

Resisting Development: Land and Labour in Israeli,  
Palestinian and Sri Lankan Literature

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines literary representations which depict the evolution of capitalist development in narratives by Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan writers. This comparative study is the first of its kind to bring the contexts of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka together. Collectively, my chapters analyse a range of literary texts by writers including Yosef Brenner, Sahar Khalifeh, Punyakante Wijenaike and Ambalavaner Sivanandan which explore the separatist ethnonational conflicts. I focus on narratives which critique the dominant discourse of development in their societies, through the formal and literary strategies that the writers utilise such as utopia, realism and melodrama. I argue that the texts I consider draw attention to the impact of uneven development on the content and form of literature in order to resist the current dispensation. This resistance is invaluable when one considers that development continues to be a contentious and divisive issue in Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka and beyond today, yet one that has clear implications for sustainable peace. As a result, my research highlights that literature can play an invaluable role in anticipating, if not imagining, alternatives to the current world order.

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## AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

The work presented in this thesis is my own. A version of material included in Chapter One appeared as “Utopian Zionist Development in Theodor Herzl’s *Altneuland*.” *Green Letters* 17, no. 3 (2013): 223-35. Material from Chapters Three and Four has been published as “Indigenous Development in Sri Lankan Literature: Punyakante Wijenaikē’s *The Waiting Earth*.” *South Asian Review* 33, no.3 (2012): 89-107. This thesis has not previously been submitted for any degree at this or any other university.

## INTRODUCTION

[Postcolonial studies omits to address] the impact of capitalist intrusion on the socioeconomic forms and institutions of precolonial societies, the effects of combined and uneven development structurally, socially, and aesthetically...the transformation of indigenous inequalities into class relationships, the ideologies and aspirations of the anticolonial movements, the continuing dominion of metropolitan capitalism, the class structures and conflicts in postindependence nation-states, and the role of neoliberalism and native compradors in the retreats of postcolonial regimes.

- Benita Parry, "What is Left in Postcolonial Studies?"<sup>1</sup>

### **Uneven Development, World-Systems and World Literature**

This comparative study is the first of its kind to bring the contexts of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka together and discusses the ways in which twentieth- and twenty-first-century capitalist development is imagined through literary representations of land and labour. I identify and investigate the relationship between local, lived experience and the protest against economic policies and political power. Exploring the relationship between resistance and economic development, this thesis examines the literature through which that resistance is articulated in separatist ethnonational conflict. The term 'development' has often been problematically measured in connection to modernity and understood as 'progress', which suggests a linear trajectory from agricultural economy to industrial economy, underdeveloped to developed. This characterisation means the 'development' of society's or nation's

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<sup>1</sup> Benita Parry, "What is Left in Postcolonial Studies?" *New Literary History* 43, no. 2 (Spring 2012): 344.

economies are then measured against the experiences of Europe and the US.<sup>2</sup> In this thesis, I use the term ‘development’ to refer to the specific state policies and practices put in place to stimulate economic growth within the capitalist world-system.

My historical trajectory can be mapped onto the world-systems mode of analysis of the world capitalist system.<sup>3</sup> Stephen Shapiro asserts that world-systems analysis ‘relates political geography to economic history by mapping long waves of economic expansion and contraction caused by the intrinsic falling rate of profit generated by capitalist regimes of accumulation against the spatial reorganisation.’<sup>4</sup> As I explain in more detail below, my study’s theoretical framework draws on the ways that territorial expansion and the power to control resources in colonialism and ethnonational conflict leads to the uneven re-organisation of capital and space. Thus, I agree with Nicholas Brown who argues for ‘establishing the interpretive horizon of twentieth-century literature at capitalism’s internal limit’, at the same time as being wary of conflating one literature with another, because ‘capitalism as a global economic system is predicated on an uneven development that produces uncountable eddies in historical time, the literary unthinkable complexity of contemporary history

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<sup>2</sup> Katie Willis, *Theories and Practices of Development* (London; New York, N.Y.: Routledge, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> The conceptualisation of world-systems analysis can be attributed to Immanuel Wallerstein and others. See Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System* (New York; London: Academic Press, 1974-1989), *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2004), Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century* trans. Siân Reynolds. (London, etc.,: Collins, 1984) and Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London; New York: Verso 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Shapiro, *The Culture and Commerce of the Early American Novel: Reading the Atlantic World-System* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 30.



that thwarts any overhasty universalizing gesture.’<sup>5</sup> However, as world literature ‘bear[s] the impress of the structural totality of that [capitalist] world-system’<sup>6</sup> the literary impact and resistance to uneven development can be compared and contrasted within a world-systemic framework. Although I explore each context separately, I take three defining periods from Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka – the colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial – in order to trace a historical trajectory of capitalism from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present day. Utilising this world-systemic framework, my geographical and historical focus in both Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka explores these periods in order to demonstrate how and why unevenness initially occurs and is then maintained. My aim is to provide a comparative literary framework in order to explore how writers have illustrated what Parry in the epigraph to this introduction refers to as ‘the effects of combined and uneven development structurally, socially, and aesthetically’,<sup>7</sup> indeed a larger space than could be possible within the separate limits of each context’s individual discourse and practice.

I begin with the intensification of capitalism through Zionist settler-colonialism in Mandate Palestine and the imposition of capitalism through British colonial rule in

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<sup>5</sup> Nicholas Brown, *Utopian Generations: The Political Horizon of Twentieth-Century Literature* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 1 and 3.

<sup>6</sup> Michael Niblett, “World-Economy, World Ecology, World Literature,” *Green Letters* 16, no.1 (2012): 19.

<sup>7</sup> Parry, “What is Left in Postcolonial Studies?” 344.

Ceylon<sup>8</sup> during the opening decades of the twentieth century and prior to 1948 when the state of Israel was established and Sri Lanka became independent. The second defining period is the occupation by Israel of the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the *Naksa*<sup>9</sup> or June war of 1967. Israeli control of capital resulted in the Palestinian economy being made dependent on the Israeli economy. In Sri Lanka this same postcolonial period is defined by government-enforced resettlement of Sinhalese peasants from the south and southwest of the island to areas of the northern and eastern dry zone. Both this internal colonisation of dry zone lands and the settler-colonialism of the Israeli occupation in the 1960s and 1970s took place in areas Tamils and Palestinians assert is their homeland. I take my usage of the term ‘postcolonial’ and, thus my application to Sri Lanka and Israel/Palestine, to be the opening years of each context’s Independence period and the state’s economic policies. In so doing, it is also my endeavour to remain conscious of and not neglect the fact that many Palestinians and Tamils continue to experience colonialism in the period I have termed ‘postcolonial’. My distinction between postcolonial and neo-colonial follows Elleke Boehmer who defines the latter term by acknowledging that

confusion is sometimes created by the overlap between the terms postcolonial and *neo-colonial*, both of which refer to the post-independence period. A term from economic theory, current since the 1960s, neo-colonialism signifies the

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<sup>8</sup> Ceylon was colonised from 1505 by the Portuguese, Dutch and British successively. Under Dutch colonial rule, beginning in 1660, the Tamil regions of the North and East were administered as separate political entities from the majority Sinhalese political entities, mainly in the southern and central regions of the island. British colonial rule began in 1796 and by 1815 the whole island was under a single governmental rule. Ceylon became independent in February 1948 and renamed Sri Lanka in 1972. See Neluka Silva, *The Hybrid Island: Culture Crossings and The Invention of Identity in Sri Lanka* (London: Zed Books, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> A term used by the Palestinians and most Arabic speakers to refer to ‘the day of the setback’. The Israeli state refers to this same period as the Six Day War. I am grateful to Ziad Elmarsafy for pointing out this translation and usage.

continuing economic control by the West of the once-colonised world under the guise of political independence. ... the triumphal development of a single world economic system.<sup>10</sup>

I highlight that this neo-colonial period is concomitant with the rise of neoliberalism.

Consequently, the final period I discuss is Israel's and Sri Lanka's adoption of neoliberalism in the late 1970s and the way it continues to influence the present.

David Harvey succinctly characterises neoliberalism 'by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.'<sup>11</sup> In the West Bank neoliberalism has generated increased investment in order to promote economic growth and create better living conditions in urban areas at the expense of overlooking the on-going Israeli occupation. The Sri Lankan state's adoption of neoliberalism created and perpetuated unequal resource allocation and the downturn in the livelihoods of the Tamil communities who live in the north. My critical engagement with literary representations of land and labour in all three periods makes it possible to consider the aesthetic and political similarities and differences in the ways Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan texts depict and resist the impact of uneven development.

### **Colonialism as Spatial Control**

My study's theoretical framework draws on the perception of colonialism as a spatial or geographical project that has been put forward by historical-materialist

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<sup>10</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 9-10. See also Robert Young, who defines neocolonialism as a situation in which 'the ruling class constitutes an elite that operates in complicity with the needs of international capital for its own benefit.' *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 45.

<sup>11</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2. See also Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

geographers, including David Harvey, Edward Soja and Neil Smith.<sup>12</sup> Colonialism entails the uneven geographical re-organisation of capital because territorial expansion and the power to control resources leads to the transformation of space. Specifically, I draw on these geographers' influential perception that social relations have outcomes in and on space, and that the spatial dimension should be a crucial part of analysing social processes.<sup>13</sup> As Doreen Massey argues, '[s]patial distributions and geographical differentiation may be the result of social processes, but they also affect how those processes work. "The spatial" is not just an outcome; it is also part of the explanation.'<sup>14</sup> This reciprocal composition of "social processes" and "the spatial" is the basis of Henri Lefebvre's understanding of conflict:

[s]ociopolitical contradictions are realized spatially. The contradictions of space thus make the contradictions of social relations operative. In other words, spatial contradictions 'express' conflicts between socio-political interests and forces; it is only in space that such conflicts come effectively into play, and in doing so they become contradictions of space.<sup>15</sup>

Lefebvre, like the other geographers, highlights that space can be socially produced, reproduced and that social conflict is at the heart of spatial transformations.

Following these geographers, I focus on how the writers' representations of the spatial strategies and practices regarding the control of land and labour in

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<sup>12</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989); Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London; New York: Verso, 1989) and Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (London: Verso, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> David Harvey, *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference* (Malden MA: Blackwell, 1996)

<sup>14</sup> Doreen Massey, "Introduction: Geography Matters," in *Geography Matters!: A Reader* eds. Doreen Massey and John Allen (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 4.

<sup>15</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 365.

ethnonational conflicts can draw attention to and evaluate processes of social change, uneven development and territorialisation. David Harvey asserts that

the world's spaces were deterritorialised, stripped of their preceding significations, and then reterritorialised according to the convenience of colonial and imperial administration... what the space contained was also fundamentally re-ordered. The map of domination of the world's spaces changed out of all recognition.<sup>16</sup>

The accumulation of capital is spatially differentiated and enables the colonial power to develop at the expense of the exploitation of the colonised. As such, the colonial power's ability to control capital transforms the social relations and development of both the colonised and the coloniser.

Moreover, colonisation of space is highlighted through the actions of the coloniser whose control of land and labour entails the accumulation of capital as well as the destruction of the colonised, indigenous group's territoriality. Territoriality is a strategy that is utilised, often by a state or colonial power, to exercise sovereign control over a delimited area of space including its people and resources.<sup>17</sup> Baruch Kimmerling asserts that '[b]y definition, the territory chosen for colonisation is seen as being "free land," and in most instances as having inexhaustible material potential...the original population...[can be] utilised as a labour force.'<sup>18</sup> In a highly influential text, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, the Guyanese Marxist scholar Walter Rodney asserts that an

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<sup>16</sup> Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, 264.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 19.

<sup>18</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1983), 1.

indispensable component of modern underdevelopment is that it expresses a particular relationship of exploitation, namely the exploitation of one country by another. All of the countries named as “underdeveloped” in the world are exploited by others; and the underdevelopment... is a product of capitalist, imperialist, and colonialist exploitation... societies were developing independently until they were taken over directly or indirectly by the capitalist powers. When that happened, exploitation increased and the export of surplus ensued depriving the societies of the benefit of their natural resources and labour.<sup>19</sup>

Uneven development is connected with inequality, specifically the core-periphery relationship and the dominance of the former and exploitation of the latter. With specific regard to the core-periphery relationship created and sustained by colonisation, James Blaut asserts that ‘[c]apitalism became centred in Europe because colonialism gave Europeans the power to develop their own society and to prevent development from occurring elsewhere.’<sup>20</sup> As such, in spatial terms, uneven patterns of development become inscribed in the control of land, labour and resources. Essentially, unevenness is not just a passive product of society but is also a factor in how society subsequently develops. In volume one of *Capital*, Karl Marx offers an overview of uneven development, which he considers to be an essential characteristic of capitalism. The ‘general law of capitalist accumulation’ stresses the concurrent appearance of concentrations of wealth for those in control of capital and poverty and exploitation for the workers. This capital-labour conflict demonstrates

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<sup>19</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981), 14.

<sup>20</sup> James Blaut. *The Colonizer's Model of the World: Geographical Diffusionism and Eurocentric History* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1993), 206.

the source of uneven development.<sup>21</sup> It is clear, then, the power to produce and control space and development become synonymous.

Marx's ideas were extended in the writings of Leon Trotsky, particularly the first chapter of *History of the Russian Revolution* (1932), where a consideration of Russia led him to the idea of 'a law of combined and uneven development.'<sup>22</sup> This conceptualisation connects with world-systems analysis throughout its transnational focus and explanation of how capitalism generates inequalities of development across the world-system. Trotsky argues that 'combined and uneven development' is derived from the imposition of capitalism which is forcibly connected to pre-existing cultures, forms and structures. In other words, urban industrialisation working in tandem with rural agricultural farming. He argues that the incorporation of pre-capitalist societies into the capitalist world system demonstrates 'the different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps, an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms'<sup>23</sup> and highlights how uneven development is framed through a lens of imperial expansion and globalisation.

In the contemporary world a consideration of the process of unevenness is important because it helps to explain how and why the differentiation between groups within a state came about and continues to exist. As David Harvey argues:

[n]ew territorial divisions of labour and concentrations of  
people and labour power, new resource extraction and

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<sup>21</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* Volume 1, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974), 574-666 . See also Patrick Bond, "Uneven Development?" in *The Encyclopaedia of Political Economy* ed. Philip Anthony O'Hara (London: Routledge, 1999), 1199.

<sup>22</sup> Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 1977)

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

markets form. The geographic landscape which results is not evenly developed but strongly differentiated. “Difference” and “otherness” are *produced* in space through the simple logic of uneven capital investment, a proliferating geographical division of labour, an increasing segmentation of reproductive activities and the rise of spatially ordered (often segregated) social distinctions.<sup>24</sup>

Colonialism depends on the exploitation of groups of people’s labour and unequal relations of production and consumption as well as territoriality. As such, a state that perpetuates uneven development, or neglects to correct it, leads to the entrenchment of differences between different groups. Indeed it is important to recognise that uneven development does not only take place on a global scale between First World and Third<sup>25</sup> evinced through the core-periphery relationship of colonisation. Uneven development also exists within and between groups that reside in a contested territory who assert conflicting claims to territoriality and the sovereignty of the nation-state. As such, David Harvey’s explanation of class-based conflicts in the quotation above can be extended and applied to ethnic groups. Indeed, the relationship between exploitation and underdevelopment, and domination and development, that is manifest in a global setting can often apply to the local setting and domestic relations between ethnic groups.

In Israel/Palestine uneven development has been created and perpetuated by uneven power relations and led to further inequality and separation of the Israelis and Palestinians as well as between Palestinians themselves. To take an obvious

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<sup>24</sup> Harvey, *Justice, Nature*, 295.

<sup>25</sup> I take my usage of ‘First World’ and ‘Third World’ from Elleke Boehmer who asserts that: ‘the collective term *Third World* is deployed, as it was by the Non-Aligned movement at the Bandung Conference in 1955, to signify (an often idealistically constructed) distance from the West. Initially used in French by analogy with ‘third estate’, meaning dispossessed, Third World came to designate those states distinct from the West, the First World, and the Second World, the Soviet bloc, in the context of the Cold War’. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, 9.



example from today, the juxtaposition between wealth in the Israeli settlements and poverty and unemployment of the Palestinian areas is a clear example of the uneven development within this contested territory. Specifically, the situation is bad for Palestinian citizens of Israel, worse for West Bankers, and worst of all for Gazans.

Ibrahim Nasrallah recognises this disparity:

A Palestinian living in the Gaza Strip, for example has experienced different political and social conditions to those experienced by another living on the West Bank. ... The same goes for Palestinians living in the diaspora, or in Jordan, Lebanon or Syria. In fact, I would say there are Palestinian peoples, and not a single Palestinian people. Nevertheless, there is one thing common among them: one dream, one destiny and one homeland.<sup>26</sup>

Following the formation of Israel as a settler-colonial society, then a state, Palestinians initially encountered, and continue to face, uneven access to resources and to political power. In Sri Lanka, from the decades following independence to the present day, a Sinhalese-majority government means that the Tamils,<sup>27</sup> like the Palestinians, encounter uneven power relations and access to resources. Michael Edward Brown identifies ‘discriminatory economic systems’ as a ‘potential sources of internal conflict’, specifically: ‘unequal access to resources such as land and

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<sup>26</sup> Ibrahim Nasrallah, “Writing of Jordan, Dreaming of Palestine,” *The Guardian*, January 29, 2007, accessed September 20, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jan/29/voicesofprotest.jordan>, para.17. See also Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: The Making of a People* (New York: Free Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> The Tamils of Sri Lanka comprise two groups: the indigenous Tamils in the island’s Northern and Eastern regions as well as in the capital of Colombo, and the “plantation Tamils” who were transported from southern India during British colonial rule in order to work the plantations in the central provinces. The Muslims and Christians make up the remainder of Sri Lanka’s population and live within the majority Tamil and Sinhalese communities. See A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: C. Hurst; Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988).

capital, and vast differences in standards of living.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, one can argue that uneven development is often seen to fragment societies and aggravate ethnonational conflicts.

### **The Interconnection of Development and Nationalism**

My project argues that an examination of the transformation of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka since the turn of the twentieth century reveals the ways in which development and nationalism inscribed themselves in space. In the contexts of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka, the spatial dimension and projection of ethnic groups’ national imaginary or ‘ethnoscapes’, arises from the importance and meaning each ethnic group assigns to geographical space. I am drawing on Anthony Smith’s definition of an ethnoscape as ‘[t]he process by which certain kinds of memory are attached to particular territories so that... [they] become historic homelands, [which] can be called the ‘territorialization of memory.’”<sup>29</sup> There is a correlation between the way that the *Mahavamsa* and other Buddhist chronicles and the Torah in Judaism are used by the Sinhalese-Buddhists and Zionists respectively in order to gain historical legitimacy for their claims to being a “chosen people”<sup>30</sup>, and the belief that these groups are the sole, exclusive heirs with a national homeland. Both

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<sup>28</sup> Michael E. Brown, “The Causes of Internal Conflict,” in *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, ed. Michael Brown, Owen R. Cote, et al. (Cambridge, Mass.; London: MIT Press, 2001), 10-1.

<sup>29</sup> Anthony D. Smith, “Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism,” *International Affairs* 72, no. 3 (1996): 453-4. His conceptualization of ‘territorialization of memory’ is taken from Ernest Renan, *Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?* (Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1882)

<sup>30</sup> Whilst employed as agriculture minister, future Prime Minister Don Stephen Senanayake argued of the Sinhalese: ‘we are one blood and one nation. We are a chosen people.’ *Ceylon Daily News*, April 17 1939. As cited in Kumari Jayawardena, *Ethnic and Class Conflicts* (Dehiwala, Sri Lanka: Centre for Social Analysis, 1985), 53.

groups also draw on stories from their religious texts about kings who conquered the homeland. In the context of Israel/Palestine, Joseph Massad argues that:

Zionism's revival of Jewish history was in fact a revival of Hebrew geography. Jewish historical memory... was transfigured through Zionist hermeneutic filters into geographic memory. The Zionist celebration of the ancient Hebrew kings rather than the Hebrew prophets was not accidental. It is, after all, the Hebrew kings, not the prophets, who conquered land and expanded territory that Zionism now claims as its own. It is this collapse of Jewish history into Hebrew geography that prefigures Zionism's self-legitimizing claims.<sup>31</sup>

The interdependence of Jewish history and geography is essential for the claim to a homeland in the land of their ancestors, and as Massad observes here, Biblical kings are connected with seizing this area by force. Likewise, in Sinhalese-Buddhist discourse, kings figure prominently in the ethnonational discourse. David Little argues that Buddhist sacred texts depict the Sinhalese as 'a people destined with a sacred mission'<sup>32</sup> and

the Mahavamsa tells the story of Duttagamani, the Buddhist king of the second century BCE. ... as a king whose only goal was to overcome Tamil domination, perceived as alien to the island, and to establish Buddhist domination over the sacred Sinhalese territory. This story vindicates and sanctifies the claims of Sinhala Buddhists to exclusive control of Sri Lanka.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Joseph Massad, "The "Post-Colonial" Colony: Time, Space, and Bodies in Israel/Palestine," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies* eds. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks. (Durham, [NC]; London: Duke University Press, 2000), 338.

<sup>32</sup> David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1994), 43.

<sup>33</sup> Atalia Omer and Jason Springs, *Religious Nationalism: A Reference Handbook* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 36. See also Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley, etc.: California University Press, 1994) and Walpola Rahula, *History of Buddhism in Ceylon*, 2d ed. (Colombo: M. D. Gunasena, 1966).

Once again, kings figure prominently in Sinhalese nationalist rhetoric, enabling the Sinhalese to legitimate the control of their professed homeland in the past, present and future.

