] While backpacking takes place in distant locales, the temporary freedoms it provides from accepted social norms can, Cohen and Noy note, 'obliquely facilitate [...] socialisation into Israeli culture and society.'[131] As such, Rico's backpacking, and eventual decision to return, is used by Oz to explore Israel's own 'mature' identity. 'Maturity', Oz suggests, is the recognition that 'finding oneself' does not need to take place in distant lands, but involves a reconciliation with Israel's Mediterranean locus.

Rico decides to return home on reaching the Sri Lankan coast. Here, the sea provides a symbolic and material connection to Israel's Mediterranean shores and reminds him of his home. His journey to the sea is repeatedly described in metaphors derived from the hydrological cycle, suggesting destiny and inevitability, a connotation which, as Yi-Fu Tuan discusses in a biblical context, has long had religious inflections.[132] While in the mountains, Rico feels 'the sea is calling', and Oz poetically compares Rico's route downwards to the path of a river, which eventually becomes calm on merging with the ocean, in a play on

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[129] Cohen and Noy, 'Introduction', (p. 3).

[130] Ayana Sbira Haviv, 'Next Year in Kathmandu: Israeli Backpackers and the Formation of a New Israeli Identity', in *Israeli Backpackers*, ed. by Erik Cohen and Chaim Noy, pp. 45–88 (p. 46).

[131] Cohen and Noy, 'Introduction', p. 6.

[132] Yi-Fu Tuan, *The Hydrologic Cycle and the Wisdom of God: A Theme in Geoteleology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968). For a critical approach to the idea of the hydrological cycle, see Linton, *What Is Water?*.

Ecclesiastes 1:7: 'all the rivers flow into the sea, and the sea is silence silence silence'.[133] By replacing the final clause of 'and the sea is not yet full', Oz shifts the meaning of the line from constant movement and change, to stability, perhaps even peace. A comment from the Narrator makes this link more explicit, generalising from Rico's wandering to the collective Israeli 'we':

> 'the young man who went off to the mountains to seek the sea that was there all the time outside his own home. We have wandered enough. It is time to make peace.'[134]

In this line, 'wandering' has multiple associations: Rico's travels, the stereotype of Jewish 'wandering' in the diaspora, and a 'wandering' after the creation of Israel, as the country seeks to establish its identity. Making 'peace' after 'wandering' points towards acceptance of a local environment, but it is impossible not to read this section, particularly given its declarative tone, as a resolution to avoid future exilic 'wandering' by establishing a political 'peace'. Rico's wandering and return has additional Mediterranean overtones, in its evocation of the narrative of Odysseus, and his *nostos*, or homecoming.

**Mediterranean Peacemaking**

I have focused so far on the ways in which Mediterraneanism is incorporated into claims of Israel's 'roots' in the region. Another crucial aspect of Mediterraneanism is its association with peacemaking. References to peace recur throughout Oz's text, some fuzzy, as above, and some more directly political. A section on Rico's travels in Bhutan ends with the phrase '[t]rue peace shall surely come', indicating the sense of personal peace that Rico might

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[133] Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 18, 130.

[134] ibid., p. 148.

achieve through backpacking and gesturing at future political reconciliation.[135] Another

section explicitly invokes this context in its title, 'The Peace Process'.[136] The experimental

form of *The Same Sea* can be read as part of this apparently conciliatory move. The novel is

split into short fragmentary chapters, which alternate between prose and poetry, and jump

between places and times. These fragments are narrated by a number of characters, living

and dead, as well as a narrator, who appears as a character, bearing considerable

resemblance to Oz. Oz has described these techniques as part of the novel's 'meta-political

significance', claiming that '[i]t is a novel that erases, deliberately, every boundary.'[137] The

formal erasing of 'every boundary' described here offers an obvious political reading in the

context of Mediterraneanism, in which the nurturing of regional affiliations promises to lead

to the breaking down of communal boundaries. In the novel, however, Oz's soft references

to a regional Mediterranean peace serve to marginalise Palestinian rights claims, as I now

examine.

'The Peace Process' draws heavily on Orientalist imagery, with Oz envisioning a journey

through an unnavigable and inhospitable desert in 'Hadhramaut […] southern Arabia'.[138]

Hadhramaut, a region of modern-day Yemen, is described by Oz as '[s]hifting sands,

wilderness, the haunt of foxes.'[139] Oz proposes that '[m]aybe the peace process will open

[this place] up to us', suggesting the increased mobility of Israeli tourists within the Middle

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[135] ibid., p. 45.

[136] ibid., p. 73.

[137] Elizabeth Farnsworth, 'Coping with Conflict: Israeli Author Amos Oz', *PBS Newshour*, 23 January 2002

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/middle_east-jan-june02-oz_1-23/> [accessed 17 February 2014].

[138] ibid.

[139] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 73.

East which followed the Oslo Accords, as well as, less positively, the Orientalist trope of the East as a gateway to be 'unlocked'.[140] The unnavigability of Oz's desert indicates the futility of entering into this Middle Eastern space. The desert's aridity illustrates, according to a Eurocentric environmental imaginary which (falsely) views areas with low rainfall as degraded, the political unproductivity of negotiations, and a metaphorical drying-up of dialogue and solutions.[141] Oz's association between the Palestinians and the desert recalls the earlier figuring of colonisation of Palestine by Zionist leaders as a battle between, in Chaim Weizman's the 'forces of civilization' against 'the forces of destruction, the forces of the desert'.[142] This passage, then, replicates older Zionist discourses of colonisation to produce an image of Palestinians as stubborn, 'landlocked' and a potential threat. The image contrasts with a representation of Israelis elsewhere in the text as liberated from ethnic conflict and confrontation, through associations with, as discussed above, flowing waters, cooling breezes, soft light, and rich, nutritious Mediterranean foods.

The Arabic etymology of the place name 'Hadhramaut' – 'death' (*hadara*) 'has come' (*maut*) – indicates extreme pessimism about peace negotiations. This representation of the peace process as a death wish points towards another reading of Oz's reworking of Ecclesiastes. Oz's new ending to the line, 'silence silence silence', could equally be read as a resistance to compromise, and a preference for merely ending discussions over finding a resolution. This fits with Oz's remarks on Mediterraneanism to Nocke, in which he bluntly declares his

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[140] Rebecca L. Stein, *Itineraries in Conflict: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Political Lives of Tourism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), chap. 1.

[141] On the stigmatisation of aridity, see Linton, *What Is Water?*, pp. 122–125; Tuan, p. 144.

[142] Cited in Cleary, p. 244.

indifference to whether or not Mediterraneanism can ease Israel's relations with the Arab world. He states:

> if it proves to be a good bridge between Israel and the Arab world – wonderful. If not, I never thought Israel had to adjust to the region. (...) If it does not work the Arab neighbours have to learn to live next door to someone [who is, AN] different.[143]

In this comment, Oz's intransigence is clear, even if he imputes this quality, as in the quotations from *The Same Sea* above, to Arabs instead. His reference to the 'Arab world', instead of Palestinians, similarly indicates a refusal to engage with the issues at stake.

The sense that Mediterraneanism ultimately serves as a means of smoothing over ethnic conflict while producing the appearance of an open and harmonious society is underscored by Oz's representation of Palestinians. There are no fully realised Palestinian characters in *The Same Sea*, but some Palestinians do appear in the novel, in Rico's recollection of a childhood bus journey to Jaffa with his mother. Oz describes a vivid and chaotic scene, populated by intimidating figures. It includes a road accident: 'a donkey cart/had overturned. Smashed watermelons on the asphalt,/a blood bath.'[144] The 'donkey cart' shows a low level of development compared to Nadia and Rico's reliable and modern bus, an impression heightened by a reference to 'an unfinished building and dunes of sand', suggesting the encroachment of the 'uncivilised' desert on the city.[145] The otherwise innocuous 'smashed watermelons' become an overt metaphor for suppressed histories of communal violence when imagined as a 'blood bath'; in a similar way, the mouth of a

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[143] Nocke, p. 149.

[144] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 5.

[145] ibid.

woman who yawns rudely at Nadia is described as 'a grave, empty and deep'.[146] The short

lines and non-rhyming verse of this passage produce the effect of a montage created from

discontinuous glimpses, mirroring Rico's partial perception of the events through the

window of a moving bus, at the same time as underscoring a sense of Palestinian society as

without rational order. The Orientalism of Oz's depiction of Palestinians in *The Same Sea*

reflects a tendency in his wider work, for which he has often been criticised.[147] This fear of

the 'Orient', literally kept outside Israeli space by the windows of Rico's bus, indicates that

'Mediterraneanism' in Oz's text lacks a genuine commitment to engaging with the actual

Mediterranean region.

The role of Mediterraneanism as a means of excluding the 'Orient' becomes clear in the

novel's allusions to Eastern Europe. Jewish people have historically been stereotyped as

'Oriental' in European anti-Semitism, a logic which, a number of critics have argued, was

replicated in the Zionist project of creating the Jewish people anew in Palestine.[148] This

project was, as Hochberg writes, haunted by a fear of Israelis becoming 'Arab-like', a

preoccupation which accounts for the significance attached by Zionist leaders like Ben-

Gurion to retaining Israel's ties with Europe.[149] In *The Same Sea*, Albert repeatedly

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[146] ibid.

[147] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, p. 105; Gila Ramras-Rauch, *The Arab in Israeli Literature* (London:

I.B.Tauris, 1989), chap. 12.

[148] Hochberg, 'Introduction', in *In Spite of Partition: Jews, Arabs, and the Limits of Separatist Imagination*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 1–19; Aziza Khazzoom, 'The Great Chain of Orientalism:

Jewish Identity, Stigma Management, and Ethnic Exclusion in Israel', *American Sociological Review*, 2003, 481–

510.

[149] Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition*, p. 13.

underscores a distinction between Israel and Eastern Europe when he admonishes Nadia for telling Bulgarian folk stories to Rico. He instructs:

> There aren't any forests or goblins here. We came to this country to put all that behind us, to live on yoghurt and salad with an omelette […] to banish the old troubles, to be cured of the ancient horror, to sit under the vine in the garden[150]

Albert's juxtaposition of symbols of the Mediterranean diet– yoghurt, salad, omelettes, vines – with Eastern superstition indicates that Mediterraneanism in *The Same Sea* operates as a means of separating Israeli Jewish identity from 'Oriental' Jewishness. Nadia's telling of folk tales brings to light the fearful prospect of a 'reversion' to the Jewishness of the Eastern European shtetl, which Zionism was meant to have suppressed.

The version of 'otherness' depicted in the novel is ultimately unchallenging to Israel's Ashkenazi-dominated national culture.[151] This is disappointing, given that aspects of the novel initially suggest otherwise. Both Albert and Nadia are Sephardi Jews, from Sarajevo and Sofia respectively, cities of the Balkans which, as a Greek clairvoyant visited in Jaffa by Albert tells him, 'belong/both to the west and to the east', much as Mediterraneanism appears to show that Israel does.[152] The setting of Bat Yam indicates a similar concern with Israel's internal minorities. Bat Yam possesses the dubious accolade of being the most densely populated city in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, and is often associated with high

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[150] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 176.

[151] Laor, 'It's Wild. It's New. It Turns Men on', p. 23.

[152] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 19.

levels of crime and unemployment.[153] It is, as Nir Cohen notes, home mostly to lower middle-class Mizrahi Jews, and, along with other cities on Tel Aviv's periphery, such as Holon, often unfavourably stigmatised as Tel Aviv's 'other'.[154] Oz's choice of Bat Yam as a location for a 'Mediterranean' novel seems to suggest much more of a commitment to Mediterraneanism as an ethnically inclusive discourse than if Oz had chosen the more obvious Tel Aviv. In contrast to Tel Aviv's glamour, wealth and much-vaunted modernist architecture, Bat Yam is 'the undesirable "national average"': unexciting, poorly planned, but an appropriate site for an attempt to depict everyday Israeli reality.[155]

All elements of potentially disruptive ethnicity in the novel are eventually contained. Nadia stops telling her Balkan foltalkes before her eventual death. Another Bosnian character is Europeanised and Ashenazified through his love of Italian opera, of which he is described as an 'addict'.[156] Next to nothing of Bat Yam's history is apparent from the text, meaning that its connotations are hidden to most non-Israeli readers. The clairvoyant, Stavros Evangelides, provides perhaps the most telling example of Mediterraneanism as a heavily partial vision of a multicultural Israel. Evangelides' Hebrew is described as 'simple but

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[153] Nir Cohen, 'Territorial Stigma Formation in the Israeli City of Bat Yam, 1950–1983: Planning, People and Practice', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 39 (2013), 113–24 (pp. 119–121).

[154] ibid., pp. 114, 118.

[155] Nir Cohen, p. 114. For a critical perspective on Tel Aviv's architectural heritage, see Sharon Rotbard, *White City/Black City: Architecture and War in Jaffa and Tel Aviv* (London: Pluto, 2015).

[156] I adapt this point from Laor, who mistakenly attributes the love of opera to Albert. Laor, 'It's Wild. It's New. It Turns Men on', p. 23.

correct,/with a slight Arab accent.'[157] This Greek with an 'Arab accent' highlights the way in which Oz's Mediterraneanism operates as a form of substitution, in which Southern Europe is as close as we want to get to Israel's actual geographical location. Oz's religious and mythological framework reinforces this reading of his Mediterranean as premised on the exclusion of anything Arab or Muslim. *The Same Sea* relies heavily on biblical allusion and references to Greek myth, to the extent that the translator, Nicholas de Lange, appends four pages of notes on Oz's biblical imagery at the end of the novel.[158] Oz creates a meshwork of Mediterranean cultural reference points, either Judeo-Christian or associated with the symbolic home of European culture, Ancient Greece. In doing so, he excises all evidence of Arab or Islamic Mediterraneans.

Oz's Eurocentric Mediterraneanism is not a distortion of an otherwise progressive discourse. Instead, the troubling nature of Israeli Mediterraneanism derives in part from the very idea of a distinct Mediterranean region, which has deep colonial roots. European conceptions of the Mediterranean region, from their first rise to prominence in late eighteenth century narratives of Northern European travellers on the Grand Tour, have long foregrounded Italy and Greece over other countries on the sea's shores. These countries are favoured because of their associations with the purported origins of European civilisation and culture, and the region's alleged 'golden age'.[159] This Europeanised Mediterranean has often been set by its

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[157] Ohana, *Israel and Its Mediterranean Identity*, chap. 6; David Ohana, 'Mediterranean Humanism', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 18 (2003), 59–75; Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 19.

[158] 'Translator's Note', in Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 198–201.

[159] Iain Chambers, *Mediterranean Crossings: The Politics of an Interrupted Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 33; Paolo Giaccaria and Claudio Minca, 'The Mediterranean Alternative', *Progress in Human Geography*, 35 (2011), 345–65 (p. 350).

advocates against an imagined hostile and uncivilised Muslim Middle East.[160] Braudel's

work, too, was structured according to the same division between mutually exclusive

realms, in a way which has been utterly neglected by his advocates in Israel.[161] The Islamic

world, for Braudel, was not 'fully "Mediterranean"'; instead, in the same Orientalist trope as

discussed above, its 'proper' geographical place was in the desert.[162] Underscoring the

colonial character of Mediterraneanism further is the fact that the major twentieth century

invocation of a unified 'Mediterranean' region, prior to the EU-initiated Barcelona Process,

was the Italian Fascist attachment to the idea of *mare nostrum* ('our sea').[163] The concept of

a single Mediterranean region, then, has a troubled history, and cannot be turned into the

grounds for multicultural pluralism as easily as its advocates in Israel, or the EU, have

assumed.

**A Mediterranean Economy**

Mediterraneanism has been portrayed as a discourse which affirms Israel's roots in the

Mediterranean region, and potentially provides a cultural counterpart to the peace process.

As I have discussed, Israel's purported Mediterranean affiliations say less about an

'authentic' sense of belonging to the local region, and more about an Israeli desire to

exclude the 'Orient'. In this section I turn to Mediterraneanism as an economic discourse. As

noted in the introduction to this chapter, Mediterraneanism emerged at a particular

historical moment in Israel's economic and political development, reaching the height of its

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[160] John A. Armstrong, 'Braudel's Mediterranean: Un Defi Latin', *World Politics*, 29 (1977), 626–36 (p. 633).

[161] ibid., p. 633.

[162] ibid.; Braudel, p. 187.

[163] Chambers, p. 145.

popularity during and after the Oslo negotiations. At this time, any pretensions Israel retained of an earlier 'socialist' orientation were shed, as the country took advantage of the business opportunities seemingly promised by the end of the Arab boycotts, including the increased willingness of multinational corporations to invest in Israel and the possibility of becoming one of the beneficiaries of economic globalisation.[164] By 1995, Israel had a rapidly growing economy, with a per capita GDP comparable to that of the UK.[165] This is often described as the 'peace dividend'.[166]

Oz's novel makes clear that Mediterraneanism cannot be understood without reference to this aspect of Israeli history. In *The Same Sea*, Oz demonstrates the sea's new economic importance, highlighting the ways in which the representation of Israel as 'Mediterranean' forms part of the integration of Israel into global circulations of capital, commodities and people which followed the Oslo Accords. He depicts the negative effects of globalisation, providing a pointed reminder of these outcomes to a country newly celebrating its own economic boom. Through Rico's travels, Oz emphasises globalisation's destructive social, ecological and economic impacts on developing countries. The hydrological cycle becomes an important metaphor for uneven development, bringing to light the causal links between

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[164] For a critical perspective on socialism and early Zionism, see: Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).

[165] Aruri, p. 104.

[166] Ofira Seliktar, 'The Peace Dividend: The Economy of Israel and the Peace Process', in *The Middle East Peace Process: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. by Ilan Peleg (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), pp. 223–36.

Israeli overconsumption, and harms elsewhere.[167] At the same time, I suggest that the guilt

encouraged in Oz's novel for the harms caused by neoliberal globalisation forms part of the

same process of normalisation facilitated by the representation of Israel as 'Mediterranean',

serving to reaffirm Israel's affiliation with Europe and North America. The imagery of flows

in the novel smoothly relocates the negative consequences of Israeli development to the

opposite side of the world, eliding its impact on maritime cultures and marine ecologies

much closer to home.

In Oz's novel, the sea itself is frequently described in metaphors of financial transactions.

This underscores its centrality, in multiple ways, to Israel's contemporary economic

strategies. The sea holds a 'joint account' with the desert, makes an 'advance payment on

the autumn', and is imagined as 'smooth tonight, chilly, shining darkly, a sea like the black

glass nameplate of a respectable firm, with lines of gleaming gold writing, a pricey, highly

polished sea, Current Liquidisations Ltd.'[168] These repeated associations echo Ben-Gurion's

earlier prediction that '[t]he sea is no waste of waters, as many think, but a sealed store of

infinite treasures'.[169] The discovery of natural gas fields in the eastern Mediterranean since

2009 has added retrospective force to Ben-Gurion's predictions, potentially promising an

opportunity for Israel to become a regional energy power.[170] Ben-Gurion's mention of

'treasures' resonates with Oz's 'gleaming gold', 'pricey' sea, with the suggestion of piracy in

the word 'treasure' highlighting the potentially underhand processes at work in Oz's

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[167] Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space*, 3rd edn (Athens: University

of Georgia Press, 2008).

[168] Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 143, 69, 150.

[169] Ben-Gurion, 'The Navy, Israel and the Sea', p. 311.

[170] Bahgat Gawdat, 'Israel's Energy Security: Regional Implications', *Middle East Policy*, 18 (2011), 25–34.

ironically described 'respectable firm'. Israel's post-Oslo emergence as a participant in neoliberal global economics promises considerable wealth, Oz suggests, but with potentially dubious moral consequences.

The activities of Dita's lover, Giggy Ben-Gal, provide the strongest sense of the changing economic significance of the sea, and its role in Israel's financial relationship with Europe in particular. Ben-Gal travels back from Brussels – home of the European parliament and symbolic heart of Europe – to the small town of Binyamina, south of Haifa, to inspect 'an orange grove that was dying because it didn't pay to irrigate it'.[171] It might, Ben-Gal considers, be wise to 'snap up today at the price of farmland what tomorrow would be prime building lots in a sought-after district.'[172] The land is potentially valuable because, as an announcement issued by Ben-Gal's firm highlights, of its proximity to the sea:

> Ben-Gal & Partners have purchased a new plot to build luxury apartments and duplexes and commissioned a ninety-second promotional film [...] your dream home, penthouse with sea view.[173]

The significance of the land's changing function can be seen through a brief discussion of the history of orange groves in Israel. Binyamina, where Ben-Gal purchases his land, was founded as a citrus colony in 1922, and was one of the settlements which made the Mediterranean coastal plain into Palestine's 'hub' of citrus production.[174] It is named after

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[171] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 196.

[172] ibid.

[173] ibid., p. 186.

[174] Nahum Karlinsky, *California Dreaming: Ideology, Society, and Technology in the Citrus Industry of Palestine, 1890-1939* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), p. 18.

Baron Benjamin Edmond de Rothschild, leader of the European Jewish banking dynasty, who made significant donations to the early settlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, for the establishment of agricultural settlements.[175] The orange, specifically the 'Jaffa orange', was a crucial national symbol for Israel in the first decades of its existence.[176] In spite of the existence of a thriving Palestinian citriculture industry prior to the creation of Israel, the orange came to be seen, as Bardenstein notes, as a 'quintessentially Israeli agricultural export'.[177] It became the symbol abroad of the success of the socialist Zionist project of restoring the connection between Jewish people and the land through 'Hebrew labour'.[178]

Ben-Gal's purchase of neglected citrus plantations at a low price indicates the decline of socialist Zionism's founding national narratives of agricultural settlement, working on the land and feeding the nation. Instead, the booming post-Oslo economy is oriented towards sectors such as property development and tourism, in which the iconic national commodity is a 'sea view' rather than an orange. Israel's economic transition was, somewhat surprisingly, summarised most aptly by a representative of the airline easyJet, on the inauguration of their route from London to Tel Aviv in 2009. They declared:

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[175] Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 39.

[176] Bardenstein, 'Threads of Memory', p. 14.

[177] ibid.

[178] ibid.

Tel Aviv has always been famous for its oranges. Now the orange planes of easyJet

will give thousands more people the chance to enjoy the sweet taste of Israel's 24-

hour city.[179]

In this transition, it is clear that food sovereignty, or even agriculture for export, is no longer

seen as a priority. I return to this theme later in the chapter, in the context of the globalised

agriculture industry.

The sea view appears as a valuable commodity elsewhere in the novel, indicating the

increasing role of tourism and foreign investment in Israel's economy. Oz portrays a

negative aspect to this shift, in the homogenising effects of private multinational capital. In

one section, he describes Dita's part-time job, working 'three nights a week at an expensive

seaside hotel', which we later learn is Tel Aviv's Hilton.[180] The mention of the Hilton brand,

one of the largest chains in the global hotel market, illustrates Israel's post-Oslo

attractiveness to multinational corporations. Dita's night-time work, meanwhile, indicates

the 24-hour nature of the economic system into which Israel has belatedly entered. The

hotel acts as a node in the international circulation of a transient and anonymous

population of 'tourists, investors, philanderers, foreign airline pilots in uniform and teams of

tired stewardesses', whose impact on Dita is merely registered through the parallel

circulation of international capital, in '[f]orms. Credit Cards.'[181] Intriguingly, Dita encounters

the 'Narrator' staying in the hotel after a lecture, who bears a number of resemblances to

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[179] Jewish Chronicle, 'Tel Aviv Gets Bus Publicity Drive in UK', *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 October 2009

<http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/20828/tel-aviv-gets-bus-publicity-drive-uk> [Accessed 20 March 2016].

[180] Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 85, 131.

[181] ibid., p. 85.

Oz, including, like Oz at the time, living in Arad, and having written a novel called *To Know a Woman*.[182] In writing himself into the text at this point, Oz self-consciously demonstrates that processes of literary production and consumption are similarly inseparable from global economic systems.[183]

As Giovanni Arrighi has highlighted, drawing on the work of Braudel, processes of financialisation like those discussed above have been a feature of capitalist cycles of accumulation over a long period of time, beginning in late medieval and early modern Europe.[184] Even with this historical caveat in mind, the way in which Oz's text brings together multiple 'circulations' particularly resonates with Zygmunt Bauman use of liquid metaphors to describe this phenomenon, in his theory of 'liquid modernity'.[185] Bauman proposes that speed, rather than space, is now the crucial element in securing economic and cultural power, while our era has been witness to the 'liquefaction' of social bonds.[186] This social 'liquefaction' is evident from Dita's interpersonal interactions with hotel visitors – themselves Bauman's 'extraterritorial elite' – which involve nothing more than financial transactions.[187] A key part of Bauman's 'liquid modernity' is that it involves the replacement of the 'solid' modernity of industrial, 'heavy' capitalism, with the 'light' capitalism of

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[182] ibid.

[183] Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 1.

[184] Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), p. ix.

[185] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

[186] ibid., pp. 13–14.

[187] ibid.

deregulation and liberalisation.[188] These processes are mirrored in the decline of Israel's

orange industry, and the more recent opening up of Israel's markets to international

interests. In Oz's novel, the metaphors of flow which tie Israel into a Mediterranean region,

as I discuss in greater detail below, integrate the country rather more ambivalently into the

new 'liquid' world described by Bauman.

The decline of Israel's earlier socialist orientation is linked in *The Same Sea* to a rise in

consumer culture, and an increasing homogenisation and privatisation of public space. Oz's

seedy would-be film producer Dubi Dombrov laments the effects of 'commercialisation,

which in fact, let's be clear, is destroying everything here'.[189] Elsewhere in the novel the

effects of this are seen in a changing urban environment: 'In south Bat Yam they're building

a new mall, they've closed a grocery shop and opened a fashion boutique or a bank,

dedicated a garden to Yitzhak Rabin with a fountain and benches.'[190] In this image the

grocery shop, a reminder of earlier, nationally significant agricultural traditions, is

superseded by interchangeable symbols of affluence, disposable income and urban

homogeneity, the boutique and bank. The use of the American term 'mall' links this to

Israel's integration into a globalised world, dominated, at least at Oz's time of writing in the

late 1990s, by the superpower of America.[191]

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[188] ibid., pp. 5, 128.

[189] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 61.

[190] ibid., p. 186.

[191] Uri Ram, *The Globalization of Israel: McWorld in Tel Aviv, Jihad in Jerusalem* (London: Routledge, 2008);

Tom Segev, *Elvis in Jerusalem: Post-Zionism and the Americanization of Israel*, trans. by Haim Watzman (New

York: Metropolitan Books, 2002).

The mention of Rabin is significant for an analysis of the novel as an engagement with a moment of economic transition. Rabin was Israel's Prime Minister from 1974-77 and again from 1992, until his assassination in 1995 by a right-wing Israeli. He was the leading Israeli politician behind the Oslo Accords. His memorialisation at the centre of an image of commercialisation might seem incongruous and perhaps ironic, since the image appears to suggest the death of earlier unifying Zionist narratives in the face of the homogenising forces of global capital. This interpretation might seem supported by Oz's earlier novel *Elsewhere, Perhaps*, in which, as Cleary argues, Oz depicts Israeli society under threat from two outside 'modes of circulation', consumer capitalism and the Diaspora.[192] However, by the time *The Same Sea* was written, Israel's acceptance into the neoliberal world economy no longer triggered anxieties about national integrity. Instead, as Eric Zakim writes, '[t]he late twentieth-century arrival of global capital has been met as national affirmation', representing, as it does, the fulfilment of the old Zionist desire for Israel to be 'normal', which was similarly a priority for Rabin.[193] In Oz's novel, the threats posed to Israel by globalisation paradoxically serve to strengthen Israel's national position through aligning Israel's national concerns with those of other 'First World' countries. On top of this, if Israel is threatened by the homogenising effects of globalisation, it is implicitly no longer subject to existential threats to its continued survival.

**The Globalised Ocean**

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[192] Cleary, pp. 157–158.

[193] Eric Zakim, 'Palimpsests of National Identity: Israeli Culture at the End of the American Century', *Shofar*, 16 (1997), 48–69 (p. 49).

As well as expressing ultimately nationally-affirming anxieties about the impact of global capitalism at home, Oz conveys concern about its effects abroad. In particular, he stresses the negative effects of globalisation through extensive descriptions of the social disruption and environmental despoliation of the Sri Lankan village in which Rico ends his journey. The village is 'a remote fishing village in the south of Sri Lanka', in the fictional 'Gulf of Kirindi'.[194] Its peripheral geographic location might make it seem distant and detached from global economic networks, but the village is in fact deeply tied to these structures through its participation in the world food system as a fish export site.[195] The expansion of an export-oriented fishing industry – especially aquaculture, as part of the 'Blue Revolution' – has been promoted by South Asian governments in recent decades, including Sri Lanka's, because of perceived benefits to local populations. Notably, it has been framed as promoting economic growth, decreased poverty and greater food security.[196] The Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have provided loans to cover capital outlays.[197]

Given the history of World Bank lending to poorer countries in the 1970s and 1980s, in which loans were offered on the condition of acquiescence to socially and ecologically devastating 'structural adjustment programmes', its involvement marks a reason for

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[194] Oz, *The Same Sea*, pp. 153, 168.

[195] ibid., p. 153.

[196] Daniel A. Bergquist, 'Sustainability and Local People's Participation in Coastal Aquaculture: Regional Differences and Historical Experiences in Sri Lanka and the Philippines', *Environmental Management*, 40 (2007), 787–802 (p. 787).

[197] Md Saidul Islam, *Confronting the Blue Revolution: Industrial Aquaculture and Sustainability in the Global South* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), p. 55.

caution.[198] And, indeed, the integration of South Asian fishing industries into global

commodity chains has had significant negative effects. It has eased access for transnational

corporations to the natural resources of the Global South, while the income generated has

predominantly been used to service existing debt rather than to invest in long-term

strategies to improve the lives of local people.[199] The consequences to oceanic and

estuarine ecosystems have been severe, including lessened water quality due to the

discharge of waste from fisheries, mangrove deforestation and species exhaustion.[200]

Rico's experiences show the extent to which village life has been damaged by global

appetites for fish. Rico, an Israeli, works as a night-watchman in a refrigeration plant

belonging to a Belgian company, with a shifty Austrian engineer as a colleague.[201] He

mentally translates his wage in Sri Lankan rupees into the global currency of the US dollar,

reflecting the composition of the Sri Lankan fishing industry, in which 55 per cent of workers

are foreign.[202] His employment demonstrates that local fishing is controlled by international

interests, and transfers capital out of the Sri Lankan economy, rather than providing jobs for

local people.[203] His overnight work, like Dita's receptionist duties in Tel Aviv, illustrates the

24-hour operation of global trading markets. Meanwhile, Oz's descriptions of the coast itself

manifest the environmental degradation which is, as Jason Moore notes, the result of the

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[198] Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism"', *Social Text*, 31/32 (1992), 84–98 (pp. 94–5).

[199] Islam, chap. 3.

[200] Bergquist, p. 788.

[201] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 186.

[202] Bergquist, p. 787.

[203] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 186; Bergquist, p. 787.

way in which capitalism externalises its costs of production in the search for continuing accumulation, exhausting the source of its own capacity to produce.[204]

The coast is described as a nightmarish vision of seemingly irreversible environmental damage. Oz writes:

> all around the derelict plant mangy dogs/are barking, skinny dogs shrieking then sinking to a whimper, as a murky sun/chokes through the screen of haze: an opaque sunrise that resembles/a diseased, inflamed eye.[205]

The degraded condition of the landscape is closely associated with social disintegration. The only Sri Lankan character who features at any length is an unnamed, 'abandoned' boy, aged 'six or possibly eight', who is depicted as an utterly abject figure.[206] The boy 'somehow belongs to the fishery' and has 'been abused by other watchmen', neglect which is linked repeatedly to the degraded environment in which he lives.[207] He 'sleeps by day in some disused cooling compartment and at night among bearded pipes sticky with solidified engine oil', and moves '[i]n and out of the dark gaps between refrigerators', while his continued survival is attributed to his having 'managed to float up to the surface of the swamp'.[208] The boy's 'belonging' to this environment shows that he is a secondary victim of the forces of neoliberal globalisation which have despoiled the Sri Lankan coast so

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[204] Jason W. Moore, p. 110.

[205] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 169.

[206] ibid., p. 168.

[207] ibid., p. 168.

[208] ibid., p. 169.

dramatically. He is, in Bauman's term, the 'human waste' of liquid modernity.[209] Oz's stark

description of both the child and the environment initially seems to represent a brave and

self-implicating realism. This is, Oz indicates, the other side of Israel's rapid economic

growth, which is producing malls, banks and boutiques in Bat Yam.

The 'flowing' form of the novel, which switches frequently between different geographical

locations and narrative perspectives, is crucial to Oz's portrayal of the spatial organisation

and ecological effects of uneven development. This style allows Oz to place descriptions of

Israeli consumer culture directly next to accounts of environmental vulnerability in the

developing world. For instance, the description of the changing Israeli urban scene quoted

above is immediately followed with: 'In Bangladesh there has been more flooding: the

monsoon has washed away bridges, villages and crops. Not here.'[210] In a novel which

suggests in its title that the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea are both part of 'the same

sea', Oz points towards the extent to which contemporary Israeli affluence is dependent on

the production of underdevelopment elsewhere, as part of a global capitalist system of

uneven economic relations fuelled by circulating 'flows' of capital. Oz's expressions of guilt,

as noted above, provide a justification for claiming Israel's cultural affiliation with Europe

and North America, and hence accessing continued political support from and economic

cooperation with these regions. In linking the two countries' unequal stages of

development, Oz underscores Israel's membership in this group by enabling Israeli readers

to participate in feelings of sympathy, guilt and outrage towards conditions in the

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[209] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

[210] Oz, *The Same Sea*, p. 186.

developing world. This reframes Israel as a stable nation, apparently no longer itself reliant on external support.

**Returning Home**

Oz's emphasis on the social and ecological harm caused in developing countries by Israeli consumption performs a further manoeuvre in relation to Israel's self-fashioning as a 'Mediterranean' country. Namely, this functions as a self-exculpating strategy, allowing Oz to locate all negative consequences of contemporary Israeli economic policy and social practice on the opposite side of the world, and elide their impacts much closer to home. Crucially, the Mediterranean on Israel's shores, as much as the Indian Ocean, is a space of fractures and frontiers as much as flows, and a site of political and ecological violence, none of which is apparent from its representation in *The Same Sea*. For instance, Oz's externalisation of the negative effects of Israeli development ignores the fact that this has been premised on an active 'de-development' of the Palestinian economy.[211] Access to the sea has been a major means through which this de-development has been enacted.

As noted in the Introduction, Israel has crippled the Gazan fishing industry. This has been enacted through restrictions to the permitted fishing area under the naval blockade, vastly lower than those agreed under the Oslo Accords, and through periodic bombardments.[212] Construction of the long-awaited Gaza Seaport – first mooted in 1993, and seen as a crucial element of future Palestinian economic independence – is constantly delayed by Israel

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[211] Sara Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995).

[212] B'Tselem, 'Lift the Restrictions'.

because of 'security concerns'.[213] Palestinians are prevented from leaving Gaza by sea, while members of the international community are prevented, sometimes violently, from entering; notoriously, in the case of the 2010 killings of nine peace activists on the Mavi Marmara 'freedom flotilla', by IDF forces.[214] A Mediterranean beach was the site of perhaps the most widely-reported incident of the 2014 Gaza war, in which four children were killed by an Israeli air strike.[215] This is not a Mediterranean we would recognise from Oz's text.

The Mediterranean, too, is subject to high levels of ecological damage. As a result of the activities of many of the countries on its shores, it is, as Serenella Iovino writes, 'a suffering and exploited sea'.[216] The dispersed, confetti-like plastic debris of its 'Garbage Patches' may not be as immediately visible as the industrial toxicity of Oz's Sri Lankan shoreline, but it is deadly nonetheless, particularly for marine wildlife.[217] The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has recorded discharge into the Mediterranean of untreated sewage, heavy metals such as lead and mercury, and chemicals known as persistent organic

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[213] Harriet Sherwood, 'Gaza's Ruined Airport and Unbuilt Seaport Fuel Dreams of Independence', *Guardian*, 18 August 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/18/gaza-airport-seaport-dreams-independence> [accessed 6 July 2015].

[214] *Midnight on the Mavi Marmara: The Attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla and How It Changed the Course of the Israel/Palestine Conflict*, ed. by Moustafa Bayoumi (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2010).

[215] Peter Beaumont, 'Israel Exonerates Itself over Gaza Beach Killings of Four Children Last Year', *The Guardian*, 11 June 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/11/israel-clears-military-gaza-beach-children> [accessed 8 July 2015].

[216] Serenella Iovino, 'Introduction: Mediterranean Ecocriticism, Or, A Blueprint for Cultural Amphibians', *Ecozon@*, 4 (2013), 1–17 (p. 13).

[217] Guiseppe Suaria and Stefano Aliani, 'Floating Debris in the Mediterranean Sea', *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 86 (2014), 494–504 (p. 501).

pollutants, produced, for example, in the manufacture of pesticides.[218] As one of the world's

busiest shipping routes, particularly for oil transportation, the Mediterranean is more like a

congested highway than a site of the leisurely voyages described by Oz and Ohana, and

subject to frequent oil spills, both accidental and deliberate.[219]

Some Mediterranean contamination can be traced to Israeli policy. The impact of

discharged desalination effluent on marine ecology has not yet been ascertained, while the

development of natural gas fields will surely increase spills. Sewage gushes daily into the

Mediterranean from Gaza's overstretched and under-maintained infrastructure, as a result

of Israel's urbicidal attacks on the Strip (discussed in Chapter Four), in combination with

deliberately induced shortages of electricity and construction materials.[220] The

Mediterranean is a more direct casualty of Israel's military operations, as a site for joint

Israel-US tests of Sparrow and 'anchor' target missiles, now degrading on the ocean floor.[221]

Most damagingly, Israel's targeting of Lebanon's Jiyyeh power plant during the countries'

2006 conflict caused a massive oil spill in the Eastern Mediterranean, while continued

bombing prevented cleanup operations.[222]

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[218] *State of the Mediterranean Marine and Coastal Environment* (Athens: United Nations Environment

Programme (UNEP) and Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), 2012), pp. 41–50

<http://195.97.36.231/dbases/MAPpublications/SoE/SoMMCER_ENG.pdf>.

[219] ibid., pp. 31–2.

[220] UNCTAD, p. 12.

[221] Yoav Zitun, 'Israel Test Fires Target Missile in Mediterranean', *Ynetnews*, 3 September 2013

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4425797,00.html>.

[222] Wael Hmaidan, 'Sands Are Running out for Lebanon's Ecosystem', *Guardian*, 16 August 2006, section

Society, p. 8.

Ironically, the Mediterranean's basin structure and extended water residence time, which Oz and Ohana use as the implicit oceanographical basis for imaginaries of regional connection and exchange, are thought to exacerbate the environmental harm caused by plastics and pollutants. They turn the region into an accumulation zone for plastics dumped from the densely populated countries on its shores, as well as a sink for plastic from the Atlantic, allowing harmful chemicals to persist and increase in concentration over longer periods of time.[223] This effect highlights, in turn, the hazards of reading Braudel's work on the Mediterranean in an age of widespread awareness of the effects of climate change and global warming. As Dipesh Chakrabarty notes, Braudel's emphasis on slow and imperceptible environmental change is incompatible with the climatological wisdom today that we are in danger of reaching a 'tipping point', beyond which we may go speeding irreversibly towards planetary disaster.[224] Oz and Ohana's portrayals of a stable marine environment are not just mistaken, but potentially dangerous, in presenting a false picture of the resilience of nonhuman nature.

The Israeli optimism once attached to the Mediterranean idea, which, as I have discussed, continues to persist in a residual, hollowed-out, form, mirrored a wider European trend. Its initial emergence was, as noted above, facilitated by European policymakers in the 1995 Barcelona Process, and boosted by the 2008 Union for the Mediterranean. Both instruments were heralded as signs of a new era of regional prosperity, stability and cultural harmony. Yet in many ways, the meanings and contradictions of Israeli Mediterraneanism reflect

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[223] Cózar et al, p. 7; Silvano Focardi and Monia Renzi, 'Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers and Polychlorobiphenyls in Fish from the Ionian Sea (Western Mediterranean)', *Journal of Environmental Protection*, 3 (2012), 135–40 (p. 139).

[224] Chakrabarty, p. 205.

those of the wider European Mediterranean project. This ultimately offered few tangible benefits to the North African and Middle Eastern countries that were ostensibly included, save for Israel, whose status as part of this region is, as this chapter has indicated, highly ambiguous. The 'partnership' has in fact served to entrench Europe's borders, with the Mediterranean becoming less of a fluid space of connection and exchange, and more of a solidifying southern wall of 'fortress' Europe.[225]

Indeed, the story of the four Gazan boys killed on the beach in 2014 recalled an older image, which made headlines around the world in 2008. The image, not easily forgotten, showed the towel-covered bodies of two drowned Roma girls, surrounded by indifferent sunbathers on an Italian beach. It became an unwanted emblem of Italy's systematic discrimination against its Roma population.[226] In these instances, the reputation of the beach as a site of leisure lends a hypervisibility to acts of violence, both direct and systemic, for which it is the stage.[227] In doing so, it undercuts the Israeli and European claims of cosmopolitanism and inclusivity which presume Mediterranean coastlines as their basis. In Europe's case, nowhere are these claims more undermined than in the almost-daily stories of the drownings of African and Middle Eastern refugees in the Mediterranean, while attempting

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[225] Chambers, p. 68; Kristina Kausch and Richard Youngs, 'The End of the "Euro-Mediterranean Vision"', *International Affairs*, 85 (2009), 963–75.