Many critics draw on the striking parallels to Benedict Anderson's conceptualisation of how the construction of a national past is a common feature of all efforts to create a sense of national community.<sup>34</sup> However, while Anderson has a rather 'benign' notion of a national past,<sup>35</sup> Anthony Smith does not. Smith argues that nations and proto-nations 'confine the role of nationalism to that of discovery and interpretation of the past for the mobilisation of the present.'<sup>36</sup> He continues by asserting that:

nationalists who want to disseminate the concept of the nation will make liberal use of elements from the ethnic past, where they appear to answer to present needs and preoccupations. The present creates the past in its own image. So modern nationalist intellectuals will freely select, invent and mix traditions in their quest for the imagined political community.<sup>37</sup>

In other words, the historic "glorious" past is drawn upon in order to create an 'unbroken' continuity with the present. However, the construction of the present neglects or omits other ethnic groups who have alternative national pasts.

Consequently, this imagined present is often out of sync with the material conditions and circumstances of reality.

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<sup>34</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, NY: Verso, 1991), 187-206.

<sup>35</sup> Laura Chrisman, "Nationalism and Postcolonial Studies," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies* ed. Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 193.

<sup>36</sup> Anthony D. Smith, "Gastronomy or Geology? The Role of Nationalism in the Reconstruction of Nations," *Nations and Nationalism* 1, no. 1 (1994): 17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 18.

Additionally, in order to substantiate these contentions, the states created, and subsequently maintained, a close association between national history and the practice of development. The two primary factors which figure prominently in evocations of the national past are the national homeland as the heartland of their civilisation and the individuals who work the land. Ilan Pappé recognises that for the Zionists ‘discursive attributions to the Bible and agriculture were prominent. The holy book and the plough appear literally and visually in the speeches of the leading members and indirectly in the daily discourse of the grassroots members.’<sup>38</sup>

Similarly in Sri Lanka, Sinhalese politicians ‘equated the colonization of the Dry Zone with a restoration of the greatness of the ancient Sinhalese Buddhist kingdom. The UNP [United National Party] consciously evoked the image of an idyllic Buddhist past in which Dry Zone irrigation provided the resources for a prosperous civilization.’<sup>39</sup> Nationalism and history re-imagined, then, came also to be fused into the two groups’ respective forms of development. Development refers to the discourses and practices that were undertaken in order to ensure the nation’s economic growth and addressed two specific yet inter-related areas: agricultural production and territorial control. As Anthony Smith recognises:

any revival of Jewry’s fortunes...take[s] place through settlement and agricultural return to the homeland, the rich ‘soils’ of which bore such creative fruit; Zionism and *aliya* are the prerequisites of normalization and regeneration, but they are closely linked to Western social and political orientation with definite territorial and political consequences

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<sup>38</sup> Ilan Pappé, “Zionism as Colonialism: A Comparative View of Diluted Colonialism in Asia and Africa,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107, no.4 (2008): 624.

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Peebles, “Colonization and Ethnic Conflict in the Dry Zone of Sri Lanka,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no.1 (February 1990): 41.

and a clear conception of heroic models in the kings and judges (military leaders and statesmen) of old.<sup>40</sup>

It is the interdependence of these two elements, agricultural production and exclusionary nationalism, that enabled the discourse of development to emerge in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka.

In these contexts, nationalism becomes exclusionary when the Jewish and Sinhalese are equated with the nation-state, and the Palestinians and Tamils experience discrimination. Oren Yiftachel characterises this ethnocentric motivation and describes states that pursue the privileging of the citizens of the majority ethnic group as an 'ethnocracy' which is 'driven, first and foremost, by a sense of collective entitlement of the majority group to control "its" state and "its" homeland.'<sup>41</sup> Both the Tamils and the Palestinians articulate competing claims to the territory and homeland. While the Tamils claim an ancestral or traditional homeland in and territoriality over the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka which they refer to as Eelam, the state in the form of the Sinhalese-majority government from 1948 to the present day maintains that this is a part of the homeland of an ancient Sinhalese population and, thus exercises territoriality over the whole of the island. The Tamil leadership believed, and continue to believe, that the only way that they can exercise legitimate territorial control in the area that they allege is their homeland is through separatism and partition. In their 1951 manifesto, the Tamil Federal Party argued that:

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<sup>40</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 205.

<sup>41</sup> Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 37.

The Tamil-speaking people of Sri Lanka constitute a nation distinct from the Sinhalese by every fundamental test of nationhood; firstly that of a separate historical past in the island at least as ancient and glorious as that of the Sinhalese... and finally by reason of their territorial habitation of definite areas.<sup>42</sup>

Since the 2009 defeat, Tamils continue to claim the right to self-determination in their homeland but the demand and recognition of this entitlement continues to be undermined by the Sri Lankan state and the international community. Indeed as Krisna Saravanamuttu argues, for Tamils, “post-war development” has become another form of counter-insurgency warfare, whereby Sinhala settlements, state-led militarization and the open gerrymandering of constituencies all threaten the Tamils’ historic relationship to their homeland.<sup>43</sup>

In the memories of Palestinians, 1948 is the year that relates to the Palestinian *Nakba* or catastrophe when over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their homeland.<sup>44</sup> The *Naksa* or war in June 1967 enabled Israel to control the Palestinian people and the resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT)<sup>45</sup> through military rule. The occupation enabled to Israel control Palestinian land and labour. Specifically, Palestinian labour exportation to Israel and the surrounding Gulf States

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<sup>42</sup> Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi, “The Case for a Federal Constitution for Ceylon,” (Colombo: Illankai Tamil Arasu Kadchi, 1951), as cited in E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 6.

<sup>43</sup> Krisna Saravanamuttu, “Israel Advises Sri Lanka On Slow-Motion Genocide,” *The Electronic Intifada*, July 30, 2013, accessed January 8, 2014, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-advises-sri-lanka-slow-motion-genocide/12644>. See also Nirmanusan Balasundaram, “Sri Lanka: The Intentions Behind The Land Grabbing Process,” *Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka*, April, 30, 2013, accessed January 8, 2014, <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/2012-01-30-09-31-17/politics-a-economy/314-sri-lanka-the-intentions-behind-the-land-grabbing-process>

<sup>44</sup> Nur Masalha, *Catastrophe Remembered: Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees* (London: Zed Books, 2005). See also Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> The term “Occupied Palestinian Territories” or OPT is used to refer to the areas of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem which have a majority Palestinian population and were occupied by Israel in 1967.

caused the subsequent decline of agricultural land because agricultural labourers sought better paid positions out with the OPT. This land was also confiscated for the construction of Israeli settlements.<sup>46</sup> Despite the fact that these settlements are illegal under international law, Israel continues to authorise new constructions which makes the separation of Palestinians and Jewish settlers even more difficult and, thus negatively compromises any form of partition of the land through the two-state solution.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, although the Oslo Accords in 1993 ended direct military rule in some parts of the OPT and transferred civilian rule to the Palestinian Authority, Israel continued to pursue the Zionist objective of gaining and retaining control of territory. Israel continued to control Palestinian space (restructured and reorganised into three distinct areas, A, B and C) and the economic sphere.<sup>48</sup> In 2012, the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, stressed that ‘[t]here is no homeland for us except Palestine, and there is no land for us but Palestine.’<sup>49</sup> Both the Palestinians and Tamil leadership, as well as individuals ‘on the ground’, continue to assert their right to their homeland and appeal the international community. Krisna Saravanamuttu highlights the similarities between the two groups in the past up to the present day:

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<sup>46</sup> Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>47</sup> For the challenges surrounding the ‘two-state solution’ and advantages of the ‘one-state solution’, see Ali Abunimah, *One Country: A Bold Proposal to End the Israeli-Palestinian Impasse* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Virginia Tilley, *The One-State Solution: A Breakthrough for Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Deadlock* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005)

<sup>48</sup> Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, “Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 6-25. See also Raja Khalidi and Sahar Taghdisi-Rad, *The Economic Dimensions of Prolonged Occupation: Continuity and Change in Israeli Policy Towards the Palestinian Economy* (New York and Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2009).

<sup>49</sup> Mahmoud Abbas, “Statement by H. E. Mahmoud Abbas before United Nations General Assembly.” General Assembly debate 27 September 2012. Available at: <[http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/PS\\_en.pdf](http://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/PS_en.pdf)>.



Both Palestinians and Tamils have been subjected to a process of settler-based colonialism. ... Israel offered advice to Sri Lanka as it built Sinhala-only armed settlements in the eastern province, which aimed to create buffer zones around Tamil-majority populations. The strategy employed was the same as Israel's in the West Bank: to destroy the local population's claim to national existence and render invalid any political solution based on popular sovereignty. Just like in Palestine, land seizures and settlement programs in Sri Lanka are fragmenting the Tamil people's national and social coherence throughout their historic homeland in the north and east of the island.<sup>50</sup>

The Sri Lankan and Israeli states' original and on-going settler-colonialism, as Saravanamuttu observes here, is the primary cause of 'fragmenting' both the Tamils' and the Palestinians' homeland.

### **Literature and Development**

My approach to the texts I consider is to investigate the different ways that they depict not just why, but how, individuals and societies were affected by and responded to development discourses and practices. 'Imaginative literature', Cheryl McEwan asserts, 'can advance understandings of development and how it is received, experienced and articulated'<sup>51</sup> in different contexts. This project illustrates the importance of literature in exploring the relationship between development and resistance in ethnonational conflict. Conflicts over resources often divide ethnic groups within a nation. I focus on the lives, lived experiences and livelihoods of those who depict a 'bottom up' perspective and experience of development. Consequently, I take a different approach from other literary studies that neglect a context's relationship between geography and literary representation in favour of

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<sup>50</sup> Saravanamuttu, "Israel Advises Sri Lanka..."

<sup>51</sup> Cheryl McEwan, *Postcolonialism and Development* (London: Routledge, 2009), 161.

abstractions like ‘third space.’<sup>52</sup> Similar abstractions are evident in recent years, where the reconsideration of space in the humanities and social sciences has been marked by the so-called ‘spatial turn.’<sup>53</sup> The field of postcolonial studies has not been exempt, as recent studies including Sara Upstone’s *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel*, Andrew Teverson’s and Sara Upstone’s edited collection *Postcolonial Spaces: The Politics of Place in Contemporary Culture* attest. However, these studies often neglect to take into consideration how geographical space is controlled, transformed and re-transformed, and the interrogation of and resistance to such processes, by stressing the importance of locales, including the home or the city. As a consequence, this idea of being independent of geography, and a lack of specificity, can often lead to abstractions like Sara Upstone’s term ‘post-space’ which she defines as ‘interrogatory chaos ... where a chaotic sense of the spatial on all scales becomes a resource towards the re-visioning of the postcolonial position in society.’<sup>54</sup> David James aptly articulates the dangers of Upstone using such terms by warning: ‘proceed with caution with literary-critical uses of spatiality, forever susceptible as space is to becoming unanchored from historical actuality.’<sup>55</sup> My project’s examination of space is attentive to the ‘historical actuality’ and the ways it can be produced, consumed and transformed by political and economic

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<sup>52</sup> A term used by both Homi K. Bhabha, “Dissemination: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in *Nation and Narration* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 291-223 and Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real and Imagined Places* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 169

<sup>53</sup> This reconsideration of the spatial dimension in scholarship can be attributed to Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 22-27 and Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

<sup>54</sup> Sara Upstone, *Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 15.

<sup>55</sup> David James, “Rev. of Spatial Politics in the Postcolonial Novel, by Sara Upstone,” *The Review of English Studies* 61, no. 249 (2010): 329.

forces. I also offer a necessary corrective to some previous research within the humanities that explores the geographical space of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka and focuses on 'land rhetoric'. This rhetoric, according to Raja Shehadeh, refers to the highly emotional relationship to the land that is put forward by the elite of the proto-state and/or state and is often internalised by the inhabitants.<sup>56</sup> There is a need, Shehadeh acknowledges, for this process to be resisted and disputed.<sup>57</sup> However, there is a need to be wary because the term creates a pejorative view of land and identity. And indeed, for Palestinians, Tamils and other groups, the rhetoric is intrinsic to anchoring historic claims to the land and national liberation. In other words, cementing their presence on the land when it is danger of being erased by other competing 'land rhetorics'. Studies that consider the literary representations of space and place too often focus on the symbolic, which at best can be said to be too simplistic, and at worst inaccurate. This simplicity and inaccuracy is derived from the fact that such studies often fail to take into consideration the material conditions of lived experiences in these contexts.<sup>58</sup>

My study builds on Timothy Brennan's assertion that nation-states are 'imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in

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<sup>56</sup> I am indebted to Barbara Parmenter who points out Shehadeh's term in this way to highlight the Israelis' and Palestinians' emotional attachment to the land and home, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>57</sup> Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way* (London: Quartet Books, 1982)

<sup>58</sup> Examples include Melanie A. Murray, *Island Paradise: The Myth an Examination of Contemporary Caribbean and Sri Lankan Writing* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009), Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011), Barbara Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994). Symptomatic of 'land rhetoric', Neumann describes the Jewish settlers' 'desire' for the land in emotional, even erotic terms: 'The Zionist narrative of many halutzim [pioneers] is a story of falling in love romantically, even sexually, with the Land of Israel' (52). The pioneers cultivated the land because they 'saw removing earth as another way to become intimate with and penetrate the Land' (55).

which imaginative literature plays a decisive role.’<sup>59</sup> I contend that the writers’ creation of ‘cultural fictions’, specifically literary representations, can be considered not only reflections of the outside world by mimetically representing spaces but also ‘play a decisive role’ in producing alternate ways of seeing the world. I explore how Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan literature use not only content but form to contest the historic and current social order. As Theodor Adorno asserts ‘what makes artworks socially significant is content that articulates itself in formal structures.’<sup>60</sup> The formal strategies that I consider in my chapters include utopia, melodrama, epic and realism. The value of these writers’ work lies in how not only their content but formal strategies ‘compel readers to engage with the socio-political landscape *outside* of the narrative.’<sup>61</sup> This engagement or ‘worldly’ commitment, Neil Lazarus argues, encourages readers to recognise a writer’s ‘active searching out and presentation of connections, contrasts and alternatives that shade necessarily and ineluctably into the framing and articulation of political demands.’<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the recognition of a writer’s political engagement is a salient feature of resistance literature. Barbara Harlow asserts that “Western” critics often misinterpret works of “resistance literature” by solely assessing them in terms of their aesthetic value, rather than in terms of their success as not only records of resistance but as part of the struggle. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that such writing not

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<sup>59</sup> Timothy Brennan, “The National Longing for Form,” in *Nation and Narration* ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), 49.

<sup>60</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 327

<sup>61</sup> Margo V. Perkins, *Autobiography as Activism: Three Black Women of the Sixties* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 25.

<sup>62</sup> Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 199.

only constitutes ‘a political and politicised activity’<sup>63</sup>, but also deconstructs ‘the very institution of literature as an autonomous arena of activity.’<sup>64</sup> I argue that form and content are used to present a critique or alternative to the current dispensation by resisting the creation and maintenance of inequalities derived from uneven development. As such, my project takes a different approach from literary studies that make a separation between a writer’s political engagement and their aesthetic/literary strategies. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, in their *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, are explicit about the perceived disjunction between these two elements:

postcolonial *writers* have made a valuable contribution to ongoing debates about social and economic development in many regions of the formerly colonised world. Their contributions have consisted for the most part of protest literature, sometimes in its most overt forms such as non-fictional reportage and political pamphletary, but also in more indirect forms such as novels, poetry and plays. The primary function of much of this literature has been that of global consciousness-raising in a wide variety of (post)colonial contexts in which the twin demands of social and environmental justice are conspicuously displayed. However, to label such writing as either ‘advocacy’ or ‘activism’ risks undermining its aesthetic complexities – one of several points where postcolonial criticism meets ecocriticism, which is similarly attentive to the negotiations between political imperative and aesthetic play.<sup>65</sup>

I challenge Huggan and Tiffin’s reference to ‘indirect forms such as novels’ because it suggests that a writer’s protest is inherent in the subtext of the novel. In the texts that I discuss below, I interpret ‘social and economic development’ as a ‘conscious

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<sup>63</sup> Barbara Harlow, *Resistance Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1987), 28.

<sup>64</sup> Barbara Harlow, *Barred: Women, Writing, and Political Detention* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1992) 4.

<sup>65</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010), 33.

and overt'<sup>66</sup> subject matter when one recognises that the narrative itself is centred on the effects of development on the local, lived experiences of communities.

References to 'negotiations between political imperative and aesthetic play' downplays how a writer's use of formal and literary strategies can stage an engagement with and resistance to state policy. A nuanced reading of the texts in this thesis is attuned to examining how the form and the content work in tandem to protest against development.

The focus of my thesis is on narrative fiction, which includes novels, short stories and memoir, because I agree with Barbara Harlow who asserts that in resistance literature 'narrative, unlike poetry perhaps, provides a more developed historical analysis of the circumstances of the economic, political and cultural domination and repression.'<sup>67</sup> In other words, in narrative fiction the writer can provide readers with information about the social, political and economic conditions in contexts outside Europe and North America. Another reason I focus solely on narrative fiction to the exclusion of poetry and drama is because 'these forms [novels and memoirs] are more likely than poetry or other non-narrative forms to be read'<sup>68</sup> by international audiences. In addition to exploring the impact of uneven development on the content and form of literature, I examine the reception and audience of this literature in both its domestic and international context. I account for the different critical responses to the texts which demonstrate the divergent reception in the domestic context and in

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<sup>66</sup> Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text* 15 (Autumn 1986): 80.

<sup>67</sup> Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 78.

<sup>68</sup> Anna Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 7.

the metropole as well as the conflicting reactions from readers within the academy and those outside.

The writers that I am looking at focus on lived experiences of uneven development at certain historical moments from the perspective of the ‘fragments’<sup>69</sup> of society. I am drawing on Gyanendra Pandey’s concept of the ‘fragment’, which refers to both historical accounts retrieved from ‘subaltern’ groups and to the groups themselves. The Subaltern Studies project, formed by Ranajit Guha in 1982, to retrieve a ‘history from below’, has been highly influential on the establishment and development of postcolonial studies.<sup>70</sup> Gyan Prakash identifies subalternity with a ‘position of critique’ which is derived from a ‘recalcitrant difference that arises not outside but inside elite discourses to exert pressure on forces and forms that subordinate it.’<sup>71</sup> It is important to bear in mind that in both Prakash and Pandey’s conceptualisation, the fragment is not a literary strategy. My approach makes a link between literature that speaks for the marginalised and the literary representation of the lived experiences of the fragments of society.

I contend that in literature these detailed representations of lived experience emphasise how certain historical periods of uneven development are lived, understood and experienced on the level of both the individual and society. By representing the lived experiences of individuals and societies that have differed

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<sup>69</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, “In Defence of the Fragment: Writing about Hindu-Muslim Riots in India Today,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 26, no. 11/12 (March 1991): 559-561+563+565-567+569+571-572.

<sup>70</sup> The Subaltern Studies project published a series of edited collections entitled *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society*, from 1982 until 1999.

<sup>71</sup> Gyan Prakash, “Subaltern Studies as Postcolonial Criticism,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no.5 (1994): 1481.

significantly from their own, the writers emphasize their responsibility to engage with the individuals and communities that are affected by development yet often marginalized or unrecognized in Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan literature. The writers' political commitment also articulates their resistance to the state's policies and the historic and prevailing social order. Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, in her study of resistance literature in African and South Asian texts, asserts the importance of alternative representations:

unearthing exclusions (including suppressed accounts and/or perspectives) in dominant accounts/formations to (a) reveal lacunae that in turn undermine the dominant's invincibility; (b) insinuate a different, sometimes oppositional perspective, because the dominant is re-played from the point of view of the excluded – here we move into the arena of what could be called alternative or counter representation.<sup>72</sup>

I agree with Needham that exploring a 'bottom-up' perspective of the land and labour in these contexts creates an 'alternative or counter representation' of development that disputes the official 'top-down' discourse and practice.<sup>73</sup> By contesting the exclusionary nationalism and the discourse and practice of development, these texts anticipate, if not imagine, a possible world where land and labour can be transformed and replaced with alternative development practices and nation-building.

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<sup>72</sup> Anuradha Dingwaney Needham, *Using the Master's Tools: Resistance and the Literature of the African and South Asian Diasporas* (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 52.

<sup>73</sup> Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin argue that development 'is primarily associated... with those top-down forms of economic management which, while retaining ties to the history of colonialism, are more obviously bound to the neocolonialist imperatives of global corporate commerce and the post-independence state.' *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 52.



## Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka and Postcolonial Studies

Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka often share a similar unrepresented or underrepresented status within postcolonial studies. I offer a fresh look at the status of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka in the field of postcolonial literary studies within the UK and the US. The relationship between postcolonial scholarship and Palestine has been fraught. This troubled connection is highlighted by Patrick Williams who decries: ‘the general absence of questions of Palestine from the postcolonial agenda.’<sup>74</sup> This ‘absence’ can in part be linked to the fact that both academics and Palestinian writers and cultural producers face difficulties that Edward Said<sup>75</sup> terms the ‘permission to narrate’<sup>76</sup> when they decide to explore or depict Palestine. Anna Ball and Patrick Williams acknowledge precisely these ‘difficulties’ created by the ‘permission to narrate’ when they assert:

[t]heoretically, the “nowhere” of Palestine relates particularly to the discipline which has, up until now, failed to address it, namely postcolonial studies. ... It is important to recognize that it is also a situation which is indeed slowly beginning to change, though this is much more a case of individual scholars intervening where they can, rather than a more systematic attempt to address a lamentable absence.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Patrick Williams, “‘Outlines of a better world’ Rerouting Postcolonialism,” in *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium* eds. Janet Wilson, Cristina Sandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh (London; New York: Routledge, 2010), 91.

<sup>75</sup> Edward Said had an uneasy relationship with Postcolonial studies – on the one hand, many people associate *Orientalism* with the founding of the field, on the other hand Said himself didn’t really see himself as a Postcolonial “specialist”. For an account of how Said kept embracing and abandoning various positions throughout his career, see H. Aram Veesser, *Edward Said: The Charisma of Criticism* (New York; London: Routledge, 2010)

<sup>76</sup> Edward Said, “Permission to Narrate,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no.3 (1984): 27-48.

<sup>77</sup> Patrick Williams and Anna Ball, “Where is Palestine?” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50, no. 2 (2014): 128. Anna Ball also draws on the ‘restrictions’ created by the ‘permission to narrate’ in her monograph, *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 1.

This silencing and occlusion of Palestinian self-representation is slowly being redressed, particularly in the UK, as evidenced by the work of Anna Ball, Anna Bernard and Patrick Williams. Specifically, 2014 marked the publication of a special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* devoted solely to ‘Palestine and the Postcolonial: Culture, Creativity, Theory.’<sup>78</sup> However within the academy there is also the persistent difficulty over whether either or neither of the terms “colonial” or “postcolonial” are applicable to Palestine. Although classifying the space may be complex, Joseph Massad neatly sums up that ‘to call it *Palestine* [rather than Israel or the Occupied Palestinian Territories] is to refer to it as a colonized space in both the pre-1948 and post-1948 periods and to signal its continued appellation as such for a postcolonial period still to come.’<sup>79</sup> Patrick Williams takes this idea one step further by suggesting that using the term postcolonial when referring to Palestine and other regions signals ‘not in any sense an achieved condition, but...an anticipatory discourse, looking forward to a better and as yet unrealized world.’<sup>80</sup> The Palestinian texts considered in this thesis illustrate such an ‘anticipatory discourse’ in the way that their form and content anticipate, if not imagine, ‘a better and as yet unrealized world’ where the Israeli settler-colonialism and occupation is resisted.

The two, albeit limited, ways that Palestine appears in postcolonial studies are highlighted by Anna Bernard who draws on the figure of the “present-absentee.” Bernard argues that the Palestinian appears as the ‘abject’ refugee which is reflected

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<sup>78</sup> Williams and Ball, “Where is Palestine?”.

<sup>79</sup> Massad, “The ‘Post-colonial’ Colony,” 312.

<sup>80</sup> Williams, ““Outlines of a better world’...,” 93.

in Homi Bhabha's work<sup>81</sup> or neglected within the paradigm of diaspora<sup>82</sup> and consequently means that 'the scholarship - apart, of course, from Said's - and the literature remains tangential to the field.'<sup>83</sup> In other words, the lived experiences of Palestinians in Palestine and how they engage with the on-going Israeli occupation often gets dismissed. Bart Moore-Gilbert criticises the occlusion of Palestinians in postcolonial writing and criticism and describes his own participation in this avoidance as being associated with 'unfounded anxieties about being misunderstood as anti-Semitic, a charge which the Zionist lobby seeks programmatically to confuse with legitimate criticism of Israel as a colonial polity.'<sup>84</sup> As a consequence of unfair, but not always unfounded, fears of being charged with anti-Semitism, Israel has been occluded from postcolonial studies. This occlusion means that the comparison of Israel with other colonial powers rarely takes place and means the state is often regarded as an exception. However, I agree with Rebecca Stein who notes: 'the mapping of Israel/Palestine onto the global and diachronic geography of the postcolonial refuses to abide by the terms of Israeli exceptionalism.'<sup>85</sup> Examining Israel with Palestine and Sri Lanka, my study challenges Israeli exceptionalism or uniqueness by offering insights into the similarities as well as differences between

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<sup>81</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 236.

<sup>82</sup> Anna Bernard, "Palestine and Postcolonial Studies." Paper presented at London Debates 2010, University of London, May 13-15. Accessed January 29, 2012. On line at [http://events.sas.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/postgraduate/Papers\\_London\\_Debates\\_2010/Bernard\\_Palestine\\_and\\_postcolonial\\_studies.pdf](http://events.sas.ac.uk/fileadmin/documents/postgraduate/Papers_London_Debates_2010/Bernard_Palestine_and_postcolonial_studies.pdf), 1-2.

<sup>83</sup> Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Life-Writing: Culture, Politics and Self-Representation* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 113.

<sup>85</sup> Rebecca L. Stein, "Ballad of the Sad Café" in *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* eds. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham [N.C.]; London: Duke University Press, 2005), 332.

the contexts and justifies Israel's place within postcolonial studies. Specifically, in line with Anna Bernard, who argues for "[t]he idea of a relational history of Israel/Palestine... [which] allows for a dialectical understanding of the changing relationship between the two national formations over time, as opposed to the more familiar insistence in metropolitan popular media and culture on a static dialogism or 'balance',<sup>86</sup> I stress the need for the two literatures to be read together as a way to engage with the ongoing evolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Within the specialism of South Asian literary studies, Indian literature overshadows Sri Lanka in terms of scholars in field, research and publication. As such, the dearth of full-length monographs<sup>87</sup> devoted solely to Sri Lanka from writers based in the UK and US attests to the fact that in the metropole postcolonial literary studies has, for the most part, failed to offer a sustained engagement with Sri Lanka. Sharae Deckard refers to a possible reason for this absence is the fact that 'in Sri Lanka, the island in the Indian subcontinent's shadow, the canon of colonial and postcolonial literature is still under consideration.'<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Sangeeta Ray acknowledges:

[t]he reification of India as the post-colonial site. ...this ascension of India as a privileged archaeological ground for numerous explorations has, perhaps unwittingly, produced a significant gap in the production of knowledge about the

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<sup>86</sup> Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 12-3.

<sup>87</sup> Two notable exceptions: Maryse Jayasuriya, *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009* (Lanham; Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012) and Minoli Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* (London: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>88</sup> Sharae Deckard, *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 23.

other spaces included in the Indian subcontinent such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal.<sup>89</sup>

In the case of university departments, undergraduate and graduate syllabi regularly omit or pay cursory attention to Sri Lanka. A perusal of the reading lists for many of the institutions that offer postcolonial courses in their literature departments indicates that there is little or no reference, at the time of writing, to Sri Lanka. Unsurprisingly, given the facts above, India is well represented, with Salman Rushdie's texts appearing on many course outlines. Although, the tone of Neil Lazarus's assertion that 'there is in a strict sense only one author in the postcolonial literary canon. That author is Salman Rushdie'<sup>90</sup> is clearly tongue-in-cheek, it does highlight the abundant research on Rushdie's texts in postcolonial studies. Another reason for the omission within postcolonial studies is linked to the status of Sri Lanka as an island. Elizabeth DeLoughrey picks up on this idea of neglect when she asserts that 'there is an ongoing colonial legacy of dismissing islands as negligible sites of cultural production. In fact, scholars working in postcolonial island literature studies may experience limited access to book publishing due to a presumed lack of a "market" – to many editors, small islands equate small readerships.'<sup>91</sup> With the exception of the Caribbean and the Pacific Islands, this dismissal rings especially true with regard to Sri Lanka. However, I argue that Sri Lanka, similarly to Palestine and Israel warrants a far more prominent place in postcolonial studies than they have previously experienced, because although both are peripheral to the field, more

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<sup>89</sup> Sangeeta Ray, "Memory, Identity, Patriarchy: Projecting a Past in the Memoirs of Sara Suleri and Michael Ondaatje," in *Postcolonial Literary Studies: The First Thirty Years*, ed. Robert P. Marzec (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 320.

<sup>90</sup> Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 22.

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Introduction: Of Oceans and Islands," *New Literatures Review*, Special Issue: Postcolonial Islands, 47–48 (2011): 2-3.

sustained engagement with Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan literature can provide us with new and diverse ways of considering the postcolonial field as a whole.

In addition, there have been wider critiques of postcolonial studies, which call for a more materialist approach to the field. One of the most vocal proponents of this methodology has been Benita Parry, whose *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* stresses the need to re-engage with conflict and resistance because ‘[t]he abandonment of historical and social explanation was soon apparent in the work of those postcolonial critics [Bhabha and Spivak] who disengaged colonialism from historical capitalism and re-presented it for study as a cultural event.’<sup>92</sup> In a more recent article, almost ten years later, Parry continues to decry certain current postcolonial studies scholarship<sup>93</sup> by asking:

what prompts the festive announcement that in the twenty-first century we have passed from resistance and independence struggles to “postcolonial empowerment,” when the systemic incursions of the core capitalist nations include military interventions to effect regime change, and a majority in the postcolonial world continue to know dispossession, impoverishment, and mass unemployment?<sup>94</sup>

The lack of engagement with capitalism by postcolonial critics is elaborated on by Parry in the first epigraph to this introduction when she refers to the historical trajectory of capitalism and uneven development in the colonial, postcolonial and

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<sup>92</sup> Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004), 4.

<sup>93</sup> Parry singles out the essays of Dipesh Chakrabarty, “Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change,” *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 1-18 and Robert Young, “Postcolonial Remains,” *New Literary History* 43, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 19-42, that had appeared in the journal’s previous volume.

<sup>94</sup> Parry, “What is Left in Postcolonial Studies?” 343.

neo-colonial periods that I explored above and which my project illuminates.<sup>95</sup> The need to redress the occlusion of the impact the imposition and enduring development of capitalism has on colonial and postcolonial societies is also advocated in Vivek Chibber's *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (2013).<sup>96</sup> As my co-organisers and I wrote in the call for papers to the Postcolonial Studies Association 'Resources of Resistance: Production, Consumption and Transformation' conference: 'recent interventions within the field of postcolonial studies have begun to take up world-systems analysis' in order to understand how and why the historical trajectory of capitalism is represented and resisted in literature and other cultural production.<sup>97</sup> This thesis pays attention to contexts where capitalism and uneven development are central to the inhabitants' lived experiences.

My main reason for arguing that Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka should be included in postcolonial studies is connected to how and why postcolonial studies came to be a part of the metropolitan institution. I argue that Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka should be studied within the field of postcolonial studies because this multi-disciplinary field was founded out of the necessity for 'subaltern' or the silenced, occluded voices of the colonised being redressed.<sup>98</sup> This factor about the 'subaltern'

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<sup>95</sup> Likewise, Neil Lazarus has insisted that with 'the established postcolonial discussion...the term 'capitalism' has tended to be conspicuous largely by its absence...and the term 'imperialism' has tended to be mobilised in description of a process of cultural and epistemological subjugation, whose material preconditions have been referred to only glancingly, if at all.' *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, 17.

<sup>96</sup> Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>97</sup> Hannah Boast, Rebekah Cumpsty, Lucy Potter and Nicola Robinson, "Call for Papers," <http://resourcesofresistance.wordpress.com/call-for-papers/>.

<sup>98</sup> One of the most paradigmatic texts in the establishment of postcolonial studies, although less so now is Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989).

aply describes the position of the ‘fragments’ that my texts depict, and demonstrates that the political dimension is very much a part of postcolonial studies and postcolonial writing. My study, then, represents a vital step in putting not only capitalist development firmly on the agenda of postcolonial studies but also Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka.

### **Outline of Thesis**

My examination begins with the opening stages of the Zionist settler-colonial project in Mandate Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century. Chapter one draws out the changing ideas of agricultural colonization, collectivism and labour in Zionist development discourse in Theodor Herzl’s *Old-New-Land*,<sup>99</sup> S. Yizhar’s *Preliminaries*<sup>100</sup> and Yosef Haim Brenner’s *Breakdown and Bereavement*.<sup>101</sup> Chapter two explores the West Bank’s experience of underdevelopment and neoliberalism during the occupation in Palestinian literature by examining Sahar Khalifeh’s *Wild Thorns*<sup>102</sup> alongside Raja Shehadeh’s *Occupation Diaries*.<sup>103</sup> The third chapter moves from the Middle East to South Asia and explores how peasants were economically and socially affected by colonial and postcolonial models of

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<sup>99</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Lotta Levensohn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)

<sup>100</sup> S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, trans. Nicholas De Lange (New Milford, Conn; London: Toby Press, 2007)

<sup>101</sup> Yosef Haim Brenner, *Breakdown and Bereavement*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, CT; London: Toby Press, 2004)

<sup>102</sup> Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns* trans. Trevor LeGassick and Elizabeth Fernea. (Northampton Mass: Interlink Books, 2003).

<sup>103</sup> Raja Shehadeh, *Occupation Diaries* (London: Profile, 2012).



development in Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle*<sup>104</sup> (1913) and Punyakante Wijenaikē's *The Waiting Earth*<sup>105</sup> (1966). The neo-colonial period is under consideration in chapter four which focuses on Ambalavaner Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*<sup>106</sup> (1997) and Isankya Kodithuwakku's 'Shallow Canoes' in order to demonstrate the different attitudes and practices concerning resource allocation and communities' livelihoods in the Sri Lankan state's and Sarvodaya's approach to development.

The literary texts in this thesis illustrate that development is an evolving category in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka. I analyse the impact of unevenness, both aesthetically and politically, in order to demonstrate how literature can act as a snapshot of resistance and present a critique or alternative to the historic or current dispensation. Every chapter explores the writers' divergent attitudes which demonstrate that development and territoriality continue to be contentious and divisive issues in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka today, yet ones that have clear implications for sustainable peace.

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<sup>104</sup> Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>105</sup> Punyakante Wijenaikē, *The Waiting Earth* (Pitakotte: State Printing Corporation, 1966).

<sup>106</sup> Ambalavaner Sivanandan, *When Memory Dies* (London: Arcadia Books, 1997).

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Zionist Development in *Old-New-Land, Breakdown and Bereavement and Preliminaries***

[W]ithout agricultural colonisation the construction of a Jewish National Home in Palestine is an impossibility, and that for this reason we dare not shirk the struggle with the difficulties, nor abandon it till we have successfully overcome them.

- Arthur Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine*<sup>1</sup>

Many of the writers of Eretz Yisrael were self-conscious about their lack of familiarity with the new environment. For this reason they were sometimes carried away by their passion for the land that finally enabled them to feel that, like other writers of national literatures, they too had native geographical roots. Their writings did not so much mirror the surrounding reality as express a naïve enthusiasm for it.

- Gershon Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction*<sup>2</sup>

“Aliyah, The Rebirth of Israel” is a collection of twenty-five mixed-media paintings by Salvador Dali that depict the history of the Jewish people. The caption of each painting is accompanied by a quotation from the Bible. Originally, the collection was exhibited at the Gallery of Modern Art in New York in 1968 in order to coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the state of Israel. David R.

Blumenthal, Professor of Judaic Studies at Emory University, wrote a full commentary for the exhibition which provided gallery visitors with background information about Dali’s collection of artwork. Sources on Dali’s Zionism and his

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine*, trans. R.J. Feiwel (Westport, Conn Hyperion Press, 1976), vi.

<sup>2</sup> Gershon Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction*, trans. Yael Lotan (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2000), 65.

reasons for painting these works are unclear. Blumenthal cites three possible reasons for Dali's interest in Judaism: 'crass, cynical exploitation,' 'to develop the "Jewish market"' or 'a serious execution of a serious commission, authentic even if not experimental.'<sup>3</sup> Whatever Dali's motivations, the paintings are significant for their illustration of the interdependence in Zionist discourse of Jewish immigration to and settlement in Palestine and the initiation of development projects. Following plate twenty-two, subtitled 'The Land at the Start of Jewish Settlement: "I will make the wilderness a pool of water" (Isaiah 41:18)', Blumenthal writes:

When the Jews started to resettle the Holy Land at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the land was dry and desertified...Much of the land of the Mediterranean coastal plain was fertile but without irrigation, or had fallen into disuse for prolonged periods of time. Areas in the northern part of the country, particularly in the Jezreel Valley and northward, were covered with intermittent swamps. Lack of proper management, insufficient water for agriculture, and times of insecurity had retarded agricultural development.<sup>4</sup>

Jewish immigration to and settlement in Palestine between the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth is depicted as beset with difficulties because of the 'retarded agricultural development' prior to the settlers' arrival. Blumenthal's reproachful tone along with descriptions of the land being 'dry and desertified' and 'fallen into disuse' reinforces his expression of disapproval about the land's underdevelopment. Also, as I highlighted above in my introduction, Blumenthal stresses the way the Jewish settlers prioritised agricultural production when they immigrated to Palestine.

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<sup>3</sup> David R. Blumenthal, "Salvador Dali 'Aliyah, The Rebirth Of Israel'" *Emory University*, August 1, 2013, accessed February 28, 2012, <http://www.js.emory.edu/BLUMENTHAL/Salvador%20Dali%20Aliyah.htm>, paras. 25, 28 and 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, para. 73.

Blumenthal's introduction to the next plate, 'The Land Come to Life: "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands" (Isaiah 55:12)' articulates a solution:

The Zionists, however, were not deterred. When they arrived in the Holy Land, they often pooled their resources and worked collectively to develop sustainable farming. They invested their hard work and their own money, sometimes not succeeding, but never giving up on the new enterprise of building a national home again. Land was purchased from local Arabs...None of it would have been possible had it not been for the "Halutzim," the Pioneers, most of whom were unprepared for such hardships, who did the actual work.<sup>5</sup>

The passage emphasizes how allegedly 'retarded agricultural development' can be transformed through the agricultural strategies of cultivating the land, specifically *avodah ivrit* or exclusively "Hebrew Labour", which was advocated by labour Zionism. Blumenthal's analysis establishes the importance of the *halutzim* or Jewish pioneers who labour on the land in order to carry out these strategies. The development strategies of the Jewish pioneers were implemented in order to create a collective community and ensure agricultural production thereby creating both self-sufficiency and economic growth.<sup>6</sup> The fulfilment of these objectives are based on the tenacity of the pioneers, whose labour makes the Zionist project of 'building a national home again' viable. In other words, agricultural colonisation was infused with a vision of Jewish settler-nationalism.

Between March 17 and June 30 2011, the collection was exhibited again at Emory University prior to a national tour. Blumenthal's commentary was once more

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. para. 74.

<sup>6</sup> Gershon Shafir *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882-1914* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1996) Zachary Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies: Arab and Jewish Workers in Palestine 1906-1948* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996)

used as a guide to the exhibition, a podcast of which is available on the exhibition's website. The contemporary use of Blumenthal's commentary to accompany Dali's exhibition demonstrates that the idea that the land of Palestine had been 'neglected' prior to Jewish settlement remains current. This perception extends to the belief that it was through Jewish settlement and labour that the land became agriculturally productive, which supported the fulfilment of the Zionist aim of creating a Jewish national home in Palestine. Indeed, it is clear from the 2011 exhibit that this idea of Zionist development discourse and practice as motivated by ethno-nationalism is still accepted and disseminated today to both an internal and international audience. The significance of international representation is it creates and sustains worldviews about Israel/Palestine that are one-sided and biased.

The Zionist focus on development did not go unrepresented in other forms of cultural production, namely literature. This chapter focuses on Hebrew literature that has been translated into English by examining Yosef Haim Brenner's *Breakdown and Bereavement* (1920; Eng., 1971)<sup>7</sup> and S. Yizhar's *Preliminaries* (1992; Eng., 2006).<sup>8</sup> I examine these texts alongside Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland* (1902; Eng. *Old-New Land*, 1903)<sup>9</sup> which was originally written in German. All three texts depict the opening stages of the Zionist settler-colonial project in Palestine at the beginning of the twentieth century. I explore the relationship between the *Aliyot*, the Jewish waves of immigration to and settlement in Palestine, and its literary production. *Breakdown*

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<sup>7</sup> Yosef Haim Brenner, *Breakdown and Bereavement*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New Milford, CT; London: Toby Press, 2004)

<sup>8</sup> S. Yizhar, *Preliminaries*, trans. Nicholas De Lange (New Milford, Conn; London: Toby Press, 2007)

<sup>9</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Old-New Land*, trans. Lotta Levensohn (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984)

*and Bereavement* and *Preliminaries* depict different approaches to settlement and labour which were implemented in order to ensure economic development. In contrast to Brenner's narrative where the Jewish and Palestinian Arab labourers are depicted as competing for labour, Yizhar depicts the move away from "conquest of labour" to "Hebrew labour". During the first Aliyah (1882-1903), the Jewish settlers competed with the indigenous Palestinian Arab inhabitants for labouring positions in the agricultural colonies through what was termed the "conquest of labour". However, this struggle proved futile as Palestinian Arab labourers continued to be employed over Jewish labourers in the Jewish economy<sup>10</sup> of Palestine. Agricultural production through the conceptualisation of "Hebrew labour" was consequently initiated during the second Aliyah (1904-1914).<sup>11</sup> Arthur Ruppin, a representative of the World Zionist Organisation in Palestine and responsible for the creation of the Palestine Office in 1908 which was set up to facilitate land purchases and development,<sup>12</sup> explains the different conceptualisations of labour and settlement during the second and first Aliyah: "[t]he new settlements are called "Moshav," in contrast to the old type "Moshava," the difference in names denoting the difference between the new type where the settler works himself and the old where he engaged paid labour."<sup>13</sup> As such, because Brenner's narrative is set in a moshava during the first Aliyah and Yizhar's narrative is set in a moshav during the second Aliyah, looking at these two texts together means that one can trace a historical trajectory.

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<sup>10</sup> Shafir, *Land, Labor*, 119.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 83-5.

<sup>12</sup> Etan Bloom, *Arthur Ruppin and the Production of Pre-Israeli Culture* (Leiden: Brill; Extenza Turpin, 2011), 2-3.

<sup>13</sup> Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation*, 24.

This chapter argues that by exploring these engagements with Zionist development discourse in Israel/Palestine in tandem, it is possible to draw out changing ideas in Labour Zionism of Hebrew labour, Zionist collectivism and land use and agriculture.