[226] John Hooper, 'Gypsy Girls' Corpses on Beach in Italy Fail to Put off Sunbathers', *Guardian*, 21 July 2008, p. 17.

[227] Alain Corbin, *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World 1750-1840*, trans. by Jocelyn Phelps (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

to reach Europe in overcrowded, makeshift boats.[228] The Mediterranean is certainly a space

which tells us about European and Israeli values and culture, but perhaps not in the ways

these countries would like it to.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the Israeli discourse of Mediterraneanism through a discussion

of *The Same Sea*, by Amos Oz, a writer often hailed locally and internationally as Israel's

'national novelist'. As a result of Oz's celebrity, *The Same Sea* is arguably the novel through

which Mediterraneanism has achieved its greatest local and international visibility.

Mediterraneanism is often presented as a peacemaking discourse, which might facilitate

cultural dialogue and connection between Israel and its neighbours. Oz's reputation as a

moderate leftist, even if, as I have discussed, this is compatible in an Israeli context with

support for aggressive state violence, enhances the appeal of Mediterraneanism in this

respect. Ultimately, I have argued that Mediterraneanism operates as a way of consolidating

Israel's ownership of both the land and sea. It does so partly through claiming Israel's

historic origins in the symbolic home of European civilisation, but also through presenting

an image of Israel which is attractive and marketable in Europe and the West, and which

encourages political and economic support on the basis of cultural similarity.

Mediterraneanism, in spite of apparently presenting an ethnically diverse and regionally

integrated Israel, ultimately serves as a means of shutting out a different region, the Orient.

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[228] The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) counts migrant fatalities worldwide through its 'Missing

Migrants' project. See Tara Brian and Frank Laczko (eds), *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration*

(Geneva: International Organisation for Migration, 2014)

<http://www.iom.int/files/live/sites/iom/files/pbn/docs/Fatal-Journeys-Tracking-Lives-Lost-during-Migration-

2014.pdf> [Accessed 20 March 2016].

Oz uses hydrological metaphors to self-consciously highlight the flipside to Israel's economic boom, in underdevelopment elsewhere in the world. However, in doing so, he reaffirms Israel's belonging to Europe and the West, and externalises the social and ecological consequences of Israeli policy in the Mediterranean region. This reading of *The Same Sea* has combined metaphorical readings of representations of the sea with an emphasis on its economic, social and ecological roles, providing a vital corrective to much existing criticism. I have offered reason to be cautious about the emancipatory potential often attached to the sea by literary critics, among others, demonstrating the ways in which representations of the sea can easily be incorporated into exclusionary nationalist discourses. In the following chapter, I move to a much earlier historical period, the 1920s. I examine further ways in which ideas of water were incorporated into territorial ownership claims, discourses of becoming 'native', and, again, attempts to garner Euro-American approval, this time in relation to the founding Zionist practice of draining the swamps.

## 2. 'The dense, murky water of the past': swamps, nostalgia and settlement myth in Meir Shalev's *The Blue Mountain*

'the true creators of our Old-New-Land [...] were the hydraulic engineers' – Theodor Herzl, Altneuland (1902)[1]

'When I was young I believed with all my heart the

Huleh swamp had to be drained.

Then all the bright-coloured birds fled for their lives.

Now half a century later they are filling it with water again

Because it was all a mistake. Perhaps my entire life I've been living a mistake.' – Yehuda

Amichai, 'Once I Wrote *Now and in Other Days*' (2000)[2]

The neatly ordered arable farmland of the Jezreel Valley (*Emek Yizreel*) in northern Israel is commonly viewed as the central example of Israel's success in 'redeeming' the land of Palestine.[3] The Jezreel Valley is popularly known in Israel as the *Emek* ('Valley') although it was once known by the Arabic name of *Marj Ibn 'Amer*. I use the Israeli 'Jezreel Valley' here to reflect the area's colonial reality. The Valley was a swamp until the early twentieth century, when, like most of Palestine's wetlands, it was drained by Zionist 'pioneers'

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[1] p. 175.

[2] Yehuda Amichai, 'Once I Wrote Now and in Other Days: Thus Glory Passes, Thus Pass the Psalms', in *Open Closed Open: Poems*, trans. by Chana Bloch and Chana Kronfeld (New York: Harcourt, 2000), pp. 29–36 (p. 31). The title refers to a collection published by Amichai in 1955, named *Now and in Other Days*.

[3] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 35.

(*halutzim*) of the Second (1904 – 1914) and Third (1919-1924) Aliyot (singular: Aliyah).[4] The

Jewish National Fund, which finally purchased the area in 1921 and drained it from 1922

and 1924, celebrated the project as one of its greatest achievements.[5] Images of the Valley

feature more frequently in pre-state JNF publicity and fundraising materials than any other

part of the country, and the JNF continues to romanticise drainage on its website today.[6]

Drainage was valorised in left-wing literature, song, and curricula of the pre- and early state

periods, and schoolchildren were sent to tour and work in the new settlements.[7] While

water in Israel/Palestine is consistently framed today in terms of scarcity, the history of

drainage tells us that an opposing view of the land's water potential was once prevalent. As

noted in the Introduction, water was considered abundant, to the extent that its 'excess'

was a nuisance which had to be managed.

In this chapter I examine the history and mythology of swamp drainage in Israel/Palestine,

through a discussion of Israeli novelist Meir Shalev's bestselling first novel, *The Blue*

*Mountain* (1988). Shalev is one of Israel's most popular novelists, and his work has been

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[4] Yoram Yom-Tov, 'Human Impact on Wildlife in Israel since the Nineteenth Century', in *Between Ruin and*

*Restoration: An Environmental History of Israel*, ed. by Daniel E. Orenstein, Alon Tal, and Char Miller

(Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013), pp. 53–81 (p. 60).

[5] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund, 1924-1947* (Rochester, NY:

University of Rochester Press and University of Haifa Press, 2003), pp. 159–60.

[6] Bar-Gal, pp. 159–60. Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, *Third Decade: 1921-1930* (Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, n.d.)

<http://www.kkl.org.il/eng/about-kkl-jnf/our-history/third-decade-1921-1930/> [accessed 22 April 2015].

[7] Aharon Kellerman, 'Settlement Myth and Settlement Activity: Interrelationships in the Zionist Land of Israel',

*Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 21 (1996), 363–78 (p. 371).

translated into over twenty languages.[8] Still, scholarship on Shalev's work remains sparse. In the Anglophone world, this is perhaps because interest in Shalev's writing is low, as with translated literature in general.[9] *The Blue Mountain* was only translated into English in 2002 and published in the UK in 2004.[10] Within Israel, it may be that the popularity of Shalev's work has proven counterproductive, with scholars preferring more 'serious' texts. In the extant criticism and reviews, Shalev's use of magical realist elements to engage with Israel's national history has been a major topic of discussion. This is typically connected with related trends in Israeli literature.[11] Others move beyond Israel and look to the postcolonial literary canon, in which magical realism retains a prominent place, even well beyond its heyday in the 1980s and 1990s.[12] Magical realist superstar authors Gabriel Garcia Marquez and

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[8] Noa Menhaim, 'Israelis Pick Meir Shalev as Most Beloved Author', *Ynetnews*, 9 January 2005 <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3030439,00.html> [accessed 24 March 2015]. Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature (ITHL), 'Meir Shalev', *ITHL* <http://www.ithl.org.il/page_13835> [accessed 27 March 2015].

[9] Brouillette, p. 59.

[10] ITHL, 'Meir Shalev'.

[11] Alan L. Mintz, *Translating Israel: Contemporary Hebrew Literature and Its Reception in America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), pp. 70–71; Smadar Shiffman, 'On the Possibility of Impossible Worlds: Meir Shalev and the Fantastic in Israeli Literature', *Prooftexts*, 13 (1993), 253–67 (pp. 254–255; 266); Giulia Miller, 'Is Zionism like Unrequited Love?', *Haaretz*, 11 February 2015 <http://www.haaretz.com/life/books/jerusalem-international-book-fair-2015/.premium-1.640311> [accessed 12 February 2015].

[12] Works by critics such as Stephen Slemon, and Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris exemplify this trend. Stephen Slemon, 'Magic Realism as Post-Colonial Discourse', *Canadian Literature*, 116 (1988), 9–24; Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

Salman Rushdie are cited as points of comparison for Shalev, by critics and on dust jackets, with their fame serving to render Shalev familiar through assimilation into an existing and highly marketable category of postcolonial writing.[13] A number of critics situate the novel in the tradition of post-Zionist reappraisals of the early years of Zionist settlement, although the playful tone of Shalev's writing differentiates his work from the harsher critiques made by the most famous exponent of this genre, Oz.[14]

I build on earlier criticism by approaching *The Blue Mountain* as a post-Zionist novel, and situating it within the wider questioning of Israel's national mythology that began in the 1980s, as discussed in the previous chapter. At the same time, I foreground the novel's links with another developing social trend in Israel during this period: the environmental movement. The novel has not been discussed from an ecocritical perspective. This is surprising, given its themes, and Shalev's widely documented interest in nonhuman nature. Shalev discusses this frequently in interviews, and his novels have won awards for their

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[13] The comparison to Marquez is ubiquitous in reviews, and features on the dust jacket of the English edition of *The Blue Mountain*. On Shalev and Rushdie, see Robert Alter, 'Magic Realism in the Israeli Novel', *Prooftexts*, 16 (1996), 151–68 (p. 157); Efraim Sicher and Shuly Eilat, 'Inception of a Nation and the Birth of the Hero: Magic Realism in Meir Shalev's *A Pigeon and a Boy* and Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Childen*', in *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics*, ed. by Ahrens Rüdiger and Klaus Stierstorfer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), pp. 107–20. For critical comments on the commercial popularity of magical realism, see Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic*, p. 19, p. 17.

[14] Eran Kaplan, *Beyond Post-Zionism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015), p. 71; Yaron Peleg, *Israeli Culture between the Two Intifadas: A Brief Romance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), pp. 7, 11–14; Zerubavel, 'Revisiting the Pioneer Past'.

environmental accuracy.[15] The potential for an environmental reading of Shalev's novels is underscored by the fact that his works are mentioned in environmental histories of Israel/Palestine by Alon Tal and Sandra Sufian.[16] However, around the time of the novel's writing, Israeli environmentalists were articulating their own critique of the activities of Israel's founders, which centred on the draining of the swamps, particularly the Huleh Valley.[17] This project was gradually being redefined, from a triumph of Israeli ingenuity, to an emblem of Zionism's environmental hubris.[18] I argue that Shalev's text points towards a neglected dimension of post-Zionism: the extent to which it operated as an ecological practice. Depictions of swamps and water in the novel become part of a reckoning with Israel's political and environmental history, which asserts that the forms of repression involved are no longer, in all senses of the word, sustainable. The novel puts forward a related critique of contemporary Israeli nostalgia for the pioneer era, and its historical and ecological erasures. Ultimately, Shalev's emphasis on the emergence of a more ecocentric Israeli environmental sensibility in the present-day has a troubling effect, in concealing the ways in which 'green' priorities, including the 'restoration' of part of the Huleh Valley, are used today in Israel for settler colonial ends.

**Decline of the Pioneer Dream**

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[15] Maya Sela, 'Meir Shalev Publishes New Novel and Talks Violence, the New Man and Why He Avoids Politics', *Haaretz.com*, 2013 <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/.premium-1.534015> [accessed 26 February 2015]; 'ITHL - Meir Shalev'

[16] Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 4–5; Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 32.

[17] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, chap. 5.

[18] Sufian, p. 1.

*The Blue Mountain* is set in the village of Nahalal, one of the earliest Jewish settlements in the Jezreel Valley. Nahalal was established in 1921 and was the first *moshav*. The *moshav* differs from Israel's most well-known form of collective agricultural settlement, the kibbutz, in permitting private ownership of farms and property by individual families.[19] Shalev was born in Nahalal and continues to live nearby.[20] The novel moves between different periods in the history of the village, from its founding era, to the present day, when the myths of the 'pioneers' have long lost their lustre. Since its heyday in the early-to-mid twentieth century, the agricultural economy of the village has gone into terminal decline, as in Israel more widely, where it has come to play an ever-diminishing role in the country's identity and national income.[21] This decline is illustrated through the occupation of Baruch, grandson of one of the village's founding fathers, Mirkin. Baruch has considerable knowledge of agriculture: he was raised by renowned farmer Mirkin after the death of his parents in an Arab bombing, and educated by teacher-naturalist Pinness.[22] However, in a macabre storyline, Baruch plants not bulbs but bodies. He founds a cemetery, Pioneer Home, after uprooting the fruit trees in his grandfather's famous orchard.[23] Here – for a significant fee – Baruch buries any Jew with a tangential connection to the Second Aliyah. The majority of his

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[19] Paul Rivlin, *The Israeli Economy from the Foundation of the State through the 21st Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 29–31; Iris Graicer, 'The Valley of Jezreel: Social Ideologies and Settlement Landscape, 1920–1929', *Studies in Zionism*, 11 (1990), 1–23 (pp. 5–7).

[20] Maya Sela, 'Meir Shalev Publishes New Novel and Talks Violence, the New Man and Why He Avoids Politics', *Haaretz*, 5 July 2013 <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/.premium-1.534015> [accessed 26 February 2015]; Meir Shalev, 'Get Me Out of Here', *Independent*, 15 April 2000, pp. 2531 (p. 25–31).

[21] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 149; Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 238.

[22] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 161.

[23] ibid., pp. 19–21.

clients are wealthy Americans who made minimal contributions to the 'redemption' of Palestine, such as having 'worked in Baron de Rothschild's winery for three weeks'.[24] Shalev's description of the arrival of the bodies is a darkly parodic version of pioneer migration to Palestine, which sends up the Zionist message of self-realisation through return to the land by taking this metaphor literally.[25]

Baruch is portrayed as a quiet, unimaginative man and a somewhat tragic figure. He appears incapable of freeing himself from the grip of the pioneers and beginning his own life. This is implied particularly through his apparent lack of interest in women, or, at least, his inability to connect with them. He starts the graveyard not out of greed, but to fulfil Mirkin's last request for revenge on his fellow villagers.[26] The reasons for Mirkin's desire for vengeance lie in the early days of the village. Mirkin was coerced into marrying against his will, supposedly in the name of the collective good.[27] He is finally reunited with his true love in an old people's home, not long before his death.[28] Mirkin is resentful of the way in which the villagers treated his son Efrayim, who returned home with severe facial disfigurements after fighting with the British in the Second World War, only to be ostracised.[29] Cemeteries, particularly military ones, are frequently charged with national symbolic meaning. They provide a connection to the nation's historical roots, a reminder of the 'sacrifice' of previous

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[24] ibid., p. 178.

[25] ibid., pp. 201, 30; Alan L. Mintz, 'Tellers of the Soil', *New Republic*, 9 September 1991, pp. 39–42 (p. 40).

[26] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 27.

[27] Ibid., p. 40.

[28] Ibid., p. 232.

[29] ibid., pp. 67, 119.

generations, and a site for the performance of commemorative rituals.[30] In Israel, military and kibbutz cemeteries play a similar role, with their national significance amplified because of the prominence of heroism and sacrifice in Israel's national mythology.[31] Baruch disrupts these meanings by founding a cemetery which illustrates the harmful effects of Israel's collectivist pioneering mythology and hastens its demise.[32]

**Draining the Swamps**

To fully grasp the significance of Baruch's construction of a cemetery over agricultural land, it is necessary to briefly discuss the history of swamp drainage in Israel/Palestine. Drainage was the greatest alteration of Palestine's hydrological map conducted by the Zionist movement, prior to the construction of the National Water Carrier in 1964, which was undertaken after the creation of the state of Israel. Swamps were drained using a range of techniques, including digging channels, planting eucalyptus trees (known for needing large amounts of water, and thought of as having the capacity to purify malarial air), and planting other water-intensive crops, such as cotton.[33] Prior to drainage, Nahalal, the Jezreel Valley village in which *The Blue Mountain* is set, was entirely encircled by swamps.[34] In the case of

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[30] George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[31] Meira Weiss, 'Bereavement, Commemoration, and Collective Identity in Contemporary Israeli Society', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 70 (1997), 91–101.

[32] Grumberg and Mann briefly make related arguments. Grumberg, p. 104; Barbara Mann, 'Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny: Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv', *Representations*, 69 (2000), 63–95 (p. 75).

[33] Derek J. Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870-1918* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 25; Sufian, p. 148.

[34] Sufian, p. 148.

the Huleh Valley (sometimes translated as Hula), the process of drainage involved altering

the width and gradient of the River Jordan at the points at which it entered and left Lake

Huleh.[35] This was one of the last drainage projects, undertaken by Ben-Gurion in the first

years after the creation of the state of Israel, and completed in 1958. It is important to note

that draining Palestine's swamps did not begin with Jewish immigration. Some drainage

activities were undertaken by the British Mandatory authorities, and prior to this, by the

Ottoman Empire.[36] However, these works were piecemeal, whereas drainage played a

central role in Zionist settlement plans, and, as such, was allotted high priority.

One of the major reasons cited by British and Jewish scientists behind the need to drain

swamps was public health. Standing water, whether in swamps, cisterns or even a cattle

hoofprint, can provide a habitat for the *Anopheles* mosquito, which is the vector for the

*Plasmodium* parasite, the cause of malaria.[37] British health surveys and anecdotal evidence

indicate that malaria was a widespread problem prior to and during the Mandate period,

with frequent epidemics.[38] Zionist leader Moshe Smilansky, whose short story 'Hawaja

Nazar' (1910) I discuss in the following chapter, lamented the swollen spleens of many

Jewish children in Palestine – a sign of a history of malaria – because of its potential to

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[35] Yehuda Karmon, 'The Drainage of the Huleh Swamps', *Geographical Review*, 50 (1960), 169–93 (pp. 178–179); Sufian, p. 179.

[36] Gideon Biger, 'Ideology and the Landscape of British Palestine, 1918-1929', in *Ideology And Landscape in Historical Perspective: Essays on the Meanings of Some Places in the Past*, ed. by Alan R. H. Baker and Gideon Biger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 173–96 (p. 189); Sufian, p. 17.

[37] John Robert McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 102.

[38] Sufian, pp. 63, 81.

affect the success of Jewish settlement. He declared: 'Almost every child in Palestine has a

swollen abdomen like a pregnant woman. What a generation of labourers and colonisers

will grow up from them!!!'[39] Smilansky's 'pregnant woman' simile here is telling. These

swollen malarial bellies are a grotesque mirror of the enlarged pregnant stomachs he

presumably wanted to see, in order to effectively populate the country with more

'labourers and colonisers'. This indicates that Zionist interests in reducing the prevalence of

malaria were not purely a matter of benevolence towards the local population, as they were

often presented, but were closely connected to the potential for success of the Zionist

endeavour.[40] This was a common feature of colonial public health projects, just as anxiety

about the potential for disease to disrupt settlement was an aspect of colonial experience

more broadly.[41] Indeed, the history of malaria, as Sufian notes, cannot be separated from

colonial history, as it was 'considered the quintessential colonial disease.'[42] Epidemiological

exchange of course went both ways, as Alfred Crosby has discussed. European settlers, too,

unwittingly introduced new diseases which decimated indigenous populations.[43]

Eradicating malaria was seen by Zionist health experts as having the potential to fulfil a

number of valuable ends. First, it would maintain the health of settlers who had already

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[39] Cited in Sufian, p. 80.

[40] Nadav Davidovitch and Rakefet Zalashik, 'Pasteur in Palestine: The Politics of the Laboratory', *Science in Context*, 23 (2010), 401–25 (p. 402).

[41] David Arnold, 'Introduction: Disease, Medicine and Empire', in *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, ed. by David Arnold (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 1–26 (pp. 14–15). Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore, MA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 10–11.

[42] Sufian, p. 66.

[43] Alfred W. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

arrived, and would reduce expenditure of limited resources on treatment.[44] At the same

time, it was seen as crucial, along with drainage, to releasing 'new' agricultural land, which

could be used to feed large numbers of anticipated future settlers, provide employment,

and perhaps eventually produce crops for export.[45] Making more land and water available

through drainage and malaria reduction was closely linked to ambitions for Jewish

immigration. Both were an essential part of countering British estimates of Palestine's

'absorptive capacity', spelled out in Churchill's 1922 White Paper, which were at this time

being used to restrict Jewish immigration.[46] Drainage was seen by the British authorities as

part of a wider water redistribution programme which was fundamental to any plans for

expanding settlements, as a Mandatory document cited by Sufian demonstrates:

> The extent of this immigration depends almost entirely on schemes of irrigation,
>
> water-power development and public works, opening up for settlement land in
>
> Palestine which is now uninhabited and uncultivated.[47]

Draining wetlands was expected to appease the British Mandatory authorities in a further

sense. The willingness of Zionist agencies to undertake this task demonstrated, according to

the prevailing 'discourses of development', the valuable contributions made for the benefit

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[44] Dafna Hirsch, '"We Are Here to Bring the West, Not Only to Ourselves": Zionist Occidentalism and the Discourse of Hygiene in Mandate Palestine', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 41 (2009), 577–94 (p. 581).

[45] Derek J. Penslar, *Zionism and Technocracy: The Engineering of Jewish Settlement in Palestine, 1870–1918* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p. 3.

[46] Sufian, p. 123.

[47] ibid., p. 121.

of the country by Jewish immigrants.[48] In doing so, drainage provided further support to the

argument for permitting increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, as well as greater

Jewish land purchase.[49]

Anxiety about the impact of malaria on the possibilities for settlement is strongly present in

*The Blue Mountain*. Many of the older characters have suffered from the disease, including

the central character Mirkin and his wife Feyge.[50] Pinness' wife Leah is described as having

died of malaria while pregnant with twins, with the death of her pregnant body symbolically

emphasising the effect of malaria on the settlers' capacity to reproduce themselves.[51] The

cause of Leah's death is later disputed by another pioneer, suggesting the ease with which

memory can perhaps be distorted by dominant narratives of national history.[52] In this case,

there is a hint that the prominence of malaria in Israel's settlement mythology, to which

Pinness is passionately attached, perhaps causes him to retrospectively rewrite his wife's

death as a heroic fall in the service of the nation. The potential of malaria to destroy

settlements completely casts a heavy shadow over the description of the early years of

settlement in the novel, in repeated references to an earlier group of German Templars in

the Valley, 'every one of whom died of malaria'.[53] German ghosts around a village spring

remind the settlers of the possibility that their own efforts could be wiped out: 'the reedy

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[48] Mark LeVine, 'The Discourses of Development in Mandate Palestine', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 17 (1995), 95–

124.

[49] Sufian, pp. 130–132.

[50] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, pp. 29, 51

[51] ibid. pp. 3.

[52] ibid., p. 280.

[53] ibid., pp. 32, 78.

death shrieks of their blond children could still be heard there, haunting the rushes and elecampane.'[54] Malaria is depicted as a risk to Jewish settlement in Palestine in its potential to cause settlers to abandon harsh conditions, and leave: 'malaria and depression' are described as the two major factors against which settlers hoping to remain must develop 'resistance' in their 'sweet blood'.[55] The threat of the diseased swamp in these early years is so great as to shape even the architecture of the village, with pioneer cabins raised above the ground in order to avoid damp and insects.[56]

Repeated comparisons between malaria and Arab resistance emphasise the significance of the threat of the disease to Jewish settlement. These are listed together as causes of equivalent numbers of deaths, in accounts of 'the victims of malaria and of Arab bandits, the suicides and the fallers by the wayside,' and claims that '[t]here wasn't a house without its dead, whether from malaria or from a bullet'.[57] The universal impact of these causes of death is suggested in Baruch's guardians being afflicted by both: while his parents are killed by an Arab bomb, his guardians after their death, Pinness and Mirkin, are both affected by malaria, as noted above.[58] Links between disease and Arab resistance are found in the oppositional and often militaristic language used to describe the pre-drainage landscape. Shalev deploys ironic exaggeration, mimicking the hyperbole of accounts of pioneer heroism. In one of many examples, Baruch recounts a childhood memory of eating in 'the woods behind the meeting house where the wild garlic grew,' an area which he recalls as

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[54] ibid., p. 78.

[55] ibid., p. 39.

[56] ibid., pp. 5, 171.

[57] ibid., p. 114.

[58] ibid., pp. 161, 3, 29.

the 'last remnant of the days when anopheles mosquitoes warred on us and the water buffalo stuck its long tongue out at us'.[59] From their description as a 'last remnant' of these earlier days, the woods would seem to be eucalyptus trees, which would produce the well-drained soil preferred by wild garlic. Indigenous nature is depicted as hostile and uncooperative through anthropomorphic language of a military campaign ('warred'), and the comically rude gesture of the buffalo sticking its tongue out at the pioneers. This language literalises the association between militaries and antimalarial campaigns of the time, as discussed by Timothy Mitchell, in order to present a humorous depiction of pioneer rhetoric[60]

**From a Swamp to a Wetland**

In the draining of Palestine's swamps, as in programmes of swamp drainage around the world at this time, modern germ theory and bacteriological sciences circulated alongside older ideas about miasma as a cause of disease. The term 'malaria' originates in the Italian for 'bad air' and in the nineteenth century was attributed to 'noxious vapours' emanating from stagnant water.[61] Until recently, the eradication of all types of wetland had long been thought of as part of producing a 'sanitary' landscape.[62] More recently, the rise of the term

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[59]  ibid., p. 188. For similar examples, see pp. 26, 45, 111, 291, 16.

[60] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), p. 26.

[61] Sufian, pp. 43, 65.

[62] Linda Lorraine Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), p. 82. Classic, if dated, versions of this argument are found in Rodney James Giblett, *Postmodern Wetlands: Culture, History, Ecology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996); William L. Howarth, 'Imagined Territory: The Writing of Wetlands', *New Literary History*, 30 (1999), 509–39.

'wetland' over the term 'swamp' has accompanied changing perceptions of the ecological, aesthetic and economic value of these environments.[63] The stigmatisation of wetlands on supposed health grounds can be seen as part of a hierarchy of water purity with religious origins. In this schema, water's flow is seen as a sign of sacredness and divine providence (hence the prominence of 'living water' in religious rituals), while its purity is measured on a vertical axis, from the 'clean' water of rain or the mountain spring, down to the 'low' and symbolically 'corrupted' water of the swamp.[64] Scientifically, too, as Linton discusses, the 'proper' state of water is characterised as the constant flow of the hydrological cycle, regardless of the actual applicability of this model outside the well-watered environments of the northern European countries from which it originated.[65] Swamp water falls down on this count, too. Water does of course flow through many swamps, providing the basis of what is now recognised as their ecologically vital ability to filter and purify water, and act, as William Neiring writes, as 'the kidneys of the landscape'.[66] The Jordan River once flowed through the Huleh swamp, with its waters being filtered in the swamp before reaching Lake Tiberias, Israel's largest water reservoir;.indeed, as I discuss later in this chapter, the redirection of the river eventually put Israel's water supplies into a perilous condition.[67] Since the flow of water through swamps is not immediately visible as in the case of rainwater, spring water, or rivers, the swamp then appears as a 'deviant' landscape, in both sacred and scientific terms.

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[63] Lawrence Buell, 'Wetlands Aesthetics', *Environmental History*, 10 (2005), 670–71 (p. 670).

[64] Strang, *The Meaning of Water*, pp. 91, 100; Tuan, pp. 58–59.

[65] Linton, *What Is Water?*, chap. 5 and 6.

[66] Cited in Howarth, p. 520.

[67] Karmon, p. 178; Sufian, p. 1.

Wetlands 'failed' to conform to dominant European categories of landscape aesthetics. They blend water and land in a 'viscous', 'interstitial' and unstable landscape which refuses to fit into the favoured aesthetic categories of the European landscape tradition, offering neither the awe and sublimity of mountainous scenery, nor a 'prospect view' over a picturesque patchwork of fields.[68] The draining of wetlands in Palestine built on colonial environmental alterations more widely, intended to make a 'dysfunctional' environment productive and 'correct' according to Eurocentric standards of a 'properly' functioning ecosystem.[69] Equally, in their apparently unproductive mix of land and water, wetlands have often fallen victim to what Philip Garone, writing in a Californian context, calls the 'agricultural mystique'.[70] Until recently, intensive agriculture was widely perceived in Euro-American cultures as the optimal use of rural land, with swamps seen as idle capital waited to be extracted, and their existence as the outcome of local neglect.[71] The often negative ecological effects of drainage were either missed or glossed over in an urge to develop and 'modernise' the landscape, and extend a country's territory through incorporating its 'frontier'.[72]

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[68] Mark Dorrian, 'Fluid and Viscous Landscapes', in *Deterritorialisations: Revisioning Landscape and Politics*, ed. by Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2003), pp. 22–23 (p. 22); Peter A. Fritzell, 'American Wetlands as Cultural Symbol: Places of Wetlands in American Culture', in *Wetland Functions and Values: The State of Our Understanding* (Washington, DC: American Water Resources Association, 1978), pp. 523–34.

[69] Davis and Burke, p. 3.

[70] Philip Garone, *The Fall and Rise of the Wetlands of California's Great Central Valley* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), p. 14.

[71] Howarth, p. 523.

[72] Sufian, p. 112.

The unifying factor in these various iterations of 'swamp stigma' is their material in-betweenness. Anthony Wilson, writing on swamps in the American South, usefully frames the distaste for swamps' ambiguous state through Mary Douglas' account of classification and concepts of purity, and Julia Kristeva's work on the 'abject', which itself builds on Douglas.[73] Swamps, as Wilson comments, are unnerving in their inability to be classified as either a liquid or a solid. Instead, they consist of a 'treacherous mix of land and water that can give way at any moment beneath the unwary foot', with this uncertainty rendering the swamp 'abject'.[74] Similarly negative characteristics have been frequently projected onto the human inhabitants of swamplands, often portrayed historically, and still today, as unclean, unproductive, morally corrupt, and potentially corrupting, assumptions which often derive from the persistence of theories of 'miasma'.[75] Swampland is generally cheaper to buy or rent than drained areas of land because of the risks of flooding and disease, meaning that its populations are frequently made up of members of racially or economically marginalised communities.[76] The attribution of negative traits to swamp inhabitants is, then, often a

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[73] Anthony Wilson, *Shadow and Shelter: The Swamp in Southern Culture* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), p. 9.

[74] ibid.

[75] Mary J. Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 14–17; David Miller, *Dark Eden: The Swamp in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 75; Ian D Rotherham and David McCallam, 'Peat Bogs, Marshes and Fen as Disputed Landscapes in Late Eighteenth-Century France and England', in *Histoires de La Terre: Earth Sciences and French Culture, 1740-1940*, ed. by Louise Lyle and McCallam (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008), pp. 75–90 (pp. 75–76).

[76] This can be seen widely, from nineteenth century London, to twenty-first century New Orleans. George Godwin, *Town Swamps and Social Bridges* (London: Cox and Wyman, 1859), p. 17; Juliette Landphair, '"The

racialised and classist discourse, and this element of Zionist perceptions of the Jezreel and

Huleh inhabitants is discussed below.

**Landscapes of *The Blue Mountain***

Shalev's depiction of the early years of settlement similarly suggests that the swamps were

viewed by the pioneers as an unhygienic landscape in need of 'correction'. Shalev uses the

techniques of magical realism to echo the pioneers' distorted perception of their

environment, and amplify this for comic effect. The use of the pioneers' views as a source of

comedy flatters Shalev's contemporary readers by implicitly suggesting that we, particularly

readers in Israel, possess a superior attitude towards the environment. I examine the

politics of this implication later in the chapter. The village in its early days is described as

'barely visible through a miasmic veil of swamp gas and mosquito wings'.[77] The exaggeration

of this comment, perceptible to a modern reader, is a technique common to magical realist

writing.[78] Here, the excessiveness of Shalev's writing style mirrors and underscores the

apparent 'excess' of nonhuman nature, particularly water, perceived by the pioneers in the

Palestinian landscape they encountered. Shalev uses the tendency of magical realism

towards hyperbole to illustrate the pioneers' attitude towards their own activities, and their

subsequent valorisation in Zionist myth. Baruch describes the 'execrable waters' in the

region, '[b]efore they were dried and ploughed,' while the villagers are described as flying

across the valley '[m]ounted on hoes [...] over poisonous swamps' and through 'a rank cover

Forgotten People of New Orleans": Community, Vulnerability, and the Lower Ninth Ward', *The Journal of American History*, 94 (2007), 837–45 (pp. 838–39).

[77] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 43.

[78] David Danow, *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004), pp. 139, 35.

of rushes and crabgrass'.[79] This description parodies both the pioneers' messianic beliefs, and the narratives of Labour Zionist history, by envisioning the frequent claim of a pioneer ability to 'transcend' the limits of nature as a literal, godlike flight above the ground.

The result of drainage is an ordered and seemingly rationalised landscape, observed by Pinness from the top of the blue mountain of the title.[80] This scene can be read as an example of the 'prospect view' of the European landscape tradition, which was presumed to demonstrate political authority, as well, potentially, as possession of the land.[81] Pinness is described as 'looking down on the broad, obeisant, fertile Valley at his feet,' in which the 'geometric fields of the pioneers' can be distinguished in a 'patchwork' shape.[82] This aerial perspective points towards Pinness' ownership of the landscape, who views it from a symbolically authoritative elevated position. Meanwhile, the emphasis on visual perception – Pinness is 'looking down' – underscores the sense of his separation from and control over the landscape, given the historical association in Western rationalist thought between vision, knowledge and reason.[83] This valorisation of sight as the highest sense has been

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[79] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, pp. 85, 39.

[80] This is likely to be a reference to either Mount Tabor or Mount Carmel. Confusingly, Mintz alternates between each of these mountains in two different pieces, giving the same reasons each time. Mintz, *Translating Israel*, p. 219; Mintz, 'Tellers of the Soil', p. 39.

[81] John Barrell, 'The Public Prospect and the Private View: The Politics of Taste in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Reading Landscape: Country, City, Capital*, ed. by Simon Pugh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 19–40 (p. 27); Denis Cosgrove, 'Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 10 (1985), 45–62 (p. 55).

[82] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 268.

[83] Denis Cosgrove, 'Landscape and the European Sense of Sight - Eyeing Nature', in *Handbook of Cultural Geography*, ed. by Kay Anderson, Mona Domosh and Steve Pile et al (London: Sage, 2003), pp. 249–68.

criticised by feminists, among others, for ignoring non-visual forms of knowledge acquisition, and facilitating an attitude of environmental and social domination, even if more recent critiques of binary formulations of gender have made these arguments feel somewhat dated.[84] Shalev self-consciously invokes these earlier debates in his description of the transformed valley as 'broad, obeisant, fertile', attributing feminised characteristics to the land which has been transformed by Zionist labour, and which is viewed by Pinness' discerning and symbolically dominating eye.

This 'prospect' over a scene has a strong imperial legacy, as W. J. T. Mitchell notes.[85] It allows 'a projected future of "development" and exploitation' to be mapped out, a vision which has clear resonances with the Zionist project of 'improvement' depicted in Shalev's novel.[86] This allows the observer's vision for the land to be mapped *over* existing uses of the land by earlier inhabitants, imagined as incapable of achieving a similar separation from nature. Such a perspective is evident from comments made by Karmon, whose description of the Huleh after drainage has much in common with Pinness' account of the Jezreel Valley. Karmon writes:

> Gone are the many narrow and twisted irrigation channels. In their place are the
>
> straight channels of the Banias and Hatsbani [sources of the River Jordan], and

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[84] For instance, Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 94.

[85] W. J. T. Mitchell, 'Imperial Landscape', in *Landscape and Power*, ed. by W. J. T. Mitchell (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 5–34 (p. 17).

[86] ibid.

between them broad fields where one can see tractors and agricultural machines all year round.[87]

Karmon and Shalev's descriptions are very similar in their valorisation of the order and symmetry brought to the landscape by Zionist agriculture, as well as in their assessments of the environmental management of its previous Palestinian inhabitants. Karmon explicitly positions the transformed landscape as a dramatic improvement on Palestinian use of the Huleh. He celebrates the removal of 'the Arab villages', lauding the 'sharp contrast to the picture of poverty and degeneration' presented by the newly drained Valley.[88] In this account, the presumed degradation of the environment and its inhabitants are inherently linked in a form of environmental determinism, with Karmon claiming that: '[p]oor conditions and diseases have created a uniform type out of the [...] Ghawarna, weak in body and spirit, helpless against the forces of nature.'[89] Karmon transfers the stigma of the swamp onto its already socially marginalised inhabitants, whose inability to separate themselves from nature sets them apart from Israeli technological ingenuity. The same association is mirrored in Shalev's ironic metaphorical associations between nonhuman nature and Arab resistance, discussed above, which evoke pioneer perceptions of the challenges of settlement.

**The 'empty land' of Palestine**

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[87] Cited in Gorney, '"Desolate" vs. "Wondrous" and "Wild" vs. "Rational": Representations of Nature, Native, and Self in Two Geography Books About the Hula Valley, Northern Israel', in *Palestinian and Israeli Environmental Narratives*, ed. by Stuart Schoenfeld (Toronto: Centre for International and Security Studies, York University, 2005), pp. 339–49, p. 344.

[88] ibid.

[89] ibid.

The apparent degradation of the Palestinian landscape was described frequently by

European and American visitors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Mark

Twain and even Herzl described their disappointment on visiting the Holy Land, with Twain

famously declaring that 'Palestine sits in sackcloth and ashes.'[90] Shalev's characters refer to

this narrative of desolation, with Baruch reflecting: 'It's hard to imagine that it was all a

wilderness once,' and adding that photographs of the early twentieth century Palestinian

environment 'looked like they were taken elsewhere.'[91] Others are typical of early settlers in

becoming depressed by the 'desolation of the countryside,' which the pioneer Levin views

as 'dead and pitiful' compared to the 'vast green expanses' of Eastern Europe.[92] As noted

above, this seeming desolation was widely attributed to neglect by its Palestinian

inhabitants and cited as a reason why Palestine was appropriate for Zionist colonisation.

One of the most famous iterations of this argument comes from British author Israel

Zangwill, who claimed in 1920, not long after the Balfour Declaration, that:

> If Lord Shaftesbury was literally incorrect in describing Palestine as a country
>
> without a people, he was essentially correct, for there is no Arab people living in

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[90] Herzl, cited in Uri Eisenzweig, 'An Imaginary Territory: The Problematic of Space in Zionist Discourse',

*Dialectical Anthropology*, 5 (1981), 261–85 (p. 282); Theodor Herzl, *The Complete Diaries of Theodor Herzl*, ed.

by Raphael Patai, trans. by Harry Zohn, 5 vols (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960), II, p. 745;

Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (Connecticut: American Publishing Co., 1869), p. 607.

[91] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 258.

[92] ibid., pp. 43–44.

intimate fusion with the country, utilising its resources and stamping it with characteristic impress; there is at best an Arab encampment.[93]

Here, Palestine is presented as *terra nullius*, lacking in civilisation and available for – indeed, requiring – occupancy and development.[94] 'Improving' the land becomes a performance of an ownership claim, in a familiar colonial trope which has its origins in Locke's theory of ownership as 'mixing' one's labour with land discovered in a 'state of nature'.[95]

'Improvement' performed an important role in allying the Zionist movement, and later the state of Israel, with the Euro-American world. The management of water here was viewed as crucial and its significance can be seen in Herzl's *Altneuland* (1902), a utopian novel in which Herzl lays out a vision of a future Jewish state in Palestine. Out of all that they view on their tour of the state, Herzl's protagonists Friedrich and Kingscourt are 'most impressed by the technical marvels achieved by the water engineers', referenced in the first epigraph to this chapter.[96] These include regulating the Jordan for agriculture, draining the swamps, and producing hydroelectricity by constructing a canal from the Mediterranean Sea to the Dead Sea.[97] The European and American origins of the new society's technological innovations are frequently stressed, to the extent that these are described as 'not built in Palestine, but [...] in England and America, in Germany and in France.'[98] These ensure that 'every single drop

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[93] Cited in Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed Books, 2007), p. 45.

[94] Sufian, pp. 46, 315.

[95] John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 328–29.

[96] Herzl, *Altneuland*, p. 177.

[97] ibid.

[98] ibid., p. 113.

that fell was put to good use', and were ultimately mirrored in the employment of American water experts, including Walter Clay Lowdermilk, in producing the Zionist movement's water management plans for Palestine.[99] By drawing explicitly on European and American innovations and expertise in relation to water, Zionist leaders made an implicit case for European and American support of the Zionist project, based on shared principles of capitalist agriculture, an attitude of mastery towards nature, and technological aptitude.

**Redeeming the Land, Redeeming the Nation**

The project of drainage was seen not just as a means of 'improving' the land, but as part of the Zionist project of national 'regeneration'. These processes were seen as intimately connected, with the 'desolation' of the land imagined as the inevitable result of Jewish exile, and agricultural labour to 'renew' the land perceived as having the capacity to rid Jewish settlers of the negative and 'degenerate' traits presumed to have been acquired in the Diaspora.[100] Among these, the supposed Jewish distance from nonhuman nature and preference for 'intellectual' work over physical labour were the targets of particular disdain, as Zionist leaders adopted anti-Semitic tropes as part of an attempted 'normalisation' of Jewish life.[101] Herzl's protagonist Friedrich repeats this narrative of a parallel decline of land

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[99] ibid., p. 177.

[100] Zakim, *To Build and Be Built,* p. 60. The 'degeneration' discourse is primarily associated with Zionist leader Max Nordau, and emerged in the context of a wider European fin-de-siècle preoccupation with questions of 'degeneracy'. Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, trans. by George Mosse, 2nd edn (Lincoln, NE and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, C. 1848 - C. 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[101] Hirsch, p. 582; Todd Samuel Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 12.

and people in *Altneuland*, describing on his first visit to Palestine, prior to its reformation, a landscape of 'almost nothing but sand and marsh'.[102] This environment leads him to conclude that '[i]f this is our homeland [...] then it has been brought just as low as we are.'[103] 'Redeeming' the land instantiated discourses of health and disease in multiple ways, with drainage appearing to not just 'cure' the neglect caused by Palestinians, but acting as a way of purging qualities of the 'sick' Diaspora Jew from new settlers and allowing them to become native to the land of Palestine.

In Shalev's novel, the process of 'curing' immigrants of supposed Diaspora traits is made literal in an encounter between the pioneers and a character named Zeitouni, master of a travelling circus troupe. Zeitouni is a lapsed Hasidic Jew who makes his living through magic, numerology and superstition.[104] He is explicitly linked to old Jewish culture in Eastern Europe through his esoteric activities, described as learnt in his 'Hasidic life'.[105] He adopts a nomadic lifestyle with a group of 'wandering players', with the suggestion of the stereotype of the 'wandering Jew', instead of the appropriate activity for a new 'Hebrew' man of working the land.[106] Zeitouni's troupe is not welcomed in the village, with one of the founders declaring with scorn, '[w]e saw enough of that nonsense in the Hasidic courts of the Ukraine'.[107] One of the villagers, Tsirkin, attempts to force Zeitouni to leave in a unique way:

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[102] Herzl, *Altneuland,* p. 32.

[103] ibid., p. 32.

[104] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 173.

[105] ibid., p. 173.

[106] ibid., p. 174.

[107] ibid., p. 173.

The deeper he dug, the louder the earth growled, until finally, when the hoe struck

the crust of the pent-up swamp, sharp blades of rushes popped up in a loathsome

cloud of mosquitoes and lanced Zeitouni's skin. Muscular leeches shinnied up his

pale calves and hung on there, while pale worms sought to drag him down into the

depths.[108]

Tsirkin's attempt to 'swamp' Zeitouni represents a literalisation of the capacity of the

worked-on land to 'consume' the supposed negative traits of Diaspora Judaism.[109] These are

encapsulated in Zeitouni, who narrowly escapes being 'drag[ged] down into the depths.'

Zeitouni's 'pale calves' are the opposite of the tanned, healthy, ideal pioneer, who later

morphs into Israel's iconic 'Sabra'.[110] They are so weak, in fact, that Shalev even contrasts

them comically with the '[m]uscular leeches' of Palestine.[111] The act of 'swamping' itself,

meanwhile, exaggerates the myth of the pioneers 'taming' the land of Palestine, through

portraying them as possessing the ability to make the swamp disappear and appear at will.

At the same time, this image is ambivalent about the pioneers' success: it indicates that the

swamp remains beneath the surface, with a power that, as I discuss below, might not always

stay under human control.

**Post-Zionist Ecology**

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[108] ibid., p. 173.

[109] ibid., p. 176.

[110] ibid., p. 173. On the 'Sabra', see Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew* (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 2000)

[111] ibid., p. 173.

As discussed in Chapter One, the influence of Israel's founding national myths has faded dramatically in recent decades. In the years prior to the publication of *The Blue Mountain*, the rise of a post-Zionist sensibility saw academics and the Israeli public becoming newly sceptical about the accuracy and ongoing relevance of Israel's national narratives. As noted above, Shalev's novel has frequently been linked to this trend, yet it has not, in spite of its environmental themes, been examined in relation to the ecological dimensions of post-Zionism. In the 1980s, Israel's environmental movement was becoming particularly active; the period is described by Israeli environmental historian Alon Tal as the dawning of a 'new era of environmentalism'.[112] Like post-Zionist historians and sociologists, environmentalists sought to reassess the activities of Israel's founders and attracted widespread public attention (as well as criticism) for doing so. A major focus of these debates was the history of drainage in the Jezreel Valley and the Huleh Valley. The Huleh was, by this point, the site of an unfolding ecological crisis, which, as I will now briefly discuss, presented a serious threat to Israel's population.

The Huleh basin was once the largest wetland in Palestine.[113] Situated in the northern Jordan Valley, it sustained a diverse ecology of plants and animals. These included, twice a year, a world-renowned temporary population of migratory birds, travelling the major

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[112] Alon Tal, 'An Imperiled Promised Land: The Antecedents of Israel's Environmental Crises and Prospects for Progress', in *Challenging Environmental Issues: Middle Eastern Perspectives*, ed. by Joseph G. Jabbra and Nancy Walstrom Jabbra (Leiden: Brill, 1997), pp. 116–34 (p. 118).

[113] Ruth Kark and Noam Levin, 'The Environment in Palestine in the Late Ottoman Period, 1798 - 1918', in *Between Ruin and Restoration*, ed. by Orenstein, Tal, and Miller, pp. 1–28 (p. 12).

migratory corridor of the Great Rift Valley from Syria to East Africa.[114] The valley was home

to human inhabitants, numbering around 5,000; mainly Arabs, but also Jewish residents

living in more recent settlements.[115] The valley's Arab inhabitants were largely of the

Ghawarna tribe, and their economy consisted of producing papyrus products, grazing water

buffalo, fishing, and cultivating a range of crops, including rice and cotton.[116] The Huleh had

been targeted for drainage by Zionist leaders for much of the early twentieth century, and

before this, the Ottoman government. Drainage was delayed for a combination of reasons,

including technical complexity and expense, the difficult land ownership arrangements

required, local resistance and the wider Arab revolt, continuing ambiguities over partition

plans, and World War Two.[117] It was only undertaken in the 1950s, after the creation of

Israel, and finally completed in 1958. The expulsion of the valley's Arab inhabitants during

the 1948 war removed the obstacles of local opposition and ownership disputes.[118] Still,

there is consensus across the political spectrum that it was not immediately obvious why

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[114] Michael Turner, Khaled Nasser and Nader Khateeb, *Crossing the Jordan: Concept Document to Rehabilitate, Promote Prosperity and Help Bring Peace to the Lower Jordan Valley*, ed. by Gidon Bromberg (Amman, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv: EcoPeace/Friends of the Earth Middle East, 2005), p. 16 <http://www.globalnature.org/bausteine.net/f/6036/crossingthejordan.pdf?fd=2> [accessed 20 March 2015].

[115] Sufian, pp. 153, 159.

[116] Sliman Khawalde and Dan Rabinowitz, 'Race from the Bottom of the Tribe That Never Was: Segmentary Narratives amongst the Ghawarna of Galilee', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 2002, 225–43; R. J. Payne, 'A Longer-Term Perspective on Human Exploitation and Management of Peat Wetlands: The Hula Valley, Israel', *Mires and Peat*, 9 (2011), 1–9 (pp. 3–5); Sufian, p. 159.

[117] Sufian, pp. 163, 178.

[118] Warwick P. N. Tyler, 'The Huleh Concession and Jewish Settlement of the Huleh Valley, 1934-48', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 30 (1994), 826–59 (pp. 853–54).

drainage programmes were needed at this time.[119] Concerns about malaria, which had

provided at least the explicit motivation for earlier drainage projects, were no longer

relevant: widespread use of pesticides such as DDT had largely eradicated the disease in

Israel, even if this was later to cause its own problems.[120] Speculation continues on the

reasons for drainage, with possibilities including Israel's wish to secure its northern border,

or gain control over the Jordan's headwaters.[121] One widely agreed-upon reason for the

Huleh project is its nation-building symbolism. Following Israel's success in the 1948 war, re-

enacting the activities of the pioneers provided a reminder of the country's founding

national triumphs, and allowed the powerful myths of drainage and settlement to be

harnessed to the nation-building efforts of the new state.[122]

The draining of the Huleh was lauded as a technical triumph. However, in a 1960 essay

written in praise of the project, Karmon unknowingly predicted the problems which would

by the 1990s result in the Huleh's ruin: underground fires caused by peat combustion under

the soil, and loss of fertile topsoil in dust storms, severely limiting agricultural activities.[123]

Drastic changes to the landscape produced by drainage had already resulted in a dramatic

loss of the previously rich biodiversity in the area, as well as ending the possibility of a

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[119] Glenna Anton, 'Blind Modernism and Zionist Waterscape', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 35, 77 (p. 79); Sufian, p. 2;

Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 116.

[120] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land,* p. 116.

[121] Sufian, p. 3

[122] ibid.; Tyler, p. 840.

[123] Karmon, pp. 169–172, 187; K. D. Hambright and T. Zohary, 'Lakes Hula and Agmon: Destruction and

Creation of Wetland Ecosystems in Northern Israel', *Wetlands Ecology and Management*, 6 (1998), 83–89 (p.

87).

revival of a unique Palestinian way of life.[124] Now the loss of the Huleh posed an immediate

threat to Israel's population, since the wetlands had played a vital role in filtering water

passing into Israel's main reservoir, Lake Kinneret. Without the swamp, nitrates and

sulphates from the swamp's decomposing peat, along with further nitrates and phosphorus

by-products of Israel's historically fertiliser-heavy farming techniques, flowed into the lake,

causing dangerous levels of eutrophication (rapid algal and plant growth).[125] Eutrophication

diminishes water quality. Lakes are left slime-covered and foul-smelling; fish are starved of

oxygen and die (oxygen is used up rapidly in the decomposition of high volumes of plant

matter); and drinking water can become contaminated by toxic blooms of cynaobacteria

(more commonly known as blue-green algae).[126] After drainage of the Huleh, the safety of

the Kinneret's water was at risk. At the same time, a series of droughts from 1984-1986,

1989-1990, which have continued periodically to the present day, had already prompted

deep concern over the state of Israel's water supplies.[127] The problems with Israel's pursuit

of national priorities without concern for their environmental consequences were beginning

to become apparent.

The story of the Huleh is closely associated with the emergence of the Israeli environment

movement, as well as being linked to global environmental trends. Opposition to drainage

helped to precipitate the founding of the Israeli environmental organisation Society for the

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[124] Hambright and Zohary, p. 87.

[125] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, p. 234; Hambright and Zohary, p. 87.

[126] M. Nasir Khan and F. Mohammad, 'Eutrophication: Challenges and Solutions, in *Eutrophication: Causes, Consequences and Control*, vol. 2, ed. by Abid A. Ansari, Sarvajeet Singh Gill (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), pp. 1-17, p. 1.

[127] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, pp. 236–241; Zeitoun, Messerschmid and Attili, p. 153.

Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), which managed to persuade a very reluctant JNF to reflood 3,100 dunams of the Huleh swamp five years after drainage.[128] By 1994, the JNF had been forced to reflood an area of the swamp and create a small new lake, Lake Agmon, in an attempt to restore some of the Huleh's historic biodiversity and protect Israel's drinking water supply.[129] Since the success of this project, there have been moves to 'restore' further wetlands in Israel.[130] This reappraisal of the value of Israel's wetlands has taken place in the context of a wider international shift in perception of these waterscapes. Wetlands are no longer seen as unproductive, harmful, or morally dangerous environments. Instead, their varied ecological functions have been widely recognised, and their aesthetic status has shifted such that they have become popular sites on 'ecotourism' itineraries, a trend which promises economic benefits for countries which preserve or restore wetlands.[131] Wetlands also offer valuable 'ecosystem services', through the dubious practice of 'wetlands mitigation banking', and their capacity to act as carbon sinks.[132] As this suggests, the re-

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[128] Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, pp. 116–117.

[129] Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 'Reflooding Hula Valley Begins, Reversing Decades of Cultivation', *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, 6 May 1994 <http://www.jta.org/1994/05/06/archive/reflooding-hula-valley-begins-reversing-decades-of-cultivation> [accessed 20 March 2015].

[130] Zafir Rinat, 'Swamps to Be Reflooded, 80 Years Later', *Haaretz*, 25 June 2009 <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/swamps-to-be-reflooded-80-years-later-1.278744> [accessed 26 March 2015].

[131] Ann Vileisis, *Discovering the Unknown Landscape: A History of America's Wetlands* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999), p. 4; David A. Fennell, *Ecotourism* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 13.

[132] Gloria Gonzales, 'Wetlands Carbon Credits Could Swim Into California Market', *Ecosystem Marketplace*, 12 December 2013 <http://www.ecosystemmarketplace.com/pages/dynamic/article.page.php?page_id=10109&section=biodiver

evaluation of wetlands is not purely motivated by new-found environmental awareness, but also by the rise of neoliberal environmentalism.

The drainage of the Jezreel swamps involved a similarly drastic environmental transformation to that undertaken later in the case of the Huleh, and, as noted above, led to the displacement of the area's Palestinian population. However, it did not become an ecological catastrophe in the same way as the Huleh. Post-Zionist scholars have instead put the triumphalist narrative of drainage under scrutiny, in a debate which flared up and spilled into the popular sphere in the years prior to the publication of *The Blue Mountain*. Initial controversy was prompted by the publication of a 1983 article titled 'The Swamps of the Jezreel Valley – Legend and Reality', by Israeli geographers Yoram Bar-Gal and Shmuel Shamai.[133] Bar-Gal and Shamai's article disputed the extent of the swamps in the Jezreel Valley prior to drainage, arguing that this had been greatly exaggerated in order to fortify the national narrative of pioneer triumph over a hostile landscape. The article caused widespread argument, becoming, as Tamar Katriel notes, 'a symbol in its own turn' of the presumed disloyalty of academics who sought to put national myths under closer scrutiny.[134] Bar-Gal and Shamai were attacked as anti-Zionists and 'PLO supporters', much as Israel's New Historians were heavily criticised at this time for questioning national

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sity_market&eod=1> [accessed 20 March 2015]; Morgan M. Robertson, 'The Neoliberalization of Ecosystem Services: Wetland Mitigation Banking and Problems in Environmental Governance', *Geoforum*, 35 (2004), 361–73.

[133] Yoram Bar-Gal and Shmuel Shamai, 'The Jezreel Valley Swamps—Legend and Reality', *Cathedra*, 27 (1983), 163–79 (Hebrew).

[134] Tamar Katriel, 'Sites of Memory: Discourses of the Past in Israeli Pioneering Settlement Museums', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 80 (1994), 1–20 (p. 7).

orthodoxies.[135] What is interesting here is not so much the possibility that Bar-Gal and

Shamai might have discovered an environmental 'truth' behind the myth, particularly given

that, as William Cronon has highlighted, environmental historians regularly produce vastly

differing narratives, even when they agree on the evidence.[136] Instead, what is significant is

the strength of the reaction to this querying of Israel's swamp mythology. The vociferous

condemnations of Bar-Gal and Shamai suggest that the narrative of draining the swamps

had, in Israeli national culture until this time, an almost sacred status within Israel's 'civil

religion'.[137]

**Revenge of the Dying Lake**

In a 1998 chapter for a commemorative volume on Israeli history, Shalev writes at length

about the draining of the Huleh Valley, and the resulting environmental catastrophe. His

commentary on the lake presents a forceful indictment of earlier Israeli attitudes to

nonhuman nature, which functions simultaneously as a critique of Israel's repression of its

expulsion of the Palestinians. He states:

> The Hula Lake has been dried out, killed. It is gone but, like many other great victims,
>
> it refuses to be forgotten. [...] For us laymen, the Hula will forever be an allegory
>
> about brutality, blindness, arrogance, and the abuse of ideals. If this sounds familiar,
>
> let us not forget that we have acted the same way in other areas – hence the power
>
> of the allegory.

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[135] Sufian, p. 346.

[136] Cronon, p. 1348.

[137] Charles S. Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, *Civil Religion in Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

1983).

It seems that the dying lake is fighting back with a vengeance. The water we had

expected to collect is contaminated and contaminates Lake Kinneret. Wild animals

and plants are disappearing, mice are multiplying, and the land – that virgin land that

awaited us so – is not good Zionist turf, but simply barren wasteland. We could

almost say that the Hula waters cry to us from the ground. [...] brute force is a

double-edged saber – it swings right back and wounds those who rattled it. The Hula

is dead, and this is its last will and testament.[138]

In *The Blue Mountain*, Shalev dramatises a similar 'vengeance' of the Huleh, depicting a

series of instances in which the swamp, along with some of its former human and

nonhuman inhabitants, appears to return. These 'returns' of erased environmental and

political histories suggest that in some ways Shalev's novel may be read as a postcolonial

ecocritical 'return of the repressed' narrative, a trope I have identified elsewhere in Israeli

literature in A. B. Yehoshua's short story 'Facing the Forests'.[139]

Freud describes the return of the repressed as 'perhaps the most potent' example of the

uncanny.[140] As he explains in his famous 1919 essay, the closest English translation of the

German *unheimlich*, which we usually read as 'uncanny', is actually 'unhomely'.[141] This

etymological root provides an insight into how uncanny affects are brought about, at the

same time as resonating in pertinent ways with literature produced in a country with

settler-colonial origins, where questions of being 'at home' are often fraught with anxieties

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[138] Cited in Sufian, pp. 4–5.

[139] Boast, p. 53.

[140] Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David Mclintock (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 148.

[141] ibid., p. 124.

about legitimacy or authenticity.[142] Freud argues that the uncanny derives not from

something strange, but 'goes back to what was once well known and had long been

familiar.'[143] He endorses the German philosopher F. W. J. Schelling's view of the uncanny,

stating that it represents 'everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and

has come into the open.'[144] The uncanny is hence something integral to the *heimlich*, but

which has been repressed. For this reason we can see why it has been used widely in

postcolonial Gothic writing, in which the traumatic legacies of colonial violence and

oppression are often figured as ghosts which return to 'haunt' the nation.[145] The uncanny

has appeared in the genre of writing recently characterised as 'ecoGothic', in which the

ecological violence of capitalist modernity or colonial ambition 'returns', potentially

threatening environmental catastrophe to come.[146] In the context of Israel/Palestine, the

threat of 'return' has a particular political inflection, in Palestinian calls for a 'right of return',

and in the persistence of wider claims for justice and restitution. Shalev's use of the swamp

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[142] Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte, 'Introduction: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic', in

*Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic*, ed. by Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte

(Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), pp. vii – xxvi (p. ix).

[143] Freud, *The Uncanny*, p. 124.

[144] ibid., p. 132.

[145] For examples of this, see David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 54;

*Unsettled Remains: Canadian Literature and the Postcolonial Gothic*, ed. by Cynthia Sugars and Gerry Turcotte

(Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009); Liliane Weissberg, 'Gothic Spaces: The Political Aesthetics of

Toni Morrison's Beloved', in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. by Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith (Manchester:

Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 104–20.

[146] See the wide range of essays in the volume *Ecogothic*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes

(Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

as setting is significant not simply because of its role in Israel's national myths, but because this environment is associated so frequently with Gothic 'returns'. Giblett describes the swamp as 'the uncanny place par excellence', while William Tynes Cowan has called them 'the landscape equivalent of the gothic's haunted house.'[147] Literary swamps, then, are often portrayed as sites at which unwanted histories rise to the surface.

In *The Uncanny*, Freud includes a lengthy 1860 dictionary entry, featuring many examples of uncanny effects. One striking example invokes the mobility and unpredictability of water, and involves a dialogue between two speakers. A speaker recalls a particular feeling experienced near any 'buried spring or a dried-up pond', in which they have the impression that '[y]ou can't walk over them without constantly feeling that water might reappear.'[148] The other describes this feeling as 'uncanny'.[149] This example is echoed in Shalev's use of water to suggest unnerving 'returns'. One striking depiction of the reappearing swamp occurs as Baruch attempts to remove the weeds from his grandfather Mirkin's cabin after Mirkin's death. These have grown with supernatural speed. Baruch removes a huge root from the ground, repeating the same arduous labours performed by the pioneers and lauded in national myth.[150] This repetition, however, has the opposite effect, bringing the swamp back to life:

> A great hole remained in the ground, and from it rose a milky, pestilential vapour
>
> thick with swarms of mosquitoes. Peering down into it, I saw the dense, murky water

[147] William Tynes Cowan, *The Slave in the Swamp: Disrupting the Plantation Narrative* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 14; Giblett, p. 13.

[148] Freud, *The Uncanny,* p. 129.

[149] ibid., p. 129.

[150] Karmon, p. 175.

of the past swirling slowly, little grubs clinging to its surface and breathing patiently

through their short air tubes [...] I could have identified the larvae of the anopheles

mosquito with my eyes closed.

A deep gurgle sounded from the hole. Shut up by the founders in the bowels of the

earth, imprisoned in the trunks of the eucalyptus trees they planted, the soughing

swamp began to surge toward me[151]

In this scene, the swamp's water is no longer allied to the success of Zionist agriculture

through its use in irrigation, or contained within the eucalyptus trees planted for drainage.

The swamp encountered by Baruch seems to act of its own accord, in its 'gurgle' and 'surge',

threatening to overwhelm him with its unpredictable and seemingly autonomous

movement. This is in sharp contrast to the careful regulation of water in the early village,

which is channelled through taps, sprinklers, pipes, and the water tower, in flows that are

checked, adjusted, opened and closed.[152]

The 'dense, murky' appearance of the swamp water highlights the possibility of

contamination and disease, echoed in the return of the mosquitoes, as well as the

miasmatic 'vapour', which together point towards the failure of the Zionist attempt to make

the land 'hygienic' through rationalising its water resources. At the same time, the 'murky'

colour of the water, which continues to 'swirl' rather than drain away, suggests the

unresolved and messy questions surrounding Israel's founding, which refuse to disappear.

The depth of the hole, which goes down to 'the bowels of the earth', alludes to a deep and

fundamental psychic repression of political and ecological violence, while simultaneously

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[151] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 250.

[152] ibid., pp. 118, 123, 234, 232, 287, 336.

suggesting – according to a rather obvious and dated reading – a fear of being 'engulfed' by a newly monstrous environment gendered as feminine.[153] In this image, water's 'liveliness' and apparent capacity to act independently of human agency, topics on which the rise of 'new materialist' and 'posthumanist' philosophies have recently prompted much debate, become malevolent.[154] Shalev demonstrates that water's malleability and flow, while in some ways facilitating its control by humans, can potentially prove disconcerting and threatening, in this case allowing the violent return of life-endangering reminders of a hidden past.[155]

Shalev's swamps remind us of the lost human history of the Jezreel Valley through invocations of the agricultural economy of the various Bedouin groups that lived here prior to their eviction.[156] In one of the many swamp scenes, Shalev describes 'reeds and rushes as tall as a man' that 'sprang up' in place of the 'pear trees', which are 'dragged [...] down into the pestilent muck' by 'thick, pale worms that coiled around' their trunks.[157] This scene hints at the way of life of the inhabitants of the Valley, who, as noted above, cultivated 'reeds and rushes', from which they constructed buildings, baskets and other products.[158] These plants

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[153] Giblett, p. 45.

[154] See, for example: Mielle Chandler and Astrida Neimanis, ,Water and Gestationality: What Flows Beneath Ethics', in *Thinking with Water*, ed. by Cecilia Chen, Janine McLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, pp. 61–83 (pp. 63–65); Vernon L. Scarborough, 'Does Water Have Agency? Does It Need To?', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 21 (2014), 150–53; Veronica Strang, 'Contributaries. From Confusion to Confluence in the Matter of Water and Agency', *Archaeological Dialogues*, 21 (2014), 165–74.

[155] Bakker, *An Uncooperative Commodity*.

[156] Sufian, p. 159.

[157] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 352.

[158] Sufian, p. 136.

return in a gothic form and monstrously exaggerated size, consuming the neat, rationalised

plantations of capitalist Zionist agriculture which replaced them. They demonstrate through

their imposing height – 'as tall as a man' – the failure of the modernist and Zionist project of

'man' subduing 'nature'. The appearance of 'ponderous water buffalo', meanwhile,

compounds the impression of a ghostly return of the region's Palestinians through this

uncanny environmental 'return', suggesting the precariousness of Israel's territorial

sovereignty by demonstrating the literally unstable ground on which its national myths are

founded.[159]

Shalev's depiction of the Israeli swamp as a site of gothic political-ecological returns was

paralleled over twenty years later in a 2009 text by Oz, indicating the ongoing power of the

swamp as a space for raising the persisting environmental and political ghosts of Israel's

past. As discussed in the previous chapter, Oz is the most visible representative of Shalev's

generation of dissenting writers, even if his dissent is ultimately less progressive than it

initially seems. In the final short story of Oz's collection *Scenes From Village Life*, published

in the UK in 2012, titled 'In a faraway place at another time', Oz depicts the battle of a lone

civil servant deployed by the 'Office for Underdeveloped Regions' to a remote, unnamed

village, against a swamp which has thoroughly returned.[160] Oz writes:

> All night long vapours blow in from the poisonous swamp. A sweetish smell of decay
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> spreads among our huts. Iron tools rust here overnight, fences rot with a damp
>
> mould, mildew eats at the walls, straw and hay turn black with moisture, as though

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[159] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain,* p. 352.

[160] Amos Oz, 'In a Faraway Place at Another Time', in *Scenes From Village Life*, trans. by Nicholas de Lange

(London: Chatto and Windus, 2012), pp. 255–65.

burnt in fire, mosquitoes swarm everywhere, our homes are full of flying and

crawling insects. The very soil bubbles.[161]

In Oz's text, which in plot and tone is strongly reminiscent of J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), the village is depicted as a frontier settlement, a last bastion of civilisation at the edge of the swamp. The village's gradual permeation by water suggests the impossibility of repressing the violence which underlies the myth of agricultural settlement, whose symbols of 'straw and hay', and 'iron tools' are destroyed by the encroaching dampness. Borders, meanwhile, are threatened by the water, which fails to respect human impositions on the landscape, and rots 'fences' and 'walls'.

In both Shalev and Oz's texts, the threat is portrayed as coming from beneath the earth. This vertical axis has a crucial significance for political readings of these works. The subterranean nature of the threat is particularly apparent when Oz's short story is read within the context of the entire book, which refers repeatedly to unidentified sounds and movements underground, particularly flowing water and drains, and possibly, also, digging.[162] In *The Blue Mountain*, villagers are also described as 'always hearing things in the earth'.[163] With the region's more recent political history in mind, these subterranean anxieties might be read in relation to Israeli fears of Palestinians in Gaza using tunnels for munitions storage, cross-border attacks and abductions, a national panic which reached feverish levels during

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[161] ibid., p. 255.

[162] Amos Oz, 'Digging', in *Scenes From Village Life*, pp. 55–120 (p. 106); Amos Oz, 'Lost', in *Scenes From Village Life*, pp. 121–58 (p. 152).

[163] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 316.

'Operation Protective Edge' in July and August 2014.[164] They might be read, admittedly

somewhat anachronistically, alongside calls for the release of people who have, like Shalev's

swamp, been 'imprisoned', according to the frequent characterisation of Gaza in activist

discourse as the 'world's largest prison'.[165] Still, even as Oz and Shalev's texts critique

dominant Zionist narratives, it is worth noting that their texts still perform a similar erasure:

in relegating Palestinians to part of the landscape, and associating them with elements of

nature that present them as 'irrational [and] uncivilized'.[166] I return to this issue with

Shalev's text later in the chapter.

**Swamp Nostalgia**

Shalev's target is not just Israel's pioneer mythologies of drainage and settlement, but a

contemporary wave of nostalgia for this period, which sought fervently to preserve these

myths.[167] In the following discussion of nostalgia I draw on the theoretical work of Svetlana

Boym, who has examined the potentially harmful aspects of obsessively remembering

national pasts.[168] I also refer to Paul Ricœur's writing on the relationship between memory

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[164] Amos Harel, 'Hamas' Strategic Tunnels: Millions of Dollars to Spirit Kidnapped Israelis into Gaza', *Haaretz*,

14 October 2013 <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/.premium-1.552198> [accessed 17

March 2015]; Israel Defence Forces Blog, 'Everything You Need to Know About Hamas' Underground City of

Terror' (Israel Defence Forces, 2014) <http://www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/07/31/everything-need-know-

hamas-underground-city-terror/> [accessed 17 March 2015].

[165] Gideon Levy, *The Punishment of Gaza* (London: Verso, 2010), pp. 20, 23; Ilan Pappé and Noam Chomsky,

*Gaza in Crisis: Reflections on Israel's War Against the Palestinians* (London: Penguin, 2010).

[166] Parmenter, p. 32.

[167] Zerubavel, 'Revisiting the Pioneer Past', pp. 212, 216.

[168] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001)

and forgetting in the context of founding moments of national violence.[169] As noted above, Zionist historiography was being increasingly challenged during the 1980s, yet it was simultaneously being reasserted in a widespread popular enthusiasm for the settlement period, manifested in the proliferation of settlement museums.[170] This dimension of Shalev's critique can be seen particularly in the activities of the character Meshulam, Baruch's cousin, and an amateur historian, who is obsessed with preserving the relics of the founding years. He has himself started a museum, 'Founder's Cabin', which includes objects of dubious historical value such as a stuffed cow, displayed with a 'gold medal from the British High Commissioner' once awarded for her famed milk production.[171] The museum is a stop-off point on the tours taken by the '[b]usloads of tourists and schoolchildren' around the village, which is described by Shalev as 'the flourishing creation of the founding fathers'.[172] This phrase is, of course, ironic, given the village's moribund state. Meshulam, driven increasingly mad by what he perceives as modern Israel's sacrilegious forgetting of its roots, starts 'reswamping the village'.[173] He begins in the museum by constructing a 'diorama of the swamp and its draining', before attempting to produce real swamps by smashing water pipes.[174] Meshulam's obsessive 'reswamping' project, purportedly a mission

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[169] Paul Ricœur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

[170] Maoz Azaryahu, 'Water Towers: A Study in the Cultural Geographies of Zionist Mythology', *Cultural Geographies*, 8 (2001), 317–39 (p. 332); Tamar Katriel, *Performing the Past: A Study of Israeli Settlement Museums* (London: Routledge, 1997); Zerubavel, 'Revisiting the Pioneer Past', p. 212.

[171] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 19.

[172] ibid., p. 19.

[173] ibid., p. 242.

[174] ibid., pp. 242, 281.

to remind Israelis of their history, can be seen as an attempt in fact to repress the history of Palestinian expulsions and environmental harm, and reinscribe a mythical past.

Meshulam's 'reswamping' of the village ostensibly represents a reversal of the pioneer generation's efforts to regulate and control Palestine's unruly hydrological landscape. He smashes water taps on irrigation pipes and blasts stolen fireman's hoses around the village in order to cause floods, declaring, in a parody of pioneer rhetoric, 'I'm founding a swamp' and '[a] swamp is born!'[175] Meshulam stands in the 'swamp' he has created, 'waiting to be carried off by malaria', and urges others from the village to join him, so that their deaths can be reported by 'comrades from the press'.[176] The potential news story of pioneer sacrifice is presumably intended to galvanise national sentiment more widely, as it would have in the past, while Meshulam's use of collectivist language, 'comrades', indicates his comically outdated ideological fervour.[177] Eventually, Meshulam persuades some 'unemployed men' to put on a costume of 'old peasant's blouses and Russian worker's caps', take 'sickles and hoes', and participate in his drainage project while singing nationalist songs.[178] On another occasion, he employs an 'old Arab' to plough the land.[179] The inclusion of a silent Arab figure in this scene recreates the Orientalist pastoral of early settler writing, although Meshulam's efforts ultimately only ever reach the level of a pathetic pastiche, produced by himself and

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[175] ibid., pp. 328, 281, 329.

[176] ibid., pp. 281, 329.

[177] ibid., p. 329.

[178] ibid., p. 332.

[179] ibid., p. 352.

fringe members of society (the desperate unemployed), rather than, as in the past, Israel's heroes.[180]

Meshulam's project can be read as a version of what Svetlana Boym describes as 'restorative nostalgia'.[181] Restorative nostalgia is, Boym writes, particularly associated with nationalist movements and revivals, and is characterised by 'a return to national symbols and myths' which can sometimes involve 'total reconstructions of monuments of the past'.[182] Restorative nostalgics believe, like Meshulam, that their project is about recovering truth, although their motivation is often found in 'anxiety' about attempts to call national traditions into question.[183] The swamp-draining pioneers were, of course, already participating in a form of restorative nostalgia, in their attempt to redeem the land of Eretz Israel and restore the biblical 'land of milk and honey', meaning that Meshulam's activities can be seen, perhaps even more ridiculously, as nostalgia for nostalgia. Shalev indicates that by Meshulam's time, the activities of the pioneers themselves had become an origin myth of similar significance, albeit one which was under threat. In his 'reswamping', Meshulam seeks to restore the place of drainage and the valorisation of pioneer activities by repressing emerging alternative histories of this period, through recreating the 'monument' of a swamp. The repetitive nature of Meshulam's project, meanwhile, recalls Paul Ricœur's transfer of Freud's work on compulsive repetition to a national context.[184] Ricœur highlights

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[180] Ramras-Rauch, p. xi; Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), chap. 3.

[181] Boym, chap. 4.

[182] ibid., p. 41.

[183] ibid., pp. 41, 44–45.

[184] Ricœur, pp. 70, 78-79.

the extent to which the absences in official national histories – namely, moments of

founding violence – are reaffirmed through commemorative public performances.[185]

Shalev's depiction of the last defender of Israel's national history as a paranoid 'swamp

revivalist', desperately performing swamp creation and drainage, offers a view of

contemporary nostalgia for the founding period as hopelessly misguided.[186]

Meshulam's swamp obsession is prompted by outrage at the publication of an academic

article on the Jezreel Valley, with the same title as Bar-Gal and Shamai's controversial 1983

paper.[187] He sees the article as a possible catalyst for a wider 'epidemic of cynicism'

threatening to afflict Israel, and castigates the unnamed academics for their 'pathetic

hunger for publicity and sensationalism'.[188] Meshulam's indignation over the article, which

mirrors the furore over Bar-Gal and Shamai's work, indicates the extent to which the

draining of the swamps represents the most fundamental of Israel's national myths, and the

potential for questioning it to be construed as the ultimate in anti-Zionist treason. Both

Meshulam and Pinness see criticisms of pioneer narratives as part of increasing decadence

in Israeli society, with Meshulam viewing a revival of the rite of passage of drainage as a way

to reverse this. 'The Jews of this country have forgotten what a swamp is', Meshulam

laments, adding, '[t]he time has come to remind them.'[189] This decadence is primarily

manifested in the novel through lack of respect for another primary feature of Zionist water

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[185] ibid., p. 85.

[186] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 337.

[187] ibid., p. 276.

[188] ibid., p. 278.

[189] ibid., p. 330.

history and settlement iconography: the water tower.[190] The novel begins with the pompous

Pinness overhearing a comically obscene shout from the top of the tower, 'I'm screwing

Liberson's granddaughter!', which recurs with various daughters and wives of the village,

until the shouter is discovered as Baruch's cousin Uri and given his comeuppance.[191] We

understand that the 'debauchery' of this act is particularly enraging for the comically uptight

Pinness not merely in that it involves the display of sexual promiscuity, but the defilement

of a once-powerful site of Israel's collectivist national myth in pursuit of individual pleasure.

Meshulam's 'reswamping' project, of course, fails, and is met only with irritation or

indifference by the villagers, who drain the swamps efficiently and without celebration each

time they appear.[192] The pioneer myths of drainage and settlement are clearly no longer as

compelling for the villagers as they are for Meshulam. A major reason for this, along with

the social, political and economic changes in Israeli society described in Chapter One, is

changing attitudes to the environment, notably the dramatic shift in estimations of Israel's

water potential which has taken place since the pre-state period, from 'abundance' to

'scarcity'.[193] This is suggested by a remark by one of the village's former pioneers, Liberson,

now in a nursing home. As one of the original drainers of the swamps, we might expect

Liberson to be enthusiastic about Meshulam's project. Instead, he is sharply dismissive,

declaring: 'How silly can you get...Who cares about all that anymore? It's just a big waste of

water.'[194] Liberson's scathing assessment of Meshulam's 'revivalism' indicates that the

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[190] Azaryahu, 'Water Towers'.

[191] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, pp. 1, 236, 241, 369.

[192] ibid., pp. 332, 337, 370.

[193] Alatout, '"States" of Scarcity'.

[194] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 350.

prevailing Israeli attitude to the environment has changed significantly, with even a former

pioneer now disillusioned by the pioneering mythology in which he played a central role.

Liberson's description of Meshulam's 'reswamping' as a 'waste of water' points towards a

greater contemporary concern with the issue of water scarcity, a topic of global significance,

than any of Meshulam's narrowly nationalist and ideological uses of nonhuman nature.

*The Blue Mountain* seems to indicate the emergence of a new environmental sensibility in

Israel, in which there has been a realisation that it is no longer ecologically or politically

sustainable to manipulate nonhuman nature in the service of nationalist aims. This

impression is reinforced by the novel's form, as well as elements of Shalev's writing style.

The novel takes the form of a family saga. Its original Hebrew title, *Roman Russi* ('Russian

Novel' or 'Russian Affair') drew self-conscious attention to this form, invoking the epic

chronicles of family life against a historical background found in classical Russian literature,

as well as hinting ironically at the protagonists' Eastern European origins, which they

struggle to shed in the process of becoming 'native'.[195] Shalev's novel achieves a traditional

form of narrative closure with the death of Pinness, the last founder, and the marriage of

the once-debauched Uri, who has become a contented father to four children.[196] This is

mirrored in nonhuman nature. While Baruch's cemetery was described frequently as having

'poisoned the orchard', by the end of the novel it has ceased to be a site through which the

founders play out their resentments even in death, resolving the text's central conflict in an

image which suggests a new ecological harmony in the Valley.[197] Farm crops and fruit trees

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[195] 'Family Novel (*Semeinyi Roman*)', in *Handbook of Russian Literature*, ed. by Victor Terras (London: Yale

University Press, 1985), p. 134.

[196] Shalev, *The Blue Mountain*, p. 377.

[197] ibid., pp. 285. The cemetery is frequently described as an act of revenge. See pp. 27, 119, 264.

grow wild over the graves, producing a 'thick cover' which resembles the mixed planting of a

permaculture farm, and which causes Uri to have to install flagpoles as grave markers.[198]

Shalev's text itself, too, could be read as encouraging greater environmental awareness

among its readers. It includes careful detailing of the native flora and fauna of

Israel/Palestine, and meticulous descriptions of the pioneers' agricultural practices. In doing

so, the novel accords strongly with the priorities of first wave ecocritics, who prized

literature which, in Lawrence Buell's words, participated in a kind of 'environmental

reorientation'.[199] *The Blue Mountain* seems to depict and, itself, represent and facilitate,

changing environmental attitudes in Israel.

**Zionist Conservation**

Shalev's novel performs a valuable ecological and political critique of traditional Zionist

narratives of draining the swamps, and highlights the malign tendencies of the widespread

nostalgia for this period at the time of writing. Still, his depiction of a new-found Israeli

environmental sensibility, in which it is no longer acceptable to instrumentalise nonhuman

nature for nationalist ends, sits uneasily with the many ways in which this process continues

in present-day Israel. The Israeli military, for instance, professes a commitment to being an

'environmentally friendly military', promoting its use of renewable energy sources.[200]

However, its heavy impact on training sites has led to it being condemned as Israel's 'biggest

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[198] ibid., p. 377.

[199] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 82.

[200] Israel Defence Forces Blog, 'Going Green: Israeli Military Chooses Solar Energy over Diesel', *Israel Defence Forces*, 5 February 2014 <https://www.idfblog.com/blog/2014/02/05/going-green-israeli-military-chooses-solar-energy-diesel/> [Accessed 20 March 2016].

environmental wrongdoer' by Yitzhak Ben-David, an official in Israel's Environmental

Protection Ministry.[201] Others emphasise the ecological effects of occupation. Raja

Shehadeh chronicles the environmental damage caused by Israel's breaking up of the West

Bank with walls, checkpoints and separate road networks in *Palestinian Walks* (2007).

Scholars at the Applied Research Institute – Jerusalem (ARIJ) note the ecological and human

harms caused by the unexploded ordinances and land mines which litter urban and

agricultural areas of the Palestinian territories, particularly Gaza.[202] In these instances, a

well-publicised commitment to 'green' principles serves to mitigate the reputational harm

caused by Israeli aggression, and to veil these environmental impacts.

Invocations of 'environmental' needs provide covert justifications for contemporary

dispossession and displacement of Palestinians. In East Jerusalem and Area C of the West

Bank, the designation of largely unremarkable areas of land as 'national parks' and 'nature

reserves' has proven a means of restricting Palestinian urban development, at the same

time as increasing the territorial contiguity of land under Israeli control.[203] Mount Scopus

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[201] Sharon Udasin, 'IDF Is Israel's "biggest Environmental Wrongdoer," Says Ministry Official', *Jerusalem Post*, 9

July 2015 <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/IDF-is-Israels-biggest-environmental-wrongdoer-says-ministry-

official-408436> [Accessed 20 March 2016].

[202] Zak Brophy and Jad Isaac, *The Environmental Impact of Israeli Military Activities in the Occupied Palestinian

Territory* (Jerusalem: Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem, 2009), n.p.

<http://www.arij.org/files/admin/2009/The%20environmental%20impact%20of%20Israeli%20military.pdf>

[accessed 11 August 2015].