Outside of Hebrew-language criticism, international critics and readers alike have only paid cursory attention to this literature.<sup>14</sup> The recent reception and criticism of *Breakdown and Bereavement* and *Preliminaries* in English is strikingly similar, in spite of the fact that the former text was published almost eight decades before the latter. In reference to Brenner, David Patterson states that: ‘Brenner’s talent reaches its height in this novel.... A blend of penetrating insight, poignancy, honesty, compassion and artistry, the novel constitutes a human document of high order’<sup>15</sup>. It is precisely this lack of engagement with the historical and political context of Brenner’s work that enables one to delineate a crucial point of connection with the criticism of Yizhar and his novels. Robert Alter asserts that *Preliminaries* is ‘a universal story, in some ways a very familiar story, about a sensitive child, something of a loner, discovering the multifarious world and beginning to glimpse the possibility that someday he might turn it into art’<sup>16</sup>. The repetition of

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<sup>14</sup> The evidence for cursoriness is that much of the criticism in English or that has been translated in English concentrates on Hebrew writing after the state of Israel was created in 1948, particularly writers such as Amos Oz, David Grossman etc. There is also a largely generic gap with prose receiving more attention than poetry. Both factors highlight a hierarchy of writers, readerships and publication in Israel.

<sup>15</sup> David Patterson, “Breakdown and Bereavement” as cited on the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature website, without a source, accessed April 11, 2012, [http://www.ithl.org.il/book\\_info.asp?id=42](http://www.ithl.org.il/book_info.asp?id=42).

<sup>16</sup> Robert Alter, “The Flow” (on the fiction of S. Yizhar), *The New Republic*, June 18, 2007, accessed February 5, 2012, <http://www.tnr.com/article/the-flow?page=0,1>, para.23.

‘universal’<sup>17</sup> to describe Brenner’s and Yizhar’s writing demonstrates that critics neglect, either by accident or design, to explore the ways that the content and form of such narratives often question and criticise Zionism.<sup>18</sup>

The source of this criticism can be attributed to the Zionist politics of the figures who serve as gatekeepers for an international (US) readership of Hebrew literature in translation. Alan Mintz argues that

[t]he construction of American Jewishness is often dependent on an idealization of Israel that focuses on the heroic struggle for statehood and the resistance to annihilation. There are whole genres of American popular fiction... that rework these themes and seem to keep many Americans supplied with what they feel they need to know about Israel.<sup>19</sup>

As such, Hebrew literature that departs from representing ‘the heroic struggle for statehood and the resistance to annihilation’, like Brenner’s and Yizhar’s texts which highlight the difficulties with Zionist development discourse and agriculture in the decades prior to the establishment of the state of Israel, fail to be widely published or read. Contrastingly, Hebrew-language critics maintain that writers like Yizhar and Brenner fulfil the “designated” role of a writer as prophet-watchman who is entrusted with the being the voice of both national responsibility and ethical

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<sup>17</sup> There are also recent reviews of contemporary Israeli novels which refer to the specific as well as the ‘universal’ characteristics of the texts. Alan Elsner refers to David Grossman’s *To the End of the Land*: ‘a book that does full justice to the pain of being an Israeli - and yet is universal in its appeal.’ “Some Recent Noteworthy Fiction From Israel,” *Huff Post Books*, October 26, 2012, accessed October 17, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-elsner/some-recent-noteworthy-fi\\_b\\_2014437.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/alan-elsner/some-recent-noteworthy-fi_b_2014437.html), para.16.

<sup>18</sup> Dan Miron, “Modern Hebrew Literature: Zionist Perspectives and Israeli Realities,” *Prooftexts* 4, no.1 (January 1984): 49-69.

<sup>19</sup> Alan L. Mintz, *Translating Israel: Contemporary Hebrew Literature and its Reception in America* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2001), 61.



authority.<sup>20</sup> This tension between the universal and the particular means that English-language critics omit to engage with the writer's dual duty. Drawing on the idea of prophet-watchman's duty, I argue that Brenner and Yizhar protest against Zionist development by demonstrating difficulties with agricultural labour and the negative repercussions for the individual's autonomy in a collectivist society.

This chapter begins with a brief background to the historical origins of development discourse and practice in the decades preceding the establishment of the state of Israel, because it is essential for contextualising the novels' representation of its interdependence with settler-colonialism and nation-building. Development in this context refers to the discourses the founders and intellectuals of labour Zionism conceptualised in order to encourage Jewish investors to inject capital into the region, which would help establish a self-sufficient Jewish community and ensure its economic survival. I offer this overview because it is relevant for contextualising how all the narratives in this chapter represent the effects and responses to Zionist development. I then move on to a short overview of the emergence of modern Hebrew literature that traces the interconnection of this literature with the Jewish national revival from the Haskalah to Zionism. This overview explores the circumstances of the domestic and international reception and audience of the texts considered in this chapter. My close reading of all three texts is focussed on the different ways the writers use literature to represent agricultural

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<sup>20</sup> Shachar Pinsker highlights that the prophet-watchman's duty is derived from: 'the trope of the prophet as the "Watchman for the House of Israel", as well as the religiously inspired, Russian ideal of the writer as prophet, modern Hebrew critics and thinkers adopted the figure of the prophet-watchman to describe the writer's role.' *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 14. Other studies which draw on the prophet-watchman role in Hebrew literature include Michael Gluzman, *The Politics of Canonicity: Lines of Resistance in Modern Hebrew Poetry* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003) Robert Alter, *Hebrew and Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).

development, labour and collective society. I begin by highlighting how Theodor Herzl's *Old-New-Land* projects the idealisation and subsequent realisation of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine. I then explore Yosef Haim Brenner's *Breakdown and Bereavement* and S. Yizhar's *Preliminaries* which present the difficulties associated with the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, particularly labouring on the land and interactions with the other settlers and indigenous Palestinian population.

### **Labour Zionism and Zionist Development**

In the decades preceding the establishment of the state of Israel the founders and intellectuals of labour Zionism sought to establish a self-sufficient Jewish community and ensure its economic survival in Palestine. Labour Zionism 'gave precedence to the realisation of an ethnocentric settler project: the establishment in Palestine of a mono-religious, ethnic settler state... [and] collective (Jewish) control of the land.'<sup>21</sup> The labour or settler-colonial dimension of Zionism was realised through the members of the Yishuv<sup>22</sup>, who are often referred to as the "practical Zionists" or "pioneers", and their Aliyah or immigration to Palestine. Gudrun Kramer acknowledges the influence of the Bible: 'the Hebrew term *'aliya* was a moral term for immigration to Eretz Israel, defining it not as mere migration, but rather as an "ascent"... to the Jerusalem Temple, standing "up on the mountain."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Nur Masalha, *The Bible & Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel* (London, New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2007), 25.

<sup>22</sup> *Yishuv* is a Hebrew term designating the social structure of the Jewish community in Palestine from the Second Aliyah period (1903-1914) until 1948 and the establishment of the state of Israel. See Gudrun Kramer, *A History of Palestine: From the Ottoman Conquest to the Founding of the State of Israel*, trans. Graham Harman and Gudrun Kramer (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 101.

<sup>23</sup> Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 104.

Although agricultural production remained the model of economic growth and self-sufficiency for a collective community, the settlement format and conceptualisation of labour differed over the successive *aliyot*. As Alon Tal acknowledges:

The paramount importance of agriculture was not a subject of debate within the Yishuv. General, Labour, Revisionist and Religious Zionists all shared an ideological fervour about transforming or “redeeming” the land of Israel for agricultural production. As it turned out, rapid agricultural expansion was an expedient and labour-intensive economic strategy for the Yishuv.<sup>24</sup>

The ultimate goal of the Yishuv’s agricultural colonisation<sup>25</sup> and labour was the establishment of a nation-state in the designated Jewish homeland of Eretz Yisrael. Indeed, by farming the land, the Jewish settlers perceive that they are regaining lost land as well as safeguarding against the possibility of losing the land again in the future. Although the Jewish settlers were not responsible for the imposition of capitalism into the peasant economies of Palestine, this role having been taken by the Ottoman administration, commentators have drawn attention to ‘the large-scale influx of capital that accompanied Jewish immigration.’<sup>26</sup> Aida Asim Essaid argues that the use of this capital was exploitative towards the indigenous population because ‘capital was used to purchase Palestinian land, dispossess the labourers or tenants from it, and make it solely Jewish to ensure that from that point onwards it

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<sup>24</sup> Alon Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land: An Environmental History of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 52.

<sup>25</sup> Measures which include the creation of agricultural settlements and cultivation that were taken in order to gain to control of land and, thus exercise territoriality are illustrated by the term ‘colonisation’.

<sup>26</sup> Zackary Lockman, “Railway workers and relational history: Arabs and Jews in British-ruled Palestine,” in *The Israel/Palestine Question*, ed. Ilan Pappé (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 107.

would always remain in Jewish hands.’<sup>27</sup> Jewish control of capital, then, established an uneven relationship characterised by domination and development for the settlers versus exploitation and underdevelopment for Palestinians, thereby paving the way for the future ethnocratic state.

I term ‘Zionist development’ the Jewish people’s return to and settlement in the land of their ancestors and the control and cultivation of this land through the labour of the Yishuv. Derek Penslar aptly observes that ‘[a]s a European nationalist movement, Zionism could not help but have a powerful pedagogic and developmental dynamic.’<sup>28</sup> As such, for Jews, Zionism adopted an educational role by incorporating nationalism and colonialism. Settler nationalism was infused with a vision of agricultural colonisation as a return to the Biblical homeland of the Jewish people. Arthur Ruppin, in the Preface to his *Agricultural Colonisation of the Zionist Organisation in Palestine*, is explicit about the interconnection of these two elements: ‘without agricultural colonisation the construction of a Jewish National Home in Palestine is an impossibility, and that for this reason we dare not shirk the struggle with the difficulties, nor abandon it till we have successfully overcome them.’<sup>29</sup> The choice of language Ruppin uses, particularly words like: ‘shirk’ and ‘abandon’ highlights the core importance Zionists placed on carrying out and embracing agricultural development in their homeland. The phrasing is also clearly evocative of Blumenthal’s commentary on Dali’s paintings from the opening of this

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<sup>27</sup> Aida Asim Essaid, *Zionism and Land Tenure in Mandate Palestine* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 243. See also Jacob Norris, *Land of Progress: Palestine in the Age of Colonial Development, 1905-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>28</sup> Derek J. Penslar, “Zionism, Colonialism and Postcolonialism,” *Journal of Israeli History: Politics, Society, Culture* 20, no.2-3 (2001): 94.

<sup>29</sup> Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation*, vi.

chapter about how the Jewish settlers ‘invested their hard work...sometimes not succeeding, but never giving up on the new enterprise of building a national home again in Palestine’ at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Key critiques of Labour Zionism, as articulated in the work of Israel’s New Historians,<sup>30</sup> as well as work on comparative settler colonialisms, highlights the reconsideration and reinterpretation of Zionism as a settler-colonial project.<sup>31</sup> In his study of comparative settler colonial projects, Patrick Wolfe demonstrates the ways settlers, desiring the land that indigenous inhabitants resided, transformed settler colonialism into a ‘zero-sum contest over land on which conflicting modes of production could not ultimately coexist.’<sup>32</sup> The Jewish settlement and the agricultural colonisation that was undertaken at the beginning of the twentieth century responded to the confrontation with the Palestinian Arab population. Zachary Lockman recognises that: ‘Zionism’s interactions with the existing Palestinian Arab society in Palestine played a crucial part in shaping the Yishuv as a society. Palestinian Arab and Jewish societies in Palestine were mutually formative...[to] Zionism’s specific pattern of development.’<sup>33</sup> In other words, Palestinian Arabs and Jewish settlers did

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<sup>30</sup> The work of the ‘New’ or ‘revisionist’ historians in Israel, dating from the late 1980s to the present, includes Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim and Benny Morris. Their work challenges the Zionist celebratory narrative of the establishment of the state of Israel, considering situations of Palestinian ‘transfer’ and ethnic cleansing.

<sup>31</sup> The analysis of settler-colonialism was first put forward by Palestinian Marxists in the 1920s. One of the first analyses that circulated in an international readership was Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-Settler State?* trans. David Thorstad (New York: Monad Press, 1973). As Rodinson argues: ‘the creation of the state of Israel on Palestinian soil is the culmination of a process that fits perfectly into the European-American movement of expansion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, whose aim was to settle new inhabitants among other peoples or to dominate them economically and politically.’ (89)

<sup>32</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Land, Labour and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race,” *American Historical Review* 106, no.3 (2001): 398. See also Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no.4 (2006): 387-409.

<sup>33</sup> Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 56-7.

not develop in isolation of one another; rather, their interactions shaped both societies. Indeed, the land and labour policies of the Israeli settlers that were implemented in Mandate Palestine in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries demonstrate how Israeli colonialism, in particular the colonial strategies and practices post-1967 that pertain to the control of space, has its roots in pre-1948 Zionism. Exploring and understanding this overlap will be essential in my next chapter. Specifically, after an Israeli literary exploration of Zionist development in this chapter, my second chapter explores how this discourse and practice affected the Palestinians following the *Naksa* of June 1967 and ensuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This current chapter focuses on how writers depicted and responded to development discourse and agricultural colonization during the first two Jewish waves of immigration to Palestine.

### **Hebrew Literature: From the Haskalah to Zionism**

A brief background to the historical emergence and trajectory of modern Hebrew literature that traces the interconnection of this literature with Jewish national revival from the Haskalah to Zionism demonstrates and contextualises the domestic and international reception and audience of the texts considered in this chapter. The history of modern Hebrew literature is linked to nineteenth century German and other European literatures, and thus Herzl's presence in this paradigm is due to the fact he wrote in German and envisaged German to be the language of a future Jewish state. The Haskalah, often translated into English as the Jewish Enlightenment, developed in the second half of the eighteenth century, primarily in Germany and Russia. The maskilim or enlightened Jewish intellectuals 'fought to reform and

modernize the Jewish people.<sup>34</sup> In order to implement this cultural regeneration successfully, they recognised the need to appropriate and transform the Hebrew language of the rabbinical elite.<sup>35</sup> As such, the Haskalah played a crucial role ‘in literary research...as the reviver of the Hebrew language and the catalyst of the Modern Hebrew literature...in Eastern Europe.’<sup>36</sup> According to Benedict Anderson, the novel and newspaper serve as a source of legitimacy in the creation and dissemination of national consciousness and ‘provide the technical means for representing the imagined community that is the nation.’<sup>37</sup> Consequently, the maskilim played an invaluable role in the creation and preservation of a Jewish national imaginary in the Diaspora.

Following the end of the Haskalah period in the 1880s, coinciding with the Russian Revolution and growth of anti-Semitic feeling as well as Jewish pogroms across much of Europe, the centre of Hebrew literary activity shifted to Palestine. While the maskilim were responsible for the revival of the Hebrew language on the written level, the intellectuals of Labour Zionism built upon this foundation and proposed the implementation of Hebrew as the vernacular and lingua franca of the

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<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Dauber, *Antonio's Devils: Writers of the Jewish Enlightenment and the Birth of Modern Jewish Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 27.

<sup>35</sup> Shmuel Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) and Michael Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin de Siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>36</sup> Feiner, *The Jewish Enlightenment*, 10. See also Aamir Mufti, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, NY: Verso, 1991), 25.

new Jewish state to be established in Palestine.<sup>38</sup> At the same time, Zionist debates recognised that adopting Hebrew as the national language could be bolstered by the creation of an accompanying national literature.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, writers like Brenner who immigrated to Palestine attempted to follow the ideals of Labour Zionism through teaching and writing in Hebrew and implementing Zionist development through agricultural colonization and labour. Consequently, the canonization of Hebrew literature which had emerged and developed in Eastern Europe took on a central role in the settler-colonial nation-building efforts of Zionism.<sup>40</sup>

When considered within the field of comparative settler-colonial studies, it is possible to apply Patrick Wolfe's apt description of settler colonisation as 'a structure not an event'<sup>41</sup> to the Zionist enterprise in Israel/Palestine because the settlers came to stay. In what follows I clarify how Zionist settlement is comparable to other settler-colonial situations, and also what makes it unique.<sup>42</sup> Fayeze Sayegh's powerful 1965 essay, "Zionist Colonialism in Palestine," is one of the first full-length Palestinian analyses which locates Zionist settler colonialism in the framework of European colonialism but also highlights the crucial differences: '[u]nlike European

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<sup>38</sup> Itamar Even-Zohar, "The Emergence of a Native Hebrew Culture in Palestine, 1882-1948," *Poetics Today* 11, no. 1, (Spring 1990): 186.

<sup>39</sup> Laurel Plapp, *Zionism and Revolution in European-Jewish Literature* (London: Routledge, 2008), 17.

<sup>40</sup> Even-Zohar, "The Emergence of..." 184.

<sup>41</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London, Cassell, 1999), 163.

<sup>42</sup> Comparative settler-colonial studies include Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Houndmills, Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and Fiona Bateman and Lionel Pilkington's *Studies in Settler Colonialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). The special issue that arose out of a conference by SOAS Palestine Society draws attention to the uniqueness of Zionist settlement: Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie and Sobhi Samour, "Past Is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine," Special Issue of *settler colonial studies* 2, no.1 (2012).



colonization elsewhere, therefore, Zionist colonization of Palestine was essentially incompatible with the continued existence of the “native population” in the coveted country.<sup>43</sup> As such, Sayegh also shows that the distinguishing feature of the Zionist project is their discourses and practices created and maintained ‘racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy.’<sup>44</sup> This idea of the Jewish settlers separating themselves from the Palestinian Arab population is manifested in the creation of their own agricultural colonies and economy and in the literature considered below.

In *Imagined Communities*, the influential theory of nationalism in literary studies, Benedict Anderson stresses the idea that nations are the products of a collective imagination. However Anderson’s comments about *settler*-colonialism and literature have been overlooked. Anderson asserts that the creole societies in Latin American settler colonies in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were the first group to develop a national consciousness derived from the rise of the newspaper and novel.<sup>45</sup> There is a correlation with the settler colonies in Palestine. Hebrew literature and culture were integral to the dissemination of national consciousness that although initially developed in the Diaspora became focused on the nation-building enterprise of Labour Zionism. Miryam Segal argues that during the initial years of settlement: ‘[r]hetorically and politically, agricultural production became the source of authority for literary production. In this necessary relationship between

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<sup>43</sup> Fayeze Sayegh, “Zionist Colonialism in Palestine,” (Beirut, Lebanon: Research Center, Palestinian Liberation Organisation, 1965), 5.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 29-30.

labour and literature, the latter was in theory subordinate to the former.<sup>46</sup> However, during the initial years of settlement there was a radical split in literary representations of land, labour and agricultural production. As Gershon Shaked observes in the second epigraph to this chapter, many of the new writers represented the land with ‘passion’ and ‘naïve enthusiasm,’ in other words zeal rather than realism.<sup>47</sup>

One group of writers, which comprised Moshe Smilansky, Yosef Luidor and Meir Wilkansky,<sup>48</sup> produced a national literature that idealised Jewish settlement in Palestine through representations of fertile and cultivated land and protagonists who are captivated by the landscape. Meir Wilkansky’s short story “In October Days” (1906-1911) includes the lines: ‘I fell on the earth. I embraced the soil tightly and emotionally, I sprawled on it and grasped it. My eyes closed, a heavy tear filled my heart, I wanted to let it out through my throat but I could not.’<sup>49</sup> These ‘successful’ settlement narratives depict agricultural production as a means to sustain the collective society and portray characters who express an intense emotional response to the land. Gershon Shaked highlights that the texts were out of sync with reality: ‘[t]hey glorified the pioneers, setting the pioneering enterprise above personal issues. ... Even if, in reality, expectation and aspiration had not yet been translated into everyday reality, they were depicted as if they were.’<sup>50</sup> Brenner, as a

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<sup>46</sup> Miryam Segal, “Rahel Bluwstein ‘Aftergrowth’ Poetics,” *Prooftexts* 25, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 332.

<sup>47</sup> Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction*, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Works by these writers include: Meir Wilkansky, “In October Days,” “Tilling and Hoeing,” 1906-11; Yosef Luidor, “Yoash”. As cited in Boaz Neumann, *Land and Desire in Early Zionism* trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> Meir Wilkansky, “In October Days,” 1906-11, as cited in Neumann, *Land and Desire*, n.p.

<sup>50</sup> Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction*, 69.

contemporary of this group, referred to them disparagingly as “genre writers” because of the way they used their texts as mouthpieces for Zionist ideology which glorified settlement at the expense of truthful representation and literary or aesthetic innovation.<sup>51</sup> In other words, ‘successful’ Zionist settler-colonialism is unproblematically represented.

### **Theodor Herzl and Zionism**

Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) is widely regarded as the founder of political Zionism, meaning the form of Zionism that is focused on the creation and maintenance of a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine. He wrote a number of texts exploring possible solutions to the “Jewish question” of anti-Semitism throughout Europe. His Zionist vision and project of bringing together a Jewish national community with a project of state-building was presented in its entirety in a book entitled *Der Judenstaat* (1896, and translated and published in English as *The Jewish State*).<sup>52</sup> The following year, Herzl convened the First Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland. At this conference, the World Zionist Organization was founded and Herzl was made its first president. *Old-New-Land* is Herzl’s first fictional publication and was originally published in German in 1902, although set twenty years in the future. The text was translated into English in the same year as *Old-New-Land* in a series of instalments for the US journal *The Maccabean*,<sup>53</sup> an English-language publication of the

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<sup>51</sup> Yosef Brenner, “The Land of Israel Genre and Its Accoutrements,” as cited in Allison Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms: Hebrew and Yiddish Literature in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press 2011), 77.

<sup>52</sup> Theodor Herzl *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Solution of the Jewish Question*, trans. Sylvie D'Avigdor (London, 1896).

<sup>53</sup> Theodor Herzl “Old-New Land,” *The Maccabean* 3, no.4 (October 1902).