[203] B'Tselem, *National Parks in East Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 2014)

<http://www.btselem.org/download/gan_czavim/en.html> [accessed 11 August 2015]; 'Restricting Space: The

Planning Regime Applied by Israel in Area C of the West Bank', *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian

Affairs, Occupied Palestinian Territory (OCHA oPt)*, 2009

Slopes Park, approved for creation in 2013 on the only areas available for expansion of the cramped Palestinian East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Al-Issawiyah and A-Tur, has become a focal point in campaigns against what Efrat Cohen-Bar, an architect working with the planning charity Bimkom, describes as 'green settlements'.[204] In the northern Negev, the practice of tree planting by the JNF ostensibly operates as a means of combating climate change-induced desertification.[205] However, this too has a land-grabbing role. Planting serves to Judaise the landscape, in the manner of the planting projects of the early Israeli state, at the same time as restricting access by local Bedouin communities to their ancestral lands and homes.[206] The environmental benefits of the projects are negligible, but their harms significant, involving heavy machinery, the introduction of high concentrations of herbicides to kill local vegetation, the inadvertent disruption of existing natural irrigation patterns, and an increase in forest fires.[207]

The harnessing of 'green' principles to settler colonial practices in these examples is not dissimilar from the way in which earlier Zionist environmental transformations served national ends. Indeed, these are comparable in the ways in which they solicit international

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<http://domino.un.org/unispal.nsf/0/b136572e8ee41fba8525768d00514356?OpenDocument> [accessed 11 August 2015].

[204] B'Tselem, 'Mount Scopus Slopes National Park and the Harm It Causes Al-'Esawiyah and a-Tur', *B'Tselem*, 2014) <http://www.btselem.org/jerusalem/national_parks_mount_scopus_slopes> [accessed 11 August 2015]; Al-Akhbar, 'Israel Land-Grabs East Jerusalem Area for "National Parks"', *Al-Akhbar*, 4 January 2012 <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/israel-land-grabs-east-jerusalem-area-national-parks> [accessed 11 August 2015].

[205] Eyal Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline*, p. 15.

[206] Manski, p. 34; Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline*, p. 15.

[207] Weizman, *The Conflict Shoreline,* p. 15.

support. While Israel's pioneers sought international approval through demonstrating a shared commitment to the technological 'mastery' of nature, Israel's pursuit of green projects accords with new international priorities. The value of 'green' is so taken for granted that in 2005, diplomats from 49 countries participated in tree-planting ceremonies to inaugurate the new 'Ambassador Forest', planted over the lands of the Bedouin village Al-Araqib, apparently without awareness of why this was troubling.[208] Meanwhile, Shalev's emphasis on an emerging Israeli environmental ethic has led *The Blue Mountain* to be read as providing implicit justifications for Israeli territorial ownership claims. Mintz, for instance, argues that the novel's representation of nonhuman nature demonstrates 'an autochthonous attachment, a mythic pre-Judaic connection that derives from the earth and is rooted in the soil of a particular place', comparable to the connection to the land often foregrounded in Palestinian nationalist writing.[209] This Israeli sense of belonging is, he states, 'no less fierce and no less embroiled an attachment to the land.'[210] The flaw in Shalev's text is that he depicts settler colonialism, and the dubious environmental practices pursued in the service of this end, as an element of Israel's past, when these themes are very much of the present. Its ultimate containment of political and ecological conflicts in Israel's past allows the novel to be read as a celebration of 'the good old days', with one Hebrew reviewer describing it as 'offer[ing] welcome relief from the ever present Arab-

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[208] ibid., p. 15.

[209] Mintz, 'Tellers of the Soil', p. 42.

[210] ibid., p. 42.

Israeli conflict.'[211] In spite of the novel's sometimes challenging criticism, the escapist possibilities permitted by Shalev's own gently ironic nostalgia skewer any political impact it might have, even if they perhaps account for the novel's commercial success.

This correspondence between contemporary 'green' narratives and earlier, ecologically harmful, Zionist environmental projects can be seen clearly in promotional materials for the Huleh Valley. Today the Huleh Valley has become a popular 'ecotourism' destination. It is noted for its birdwatching possibilities, although the effects of so many visitors on the birds themselves have been criticised.[212] The JNF website promotes the creation of a new area of swamp as a contemporary version of Israeli pioneering, stating that this was 'no less of a feat than the draining of the swamps sixty years ago.'[213] Meanwhile, the Israel Ministry of Tourism website declares that:

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[211] Roni Rabin, 'Israelis Push Nostalgic Novel To Top Of Charts', *Associated Press News Archive*, 9 August 1988 <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1988/Israelis-Push-Nostalgic-Novel-To-Top-Of-Charts/id-c3f7ee4b290e8c7b2be6fba9e937a0cc> [accessed 4 August 2015].

[212] Moshe Gilad, 'For Millions of Birds and Watchers, Israel's Hula Valley Is Paradise', *Haaretz*, 23 November 2011 <http://www.haaretz.com/life/arts-leisure/for-millions-of-birds-and-watchers-israel-s-hula-valley-is-paradise-1.397190> [accessed 4 August 2015]; Zafir Rinat, 'Study: Visitors at Israel's Hula Reserve Make Feathered Friends Take Wing', *Haaretz*, 6 February 2012 <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/study-visitors-at-israel-s-hula-reserve-make-feathered-friends-take-wing-1.411250> [accessed 4 August 2015].

[213] Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael, 'Hula Lake Park - Birding in Israel' <http://www.kkl.org.il/eng/tourism-and-recreation/forests-and-parks/hula-lake-park.aspx> [accessed 4 August 2015].

The Hula valley is a place of miracles and wonders. Heroic people working together

with Mother Nature have made the Hula valley into a place filled with abundant

green beauty.[214]

These accounts erase any history of anthropogenically-induced environmental harm in the

Huleh Valley, at the same time as saying nothing about the populations which were

displaced in order to drain the area, and who remain prevented from returning.

Contemporary conservationists are portrayed as modern pioneers, in a narrative which

indicates the ease with which present-day ecological concern can be assimilated into

existing Zionist mythology.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have offered a reading of Shalev's *The Blue Mountain* which highlights the

novel's strong environmental themes. These, as I discuss, have until now been neglected by

critics. The novel illustrates the role played by major hydraulic engineering projects in

constructing the landscape of Israel, and producing Israeli national identity. In doing so, it

underscores the centrality of the narrative of draining the swamps in Israel's national

settlement mythology. I have argued that Shalev's novel emphasises the ecological

dimensions of post-Zionism, and participates in a wider critique of the environmental and

political erasures of Zionist national myths. In magical realist depictions of returning

swamps, Shalev uses water's uncontrollability and mobility to suggest the possibility of

further 'returns', in the sense of Palestinian demands for justice, and the environmental

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[214] Israel Ministry of Tourism, 'The Hula Valley', 2011

<http://www.goisrael.com/Tourism_Eng/Tourist%20Information/Discover%20Israel/Geographic%20Regions/P

ages/The%20Hula%20Valley.aspx>.

problems resulting from drainage. Shalev ridicules the contemporary trend of nostalgia for

the pioneer period through the figure of Meshulam, a paranoid 'swamp revivalist'. The

villagers' rejection of Meshulam's ideologically-informed 'reswampings' marks the

emergence of a newly altered Israeli environmental sensibility, in which it is no longer

acceptable to subordinate nonhuman nature to nationalist ends. However, as I discuss, this

neglects the many ways in which 'green' priorities play a key role in Israel's ongoing

appropriation of Palestinian land and resources. In the case of the Huleh, the 'restored'

waterscapes become just as invested with national sentiment as the drained fields once

were, illustrating the smooth correspondences between contemporary Israeli

environmentalism and pioneer mythologies. In this chapter I have highlighted the

historically contingent nature of contemporary discourses of water scarcity, and have

demonstrated the prevalence of an alternative view of water abundance in the decades

prior to the creation of Israel. In the following chapter I pursue the question of abundance

further, examining the place of the River Jordan in Israeli and Palestinian writing.

# 3. States of Scarcity: the River Jordan as national border and 'natural' resource

'The Jordan River figures as the border where both Palestinian and Israeli identities are constructed, contested, and mythologised.' – Rachel Havrelock[1]

'I wouldn't want to be baptised there, I can tell you that' – Gidon Bromberg, Director, Friends of the Earth Middle East[2]

The River Jordan plays two key, intersecting roles for Israelis and Palestinians: it is a national border, and a major reserve of surface water. As a border, the Jordan is currently a site at which Palestinians travelling between Jordan and the West Bank endure lengthy and often humiliating encounters with Israeli sovereignty.[3] As a resource, the river is claimed by both sides, but, as noted in the Introduction, diverted at present almost in its entirety into Israel's National Water Carrier. The parlous ecological state of the river – diverted, dammed, and degraded by pollution – is one of the most well-known and widely reported aspects of hydropolitics in Israel/Palestine. This is partly because the river's contemporary despoliation provides a compelling contrast with the historic fertility and abundance described in biblical

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[1] Rachel Havrelock, 'My Home Is over Jordan: River as Border in Israeli and Palestinian National Mythology', *National Identities*, 9 (2007), 105–26 (p. 105).

[2] Sharon Udasin, 'Sewage Clogs Jordan River South of Baptism Site', 23 December 2011 <http://www.jpost.com/Enviro-Tech/Sewage-clogs-Jordan-River-south-of-baptism-site> [accessed 23 September 2015].

[3] Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007), chap. 5.

accounts of the Holy Land, serving as a narrative hook which appeals to journalists.[4] Conflict

over the Jordan's waters is also the most frequently cited example of past and future 'water

wars'.[5] The River Jordan is overloaded with material and symbolic significance for Israelis

and Palestinians, and as such, an examination of its portrayal in literature is an essential part

of a study of Israeli and Palestinian hydropolitics.

In this chapter I examine three texts, across a range of genres, in which the River Jordan

features prominently and plays a major narrative role. The first is the writer and farmer

Moshe Smilansky's short story 'Hawaja Nazar', initially published in 1910, and included in

Smilansky's 1935 collection *Palestine Caravan*.[6] This is the most well-known of the many

short stories published by Smilansky, a member of the First Aliyah, the earliest wave of

Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1880s and 1890s, whose writing is now largely

forgotten. In the second half of the chapter I focus on works by the two most widely read

contemporary Palestinian poets. The first is Mahmoud Darwish's poem 'A river dies of

thirst', published in Arabic in 2008 and the following year in English, in a collection of the

same name.[7] The second is Mourid Barghouti's memoir *I Saw Ramallah*, published in Arabic

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[4] E.g. Peter Schwartzstein, 'Biblical Waters: Can the Jordan River Be Saved?', *National Geographic*, 22 February

2014 <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/02/140222-jordan-river-syrian-refugees-water-

environment/> [accessed 26 January 2015].

[5] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 49.

[6] Moshe Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', in *Palestine Caravan*, translator unknown (London: Methuen, 1935), pp.

145–81.

[7] Mahmoud Darwish, *A River Dies of Thirst*, trans. by Caroline Cobham (London: Saqi, 2009), p. 54. All

subsequent references are to the same page.

in 1997 and in English in 2000.[8] It is evident that the reputations, styles and periods of writing of the authors discussed in this chapter contrast sharply. I bring them together because in each text, depictions of what art historian Tricia Cusack terms the national 'riverscape' provide a crucial stage for engagements with themes of borders and territory, home and belonging, and the role of water resources in imagining national futures. Smilansky and Darwish's texts engage, in different ways, with the clash between the imagined or remembered river and the actual river, while Barghouti deliberately strips away the Jordan's symbolic connotations in Israeli or Palestinian national mythology, to foreground the river's degraded ecological state.

As noted above, Smilansky's work is now barely read, 'Hawaja Nazar' included, and is largely out of print. During his lifetime, Smilansky's work was not well-regarded. His short stories, which he published in Hebrew periodicals from 1902 onwards for around thirty years, were criticised for their apparent lack of literary merit. For instance, the Hebrew novelist Yosef Haim Brenner notably condemned Smilansky for writing 'genre fiction', involving simplistic narratives, superficial characterisation, and political didacticism.[9] Gershon Shaked sees an element of 'virtual propaganda' in the naiveté of Smilansky's style, through which Smilansky transmitted information about Jewish life in Palestine and about Zionist values to a European audience.[10] Existing criticism on Smilansky's work tends to focus on his views on Palestine's Arab population. Risa Domb and Gilead Morahg argue that Smilansky's writing manifests typical Zionist attitudes of the time, criticising his work for depicting Jewish

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[8] References to this text are to the 2004 UK edition. Mourid Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, trans. by Adhaf Soueif (London: Bloomsbury, 2004).

[9] Cited in Gila Ramras-Rauch, p. 20.

[10] Gershon Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 64.

pioneers as bringing civilisation to the 'backward' East, or making little effort to portray

Arab characters as anything more than poorly sketched 'abstractions'.[11] Other critics have

interpreted Smilansky's politics more positively, at least for his time. Yaron Peleg examines

the ways in which Smilansky's work presented Arabs as a model for Jewish attempts to

become 'native' to Palestine, while Gila Ramras-Rauch foregrounds Smilansky's concern for

the exploitation and poor living conditions of Arab workers.[12] I build on this existing

criticism, arguing that Smilansky's depiction of the Jordan in 'Hawaja Nazar' provides a

crucial means through which we can understand his attitude towards Zionist settlement and

Palestine's Arab population.

In contrast to Smilansky, Darwish and Barghouti are well-known and highly regarded

contemporary writers. Darwish is often described as Palestine's national poet, while

Barghouti, long a highly visible figure, has to some extent inherited this mantle since the

death of Darwish in 2008.[13] Darwish's poem has attracted little critical interest, while

Barghouti's memoir has primarily been analysed as an example of the 'literature of the

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[11] Risa Domb, 'The Arab in Fact and Fiction - as Reflected in the Works of Moshe Smilansky', *Jewish Quarterly*,

29 (1981), 3–7; Gilead Morahg, 'New Images of Arabs in Israeli Fiction', *Prooftexts*, 6 (1986), 147–62 (p. 149).

[12] Yaron Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), pp. 75–76;

Ramras-Rauch, p. 15.

[13] Anna Bernard and Ziad Elmarsafy, 'Intimacies: In Memoriam Mahmoud Darwish', *Interventions*, 14 (2012),

1–12 (p. 1); Rashid Khalidi, 'Remembering Mahmud Darwish (1941–2008)', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 38

(2008), 74–77 (p. 75); Anna Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction": Mourid Barghouti's I

Saw Ramallah', *Textual Practice*, 21 (2007), 665–86 (p. 665).

checkpoint'.[14] There has been scant attention to the environmental or hydropolitical dimensions of these texts or each writer's wider work, save Farrier's 2012 essay on Barghouti, which I draw on below.[15] My choice of these two texts needs explaining, as there are a great many depictions of crossings of the Jordan in Palestinian writing. The crossing of the Jordan features frequently because of its foundational role in the Palestinian national narrative of displacement and exile.[16] Because of this, the crossing is often similarly prominent in accounts of return. I have chosen Darwish and Barghouti's texts in part because of their authors' reputations, which make these works the most widely read Palestinian engagements with the hydropolitics of the River Jordan. I have also brought these texts together because of their shared concern for the ecology of the river. In particular, I suggest that the texts form a literary counterpart to growing claims among Palestinians and solidarity groups of an 'environmental Nakba', in which the expulsion of the Palestinians on the creation of Israel in 1948, an event known by Palestinians and the Arab world as the 'Nakba', or Catastrophe, set in motion a parallel ecological disaster.[17]

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[14] Karim Mattar, 'Mourid Barghouti's "multiple displacements": exile and the national checkpoint in Palestinian literature', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50 (2014), 103–115. See also Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction"'; Havrelock, *River Jordan*, pp. 272-73.

[15] David Farrier, 'Washing Words: The Politics of Water in Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 48 (2013), 187–99.

[16] Rachel Havrelock, *River Jordan: The Mythology of a Dividing Line* (Chicago, IL: University Of Chicago Press, 2011), p. 219.

[17] Abeer al Butmah, Bobby Peek and Eurig Scandrett, *Environmental Nakba: Environmental Injustice and Violations of the Israeli Occupation of Palestine* (Amsterdam: Friends of the Earth International, 2013).

A key framing term in this chapter is 'riverscape', borrowed, as noted above, from Cusack.[18] The term is intended as an analogue to the way in which 'landscape', as discussed in the preceding chapter, has been approached in recent decades as a medium in which social and economic power structures are inscribed, and reproduced in turn as 'natural', invisible and inevitable. Cusack also draws loosely on Bauman's work on liquidity, discussed in Chapter One. Riverscapes, as Cusack notes, have often been incorporated into nationalist imagery, because their movement allows them to stand in 'for the passage of time, for life, and for renewal'.[19] As a result, they often serve as metaphors for 'the uninterrupted "flow" or "course" of national history'.[20] Solid landscapes move and change too, of course. As Barbara Bender notes, 'landscapes, like time, never stand still.'[21] The key difference here is one of immediacy. Except in the cases of rapid events such as earthquakes or landslides, landscape change occurs over a longer period of time, usually on a geological scale, whereas the change and movement of liquids is readily apparent, making them much more immediately available as a metaphor. This chapter widens Cusack's approach by discussing the Jordan riverscape not only as a site at which 'elite' perspectives are constructed and naturalised, but as a location at which nationalisms are negotiated, and alternative perspectives emerge, even if sometimes only temporarily.

**Recent Ecology and Politics**

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[18] Tricia Cusack, *Riverscapes and National Identities* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2010).

[19] ibid., p. 2.

[20] ibid.

[21] Barbara Bender, 'Time and Landscape', *Current Anthropology*, 43 (2002), 103–12 (p. 103).

The River Jordan is a major site of hydropolitical tension between Israelis and Palestinians, as well as the surrounding co-riparian states of Syria, Jordan and Lebanon. Ownership of its water is subject to fierce contestation, to the extent that, as noted above, competing claims are often cited as a likely cause of past and future 'water wars'. Conflict between Israel, Jordan and Syria over the river's headwaters has been described as the primary cause of the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Six-Day War.[22] Selby cautions against such a conveniently simple explanation, noting that it fails to consider major political causes, including Israel's expansionist territorial ambitions, and desire to undermine the strength of Egypt's Arab Nationalist President Nasser.[23] Water conflict may at most have been an exacerbating factor.[24] Nevertheless, access to the river's water is highly unequal, such that the present situation might be described as part of an Israeli 'water war' against Palestinians.[25] As noted above, most of the river's water is diverted by Israel, and distributed to its coast and arid south by the country's National Water Carrier. As a result, the Jordan's volume today is just five percent of what it was in the 1950s, before large-scale diversion of its waters began to take place.[26]

The diversion of the Jordan's water has had serious consequences for Palestinians. Most of this water is used before the river reaches the West Bank, meaning that Palestinians are

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[22] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics,* pp. 49–50.

[23] ibid., p. 50.

[24] ibid., p. 58.

[25] ibid., pp. 47–52; Zeitoun, pp. 1–7; Muna Dajani, 'Drying Palestine: Israel's Systemic Water War', *Al-Shabaka*, 4 September 2014 <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/drying-palestine-israels-systemic-water-war/> [accessed 9 July 2015].

[26] FoEME and WEDO, *'Integrated Trans-Boundary Regional NGO Master Plan'*, pp. 14, 40-41

'effectively denied access' to it.[27] The largest proportion of the Jordan's water is diverted by

Israel, followed by, to a much lesser extent, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.[28] Aside from its

impact on the health, wellbeing and quality of life of West Bank Palestinians, lack of access

to reliable and affordable supplies of clean water has a crippling effect on the Palestinian

economy. One of its effects is to force West Bank Palestinians to purchase water from Israel

at inflated prices.[29] The major economic impact, however, is felt in the agricultural sector,

where activity has been severely curtailed.[30] Currently, only nine per cent of the West

Bank's agricultural land is irrigated, depriving the Palestinian economy of an estimated 1.88

billion dollars in annual income.[31] Israel's diversion of the Jordan's waters materially limits

the Palestinian capacity to support its population, as well as to build an independent

economy which might form the foundations of a Palestinian sovereign state.[32]

The diversion of the Jordan has contributed to the rapid shrinking of the Dead Sea, while the

river's vastly reduced flow and velocity, along with heavy pollution, have significantly

affected biodiversity.[33] Data is limited, but a recent study commissioned by Friends of the

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[27] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics,* p. 124.

[28] Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), *The Economic Costs of the Israeli Occupation for the Occupied Palestinian Territory* (Ramallah: Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and ARIJ, 2011), p. 12 <http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/docs/2012Cairo/p2%20jad%20isaac%20e.pdf> [accessed 15 July 2015].

[29] ibid., p. 13.

[30]ibid.; Zeitoun, p. 14.

[31] Palestinian Ministry of National Economy and Applied Research Institute - Jerusalem (ARIJ), pp. 14, 16.

[32] ibid., p. 16.

[33] Francesca de Châtel, *Water Sheikhs and Dam Builders: Stories of People and Water in the Middle East* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2007), pp. 128–129; FoEME and WEDO, *Towards a Living Jordan River:*

Earth Middle East indicates that biodiversity in the river has decreased by fifty percent since an earlier survey undertaken in 1976.[34] The river is now a contaminated trickle of sewage, fish pond runoff, agricultural chemicals, and saline spring water.[35] Baptism in the Jordan, a lucrative industry for Israel and Jordan, has become a public health risk, as indicated by this chapter's second epigraph.[36] Recent plans for two transborder 'peace parks' produced by the group Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) seem to offer the main hope for the Jordan's regeneration. Much is made by FoEME of its transnational credentials, a position which has helped it to attract international support. Havrelock, for instance, praises the organisation's 'bioregional' perspective.[37] The idea of bioregionalism is, however, typically met with ambivalence by environmental historians and, increasingly, ecocritics. Its advocates are known for a dubious tendency to present western environmental values as universal.[38] As Ramachandra Guha notes, the fulfilment of bioregional priorities often comes at the expense of questions of social justice, which are generally a greater priority for

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*An Environmental Flows Report on the Rehabilitation of the Lower Jordan River* (Amman, Bethlehem and Tel Aviv: FoEME and WEDO, 2010), p. 13 <https://www.globalnature.org/bausteine.net/file/showfile.aspx?downdaid=7273&domid=1011&fd=0> [accessed 5 July 2015].

[34] FoEME and WEDO, *Towards a Living Jordan River*, p. 46.

[35] ibid, p. 13.

[36] Melanie Lidman, 'Baptism by Mire? In Lower Jordan River, Sewage Mucks up Christian Rite', *Times of Israel*, 18 June 2015 <http://www.timesofisrael.com/baptism-by-mire-in-jordan-river-sewage-mucks-up-christian-rite/> [accessed 23 September 2015].

[37] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 284.

[38] Farrier, p. 5; Robert Spencer, 'Ecocriticism in the Colonial Present: The Politics of Dwelling in Raja Shehadeh's Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape', *Postcolonial Studies*, 13 (2010), 33–54.

people living in areas targeted by the international environmental movement as in need of 'conservation'.[39] These issues can be seen in the 'peace parks' proposal. In pushing an agenda of cooperation, FOEME neglects the fact that it is much easier for Israelis than it is for Palestinians to consider the issue of environmental quality as distinct from debates over property and sovereignty.[40] As discussed in the previous chapter, 'green' concerns have been used by Israel as a means of strengthening territorial control. In light of this, some Palestinian scepticism towards 'cooperative' projects for 'restoring' the Jordan seems justified, even if it is clearly apparent that some sort of intervention is, from an ecological perspective, desperately needed.

**The Jordan and the 'whole land of Israel'**

Given the intense attachment to the Jordan within the Israeli and Palestinian nationalist movements, it is perhaps surprising that the Jordan only became a border relatively recently, and as a result of British colonial intervention. This occurred in 1921, when the British government decided to modify its mandate and divide the territory of historic Palestine along the course of the river. When approved by the League of Nations in 1922, this modification created two 'countries', if both still governed by the British: Transjordan in the East and Mandate Palestine in the West.[41] Britain restricted the area in which it intended to implement the Balfour commitment to a Jewish national home to the land west of the river, and handed control of the new state of Transjordan on the east bank to Emir

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[39] Ramachandra Guha, 'Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique', *Environmental Ethics*, 11 (71-83), 1989 (p. 82).

[40] Samer Alatout, 'Towards a Bio-Territorial Conception of Power', p. 610.

[41] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 232.

Abdullah.[42] Benny Morris writes that 'Zionist mainstream thought had always regarded a Jewish state from the Mediterranean to the Jordan River as its ultimate goal.'[43] This is not strictly accurate. In fact, in the early twentieth century the mainstream World Zionist Organisation petitioned the British authorities for a much larger territory, including land on the river's eastern side.[44] This ambition began to change after the British decision of 1921. From this point onwards, mainstream Zionism reoriented its ambitions to focus on the Jordan as the border of a future Jewish state.[45]

Revisionist Zionism, however, continued to promote the idea of a 'whole land of Israel' which included Transjordan. The Revisionist movement was founded by the radical Zionist leader Ze'ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky in 1925, with a core aim of achieving a Jewish state spanning both banks of the River Jordan.[46] Jabotinsky maintained that the Jordan was not a border of Israel, but in fact, as he wrote in his 1930 poem 'The Left Bank of the Jordan', its 'backbone' and 'spine'.[47] Invoking metaphors of the body's vital nerve centre suggests that the inclusion of the Jordan within the borders of Israel is essential to the effective functioning of a future state. This poem includes the line '[t]here are two banks to the

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[42] Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*, trans. by Haim Watzman (London: Abacus, 2001), p. 117.

[43] Benny Morris, *Israel's Border Wars, 1949-1956: Arab Infiltration, Israeli Retaliation, and the Countdown to the Suez War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 11.

[44] Gideon Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine, 1840-1947* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), p. 161.

[45] For a detailed account of this transition, see Nadav Shelef, *Evolving Nationalism: Homeland, Identity, and Religion in Israel, 1925-2005* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2010), pt. 1.

[46] ibid., 6.

[47] Cited ibid., pp. 82–83.

Jordan – This one is ours, and that one as well', which became a Revisionist rallying cry.[48]

After Jabotinsky's death, the ambition of incorporating both banks of the Jordan into the

State of Israel was taken on by future Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin (1977 – 1983).

In 1948, just after the war, Begin inscribed this aim into the core principles of the right wing

nationalist Herut party, which in the 1970s merged with other political groups to become

today's Likud.[49] Still, by the mid-1950s, references to both banks of the Jordan began to fade

from Begin's rhetoric and Herut propaganda.[50] This view of 'the whole land of Israel' is now

generally the preserve of the religious right, including the settler movement Gush

Emunim.[51] The geographical referent of the phrase 'the whole land of Israel' has changed:

when used today, even by right wing Likud politicians, it stretches to the River Jordan, but

not beyond.[52]

Discussion of the ancient biblical topography of Eretz Israel was, as might be expected,

prominent in Zionist debates over the eastern border.[53] Begin claimed that Jewish

ownership of Jordan would be a fulfilment of the Jewish people's 'covenant with God'.[54] As

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[48] ibid.

[49] Colin Shindler, 'Likud and the Search for Eretz Israel: From the Bible to the Twenty-First Century', *Israel Affairs*, 8 (2001), 91–117 (p. 102).

[50] Nadav Shelef, 'From" Both Banks of the Jordan" to the" Whole Land of Israel:" Ideological Change in Revisionist Zionism', *Israel Studies*, 9 (2004), 125–48 (pp. 132–33).

[51] Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), pp. 107–109.

[52] Eran Kaplan, *The Jewish Radical Right: Revisionist Zionism and Its Ideological Legacy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), p. 159.

[53] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 229.

[54] Shindler, pp. 101–102.

Havrelock discusses, biblical maps are of limited usefulness in determining modern borders, given their propensity for contradiction.[55] The extent to which the Jordan constituted a 'natural border' was a similarly significant issue (even if by advocating an alternative view of 'nature', both sides on this argument seem to undermine their own foundation: that what is 'natural' is self-evident). The militant Zionist group Lehi (also known as the Stern Gang) argued that the Jordan was 'as little a frontier of border demarcation between states as the Thames in England or the Vistula in Poland', while leaders of the Labour Zionist party Mapai, including Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett, believed that the Jordan constituted Israel's 'natural' border.[56] Likud leaders, including Yitzhak Shamir, Israel's current Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and even Begin eventually came to adopt the latter viewpoint, with Shamir declaring in 1978 that 'there is no other natural border'.[57] The British Mandate authorities, too, prioritised 'natural' borders over 'artificial' ones. Lord Curzon, Foreign Secretary in the early 1920s, at the time of Palestine's first partition, spelled out his belief in their superiority in a 1907 essay.[58] This priority was a factor, among others discussed at greater length by Havrelock, in the decision to choose the Jordan as a border.[59]

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[55] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, chap. one; Gudrun Krämer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel,* trans. by Graham Harman and Gudrun Krämer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), pp. 5–9.

[56] Shelef, 'From "Both Banks of the Jordan"', p. 135.

[57] Cited ibid., p. 135.

[58] Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine*, p. 4.

[59] ibid., p. 4; Havrelock, *River Jordan*, pp. 221–23.

One of Shamir's reasons for claiming the Jordan as a 'natural' border was military: he believed these to be more easily defensible.[60] Indeed, the Jordan became a front between Arab and Jewish forces in 1948.[61] At the same time, the widely held attachment to the Jordan as Israel's 'natural' border owes a debt to Zionism's historical roots in nineteenth-century European cultural nationalism. German Idealists, such as Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Gottlieb Fichte, had a particularly significant impact on Zionist ideology, even if this seems, with hindsight, unlikely, following the later influence of these writers' ideas on Nazism.[62] From German romantic nationalism Zionism acquired the belief in the necessity of reviving the Hebrew language, as well as a concern with the 'organic' connection between the Jewish nation and its Palestinian homeland.[63] The value ascribed to 'natural' borders within the Zionist movement derives in part from Herder's writing on what he saw as the influence of aspects of the environment, including landscape, geography, and climate, on a nation's historical trajectory. Herder, who was in many ways an early political geographer, saw 'natural' borders as a crucial part of the 'organic' emergence of nations, writing that:

> Seas, mountain-ranges, and rivers are the most natural boundaries not only of lands but of peoples, customs, languages, and empires, and they have been, even in the greatest revolutions in human affairs, the directing lines or limits of world history. If

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[60] Shelef, 'From "Both Banks of the Jordan"', p. 147, note 63.

[61] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 252.

[62] Walter Laqueur, *The History of Zionism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2003), pp. 30–31.

[63] Laurel Plapp, *Zionism and Revolution in European-Jewish Literature* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 16–17.

otherwise mountains had arisen, rivers flowed or coasts trended, then how very

different would mankind have scattered over this tilting place of nations[64]

Grounding the nation in features of the environment lends the nation-state a similar

appearance of natural or God-given permanence.[65] It can even be seen as providing an

apparently 'scientific' and 'objective' character to the national territory and, by proxy, to the

nation itself.[66] The inclusion of 'natural' borders strengthens the apparent authority given to

a nation's claim to a national space already produced by the act of mapmaking.[67] In

Baudrillard's famous phrase, the map precedes the territory.[68] The incorporation of a water

border seems to underscore the legitimacy of the Zionist claim to Palestine as a home for

the Jewish people, naturalising the tie between nation and territory.

Rivers, however, differ significantly from the other 'natural' boundaries cited by Herder,

oceans and mountain ranges. The courses of rivers are often changeable, and they can be

crossed with comparative ease. They are not the most reliable of borders. This became

[64] Cited in Jan Penrose, 'Nations, States and Homelands: Territory and Territoriality in Nationalist Thought',

*Nations and Nationalism*, 8 (2002), 277–97 (p. 286).

[65] Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose, 'Introduction: Placing "Race" and Nation'', in *Constructions of Race, Place*

*and Nation*, ed. by Peter Jackson and Jan Penrose (London: UCL Press, 1993), pp. 1–23 (pp. 2–3).

[66] Juliet Fall, *Drawing the Line: Nature, Hybridity and Politics in Transboundary Spaces* (Aldershot and

Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), p. 16.

[67] Brian Harley, 'Maps, Knowledge and Power', in *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic*

*Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. by Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 277–312; Denis Wood, *The Power of Maps* (New York: The Guilford

Press, 1992).

[68] Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, MI: University of

Michigan Press, 2006), p. 1.

apparent to British Mandate officials charged with drawing the eastern boundary of Palestine in the 1920s, when using the Jordan introduced more contingency into the country's borders than its 'natural' appearance might suggest. The Jordan runs through a chalky landscape that can erode rapidly in times of heavy rainfall, allowing the course of the river to alter, and causing land on one side of the river to end up on the other.[69] As a result, British officials made a decision that continues to determine the border between Israel and Jordan today: the border follows the Jordan's thalweg (deepest point of flow) and sovereignty shifts with the changing riverbed.[70] The ease with which rivers can often be traversed leads Biger to question whether they constitute a boundary. He argues instead that '[c]ulturally and economically, rivers are natural links for the people who live adjacent to them'.[71] This tension between rivers as barriers and rivers as connectors is crucial to the discussion below.

**Smilansky's 'Hawaja Nazar'**

Smilansky arrived in Palestine in 1891, as a young Jewish immigrant from Kiev.[72] He worked as a labourer in Baron de Rothschild's vineyards, before helping to found the famous *moshava* Hadera, and eventually settling in another *moshava*, Rehovot.[73] The *moshava*

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[69] Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine*, p. 187.

[70] ibid., p. 188.

[71] Gideon Biger, 'Physical Geography and Law: The Case of International River Boundaries', *GeoJournal*, 17 (1988), 341–47 (p. 342); Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine*, p. 5.

[72] Nahum Karlinsky, *California Dreaming: Ideology, Society, and Technology in the Citrus Industry of Palestine, 1890-1939* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005), pp. 23–24.

[73] ibid., p. 24.

differs from the kibbutz or moshav, in that all land and property are privately owned.[74] In

Rehovot, Smilansky switched his crop from grapes to citrus, and became an early Jewish

citriculture expert.[75] Smilansky was a prominent public spokesperson for farmers, as

founder and president of the Palestine Farmers' Federation.[76] He wrote regularly for the

newsletter of the Jewish labour movement Hapo'el Hatza'ir, until what he described as a

dispute over the 'Hebrew labour' issue.[77] Second Aliyah settlers advocated the employment

of an entirely Jewish agricultural workforce, known as the 'conquest of labour', which they

saw as an integral part of the mission of making Palestine into a Jewish country, otherwise

known as the ideological pillar of the 'conquest of land'.[78] Smilansky, by contrast, employed

Arab and Jewish labourers, and was outspoken on this matter.[79]

Smilansky's attitude to the Arab population of Palestine mirrored that of the Zionist thinker

Ahad Ha'am, and he was deeply influenced by Ha'am's thinking.[80] Ha'am's 1891 article

'Truth from Eretz Yisrael' famously and presciently described his concern with the

condescending attitudes he encountered among members of the Zionist movement towards

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[74] On the different types of Jewish settlement in Palestine, see Dov Weintraub, Moshe Lissak, and Yaakov

Azmon, *Moshava, Kibbutz and Moshav: Patterns of Jewish Rural Settlement and Development in Palestine*

(Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969)

[75] Karlinsky, p. 24.

[76] ibid.

[77] ibid.

[78] Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine, 1906-1948* (Berkeley:

University of California Press, 1996), p. 50.

[79] Karlinsky, p. 27.

[80] ibid., p. 24.

Palestine's existing Arab population.[81] It is true that Smilansky remained part of a colonial movement, and his stories are written in an Orientalist style which relies on the exotic tradition and 'mystery' of the 'East'. Even so, his political views at least acknowledged more room for doubt than those of his contemporaries, and he had considerable interest in Palestinian ways of life. He stated that '[o]ur country [Palestine] is not an unsettled wasteland', and reminded others that '[t]he inhabitants of our land are not savages who may be treated with disregard.'[82] Today this may not seem much of a concession, or, indeed, any more generous than the condescension criticised by Ha'am, but remarks such as this, combined with Smilansky's later interest in bi-nationalism, still seem to offer intriguing and now lost possibilities about alternative routes which the Zionist movement might once have taken.

In 'Hawaja Nazar', the River Jordan becomes a site at which Smilansky engages with debates over the appropriate borders of a future Jewish state in Palestine, as well as early Zionist settler perceptions of the seemingly hostile and arid Palestinian landscape, which seemed unlikely to possess sufficient water to support a future state. The story takes its title from a corrupted version of the name of Smilansky's central character, a young Russian immigrant, Lazar, who arrives unannounced at a Jewish colony in Palestine and is taken under the guardianship of the unnamed narrator. 'Hawaja Nazar' comes from a mispronunciation of Lazar's name by an Arab character, Ibrahim, who appears briefly after attempting to rob Lazar, before being unexpectedly overpowered by his strength.[83] Ibrahim prefaces Lazar's

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[81] For an English translation, see Alan Dowty, 'Much Ado about Little: Ahad Ha'am's "Truth from Eretz Yisrael," Zionism, and the Arabs', *Israel Studies*, 5 (2000), 154–81.

[82] Cited in Karlinsky, p. 27.

[83] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 149.

name with the honorific title '*Hawaja*', to indicate his new respect for Lazar. The use of a term in the title that would likely be unfamiliar to European, and, potentially, Hebrew-speaking audiences gives the story an 'exotic', Orientalist tone, invoking a style which was popular in European art and literature at Smilansky's time of writing.[84] The term of respect emphasises Lazar's affinity with the 'native' Arabs of Palestine, foregrounding a recurring theme of the text. As Peleg notes, 'Lazar is an aesthetic symbol of the new Jewish nationalism, a modern Samson whose exemplary character is mirrored by his wholesome good looks.'[85] However, even while Lazar may seem to embody the masculine ideal of the 'Hebrew' pioneer, his tragic and grotesque ending indicates that all is not right with Zionist ambitions.

The story centres on Lazar's obsession with the River Jordan. He longs to see it, and is unable to countenance the thought that it may not be as full or as wide as he has imagined. When a visitor to the colony describes the Jordan at Galilee as 'only a thin ribbon' which '[a]t the end of the summer [...] grows dry', to the extent that 'there are places where you can cross on foot', Lazar is violently upset.[86] When he and the narrator eventually visit the river, Lazar is at first disappointed to see the visitor's description apparently confirmed, but later they discover a broad, fast-flowing section. At this point, he is filled with a delight which turns increasingly manic. He strips off and dives in, but, unable to fight the strong current and unfamiliar with how to negotiate the river's dangerous weeds, drowns. After Lazar's naked body washes up on the bank, it becomes apparent that he is not circumcised, hence not 'fully' Jewish. Earlier in the story, we also learn that he is the son of a Jewish

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[84] ibid., p. 149, Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination*, p. 79.

[85] Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination*, pp. 39–39.

[86] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 163.

father and non-Jewish mother, and so does not carry Jewish 'blood' on the crucial mother's side. Shocked, the Hevra Kadisha (Burial Society) refuses to inter Lazar's body. In an uncanny moment, the body is drawn back into the river, and disappears downstream.

**The Jordan as Resource and Riverscape**

Lazar's fixation with the river, particularly its size and flow, seems to stem from multiple sources. One is the fact that the river's size correlates directly with the potential for success of a future Jewish state in Palestine, in both material and metaphorical ways. Materially, as discussed in the previous chapter, Palestine's water potential – and therefore its capacity to support greater Jewish settlement – was a major topic of discussion in the Zionist movement over the early years of the twentieth century. Estimates of abundant water supply were a crucial means of demonstrating the land's capacity to absorb future waves of Jewish settlers to the sceptical British authorities. The River Jordan was seen as playing a vital future role in agriculture, as part of the envisioned future state's breadbaskets of the Jezreel Valley, discussed in the previous chapter, and the Jordan Valley.[87] It was also seen as a valuable potential source of hydroelectric power.[88] Smilansky would have been engaged with these debates from his involvement in the citriculture industry, which was the driver behind a number of innovations in irrigation techniques and technologies, as well as the introduction of increased mechanisation (i.e. electricity-dependent methods).[89] As discussed in the first chapter, citriculture was the supplier of the Palestinian Jewish agricultural sector's major export commodity, the orange, and these advances helped to shore up the

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[87] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, pp. 227, 248.

[88] ibid.

[89] Karlinsky, pp. 18-19, 121-22.

production rate of this vital crop. Smilansky himself wrote of the value of technology in

accessing 'hidden water wealth' to expand the area of potentially cultivable land, and

praised the Jewish introduction of new, intensive irrigation practices including a technique

of digging grids of irrigation furrows known as the 'California method', which replaced

earlier methods perceived by Smilansky as 'primitive'.[90] It is impossible to read Smilansky's

account of an agricultural pioneer's extreme investment in the river's size without this

context in mind.

Metaphorically, Lazar's references to the biblical Jordan, and Russia's national river, the

Volga, are significant in terms of Smilansky's commentary on Zionist ambitions. Lazar's

fragmentary citations of the Bible suggest that this provided the main source for his images

of Palestine and the Jordan, as it did for many visitors to the Holy Land at this time and

historically.[91] He refers to the biblical Jordan following the visitor's talk, mentioned above,

as evidence for what he believes to be the river's true size. He protests: '"When the Jordan

overflowed its banks all the harvest season!" "And the waters stood still, rose in a single

pile." "And all the people passed through on the dry land..."'[92] All of these references are

abruptly cut short, like Lazar's imagined full-flowing river, and indicate his distressed

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[90] Moshe Smilansky, *Jewish Colonisation and the Fellah: The Effect of Jewish Land Settlement in Palestine on the Native Rural Population and on Agricultural Development in General* (Tel Aviv: Mischar w'Taasia, 1930), pp. 5, 39.