Federation of American Zionists founded in New York in 1901. The narrative depicts the ideological and practical aspects of how settlement and agricultural colonisation can be achieved in Palestine by the Jewish people. *Old-New-Land* draws attention to how the members of the Yishuv can return to and settle on the land as well as how they can cultivate or ‘redeem’ the land through their labour.

In July 1898, Herzl gave an interview to the *Young Israel* journal in which he invoked the text of *Robinson Crusoe* and aligned it to the fulfilment of the Zionist project in his novel *Old-New-Land*. He observes that ‘[a]ll the means we need, we ourselves must create them, like Robinson Crusoe on the island – your readers will surely understand the hint. In the days to come the story of Zionism’s development will be like a wonderful novel.’<sup>54</sup> Herzl refers to the rise of the novel and its role in creating national consciousness and a national community<sup>55</sup> as well as the specific text that will serve Zionism as the paradigm of conquest, development and control of land and labour. *Old-New-Land* recounts the travels of a young Jewish lawyer, Friedrich Loewenberg, and his travelling companion Kingscourt, who decide to remove themselves from society by embarking on a long sea voyage. Over the course of this journey they make two visits to Palestine: once in 1902 and again in 1923. In this sense, Herzl’s novel corresponds to the generic characteristics of utopian fiction because utopias are usually toured by a visitor, whereas dystopias are depicted from the point of view of an inhabitant.<sup>56</sup> My close reading of *Old-New-*

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<sup>54</sup> *Young Israel*, July 1898, 106. As cited in Eitan Bar-Yosef, “A Villa in the Jungle: Herzl, Zionist Culture, and the Great African Adventure,” in *Theodor Herzl: From Europe to Zion*, eds. Mark H. Gelber and Vivian Liska (Tubingen: Max Niemeyer, 2007), 85-102.

<sup>55</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Christopher S. Ferns, *Narrating Utopia: Ideology, Gender, Form in Utopian Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 1999), 112.

*Land* illustrates how Herzl uses the form of utopia to trace a trajectory away from underdevelopment towards prosperity in order to consolidate the settler-colonial and national imaginary of successfully putting Zionist development into practice at the turn of the twentieth century.

Herzl's utilisation of utopia enables him to project a vision of a socio-political imaginary that is superior to the present reality in early twentieth-century Palestine. According to Fredric Jameson, the interpretation of utopia offers a *way of reading* which reinforces the 'political dimension' of a writer's text: 'by reading the very content and the formal impulse of the texts themselves as figures— whether of psychic wholeness, of freedom, or of the drive toward Utopian transfiguration – of the irrepressible revolutionary wish.'<sup>57</sup> Jameson highlights that utopias express not an expectation for the future but rather provide a radical recreation of the present. While Jameson is talking about more truly revolutionary (leftist, Marxist) utopias than Herzl's, the politics of a Zionist utopia aimed to transform the Jewish Diaspora into a self-sufficient nation in Palestine. In 'The Politics of Utopia' Jameson reaffirms that utopia enables the imagination of alternative political possibilities by creating 'the conception of systemic otherness, of an alternate society'<sup>58</sup> and, thus the political dimension is inherent in the way utopia enables the writer to critique the existing society. Paul Ricœur argues: '[at] a time when everything is blocked by systems which have failed but which cannot be beaten...utopia is our resource. It may be an escape, but is also the arm of critique. It may be that particular times call

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<sup>57</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), 159.

<sup>58</sup> Fredric Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia," *New Left Review* 25 (January-February 2004): 35-54.

for utopia.’<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, a common criticism of the use of utopia is that the literary imaginaries that writers produce may only have limited transformative power of the world *outside* of the text. Specifically, the narrative does not concern itself with how to change existing circumstances in order to create this new society because it derives its vision of an already transformed society from the writer’s imagination or stock of cultural resources.

However, Herzl was determined that his use of the form of utopia should not be conceived of in these terms. Indeed, he distanced his work from the fantastical or the idea that simply the influence of his own vision was sufficient. The note that accompanied the copy of *Old-New-Land* that he gave to Lord Rothschild<sup>60</sup> reads: ‘There will, of course, be stupid people who, because I have chosen the *form* of a Utopia...will declare the *cause* to be a Utopia. I fear no such misunderstanding in your case.’<sup>61</sup> This conception of the *cause* coincides with Ernst Bloch’s view about the function of utopia. According to Bloch, utopia articulates ‘anticipatory consciousness’ which is an awareness of alternatives that have yet to take shape in the world *outside* the text but that could one day be put into practice. He demonstrates how art and culture can be utilised to create hope and a blueprint for an alternative future.<sup>62</sup> Herzl’s assertion about ‘the *cause*’ or achievability is reinforced by the narrative which does not simply represent the creation of a new, alternative

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<sup>59</sup> Paul Ricœur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 300.

<sup>60</sup> The financial support of the Rothschilds helped the Yishuv to settle in Palestine by providing the capital to purchase land. See Ran Aaronsohn, *Rothschild and Early Jewish Colonization in Palestine* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 282.

<sup>61</sup> Theodor Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Herzl Press and Thomas Yoseloff, 1960): 1357 (emphasis in original).

<sup>62</sup> Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986)

society. Rather, Herzl depicts how the Zionist discourses of nation-building and development will be put into practice in order to create such a society. Critics of utopianism have often asserted that its chief danger is its uncompromising, totalising character.<sup>63</sup> As I shall show in more detail below, Herzl's Zionist utopia as represented in the novel's depiction of land, labour and development often contradicts with the landscape *outside* of the narrative.

### **Theodor Herzl's *Old-New-Land***

In the opening pages of the novel Friedrich is presented as depressed and isolated from the community in Vienna in which he lives. He is 'in deep melancholy' and '[h]e felt too tired to make new acquaintances' (3). Friedrich's separateness from society resonates with the historical context and the Jewish Question of assimilation versus segregation in Europe. Segregation took the form of the ghetto in Eastern Europe and social alienation in Western Europe.<sup>64</sup> Thus, Herzl's characterisation of Friedrich reflects this social alienation and also links with his use of the *Bildungsroman* form which provides a teleology from exclusion into integration in the narrative. The narrative trajectory traces Friedrich's development from a peripheral position as a Jew in Europe towards an integrated individual in society, thereby highlighting the "demarginalizing" potential of the *Bildungsroman*.<sup>65</sup> It is precisely Friedrich's social alienation that makes him not only the typical *Bildungsheld* but also the ideal candidate to be Kingscourt's travelling companion:

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<sup>63</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 401.

<sup>64</sup> Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question," in *The Marx-Engels Reader* ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1978), 26.

<sup>65</sup> Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 134.

“I must remind you that you are undertaking a life-long obligation...If you come with me now, there will be no going back. You must cut all your ties.”

“Nothing binds me,” replied Friedrich. “I am all alone in the world, and have had enough of life.” (22-3)

On the course of their voyage Friedrich and Kingscourt make their first visit to Palestine. On disembarking in Jaffa they survey the landscape:

Jaffa made a very unpleasant impression upon them. Though nobly situated on the blue Mediterranean, the town was in a state of extreme decay. Landing was difficult in the forsaken harbor. The alleys were dirty, neglected, full of vile odors. Everywhere misery in bright Oriental rags. Poor Turks, dirty Arabs, timid Jews lounged about-indolent, beggarly, hopeless. A peculiar, tomblike odor of mold caught one's breath. (30)

The repetition of ‘odor’ and references to ‘decay’, ‘dirty’ and ‘mold’ reinforces a sense of disgust with their surroundings. The reference to inhabitants subverts the ‘myth of Jewish ignorance of the presence of Palestinian Arabs’<sup>66</sup> as epitomised in the slogan ‘a land without people, for a people without a land’.<sup>67</sup>

Likewise in Jerusalem, Friedrich and Kingscourt encounter:

a picture of desolation. The lowlands were mostly sand and swamp, the lean fields looked as though burnt over. The inhabitants of the blackish Arab villages looked like brigands. Naked children played in the dirty alleys...The bare slopes and the bleak, rocky valleys showed few traces of present or former cultivation. (30)

The overlap in Herzl’s diaries and his novel can be seen through the passages from his diaries that correspond to the narrative of *Old-New-Land*. He writes of Jerusalem,

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<sup>66</sup> Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins*, 204.

<sup>67</sup> The origin of this term has been attributed to a range of sources including Theodor Herzl. However, the phrase was, in fact, coined by the Earl of Shaftesbury in the 1840s. See Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 165-6.



‘The musty deposits of two thousand years of inhumanity, intolerance, and uncleanliness lie in the foul-smelling alleys’.<sup>68</sup> The fictional text directly echoes the diary, through the use of the same language and disgusted tone. The word choice of ‘brigands’ suggests that the inhabitants are perceived as outlaws in a wild or isolated terrain. This view also ties in with Herzl’s assertion in *The Jewish State* about the Jewish need to create a state that would provide ‘an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism.’<sup>69</sup> Herzl’s representation of the landscape reflects the intimate connection between travel writing and colonialist discourse that existed in the nineteenth century. This representation was aided by many nineteenth-century European travel accounts of Palestine which depicted the land as poor and neglected and the population as impoverished or weak. Mark Twain writes about how he discovered on his travels: the ‘desolate country whose soil is rich enough, but is given over wholly to weeds... a silent mournful expanse.... a desolation.’<sup>70</sup> Mary Louise Pratt argues that landscape in literature and art refers to the particular gaze or perception of ‘a European male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes look out and possess.’<sup>71</sup> As such, Herzl’s/Friedrich’s gaze is one of control and projects a fabricated set of Eurocentric preconceptions and authoritative vision. In such an Orientalist paradigm, [the textual representations] of indigenous peoples are depicted as Other.<sup>72</sup> Derek Penslar argues that: ‘Zionist thinking, like

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<sup>68</sup> Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, 745.

<sup>69</sup> Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 42.

<sup>70</sup> Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Company, 1869), 488.

<sup>71</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 7.

<sup>72</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 2003)

that of *fin de siècle* Europeans as a whole, operated on multiple levels and that feelings of benevolence, humanitarianism, and sympathy could easily blend with condescending, Orientalist, and even racist views of the Palestinian Arabs.<sup>73</sup> The significance of a socially alienated European Jew seeing Palestine as a desolate land and its native inhabitants as feckless is that this image was reflected in paintings and photographs from this period<sup>74</sup> and helped bolster the need for the Jewish immigrants to ‘make the desert bloom’.

The passage about Jaffa also demonstrates that the poverty and deprivation of the Palestinian Arabs are perceived to be directly correlated to their inability or refusal to work the land. Specifically, presenting the land as ‘a picture of desolation and neglect’ suggests the lack of cultivation and production prior to Jewish settlement. Sandra Sufian recognises that: ‘[u]nder the *terra nullius* principle, applied particularly in colonial contexts, if the land was not being cultivated, then by Western standards it was considered as not being properly used. Those who could, therefore, cultivate the land had the right, if not an obligation, to do so.’<sup>75</sup> It was precisely this perceived failure to treat the land with the proper or required care and attention that Zionism used to legitimate the Jews’ claim to the land and concomitantly the Palestinian Arabs’ forfeiture of this land. The description of the early period of Zionist settlement by Shimon Peres, former Prime Minister of Israel, reflects this attitude:

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<sup>73</sup> Derek J. Penslar, “Israel: A Colonial or Post-Colonial State?” 2003, accessed August 21, 2013, [http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~ikalmar/illustex/penslarzionism.htm#\\_ednref3](http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~ikalmar/illustex/penslarzionism.htm#_ednref3).

<sup>74</sup> Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2000), 60.

<sup>75</sup> Sandra Marlene Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 46.

[t]he land to which they [the Jewish settlers] came, while indeed the Holy Land, was desolate and uninviting; a land that had been laid to waste, thirsty for water, filled with swamps and malaria, lacking in natural resources. And in the land itself there lived another people; a people who neglected the land, but who lived on it.<sup>76</sup>

This view of the Palestinian inhabitants and the land formed a key component of the Zionist colonial project and nation-building. The land of Palestine was frequently perceived and described as a locus of contaminated conditions of polluted water, swamps and contagious diseases such as malaria.<sup>77</sup> Moreover these two passages demonstrate that the poverty and disease used to characterise the Palestinian Arabs' underdevelopment is perceived to be an inherent characteristic of their culture. However, Alon Tal contradicts the depiction of Palestine as a wasteland in his environmental history of Israel:

The question of how barren the land of Israel was prior to Zionist settlement has been highly politicised in the "tit-for-tat" debates between pro-Israeli and pro-Arab camps. Environmentalists now question the appropriateness of such loaded terms as "barren" and "desolate," given the remarkable underlying biodiversity.<sup>78</sup>

The perception of Palestinian Arab underdevelopment can also be countered by the fact that in Palestine, as early as 1800, the population was an estimated 250,000 and 300,000 inhabitants, of whom the 'vast majority lived as peasants', and 'agriculture

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<sup>76</sup> Shimon Peres, *New York Times Magazine*, 5 October 1986 as cited in 'Introduction' *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question* eds. Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 2001), 62.

<sup>77</sup> Sufian, *Healing the Land*.

<sup>78</sup> Tal, *Pollution in a Promised Land*, 37.

<sup>79</sup> Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 44-5.

formed the basis of the local economy and society.<sup>79</sup> As such, the land was cultivated for both subsistence crops and trade.

Moreover, when the two men return to Palestine after a period of two decades they discover that through Jewish immigration and labouring on the land there has been a socio-economic transformation of the region. ‘ “How changed it all is!” cried Friedrich. “There’s been a miracle here.” ’ (40) The use of religious language to describe economic change highlights the interesting connection between development and the Bible that permeates everyday discourse. The representation of the landscape provides a striking juxtaposition with the passage cited above:

On both sides of the road there were carefully tended fields, vineyards, tobacco plantations, tree nurseries, with nowhere so much as an inch of wasteland. Some way off they saw a machine mowing a field of clover. Now and again a cart passed them high with Lucerne for fodder. Here and there the summer crops had already come up – maize and sesame, lentils and vetch. On the fallow land motor-ploughs were preparing the fields, still moist from the spring rains, for the next sowing. (120-1)

The differences between the two depictions lie not only in the fertility and irrigation that is evident in the latter passage, but also the role of agricultural technology in enabling this change to take place, both characteristics that were absent in the first passage. Agricultural technology is also given a prominent place through the enumeration of: ‘a machine mowing’, ‘a cart passed’ and ‘motor-ploughs were preparing the fields’. Alon Tal asserts that

many Zionist leaders like Herzl can be readily diagnosed as “technological utopians”. For them, technology, if pursued with sufficient ardour, constituted the most reliable

instrument for attaining power over their surroundings and for overcoming the menacing and primitive “wastelands.”<sup>80</sup>

Consequently, labour and technology are projected as the necessary components to establish a prosperous and successful national enterprise based on agricultural production. As Glenna Anton acknowledges, Zionism from the outset ‘celebrated technological innovation and modernization while at the same time idealized a close connection to the soil through labour.’<sup>81</sup> There is little tension between technological and agrarian utopianism. As such, the transformation from what was perceived to be a traditional unproductive form of agriculture to modern technological agriculture is depicted as crucial to the success of settler-colonialism.

Furthermore, in *Old-New-Land* Herzl projects the idea of the redemption of the land being directly correlated to the redemption of the Jewish people: ‘[w]e took our children out of damp cellars and hovels, and brought them into the sunlight. Plants cannot thrive without sun. No more can human beings. Plants can be saved by transplantation into congenial soil. Human beings as well. That is how it happened.’ (55) This dual redemption is more thoroughly explained:

The wealth of a country lies in its workers...The more workers that come along, the more bread there is – provided the society is as just as ours...just as it is good for Newville if it grows, more and more settlements being added to its outskirts, so it is good for the New Society...The more men come here to work, the better off we shall be...The eldest among you know what this village was like twenty years ago, all empty and desolate...Stones were cleared, swamps drained...And today Newville is a garden, a lovely garden where you live a good life. (118).

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<sup>80</sup> Alon Tal, “Enduring Technological Optimism: Zionism’s Environmental Ethic and Its Influence on Israel’s Environmental History,” *Environmental History* 13 (2008): 281.

<sup>81</sup> Glenna Anton, “Blind Modernism and Zionist Waterscape: the Huleh Drainage Project,” *Jerusalem Quarterly* 9, no. 1 (2008): 90.

Herzl depicts how the workers put Zionist discourse into practice through settlement and the labour of the Jewish workers. Kramer argues that the aim of ‘the idea of “productivizing” the “Jewish masses,” by transforming Jewish *Luftmenschen* into workers... was to establish an egalitarian Jewish society that would be largely self-contained and self-sufficient.’<sup>82</sup> Zionist agricultural colonization and labour is also represented as the initial stage of this project: ‘Stones were cleared, swamps drained’. The transition into a garden resonates with Herzl’s description in *The Jewish State* about how Zionism is able to bring technology to Palestine: ‘[w]here we modern ones appear with our inventions we transform the desert into a garden.’<sup>83</sup> Agricultural methods were recognized by the Yishuv as key ways to ‘redeem’ the land. Herzl is evidently prefiguring the idea of Zionist environment discourse which Shaul Cohen defines in the following terms:

the environment has been the stage upon which the Zionist enterprise has been built, and its features are opportunities to showcase good stewardship, and the prowess of Jewish agriculture and development... In Zionist ideology, redemption of the self comes through redemption, i.e. rehabilitation of the land.<sup>84</sup>

As such, the idea of ‘redemption’ becomes a means of regaining the land – if we work the land, we will not lose it again. Working the land is also linked to the idea of culpability, as through ‘redeeming’, which equates to farming, the Jewish settlers

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<sup>82</sup> Kramer, *A History of Palestine*, 111. Dan Miron argues that the Yiddish term *Luftmenschen* refers to Jewish people ‘inclined to speculative, economically unproductive occupations.’ Dan Miron, *The Image of the Shtetl and Other Studies of Modern Jewish Literary Imagination* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 24.

<sup>83</sup> Herzl, *The Jewish State*, 75.

<sup>84</sup> Shaul Cohen, “Environmentalism Deferred: Nationalisms and Israeli/Palestinian Imaginaries,” in *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa: History, Policy, Power and Practice*, eds. Diana K. Davis and Edmund Burke (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), 248.

perceive that they are regaining lost land as well as safeguarding against the possibility of losing the land again in the future. Also, the Jewish community would undergo a radical transformation through their participation in physical labour and not only 'redeem' the land but also the Jewish community across the world. As we have seen, Zionist rhetoric and settler-colonialism in *Old-New-Land* sought to 'redeem' and assert a claim to the land through an ability to 'make the desert bloom' with modern technology that presented Zionist settlers as more 'civilised' than the Palestinian farmers.

The novel further contends that the combination of settlement and agricultural development is not only exclusively beneficial to the Jewish community in Palestine but also produces advantageous effects for the Palestinian Arab community. The sole Palestinian Arab character of the narrative is Rashid Bey, who appears to act as a mouthpiece for the effects of Zionist development on his community. In his first appearance in the novel we learn that he is: 'one of those who immediately grasped that Jewish immigration could only be beneficial to all, and he profited from our economic boom' (54). As Bey explains about Jewish immigration himself:

It was a great blessing for all of us. Naturally the landowners gained most, because they were able to sell to the Jewish society at high prices... [But] those who had nothing stood to lose nothing, and could only gain. And they did gain: opportunities to work, prosperity. Nothing could have been more wretched than an Arab village at the end of the 19th century. The peasants' clay hovels were unfit for stables. The children lay naked and neglected. Now everything is different. They benefited from the progressive measures of the New Society whether they joined it or not... These people are better off than at any time in the past. (81-2)

Bey's representation of the land prior to Jewish settlement as uncultivated and the Palestinian Arab population as impoverished and neglectful of the land echoes the Jewish characters' depiction above. Earlier in the same scene, Kingscourt and Friedrich are told by one of their guides, "Do not expect to see the filthy nests that used to be called villages in Palestine" (81). As such, the landscape has been stripped of the presence of indigenous Palestinian Arab villages. Bey also emphasises prosperity and better standards of living for the Arab inhabitants of Palestine. Indeed Israel's advocates continue to assert that living standards and political freedoms of Israeli Arabs are superior to Arabs living in surrounding countries. Shlomo Avineri regards such ideas in the novel as evidence of Herzl's 'tolerance and universalistic humanitarianism, characteristic of his Central European outlook and his impeccable vision of civil rights as related to the Palestinian Arabs.'<sup>85</sup> However, in comparison to the Jewish community, the Arab inhabitants of Palestine in the period when *Old-New-Land* is set encountered rising inequity in political power and economic conditions.<sup>86</sup> During the period in which the novel is set, Labour Zionists placed significant ideological importance on "conquest of labour" which related to the first Jewish settlers competing with the indigenous Palestinian Arab population for labouring positions in the agricultural colonies.<sup>87</sup>

The utopian narrative of *Old-New-Land* illuminates Herzl's vision of the move away from a perceived wasteland with feckless inhabitants towards a cultivated land

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<sup>85</sup> Shlomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), 99.

<sup>86</sup> Ilan Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2011), 110.

<sup>87</sup> Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 18-20.



and a mutually beneficial society for both Jews and Palestinian Arabs – but only on the terms dictated by Zionist development discourse. Herzl’s depiction of the Zionist settler-colonial project offers a wrong and deluded imagining of the environmental and social transformation of Mandate Palestine. The need for such recognition is all the more critical, given the fact that *Old-New-Land* ‘is still an accurate portrayal of the way the majority of Israelis (and Diaspora Jews) understand the unfolding of the Zionist-sponsored “development” of Palestine.’<sup>88</sup> Consequently, it is clear that the text continues to function as a source of the enactment and assertion of Zionist development because Herzl’s fictional representation of the simultaneous redemption of the land and Yishuv is a recurring one and still being unproblematically accepted and disseminated today. The narrative closure identified in *Old-New-Land* through the narrative ‘concluding rather than merely stopping or ceasing...yields a feeling of completeness’<sup>89</sup> that reinforces Herzl’s enduring legacy of representing successful agricultural colonization. Examining the text in relation to land, labour and development highlights that this successful agricultural colonization can be regarded as an idealised alternative to the geopolitical reality of Mandate Palestine.

### **Yosef Brenner’s *Breakdown and Bereavement***

While Herzl’s text projects the idealisation and subsequent realisation of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine, Brenner’s novel depicts doubts about whether Jewish labour and the creation of a collective community will be fulfilled. Yosef Haim

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<sup>88</sup> Mark Levine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880-1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 182.

<sup>89</sup> Noël Carroll, “Narrative Closure,” *Philosophical Studies* 135, no 1 (August 2007): 2.

Brenner was born in Ukraine in 1881, where he worked as a literary editor and publicist before immigrating to Palestine in 1909, and wrote in both Hebrew and Yiddish. In Palestine, he worked as a labourer in a moshava and continued to write both fiction and the editorials for two periodicals.<sup>90</sup> Brenner died in the armed clashes between Palestinian Arab inhabitants and Jewish settlers of 1921. Brenner's last novel *Shchol Ve-Kishalon* was published in Hebrew in the year before his death. *Breakdown and Bereavement*, as it was originally published in English in 1971 and re-published in 2004, narrates the story of a young Jewish man, Yehezkel Hefetz, who emigrates from Eastern Europe to Palestine in order to live and work in a moshava. Brenner represents Hefetz's difficulties in competing with the Arab workers, cultivating the land and associating with society. These difficulties take on an allegorical dimension when Hefetz suffers from a hernia whilst working the land and is sent to Jerusalem to recover and recuperate with relatives in Jerusalem. His convalescence is followed by a period of several months spent in a mental institution before he falls in love with a woman who does not return his affections. The novel ends with Hefetz concluding that he will always feel separate and isolated from his society.

Brenner's story is written in the experimental, fragmented style characteristic of the Jewish writers influenced by Russian modernism, which also includes Uri Gnessin and Gershon Shoffman. These writers framed their uncertainty about the Zionist project in their writing, both fiction and non-fiction and in terms of both content and form. Indeed, much of the initial criticism levelled at Brenner, between 1910 and 1930, was directed at the idea that narrative fragmentation was unsuited to

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<sup>90</sup> Shaked, *Modern Hebrew Fiction*, 47.

the writer's prescribed role in nation-building.<sup>91</sup> Benjamin Harshav asserts that 'after the failure of the 1905 revolution, the Russian intelligentsia and literature fell into a politically "defeatist" or inward mood... Young Jews were influenced by that mood... A new literature, [characteristically] individualistic... took centre stage'<sup>92</sup>. Specifically, Brenner's lack of enthusiasm for the Zionist project and tendency to expect the worst of agricultural colonization and labour is represented through the doubts, misgivings and inaction of his protagonists.

In another contemporaneous engagement with Hebrew literature, including Brenner's texts, the critic Ahad Ha'am<sup>93</sup> asserted: '[s]eek and find [that] even the best new Hebrew stories... are nothing more than fragments in which we can see only rudimentary hints of talent that has not developed clearly. These fragments would hardly make an impression in other, real literatures.'<sup>94</sup> Ahad Ha'am's reference to 'real' highlights his distinction between what he considers 'high' and 'low' culture and the critique of Hebrew writers who fall into the latter category. Brenner responded to Ahad Ha'am's accusation that Hebrew literature represents 'nothing more than fragments' in an essay written in 1908. He asserts that his use of fragmentation is derived from the fact that 'reality itself is broken' and for this

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<sup>91</sup> For example, Yitshak Bakon argues that such critics expressed resentment about what they perceived to be Brenner's pessimistic attitude: '[l]iterature, and specifically young literature, should emphasise the joy of life', arguing that he was 'more of a publicist than an artist', "Introduction" in *Yosef Haim Brenner: A Selection of Critical Essays on His Literary Prose* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1972) 15-6.

<sup>92</sup> Benjamin Harshav, *Language in the Time of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 66.

<sup>93</sup> Ahad Ha'am, meaning 'one of the people' is the pen name of Asher Ginsberg. I am grateful to Anna Bernard for pointing out this translation.

<sup>94</sup> Ahad Ha'am *Luach Aahiasaf* (1903) as cited in Shachar Pinsker, *Literary Passports: The Making of Modernist Hebrew Fiction in Europe* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 13.

reason the Hebrew literature that represents it is also ‘miniature, torn, and broken into pieces.’<sup>95</sup> Three years later, Brenner once again explained and bolstered this form of Hebrew literature: ‘the inner truth of reality, the lively and essential truth, can be found in only in the small sketches, which are presented fragment by fragment, shred by shred.’<sup>96</sup> Brenner acknowledges that his texts are a reflection of a ‘broken’ historical reality is best captured through the literary strategy of fragmentation. This breakage has been caused by the unpredictable, uncertain nature of Jewish history in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century when Jewish immigration increased dramatically because of anti-Semitic pogroms in many of the countries in which they resided.

Fragmentation characterises the novel from the outset.<sup>97</sup> The foreword opens with the claim that the protagonist’s Yehezkel Hefetz’s ‘notes’ were found by the narrator, who ‘wove them in a conventional fictional manner into several chapters dealing with the life and inner world of this man’ (5). The narration which follows is marked by a lack of linearity, with a number of prolonged flashbacks and disjointed scenes. Brenner appears to be demonstrating his argument from above about Hebrew literature producing ‘small sketches, which are presented fragment by fragment,

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<sup>95</sup> Yosef Haim Brenner, “Mehirhurei sofer” (“Reflections of a Writer,”) *Revivum* 2 (1908). Reprinted in *Ktavim II* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1960) as cited in Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 15.

<sup>96</sup> Yosef Haim Brenner, “Mi-tzror ktavim Yeshanim” in *Ha-po’el ha-tzair* (n.p., 1911) as cited in Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 16.

<sup>97</sup> One of the chapters in Hasak-Lowy’s monograph explores Brenner’s earlier novel *Mi-kan u-Mi-kan* (*From Here and There*) in relation to the same essay I use and also links the essay to this novel’s narrative fragmentation and analepsis, *Here and Now*, 34-67.

<sup>98</sup> Brenner, “Mi-tzror..’

shred by shred.’<sup>98</sup> Brenner continues by drawing attention to the difficulties associated with the reproduction of these ‘notes’:

despite my reservations about the form, which have not and of course cannot cease to exist, I have resolved in the end to offer this story to the reader exactly as it was written, without a single correction. In doing so I am forced to brush aside yet another misgiving... the time of publication, which is neither suitable nor conducive to the consumption of such tales (6).

His allusion to ‘the time of publication’ expresses a direct rebuttal to criticism such as Ahad Ha’am’s about the text’s fragmentation and the perception that he, Brenner, is not fulfilling the prescribed role of the writer as prophet-watchman during periods of nation-building. In place of this idea, Brenner offers a fragmented representation of Jewish immigration and settlement which forms a critique of society and settler-colonialism. In contrast, as we saw above, Herzl depicts a Jewish society that successfully implements Zionist development in order to not only improve the society itself but also the land which serves to encourage settlement in Palestine.

However Brenner is ‘resolved’ to reconstruct Hefetz’s ‘notes’ which produce ‘small sketches’ of individual characters. Indeed he invites the reader to agree that his narrative better reflects and responds to reality: ‘Have we ourselves not seen even in these tumultuous days each of us continues to be pettily preoccupied with his own individual ennui?’ (6). Specifically, the phrase ‘individual ennui’ is associated with his protagonist’s preoccupation with the place of the individual within society as well as his apathy and weariness which characterises Brenner’s novel as a whole. Indeed, there is a sense of ‘individual ennui’ represented through the aesthetics of alienation that runs throughout the novel, which enables the protagonist to reflect on

private experiences of alienation from the other settlers and labouring conditions. Brenner's on-going exploration of Hefetz's 'inner world' or interiority highlights a lack of linearity or strict teleology and demonstrates that fragmentation is sustained throughout the novel. As such, in addition to the device of the notes, further evidence of formal fragmentation is demonstrated through the rambling and disorganised thoughts that Hefetz expresses through analeptic narration. In his discussion of analepsis, Gérard Genette describes it as 'any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment.'<sup>99</sup> Analepsis in *Breakdown and Bereavement* includes Hefetz's lengthy flashbacks which retrospectively explain his life and work in the moshava, particularly the lack of identification he feels towards the Zionist project. Shachar Pinsker asserts that: '[f]loreshadowing many scholars and historians of modernism, Brenner understands fragmentation as a quintessential modernist expression – an existential attitude that offers a way to cope artistically with the stresses of contemporary life.'<sup>100</sup> Consequently, there is an evident tension between Brenner's use of modernist fragmentation as a universal expression and as a response to his particular circumstances. In other words, modernism versus development-driven narrative. The aesthetics of alienation, as will become clear in the reading below, is represented and expressed as an existential and social distancing from Zionist collectivism and labour conditions.

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<sup>99</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 40.

<sup>100</sup> Pinsker, *Literary Passports*, 16.

In the opening pages of the novel Brenner foregrounds Hefetz's isolation from the rest of the community in the moshava:

In the workers' inn in the colony, on the other hand, surrounded by bearded, bookish, ascetic votaries of labour; there where everyone was an eccentric of sorts, a bit of an "original", there and only there could he too, Hefetz, be a good companion, even if he wasn't contentious like the rest of them and didn't argue at the drop of a hat or take sides in every quarrel or play politics out of sheer boredom and the need to pick a fight... (12).

Hefetz expresses alienation from the idea of Jewish labour which is depicted as bookish, argumentative and self-sufficient and highlights the apparent incongruity of bookishness and manual labour. Brenner is mocking intellectuals who espouse a pro-manual labour philosophy without doing labour themselves. The passage also draws attention to the contrast between the members of the 'new Yishuv' who immigrated to Palestine from the 1880s and the residents of the 'old Yishuv' who were already there and the differences in their respective approaches to labour. While the 'old Jew' encapsulated the traits that Brenner highlights above, including bookishness and propensity for study, as well as idleness, the 'new Jew' represents the opposite: unafraid of labour and practical agricultural development.<sup>101</sup> Brenner juxtaposes Hefetz's disposition with the collective characteristics of 'the rest of them' to reinforce Hefetz's social rootlessness.

The text was composed during a period when Labour Zionists had placed significant ideological and practical importance on "the conquest of labour" which related to the first Jewish settlers competing with the indigenous Palestinian Arab

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<sup>101</sup> See Michael D. Birnhack, *Colonial Copyright: Intellectual Property in Mandate Palestine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 124 and Yehouda A. Shenhav, *The Arab Jews: A Postcolonial Reading of Nationalism, Religion, and Ethnicity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 90.

population for labouring positions in the agricultural colonies.<sup>102</sup> However, the reality throughout the Yishuv was that labouring positions and employment were scarce. Hefetz's views about the difficulties he encounters whilst engaging in labour further sets him apart from 'the bearded, bookish, ascetic votaries of labour':

No, what never failed to crush him was the utter pointlessness of it all: it seemed monstrous to him to have to go on living like this, for no reason, as a Jewish "farm hand" always looking for work; monstrous when he would have to go out every morning and compete with a horde of strange Arabs; monstrous to have to fight all day long with the ill-mannered foreman... And the work had no meaning, and the end was far, unclear, invisible, non-existent...to go a year like that, two years, ten years, forever...and never any change; no relief, no progress, no hope (13, ellipsis in the original).

The repeated ellipsis reinforces Brenner's use of fragmentation to portray the disjointed nature of his protagonist's thoughts. Hefetz emphasises his perception that labouring on the land is both futile and completely unpleasant, as well as his sense of alienation and foreignness, and the projection of this estrangement onto the 'Arabs'. The Palestinian Arab presence on the same land, as well as their status as competition within the labour market, is presented as something that is again difficult to tolerate. Anita Shapira asserts that '[t]he hero of the Second Aliyah was not the fighter but the worker, who prepared himself for physical labour and sacrificed himself in a daily struggle for survival. Arabs were perceived less as national rivals and more as competitors in the job market.'<sup>103</sup> Hefetz also endeavours to justify his intolerance for these 'competitors in the job market' through the

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<sup>102</sup> Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, 18-20.

<sup>103</sup> Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 81.



observation that ‘the work had no meaning, and the end was far, unclear, invisible, non-existent...to go a year like that, two years, ten years, forever...and never any change.’ This observation highlights his notion of a stagnant, monotonous future which contrasts with Herzl’s notion of successful development. As such, Brenner emphasises Hefetz’s existential nihilism as well as the fact that he perceives no future for this pattern of settlement and labour.

Similarly, Hefetz draws attention to the Zionist rhetoric that was used to describe settlers who were perceived to be fulfilling their role in society as well as those settlers who have fallen short of their ‘duty’:

They were all neurasthenics, cosmic worriers, who wore the world’s burden on their shoulders and judged everything in terms of the group. If one of them had travelled abroad, for example, he had not simply gone someplace else, but had “given up” and “betrayed the ideal”; if someone stood guard in a vineyard he was not just a lookout, but “a watchman in the fatherland”; if the cook burned the food in the inn – and when did she not burn it? and who really cared, anyway, except that it was something to talk about? – she was an execrable cook, of course, but she was also “an irresponsible woman with no sense of duty to her comrades” (15).

Both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ patriots appear in this passage. The fact that the settlers ‘judged everything in terms of the group’ demonstrates the belief that the actions of the individual directly affected the well-being of the other settlers and, thus their realization of the importance of collectivism, a key aspect of settler-colonialism.

Donna Devine asserts that an essential component to the Zionist nation-building and development discourse was the settlers’ sense of collectivism:

Zionist rhetoric invented a vocabulary that measured communal interests on a scale of spiritual, national regeneration...emigration from the land of Israel [was] tantamount to betrayal...this powerful narrative offered little

room for alternative views of how to become part of the nation-building project, and it showed no awareness of how many labourers it left feeling ostracised.<sup>104</sup>

Hefetz repeats the same rhetoric in the passage above to ironically draw attention to its failings. His derision is evident through the way that the voices of the community articulating Zionist rhetoric retain their direct quotation marks which suggests Hefetz does not share or identify with the espousal of such views. Hefetz's distancing from his 'duty' can be read as a 'desire for some transfigured social order',<sup>105</sup> other than the one created through Zionist collectivism thereby highlighting that Brenner is making fun of the idea of duty rather than endorsing it.

Subsequently in *Breakdown and Bereavement* Hefetz illustrates the difficulties that the Yishuv encountered with land use and agricultural colonization because of their lack of environmental knowledge and experience. Brenner illustrates the community had difficulties with sowing, planting and harvesting because they

had been stubborn enough to insist on planting potatoes. There were potatoes in Russia – why not here? An expert tried to warn him that the soil was too clayey, but he wouldn't listen. And sure enough, it rained so hard that year that the seed all rotted in the ground. (48-9)

Environmental histories of this period highlight that the Yishuv discovered that the climatic conditions were not conducive to the cultivation of potato crops.<sup>106</sup>

Likewise, sesame seed planting is also unsuccessful due to the lack of knowledge

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<sup>104</sup> Donna Robinson Devine, *Exiled in the Homeland: Zionism and the Return to Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 162-3.

<sup>105</sup> Joseph Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press 2002), 179.

<sup>106</sup> David Grossman, *Rural Arab Demography and Early Jewish Settlement in Palestine: Distribution and Population Density During the Late Ottoman and Early Mandate Periods* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2011), 25-6.

about agricultural conditions in Palestine: ‘the sun had dried this bottom layer too. The spring rains didn’t come, the sesame was sewn in the dry earth – and that was the last they saw of it. ...it took a special kind of luck to be stubborn’ (49) On the other hand, Herzl’s novel depicts a bountiful harvest ‘the summer crops had already come up – maize and sesame, lentils and vetch. On the fallow land motor-ploughs were preparing the fields, still moist from the spring rains, for the next sowing.’ (120-1) While Herzl describes a lush and bountiful harvest of varied crops and the crucial presence of rain to create and sustain the crops, Brenner demonstrates an absence of both elements. Hefetz’s characteristics of wilfulness and obstinacy are also attributed to the Palestinian Arabs who labour in the moshava:

The Arabs were stubborn too, only they got away with it. When they were asked to do the plowing in the colony, for instance, they refused to go ahead with it unless they were allowed to use their own plows. The colony was forced to lay aside the big European plow that had cost so much money and buy new wooden ones for the Arabs. (49)

Brenner illustrates that although the Palestinian Arabs and Jews deploy different modes of production, the Palestinian Arab labourers have more experience with working the land. However, as I highlighted above, the moshava during the period in which the novel is set was a locus of competition for labouring positions and, thereby fraught co-existence.

The novel ends with Hefetz’s sad allusions to the passage of time and his lingering loneliness:

When one was young one tended to think highly of one’s own sorrow, to prize it and drain it like a cup of sweet wine, sometimes to the point of self-forgetfulness, even of happiness. But he, Yehezkel Hefetz, at the age of thirty-one, was no longer any youngster. No, no more brave words, no

more running away from his accountability to himself!...When things seemed grim, black, hopeless, impossible, why pervert the plain facts with bravado... Something essential was lacking, something that could never be made good. Alack, a lack! And it was useless, too, to comfort himself with the thought that he still had other qualities with which he could also serve. (254-5)

In contrast with the notion of ‘accountability’ to the self, it is clear that Hefetz’s emphasis, particularly his inability to ‘serve’, is a observation about his failure to work for the well-being of society as a whole. This inability is reinforced by the lines which follow. In these lines there is a long enumeration of circumstances where he feels he is unable to help with the Yishuv’s socio-economic development and, thereby integrate with fellow members of the community. These specific instances include: ‘the destitute father who lived with his children in unendurable want’, ‘his comrade in the guardhouse’ and ‘the worker in the field’ (255). Rather, Hefetz expresses that he would rather live day-to-day with no distinct plans for the future. His sense of the futility and distance from society is coupled with a sense of temporariness: ‘On the threshold. Because ultimately nothing was permanent, nothing was assured. There were only thresholds, moments...Nothing was permanent...And the future was unpredictable’ (256-7). Once again, Hefetz expresses how he continues to experience a sense of alienation about his present circumstances. These thoughts and feelings create a tension between alienation as a universal modernist condition as well as being tied to his particular social, economic and political environment and situation. Consequently, Hefetz’s sense that nothing is permanent is at odds with the Zionist project that is very much rooted in creating an enduring, sustainable nation.

Moreover, the lack of narrative closure, which contrasts with *Old-New Land*, means that the narrative terminates rather than concludes: ‘One way or another – he picked up a pebble and putting it under his shirt, began to scratch and scratch with great gusto. *It won’t be hard*, signalled the mast of the boat, *soon we’ll be on our way, soon, soon we’ll be on our way.*’ (266, emphasis in original) The repeated phrase of ‘soon we’ll be on our way’, particularly the repetition of ‘soon’, highlights a reinforced sense of contingency about both Hefetz’s and the Yishuv’s future in Palestine and questions whether a proto-nation and community can be sustained and developed. The issue of narrative non-closure has links to Russian nineteenth and twentieth century writers and modernism, as Olga Matich observes: ‘the requirement for narrative closure poorly accommodates modernism’s no longer unified sense of the individual and his life’<sup>107</sup>. Brenner’s use of open-endedness, then, produces no definite end point to the narrative and can be connected with fragmentation. Both factors demonstrate the interconnection between the disjointed, non-linear narrative form and Hefetz’s alienated, isolated sense of self and distance from society as we saw above. Noël Carroll explains that writers often ‘withhold closure for the purpose of advancing the theme of the existential meaninglessness of contemporary life.’<sup>108</sup> As such, the novel’s narrative non-closure reinforces the universal/particular tension by

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<sup>107</sup> Olga Matich, *Petersburg/Petersburg: Novel and City, 1900-1921* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), 144

<sup>108</sup> Carroll, “Narrative Closure,” 2.

emphasising Hefetz's existential and social distance from the Zionist settler-colonialism in Palestine.<sup>109</sup>

### **S. Yizhar's *Preliminaries***

The final part of this chapter also focuses on settler-colonialism in Palestine, moving from the first Aliyah to the second Aliyah, examining S. Yizhar's *Preliminaries*. Born in 1916 in a moshav called Rehovot, Yizhar is the pen-name of Yizhar Smilansky. In later life, he defined himself as being influenced by 'two founding uncles'<sup>110</sup> who had both settled in Palestine but personify the two contrasting paradigms of "conquest of labour" and "Hebrew labour" within Zionist development discourse. While the paternal uncle, Moshe Smilansky, immigrated to Palestine during the First Aliyah and competed against both Palestinian Arab and Jewish labourers for employment, the maternal uncle, Yosef Weitz, immigrated during the Second Aliyah, employed exclusively Jewish labourers and appropriated Palestinian Arab land.<sup>111</sup> Yizhar's literary oeuvre spans over five decades. His first novel, *Khirbet Khizeh*,<sup>112</sup> depicts the 1948 war when the Israeli army destroyed many Palestinian villages and displaced their inhabitants. Following a one thousand

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<sup>109</sup> Evidence for any pressing ideological (theological) reasons for his position is contradictory. As his biographer, Anita Shapira, highlights: 'To his last day he said lofty things in praise of the Zionist project and at the same time contended that he didn't believe in it.' As cited in Avirama Golan, "The case of y.h. brenner," *Haaretz*, September, 12, 2008, accessed April 2, 2015, <http://www.haaretz.com/the-case-of-y-h-brenner-1.253690>.