[91] For examples from very different periods, see Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. xvii; Zur Shalev, 'Early Modern Geographia Sacra in the Context of Early Modern Scholarship', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in England, C. 1530-1700*, ed. by Kevin Killeen, Helen Smith, and Rachel Judith Willie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 196–208 (p. 201).

[92] ibid, p. 164.

emotional state. As Lazar's quotations suggest, the Jordan and its surrounding valley are portrayed in the Bible as abundant, fertile, and even heavenly. Genesis 13:10, for instance, states that the Jordan Valley was 'well watered everywhere, like the garden of the Lord'.[93] Lazar's expectations of a biblical Jordan suggest a desire for continuity between these ancient times of plenty, and, crucially, of Jewish ownership of Palestine, and the present day Zionist 'rebuilding' of the Jewish people and the land. The Jordan's reported narrowness and small volume undermines claims of divine support for the Zionist mission, at the same time as actively inhibiting the potential for Jewish settlement. Low levels of water may even suggest a lack of divine approval, given the longstanding associations in Judeo-Christian theology between providence and a 'well-watered earth'.[94] Lazar's reliance on the Bible in this way recalls the more general deployment of biblical precedent in support of Zionist claims of exclusive Jewish sovereignty over the land and resources of Israel/Palestine.[95]

Lazar's biblical references are all taken from Joshua 3. 1–17, a source which points towards an additional meaning to his comments. In these passages, the overflowing waters of the river miraculously part, allowing Joshua to lead the twelve tribes of Israel out of the wilderness and onto the western bank. The Joshua narrative is a story of a return from exile,

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[93] Cited in Christiana Z. Peppard, 'Troubling Waters: The Jordan River between Religious Imagination and Environmental Degradation', *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 3 (2013), 109–19 (p. 113).

[94] Yi-Fu Tuan, p. 144. See also Linton, Ch. 5.

[95] There is a rich body of scholarship on this theme. See Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Nur Masalha, *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London: Zed Books, 2007); Keith Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (London: Routledge, 1996).

providing an obvious precursor for the Jewish 'return' to Palestine. Havrelock's reading of Joshua provides a further significance to Lazar's invocation of the story. She interprets the crossing in Joshua as a narrative of conquest.[96] In the crossing, Havrelock argues, the men of the twelve tribes are transformed into an army, while the 'pile' or 'heap' of waters provides evidence of God's domination of nature, and points towards the future submission of Israel's enemies.[97] With Havrelock's reading in mind, Lazar's references to Joshua suggest that his attachment to the river derives in part from militaristic and territorial ambitions, a theme which I examine below in greater detail.

Lazar's distress at the Jordan's lack of resemblance to the biblical river is compounded by its failure to mirror the national river of his Russian homeland, the Volga. Earlier in the story, we learn that Lazar is deeply attached to the Volga. On his arrival in the colony, he is reserved until asked about the river, which passes through his home town of Samara, in south-east Russia.[98] The narrator describes Lazar's immense enthusiasm for the river:

> In flowing and picturesque words he began telling me of the beauty of the Volga – how broad it was, how bright and clear were its waters. An ocean of a river! Often your eyes could not see across to the other bank.[99]

It emerges that with his recent Jewish awakening, Lazar's passion for the Volga was translated onto the Jordan. He declares: 'And I began to love the Jordan more than the

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[96] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 88.

[97] ibid., pp. 88, 92.

[98] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 152.

[99] ibid, p. 152.

Volga. How lovely that word is: J-o-r-d-a-n! How fine it sounds.'[100] After the visitor's talk,

Lazar's assumption of a resemblance between the Jordan and the Volga is undermined, as it

was for the Bible. He repeats a version of his earlier comments: 'The Volga...Sometimes the

eye cannot see the farther bank. A sea...'.[101] The fragmentation of these remarks illustrates,

again, Lazar's distress and disbelief.

One way to understand Lazar's desire for a likeness between the Jordan and the Volga may

be in terms of security. His references to the Volga as an 'ocean' and a 'sea' recall the way in

which seas, as discussed earlier in this chapter, are often thought of as a particularly

effective 'natural border'. If the Jordan were to resemble a sea in its great expanse, it might

serve as a buffer between Jewish settlers and potentially hostile Arab countries, providing

them with a greater degree of safety. This purpose is hinted at by Lazar in a reference to the

military history of the Jordan, in which he states that '[d]uring warfare, [armies] used to

capture the fords of the Jordan', so that enemy forces were unable to cross the river.[102] At

the same time, as noted above, the Volga is Russia's national river, and the Jordan the

potential national river of a future Jewish state in Palestine. Riverscapes, as Cusack has

discussed, are frequently incorporated into nationalist imagery, becoming symbols of the

persistence of national history, and the continuity of the nation through time. Lazar's wish

for the Jordan to resemble the Volga is significant in this respect. It suggests his desire for a

new Jewish state in Palestine to become as powerful as his home country of Russia, with

these countries' strength and ancient roots symbolised by the image of a wide, perpetually

flowing river.

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[100] ibid, p. 154.

[101] ibid.

[102] ibid., p. 164.

Lazar's hoped-for similarity between the river of his homeland and the Jordan is also noteworthy in terms of his attempt to become 'native' to the land of Palestine, and to feel 'at home' in a new and unfamiliar environment. Many critics have noted the associations between water and memory, which are pertinent here.[103] Bachelard, in particular, describes the way in which all rivers prompt thoughts of his childhood home. He writes:

> I cannot sit beside a stream without falling into a profound reverie, without picturing my youthful happiness. [...] It does not have to be the stream at home, water from home. The nameless waters know all of my secrets. The same memory flows from all fountains.[104]

For Lazar, a similarity between the Jordan and the Volga might help to mitigate the feelings of disappointment and alienation experienced by many Jewish settlers on their arrival in Palestine. Jewish immigrants, anticipating a biblical land of milk and honey, were instead met by the uncompromising realities of the often harsh Palestinian landscape, which differed immensely from the environments of their home countries in Central and Eastern

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[103] For example: Ivan Illich, $H_2O$ and the Waters of Forgetfulness: Reflections on the Historicity of Stuff (London: Marion Boyars, 1986), p. 31; Janine McLeod, 'Water and the Material Imagination: Reading the Sea of Memory against the Flows of Capital', in Thinking with Water, ed. by Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Chen, and Janine McLeod (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), pp. 40–60; Nefissa Naguib, Women, Water and Memory: Recasting Lives in Palestine (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

[104] Gaston Bachelard, Water and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Matter, trans. by Edith R. Farrell (Dallas, TX: Pegasus Foundation, 1983), p. 8.

Europe.[105] Reports of the Jordan's narrowness are disappointing for Lazar, then, because they seem to affirm Palestine's distance and difference from Europe, through the seemingly 'abnormal', 'strange' and' defective' character of Palestine's waterscapes.[106]

Lazar's disappointment in the lack of fit between his expectations and the actual Palestinian landscape mirrors a more general feeling of embodied dislocation often experienced by exiles, immigrants and even, without wishing to overly emphasise a need for sympathy in this case, colonists.[107] As Bender asks, in relation to refugee experiences:

> How do people relate to unfamiliar and often hostile worlds? How do they create bridges between what is and what has gone before? [...] From the old life, what gets brought, what left behind?[108]

This lack of fit between landscapes of home and exile can lead to profound consequences for conceptions of personal and collective identity, and ways of understanding our relation to the world. Writing on this phenomenon in a colonial context, Jessica Dubow draws on J. M. Coetzee's analysis of South African landscape. For Coetzee, she writes ,the inability of

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[105] Ramras-Rauch, p. 45; Yael Zerubavel, 'The Conquest of the Desert and the Settlement Ethos', in *The Desert Experience in Israel: Communities, Arts, Science, and Education in the Negev*, ed. by A. Paul Hare and Gideon M. Kressel (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2009), pp. 33–44 (pp. 34–5).

[106] Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke lll, 'Imperialism, Orientalism, and the Environment in the Middle East: History, Policy, Power, and Practice', in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. by Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke lll (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), pp. 1–22 (pp. 3–4).

[107] Barbara Bender, 'Landscapes on-the-Move', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 1 (2001), 75–89; Jessica Dubow, '"From A View On The World To A Point Of View In It": Rethinking Sight, Space and the Colonial Subject', *Interventions*, 2 (2000), 87–102.

[108] Bender, 'Landscapes on-the-Move', pp. 79–80.

European colonisers to force the alien and resistant landscape to cohere with prescriptive, foreign aesthetic conventions undermines the 'dominant visual regime' of European colonists, disrupting the usually taken for granted relationship between visual perception and colonial possession.[109] The experiences of Zionist immigrants in Palestine cannot be straightforwardly interpreted as a parallel with those of colonists in South Africa. Many Jewish immigrants were refugees from Europe's pogroms and anti-Semitism (some also ended up in South Africa).[110] Immigration to Palestine was conceived by Zionists as 'return' to the supposedly familiar, rather than 'discovery' of the new. With this in mind, the possibility that the Jordan might not match Lazar's imagined river threatens his certainty in the legitimacy and likely future success of Jewish settlement in Palestine.

**The Jordan as National Border**

As indicated above in relation to the Joshua narrative, Lazar's fixation with the size of the Jordan has implications for Zionist territorial ambitions. When the narrator agrees to take Lazar on a journey along the entire length of the Jordan, Lazar insistently seeks assurances that the river's true size will eventually become apparent: 'And the further we go, the broader it will become, broader and broader?'[111] Moving from rhetorical questions to a more confident declarative tone, Lazar states his ultimate hope:

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[109] Dubow, p. 96. On vision and colonialism, see Homi Bhabha, 'The Other Question', *Screen*, 24 (1983), 18–36 (p. 23); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 60.

[110] Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Judaism: History, Belief and Practice* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 284.

[111] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 165.

And we will reach the place where it is broadest, overflowing its banks and its water rising in waves and waves. The place where its waters cover the whole of the countryside.[112]

In this image, the Jordan is not a border of the state, but rather seems to make the entire idea of a border impossible because of its spreading, liquid form. At the same time as indicating an apparently unlimited supply of water resources for use by Jewish settlers, the overflowing Jordan is a sign of similarly limitless possibilities for territorial expansion. In doing so, Lazar's comments recall the debate within the Zionist movement at the start of the twentieth century, discussed above, over the appropriate borders of a potential future Jewish state in Palestine. Lazar, it seems, favours not keeping the Jordan as a border, but aligns himself with the view later expressed by Lehi, that the Jordan is no more a border than other national rivers of Europe. His references to the Volga take on an additional significance in this light, lending support to a reading of Lazar's obsession with the Jordan as the staking of a territorial claim.

This territorial reading is underscored by the story's penultimate scene, in which the narrator and Lazar eventually reach a broad and fast-flowing section of the Jordan. At this point, the usually sceptical narrator takes on Lazar's tone of religious awe in describing the river:

Its waves no longer rippled but beat with force, and were grey in colour. It seemed as though the small stream had become a river, and that from here onward it would grow broader and stronger until the whole earth would be filled with its glory. We

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[112] ibid.

could not imagine that from this spot onward the Jordan would again be quiet and dwindle down to a stream as before.[113]

In these comments, the spatial reach and 'force' of the river's flow seem to suggest, with Cusack's arguments in mind, a similar lack of spatial and temporal restrictions for a potential future Jewish state. Lazar strips naked to swim in the river, in an image which holds a number of connotations. The immediate connotation is of sexual fulfilment. Swimming in the Jordan is the culmination of Lazar's fixation with the river, which throughout the story is called the object of his 'longing', 'love' or 'yearning', for which he 'can wait no longer'.[114] Romantic and even erotic feelings feature, as Boaz Neumann writes, in pioneer narratives of arrival in Palestine.[115] Lazar's immersion in the river represents a literal unification of his body with Eretz Israel, suggesting the ultimate fulfilment of his dream of 'return', and the inextricable connection between the 'renewal' of the Jewish people and of the land.

Lazar's immersion in the river also evokes associations of ritual bathing as a cleansing and purifying experience. In the Bible the Jordan provides the stage for the most famous example of water's ritual significance in the Christian tradition, as the site for John's baptism of Jesus.[116] Lazar's removal of his clothes to appear 'naked as on the day he was born' similarly suggests a moment of rebirth and renewal.[117] This impression is emphasised by descriptions of Lazar's transforming facial expression, which previously 'bespoke deep

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[113] ibid, p. 177.

[114] ibid, pp. 166, 163, 175, 162.

[115] Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2011), p. 52.

[116] Matthew 3. 13.

[117] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p .178.

suffering' but, in the river, is 'bright with a laugh of happiness and satisfaction'.[118] The description of Lazar's new-found joy gains a religious hue from the line 'drops of water scattered all round him and gleamed in the sun like sapphires'.[119] This image recalls the biblical trope of 'bejewelled Jerusalem', suggesting the blending of the earthly and the heavenly worlds, and an apparent divine blessing for the Zionist project of 'renewing' the people and the land.[120] The suggestion in this image of an immigrant being nourished by and 'reborn' in the environment of his new home is again familiar from Zionist writing, and seems unsurprising in a story by Smilansky, given his romantic views of Jewish settlement and the cultivation of Palestine's soil.[121]

Earlier descriptions of Lazar's impressive physicality point towards a reading of the scene as a depiction not just of Lazar's personal rebirth and renewal in the land of Palestine, but of the Jewish people. As noted above, Lazar is portrayed as the embodiment of the 'New Hebrew Man'. The narrator describes Lazar's body at length, stating:

> The Arab looked at [Lazar] admiringly, nor could I myself take my eyes off him. [...]
> His skin shone like polished metal, and he was full of exuberant vitality. The whole of
> his big, supple frame told of strength, bravery and the glory of youth.[122]

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[118] ibid., pp. 177, 178.

[119] ibid., p. 178.

[120] Meg Boulton, '"Adorned with All Manner of Precious Stones": (re)building Jerusalem in Anglo-Saxon England' (presented at the conference Remembering Jerusalem: Imagination, Memory, and the City, King's College London, King's College London, 2015).

[121] Ramras-Rauch, p. 13.

[122] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 148.

Lazar's appearance epitomises the new, forceful and athletic (male) Jewish body valorised in early twentieth-century Zionism, discussed in the previous chapter. The narrator's admiring descriptions resemble Max Nordau's call for 'deep-chested, sturdy, sharp-eyed men' to form a new 'muscular Judaism' that would rebuild the nation of Israel in its homeland.[123] The contrast between Lazar and the narrator, a bookish Torah scholar who reads to Lazar and teaches him Hebrew, emphasises Lazar's appearance of physical strength and vitality.[124] Today it is difficult not to read these descriptions as homoerotic. Peleg offers an alternative reading of the story's homoeroticism, in which the 'romance' between the narrator and Lazar represents the 'union' between ideology and action needed for the success of the Zionist project.[125] In this context, the focus on Lazar's 'exaggerated manliness' is part of a wider emphasis on 'homoerotic socialization' within nationalist movements of the time, in which ancient Greece provided a model.[126] I examine these connotations in greater detail below, contesting Peleg's interpretation.

Lazar's embodiment of ideals of Zionist physicality indicates that his entry into the water can be read as the enactment of ownership claims, both on the water of the Jordan and on the territory beyond. It represents a translation into water of the Zionist practice of 'knowing the land' (*yediat ha'aretz*) through direct environmental experience, which in itself, as discussed in the previous chapter, represented an assertion of ownership. The equation of

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[123] Cited in Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Max Nordau and the Generation of Jewish Muscle', *Jewish Culture and History*, 6 (2003), 130–51 (p. 133).

[124] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', pp. 145, 157.

[125] Yaron Peleg, 'Heroic Conduct: Homoeroticism and the Creation of Modern, Jewish Masculinities', *Jewish Social Studies*, 13 (2006), 31–58 (p. 39).

[126] ibid., p. 40.

presence and ownership similarly occurs when Lazar swims to the opposite side of the bank and declares: 'Greetings from beyond Jordan.'[127] He then moves further into the territory; Smilansky writes that Lazar twice 'climbed the bank, stood upon it, gazed over the whole district, and dived down into the water.'[128] In surveying the district from a high vantage point, Lazar performs something like a 'prospect view'. As discussed in the previous chapter, this is a way of observing and visually organising the external world which establishes a separation and a relationship of dominance between viewer and viewed, making the object of vision potentially subject to the power and control of the observer. Lazar's incorporation of the 'whole district' – both the western and eastern banks of the river – into a single visual frame, from a 'commanding' viewpoint, can be read in this way as a precursor to the assertion of ownership claims on the entire territory.[129] With Smilansky's references to 'yearning' and 'love' in mind, this scene recalls the colonial trope of depicting exploration and possession of land in the language of sexual conquest.[130]

'Hawaja Nazar' is not, however, an account of national triumph. It ends, as noted above, with Lazar's death by drowning, an event which points towards, on a number of levels, the need for moderation of Zionist ambitions. Given, as noted in the previous chapter, the prominent role of sacrifice within Zionist ideology and Israeli national myth, Lazar's death may not immediately register as tragedy or folly. Peleg asserts that Lazar's death, like his

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[127] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 178.

[128] ibid.

[129] Cosgrove, 'Prospect, Perspective and the Evolution of the Landscape Idea', pp. 55–56.

[130] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 3. Edward Said's argument that the Orient was viewed by Western scholars as a sexualised and feminised object for male possession is relevant here. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 309.

life, makes him a 'national hero'.[131] Against this reading, I highlight the significance of

Lazar's activities prior to drowning, and the point of the river at which he drowns. Lazar

drowns after swimming back and forth from the eastern bank. It is implied that he should

have turned back prior to the symbolic dividing point of the river, 'before he was halfway

across', when the water had already 'reached his neck'.[132] Lazar's death just beyond the

mid-point of the Jordan indicates the dangers of expansionist territorial ambitions, a reading

which is underscored by the subsequent revelation that Lazar was uncircumcised. While

Lazar appeared to represent the perfect Jewish man, the discovery that he is not, in fact,

fully Jewish, casts doubt on the appropriateness of his territorial ambitions. Lazar's death

also prompts a re-evaluation of the homoerotic elements of his relationship with the

narrator. Daniel Boyarin has argued that the Zionist ideology of the 'New Man' was

heteronormative and homophobic, as part of its response to anti-Semitic European

stereotypes of Jewish men as weak, effeminate and homosexual.[133] The equation of

homoeroticism and territorial expansionism suggests that the latter may also be 'unnatural'

according to the beliefs of the time, and the Jordan could be the 'natural border' of a Jewish

territory.

Lazar's strange glee at the river's dangerous currents and weeds indicates something

improper, even pathological, in his relation to the Jordan. When in the river, he declares to

the worried narrator: "The water is deep here, friend. And there's a very strong current

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[131] Peleg, 'Heroic Conduct', p. 39.

[132] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p.178.

[133] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

indeed underneath. You can easily drown...".[134] The narrator reflects: 'How happy he

sounded as he spoke! [...] I began to grow frightened.[135] Lazar's peculiar and disturbing

enjoyment of the risk of drowning recalls Freud's concept of the 'oceanic feeling', discussed

at the start of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).[136] For Freud, the 'oceanic feeling' was a

desire to restore an earlier, originary state of completeness, in which the ego and the

external world are not distinct.[137] It is 'a sensation of "eternity", a feeling of something

limitless, unbounded – as it were, "oceanic"', and the primary basis, for Freud, of religious

sentiments.[138] The oceanic feeling is associated in particular with a regressive fantasy of

returning to the idealised and blissful state of the maternal womb, but is also linked to an

idealisation of death, as a state in which this merging might be achieved.[139] Bachelard, too,

links the weightless sensation of floating in water to early experiences of maternal intimacy,

in mirroring the feeling of being held. He writes: 'Water carries us. Water rocks us. Water

puts us to sleep. Water gives us back our mother.'[140] Feelings of escape, detachment from

everyday life, and even transcendence have often been associated with swimming, since its

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[134] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 178.

[135] ibid.

[136] Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. by James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1962), p. 11.

[137] ibid., p. 13.

[138] ibid., p. 11.

[139] Jan Baker, 'Fears and Fantasies of Swimming and Being in Water', *Psychodynamic Practice*, 11 (2005), 311–24 (p. 313).

[140] Bachelard, p. 131. For further discussion, see Veronica Strang, *The Meaning of Water*, pp. 54–55.

emergence as a popular leisure activity in the West from the nineteenth century onwards.[141]

To an extent, these connotations provide the wider and more mundane cultural context for Lazar's extreme experiences of oceanic feeling while swimming.

Lazar's increasing difficulties with speech prior to swimming support a reading of his immersion as a kind of regression. The narrator reports that '[Lazar's] eyes asked me, without words' whether the sounds of water were the Jordan.[142] He also states that on initially finding only a narrow stretch of the river, Lazar communicated his disappointment nonverbally: 'He neither stopped nor turned aside nor spoke a single word. I knew that he was suffering torments'.[143] The impression of a gradual merging between Lazar and the river is underscored by the use of water metaphors to describe his speech prior to immersion. His emotions are described as 'poured' into the Jordan, while his words are 'flowing and picturesque'.[144] The capacity of water to evoke experiences of infancy indicates that Lazar's motivation for desiring this suicidal unification with the river might be found in his parental history. As noted above, only Lazar's father, not, crucially, his mother, is Jewish. We might see Lazar's urge to swim in the river, and unnerving cry of 'You can drown!', which is described by the narrator as 'victorious' in tone, as an aspiration towards an earlier point of

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[141] Charles Sprawson, *Haunts of the Black Masseur: The Swimmer as Hero* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 135; Christopher Connery, 'The Oceanic Feeling and the Regional Imaginary', in *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, ed. by Wimal Dissanayake and Rob Wilson (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 284–311 (pp. 294–95).

[142] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 177.

[143] ibid .

[144] ibid, p. 152, p. 161.

wholeness with his mother, through the apparent satiety of death.[145] At the same time, the

substitute maternal qualities of the national river of his homeland – including, as suggested

above, the capacity of water to offer a form of maternal 'holding', and the frequent

gendering of the homeland as female – seem to form part of Lazar's attempt to be 'reborn'

as fully Jewish.[146]

Lazar's death, in the course of an attempt to perform what might seem like the ultimate act

of becoming 'native', marks a need for serious caution about this mode of relating to the

Palestinian environment and its waterscapes. In Smilansky's story, Lazar attempts to

understand the Jordan through European ideas about nonhuman nature, delighting in the

thought that it might resemble the Volga, or the biblical river. It is the realities of the local

landscape that prove his undoing, with the 'strong current', or 'stiff grass' on the riverbed,

leading to his death.[147] The narrator's careful, even fearful, attitude to the local

environment, which recognises its difference from European landscapes, is shown by

contrast to be more suitable. Instead of Lazar's unquestioning affection for an idealised

image of Palestine, the narrator feels 'a strange sense of orphanage and loneliness' in the

countryside's expanse, in which '[t]he whole environment seems to be at enmity with you

and to hate you in secret for having pitched your tent or built your house in its midst.'[148] The

Jordan, symbolic entrance to the Land of Israel, becomes the point at which Lazar's

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[145] ibid., p. 179.

[146] Anne McClintock, '"No Longer in a Future Heaven"', p. 90.

[147] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', pp. 178-79; Ariel Hirschfeld, 'Locus and Language: Hebrew Culture in Israel, 1890-1990', in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. by David Biale (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002), pp. 1011–62 (p. 1036).

[148] Smilansky, 'Hawaja Nazar', p. 146.

territorial ambitions, and ideas of the local landscape, are rejected as inappropriate and potentially dangerous, too keen to mirror European models of nationalism and national riverscapes. While Smilansky's stories were popular for what Peleg describes as their 'regenerative promise', 'Hawaja Nazar' is ultimately an ambivalent tale, casting doubt on key aims of the Zionist movement of the time.[149]

**The Palestinian River Jordan**

As noted above, the River Jordan did not become a political border until 1922. Even afterwards, movement of people and goods across the river remained relatively fluid, as it had been under Ottoman rule.[150] The status of the Jordan changed again in 1949 as a result of the 1948 War, known by Israelis as the War of Independence and by Palestinians as the Nakba, or 'catastrophe'. During the war, Palestinians crossed the river in large numbers, expelled by Israeli forces, or fleeing violence. Unable to return, they became refugees; exact figures are hard to determine, but estimates suggest around 100,000 people.[151] An area of central Palestine, the West Bank, was annexed by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, formerly Transjordan.[152] At this point the border between Israel and Jordan switched from the river to the 1949 armistice line, known as the 'Green Line'.[153] In contrast to the earlier river border, the Green Line functioned as a militarised boundary, which divided neighbouring Palestinian villages and disrupted existing patterns of social and economic

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[149] Peleg, *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination*, p. 78.

[150] Biger, *The Boundaries of Modern Palestine*, p. 188.

[151] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 256.

[152] Ilan Pappé, *The Making of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1947-1951* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2006), p. 259.

[153] ibid.

activity.[154] During the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, also known as the Six-Day War, and by Palestinians as *al-Naksa* ('the Setback'), Israel seized the entire territory of the West Bank and unilaterally claimed the Jordan as its border.[155] The Green Line was removed by the Israeli government from official maps, documents and atlases.[156] Palestinians who had fled during the war of 1967, or had been driven out by Israeli forces, found themselves, once again, unable to return to their homes and families.[157] Even so, the Jordan only became the internationally recognised border between Israel and Jordan following their 1995 peace agreement (it is one of just two of Israel's five potential land borders to be internationally agreed upon).[158]

The River Jordan is one of many borders which make up Israel's 'architecture of occupation'.[159] Today, it is the site of lengthy waits and arbitrary checks for Palestinians seeking to travel between Jordan and the West Bank, experiences which deprive Palestinians of agency, and make them subject to the whims of Israeli authority.[160] The Green Line, too, continues to regulate movement of West Bank Palestinians into Israel for

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[154] David Newman, 'The Geopolitics of Peacemaking in Israel–Palestine', *Political Geography*, 21 (2002), 629–46 (p. 637).

[155] Elisha Efrat, *The West Bank And Gaza Strip: A Geography of Occupation and Disengagement* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 49.

[156] David Newman, 'Borders and Conflict Resolution', in *A Companion to Border Studies*, ed. by Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2012), pp. 249–65 (p. 253).

[157] Masalha, Nur-eldeen, 'The 1967 Palestinian Exodus', in *The Palestinian Exodus, 1948-1998*, ed. by Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran (New York: Ithaca Press, 1999), pp. 63–109.

[158] Newman, 'Borders and Conflict Resolution', p. 252.

[159] Weizman, *Hollow Land.*

[160] ibid., chap. 5.

work (subject to checks, closures and curfews) while dividing two populations afforded different civil and political rights.[161] It was revived during the First Intifada, in response to Israeli-defined security concerns stemming from the free movement of Palestinians into Israel, who often fill low-waged jobs in the Israeli economy.[162] Similar fears, following an unprecedented wave of suicide bombings in Israel during the Second Intifada, led to the construction, beginning in 2004, of Israel's Separation Wall, a winding barrier made up of '8-metre-high concrete slabs, electronic fences, barbed wire, radar, cameras, deep trenches, observation posts and patrol roads'.[163] The Wall follows the Green Line for only 70 per cent of its course.[164] As Israeli human rights organisation B'Tselem and planning group Binkom highlighted in a 2005 report, the Wall undergoes implausible contortions in order to encircle Israeli settlements and their surrounding hilltops, engaging in an ongoing land grab, even when this threatens to undermine the 'security concerns' that provided the impetus for its construction.[165] The Wall is arguably enacting a parallel 'water grab'. As Weizman notes, its route incorporates the major extraction points of the West Bank's mountain aquifer into Israeli territory.[166] The fixed barriers of the Wall, Green Line and Jordan have been joined more recently by a 'fluid' and dispersed system of checkpoints, roadblocks and even a separate road system, which structure Palestinian experience to such an extent that Nurith

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[161] Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), pp. 103–104.

[162] Newman, 'Borders and Conflict Resolution', p. 254.

[163] Weizman, *Hollow Land,* p. 161.

[164] Newman, 'Borders and Conflict Resolution', p. 254.

[165] Cited in Weizman, *Hollow Land,* p. 168.

[166] ibid, p. 169.

Gertz and George Khleifi have identified a new genre of Palestinian film, the 'roadblock movie'.[167]

In contemporary Israel/Palestine, borders proliferate endlessly. They no longer exist merely as external barriers, delineating space, but permeate the very fabric of everyday (Palestinian) life. Even in this context the border of the River Jordan maintains a particular significance. After the mass displacements of 1948 and 1967, the Jordan became a symbol of Palestinian loss and dispossession. Edward Said described it as '*the* border: the closest one spiritually, the one travelled across most painfully, the one that most fully characterises the displacement and the proximity of its cause'.[168] It represents, as Havrelock notes, 'the border between home and exile'.[169] This meaning was heightened after the Second Intifada, when Palestinians were banned from using Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion airport, and the Jordan crossing became the only legal point of Palestinian entry into Israel.[170] The Jordan also has a prominent place in Palestinian demands for justice, as part of the historic call for a Palestinian state 'from the river to the sea', indicating the borders of the original British Mandate. Once enshrined in the 1968 Palestinian National Charter, this demand faded from Palestinian national ambitions from 1974 onwards, as the Palestinian Liberation

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[167] Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, 'Palestinian "Roadblock Movies"', *Geopolitics*, 10 (2005), 316–34.

[168] Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1994), p. 8, in Havrelock, p. 253.

[169] Havrelock, *River Jordan*, p. 261.

[170] Véronique Bontemps, 'Le Temps de Traverser Le Pont. Pratiques et Perceptions Des Temporalités Dans Les Territoires Palestiniens Occupés', *Temporalités 15 (*2012), p. 13. <https://temporalites.revues.org/1995> [Accessed 19 March 2016]

Organisation conceded to a more pragmatic programme of territorial ambitions.[171] In 1988, this turned into an explicit adoption of a two-state solution based on 1967 borders, and the 'river to sea' call has since become more of a rhetorical demand.[172] More recently, as Palestinian demands have increasingly been framed in the terminology of environmental justice, the Jordan has become an icon of Palestinian loss in a different sense, suggesting the ecological devastation wrought by Israeli occupation.[173]

**Palestinian Literature and the River Jordan**

I now turn to two contemporary Palestinian texts to examine the ways in they negotiate the ideas of the River Jordan as an (unwanted) border, a much-needed resource, and a site at which memories of environments collide with the realities of ecological degradation. Darwish's poem 'A river dies of thirst' is written in his characteristic free verse, and uses botanical and geographical detail to preserve a memory of the river, as well as to record its historic – now inescapably disrupted – role in mediating Palestinian social relations. Drawing on the same Bachelardian associations between rivers, fertility and motherhood found in Smilansky's short story, Darwish personifies the river and its source as an infant and nursing mother. The poem ends with a similarly violent conclusion, although this time the ending involves death from a shortage of water, rather than an excess, indicating water's

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[171] Ahmad Samih Khalidi, 'The Palestinian National Movement', in *The Routledge Handbook on the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, ed. by Joel Peters (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 20–30 (p. 28).

[172] ibid.

[173] Alatout; al Butmah, Peek and Scandrett; Stuart Schoenfeld, 'Varieties of Environmental Narratives and Their Implications for Environmental Cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians', in *Palestinian and Israeli Environmental Narratives*, ed. by Stuart Schoenfeld (Toronto: Centre for International and Security Studies, York University, 2005).

ambivalent role as a substance which both nourishes and takes life.[174] The poem emphasises the affective and communal consequences for Palestinians of Israel's exhaustion and contamination of the Jordan, while the pastoral tone and imagery of familial care heighten the impact of the poem's dramatic ending.

Barghouti deploys an 'existentialist materialist aesthetic' (Bernard 2007: 666) which contrasts sharply with Darwish's nostalgic tone and transhistorical setting. His concern for the river is less about lamenting environmental harm and a lost society, and more about frustration with the uneven development of the present, brought about in large part, as noted above, by Israel's restriction of Palestinian access to the Jordan. In this sense, Barghouti's concerns overlap with Smilansky's, emphasising the significance of water resources in securing economic sustainability and national independence. Like Lazar, both Darwish and Barghouti contest the designation of the River Jordan as a 'natural' border. However, while Lazar is motivated to do so by beliefs in territorial expansionism which circulated in the Zionist movement of the early twentieth century, Darwish and Barghouti do so on the basis of concern for the river's ecological state, arguments which, as I discuss, play a subtler role in national demands. While in some ways the differences between Darwish and Barghouti's texts arise out of their use of different genres, these also highlight the multiple dimensions of the impact of loss of water on Palestinian communities. As with Smilansky's story, these texts foreground aspects of hydropolitics – place attachment, and economics – more typically seen as linked to the land, and perform complementary roles in the rights and justice claims they imply in the present.

**Darwish – 'A river dies of thirst'**

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[174] Bachelard, p. 6.

It would not be necessary for Darwish's river to correspond to any actually-existing river in order for us to read the poem hydropolitically. Still, the river bears marked resemblances to the River Jordan. The most immediate parallel is the exhausted state of both rivers. Darwish's river has dried up, foreshadowing the imminent demise often predicted for the Jordan.[175] Beyond this, there are further geographic and linguistic links. Darwish describes a 'small river' that could be found 'descending from the mountain peaks/visiting villages and tents like a charming lively guest'. This river's small size could be said to mirror the Jordan's historically narrow width, as described, for instance, by Mark Twain, who wrote that 'many streets in America are double [sic] as wide as the Jordan'.[176] The mountain source of Darwish's river corresponds to the Jordan's headwaters in Mount Hermon and the Golan Heights, while its visits to many villages suggest the Jordan's extended and meandering course, which render its length over twice the direct distance from its source to its end.[177] The rivers are also linked etymologically: the verb 'descending' recalls the river's Hebrew name, *Yarden*, meaning 'descender'. The use of the Arabic '*nazilan*' in the original poem, which derives from the root 'n-z-l', meaning 'to descend', indicates that this connection derives from the original poem, rather than being introduced in translation.

Through depicting the diminishing flow of the water, Darwish contrasts two distinct periods of time in the life of the river and of the community located on its banks. These are unspecified, but other lines of the poem, discussed below, indicate that they refer to pre- and post-1948. Prior to the drying-up of the river, nonhuman nature in the poem is depicted

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[175] 'Towards a Living Jordan River',  p. 14.

[176] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (Connecticut: American Publishing Co., 1869), p. 594.

[177] Tony Allan, *The Middle East Water Question: Hydropolitics and the Global Economy* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002), p. 74; Nurit Kliot, *Water Resources and Conflict in the Middle East* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 143.

as abundant, with the river 'bringing oleander trees and date palms to the valley'. The proliferating oleander trees around Palestine's rivers, including the Jordan, are frequently mentioned in narratives by nineteenth century European visitors to the Holy Land. James Silk Buckingham wrote that the Jordan's banks were 'so thickly wooded with oleander and plane trees', among other plants, 'that we could not perceive the water through them from above'.[178] The scented pink-white flowers of oleander trees make them a decorative plant, while date palms have historically provided a major food source and income for Middle East communities.[179] Darwish's reference to the oleander and palm, with their very different connotations, illustrates both aesthetic and practical contributions made by the river to village life.

Darwish describes the river as an important locus of village activities. It hosts 'nocturnal revellers on its banks', and provides 'the milk of the clouds' for villagers and their horses to drink. The villagers' revelry is mirrored in the personification of the river as 'laughing' and having 'sang', a correspondence which draws on a longer history of imagining the sound of water and rivers as a human voice, and which points towards a harmonious and intersubjective relationship between the villagers and river.[180] The reference to 'nocturnal revellers' by the river perhaps hints at a role for the Jordan in producing the villagers' own fertility as well as that of their crops, and securing the bodily continuation of the village's

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[178] James Silk Buckingham, *Travels in Palestine, Through the Countries of Basahan and Gilead East of the River Jordan: Including a Visit to the Cities of Geraza and Gamala, in the Decapolis* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), pp. 108–109.

[179] ChihCheng Chao and Robert R Krueger, 'The Date Palm (Phoenix Dactylifera L.): Overview of Biology, Uses, and Cultivation', *HortScience*, 42, 1077–82 (p. 177).

[180] Bachelard, p. 189.

human population into the future. This recalls the place of rivers and water in fertility rituals across many cultures, including Palestinian.[181] This meaning is heightened by Darwish's reference to 'milk', a substance which Gaston Bachelard cites as a common poetic metaphor for water, ascribing its recurrence to water's nutritive and regenerative properties.[182] The depiction of the water's capacity to nourish represents a variant on the older trope of imagining the homeland as female. [183]

A final point worth noting in the context of the river's links to village life is the correspondence between the flow of the river and human mobility. The personified river urges, '"water the horses/and fly to Jerusalem and Damascus"'. There is no sense in the poem of the Jordan as the militarised border it is today. Instead, the possibility of this journey being undertaken with speed ('fly') hints at a time prior to the region's present-day national borders, or the roadblocks, closures and other movement restrictions now imposed on Palestinian travellers in the West Bank. In providing water for horses, the river directly facilitates this mobility and crossing of borders, while providing a metaphor for the international 'flows' of villagers and their visitors around the region, in its own journey from Syria to Palestine. Darwish's depiction of the river indicates the ease with which it could be crossed during the Mandate and Ottoman periods, as noted above.

The level of geographical and botanical detail in Darwish's poem suggests a particular purpose. The poem bears similarities to the vast numbers of Palestinian 'memorial books'

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[181] Strang, *The Meaning of Water,* p. 85; Naguib, pp. 113–114; Salim Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 32.

[182] Bachelard, p. 117.

[183] Ball, *Palestinian Literature and Film,* pp. 20–21.

produced in the wake of the displacement of 1948.[184] These collections of narratives about

destroyed or unwillingly abandoned villages form part of a process of 'active remembrance',

which unites Palestinians in the diaspora through reconstructing a shared history, at the

same time as countering the erasures of official Israeli narratives.[185] In its elegy for the

dried-up river, Darwish's poem provides an account of a lost human and nonhuman world,

and functions as both a document of Palestinian loss as well as what Catriona Mortimer-

Sandilands calls an 'archive of ecological trauma'.[186] In this way, the 'thirst' of the title

performs a dual role, invoking not just the drying-up of the river, but the longing for a

homeland of Palestinians in the diaspora. The depiction in the poem of thirst leading to

death adds an ominous aspect to this longing, if not fulfilled by return. In a reference to the

original meaning of nostalgia as pathology, this 'thirst' is figured as an existential threat.[187]

Darwish uses personification and the disruption of the poem's cyclical structure to

emphasise the apparent tragedy and 'unnaturalness' of the river's death. The poem begins

with the lines: 'A river was here/and it had two banks/and a heavenly mother who nursed it

on drops from the clouds'. These recur towards the end of the poem, with a small variation,

in that the first two lines are compressed into the more declamatory '[i]t was a river with

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[184] Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced* (Stanford, C. A.: Stanford

University Press, 2011); Susan Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

[185] Slyomovics, pp. xiv, xii.

[186] Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, 'Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies', in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature,*

*Politics, Desire*, ed. by Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University

Press, 2010), pp. 331–58, p. 342.

[187] Boym, pp. 3–5.

two banks'. What initially seems like a return is abruptly cut short, with three curt lines that announce the river's death: 'But they kidnapped its mother/so it ran short of water/and died, slowly, of thirst.' Darwish's account of the river's 'kidnap' and death dramatises the diversion of the Jordan's waters by Israel, while the legal connotations of 'kidnap' recalls not just the high numbers of Palestinians held by Israel in the legal limbo of administrative detention, but the discourse of 'theft' frequently used by Palestinians and their advocates to describe Israel's use of water that should rightfully, they claim, be theirs.[188] In reference to Cusack, the death of Darwish's river mirrors the parallel dispersal of the Palestinians, and the end of a continuous period of national history in the land of Palestine. The interruption in the flow of the poem mirrors the interruption of the movement of the water cycle by the 'kidnap', reinforcing the sense of a forced ending of an ancient, natural, even potentially 'sacred' order and balance.[189]

Perhaps the most powerful element of these final lines is Darwish personification of the river and its source as a mother and her nursing child, a technique which further underscores the 'unnaturalness' of the kidnapping, and heightens its pathos. Darwish's reference to a child is familiar from environmentalist discourse, where it features frequently

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[188] B'Tselem, *Israel Holding More than 470 Palestinians in Administrative Detention – Highest Number in 5 Years* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 2015) <http://www.btselem.org/administrative_detention/20141007_spike_in_number_of_administrative_detainees> [accessed 23 September 2015]; Judith Deutsch, 'JNF Greenwash', in *Greenwashing Apartheid: The Jewish National Fund's Environmental Cover Up*, ed. by Jesse Benjamin and others (Online: International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network (IJAN), 2011), IV, 23–37 <http://stopthejnf.org/documents/JNFeBookVol4.pdf> [accessed 20 March 2015].

[189] Tuan, p. 122.

in campaigns aimed at spurring action through an expected affective response, even if this technique has been critiqued by queer theorists.[190] Indeed, in its reference to breast milk, Darwish's poem recalls one of the earliest environmentalist texts to rely on these strategies, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in which the horror of DDT is emphasised through its capacity to be passed from mother to infant via breastfeeding.[191]

The contrast between earlier harmony and this violent event represents what Laurence Buell describes as a '[t]rauma of pastoral disruption'.[192] This trope features frequently in environmental writing, and often, as Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley highlight, in postcolonial indictments of imperial environmental degradation.[193] A particular inflection of this trope is common to Palestinian environmental narratives, as Shaul Cohen notes:

> For Palestinians, the environment is a vessel for the idyll of Palestinian
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> independence and a place that has been despoiled by Israeli (de)construction. It is
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> also an hourglass that shows the erosion of opportunity for (re)creating a garden of

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[190] Nicole Seymour, *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2013), p. vii.