<sup>110</sup> S. Yizhar, "About Uncles and Arabs," trans. Steven Bowman, *Hebrew Studies* 47 (2006): 321-326.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> S. Yizhar, *Khirbet Khizeh*, trans. Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck (Jerusalem, Israel: Ibis Editions, 2008).

page novel entitled *Days of Ziklag*,<sup>113</sup> Yizhar published a collection of short stories, *Midnight Convoy*,<sup>114</sup> in the early 1960s and then stopped writing fiction for over three decades. During this period he was an elected member of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, for seventeen years, and lectured on education at the Hebrew University, then Hebrew literature at Tel Aviv University.<sup>115</sup> *Miqdamot* was published in Hebrew in 1992 and translated into English as *Preliminaries* in 2006. The protagonist depicts the Second Aliyah by narrating the period between 1918 and 1928 when he is aged between two and twelve. In particular, Yizhar represents the questioning of the settlers' agricultural colonization and labour, particularly the technology used which causes environmental damage to the land.

Although Yizhar's *Preliminaries* was written decades after the state of Israel was established, some critics still see it as playing the same fundamental role as texts written by Brenner and his contemporaries. Robert Alter asserts:

the spectacular revival of the Hebrew language, a process that began in eighteenth century Europe and culminated in the Zionist settlement of Palestine. This revival is not something that was "accomplished" during the 1920s. It is a continuing process in which Yizhar - and after him Amos Oz, A.B. Yehoshua, Yaakov Shabtai, David Grossman, Meir Shalev, and other prose writers, as well as the great poets of the period - played a vigorous role. The ultimate triumph of *Preliminaries* is its achievement of a fully realized world in the Hebrew language.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> S. Yizhar, *Days of Ziklag* (Am Oved, 1958).

<sup>114</sup> S. Yizhar, *Midnight Convoy and Other Stories* (New Milford, CT; London: Toby, 2007).

<sup>115</sup> Shiri Lev-Ari, "S. Yizhar: 1916-2006," *Haaretz*, August, 22, 2006, accessed April 10, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/s-yizhar-1916-2006-1.195651>.

<sup>116</sup> Alter, "The Flow", para.27.

Robert Alter fails to explore how and why these narratives depict and criticize specific elements of settler-colonialism. Zionist historiography depicts the first settlers and their agricultural colonisation as essential to state- and nation-building. Maxime Rodinson asserts that ‘Zionists [and Zionist historiography] tend to trace the beginning of the Jewish state to the first Jewish colonization in Palestine during the first waves of immigration.’<sup>117</sup> For instance, Arthur Ruppin follows such a pattern: ‘the pioneers who had laid the foundations of the old colonies could, in their willingness to make sacrifices, in their unwavering faith in agriculture as the source of national renaissance, compare favourably with even the best Halutzim elements of the present day.’<sup>118</sup> By contrast, Yizhar’s protagonist subverts the idea that the settlers possess an ‘unwavering faith in agriculture’ as a source of development and nation-building. The protagonist of *Preliminaries* demonstrates that these claims of the intellectuals/founders of Zionism are not reflected and represented in the perspectives derived from the settlers ‘on the ground’. Specifically, the subversion of the teleological structure and linear narrative of Zionist nation-building enables the protagonist to ‘critically evaluate received history.’<sup>119</sup> This critical stance which also describes the duty of the writer as prophet-watchman means that Yizhar questions the efficacy of Hebrew labour and agricultural methods.

In contrast to the fragmented and disjointed form of *Breakdown and Bereavement*, the narrative of *Preliminaries* is more reflective and flowing. These aesthetic differences reflect each writer’s particular critique or misgivings about the

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<sup>117</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Israel: A Colonial-settler State?* trans. David Thorstad (New York: Monad Press, 1973), 56.

<sup>118</sup> Ruppin, *The Agricultural Colonisation*, 6.

<sup>119</sup> Bernard, “Forms of Memory,” 14.



specific historical moment of settler-colonialism in Palestine. Set during the First Aliyah, Brenner's fragmented aesthetic refers to Hefetz's individual alienation from the collective society and labouring conditions. Yizhar's depiction of the Second Aliyah combines the difficult conditions of labouring and misgivings about cultivation through stream of consciousness. Brian McHale defines stream of consciousness as being 'characterised by free association, the illusion of spontaneity, and constant micro-shifts among perception, introspection, anticipation, speculation and memory.'<sup>120</sup> In the opening pages of *Preliminaries*, the two-year-old protagonist makes 'constant micro-shifts' through the free association and thoughts about his father labouring on the land, the methods his father is using and the proximity of the Palestinian Arab community:

Suddenly this field will be a rich green, the green of total renewal, and even the child will feel that a renewal has taken place...Here are two thousand dunams of Zionist renewal. Jewish land. A little island of rich, scientific green surrounded by an ocean of ignorance, primitiveness and under-development, with fields of monotonously alternating exploitation, wheat followed by wheat, barley followed by barley. What about manure, fertilisers, enrichment with nitrogen, rotation and fallow years? And suddenly there will be this new green to be seen. By hostile eyes, too, perhaps, that do not like the renewal or the renewers. A hostile circle all round. Contained and not so contained...the closest Jewish settlement two or three hours westwards...And this is how it is (52).

The phrase 'an ocean of ignorance, primitiveness and under-development' is evocative of Blumenthal's commentary on Dali's paintings from the opening of this chapter about the 'retarded agricultural development' in Palestine at the beginning of

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<sup>120</sup> Brian McHale, "Speech Representation," in *Handbook of Narratology*, eds. Peter Hühn, John Pier, Wolf Schmid, Jarg Schanert. (Berlin; New York, N.Y.: Walter de Gruyter Berlin 2009), 437.

Jewish settlement. In contrast to Herzl's text where agricultural technology is depicted as an essential way of 'redeeming' the land in order to achieve sustainable agricultural production, Yizhar expresses reservations and misgivings about using such technology for 'Zionist renewal'. The rhetorical question suggests that methods such as 'manure, fertilisers, enrichment with nitrogen' have been used but little thought has been given to their consequences.

In the initial stages of Jewish settlement in Palestine prior to World War I the use of technological agriculture to redeem the land was to be realized through the use of synthetic fertilizers. However, Alon Tal argues that fertilizers have caused serious environmental damage:

Zionism spawned a high input, "technological" agriculture. For instance, a key to the successful land reclamation by Jewish farmers was synthetic fertilizers... Years later the nitrates would reappear as high concentrations... [thereby creating] a hydrological hazard.<sup>121</sup>

Although the potential of 'hydrological hazard' would not have been known by Jewish settlers during the early twentieth century, more recent studies have found that the presence of nitrates continues to contaminate the drinking water sources.<sup>122</sup> In a further article, Tal refers to the need for the emergence of a 'pro-environmental, technologically sceptical' attitude because 'technology has led Israel into its present environmental crisis.'<sup>123</sup> Indeed, the forcefulness of the protagonist's word choice of 'exploitation', in the passage from *Preliminaries* above, emphasises the

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<sup>121</sup> Tal, "To Make a Desert Bloom," 256.

<sup>122</sup> Yuval Azoulay, "Report: One third of water sources closed by pollution in 2005," *Haaretz*, October 29, 2007, accessed July 28, 2012, <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/report-one-third-of-water-sources-closed-by-pollution-in-2005-1.232116>.

<sup>123</sup> Tal, "Enduring Technological Optimism," 281.

environmental damage and degradation caused by agricultural technology. In other words, the received history of agricultural colonisation ‘making the desert bloom’ is subverted and replaced with a warning about the harmful effects of Zionist development.

As a result of the Jewish settlers’ attempts to create a separate, self-sufficient community, Yizhar presents a criticism of the mainstream Zionist point of view about the proximity of the Palestinian Arab communities to the moshav being a cause for concern. In the passage from *Preliminaries* above the protagonist articulates the perception that these Palestinian Arab communities pose a threat to the Yishuv’s continued existence in Palestine: ‘hostile eyes, too, perhaps, that do not like the renewal or the renewers. A hostile circle all round. Contained and not so contained’. Baruch Kimmerling asserts that the separation of these groups has led to both economic and spatial differentiation:

These settlements were based on purely Jewish labour and put islands of purely Jewish settlement on the map of the country... [which] contributed not only to social and economic differentiation but also to ecological separation between the Jewish and Arab communities, and to the creation of Jewish majorities in specific areas.<sup>124</sup>

Kimmerling emphasises that Jewish land purchases, and conquest by arms, made it possible to take control over more and more land. Yizhar’s protagonist presents both this territoriality and the separation of Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities as precarious because the Jewish settlement is portrayed in indefinite terms:

‘[c]ontained and not so contained’. However, he expresses resignation about these

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<sup>124</sup> Baruch Kimmerling, *Zionism and Territory: The Socio-territorial Dimensions of Zionist Politics* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 1983), 104.

conditions and the divided society that has been created through the final phrase 'And this is how it is'.

This unprotesting acceptance is subverted in subsequent representations of land and labour. The young child's perception of the settlers' techniques of agricultural colonization and production leads to a questioning of whether the whole project undertaken by Jews to settle in this land was bound to fail: '[a]s though you are suddenly seized by a realization that maybe it was a fundamental mistake. That maybe the land doesn't want us at all, really. Because we came here to make changes that it doesn't want' (86). Robert Alter suggests that in such passages 'what needs to be observed is that the perspective of the novel, in this regard as in others, is not essentially political but existential, or one might even say cosmic'<sup>125</sup>. Labelling the protagonist's perspective as 'existential' or 'cosmic', is essentially reductive and symptomatic of the impulse to read texts like *Preliminaries* as being expressive of a 'universal' condition instead of specifically about Jewish settlers in Palestine. I contend that it is more fruitful to pay attention to the protagonist's stream of consciousness more closely because he engages directly with settler-colonialism. Indeed, in the lines immediately following, which Alter ignores, the protagonist says: 'It [the land] doesn't want any Herzl Forest. It doesn't want any citrus groves on a sandy clay hill. It doesn't want the sandy clay to change at all, but to be left as it is' (86). It is difficult to read these lines as depicting anything other than a critique of the Jewish settlers' involvement in the creation of the Herzl forest. The creation of

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<sup>125</sup> Alter, "The Flow," para. 11. See also Gilah Ramraz-Ra'ukh who argues 'Yizhar's landscape is entirely, personal, experiential, ahistorical' *The Arab in Israeli Literature* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press; Tauris, 1989), 55.

the Herzl Forest is depicted earlier in the narrative when the protagonist explains how the concept of “Hebrew labour” was taken to an extreme:

the Jewish National Fund made plans to set up a nursery of pine trees for the Herzl Forest, and entrusted it to Berman, the contractor, who handed the work over to Arabs, and we had to demonstrate, strike, and move heaven and earth before they changed their minds and gave the work to our group, and we not only did all the work with Jewish hands but, in the end, we even uprooted and discarded everything the Arabs had planted, and planted it all again – for no extra pay – so that we wouldn’t have a Herzl Forest planted by alien labour (58).

The planting of the Herzl Forest began in 1908 through the assistance of the Jewish National Fund<sup>126</sup> and the labour of both Jewish and Palestinian Arab workers.

However, the mainstream Zionist point of view advocated “Hebrew labour” and regarded the hiring of Palestinian Arab workers as intolerable.<sup>127</sup> The humour of this passage is derived from the protagonist’s perspective which draws attention to the ridiculousness of a conceptualisation of “Hebrew labour” that led to the planting initiated by Palestinian Arab labour being ‘uprooted and discarded.’

In the years which follow, the protagonist begins to evaluate the consequences of the relationship between Jewish and Palestinian Arab communities. The narrative trajectory traces the move away from resigned acceptance about the proximity of Palestinian Arab and Jewish communities being simply ‘how it is’ towards a recognition that such a proximity is unsustainable:

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<sup>126</sup> The Jewish National Fund (JNF) was established in 1901 in order to promote the purchase of land in Palestine for the Jewish people. Walter Lehn, *The Jewish National Fund* (London: Kegan Paul, 1988).

<sup>127</sup> Shaul Cohen, *The Politics of Planting: Israeli-Palestinian Competition for Control of Land in the Jerusalem Periphery* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 48.

Recklessness. The whole idea of a Jewish neighbourhood next to Arab Jaffa, living from each other by day and separating at night, the enlightened, the clean, the cultured, the builders of the Land on this side and the natives, the backward, the filthy who have caused the desolation of the land on that side. Not just Jews against Muslims, not just immigrants against indigenous people, not just the progressive against the primitive... what is this: naivety, folly or criminal behaviour? (136)

Yizhar's juxtaposition of the two communities' divergent attitudes and behaviour shows how his protagonist regards the Palestinian Arabs as an ominous presence. Similarly to Brenner's narrative, this consideration of proximity demonstrates a disparity between the views of the individual and those of society. As we saw above, Hefetz in *Breakdown and Bereavement* expresses an 'individual ennui' or alienation from the collective Jewish settler community. He also critiques co-existence with Palestinians not because the implementation of 'conquest of labour' is racist but because the competition with Palestinian Arab labourers for employment positions is 'monstrous'. In *Preliminaries*, Yizhar's protagonist questions whether Palestinian Arab and Jewish communities can live separately yet in close proximity to one another by asking: 'what is this: naivety, folly or criminal behaviour?' The protagonist despairingly recognises that he is at odds with the rest of society who hold on to the belief 'that the longer we live together, Jews and Palestinian Arabs, the more this neighbourhood will do good things, and acquire good habits, and the best fence there is...is good neighbourliness' (137). Through the delineation of a disparity between the individual's and society's views of the relationship between Jewish and Arab communities Yizhar demonstrates that Palestinian Arab and Jewish territorial separation is imagined as being between two contrasting ideas: 'recklessness' and 'good neighbourliness.' While the first attitude expresses the idea

that the settlers have neglected to consider the dangers of the two communities living in close proximity, the second outlook conveys the perception that a sort of harmony can exist if the two communities leave one another alone. The protagonist exposes the second idea as a delusion.

In the closing pages of the novel, the twelve-year-old protagonist in *Preliminaries* is employed by the farmer Yehuda to transport the labourers and their harvest back to the farm. In the course of completing this task he comes to a realization:

suddenly he knows with certainty, without having any certainty...suddenly he knows that soon, almost unnoticed, none of this will remain...this place is not like all those other places where year after year and generation after generation the time of threshing comes regularly in its season...because everything here is provisional, and that ancient cycle of the year has no binding force here, it does not enter into the bloodstream of existence here, the external existence of this place...but everything that there is here is temporary and they are only pretending to be farmers, it's only temporarily that they sink in the yielding red sand or speed over the red clay, they all exist but not in the blood, not firmly grounded, nothing is solid here...the farmer nor his sons...and who knows, maybe yes and maybe no. (300-1)

Dan Miron asserts that in these lines ‘the protagonist experiences a sudden prophetic intuition of the ultimate failure of Zionism to create an authentic Jewish place, an authentic Jewish sense of living in a real home, belong to a specific place and to none other’<sup>128</sup>. While Miron demonstrates an awareness of Yizhar’s depiction of challenging the Zionist project, he relies on abstractions about ‘home’ and ‘Jewish place’ and thereby neglects the specific, agricultural practices of development and nation-building that are represented. These abstractions of considering literary

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<sup>128</sup> Dan Miron, “Introduction: A Late New Beginning” in S. Yizhar *Preliminaries*, trans. Nicholas De Lange (New Milford, Conn; London: Toby Press, 2007), 25-6.

representations of 'home' are symptomatic of a wider trend within postcolonial studies that I considered in my introduction. When one reads more closely, Yizhar's word choice of 'temporary', 'temporarily', 'provisionally' and 'pretending' reinforces the perception that the Yishuv's labouring on the land in order to facilitate agricultural production can only last for a limited time and, therefore cannot be permanent. In addition, these lines illustrate a lack of narrative closure which negates the Zionist development discourse and practice and resonates with *Breakdown and Bereavement*. Consequently, both novels critique the Yishuv's efforts to implement settler-colonialism and create a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Analysing different literary representations of Palestine demonstrates the articulation of different perspectives about the viability of the creation and maintenance of Zionist development. While Herzl's narrative presents the mainstream Zionist point of view that supports development incorporating agricultural colonization and labour, Brenner and Yizhar criticise this point of view. The very different moments of writing and publication of *Breakdown and Bereavement* and *Preliminaries* means this interrogation reflects different priorities. As such, while Hefetz experiences individual alienation from society and labour conditions, Yizhar's protagonist explores how labour through the use of agricultural technology is causing environmental damage to the land. Moreover, all three writers depict how Zionist development played a vital role in shaping relations between Palestinian Arab and Jewish labourers in Palestine. Brenner and Yizhar are essential in their respective creation and maintenance of Hebrew literature and intertwined with the role of the writer as prophet-watchman. Despite the fact that in this chapter the three narratives are more concerned about how the Palestinian Arab population



affects the implementation of settler-colonialism, the subject of my next chapter is how and why ‘Arab and Jewish societies in Palestine were mutually formative... [to] Zionism’s specific pattern of development.’<sup>129</sup> The next chapter highlights how Israel’s control of the economy led to different levels of economic prosperity, and thus development in Israel and the West Bank. In particular, I explore the representation of the economic impact of the occupation by Israel of the West Bank in Palestinian literature.

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<sup>129</sup> Lockman, *Comrades and Enemies*, 56-7.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Development Under Occupation in Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* and Raja Shehadeh's *Occupation Diaries*

[T]he West Bank and Gaza had experienced little economic development since 1967. For one thing, Israeli rule had not been accompanied by construction of the infrastructure necessary for significant and sustained economic development. ...this situation that forced many West Bank and Gaza Palestinians to seek work in Israel, meaning that the income gains associated with this pattern of employment were not an indication of development at all but, on the contrary, a sign of the continuing underdevelopment of the occupied territories.

- Mark Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*<sup>1</sup>

Using capital and exploitation as a means of describing the control mechanisms imposed on the Palestinians creates a certain framework for understanding the occupation. This framework assumes that this structure of exploitation and repression is prominent in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

- Shir Hever, *The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation*<sup>2</sup>

Designing Civic Encounter<sup>3</sup> is a multidisciplinary project which brings together artists, architects, academics and activists to explore the impact of the Israeli occupation and the transformation of urban space in the West Bank and Gaza, through essays, photographs and art installations. The project was combined with an event that took place between 21-24 July, 2011 with a bus tour, symposium and workshop in Ramallah, West Bank. Emily Lawrence explains that a 'theme which runs through the project is the rise of commercialism in Palestine's urban centers —

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<sup>1</sup> Mark A. Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 527.

<sup>2</sup> Shir Hever, *The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation* (London: Pluto, 2010), 153.

<sup>3</sup> "Designing Civil Encounter," *ArtTerritories*, accessed December 4, 2012, <http://www.artterritories.net/designingcivicencounter/>.

partly a result of neoliberal economic policies.’ These policies have ‘created inwards-looking [sic] spaces focused on individual material accumulation, rather than national liberation.’<sup>4</sup> Both the project and the second epigraph to this chapter highlight that processes of exploitation and domination exist not only through the military rule of the Israeli state but through its control of capital which gives power over resources, namely Palestinian land and labour.

One installation, entitled “The Zone,” explores the dissonance between image and reality and focuses on:

the discord created by billboards in public spaces, and their promotion of a globalized commercial dream at the expense of traditional heritage and symbolism. For example, billboards appropriate symbols of national heritage and the struggle for homeland, such as the olive or the Palestinian farmer, and adapt them to represent commercial trade and investment. Where previously public space was dominated by expressions of a collective dream of national liberation it is now replaced by an individuated consumerism.<sup>5</sup>

Neoliberalism and globalisation often erode state sovereignty and undermine articulations of national belonging by emphasising the fulfilment of the needs or desires of the individual or a certain group of individuals at the expense of the collective.<sup>6</sup> ‘What struck us as most significant is the way in which this new regime displaced the old collective “dreams” and gave birth to new political discourses and desires largely centered on consumption,’ write artists Basel Abbas and Ruanne

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<sup>4</sup> Emily Lawrence, “Transformation of Palestinian landscape focus of Designing Civic Encounter project,” *The Electronic Intifada*, February, 25, 2012, accessed February, 25, 2013, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/transformation-palestinian-landscape-focus-designing-civic-encounter-project/10950>, para.23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, para. 26.

<sup>6</sup> Ray Kiely, *The Clash of Globalisations: Neo-Liberalism, the Third Way, and Anti-Globalisation* (Chicago: Brill, 2005), Manfred B. Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

Abou-Rahme. ‘The absurdities of this are clear when we just stop to consider that in order for us to invest in this new dream we must somehow ignore...the colonial situation.’<sup>7</sup> The artists demonstrate the dialectic between the Palestinian Authority’s economic policies centred on increased commercialism, and consumption being centred on an individual’s “dreams”, rather than the well-being of the nation as a whole. Neoliberalism has generated increased investment in order to promote economic growth and create better living conditions for some people in urban areas at the expense of overlooking the on-going occupation. Similarly Raja Shehadeh observes, in his memoir *Occupation Diaries*, that: ‘[b]efore, we had none of these billboards that now dominate our skies, inviting us to borrow, buy and dream, as long as we do not dream of travelling beyond the borders of our own small city without being stopped by the occupation army’ (42). The idea of ‘dreams’ in both literature and other cultural production suggests a way of reacting to the billboards and economic policies they espouse that combines the real and imaginary and also articulates a desire for something different from present circumstances. Neoliberal development is also critiqued because of the way it creates individual prosperity at the expense of national consciousness and organised resistance to the on-going Israeli occupation.

This chapter explores Palestinian literature that has reached an international audience<sup>8</sup> by examining Sahar Khalifeh’s *Wild Thorns* (1976; Eng., 1984)<sup>9</sup> alongside

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<sup>7</sup> Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abourahme, “The Zone,” *ArtTerritories*, accessed February 27, 2012, [http://www.artterritories.net/designingcivencounter/?page\\_id=633](http://www.artterritories.net/designingcivencounter/?page_id=633), para. 7 and 15.