[191] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), p. 23.

[192] Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 37.

[193] Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, 'Introduction: Towards an Aesthetics of the Earth', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. by Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey and George B. Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3–42 (p. 23).

Eden that Palestinian nationalism has promised will materialise upon the termination of the occupation (2011: 248-9).[194]

While Cohen's formulation is rather blunt, the juxtaposition of 'A river dies of thirst' with the poem 'The wall', found on the opposite page, underscores its relevance to a reading of 'A river'.[195] In 'The wall', which addresses the topic of Israel's separation barrier, this is described as '[a] huge metal snake', an image which recalls the snake of the Garden of Eden, and a parallel environmental 'Fall', much like the biblical imagery Cohen also deploys. The 'snake' is described in more detail as 'a nightmare of cement segments reinforced with pliant metal', becoming, through its composite structure of hard, man-made materials, a monstrous manifestation of Israel's apparent alienation from nonhuman nature. The reference to the Wall, a hugely restrictive contemporary border, contrasts with the depiction, early on in 'A river dies of thirst', of free-flowing mobility across the Jordan. In this sense, the two poems suggest the 'unnatural' character of both borders.

By depicting a flourishing environment in Palestine's past, these poems challenge dominant Zionist narratives of having 'drained the swamps and made the desert bloom' – the idea that the drastic environmental changes described in Chapter Two were necessary for undoing indigenous neglect. Instead, they imply that Israeli alterations of the landscape have caused, as mentioned in the introduction, an environmental crisis or 'Nakba'. This history of seemingly superior Palestinian environmental stewardship becomes incorporated

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[194] Shaul Cohen, 'Environmentalism Deferred: Nationalisms and Israeli/Palestinian Imaginaries', in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*, ed. by Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke lll (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), pp. 246–64 (pp. 248–9).

[195] Mahmoud Darwish, p. 55. All subsequent references to this poem are to the same page.

into counter-claims of rightful Palestinian sovereignty over land and water in Israel/Palestine, and suggestions of the apparent alienation from nature of Israeli culture. Darwish offers an earlier vision of ecological harmony, combined with a critique of the 'unnatural' borders and impediments to movement imposed by Israel's occupation.

## Barghouti – 'a river without water'

Barghouti's memoir *I Saw Ramallah* was published at the turn of the millennium, to widespread regional and international acclaim. It has often been hailed, not unproblematically (Bernard 2007: 666), as an archetypal representation of Palestinian experience, including by Said in its foreword (2004: vii).[196] The text depicts Barghouti's return to Israel/Palestine after an enforced thirty-year exile, and covers his visits to Ramallah, as well as his home village of Deir Ghassaneh. It begins with Barghouti's entry into Palestine from Jordan via the Allenby/al-Karama crossing, where, forced to endure a lengthy wait, he looks out of the door at the river, and reflects:

> I was not surprised by its narrowness: the Jordan was always a very thin river. This is how we knew it in childhood. The surprise was that after these long years it had become a river without water. Almost without water. Nature had colluded with Israel in stealing its water. It used to have a voice, now it was a silent river, a river like a parked car.[197]

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[196] Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction"', p. 666; Edward Said, 'Foreword', in Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah* , pp. vii–xi.

[197] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, p. 5.

Barghouti and Darwish use a number of similar strategies to critique Israel's impact on the River Jordan. The arid riverscape features again, conveying a comparable impression of national loss, disunity and tragedy to that found in 'A river dies of thirst', becoming, as Bernard notes, 'a symbol of loss and defeat.'[198] Barghouti's spare tone and short, largely descriptive phrases communicate a sense of restrained outrage, much as in Darwish's poem, particularly its concluding lines. In Barghouti's account, the river's 'death', if not described with the overt personification which makes such strong affective demands in Darwish's poem, is still conveyed through the metaphor of a silenced 'voice'. As in 'A river dies of thirst', this passage also juxtaposes two distinct periods, before and after the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, in its timeline of the river's environmental degradation. The rhetoric of the 'theft' or 'kidnap' of Palestinian resources recurs here, too, in Barghouti's description of 'nature' and Israel 'stealing' the river's water. While this forceful language is valuable in demonstrating the unequal levels of water access in Israel/Palestine and making them affectively powerful, it neglects the extent to which nonhuman occupants of Israel/Palestine require water to survive. I return in the Conclusion to the wider implications of such anthropocentric language.

While the texts share many resemblances, Barghouti's striking and incongruous simile 'a river like a parked car' contrasts sharply with the nostalgic, pastoral tone of Darwish's poem. This simile is key to a hydropolitical interpretation of this passage, even if this is not typically how it has been approached. In her discussion of Barghouti's text, Bernard argues that the river and car 'share immobility, but nothing else' , aligning the image with Barghouti's wider

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[198] Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction"', p. 671.

use of 'absurd' metaphors, a strategy which she describes as having 'Brechtian affinities'.[199]

For Bernard, these seemingly incompatible word choices produce an image which is patently 'artificial', compelling the reader to reflect on the material impact of the loss of the river on the Palestinian inhabitants of the West Bank.[200] I agree with Bernard's assessment of the simile's incongruity and its effect, but would suggest that the image is not as surprising as it seems.

By likening the river to a parked car, Barghouti implicitly invokes the actual parked cars queuing on both sides of the river, as Palestinians wait to cross. These are out of view in *I Saw Ramallah*, but mentioned explicitly in the book's sequel, *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* (*Wulidtu Hunak, Wulidtu Huna*), published in Arabic in 2009, and English in 2011.[201] This work also features a crossing of the Jordan, in which cars are a prominent feature. Barghouti describes '[h]undreds of human beings standing outside their cars waiting their turn', adding that '[t]he rows of cars have no end'.[202] As noted above, the power of rivers as national symbols derives from water's potential to suggest the movement, and hence, continuity, of the nation through time. Movement, too, is an inherent part of the function and symbolic connotations of cars. We might suggest, then, that Barghouti's jarring comparison of the river with a car highlights the manipulation of Palestinian time and space central to the 'architecture of occupation' discussed above, which causes Palestinians to have to endure such lengthy waits at the border.

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[199] ibid., p. 671.

[200] ibid.

[201] Mourid Barghouti, *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*, trans. by Humphrey Davis (London: Bloomsbury, 2011).

[202] ibid., pp. 133, 134.

Drawing on Weizman and Bauman, Farrier has rightly noted the ways in which Barghouti's references to water highlight the operation of Israeli regimes of power in the West Bank.[203] As Farrier points out, Israelis have access to what Bauman describes as 'liquid modernity', allowing them to travel freely, while Palestinians are subject to 'heavy modernity', with their movement curtailed by Israel's roadblocks and checkpoints, and, most visibly, the Separation Wall.[204] These restrictions, imposed under the pretext of security concerns, have a major impact on the Palestinian economy, particularly in limiting Palestinian access to the Israeli labour market.[205] As noted in the Introduction, Sara Roy has described policies such as these as contributing to a process of Palestinian 'de-development'; as discussed above, water shortages have a similar impact, drastically constraining the potential of the Palestinian agricultural sector. As such, the image of the river as car, while initially odd, can be seen as juxtaposing two similarly stalled flows, of people and of water, in an image which illustrates and imaginatively links two forms of economic occupation.

At some points in his memoirs, Barghouti advances a romantic, pastoral perspective on Palestinian relationships with nonhuman nature, which bears comparison with Darwish's imagery in 'A river dies of thirst'. Farrier cites, for instance, Barghouti's account of traditional irrigation methods in the village of Ein al-Deir as an example of 'sustained agro-ecological harmony'.[206] This scene mirrors the harmonious relations between humans and the environment depicted in Darwish's poem. Similarly, an account of the Separation Wall in *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here*, which Barghouti describes as 'a cruel and disfiguring

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[203] Farrier, p. 3.

[204] ibid.

[205] Weizman, *Hollow Land*, pp. 156–7.

[206] Farrier, p. 10.

intervention' to which nature has been 'subjected', resembles Darwish's description in the second poem discussed above.[207] At the same time, Barghouti's emphasis on the economic impacts of occupation differs sharply from Darwish's approach, with the reference in the above passage to 'nature' being salient here. Barghouti writes that 'nature had colluded with Israel in stealing [the Jordan's] water'.[208] Collusion, or collaboration, is a practice with high stakes, and Barghouti's use of personification links 'nature' to the most serious possible betrayal of the Palestinian national cause.[209] Darwish, by contrast, presents the causes of 'nature' and the Palestinians as inherently aligned, treating environmental harm solely as the result of the expulsion of the Palestinians, in an association familiar from Palestinian literature.[210] While Darwish's text performs the valuable role of illustrating the affective impact of the loss of water and its disruption of a way of life, Barghouti's more cautious approach provides a reminder of the potential for the pastoral to give a misleading impression of history.

Elsewhere in *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti describes urban life in Ottoman Palestine, writing: The occupation has kept the Palestinian village static and turned our cities back into villages. We do not weep for the mill of the village but for the bookshop and library.'[211] If Darwish's romantic depiction of village life derives to an extent from the ways in which history tends to figure in poetry, these suggestions of a Palestinian alliance with 'nature' can still be

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[207] Barghouti, *I was Born There, I was Born Here*, p. 128.

[208] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, p. 5.

[209] B'Tselem, 'Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Human Rights Abuses and Violations, January 1994', (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 1994).

[210] Bardenstein, 'Trees, Forests', p. 152; Parmenter, p. 81.

[211] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, p. 147.

dangerous. As in colonial discourse more generally, this idea was historically used to imaginatively erase the Palestinian presence on the land prior to Jewish settlement, and justify claims that Palestine was, in the infamous Zionist slogan, a 'land without a people'.[212] The harmonious idyll depicted by Darwish likely would not have survived the increasing urbanisation of Palestinian life which was already taking place long before the creation of Israel; a third of Palestinians lived in urban areas prior to 1948, rather than the villages that form the mainstay of nationalist myth.[213] As I have noted elsewhere, there is an element of Orientalism in suggesting that this way of life would have gone on forever if Israeli settlement had not taken place; there is also a potentially more dubious association between the 'native' people and the land which is not too dissimilar from Zionist claims of exclusive territorial ownership and superior environmental stewardship.[214] Barghouti's text provides a counterpart to contemporary reassessments of Ottoman and Mandate Palestine by scholars such as Salim Tamari, in emphasising the ways in which the loss of the river has caused the loss of an urban culture, as well as a rural one.[215]

Barghouti's emphasis on the material impact of occupation continues in his depiction of the Allenby Bridge. In this image, Barghouti contests the Israeli designation of the river as a national border through deploying the rigorous 'existential materialist aesthetic' identified by Bernard.[216] Barghouti describes his crossing of the bridge, an event potentially loaded with nationalist significance, in terms which, as Bernard notes, are 'almost purely sensory',

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[212] Zerubavel, 'Desert and Settlement', p. 205.

[213] Benvenisti, pp. 6–7.
[214] Boast, p. 54.

[215] Tamari, *Mountain Against the Sea*.

[216] Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction"', p. 666.

and stripped of the symbolic connotations which might be expected.[217] He writes: 'It is very hot on the bridge. A drop of sweat slides from my forehead down to the frame of my spectacles.'[218] The bridge itself is portrayed in similarly bare terms: 'a bridge no longer than a few meters of wood and thirty years of exile', or merely 'a piece of dark wood' with the implausible ability 'to distance a whole nation from its dreams'.[219] In these images, Barghouti juxtaposes his own bodily perceptions and the bridge's banal materiality, with the immeasurable consequences for Palestinians of the Jordan's designation as a border. As Bernard points out, in setting up this contrast Barghouti highlights the roots of the bridge's metaphorical significance in human decisions and practices, rather than an apparently inevitable natural fact.[220]

Barghouti directly engages with the issue of 'natural' borders, suggesting, like Biger, that rivers are not 'natural' divisions. Implicitly invoking the hierarchy of 'natural' borders discussed at the start of this chapter, Barghouti writes:

> I do not thank you, you short, unimportant bridge. You are not a sea or an ocean that
> we might find our excuses in your terrors. You are not a mountain range inhabited
> by wild beasts and fantastical monsters[221]

These extensive, dangerous and difficult to navigate spaces, Barghouti suggests, might present more obvious borders. The River Jordan, by contrast, seems an unlikely candidate

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[217] ibid, p. 670.

[218] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, p. 1

[219] ibid., p. 9.

[220] Bernard, '"Who Would Dare to Make It into an Abstraction"', p. 671.

[221] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, pp. 9-10.

for a dividing line between peoples, particularly when, as Barghouti writes, '[t]here is very little water under the bridge'.[222] Here, Barghouti invokes a well-known idiom, which explains everything that should make the Jordan easy to cross, at the same time as demonstrating why this is not the case. The remark is a literal description of the state of the Jordan, but also a summary of the state of the open-ended conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and a reference to one of the conflict's exacerbating factors.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have examined representations of the River Jordan in a short story, poem, and memoir, by three Israeli and Palestinian authors writing at different times, and with sharply contrasting reputations. While Smilansky's story 'Hawaja Nazar', written at the very start of the twentieth century, remains barely read today, Darwish's poem 'A river dies of thirst' and Barghouti's memoir *I Saw Ramallah* are contemporary texts, with wide readerships. The latter two texts are, I have argued, two of the highest profile engagements with Palestinian hydropolitics. Nevertheless, just like Smilansky's story, Darwish's poem has received no attention for its hydropolitical themes, while Barghouti's memoir has received very little. This is surprising, given the high visibility of the River Jordan in international debate over 'water wars', and the global scale of concern over the disastrously degraded condition of a river sacred to three world religions.

The three texts, as I have shown, use depictions of the riverscape to engage with key issues in Israeli and Palestinian nationalism at their times of writing. Smilansky demonstrates the importance of the Jordan's water resources in realising Zionist plans for settlement, at the same time as warning of the dangers of territorial overambition, and of falsely expecting the

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[222] Barghouti, *I Saw Ramallah*, p. 11.

Palestinian environment to mirror the landscapes of Europe. Darwish and Barghouti's texts, in very different ways, respond to the contemporary prominence of environmental justice in Palestinian environmental narratives. They emphasise the ways in which Israeli overuse of the Jordan's unequally shared resources has harmed the river's ecology, and disrupted Palestinian social relations. Like Smilansky's character Lazar, Darwish and Barghouti both suggest that the Jordan is not a 'natural' border. While Lazar does so for reasons of territorially expansionist ambitions, Darwish and Barghouti instead propose the artificiality and environmental harmfulness of Israel's designation of the Jordan as a border. In this chapter, I have focused on the issue of water scarcity, whether feared, as in Smilansky's story, or produced, as in Darwish and Barghouti's texts, through diversion and overuse. The following chapter develops this theme, examining the deliberate production of water scarcity as an Israeli military tactic in the occupied Palestinian territories.

# 4. Water Wars: Infrastructures of Violence in Sayed Kashua's *Let It Be Morning*

'Gaza's electricity, sewage and water plants are bombed to smithereens, where the West

Bank is ever so tightly wound in the web of Israeli infrastructural administration.' –

Laleh Khalili[1]

The targeting of Palestinian water infrastructure has been a major feature of Israel's

periodic assaults on the West Bank and Gaza. From Operation Defensive Shield (2002),

through Operation Summer Rains (2006), Operation Cast Lead (2008-9), Operation Pillar of

Defence (2012), to Operation Protective Edge (2014), this has caused millions of pounds

worth of damage to Palestinian water infrastructure, which is barely repaired before the

next bombardment begins.[2] The lack of clean water, combined with the cramped living

conditions for refugees sheltering in public buildings, leads to the heightened risk of

infectious disease.[3] The existence of this tactic allows us to add an important qualifier to

existing discourse on 'water wars'. Infrastructural warfare shows that, as Mark Zeitoun

writes, '[w]hile water may rarely be the sole motive for war it is often a victim and target of

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[1] Laleh Khalili, 'A Habit of Destruction', *Society and Space - Environment and Planning D*, 2014 <http://societyandspace.com/material/commentaries/laleh-khalili-a-habit-of-destruction/> [accessed 26 August 2014].

[2] The cost of damage to water infrastructure during Operation Protective Edge was estimated at $34 million. Long-term repairs of accumulated damage over years of attacks are estimated at $620 million. UNCTAD, p. 12.

[3] On health and sanitation during and after Operation Protective Edge, see: UN OCHA oPt,, *Gaza: Initial Rapid Assessment, 27 August 2014* (East Jerusalem: UN OCHA oPt, 2014), pp. 17–19 <https://www.ochaopt.org/documents/gaza_mira_report_9september.pdf> [accessed 27 August 2015].

it.'[4] Water infrastructure is targeted in less direct ways, and this distinction is roughly

geographical, as highlighted in this chapter's epigraph. The Israeli authorities' systematic

neglect of water infrastructure in the Palestinian neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, and

Israeli Palestinian communities around Israel, can be seen as another aspect of this 'water

war'.[5]

Given the frequency with which Palestinian water infrastructure is targeted, this theme is

surprisingly absent from Palestinian fiction. It appears mainly in non-fictional writing, dealt

with at length only in NGO reports and newspaper articles, and mentioned in passing in

diary pieces and memoirs. I begin this chapter with an account of infrastructural warfare,

discussing the increasing attention it has received from scholars in the social sciences in

recent years. I then examine Israel's 'infrastructural administration' in more depth, and offer

a series of reasons for the absence of infrastructural warfare in Palestinian literature. These

include the relative class privilege of Palestinian authors with access to publishing platforms,

the wider material constraints on the production of Palestinian literature, and the

representational difficulties involved in depicting damage to water infrastructure. I then

turn to a rare extended discussion of infrastructural warfare in Palestinian literature. Israeli

Palestinian author Sayed Kashua's novel *Let It Be Morning* (2007), originally published in

Hebrew in 2004, depicts the fallout when the water supply of an Israeli Palestinian village is

abruptly cut off by the Israeli military.

In the small amount of criticism which exists on Kashua's work, *Let It Be Morning* has

primarily been interpreted as another iteration of themes found across his writing. It is

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[4] Zeitoun, p. 4.

[5] Dajani.

typically read as an engagement with the paradoxes of Israeli Palestinian identity, written in an ironic style which exposes both the racism of Israeli culture, and the tragic attempts of Israeli Palestinians to 'pass' in a society which rejects anything viewed as 'Arab'.[6] The disconnection of water supplies in *Let It Be Morning* is dealt with in passing, and portrayed as one element among many in a constructed crisis scenario which permits the exploration of issues relating to identity.[7] Yet water plays a central role in the novel, both in serving as the main cause of the deterioration of relations between villagers, and the catalyst for the villagers' eventual realisation that they are genuinely under threat. The widespread use of infrastructural warfare in Israel indicates that this theme of *Let It Be Morning* deserves greater attention. I argue that Kashua's novel, in focusing on an Israeli Palestinian community whose status as members of Israeli society is already precarious, brings to light the crucial connections between water infrastructure and citizenship that make its disconnection or destruction so potent as a form of warfare.

This focus on Israeli Palestinians allows Kashua's novel to provide an important counterpoint to existing discourse on water access in Palestine and elsewhere, which is typically framed in terms of human rights, and emphasises water as a universal biophysical need. While it is clearly the case that water is essential for life, this message occludes the more complex nature of water crises. As political ecologists Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus note, 'water

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[6] Grumberg, pp. 151–52; Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech-Acts', *Comparative Literature*, 62 (2010), 68–88 (p. 76); Catherine Rottenberg, 'Let It Be Morning (review)', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 4 (2008), 138–41 (p. 138).

[7] Grumberg, p. 149; Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab', p. 77; Rottenberg, p. 139.

crises can exacerbate socially constructed differences and power relations'.[8] Kashua's novel

illustrates the extent to which induced water crises intersect with and intensify existing

tensions within Israeli, Israeli Palestinian, and Palestinian society, based on geography,

gender, class, and national affiliation, factors which are distorted by the ongoing conflict. On

top of this, *Let It Be Morning* is a valuable text to consider in relation to infrastructural

warfare because it is implicitly situated in the context of climate change, through references

to Israel's increasingly extreme patterns of weather.[9] The events of the novel take place

during a 'heatwave', during which 'the Water Council is weighing up the possibility of

declaring a state of emergency in the water supply', to counter 'the national water

shortage'.[10] The shortage persists even after 'the longest and rainiest winter in three

decades'.[11] This context hints at the possibility that infrastructural warfare might become

more powerful and more frequent, in a future where climate change is likely to increase the

dangers of water shortages.

At this point, I should add a brief caveat on the scope of this chapter. 'Water infrastructure'

includes not only the technologies which deliver potable water to taps in homes, workplaces

and public buildings, but also the systems which remove greywater (water from sinks,

showers and baths) and sewage. The functioning of both supply and removal networks is

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[8] Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus, 'The Right to Water: Prospects and Possibilities', in *The Right to Water*, ed. by Farhana Sultana and Alex Loftus, pp. 3-18 (p. 9).

[9] Yonatan Neril, 'Record Heat, Extreme Snow: Israel in the Era of Climate Change', *Times of Israel*, 28 May 2015 <http://blogs.timesofisrael.com/record-heat-extreme-snow-israel-in-the-era-of-climate-change/> [accessed 28 August 2015].

[10] Kashua, *Morning*, pp. 94.

[11] ibid., pp. 94, 8.

also inseparable from the operation of the electricity grid, which provides the pressure needed to pump water to the rooftop storage tanks common in the West Bank and Gaza, and up the West Bank's steep hills. These secondary topics will not be examined in this chapter and remain avenues for future research.

## Infrastructural Warfare

Infrastructure has become a popular topic in the social sciences over recent years, with Stephen Graham remarking that these disciplines have undergone an 'infrastructural turn'.[12] Infrastructure encompasses, as Patricia Yaeger notes in her 2007 *PMLA* Editorial on this theme, a wide range of 'equipment, facilities, services, and supporting structures needed for a city's or region's functioning', including such places and networks as '[a]irports; communications systems; computer grids; highways; gas, electric, and water systems; mass transit; public toilets; sewers; streets; waste management'.[13] In short, 'infrastructure' incorporates the vast, varied, intersecting, and often invisible networks that sustain places of inhabitation, particularly, as Yaeger notes, cities, in which use and management of these networks is most intense.[14] Following Yaeger's editorial, there has been a slower, yet perceptible literary turn to infrastructure, including work by critics including Sophia Beal, Rob Nixon, Michael Rubenstein, Bruce Robbins, and Jennifer Wenzel.[15] Key concerns in this

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[12] Stephen Graham, 'When Infrastructures Fail', in *Disrupted Cities: When Infrastructure Fails*, ed. by Stephen Graham (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 1–26 (p. 10).

[13] Patricia Yaeger, 'Introduction: Dreaming of Infrastructure', *PMLA*, 122 (2007), 9–26 (p. 15).

[14] ibid., p. 15.

[15] Sophia Beal, *Brazil Under Construction: Fiction and Public Works* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Nixon, *Slow Violence*, chap. 5; Bruce Robbins, 'The Smell of Infrastructure: Notes toward an Archive', *Boundary 2*, 34 (2007), 25–33; Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial*

criticism have been the connections between infrastructure and discourses of modernity, modernisation, statebuilding and national identity, themes which are animated in different ways in the context of infrastructural warfare. Hydraulic infrastructure is discussed most frequently by social scientists.[16] This is perhaps because it is integral to such a large number of processes needed to sustain the urban environment. As Matthew Gandy argues, '[t]he history of cities can be read as a history of water'.[17] This social sciences interest has not, however, been paralleled in literary treatments of hydraulic infrastructure, although Rubenstein's work, which I draw on later in this chapter, suggests great potential for this area of research.

'Infrastructural warfare' is an emerging military strategy which forms part of a broader tactic known as 'urbicide', and has received considerable attention from social scientists.[18] The term 'urbicide' rose to prominence during the Bosnian War of 1992-1995, following its use by a group of Mostar architects to describe the intentional targeting of Bosnia's built

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(Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010); Jennifer Wenzel, 'To Begin Everything All Over Again': Fanon, Resource Sovereignty, and Contrapuntal Environmentalism', keynote lecture at the Postcolonial Studies Association postgraduate conference, 'Resources of Resistance: Production, Consumption, Transformation' (University of York, July 2014).

[16] Chris Otter, 'Locating Matter: The Place of Materiality in Urban History', in *Material Powers: Cultural Studies, History and the Material Turn*, ed. by Tony Bennett and Patrick Joyce (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 38–58 (p. 47).

[17] Gandy, *Concrete and Clay,* p. 22.

[18] Key works on this include Diana Coole and Michael J. Shapiro (eds), 'Urbicide [Special Issue]', *Theory and Event*, 10 (2007); Martin Coward, *Urbicide: The Politics of Urban Destruction* (London: Routledge, 2008); Stephen Graham, *Cities Under Siege: The New Military Urbanism* (London: Verso, 2010); Stephen Graham (ed)*, Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

environment by Serbian and Croatian forces.[19] Around the same time, Marshall Berman used the term independently in connection with the redevelopment of his home town of New York City, extending it to encompass what Berman argued was a general fear and phenomenon of urban destruction throughout human history.[20] Graham, a major voice in this field, gives a definition of urbicide which has come to be widely accepted: 'political violence intentionally designed to erase or "kill" cities'.[21] For Graham, this involves a number of aims and targets, with the most pertinent for this chapter being 'the systematic devastation of the means of living a modern urban life', particularly infrastructural networks.[22]

As Berman indicates, the targeting of cities during war is not new. Nor is it a recent phenomenon in Israel/Palestine. Israeli warfare has long involved considerable damage to the Palestinian urban environment: as Khalidi and Pappé have documented, the 1948 war involved the devastation of Palestinian urban centres and villages, to force their inhabitants to leave and make it impossible for them to return.[23] The devastation of the Palestinian built environment during Operation Defensive Shield and again in more recent attacks can

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[19] *Mostar '92 - Urbicid*, ed. by I Ribarevic-Nikolic and A Riedlmayer (Mostar: Hrvatsko vijece obrane opcine Mostar, 1992) (Bosnian).

[20] Marshall Berman, 'Falling Towers: City Life After Urbicide', in *Geography and Identity*, ed. by Dennis Crowe (Washington, DC: Maisonneuve Press, 1996), pp. 172–92.

[21] Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. 84.

[22] ibid.

[23] Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), pp. 91–102; Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

therefore be understood, as Eyal Weizman argues, as an 'intensification of an old policy'.[24]

At the same time, contemporary urbicide in the West Bank and Gaza takes place in a significantly altered context, in which the aim of offensives is not so much to gain territory as to control populations. One of the most effective ways to do this is through targeting infrastructure, including electricity, roads, and water – but especially water.[25] As Swyngedouw highlights, 'controlling the flow of water implies controlling the city, as without the uninterrupted flowing of water, the city's metabolism would come to a halt.'[26] The removal of water threatens chaos, and, potentially, catastrophe.

Military attacks on objects necessary for the survival of civilian populations are prohibited in a range of statutes in International Humanitarian Law, including Article 57 of the Geneva Convention.[27] However, any intention to destroy civilian infrastructure is notoriously difficult to prove. The integration of infrastructure within the urban fabric means that it is often difficult to establish whether damage was the result of deliberate or 'merely' indiscriminate violence.[28] Within Israel, such distinctions have taken on a heightened

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[24] Eyal Weizman, 'Strategic Points, Flexible Lines, Tense Surfaces, Political Volumes: Ariel Sharon and the Geography of Occupation', in *Territories: Builders, Warriors and Other Mythologies*, ed. by Anselm Franke (Rotterdam: Witte de With, 2003), p. 197.

[25] Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, pp. 274–275; Eyal Weizman, Misselwitz, Phillip, 'Military Operations as Urban Planning', *Mute*, 28 August 2003 <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/military-operations-urban-planning> [accessed 5 August 2014].

[26] Gandy, *Concrete and Clay*, p. 22; Swyngedouw, *Social Power and the Urbanization of Water*, p. 3.

[27] International Committee for the Red Cross and Red Crescent, *Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and Relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts (Protocol I)*, 1125 UNTS 3, 1977 <https://www.icrc.org/ihl/WebART/470-750073?OpenDocument>.

[28] Zeitoun, p. 91-92.

importance since the publication of the Goldstone Report in 2009, which, until it was

retracted in 2011 by Judge Richard Goldstone, alleged that Israel had deliberately targeted

water infrastructure during Operation Cast Lead.[29] Targeting infrastructure can in fact serve

as a way of avoiding the legal consequences of military action. It has been framed as a

'humanitarian' form of war, because it appears to produce fewer civilian deaths, instead

seeming to put pressure on leaders.[30] The rhetoric of a 'humanitarian' means of war

operates here as a form of public relations management, masking the fact that the death

and suffering caused by infrastructural disconnection and destruction takes place after the

event and out of sight.[31]

Infrastructural warfare in Palestine can be thought of as a form of violence which makes its

effects felt over multiple temporal scales. It is fast, in the immediate and hyper-visible

display of military assault, and it is, to use Rob Nixon's influential term, a kind of 'slow

violence', which is 'neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and

accretive'.[32]  Some of the 'slow' consequences of the destruction of Palestinian water

infrastructure include an increased frequency of water-associated disease (disease caused

by inadequate sanitation or water-borne pathogens), a factor cited by UNICEF as the

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[29] United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, A/HRC/12/48*, 29 September 2009, pp. 206–210, 265–266 <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/12/48> [accessed 27 August 2015].

[30] Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. xxiv.

[31] ibid., p. 265.

[32] Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 2.

primary cause of death in Gazan children.[33] The slowest form of violence caused by these

periodic assaults may yet be the increased contamination of Gaza's coastal aquifer by

sewage, toxic rubble, and, potentially, the remnants of chemical weapons Israel is alleged to

have used during attacks.[34] The 'slow' nature of infrastructural warfare allows it to serve as

a means, in Judith Butler's phrase, of 'sustaining populations on the edge of death', such

that the life which is permitted may only barely seem worth living.[35] These temporally

drawn-out effects may not be as immediate or shocking as deaths caused by an airstrike,

but, as Butler highlights, they are part of the same process. She notes, pointedly: 'Lives

under such conditions of precarity do not have to be fully eviscerated to be subject to an

effective and sustained operation of violence.'[36] The destruction of water infrastructure, in

short, causes maximum humanitarian and ecological damage, with a minimum of the

international visibility that might lead to prosecutions under international humanitarian

law.[37]

The 'slow' consequences of damage to water infrastructure are not just in its environmental

and health impacts, but in its implications for Palestinian governance and possible future

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[33] UNICEF, *Protecting Children From Unsafe Water in Gaza: Strategy, Action Plan and Project Resources*

(UNICEF, 2011)

<http://www.unicef.org/oPt/FINAL_Summary_Protecting_Children_from_unsafe_Water_in_Gaza_4_March_2

011.pdf> [accessed 20 December 2014].

[34] World Health Organisation and United Nations Environment Programme, cited in United Nations, General

Assembly, *Report of the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, A/HRC/12/48*, p. 268.

[35] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2010), p. xix.

[36] ibid.

[37] Weizman has documented the abuse of discourses of humanitarianism and IHL by the Israeli military in *The

Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence From Arendt to Gaza* (London: Verso, 2011).

bids for statehood. As noted above, water is frequently described as the circulating 'lifeblood' which sustains urban life. The destruction of water infrastructure represents, as Stephen Graham has highlighted, an 'attack [on] the urban foundations of a proto-Palestinian state', and an attempt to undermine the legitimacy and authority of its ruling parties.[38] As such, it forms part of the process of 'politicide' identified by Baruch Kimmerling in his 2003 account of the legacy of Ariel Sharon, one of the chief architects of infrastructural warfare as an Israeli policy.[39] Kimmerling describes 'politicide' as 'a wide range of social, political, and military activities whose goal is to destroy the political and national existence of a whole community of people and thus deny it the possibility of self-determination.'[40] By incapacitating water infrastructure, this type of warfare incapacitates a further symbol of potential Palestinian statehood: the city, the locus of a country's cultural, economic and political life.

**Infrastructural Warfare in Palestine**

Water infrastructure is always heavily damaged in Israel's periodic attacks on the West Bank and Gaza. Jan Selby begins his book on water politics and the Israel-Palestine conflict with a vivid description of the impact of Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 on West Bank water infrastructure and the Palestinian population. It is worth quoting at length:

> As with every other area of Palestinian life, water supply services were gravely
> affected. Pipes were ruptured by tanks and trenches, water spilling down the streets;
> pumping stations and wells ran out of diesel fuel or lost their electricity supplies;

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[38] Graham, *Cities Under Siege*, p. 226.

[39] Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's War Against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2003).

[40] ibid., p. 4.

roof-top water tanks were deliberately shot at by Israeli troops; and under curfew,

local engineers were often unable or too frightened to undertake necessary repairs.

In Nablus, around 30,000 people went without piped water for 11 days in a row. In

Ramallah, at least 25,000 people lost their supplies for several days. In Jenin, amidst

the piles of corpses and bulldozed sewerage pipes, children screamed for water and

drank sewage. Oxfam estimated that, as of 4 April, 400,000 people in Ramallah,

Nablus, Qalqilya, Bethlehem and Tulkarm were without access to running water.[41]

The length of Selby's description and the number of West Bank towns mentioned indicate

the scale of the damage caused, while his inclusion of this paragraph at the very start of his

book indicates the primacy of attacks on infrastructure in conceiving of the place of water in

Israeli-Palestinian relations. Operation Cast Lead (2008-2009) had a similarly devastating

impact on Palestinian water infrastructure, particularly in Gaza. Over 30 kilometres of water

networks were damaged or destroyed, along with 11 wells, 6,000 rooftop tanks, and 840

household water connections, causing 10,000 people to be without access to the water

network for eight months after the attacks.[42] More recently during Operation Protective

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[41] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 2.

[42] EWASH Advocacy Task Force, *Fact Sheet: How Gaza's Blockade Impacts on Water and Sanitation* (EWASH Advocacy Task Force, 2011), p. 2 <http://www.ewash.org/files/library/Factsheet%201%20-%20A4.pdf> [accessed 5 August 2014]. See also the comments on this in the Goldstone Report. United Nations, General Assembly, *Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict*, *A/HRC/12/48*, 2009, sec. XIII C, XVII D <http://undocs.org/A/HRC/12/48>.

Edge (2014), water technicians were killed while undertaking repairs.[43] As of April 2015, 120,000 people in Gaza remained dependent on water tankers, and the per capita water consumption was less than half of the 100 litres per day recommended by the World Health Organisation.[44]

In the West Bank, Palestinian water shortages are engineered using a range of legal and bureaucratic mechanisms deriving from the 1995 Oslo II Interim Agreement. The agreement was framed as a means to increase Palestinian autonomy over water and sewage management in areas under Palestinian control, and facilitate cooperative arrangements in areas under joint control. However, as Selby notes, it was ultimately an exercise in 'dressing up domination as co-operation'.[45] The veneer of Palestinian autonomy in fact served to divest Israel of the responsibilities and burdens of occupation, while maintaining control over pricing and supply.[46] The Joint Water Committee, created to encourage cooperative management, provides Israel with a veto over any proposed improvements to the Palestinian network, unless these offer in trade the permission to construct new supply systems from the Green Line to Israeli settlements.[47] It effectively operates as an instrument

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[43] UN OCHA oPt, *Occupied Palestinian Territory: Gaza Emergency. Humanitarian Snapshot* (UN OCHA oPt: 2014) <http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/humanitarian_snapshot_31_august_2014_opt_v4.pdf> [accessed 28 October 2014].

[44] United Nations, General Assembly, 'United Nations Seminar on Assistance to Palestinian People'.

[45] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 95.

[46] ibid., pp. 140–143.

[47] For a recent account of these effects using data from JWC files, see Selby, 'Cooperation, Domination and Colonisation'.

for extending Israel's 'facts on the ground'.[48] Water installations built without a permit

issued by the committee are likely to be destroyed, affecting Palestinian health and the

Palestinian economy, in which agriculture plays a major part.[49] These effects of Oslo on

Palestinian water access are an aspect of the wider way in which the Oslo Accords, as

Edward Said noted, strengthened Israeli occupation, with Palestinian consent.[50]

**The Absence of Infrastructural Warfare in Palestinian Literature**

In spite of its prominence as a military tactic, infrastructural warfare features infrequently in

Palestinian literature in international circulation. References are usually indirect. Some are

found in the British Palestinian author Selma Dabbagh's 2011 novel *Out Of It*.[51] Dabbagh

refers to the 'mile-long walks for water' endured by some Gazans, if not the novel's middle-

class protagonists, though even their supply runs short and is 'too intermittent to be

shared'.[52] They supplement this with bottled water, which results in household litter: 'a

battalion of water bottles that spread out across the kitchen floor.'[53] The military metaphor

of 'battalion' hints at the origin of water shortages, to which Dabbagh refers directly in

describing the messy aftermath of a hit on an overground water pipe. She writes: 'A water

pipe next to the road had been hit and there was water everywhere in the streets, a brown

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[48] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, p. 113.

[49] EWASH Advocacy Task Force, *Fact Sheet: Demolition and Destruction of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT)* (EWASH Advocacy Task Force, 2012) <http://www.ewash.org/files/library/factsheet%2011%20-%20demolition.pdf> [accessed 9 July 2015].

[50] Said, 'The Morning After'.

[51] Selma Dabbagh, *Out Of It* (London: Vintage Books, 2011).

[52] ibid., p. 22.

[53] ibid., p. 33.

rush of it sloping around the potholes'.[54] Allusions to damage to water infrastructure also

occur in Nour Al-Sousi's story 'Canary', in the recent collection of short stories *Gaza Writes*

*Back*.[55] The story's events are triggered by a shooting of a young boy while he and his

brother return home from fetching water, delivered by an United Nations Relief and Works

Agency (UNRWA) truck.[56] Often, we are told, [t]he camp did not have fresh water for days',

and the boys face a lengthy queue, waiting 'for an hour or so' before being able to 'stagger'

back home with their heavy loads of water.[57] The story shows the adult responsibilities that

children in Gaza are forced to take on in order to provide the basic material means of

survival for themselves and their families, a necessity which, here, has tragic consequences.

Nevertheless, in both Dabbagh's novel and Al-Sousi's story, water shortages are only

mentioned in passing, providing a sense of Gazan life, but without any deep engagement.

A diary piece by the Gazan writer Nayrouz Qarmout, written and published online by English

PEN during Operation Protective Edge, gives an unwitting insight into the class background

of Gazans with access to international publishing platforms. This may explain the seemingly

few mentions of water shortages in Palestinian writing. Qarmout describes taking frequent

showers 'because of the severity of the heat', while lamenting the situation 'of those who

were displaced from their homes and not even permitted to bathe', because they 'have no

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[54] ibid., p. 47.

[55] Nour Al-Sousi, 'Canary', in *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine*, ed. by

Refaat Alareer (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2013), pp. 53–58.

[56] ibid., pp. 55–56.

[57] ibid., p. 55.

water.'[58] The displaced people described by Qarmout, who experience the worst effects of infrastructural warfare, are unlikely to have the networks and contacts, or, indeed, the material resources, to write about their daily life for international media organizations. The piece is also notable for Qarmout's failure to recognize the impact of her preference for frequent showers and high water usage on others' access to water over the long term, because of Gaza's dwindling supplies.

Perhaps the expectation that Palestinian literature would address attacks on water infrastructure is unreasonable. It would certainly be misguided to suppose that Palestinian literature would merely catalogue each aspect of Palestinian life under occupation. This approach risks reducing Palestinian writing to an educational device, transmitting, in Gayatri Spivak's phrase, 'cultural information' about the conflict, and operating as a mere supplement to news broadcasts, albeit, as Anna Bernard notes, one with a particular cultural cachet, because of the status of literature as an elite form.[59] However, water is not merely an aspect of Palestinian life: it is a matter of life and death. Shortages of water are readily noticed, and can restrict and reshape day-to-day activities in major ways. The destruction of water infrastructure is an issue of huge national significance, while water rights more generally are a prominent feature of Palestinian national demands.[60] Palestinian literature has tended to self-consciously examine issues of national significance, whether in attempts to build a Palestinian community in the absence of a shared national home, or to

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[58] Nayrouz Qarmout, 'Life in War', *English PEN*, 31 July 2014 < https://www.englishpen.org/pen-atlas/life-in-war/> [accessed 20 March 2016].

[59] Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, pp. 2–3.

[60] Selby, *Water, Power and Politics*, pp. 144.

inform an international readership often ignorant of the Palestinian situation.[61] For

instance, Refaat Alareer, the editor of the recent anthology of short stories by young Gazan

writers *Gaza Writes Back* (2014), describes this latter task as a 'nationalist obligation', while

Salma Khadra Jayyusi has more critically warned that the pressure to deal with national

themes has at times restricted the development of Palestinian literature.[62] With this in

mind, the expectation that Israel's war on Palestinian water infrastructure might feature as

a literary theme does not seem unfounded.

Still, as discussed in the introduction, the practical restrictions limiting the production of

Palestinian literature more generally are likely to impact the amount of Palestinian writing

which deals with the destruction of water infrastructure. Literature from Gaza, which we

might have expected to be especially likely to feature this topic, is particularly subject to

material constraints on publishing. Added to this is the fact that infrastructural warfare is a

relatively recent military strategy in its current systemic and intensified form. As a result, it

might take longer for works dealing with this topic to emerge. It is useful here to turn to

some of Anthony Carrigan's insights into temporality and narrative form, in the context of

what Carrigan terms 'postcolonial disaster studies'.[63] The status of Gaza's water is not a

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[61] Cleary, pp. 86–90.

[62] Refaat Alareer, 'Editor's Introduction', in *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza,
Palestine* (Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2014), pp. 13–26 (p. 26). Salma Khadra Jayyusi, 'Introduction',
in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. by Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University
Press, 1992), pp. 1–80 (pp. 2–3, 53–54).

[63] For an introduction, see: Anthony Carrigan, 'Towards a Postcolonial Disaster Studies', in *Global Ecologies and
the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony
Carrigan (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 117–39.

disaster in the traditional sense of a 'natural' event such as a tsunami or hurricane, which 'ruptures' or 'inverts' everyday life.[64] However, there are pertinent parallels, indicated by the common rhetorical framing of Israeli violence against Palestinians as a 'natural disaster'.[65] Notable among these are the interaction of structural and ecological factors in producing vulnerability, as relevant in Gaza as in pre-tsunami Sri Lanka or pre-earthquake Haiti, and the unevenness of recovery, subject to global forces of capitalism, colonialism and militarism, and tensions between local political actors.[66]

Postcolonial disaster studies can help us to offer an explanation for the apparent lack of engagement with infrastructural warfare in Palestinian literature. Disasters tend, as Carrigan notes, to be followed by 'different waves of representation'.[67] Forms such as testimony, memoir, poetry and painting typically emerge first, with longer forms like films and novels following much later.[68] In particular, the 'slow' nature of the novel, in terms of reading, writing, and, we should add, publication, leads Carrigan to conclude that '[o]ften the best

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[64] Mark D. Anderson, *Disaster Writing: The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), p. 1.

[65] For instance: Ma'an News Agency, 'UN Official: Gaza Looks like It Was Hit by a "Tsunami"', *Ma'an News Agency*, 13 September 2014 <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=726916> [accessed 26 September 2014]. This is certainly a topic deserving of greater investigation elsewhere.

[66] Carrigan, 'Towards a Postcolonial Disaster Studies', pp. 117, 130.

[67] Anthony Carrigan, 'Introduction: Representing Catastrophe [pre-Publication Draft]', *Moving Worlds: A Journal of Transcultural Writings*, 14 (2014), 1–13.

[68] Anthony Carrigan, 'Compound Disaster, Uneven Recovery: Reading the Catastrophic Legacies of 1970–71 in Bangladesh', keynote lecture at the Postcolonial Studies Association postgraduate conference, 'Resources of Resistance: Production, Consumption, Transformation' (University of York, July 2014).

disaster novels are not produced until at least a generation after a catastrophic event'.[69] In

addition, Carrigan notes, drawing on the work of Haitian author Dany Laferrière, the

production of a sustained creative work like a novel generally requires more stable material

conditions than are often possible in contexts such as Gaza.[70] As such, we might say that the

'slow' violence of infrastructural warfare obstructs the necessarily 'slow' literary work of

representing its effects. It is not a coincidence that Gazan writing is overwhelmingly

dominated by the short story form.[71] Still, with Carrigan and Laferrière's timetable in mind,

as well as the prominence of Gazan writers in documenting the attacks of 2014 in the press,

we might expect to see more Palestinian fictions of infrastructure in future. An early

indication of this likelihood is seen in the recent publication of Gazan novelist Atef Abu Saif's

*The Drone Eats With Me* (2015), his diaries of the 2014 Gaza War, which includes accounts

of the extreme difficulty of accessing water under siege.[72]

A final reason I will mention for the absence of infrastructural warfare from Palestinian

literature in English is how difficult this damage, and particularly its scale, is to represent.

While water is constantly visible in everyday practices, water infrastructure is mostly

unseen, part of vast networks of contemporary urban infrastructures that are, as Kaika and

Swyngedouw highlight, 'largely hidden, opaque, invisible, disappearing underground, locked

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[69] Carrigan, 'Introduction: Representing Catastrophe'.

[70] Dany Laferrière, cited in Carrigan, 'Introduction: Representing Catastrophe'.

[71] Atef Abu Saif, 'Introduction', in *The Book of Gaza*, trans. by Elisabeth Jaquette (Manchester: Comma Press, 2014), pp. vii – xiii (pp. ix–x).

[72] Atef Abu Saif, *The Drone Eats with Me: Diaries from a City Under Fire* (Manchester: Comma Press, 2015). This text was published too late to be examined in this study.

into pipes, cables, conduits, tubes, passages, and electronic waves.'[73] We tend to have very little sense of the considerable labour and technologies involved in delivering water from source to point of use. It is true that water infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza is much more visible than in the European and American contexts discussed by Kaika and Swyngedouw. Cyclical bombardments and systemic underinvestment have led to the reliance on improvised arrangements, including water delivery trucks, rooftop tanks, and overground water pipes.[74] Yet much infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza still remains out of sight. When destroyed, it is not available as what Weizman calls a 'visible ruin', which might be capable of communicating 'the facts of domination and violence' to observers elsewhere.[75] This is an even greater problem in the case of infrastructure which is not built because of denied permit applications, or which exists, but is overstretched, or works only irregularly.

The 'visible ruins' which circulate most widely in the aftermath of Israeli attacks are images of destroyed Palestinian houses, which possess a greater affective force than images of destroyed infrastructure. The house has a particular local meaning in Palestinian culture, making its ruination carry an additional symbolism and affective power. As Said writes: 'Each Palestinian structure presents itself as a potential ruin. The theme of the formerly proud family house (village, city, camp) now wrecked, left behind, or owned by someone else,

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[73] Maria Kaika and Erik Swyngedouw, 'Fetishizing the Modern City: The Phantasmagoria of Urban Technological Networks', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24 (2000), 120–38 (p. 121).

[74] Swyngedouw (2004) writes on improvised water infrastructure in Guayaquil, Ecuador, and Latin America more widely.

[75] Weizman, *The Least of All Possible Evils*, p. 141.

turns up everywhere in our literature and cultural heritage.'[76] The image of the ruined

house, then, confirms exile and displacement as characteristic components of Palestinian

identity, providing an emotive reminder for Palestinians and international readers of the

impossibility for Palestinians of returning home. By contrast, underground pipes torn up by

a D9 bulldozer, or domestic pipes and rooftop tanks destroyed by aerial shelling, are

'invisible ruins'. Their disappearance is hidden in the image of the devastated house or

street, even while they are equally essential for sustaining Palestinian life. The closest news

articles and NGO reports get to depicting the damage to Palestinian water infrastructure is

the familiar, clichéd image of a Palestinian child turning on an empty tap, or clutching fizzy

drinks bottles refilled with water from an UNRWA truck.[77]

One rare and novel representation of the effects of infrastructural warfare on water access

came, surprisingly, out of the 'Ice Bucket Challenge' trend in August 2014, during Operation

Protective Edge. Participants were nominated by friends on social media to film themselves

tipping a bucket of freezing water over their heads, then share their video online and

nominate others. The 'challenge' had the purported aim of raising (loosely defined)

'awareness' of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), known more commonly in the UK as

motor neuron disease, as well as funds for research into the condition. The meme was

adapted into a 'Rubble Bucket Challenge' by a Gazan student, Maysam Yusuf, and

popularised in a video featuring the Palestinian journalist Ayman Aloul, with the most

famous participant being Mohammed Assaf, the 2013 winner of *Arab Idol*.[78] Aloul

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[76] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky* (London: Vintage, 1993), p. 38.

[77] See, for instance, the widely read *Troubled Waters* report by Amnesty International.

[78] Maysam Yusuf, 'Rubble Bucket Challenge', *Facebook*, 22 August 2014

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Rubble-Bucket-Challenge/754732341257955> [accessed 25 November

comments in his video: 'We looked for a bucket of water, however the use of water is more

important than to empty over our heads. And even if the water is available it is difficult to

freeze it.' The Gazan adaptation offered a bitterly ironic yet upbeat visual juxtaposition of

Palestinian water and electricity shortages with the immense 'infrastructural privilege', to

use Yaeger's phrase, of the millions of Western social media users drawn into the summer's

craze of wasting water in the name of charity.[79]

**Sayed Kashua's *Let It Be Morning* (2007)**[80]

Kashua is a prominent figure in contemporary Israeli culture. He is known for his popular

novels *Dancing Arabs* (2002), *Let It Be Morning*, and *Second Person Singular* (2010), his

television show, 'Arab Labor' (*Avoda Aravit*, 2007 – present), and his weekly column for the

left-wing Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*.[81] However, his future role in Israel is uncertain. In July

2014, just after the discovery of the bodies of the three Israeli boys who were kidnapped in

the West Bank, and days before the launch of Operation Protective Edge, Kashua wrote in

his column that he was leaving Jerusalem for the United States, because he could no longer

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2014]; *Rubble Bucket Challenge in Gaza. Ice Bucket Challenge in #Gaza* [online video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Zqnxme3GSc> [accessed 25 November 2014]; *Mohammed Assaf*

*Rubble Bucket Challenge محمد عساف - تحدي #تز ودل_مراكل ال* [online video]

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtlNQQqanco> [accessed 25 November 2014].

[79] Yaeger, 'Dreaming of Infrastructure', p. 17.

[80] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 181.

[81] Sayed Kashua, *Dancing Arabs*, trans. by Miriam Shlesinger (New York: Grove Press, 2004); Sayed Kashua,

*Second Person Singular*, trans. by Mitch Ginsburg (New York: Grove Press, 2012); *Arab Labor*, dir. by Ron Ninio

(Israel: Alive Mind, 2007 *Arab Labor*, dir. by Ron Ninio (Israel: Alive Mind, 2007 – ).

tolerate hostility towards Arabs in Israel.[82] As noted above, there is little scholarship on

Kashua's work. This seems to stem from two main factors. First is the tendency, within

Israel/Palestine and internationally, to ignore Israeli Palestinians. Ilan Pappé calls them 'The

Forgotten Palestinians', in his book of the same name.[83] As discussed in the Introduction,

Israeli Palestinians fail to fit into the two ethnically and territorially exclusive groups

imagined as the primary actors in the conflict, and are frequently mistrusted by both Israelis

and Palestinians. Israelis often view Israeli Palestinians as a potential 'fifth column', yet

Israeli Palestinians are similarly isolated from the Palestinian community, suspected of being

traitors or collaborators.[84] The second factor in the neglect of Kashua's writing seems to be

a scholarly reluctance to engage with popular literature; Kashua's work is sometimes

criticised for its plot-driven narratives and 'journalistic' style.[85] While Kashua's writing and

journalism is widely consumed, it is frequently controversial. He has a reputation, as

Hochberg notes, as 'a relentless provocateur', and his work has been criticised by both

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[82] Sayed Kashua, 'Why Sayed Kashua Is Leaving Jerusalem and Never Coming Back', *Haaretz*,4 July 2014

<http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/weekend/.premium-1.602869> [accessed 9 September 2014].

[83] Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven, CT: Yale University

Press, 2011).

[84] Ilan Peleg and Dov Waxman, *Israel's Palestinians: The Conflict Within* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

Press, 2011), p. 107; Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948-1967*

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Rhoda Kanaaneh, *Surrounded: Palestinian Soldiers in the Israeli

Military* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), chap. 8.

[85] Hochberg states that one of the anonymous reviewers of her article argued that Kashua should not be

analysed by literary critics since he is 'not really a writer… [but] a journalist provocateur.' See 'To Be or Not to

Be an Israeli Arab', p. 71, note 6.

Israeli Jews and Israeli Palestinians.[86] Critiques from the former emphasise Kashua's presumed disloyalty; the latter suggest that Kashua propagates offensive stereotypes of Israeli Palestinians as a result of internalised racism.[87] The extreme scenario presented in *Let It Be Morning*, and the reactions of the Israeli Palestinian characters, toy with both these expectations.

The protagonist and narrator of *Let It Be Morning* is an unnamed Israeli Palestinian journalist, who works for an unnamed Hebrew-language newspaper in Jerusalem, where he has lived for ten years.[88] The novel begins with the journalist moving back to his home town of Tira, with his wife and baby daughter.[89] These characters are also unnamed, in a decision which Hochberg, discussing Kashua's *Dancing Arabs*, traces to his preference for engaging with two collectives – 'Arabs' and 'Jews' – in order to emphasise the absurdly 'prescribed reality' of stereotyped identities which Kashua's characters are forced to inhabit.[90] While the narrator dislikes the village for what he sees as its traditionalism and small-mindedness, he says that he returned because of increasing hostility towards Arabs in Israel. He states that 'it had become uncomfortable just to walk down the street', and that racist graffiti, declaring 'ARABS OUT = PEACE AND SECURITY', had appeared on his apartment building.[91] In his background and occupation the protagonist bears similarities to Kashua himself, while his move foreshadows Kashua's later departure from Israel.

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[86] ibid., p. 69.

[87] ibid.

[88] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 18.

[89] ibid., p. 16.

[90] Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab', p. 74.

[91] Kashua, *Morning*, pp. 7, 17.

The village turns out not to be the safe haven the narrator was expecting. Not long after his

return, the village is unexpectedly encircled by IDF tanks.[92] No-one is allowed to enter or

leave, and electricity and water supplies are cut off, along with all possibilities of

communication with the outside world.[93] Still, as loyal citizens of Israel, the villagers are

unable to contemplate the fact that the siege might be anything other than a mistake by the

Israeli authorities.[94] After an unspecified period – not long enough for villagers to have died

of thirst or hunger, but long enough for shortages to have led to chaos and violence – an

'historic peace treaty' is signed, and the siege lifted.[95] As the consequences of the treaty

gradually dawn on the villagers, they respond with disbelief.[96] The treaty will involve an

exchange of territory and populations which foreshadowed the later 'Lieberman Plan',

proposed in 2004 and still promoted by the right-wing Israeli MK and forceful advocate of

the settler movement, Avigdor Lieberman.[97] Israel's larger settlements will be 'permanently

annexed to the State of Israel', Jerusalem will be divided, the Old City put under UN control,

and the predominantly Israeli Palestinian areas of Wadi Ara and The Triangle, including the

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[92] ibid., p. 52.

[93] ibid., p. 52.

[94] ibid., p. 68.

[95] ibid., p. 260.

[96] ibid., pp. 267–271.

[97] Peter Beaumont, 'Plan to transfer Arab-Israelis to new Palestinian state seeks legal approval',

*Guardian*, 25 March 2014 < http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/25/transfer-arab-israeli-

citizens-palestinian-state> [Accessed 10 September 2015]

village, transferred to the Palestinian Authority.[98] 'I think we're Palestinian now', the

shocked narrator tells his wife.[99]

**Infrastructures of Citizenship**

The major way in which the impact of the roadblock is felt in the novel is through the loss of

domestic water supplies. The absence of water in the home highlights the extent to which

so many routine practices rely on its availability, and points towards the particular force of

infrastructural warfare, in bringing war firmly into what Phillip Misselwitz calls 'the sphere of

the everyday, the private realm of the house'.[100] As I discuss below, the penetration of

conflict into the domestic sphere involved in infrastructural warfare indicates further, crucial

connections between the provision of functioning water infrastructure and national

inclusion. In *Let It Be Morning*, the disruption of water supplies occurs after the village's

electricity is cut off. As the narrator recalls, the villagers are told that 'the water pumps had

stopped functioning when the power was cut, and that there was unlikely to be any water in

the pipes by tomorrow morning.'[101] This domino effect highlights the potential vulnerability

brought about by the overlapping and mutually dependent nature of modern urban

infrastructures, and the rapid and cumulative demodernisation which infrastructural

warfare can, indeed is designed, to produce. Power cuts are in fact a common way in which

water shortages are indirectly engineered in the West Bank and Gaza, particularly in Gaza,

where Israel's attacks on the territory's only power plant in 2006 marked the start of an

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[98] ibid., pp. 261–262.

[99] ibid., p. 266.

[100] Weizman and Misselwitz.

[101] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 143.

electricity crisis which is ongoing.[102] In July 2015 the United Nations Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories reported that as

a result of power shortages, 70 per cent of people in Gaza receive piped water for six to

eight hours a day, every two to four days.[103] This is a state of affairs with which Kashua's

novel, implicitly, evokes.

In *Let It Be Morning*, villagers are left dependent on the limited water which remains in their

rooftop tanks, which the narrator tells his family 'is for drinking only', rather than washing,

cleaning, or the many other domestic uses of water.[104] The narrator institutes careful

changes to his daily personal routines, practices which he suddenly realises are water-

intensive, stating:

> 'I'm sweating and I feel sticky. For a moment I consider getting in the bath, but I
>
> decide to wait. Mustn't waste water now. When I urinate, I don't even flush the
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> toilet.'[105]

Later, as the house sewage system starts to fail, the narrator instructs his family to avoid

using the toilet altogether, stating: 'all peeing will be done in the yard'.[106] When the limited

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[102] B'Tselem, *Act of Vengeance: Israel's Bombing of the Gaza Power Plant and Its Effects* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 2006) <http://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/200609_act_of_vengeance> [accessed 20 August 2015].

[103] UN OCHA oPt, *The Humanitarian Impact of Gaza's Electricity and Fuel Crisis* (East Jerusalem: UN OCHA oPt, 2015), p. 1 <http://www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_gaza_electricity_factsheet_july_2015_english.pdf> [accessed 20 August 2015].

[104] Kashua, *Morning*, pp. 172.

[105] ibid., p. 145.

supply of water in the rooftop tank runs out, the family relies on the bottled water and 'fruit

juice and carbonated drinks' which the narrator has managed to stockpile, before other

villagers realised a water crisis was underway.[107] Eventually, the narrator decides that the

water should be reserved only for the family's children, and that adults should consume the

other remaining drinks.[108] The lack of water prompts even wider changes to family routines

beyond drinking and washing, restricting modes of food preparation, and foods available to

eat. 'No more cooking with water', the narrator rules, '[a]nd let's not even think of tea or

coffee.'[109] The rice and flour which the narrator had gathered prior to the crisis become

useless without water to cook them in, and the family's usable food supplies dwindle as a

result of water shortage.[110] Even with shrinking food supplies, the narrator insists that

'[f]ood is less of a problem than water'.[111] He reports: 'I try not to think about water,

because it only makes me thirstier.'[112]

The starkness of the water crisis which ultimately emerges is emphasised by the contrast

with the high levels of water use in the early stages of the roadblock, when its implications

for water supply have not yet become apparent. Kashua describes the narrator's wife's

unchanged morning routines on the second day of the roadblock – using the toilet, brushing

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[106] ibid., p. 169.

[107] ibid., p. 200.

[108] ibid.

[109] ibid.

[110] ibid., p. 201.

[111] ibid., p. 217.

[112] ibid.

her teeth, and making tea – all of which, in different ways, involve using water.[113] She pours

away old water from the kettle, because '[s]he doesn't like using water left in the kettle

from yesterday'.[114] In doing so, the narrator's wife demonstrates the extent to which she

takes a ready supply of water for granted. Even after the family becomes aware of the

reality of water shortages, they are not quick to adapt their habits. The narrator's father

rejects a glass of water fetched for him by his wife for not being cold enough, and 'spills it

out' onto the floor, suggesting a routine wastefulness (and patriarchal manner) that is

difficult to shake.[115]  The narrator's mother continues to make tea, having to be reminded

by the more cautious narrator: 'please, go easy on the tea, and for heaven's sake don't start

cleaning the house like our idiot neighbours.'[116] The forced alteration of the family's

practices, and their difficulties in adapting, mark a major shift in the way in which water is

imagined in the novel. It changes from 'something self-evident, an apparent triviality,

located simply at the mouth of the tap', in the words of Swyngedouw and Kaika, to a

substance which can no longer be taken for granted.[117] Instead of magically appearing from

the tap, water is always mentioned in relation to the container in which it is held – the tank,

or plastic bottles. The irregular water supplies in the novel disrupt the 'comfort and security,

both material and symbolic', which, Roger Silverstone notes, bodies require.[118] These, he

notes, are usually sought 'in the repetitiveness of the everyday, its very familiarity and

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[113] ibid., pp. 99–100.

[114] ibid., p. 100.

[115] ibid., p. 182.

[116] ibid., pp. 173.

[117] Kaika and Swyngedouw, p. 135.

[118] Roger Silverstone, 'Complicity and Collusion in the Mediation of Everyday Life', *New Literary History*, 33 (2002), 761–80 (p. 765).

predictability'.[119] The removal of the possibility for comfortable repetition represents a kind of disruption on both psychological and bodily levels.

The disruption of everyday routines has a greater significance than mere personal inconvenience. It indicates the extent to which infrastructural warfare in Kashua's novel is an attack not just on infrastructure itself, but on the inclusion within the national collective which infrastructure represents. This effect can be understood through taking a longer view of the development of centrally-provided water infrastructure. In nineteenth-century Britain, epidemic outbreaks of cholera and typhus, along with new scientific advances in understanding the spread of infectious diseases, motivated sanitary reformers including Edwin Chadwick and Charles Kingsley to call for improved water infrastructure.[120] This was seen as a way to improve working class living conditions in the slums of the time, as well as the state of working class morality and economic productivity, the decline or absence of which were viewed as closely connected to an unsanitary environment.[121] The projection of perceived negative qualities of an environment onto its inhabitants is a practice discussed earlier in Chapter Two, in relation to swamps. The construction of water infrastructure came to be seen as one of the hallmarks of modernity, with massive engineering projects becoming a great deal more than the provision of a service; New York, as Matthew Gandy

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[119] ibid.

[120] Michelle Elizabeth Allen, *Cleansing the City: Sanitary Geographies in Victorian London* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008), p. 15; Christopher Hamlin, *Public Health and Social Justice in the Age of Chadwick: Britain, 1800-1854* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[121] Allen, p. 15; Hamlin, p. 165.

has documented, is particularly famous in this regard, while hydraulic engineering was later taken up by newly decolonised states as a way of manifesting their independence.[122]

These new water infrastructures represented demonstrations of technological capability and, as Kaika and Swyngedouw suggest, monumental concretisations of hopes for future social 'progress' and emancipation.[123] Infrastructural projects were viewed as testaments to the power of 'man' to 'conquer' and 'civilise' unruly nature, and to make use of its resources for the purposes of serving the relatively new idea of the 'public good'.[124] Even banal infrastructural sites such as pumping stations were often highly visible and elaborately decorated at this time, celebrating their apparent social significance.[125] The frequent appearance of Marianne, icon of the French Republic, on top of fountains built after the French Revolution demonstrates this link between increased water access and egalitarian ideals particularly strongly.[126] Early twentieth century public works schemes including the development of urban water infrastructure have even been cited by Daniel T. Rodgers as forerunners of the modern welfare state in Britain and America.[127] To this day, Bakker confirms, the expansion of water supply networks represent a key 'emblem of inclusionary citizenship', in providing a material connection between individual bodies and 'the collective

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[122] Gandy, *Concrete and Clay*, pp. 35, 32; Nixon, *Slow Violence*, p. 150.

[123] Kaika and Swyngedouw, p. 130.

[124] Gandy, *Concrete and Clay*, p. 52; Kaika and Swyngedouw, p. 125.

[125] Kaika, *City of Flows*, chap. 1; Kaika and Swyngedouw, p. 121.

[126] Jean-Pierre Goubert, *The Conquest of Water : The Advent of Health in the Industrial Age*, trans. by Andrew Wilson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 81–82.

[127] Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 130.

body politic'.[128] This helps to explain the controversy and mass resistance generated by government proposals for water privatisation and taxation, from Bolivia's 'water war' in 2000 to the ongoing protests in Ireland.[129]

The associations between citizenship and state provision of water can be further understood as an aspects of what Foucault termed 'biopolitics' and 'biopower'. These are concepts which Foucault articulated in changing ways over a long period of time, and which have since been reformulated extensively by others.[130] Broadly, Foucault saw biopolitics as a technique of power, administered through the individual body, and mobilised by the state in attempts to regulate the health and economic efficiency of a population.[131] This was, for Foucault, part of the exercise of 'governmentality', or the means by which the state attempts 'to shape conduct in certain ways in relation to certain objectives', famously

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[128] Karen Bakker, 'Neoliberalizing Nature? Market Environmentalism in Water Supply in England and Wales', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95 (2005), 542–65 (p. 559); Karen Bakker, *Privatizing Water: Governance Failure and the World's Urban Water Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), p. 190.

[129] Oscar Olivera and Tom Lewis, *Cochabamba!: Water War in Bolivia* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004); Guardian Staff and Agencies, 'Tens of Thousands March through Dublin to Protest against Water Charges', *Guardian*, 21 March 2015 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/21/tens-thousands-march-dublin-protest-water-charges> [accessed 21 August 2015].

[130] Thomas Lemke, *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, trans. by Eric Frederick Trump (London: New York University Press, 2011), p. 34.

[131] Foucault coined the term in 1974 before later elaborating on it in greater detail. See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1, an Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980); Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76* (New York: Picador, 2003).

summarised as the 'conduct of conduct'.[132] Foucault distinguished biopower from earlier

forms of sovereign power; where sovereign power was characterised by the capacity to

deprive a population of goods, services, or even their lives, biopower represented a power

aimed at managing life.[133] For Foucault, biopower was inseparable from the project of

liberal government, even if liberalism's emphasis on individual autonomy is seemingly at

odds with the subtle coercion of biopolitics.[134] In this context, the construction of water

infrastructure combined with new cultural codes of bodily conduct and self-discipline in

order to shape the possibilities of subjectivity, while the material nature of infrastructural

technology disguised its simultaneously biopolitical character as a 'technology of rule'. [135]

Patrick Joyce provides an apt summary of the intersection of construction, governance and

social norms, writing that 'the hygienisation of the city was accompanied by processes

making for the individuation of the self'.[136] These included the emergence of new kinds of

embodied social distinctions, notably class and gender, a theme to which I return later in the

chapter.

These longstanding associations between state provision of water and inclusion in the

national collective heightens the meaning of the village's disconnection from Israel's water

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[132] Michel Foucault, 'On Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. by Graham

Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 102–3; Nicholas

Rose, cited in Chris Otter, 'Making Liberalism Durable: Vision and Civility in the Late Victorian City', *Social

History*, 27 (2002), 1–15 (p. 1).

[133] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1*, p. 136.

[134] ibid., p. 136; Otter, 'Making Liberalism Durable', p. 1.

[135] Otter, 'Making Liberalism Durable', p. 5.

[136] Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 73.

network. It becomes a material enactment of the exclusion of Israeli Palestinians from the domain of Israeli citizenship. This is a place in which their status had always been precarious, even if this is a fact which the villagers in Kashua's novel are reluctant to admit. Israeli Palestinians, as noted above, exist in a difficult position, neither fully accepted by Israeli or Palestinian society, an instability that is underscored by the debates over their name as a group. Israeli Palestinians have often been treated as a potential threat within Israel's borders, and are subject to pervasive discrimination in many contexts, in spite of possessing Israeli citizenship. Israeli Palestinian communities have high rates of poverty, unemployment, and domestic violence, while the areas in which they live have suffered from longstanding neglect and underinvestment by Israeli local authorities.[137] The divisions between Israeli Palestinians and Jewish Israeli society became particularly apparent during the Second Intifada, which prompted widespread and fervent solidarity demonstrations in Israeli Palestinian villages of northern Israel. In what has become known as the 'October 2000 events', these protests were violently suppressed by the Israeli police, leading to the deaths of thirteen Israeli Palestinian demonstrators.[138] The events were investigated by the Or Commission, which condemned the use of excessive force by Israel's police, including live fire to disperse crowds, as well as criticising the longstanding governmental 'prejudice and

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[137] For a useful overview of the status of Israeli Palestinians (with a focus on gender), see Amalia Sa'ar and Taghreed Yahia-Younis, 'Masculinity in Crisis: The Case of Palestinians in Israel', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 35 (2008), 305–23 (pp. 309–10).

[138] Azmi Bishara, 'Reflections on October 2000: A Landmark in Jewish-Arab Relations in Israel', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 30 (2001), 54–67.

neglect' towards the Israeli Palestinian community.[139] Against the recommendations of the

Commission, no officers were charged, and the Police Internal Affairs Bureau claimed to

have found no evidence of criminal conduct.[140]

These events were current news at the time in which Kashua was writing *Let It Be Morning*,

and are referenced in the opening of the novel, when Kashua's narrator states that

reporting on the shootings marked an irrevocable alteration in his perception of his position

in Israeli society. He recalls:

> Like me, the demonstrators had always thought of themselves as citizens of Israel,
>
> and never imagined they would be shot at for demonstrating or for blocking an
>
> intersection [...] Two days of demonstrations had been enough for the state to
>
> delegitimise its Arab population, to repudiate their citizenship.[141]

As Hochberg notes, it is no accident that Kashua chose to begin the novel with a reminder of

October 2000.[142] These events presented a stark example of the key concern which

animates Kashua's novel, which is, in Hochberg's words, the 'the fictive transformation of

Israeli Arabs "back into" Palestinians'.[143] At the same time, however, Hochberg neglects the

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[139] James Bennet, 'Police Used Excessive Force on Israeli Arabs, Panel Says', *New York Times*, 2 September

2003 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/02/world/police-used-excessive-force-on-israeli-arabs-panel-

says.html> [accessed 26 August 2015].

[140] Ahiya Raved, 'Case Closed: Police "relieved, Frustrated"', *Ynet*, 18 September 2005

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3143845,00.html> [accessed 26 August 2015].

[141] Kashua, *Morning*, pp. 18–19.

[142] Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab', p. 77.

[143] ibid.

extent to which the disconnection of water supplies plays a pivotal role in this transformation, and in the removal of the villagers' precariously held Israeli citizenship.

The villagers' gradually disintegrating identity as Israeli citizens is referred to frequently in the novel. Early on, the narrator believes that his phone not working is the result of a 'technical problem', and comments that this 'happens all over the country', emphasising the village's inclusion within Israel.[144] This belief is widespread, and particularly apparent in the villagers' reluctance to use words like 'curfew' or 'closure' which would link events to those in the West Bank and Gaza, preferring to talk about a 'roadblock'.[145] As the narrator becomes aware that something else is happening, before this dawns on the other villagers, he articulates his suspicions specifically in terms of a breakdown in the 'rules' of citizenship, stating: 'they don't see the events as a blatant breach of normal relations between citizens and their country.'[146] Finally, as sewage streams around the village, there is no piped water, and people 'continue behaving normally', the narrator becomes more explicit, even scornful, declaring: 'I can't help feeling unspeakably sorry for them when I see how much they believe in their citizenship.'[147] There is an irony to these comments, given that the narrator, too, believed in his citizenship until only recently. Both his heightened awareness of Israeli racism, and the sense of superiority to other villagers suggested by these comments, derive from his having lived for some time in an Israeli city. At the same time as they demonstrate the revocation of the villagers' Israeli Palestinian citizenship, they simultaneously make an implicit case for the narrator's claim to an Israeli identity.

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[144] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 59.

[145] ibid., p. 72.

[146] ibid., p. 73.

[147] ibid., p. 176.

The removal of water supplies plays such a significant role in the novel because it represents the village being literally cut off from the connective infrastructure which, as I discussed above, forms the material foundation of a state's commitment to equality between citizens. It is in this context that the significance of the narrator's remark that '[p]eople barely have enough to drink. Every trace of a normal modern life has disappeared', can be fully understood.[148] Rituals involving centrally provided infrastructure have been described by Michael Rubenstein, drawing on Benedict Anderson, as 'repetitive moments of communion with the state', both in terms of its power and its benevolent provision.[149] When these are disrupted in Kashua's novel, they turn from a performance of belonging and citizenship into an embodied encounter with the villagers' rejection from the Israeli national collective. Similarly, in the West Bank and Gaza, these moments become an encounter with Israeli power and the incapacitated Palestinian governments at the most personal level, given, as Strang has pointed out, the intimacy of many practices involved in using water, involving bodily processes such as 'ingestion and expulsion, contact and immersion'.[150] What is more, these processes are often closely tied to aspects of identity, most markedly, in practices of hygiene and cleanliness. A lack of water, felt through embodied uncleanliness and thirst, becomes one of the ways in which, as Julie Peteet writes in a different context, '[t]he daily inscription of power on the unwilling bodies of Palestinians' takes place.[151]

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[148] ibid., p. 212.

[149] Rubenstein, pp. 9–10.

[150] Strang, *The Meaning of Water*, p. 4.

[151] Julie Peteet, 'Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence', *American Ethnologist*, 21 (1994), 31–49 (p. 32).

The stark change in the village's status is encapsulated in the image of a polluted water fountain at the village's entrance.[152] The fountain, as the narrator describes, had once been 'dedicated with much pomp and circumstance' by the mayor, and was intended 'to welcome the Saturday shoppers into the village', these being Israelis who travelled to the Arab towns from elsewhere, assuming (falsely, the narrator notes with irony) that prices will be cheaper.[153] As noted above, fountains are frequently invested with connotations of egalitarian politics, serving as reminders of state commitments to public water supply, as well as to the provision of shared public space. In the context of the Israeli Palestinian village in the novel, the fountain stakes a claim to an Israeli identity, serving to apparently affirm the villagers' Israeli citizenship through displaying the water that the village, unlike Palestinian towns in the West Bank subject to inflated Israeli water pricing, is able to waste. This claim serves an economic purpose, reassuring Israeli shoppers on their arrival through the visual similarity between the village and Israeli towns that while they may be in an Arab area, they haven't travelled too far from home. Following the siege, however, the fountain stops working, and quickly becomes neglected: 'The water seems dirtier than ever. Cans and cigarette butts and other trash thrown in [...] floating on the water.'[154] The rapid deterioration of the state of the fountain, caused by villagers trapped at the entrance, waiting to leave, indicates the highly provisional status of the village's Israeli identity, providing a reminder that the privileges of citizenship, including mobility in and out of the village, are reserved for Jewish Israelis only.

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[152] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 160.

[153] ibid.

[154] ibid.

The disconnection of water supplies becomes proof for the villagers, initially sceptical, that the roadblock represents a genuine threat. When the narrator proposes that they might be facing a water shortage, the narrator's family responds with disbelief. He comments: 'Mother stares at me as if I've gone mad. As if the idea that we could run out of water [as well as food] has never occurred to her.'[155] For the narrator, the threats to water as well as food mark this conflict as different from previous wars and political events. He describes fears of running out of food during 'the October War, Land Day, during the first Gulf War, at the beginning of the Intifada', but adds that 'nobody ever thought in terms of running out of water. [...] There were never any real shortages. This war is different from all the others.'[156] The loss of water becomes a material enactment of the exclusion of Israeli Palestinians from the realm of Israeli citizenship, which the village's residents had previously taken for granted.

It is telling that the narrator decides, as the village is being bombarded, that his family should take shelter in the bathroom. He is uncertain of his own reasons for doing so, stating that 'for some reason I figure that is the safest place in the house.'[157] This assumption seems reasonable on a practical basis. The room is on the ground floor, and allows the parents to protect the baby as much as they can by covering her in the bath.[158] At the same time, the bathroom can be seen as a space in the home which 'protects' the narrator and his family more psychologically, in providing reminders of Israeli citizenship. This can be understood through returning to the history of urban hydrological development. The installation of

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[155] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 173.

[156] ibid.

[157] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 185.

[158] ibid.

bathrooms in private homes proliferated in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Advocates of the 'sanitary city' saw the construction of bathrooms – or, at the very least,

toilets – in working class homes as a crucial aspect of the project of moral reform,

contributing to the production, in reformer Henry Roberts' phrase, of a 'well-ordered

family'.[159] The bathroom provided, as Gandy writes, an 'intimate interface' between the

private and public spheres, in a number of ways.[160] The narrator's decision to hide his family

in the bathroom represents an attempt to 'shield' himself with a link to the infrastructural

connection which had, until now, provided evidence of their citizenship.

The family's relief following the end of the siege is manifested primarily through actions in

the bathroom, further underscoring its material and symbolic role in providing a connection

to the Israeli body politic. The narrator takes a long shower, which is, unusually for Kashua,

described over almost a page, in short sentences which emphasise the impression of a

savoured, sensory encounter. At the end of the account, the narrator states:

> After every part of my body that I clean, I rest a little, lift up my head and let the
>
> water run down my face and over my closed eyes. I open my mouth and let the
>
> water in.'[161]

In his careful, detailed account of systematically washing each part of his body, followed by

this moment of silent appreciation, the narrator's practice of showering seems almost like a

secular ritual. The narrator's wife, too, delights in the possibility of being able to shower

again, declaring: 'How I've missed water [...] I'm going to spend at least two hours in the

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[159] Barbara Penner, *Bathroom* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), pp. 58–9.

[160] Gandy, *The Fabric of Space*, p. 6.

[161] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 254.

shower'.[162] The tensions between the narrator and his wife which have persisted

throughout the novel finally dissipate, as the two shower together.[163] It is easy to relate to

the experience of feeling dirty as physically unpleasant and, in some circumstances,

potentially dangerous. Still, the relief of the narrator and his wife at being able to shower

again, and Kashua's lengthy description of the narrator's shower, indicates that the

restoration of a water supply holds a greater significance, which we can apprehend through

a brief diversion into the meaning of dirt.

Dirt, in Mary Douglas' famous definition, is 'matter out of place'.[164] As Douglas notes, our

understanding of 'dirt' today is largely dominated by medical concepts of bacteria, yet many

of the practices we engage in to 'remove' dirt do not necessarily have any real effect.[165]

Another compelling way in which Douglas argues that we might account for the strong

emotions and elaborate cultural practices prompted by 'dirt' is in terms of its capacity to

disturb a system, and disrupt the symbolic boundaries through which society is ordered

under regular circumstances.[166] With this in mind, the narrator's inability to shower can be

read as producing an embodied experience of a broader breakdown of normal social life. It

can be seen as producing a particular kind of helplessness, closer to infantilisation, given the

strong cultural connection between adulthood and the ability to manage the body through

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[162] ibid., p. 255.

[163] ibid., p. 257.

[164] Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 44.

[165] ibid., pp. 44–45.

[166] ibid., p. 44.

hygienic practices.[167] We might read this aspect of being unable to wash as particularly troubling for the narrator, given that his sense of his own masculinity, and position as the 'head' of and provider for his family, are under stress in the novel even prior to the siege. He loses his job at the start of the novel, but is unable to face telling his family, and continues to pretend to go to work every day; after returning to the village, he encounters a school bully with whom he was coerced as a child into gay experimentation.[168] The restoration of water supplies simultaneously restores the narrator's control over his own destiny, and that of his family.

As noted above, washing and cleanliness are closely tied to codes of social 'distinction' through which we conceptually order the society around us by categories such as class, and hierarchies of 'civilisation'.[169] Without the ability to shower, the narrator's ability to perform the routines of bodily self-regulation that would mark him as a member of the Israeli national collective is constrained. Worse, the presence of dirt on his body potentially serves to emphasise his own character as 'out of place' within Israel's geographical borders, and, given the intersection between discourses of cleanliness, racism and colonialism, potentially

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[167] Norbert Elias, *The Civilising Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000); Wendy Seymour, 'Containing the Body', in *The Sociology and Politics of Health: A Reader*, ed. by David Banks and Michael Purdy (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 237–43 (pp. 238–39).

[168] Kashua, *Morning*, pp. 43, 136-38.

[169] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice (London: Routledge, 1986).

increases his vulnerability to violence.[170] The act of showering, then, is powerful in the novel

because it appears to represents a restoration of the narrator's personal identity and sense

of citizenship. In this context, the ritualistic quality of the description of the narrator's

shower can be read as a reference to the symbolism of immersion in water within religious

rituals, for instance, the Christian baptism, for instance, the Christian baptism, Jewish

*mikveh* or Islamic *ghusl*, in which bathing represents a process of regeneration, transition,

and removal of sin.[171] In this image, the narrator's belonging to the Israeli national

community appears to be – but ultimately, is not – renewed.

**Water, human rights and shared vulnerability**

In theoretical and activist contexts, water is often portrayed as a substance which unites

communities across difference through the recognition of a shared biophysical need. The

cliché 'water is life', inescapable in activism and charity campaigns on water rights, reflects

the high symbolic value placed on water as the essence of human existence.[172] This sense of

water as the foundation of human life, as Strang notes, provides the basis for a further

popular coding of water as 'a substance that carries common "humanity"', and so unifies

groups through their shared need for water.[173] The apparent ethical compulsion of claims of

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[170] See, for instance: Timothy Burke, *Lifebuoy Men, Lux Women: Commodification, Consumption and Cleanliness in Colonial Zimbabwe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press 1995); McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, chap. 5.

[171] Tvedt and Oestigaard, p. xxi.

[172] 'Water is life' is a slogan used by WaterAid, Oxfam, and the charity of the same name, while Bakker relates that it was chanted by activists disrupting a session on privatising water in developing countries at the World Water Forum in Kyoto, 2003. Bakker, *Privatizing Water*, p. 135.

[173] Strang, *The Meaning of Water*, p. 62.

a universal human need for water seems to be a particularly potent version of an argument which Butler has advanced in recent work, on recognition of common bodily vulnerabilities as potential grounds for solidarity.[174] She writes that 'the apprehension of another's precarity is implicitly an apprehension of our own', and that this apprehension imposes an 'ethical obligation'.[175] An attempt to deal with this obligation arising from essential characteristics of being human is in some ways the basis of the recognition of a human right to water by the United Nations General Assembly in the surprisingly late year of 2010.[176]

A theme of the 'human' under threat recurs in writing on artificially-induced water shortages in the occupied Palestinian territories. This is often framed in terms of Giorgio Agamben's work in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1995), which has been referenced with increasing frequency in writing on Palestine in recent years.[177] In this work, Agamben builds on insights by Foucault and Hannah Arendt into the relationship between 'biological life' and political power, as well as Carl Schmitt's work on the 'state of exception'. Agamben takes the term *homo sacer* from ancient Roman law, in which it describes an

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[174] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2006); Butler, *Frames of War*.

[175] Butler, *Frames of War*, p. xvi.

[176] United Nations, General Assembly, *General Assembly Resolution 64/292, the Human Right* to W*ater and Sanitation*, A/RES/64/292, 2010 <undocs.org/A/RES/64/292>.

[177] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998). Examples include: Derek Gregory, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 16; Tom Langley, 'Exceptional States: The (Bio)politics of Love in Darwish's A State of Siege', *Interventions*, 14 (2012), 69–82 (p. 73); *Thinking Palestine*, ed. by Ronit Lentin (London: Zed Books, 2008).

individual who has committed a crime so grave that they have been exiled from the polis.[178]

The *homo sacer* is a figure who can be killed with impunity, but not in rituals that require

human sacrifice.[179] This person is reduced to what Agamben calls 'bare life', for which

Agamben uses the Greek term *zoe*, meaning the 'simple fact of living common to all living

beings (animals, men, or gods)'. Agamben distinguishes *zoe* from *bios*, 'the form or way of

living proper to an individual or a group', meaning a kind of 'qualified life' which involves the

legal status and political recognition of being included in a political community.[180]

Agamben draws here on Foucault's work on biopower, although while Foucault saw

biopower and sovereign power as operating in distinct ways, for Agamben these are

inherently linked. For Agamben, sovereign power fundamentally resides in the capacity to

decide who is included and who is excluded from the realm of the state; those who are

excluded are produced as 'bare life', or, *homo sacer*.[181] This capacity is otherwise known as

the power to declare a 'state of exception'.[182] In contrast to Foucault, Agamben argues that

this has been the foundation of sovereign power since ancient times.[183] The modern period,

Agamben writes, is distinguishable by a reorientation in which bare life, originally at the

'margins' of politics, has instead become the 'hidden foundation' of the entire political

order.[184] The ultimate expression of biopolitical sovereignty is, for Agamben, the

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[178] Agamben, pp. 10, 13.

[179] ibid., p. 12.

[180] ibid., p. 9.

[181] ibid., p. 11.

[182] ibid., p. 13.

[183] ibid., p. 11.

[184] ibid., p. 12.

concentration camp. This, he controversially argues, represents the 'fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West', and in doing so, makes explicit the dangers of the politicisation of bare life in liberal democracies as much as totalitarian states.[185] Already highly provocative, Agamben's theory becomes even more so when applied in the context of Palestine, because of the implied resemblances between Israel's actions and those of the Jewish people's Nazi persecutors.

References to the 'human' recur frequently in Palestinian non-fiction and memoir dealing with the consequences of the destruction of water infrastructure. Raja Shehadeh explicitly draws on Agamben in connection with the bombing of water infrastructure in the West Bank. He comments, after an account of the water-related privations endured by residents of Jenin during the Israeli army's siege in 2002, that the attacks demonstrate 'Israel's position that the Palestinians are not human beings'.[186] He adds: 'We are treated as *homo sacer* – to whom the laws of the rest of humanity do not apply'.[187] Other writers invoke this concept less overtly. In an article for *Guernica* magazine written during Operation Protective Edge, the Gazan novelist Atef Abu Saif invokes the notion of basic human needs ironically, to emphasise the dire conditions in Gaza. He writes: 'We're OK in Gaza. After all, clean water isn't that important to human beings.'[188] Abu Saif suggests that the destruction of water infrastructure leads to Palestinians being unable to access the fundamental requirements

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[185] ibid., p. 102.

[186] Raja Shehadeh, *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing: A Diary of Ramallah Under Siege* (London: Profile, 2003), p. 86.

[187] ibid., p. 95.

[188] Atef Abu Saif, 'We're OK in Gaza', *Guernica*, 8 August 2014 <http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/atef-abu-saif-were-ok-in-gaza/> [accessed 20 March 2016].

for reproduction even of 'bare' life. At the same time, his comment forms part of an appeal for recognition of a shared human need that, on Butler's model, might lead to empathy with Palestinian suffering on the part of the magazine's international readership.

While these non-fictional texts differ from *Let It Be Morning* in that they are advocacy-oriented, elements of these discourses are at play in Kashua's novel. For instance, the impact of the narrator's eventual realisation that the roadblock is deliberate is heightened because of the dramatic irony of the reader knowing that this is the case all along, and being able to immediately apprehend the potential bodily danger posed by water shortages. The novel creates tension as we wait for the narrator to become aware of the seriousness of the situation. As noted above, Kashua clearly represents the deprivation of water supplies as the worst possible thing that the Israeli state could do to the Israeli Palestinian villagers in order to remind them of their exclusion from the national body, and, potentially, to reduce them to a state of 'bare life'. The cover of the English edition, too, states that Kashua's narrator 'is forced to confront what it means to be human in an inhuman situation.'

At the same time, the villagers' calls for recognition of their humanity are premised on devaluations of the humanity of Gazan and West Bank Palestinians. The water crisis depicted by Kashua exacerbates the villagers' articulations of their difference from Palestinians, as well as their cruelty to Palestinians trapped in the village during the roadblock. It also indicates the villagers' lack of knowledge about Israel's practices in the Occupied Territories. Kashua's persistent focus in the novel and in his wider work on the construction of identity, as discussed by Grumberg and Hochberg among others, highlights an aspect of water crisis which is hidden in narratives that present Palestinian identity and

experience as a unified category.[189] As noted in my introduction to this chapter, *Let It Be Morning* provides a forceful illustration of Sultana and Loftus' thesis that water crisis heightens socially constructed difference, rather than prompting identifications with a common humanity. To some degree, Sultana and Loftus' argument echoes critiques of Agamben and Butler, which have drawn attention to their failure to fully account for variations in vulnerability.[190]

The articulations of Israeli Palestinian superiority brought about by the roadblock are an intensification of the villagers' existing perception of their difference from Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Residents of the village describe Palestinians in these locations as politically extreme. Invoking a widespread perception discussed above, the narrator's brother-in-law, Ashraf, drives past Palestinian day labourers in the village square hoping for work, telling the narrator, '[d]on't feel sorry for them [...] Now they're begging, but deep inside they're convinced that every Israeli Palestinian is a traitor and a collaborator.'[191] Ashraf portrays Palestinians as a threat to Israeli Palestinians through their apparent preoccupation with nationalist grudges, while distinguishing this group from his own community through his use of the pronoun 'them'. In doing so, he separates Palestinians from 'us', and presents them as an amorphous and depersonalised mass. 'Us', for the

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[189] Grumberg, p. 151; Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab', p. 70.

[190] Malini Johar Schueller, 'Decolonizing Global Theories Today: Hardt and Negri, Agamben, Butler', *Interventions*, 11 (2009), 235–54 (pp. 246–59); Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, 'Bare Life', in *Impasses of the Post-Global: Theory in the Era of Climate Change, Vol. 2*, ed. by Henry Sussman (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2012), pp. 194–211 (p. 194).

[191] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 27.

narrator, crucially includes the Israeli military, whom he describes as 'our soldiers'.[192] The

onset of the siege brings about increasing assertions of difference. For instance, the narrator

and other villagers initially assume that if the roadblock is not a mistake, it must be part of

an army search for a Palestinian terrorist cell or suicide bomber.[193] This suggestion affirms

the difference between the loyal villagers and presumably extremist Palestinians, disrupting

peaceful Israeli Palestinian life.

One neighbour jokes that the IDF might have 'confused us with Tul-Karm', a town in the

West Bank, a comment which provokes laughter from others.[194] This joke indicates that the

town's residents view unexplained military actions as a fact of life in the West Bank, while

the possibility of this state of affairs being the subject of a joke illustrates the lack of regard

for the lives of Palestinians, and the trust which they have in the Israeli army. However, the

implication that the two places might be confused at all suggests that the villagers' position

is less secure than it seems; this technique of destabilising a claim at the moment of its

articulation is one which, as Hochberg notes, Kashua has used elsewhere.[195] The reference

to Tul-Karm, captured by Israel in 1967 and transferred to the Palestinian Authority after the

Oslo Accords, in fact foreshadows the novel's ending, such that the village has more in

common with Tul-Karm than its inhabitants realise.

While the early phase of the closure prompted some villagers to 'imitat[e] well-known

Palestinian scenes', as the narrator cynically describes the initial protests at the funeral of a

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[192] ibid., p. 127.

[193] ibid., pp. 56, 62, 71.

[194] ibid., p. 53.

[195] Hochberg, 'To Be or Not to Be an Israeli Arab', p. 76.

contractor and two workers, killed trying to charge the barrier, this phase is short-lived.[196]

Ultimately the villagers abandon any gestures of solidarity, and declare their resentment at

the perceived injustice of being subjected to military tactics used in the West Bank. One

claims: 'we're not like them, we can't last long.'[197] In one sense, this complaint emphasises a

paradoxical vulnerability of the Israeli Palestinian village, in comparison with Palstinian

villages in the West Bank and Gaza. The comment shows that the village's integration into

Israeli systems of money, electricity, food, water has created an infrastructural dependence

that has become a disadvantage. As the narrator points out, '[t]his isn't Jenin, everything

here is Israeli'. The village, he indicates, is unable to survive being cut off from Israeli

society.[198]

At the same time, the heavy impact of infrastructural warfare on Palestinians in the West

Bank and Gaza indicates that the claim Palestinians are better able to endure siege

conditions is clearly untrue. The narrator's mention of Jenin is a case in point. This seems to

reference the 'Battle of Jenin', which took place during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002,

which was very recent history when *Let It Be Morning* was published in 2004. During this

time, the city's water and electricity were cut off by the IDF, in an infrastructural assault

which is now seen as a prototype attack in the development of infrastructural violence as a

means of waging war.[199] Given the levels of destruction caused in the attack on Jenin, and

the shortages of food and water endured by the camp's residents, the narrator's

presumption that Palestinians find it easier to survive attacks seems dismissive in the

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[196] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 203.

[197] ibid., p. 144.

[198] ibid.

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extreme.[200] This belief seems to be grounded in both a lack of knowledge about the realities of Israeli attacks, and an essentialising belief in the hardier nature of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians.

The villagers' lack of knowledge about the realities of occupation in the Palestinian Territories is underscored in a later comment by a neighbour, overheard by the narrator. The neighbour remarks: 'What are they trying to do, kill us by dehydration? Even on the West Bank they never did that.'[201] In this comment, the neighbour emphasises the injustice of the village's current situation through a comparison with the West Bank, seen as the locus of the most extreme forms of military violence. The narrator, too, struggles to believe that Israel would use the removal of essential material provisions as a military strategy, stating: 'it's inconceivable that any army or country in the world would let people collapse that way, let little children die of hunger and thirst before their own eyes'.[202] The 'slow' impact of infrastructural warfare, in reducing access to water supplies to dangerous levels, indicates that death by dehydration is not in fact an unrealistic outcome of attacks on the West Bank and Gaza. This is forgotten by the village's residents in their rush to present their experience as exceptional. A reader with knowledge of infrastructural warfare would encounter these statements as ironic manifestations of the villagers' naïveté and lack of empathy. At the same time, Kashua's use, as Bernard notes, of the 'middlebrow novel form'

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[200] Ramzy Baroud and Mahfouz Abu Turk, *Searching Jenin: Eyewitness Accounts of the Israeli Invasion, 2002* (Seattle, WA: Cune Press, 2003); Stephen Graham, 'Constructing Urbicide by Bulldozer in the Occupied Territories', in *Cities, War, and Terrorism: Towards an Urban Geopolitics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 192–213.

[201] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 204.

[202] ibid., p. 196.

plays a disarming role for his Hebrew readers, in particular.[203] Combined with Kashua's use

of the first person voice, and the colloquial and confessional tone noted by Bernard as

common to Kashua's writing, this style coerces the reader into 'a sense not only of affinity,

but of identification' with the Israeli Palestinian villagers.[204] This perhaps in turn might

prompt an indirect identification with Palestinian communities who actually endure

infrastructural warfare, which could be more compelling than the effects produced by non-

fictional narratives given the way in which Kashua lures his readers into a position which

they might not usually enter voluntarily.

Threats of water shortage in the village not only fail to prompt empathy for Palestinian

sufferers of infrastructural warfare, but ultimately trigger communal violence towards

Palestinian workers trapped in the village by the roadblock. In a darkly ironic scene, the

villagers are persuaded to round up the workers and hand them over to the soldiers,

becoming, as the narrator acknowledges, quasi-agents of the state which has caused their

difficulties in the first place.[205] Initial reluctance is transformed into agreement when the

mayor threatens the possibility of interruptions to water supply, and the humiliation of a

failing sewage system which would mean 'people would have to start taking a shit outdoors,

the way they used to long ago.'[206] Kashua writes: 'But once the mayor explained that there

was no choice, that if things went on this way for one more day there would be no drinking

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[203] Anna Bernard, 'Sayed Kashua', *The Literary Encyclopedia*, 2012

<http://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=13077> [accessed 22 September 2014].

[204] Bernard, 'Sayed Kashua'.

[205] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 143.

[206] ibid.

water left, they backed down.'[207] The threat of being reduced to what might be construed

as 'bare life' encourages the villagers to reduce the Palestinian workers to 'bare life' instead,

undermining suggestions that the shared bodily vulnerability instantiated by water crisis

might lead to heightened empathy between different communities. The 'sobbing workers'

are 'stripped brutally' before the attempted transfer, and any who resist are 'kicked hard in

the ribs.'[208] Two workers are shot and killed by Israeli soldiers, before the villagers realise

that the attempted deal was misguided. The animal-like terms used to describe one of these

workers, depicted as '[t]rembling all over, practically naked [...] on all fours', emphasise his

dehumanisation at the hands of the villagers, instead, as might be expected, Israeli

soldiers.[209]

Water shortages in the village prompt conflict between villagers, too, as tensions created by

their unequal position within Israeli society come to the surface. The behaviour of the

villagers in the face of failing water infrastructure becomes the basis for a highly provocative

comparison between Israeli Palestinians and Israeli settlers. Just as the shortages are

starting to become apparent, Kashua's narrator discovers that his water tank, which he had

thought was half full, is 'completely empty. Someone has stolen our water.' [210] His brother's

tank, too, is found to be empty.[211] Following the 'theft', the narrator resolves to steal water

himself, if he can find anyone to steal it from, and thereafter regards other villagers with

suspicion, thinking of a group of children in the street, '[w]ho knows, maybe they're the

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[207] ibid.

[208] ibid., p. 158.

[209] ibid., p. 159.

[210] ibid., p. 195.

[211] ibid., p. 200.

ones who stole the water from our tank.'[212] As noted in the previous chapter, the notion of

'stolen' Palestinian water appears frequently in polemical and activist references to Israel's

discriminatory water policies, particularly in relation to settler activities.[213] The reference to

stolen water within an Israeli Palestinian community has an absurd effect, highlighting the

extreme divisions produced by living under occupation by suggesting similarities between

villagers, and, supposedly, the worst embodiments of the Israeli occupation.

This water theft signals a complete disintegration of relations within the village community,

exacerbating an existing lack of trust produced by the occupation. The narrator, for

instance, instantly finds people to blame for the water 'theft', stating 'I'm sure it's those

collaborators who stole our water. They ought to be killed'.[214] This wish is read as ironic by

the reader, given that the narrator's father's political career was, Kashua hints, premised on

collaboration.[215] In *Let It Be Morning*, the breakdown of water infrastructure becomes a

cause of, and a metaphor for, the breakdown of the social structures that it brings to light.

This failure to connect takes a particularly literal and graphic form, in rising water levels in

the toilets and sinks in the narrator's parents' house, threatening the upsurge of sewage.[216]

The sense of communal mistrust becomes pronounced as the narrator desperately attempts

to imagine how water shortages might be overcome. This mistrust, Kashua suggests, is

connected to the villagers' alienation from the land. In this moment, the novel gestures –

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[212] ibid., pp. 196-97, 209.

[213] For instance, Ramzy Baroud, *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story* (London: Pluto, 2010),

p. 178, as well as campaigns by Palestine Solidarity Campaign (2013) and War on Want (2014).

[214] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 197.

[215] ibid., p. 109.

[216] ibid., p. 177.

ironically, as I discuss below – to traditional themes in Palestinian literature, including attachment to and loss of the land.[217] These themes mirror founding concerns of postcolonialism.[218] At the same time, this takes place in the very different context of a village whose residents had ostensibly remained within their land in historic Palestine after the Nakba, and whose detachment from practices of self-subsistence came from their increasing affluence as citizens of Israel, an advantage which, as noted above, now produces their vulnerability. The narrator reflects: 'I try to think of ways of getting hold of more water. [...] I wonder what would happen if we dug some water holes in the village. Maybe the groundwater would rise to the surface and give enough not only for us but for everyone.'[219] Because of the villagers' reliance on Israel for water, the narrator only has the residual idea that a well – a word which he doesn't use, emphasising his lack of knowledge – might help them to find water. Instead, the narrator has only the vaguest sense of how the country's water resources are being used by Israel, and redistributed around the country by extensive and hidden infrastructural networks. He speculates: 'And maybe there are pipes running under our land, leading from the reservoirs and the rivers of the Galilee to the cities in the centre and the desert in the south.'[220] Yet this would require cooperative work, which the villagers are incapable of doing. As if to underline this, the narrator follows his idealistic proposals with his own anger, declaring: 'I hope the ones who stole our water die of

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[217] Parmenter, p. 42.

[218] Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 40.

[219] Kashua, *Morning*, p. 216.

[220] ibid.

poisoning!'[221] The tropes of nationalist literature and sentiment fail to be relevant in a situation when, as Kashua shows, it is the national community itself which is in question.

Infrastructural warfare is a major current strategy of the Israeli military. In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which destroying or disconnecting water supplies are both used as a means of entrenching Israeli control over Palestinian populations. This tactic is deeply concerning, not least in the way in which it functions as a form of slow violence, the effects of which persist well after offensives have apparently ended and international media teams have returned home. Infrastructural warfare has been widely discussed in the social sciences, yet this has not been matched in literary studies. In the case of Palestinian literature, this is perhaps partly due to a shortage of texts, which, as I have examined, derives from a range of factors. These include the class position of Palestinian authors, the representational issues involved in depicting damage to invisible infrastructure, and the 'slow' nature of producing literature, which is hindered by the unstable conditions of life under the slow violence of infrastructural warfare.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I explored the impact of infrastructural warfare through a discussion of Israeli Palestinian novelist Sayed Kashua's *Let It Be Morning*. This challenged existing readings of the novel, in which Kashua's engagement with water have until now been neglected. Kashua's novel, as I demonstrated, makes the effects of infrastructural warfare visible through illustrating its disruption of the routines of everyday life. By drawing on geographical work on the development of urban infrastructure, I argued that a crucial effect of the disconnection of water in Kashua's novel is to enact a parallel disconnection of the

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[221] ibid., p. 217.

narrator's village from Israel's national community. The state provision of water infrastructure is, I established, intimately intertwined with discourses of citizenship and national inclusion. In Kashua's novel, the villagers are forced to experience their abrupt exclusion from Israel's body politic as an inscription of power on the body, in the form of thirst and the inability to wash. While the former poses the greatest immediate biological risk, the latter, as I discussed, represents a serious psychological threat.

Infrastructural warfare is often framed in Palestinian advocacy texts as an assault on the 'human', whether as a reduction of Palestinians to what Agamben describes as 'bare life', or a process of highlighting what Butler calls 'precarious life', which might prompt empathy and political action from an observer on the basis of a recognition of shared bodily vulnerabilities with a victim. By setting his novel in an Israeli Palestinian village, and focusing on a group marginalised by both Israelis and Palestinians, Kashua's novel provides a valuable caveat to these universalising concepts. As I have highlighted, they carry the danger of encouraging an unrealistic picture of the homogeneity of Israeli and Palestinian communities. The spiralling social catastrophe depicted in *Let It Be Morning* underscores the extent to which water crisis can, as I have shown, heighten existing social tensions, in ways which are not yet sufficiently understood beyond Israel/Palestine.

# Conclusion

Sahar Khalifeh's novel *The Inheritance* (*Al-Mirath*, 2005) opens with an account of a

Palestinian immigrant selling 'holy water and holy sand from the holy river' to unsuspecting

residents of New York.[1] Under the pretence of being a Jerusalem native, when he in fact

originates from a small West Bank village, he asks a passing woman: 'Is there a baptism in

your family? We have many baptisms in ours, we get baptised every day'.[2] A similar vignette

appears in Palestinian director Elia Suleiman's 1996 film *Chronicle of a Disappearance (Sijill*

*Ikhtifa)*. The proprietor of a Nazareth souvenir shop named 'the Holyland' is seen filling

bottles marked 'holy water' from a tap.[3] Many social, cultural and political meanings of the

deceptively 'natural' substance of water collide in these brief scenes. For Khalifeh and

Suleiman's characters, water is an object of religious reverence and an unholy commodity,

sold under comically false pretences to pious American Christians and gullible foreign

tourists. The economic motivation of these Palestinian characters contrasts humorously

with the supposed 'purity' and religious authenticity of the commodity they sell, while the

depiction of Palestinians as tricksters challenges the 'tragic discourse' through which

Palestinian lives, as Khalili has noted, are too often narrated.[4] Water in Khalifeh and

Suleiman's texts is both local and global: its value derives from its assumed origins in the

River Jordan, yet it is distributed around the world by Palestinians in the diaspora, or

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[1] Sahar Khalifeh, *The Inheritance*, trans. by Aida Bamia (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo

Press, 2005), pp. 3–5.

[2] ibid., pp. 3–4.

[3] *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, dir. by Elia Suleiman (New York: International Film Circuit, 1996)

[4] Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine: The Politics of National Commemoration* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 34.

purchased and taken home by international travellers. The simple substance of 'holy water', purportedly from the Jordan, contains a wealth of information about migration, religion, tourism, economics, Palestinian identity, and Palestinian humour, all within a kitsch plastic bottle shaped like the Virgin Mary.

As this thesis has demonstrated, water is often rendered invisible in literary, cultural and political discourses, despite being ubiquitous and, in so many ways – religious, economic, biophysical, to name just a few – fundamentally necessary. Water is, in fact, highly visible across literary, cultural and political life: it plays an inescapable role in practices of statebuilding, war, and occupation, and serves a vital function in the intimate rituals and routines of embodied life, including drinking, showering, and flushing the toilet. Water has been and continues to be a major preoccupation for the Israeli and Palestinian nationalist movements, whether in the Zionist mythologies of draining the swamps and making the desert bloom, or in contemporary Palestinian calls for water justice.

The apparent invisibility of water in the domains of literature and culture might be explained by the fact that widespread knowledge of the essential need for water works, somewhat paradoxically, to obscure other ways of seeing, thinking and writing about water. Water quality and availability have often been viewed primarily as technical problems to be 'solved', with water understood as a mere 'biological fact'.[5] The scientific representations of water as the straightforwardly knowable substance of $H_2O$ which pervade these discourses mask the extent to which, as Linton writes, '[w]ater is what we make of it'.[6] Water, as Linton

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[5] Ben Orlove and Steven C. Caton, 'Water Sustainability: Anthropological Approaches and Prospects', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 39 (2010), 401–15 (p. 402).

[6] Linton, p. 3.

suggests, constitutes a substance invested with multiple and intersecting social and cultural meanings; in particular, as this study has emphasised, it can play a major role as a material conduit for more abstract flows of social power.

A further perspective on water's relative invisibility in literary and cultural criticism may be drawn from practices of water management in the regions of the world in which environmental humanities approaches are most prominent, these being Europe and North America. In these places, the water infrastructure that sustains our lives only really becomes 'visible' when it fails, which is very infrequently.[7] The national shock with which shortages of clean water in the Michigan town of Flint has been greeted underscores the extent to which such events are viewed as outside the norm; yet the existence of the crisis, and the length of time it took for these events to receive significant attention (the switch to the toxic Flint River took place in April 2014, with a state of emergency announced January 2016) also indicate the uneven distribution of infrastructural failure in wealthy countries, and the way in which this operates as a form of environmental racism.[8] European and North American scholars engaged in work to make nonhuman nature visible may find the theme of water

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[7] Stephen Graham, 'Preface', in *Disrupted Cities*, pp. xi–xii, p. xi.

[8] Scott Bixby, 'Obama addresses 'terrible tragedy' of Flint water crisis while in Michigan', *Guardian*, 20 January 2016 < http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/jan/20/obama-detroit-flint-water-crisis> [Accessed 19 March 2016]; Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality*, 3rd edn (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000); Denise Roberts, 'ANALYSIS: How Michigan and National Reporters Covered the Flint Water Crisis', *Media Matters,* 2 Feburary 2016 <http://mediamatters.org/research/2016/02/02/analysis-how-michigan-and-national-reporters-co/208290> [Accessed 19 March 2016]

less visible, because the areas and backgrounds we typically come from allow us to enjoy a relative 'infrastructural privilege' which renders water largely invisible.[9]

Pursuing research which makes water visible in the context of Israel/Palestine can help us to deepen our understanding of the frequently severe effects of systemic and deliberately induced water shortages in Palestinian communities. The presently dominant discourse of human rights is valuable yet limited. Alone, it does not tell us the psychological as well as physical toll of being unable to secure the most basic material means of survival, or explain why Palestinian refugees might argue that water from Israel/Palestine simply 'tastes better', or is 'the most delicious water in the world'.[10] Research into Palestinian cultures of water potentially offers ways of deepening advocacy practice, and making demands for an end to water inequality in Israel/Palestine more effective. Approaching water in this way can also provide the context with which we are able to historicise and comprehend the links between particular contemporary Israeli priorities, from the use of infrastructural warfare, to recent attempts to turn Israel into a major exporter of water technologies, and promote Israel's water conservation achievements internationally. Reading water in literature over a longer period of time provides context for grasping the meanings of crucial terms such as 'scarcity' and 'abundance', and understanding that their roots are found in political priorities as much as in states of nature. In doing so, this thesis has foregrounded the key role of narrative in the production – and contestation – of dominant hydropolitical discourses in Israel/Palestine.

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[9] Yaeger, 'Dreaming of Infrastructure', p. 17.

[10] Dawn Chatty, 'Palestinian Refugee Youth: Agency and Aspiration', *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 28 (2009), 318–38 (p. 318); Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun*, trans. by Humphrey Davies (London: Vintage, 2006), p. 98.

In spite of what we might deduce from its absence in existing criticism, water plays a significant role in Israeli and Palestinian literature. Approaches to the environment in Israeli and Palestinian literature have so far been overwhelmingly determined by the extreme prominence of the issue of the land in Israeli and Palestinian history, and in the ongoing debates over land sovereignty, rights and borders. While land is seen as fundamental, turning our attention to water reminds us that, without it, the agriculturally productive land celebrated in Israeli and Palestinian nationalist writing would not exist. In this sense, focusing on water brings to light a hidden assumption of existing criticism, which is that land and water can be discussed separately. All of the chapters in this thesis are in fact about land as much as they are about water: claiming it, 'redeeming' it, draining it, or rendering it unliveable – hence, potentially conquerable – through the deprivation of water supplies.

The inextricable, if somewhat paradoxical, connections between water and land were introduced at the beginning of this study. In Amos Oz's novel *The Same Sea*, water, in the form of the Mediterranean Sea, seems to offer the potential for Israel to become integrated into the surrounding region. Oz puts forward a vision of regional connectivity, cosmopolitanism and harmony, grounded in an imaginary of oceanic connection which draws on the work of Fernand Braudel, and which ties into the 'Mediterraneanism' trend which was popular in Israel during the early-to-mid 1990s. Oz's depiction of the sea as a connective, even multicultural, space mirrors similarly optimistic claims in existing ecocritical work on the sea. I argued that Mediterraneanism ultimately serves as a means of strengthening Israel's hold on its land and sea, and as a way of distancing Israel from its Arab neighbours. Mediterranean underscores the country's militarily, and crucially in this case, economically, beneficial affiliation with Europe and America, serving as a way to

'anchor' Israel into its territory through the support and approval of powerful allies. Oz's deployment of the sea as a metaphor similarly serves as a way of ignoring the local region, this time offering a way to overlook and externalise the deleterious ecological consequences of Israeli military policy on the Mediterranean Sea.

Meir Shalev's *The Blue Mountain* engages with one of the major water-related pillars of Zionist mythology: draining the swamps. In Shalev's novel, we learn further ways in which water has been incorporated into claims of territorial ownership, at the same time as figuring in attempts to gain European and American approval through particular kinds of water management, both historically and, as I demonstrate, today. While water in Israel/Palestine is now almost universally understood as in short supply, Shalev's novel dramatises a period in which the opposite belief was widespread and Palestine was judged to have *too much* water. Estimates of abundant quantities of water, as I examined in the chapter, were a crucial part of Zionist attempts to prove to the British that Palestine had sufficient resources to provide for greater numbers of Jewish immigrants in the future. This chapter shows that the view of scarcity is not as permanent as it now seems. Estimates of the land's water potential have changed over time, and have been linked to the pursuit of particular political ends. In my discussion of the novel, I argued that Shalev's post-Zionism is an ecological practice, criticising Zionist mythology not only for its historical erasures, but its ecological violence. Still, Shalev's ecological critique ultimately proves to be built on unstable ground, given the extent to which 'green' principles continue to be used today for staking Israeli claims of ownership on Israel/Palestine's land and water. Professing 'green' principles increases Israel's appeal to European and American onlookers, in much the same

way as adherence to the doctrines of 'improvement' and 'development' did for Zionist swamp drainers in the early-to-mid twentieth century.

The third chapter examined the history of the River Jordan, the body of water in Israel/Palestine which features most frequently in accounts of the threat of future water scarcity. It has also often figured in debates – and wars – over territorial sovereignty. The texts discussed in this chapter – one by early Hebrew writer Moshe Smilansky, the others by contemporary Palestinian poets Mahmoud Darwish and Mourid Barghouti – demonstrated that the Jordan plays a major material and symbolic role in Israeli and Palestinian national hopes. Smilansky's short story 'Hawaja Nazar' demonstrates the influence of European perceptions of national 'riverscapes' on Jewish settlers, at the same time as providing a note of warning about territorially expansionist ambitions. Darwish and Barghouti similarly deny that the River Jordan is a border, but on environmental grounds. While Darwish's text demonstrates the affective consequences of the lack of Palestinian access to the river, Barghouti focuses on the economic impact of this artificially induced water scarcity. Both texts show the increasing prominence of an environmental justice framing in Palestinian writing and activism. At the same time, Darwish's poem indicates the dubious aspects of claiming a Palestinian affiliation with nonhuman nature, which potentially reproduces exclusionary Zionist ideas about a natural 'bond' between the people and the land.

Induced water scarcity threatens Sayed Kashua's characters in *Let It Be Morning*, too, this time through the military tactic of infrastructural warfare. This strategy has been widely used by the IDF in the West Bank and, especially, Gaza, from Operation Defensive Shield in 2002 onwards. While previous chapters focused on water as part of the nonhuman 'natural' environment, in this chapter I examined the relationship between water and the human

body in an urban space, and the ways in which this relationship is mediated through infrastructural connection (or, crucially, disconnection). Kashua's novel, by focusing on Israeli Palestinians, whose status as Israeli citizens is already unstable, brings to light the connections between water infrastructure and citizenship that make its destruction so potent as a means of waging war. By drawing attention to the impact of infrastructural warfare on a community which is often forgotten, Kashua's novel highlights an issue with existing discourse on water shortages, in which the effects of this tactic are homogenised by well-meaning activists and writers. By contrast, Kashua shows the extent to which water crises do not have equal effects across a community, but can intensify existing differences brought about by occupation. Kashua's novel, one of the most recent works discussed in this thesis, also illuminates the potential impact of future climate change on Israeli and Palestinian access to water.

This thesis contributes to literary studies by examining the vital yet improbably neglected theme of water, in the similarly neglected, yet rich and diverse, fields of Israeli and Palestinian literature. By demonstrating the potential of these two intersecting areas of research, this project is of particular value as a work of postcolonial ecocriticism. Both postcolonial studies and ecocriticism have, as discussed in the Introduction, long been reluctant to engage with the theme of water, or the domain of Israeli and Palestinian writing. In the latter case, I have suggested, because of the potential professional risks. This thesis offers a challenge to both of these disciplines, to move beyond familiar and comfortable landscapes and literatures. It is also a contribution to the field of the environmental humanities, which has risen rapidly to prominence over recent years, and has advocated the need for interdisciplinary research, a call which I have heeded in this

project. Beyond literary studies, the most obvious influence here is cultural geography, to which the thesis similarly contributes by demonstrating the relevance of literary texts to geographical research, and emphasising the significance of representational aesthetics, language and narrative style to understanding water crisis in Israel/Palestine. At the same time, I have drawn from disciplines as wide-ranging as anthropology, economics, environmental history, science and technology studies, sociology, and, of course, politics. As Gandy has highlighted, interdisciplinary thinking is one of the inescapable challenges – and pleasures – of pursuing water as a topic of research, and this represents one of the ways in which exploring water might enrich literary studies more widely.[11]

There are some watery environments in Israel/Palestine this thesis does not discuss. While in part these remain limitations of the current study, particularly when deriving from restrictions on the availability of works in translation, in many cases they also offer a great deal of possibilities for future research. As this is the first study to examine water in Israeli and Palestinian literature, I chose to structure the project according to the bodies of water which have been most significant in Israeli and Palestinian history (a term which I have stretched to include infrastructure, as a man-made container of water), and which have inspired a range of works of literature. Other bodies of water were inevitably left out. These include the Dead Sea, excluded, surprisingly, because of a paucity of literary sources, beyond references in religious texts. In addition, I have not discussed the Red Sea, the region's various lakes, including Israel's major reservoir Lake Kinneret, other rivers beyond the Jordan, such as the Yarkon, and the region's aquifers. Another restriction is my focus on 'bluewater' – surface water. There are many other types, including 'greenwater', 'virtual

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[11] Gandy, *The Fabric of Space*, p. 2.

water', greywater (relatively clean wastewater produced by hand basins, showers and baths) and blackwater (sewage). While I made this exclusion deliberately, in order to focus consistently on 'clean' water, these other forms of water certainly offer avenues for future research. As hinted at in the final chapter, and in earlier references to hydropower, water networks intersect with a range of other infrastructures, notably electricity. These intersections suggest possibilities for further investigation, particularly given the way in which water and electricity share a common metaphorical language of flow, their nature as limited and socially produced resources, and their fundamental roles in modern life.

There are many Israeli and Palestinian texts with watery elements that I have had to leave out. I hope that their absence will be seen as a sign of the richness of this topic, and its future promise. Some of these texts include Orly Castel-Bloom's juxtaposition of extreme weather with the First Intifada in *Human Parts* (*Halakim Enoshiyim*, 2003), David Grossman's surreal and beautiful rendering of oceanic ecosystems and salmon migration in *See Under: Love* (*Ayen 'erekh: ahavah*, 1989), and Ghassan Kanafani's depiction, in *Men in the Sun* (*Rijal fi al'Shams, 1963*), of three desperate Palestinian refugees who tragically suffocate in an empty water tanker while attempting to escape across the desert to Kuwait.[12] Accounts of Palestinian wells, spring water and cisterns, in works by Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Elias Khoury, and Anton Shammas, suggest ways to develop the theme of

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[12] Orly Castel-Bloom, *Human Parts*, trans. by Dalya Bilu (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 2003); David Grossman, *See Under: Love*, trans. by Betsy Rosenberg (London: Vintage, 1999); Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun*, trans. by Hilary Kilpatrick (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1983).

infrastructure, and to engage, if indirectly, with aquifers in literature.[13] The restriction of this study to texts in English translation prevented analysis of texts such as Israeli-Iraqi author and hydrologist Sami Michael's *Water Kissing Water* (*Mayim Noshkim Le-Mayim*, 2005), which focuses on a Mizrahi Jewish man, who works, like Michael, for Israel's Water Authority.[14] At the same time, as this paragraph clearly demonstrates, the body of work in translation already provided far more material than it was possible to cover. In addition, this restriction allowed the project to examine the ways in which water mediates relationships between Israel/Palestine and the West, whether in terms of Zionist attempts to make the Palestinian environment conform to European-derived standards of aesthetics and 'efficiency', or in present-day fears, with global ramifications, of Middle East 'water wars'.

The existence of a number of films addressing watery themes indicates the potential for a parallel study to be conducted on this medium, which would allowing water's visual and aural manifestations to be considered. These include Zionist propaganda films such as *Sabra* (*Tzabar*, 1933) and *They Were Ten* (*Hem Hayu Asara*, 1961), which depict water conflicts between modernising pioneers and Palestine's native population.[15] More recently, Tawfik Abu Wael's *Palme D'Or*-winning 2004 film '*Atash (Thirst)*, offers a sophisticated and highly

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[13] Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The First Well*, trans. by Issa J. Boullata (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1995), pp. xix–xxi; Khoury, p. 98; Anton Shammas, *Arabesques*, trans. by Vivian Eden (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 47–48.

[14] Sami Michael, *Water Kissing Water* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2005) (Hebrew).

[15] These earlier films are discussed in Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*, pp. 39–41.

suggestive take on the role of water infrastructure in mediating gender relations within an Israeli Palestinian community in northern Israel.[16]

Grossman's account of salmon migration and his personification of the sea suggest the need for future research on water in Israel/Palestine to consider the nonhuman, as well as human, dependence on water. His focus on the shoal, which contains what Grossman calls a 'non-human human' turned into a 'non-fish fish', indicates the intermingling of human and nonhuman concerns in our shared need for our environment to remain habitable.[17] In this thesis I have left questions of the nonhuman need for water to one side in order to focus, no doubt anthropocentrically, on the extreme water inequality which currently exists between the human inhabitants of Israel/Palestine. At the same time, it is impossible to escape the fact that achieving water justice in Israel/Palestine cannot be separated from the issue of the nonhuman need for, or perhaps even right to, water. Even if the discriminatory permissions on water allocation and extraction enacted in the supposedly temporary Oslo II Interim Accords of 1995 were to be altered in favour of Palestinian water rights, a right to water would mean little if the environment were unable to supply it.

The beginnings of a solution to this question have been offered Astrida Neimanis, as part of what she describes as a 'posthumanist feminist ethics'.[18] Neimanis argues, rightly, that water must be thought of as more than 'an instrumentalized resource for human

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[16] '*Atash (Thirst)*, dir. by Tawfiq Abu Wael (London: Axiom Films, 2004).

[17] Grossman, p. 130; Yaeger, 'Sea Trash, Dark Pools', p. 542.

[18] Astrida Neimanis, 'Alongside the Right to Water, a Posthumanist Feminist Imaginary', *Journal of Human Rights and the Environment*, 5 (2014), 5–24 (p. 6).

flourishing.'[19] By contrast, we must consider ourselves and our human responsibilities within 'a more-than-human aqueous ecology', which Neimanis proposes that we term the 'hydrocommons'.[20] Questions of the rights of nature are being considered more widely by water justice activists, indicating that these issues are not theoretical conceits of purely scholarly concern.[21] This is not, however, the case in Palestinian discourse on water rights, where the rhetoric of water 'theft' remains prevalent, as in Darwish and Barghouti's texts, discussed in Chapter Three, and in Palestine Solidarity Campaign resources.[22] While this language provides a vehicle for the expression of legitimate anger at the historic and ongoing water injustices perpetrated by Israel against Palestinians, it replicates the same perversely anthropocentric attitude towards water which has enabled the exploitation and ultimately, endangerment, of water supplies by Israel. As such, examining the connections and tensions between human and nonhuman needs for water in Israel/Palestine represents a crucial element of further research on this topic, and on water in literature more generally.

This thesis has argued that Israeli and Palestinian literatures contain many texts that can be productively read as 'hydrofictions'. In contrast to existing work, the preceding chapters

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[19] ibid.

[20] ibid., pp. 6, 12.

[21] See, for instance, Maude Barlow, *Our Right to Water: A People's Guide to Implementing the United Nations Recognition of the Right to Water and Sanitation* (Ottawa: Council of Canadians, 2010), pp. 4–5 < http://www.right2water.eu/sites/water/files/righttowater-0611.pdf> [Accessed 20 March 2016]; Jamie Linton, 'The Human Right to What? Water, Rights, Humans, and the Relation of Things', in *The Right to Water*, ed. by Sultana and Loftus, pp. 45–60.

[22] For instance, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, 'Agricultural Produce', *Palestine Solidarity Campaign* <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/campaign/agricultural-produce/> [Accessed 10 September 2015]

have shown the many ways in which water plays a defining role in Israeli and Palestinian cultures and subjectivities, and have demonstrated that the significance of land is not separate from, but in fact closely intertwined with the role of water. By taking a longer historical view, this project has demonstrated the enduring significance of water in Israeli and Palestinian cultures, at the same time as historicising the dominant contemporary perception of water scarcity in Israel/Palestine. While there is clearly an urgent need to respond to the threat posed by climate change to water access in Israel/Palestine, this should also be tempered by an awareness of the ways in which claims of superior environmental management have historically been used by Israel to strengthen its control of land and resources. Crucially, this thesis has demonstrated that, in Israel/Palestine, water is never 'merely' water, in the sense of the familiar, quantifiable compound of $H_2O$. It is far more than that: water is a substance and medium through which social, cultural, geopolitical, economic, relations flow, which is as 'cultural' as it is 'natural', and which must be recognised in this complexity if we are to challenge the practices and assumptions which lead to its overuse, without our calls for ecological responsibility being repurposed into new forms of exclusionary nationalism.

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