<sup>8</sup> *Wild Thorns* has been translated into English and *Occupation Diaries* was originally written in English.

<sup>9</sup> Sahar Khalifeh, *Wild Thorns* trans. Trevor LeGassick and Elizabeth Fernea. (Northampton Mass: Interlink Books, 2003).

Raja Shehadeh's *Occupation Diaries* (2012).<sup>10</sup> Both texts depict the lived experiences of the Palestinians in the West Bank, by centring on how this group was affected by the Israeli occupation from 1967 to the present. Reading these texts together, it is possible to appreciate how the evolution of Israel's economic policies has affected, and continues to affect, Palestinian economic development and social cohesion. I trace an historical trajectory from Khalifeh's novel which is set in the initial years of the occupation to Shehadeh's narrative, which is set in the present. Khalifeh protests against Israel's control of land and labour which resulted in the further decline in the Palestinian economy and the concomitant growth in the Israeli counterpart.<sup>11</sup> As Shir Hever acknowledges, it is essential to refer to 'two economies coexisting under Israeli control.'<sup>12</sup> In the last chapter, Brenner and Yizhar represented separate Palestinian Arab and Jewish economies. The Palestinian economy in the 1970s and 1980s was characterised by stagnation, lack of development and dependency on Israel. The Palestinian Authority inherited this stagnant, underdeveloped and dependent economy as part of the agreements that were reached during the Oslo Accords. Shehadeh criticises the Palestinian Authority's embrace of neoliberalism<sup>13</sup> and the foreign funding and investments for

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<sup>10</sup> Raja Shehadeh, *Occupation Diaries* (London: Profile, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Similarly to the first half of this chapter, Nejd Yaziji's article also explores the representation of the Israeli capitalist economy and socio-economic conditions under the occupation in *Wild Thorns*. Yaziji explores the influence of this economy and these conditions on Palestinian national identity. The biggest difference this article has with my thesis is contextual: my thesis is more recent, informed by events of the last decade, and inscribed in a more detailed comparative context. "Exile and Politics of (Self-) Representation: The Narrative of Bounded Space and Action in Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns*," in *Cross Addressing: Resistance Literature and Cultural Borders* ed. John C. Hawley (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 87-105.

<sup>12</sup> Hever, *The Political Economy*, 3.

<sup>13</sup> The relationship between neoliberalism and literary and cultural production is thoroughly explored in Jane Elliott and Gillian Harkins, "Introduction: Genres of Neoliberalism," *Social Text* 31, no. 2, 115 (Summer 2013): 1-17.

the negative impact on Palestinian infrastructure and independence. Exploring these texts together demonstrates that individualised consumerism weakens the desire to resist the Israeli occupation. This chapter argues that each text represents the clash between individual and collective well-being and Khalifeh and Shehadeh protest against economic measures which were put into practice in order to engender the pacification of the Palestinians, and by extension weaken any resistance efforts for national liberation.

This chapter starts with a brief historical background to Israeli development discourse and practice at the outset of the occupation because it is critical for contextualising the representation of the economic impact of the Israeli occupation on the West Bank in *Wild Thorns*. I then explore the status of Palestinian literature in the fields of postcolonial and world literature, which demonstrates the critical engagement and reception of the novels. My close reading of *Wild Thorns* is combined with an examination of the form of critical realism which demonstrates Khalifeh's critique of development.

### **Occupation: An Historical Overview**

The *Naksa* in June 1967 enabled Israel to control the Palestinian people and the resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) through military rule.<sup>14</sup> The Palestinian economy in the West Bank, underdeveloped and under Jordanian control prior to the 1967 war, stagnated further during the Israeli occupation. As Shir Hever recognises:

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<sup>14</sup> Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London, Vintage 1992)

[t]he occupation of the Palestinian territories defines Israel's economy in a large way. About two-thirds [or the whole] of Israel's history, it has been an occupying power, controlling Palestinian territories. But even before that occupation, Israel had created a very particular system of economic control which is designed to promote the idea of a Jewish state.<sup>15</sup>

Israel's economic control is apparent through the way in which Palestinian labour exportation to Israel and the surrounding Gulf States caused the subsequent decline of agricultural land because agricultural labourers sought better paid positions out with the OPT. This land was also confiscated for the construction of Israeli settlements.<sup>16</sup> Israeli policies concerning the control of land and labour reflect an ethnocentric motivation which describes that pursuit of privileging the citizens of the majority ethnic group at the expense of other ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup> Israeli state domination relied on the exploitation of Palestinian labour which resulted in the economy of the OPT being made dependent on the Israeli economy.

Moreover, Israel's creation of 'facts on the ground' through the occupation of and settlement in the OPT resulted in the further recognition of 'Israel [as] a colonial-settler state and society, both in foundation and in continuing practice.'<sup>18</sup> Adel Samara asserts that the

capitalist mode of production of Israeli settler colonialism, enforced by the Israeli military governorate, incorporated the

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<sup>15</sup> Shir Hever, interview by Paul Jay, "The Political Economy of Israel's Occupation," *Monthly Review*, June 7, 2010, accessed April 18, 2011, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2010/hever060710.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Neve Gordon, *Israel's Occupation* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*, 37.

<sup>18</sup> Bashir Abu-Manneh, "Israel in US Empire," *New Formations* 59 (2006): 36. Matzpen was the first significant Israeli group to propose this analysis in the 1960s. However, the idea of settler-colonialism is controversial and often actively dismissed within Israeli academia, as exemplified in Colin Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

West Bank economy so as to disarticulate its sectors internally. With this policy, the occupation precluded the possibility of independent capitalist development.<sup>19</sup>

Processes of exploitation and domination exist not only through the military rule of the Israeli state but through its control of capital. Control of capital allows the state to exercise complete power over resources, namely Palestinian land and labour, and accentuates the differences and inequality between the Palestinians and Israelis and between different classes in the West Bank. Samih Farsoun recognises that the ‘[t]he impact... [of Israeli dominance] on Palestinian society [is that it] dramatically re-arranged both the broad contours of the economic class structure and the inner character of the traditional political structures.’<sup>20</sup> As such, the power to control capital is in the hands of the dominant ethnic group who use this control in order to benefit and boost the development of their own ethnic group and adversely affect other groups. This disparity occasioned the stratification of Palestinians and Israelis and concomitantly different classes of Palestinians. Consequently, Israeli state domination perpetuated Palestinian underdevelopment and Israeli development and created new class differences in the occupied territories. Khalifeh’s novel highlights Palestinian underdevelopment and Israeli development and shows although there were class conflicts within Palestinian society before the occupation (for example, between landowners and agricultural labourers), new class conflicts were introduced and added into Palestinian society after occupation.

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<sup>19</sup> Adel Samara, “The Political Economy of the West Bank 1967-1987: From Peripheralisation to Development,” *Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle-East*. Available on-line at: <https://libcom.org/library/political-economy-west-bank-1967-1987-peripheralisation-development-adel-samara>

<sup>20</sup> Samih Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians* (Boulder, Colo.; Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), 220.



## **Palestinian Writing and World Literature**

As I explored in the previous chapter, Mandate Palestine from the perspective of Jewish immigrants is represented in Hebrew literature. These texts are also available to an international audience through translation and publication. The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature keeps a database listing Hebrew texts that have been published in translation.<sup>21</sup> However, prior to 2012, the representation of this period from the Palestinian perspective in Palestinian literature that has been translated into English went largely unacknowledged. The reason for this lack of recognition is articulated by M Lynx Qualey: ‘The recent period has been rich in historical novels and historical memoirs (such as *Travels with my Ottoman Uncle*) set in pre-Nakba Palestine (which is amazing, you know, because nobody existed and there was nothing to see)’.<sup>22</sup> Although, the tone of this assertion in brackets is clearly tongue in cheek, it does draw attention to the attitude that long existed in Zionist consciousness about Palestinians either being absent from Palestine or not existing as a distinct national group, which was reflected in and bolstered by the publishing industry’s lack of publications.

The online article above is intended as a response to a quotation from a Republican candidate Newt Gingrich during the 2011 U.S. presidential debates:

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<sup>21</sup> The website for the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature explains: ‘The Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature (ITHL) was founded in 1962 to acquaint foreign readers with the best of modern Hebrew literature. Over the years, the range of its activities has expanded far beyond translation. Concurrently, and largely in response to the work of ITHL, international interest in Hebrew literature has grown significantly. At present, Hebrew literature is published in 72 languages!’ Accessed March 1, 2013, [http://www.ithl.org.il/page\\_13057](http://www.ithl.org.il/page_13057).

<sup>22</sup> M. Lynx Qualey, “One-minute Review: Ibrahim Nasrallah’s ‘Time of White Horses,’” May 26, 2012, accessed December 6, 2012, <http://arablit.wordpress.com/2012/05/26/one-minute-review-ibrahim-nasrallahs-time-of-white-horses/>.

I think that we've had an invented Palestinian people who are in fact Arabs, and who were historically part of the Arab community. And they had a chance to go many places, and for a variety of political reasons we have sustained this war against Israel now since the 1940s, and it's tragic.<sup>23</sup>

Gingrich's assertion sets up a dichotomy between 'Imagined' Palestinians versus 'real' Americans, Israelis etc. However, the hypocritical and dangerous part of his view is that the Palestinians should be denied the right to define themselves as Palestinians because he perceives them to be Arabs from neighbouring states. This denial and therefore erasure of the Palestinians had most famously been expressed by the then Prime Minister Golda Meir, who had asserted, 'there is no such thing as a Palestinian people...they didn't exist'<sup>24</sup> in June 1969. In 1984, Meir's assertion was reinforced by the publication of Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine*. Peters' bestseller 'proved' through demographic studies, censuses and other 'official' documents that Palestine was practically empty prior to the beginning of Jewish settler-colonisation and Palestinians were not indigenous to the region because Arabs from the surrounding states emigrated there at the same time as the Jews.<sup>25</sup> Norman Finkelstein, among other Israeli revisionist historians, has since thoroughly disproved Peters' false assertions and distorted statistics.<sup>26</sup> Likewise, there is resonation of the difficulties

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<sup>23</sup> M Lynx Qualey, "U.S. Presidential Debate-season Reading Material (on Palestine)," December 11, 2011, accessed March 4, 2012, <http://arablit.wordpress.com/2011/12/11/u-s-presidential-debate-season-reading-material-on-palestine/>.

<sup>24</sup> Golda Meir, Statement to the *Sunday Times*, 15 June 1969. As cited in Shindler, *A History of Modern Israel*, 153.

<sup>25</sup> Joan Peters, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab-Jewish Conflict Over Palestine* (London: Michael Joseph, 1985)

<sup>26</sup> Norman G. Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

caused by the ‘permission to narrate’ with the publishing industry’s previous preconceptions that Palestinian narratives written or set in Mandate Palestine and before could not be published because ‘nobody existed and there was nothing to see’. Writers and publishers are slowly attempting to redress this elision of pre-1948 Palestinian history. For instance, in 2012, three texts on the pre-1948 period were translated and published in English: *Of Noble Origins* by Sahar Khalifeh, *As Though She Were Sleeping* by Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury, along with Ibrahim Nasrallah’s *Time of White Horses*. The publication of these novels reflects the fact that both publishers and readers are looking more closely at the origins of the conflict, including the wealth of literature about Ottoman and Mandate Palestine.

Literature from the post-Nakba period has gained more recognition, in terms of wider international publication and reception. In spite of this wider international readership, and as I highlighted in the Introduction, the relationship between postcolonial scholarship and Palestine has been fraught. By contrast, outside the academy and postcolonial studies, the circulation and consumption of Palestinian literature has increased in the last decade. Anna Bernard explains this change as follows:

the escalation of violence in Israel/Palestine between 2000 and 2004 (which Israeli officials were quick to link to the ‘war on terror’) increased the international visibility of the conflict, which in turn has strengthened the international Palestinian solidarity movement and expanded the metropolitan market for Palestinian cultural production.<sup>27</sup>

The international community’s growing awareness of the conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territories coincides with the Second Intifada which began in September

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<sup>27</sup> Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 4.

2000. This uprising followed in the wake of the breakdown of peace talks at Camp David and Ariel Sharon's visit to the al-Asqa Mosque in Jerusalem. Subsequently demonstrations against the occupation were widely reported in the media. John Collins points out that for Palestinians,

the media can be both a blessing and a curse. ... It means constantly having to defend oneself against broad-brush and often racist charges of "terrorism". ... media visibility has also functioned as a way for Palestinians to ensure that their struggle remains in the world's consciousness. ... This similar double-edged visibility... helps ensure that the Palestinian struggle, even when it is rendered problematically, remains accessible to a range of sympathetic audiences around the globe.<sup>28</sup>

Both Bernard and Collins stress how important 'visibility' and violence is to helping guarantee that the Palestinians remain prominent in the international community's consciousness. As a consequence of this prominence, international activism, advocacy and solidarity with the Palestinian cause increased at this time through non-violent protests. Indeed, Israel's recent 'Operation: Protective Edge' and extreme violence in Gaza, once again elicited huge international public condemnation. In contrast to the institutional response to Palestinian writing, the political engagement and activism of the general public is precisely what has engaged their interest and increased the readership of Palestinian literature.

Many metropolitan reviews of new Palestinian literature often draw attention to its success in circumventing the 'permission to narrate'<sup>29</sup> and the place it occupies as world literature. A symptomatic example is Tam Hussein's review of *Time of White Horses* in which he argues that the novel 'attempts to safe guard that [Palestinian]

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<sup>28</sup> John Collins, *Global Palestine* (Hurst: London, 2011), 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Said, "Permission to Narrate," 27-48.

identity and though it is not argumentative or defiant, its contribution to Palestinian identity and world literature is just as important.<sup>30</sup> The reference to ‘world literature’ provides a way to build on the consideration of the place of Palestinian literature within postcolonial literary studies. Franco Moretti’s seminal study on world literature provides a definition of the term:

World literature: one and unequal. I will borrow this initial hypothesis from the world-system school of economic history, for which international capitalism is a system that is simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and a semiperiphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality. One, and unequal: *one* literature (*Weltliteratur*, singular, as in Goethe and Marx), or perhaps, better, one world literary system (of inter-related literatures); but a system which is different from what Goethe and Marx had hoped for, because it’s profoundly unequal.<sup>31</sup>

Khalifeh’s and Shehadeh’s texts can be read as response to the economic system on both a global and a national level and in terms of both content and form. Sharae Deckard draws on Moretti’s passage above to assert: ‘Moretti’s emphasis on “one, and unequal” calls for a new consideration of the aesthetics of world literatures in light of the Marxist theory of combined and uneven development.’<sup>32</sup> World literature is further defined by Moretti as an encounter between ‘Western forms and local reality’<sup>33</sup> and Khalifeh’s and Shehadeh’s significance as Palestinian ‘world writers’ can be linked to their formal strategies, particularly the use of critical realism.

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<sup>30</sup> Tam Hussein, “Review: Time of the White Horses,” *New Statesman*, December 4, 2012, accessed December 6, 2012, <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/culture/2012/12/review-time-white-horses>, para. 4.

<sup>31</sup> Franco Moretti, “Conjectures of World Literature,” *New Left Review* 1 (January-February 2000): 55-6.

<sup>32</sup> Sharae Deckard, “Deformed Narrators: Postcolonial Genre and Peripheral Modernity in Mabanckou and Pepetela,” in *Locating Post-colonial Narrative Genres* eds. Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (New York: Routledge, 2013), 92.

<sup>33</sup> Moretti, “Conjectures...” 62.

Literary realism can be divided into two primary categories: critical realism and socialist realism.<sup>34</sup> According to György Lukács, the two modes are linked by their ‘alliance’<sup>35</sup> in opposition to modernism. Lukács highlights that realism is a method for writers to represent ‘the totality of the society in its immediacy and... its pattern of development.’<sup>36</sup> While the focus of this chapter is critical realism and Khalifeh’s use of this mode in *Wild Thorns*; in Chapter Four of the thesis, I explore socialist realism and how it is utilised by Sivanandan and Kodithuwakku in their texts. Lukács asserts that ‘critical realism transforms the positive and negative elements of bourgeois life into ‘typical’ situations and reveals them for what they are.’<sup>37</sup> This creation of ‘typical’ characters can be seen in *Wild Thorns* through the stereotypical characters who each allegorise certain perspectives about Palestinian life under occupation: including a member of the armed resistance movement, the exiled returnee, the worker in Israel. The Lukácian notion of realism ‘aiming at a truthful reflection of reality’<sup>38</sup> means critical realism analyses as well as reflects thereby enabling Khalifeh to evaluate the lived experiences of Palestinians under Israeli occupation and illustrate the multiplicity of lives and perspectives within this society. Rima Najjar Merriman argues that Palestinian writers

see their role not merely as witnessing and reflecting on the unfortunate events that have befallen them. ... These writers invite Western readers to enter imaginatively into the existential world that Palestinians depict in their literature, a main function of which is to “shed light” on their reality, to

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<sup>34</sup> György Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, Trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1979), 93-135.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 100.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 68.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 23.

clarify the way they think about themselves and the world around them.<sup>39</sup>

Merriman highlights the idea that Palestinian writers use their literature to represent the occupation, which can ‘shed light’ and ‘clarify’ the situation, thereby helping ‘Western readers’ understand.

### **Sahar Khalifeh’s *Wild Thorns***

Born in Nablus in 1941, Sahar Khalifeh is considered ‘one of the foremost Palestinian novelists.’<sup>40</sup> Her works include novels which have been translated into nine languages including English and Hebrew, as well as non-fiction writing and a memoir.<sup>41</sup> Khalifeh’s second novel *al-Sabbar* was first published in Arabic in 1976, translated into English in 1984 as *Wild Thorns*, and explores the initial years of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank which followed the *Naksa* of June 1967.

Khalifeh acknowledges that the text occupies a central place in Palestinian literature as ‘the first novel that came out after the occupation.’<sup>42</sup> Set in 1972, *Wild Thorns* offers a detailed representation of the economic impact of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. The narrative is articulated through multiple narrators who not only hold different perspectives about the occupation but because of their diverse social

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<sup>39</sup> Rima Najjar Merriman, “No Ordinary Place: Writers and Writing in Occupied Palestine,” *World Literature Today*, May/June 2012, accessed October 31, 2013, <http://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/2012/may/no-ordinary-place-writers-and-writing-occupied-palestine-rima-najjar-merriman#.UnKJJOpFDIV>, para.38.

<sup>40</sup> Salma Khadra Jayyusi, *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 1992), 589.

<sup>41</sup> As well as English, her works have been translated into Hebrew, French, Dutch, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Swedish, and Malay. Khalil Sakakini Culture Centre, “Sahar Khalifeh,” accessed June 2, 2011 <http://www.sakakini.org/literature/saharwriting.htm>.

<sup>42</sup> Therese Saliba and Jeanne Kattan, “Palestinian Women and the Politics of Reception,” in *Going Global: the Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* eds. Amireh, Amal and Lisa Suhair Majaj (New York: Garland, 2000), 90. See also Sahar Khalifeh, “My Life, Myself, and the World,” *Al-Jadid Magazine* 8, no. 39 (2002), accessed February 3, 2012, [www.aljadid.com/content/my-life-myself-and-world](http://www.aljadid.com/content/my-life-myself-and-world)

classes they are also affected differently. Taken together, these disparate experiences draw attention to how the new economic and social reality brought about by the occupation affected individuals and Palestinian society as a whole. Nevertheless, it is not only the content of *Wild Thorns* but also the formal strategies Khalifeh uses which clearly resonate with this goal of depicting Palestinian lived experience under occupation. In addition to the use of realism, Khalifeh's depiction of Palestinian society is strengthened through the way she 'mix[es] colloquial and classical Arabic... faithfully reproducing "street language."...She depicts her characters through local idioms, proverbs, spontaneous verse.'<sup>43</sup> By choosing to utilise this language, including idioms, Khalifeh highlights an intention to depict not the elite but rather the lived experience and perspective of the 'fragments'.

*Wild Thorns* opens with one of the protagonists of the novel, Usama, returning to the West Bank, after several years living and working in the Gulf. After crossing an Israeli checkpoint into the West Bank, he recognises that unskilled and semi-skilled labour opportunities in Israel became have become available for Palestinians.<sup>44</sup>

Looking around the market Usama observes that

The people no longer seemed so poverty-stricken. They dressed fashionably now. They bought things without haggling. There seemed to be a lot of money about. There were more sources of employment and wages had gone up. Prices had risen, but people were eating meat, vegetables and fruit voraciously, as though they were starved, stuffing their

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<sup>43</sup> Suha Sabbagh, "Women Writers and the Intifada," *Social Text* 22 (1989): 72-3. A note on the back-cover of *Wild Thorns* cites the *Middle East Journal* with the following evaluation: 'the translators have successfully conveyed in readable English the flavor of the Palestinian idiom and sense of humor.'

<sup>44</sup> Other texts in English translation which depict Palestinians from the West Bank who work in Israel include Ghareeb 'Asqalani's short story "Hunger" in Jayyusi, *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, 381-88.



children. Those who had once owned not so much as a sweater now swaggered about in leather jackets. (26-7)

Initially employment appears to have led to material improvements in the lives of the lower classes of Palestinian society, namely the peasants who previously worked the land and the servants in the more affluent Palestinian households. Farsoun asserts that

[o]n the economic front, in the post-1967 war period, Israel's previously staggering economy boomed... This upward structural shift reoriented Jewish labour toward higher-paid technical service sectors and created a demand for low-skilled and cheap labour, especially in construction and agriculture, which was filled by Palestinians from the newly conquered territories.<sup>45</sup>

It is essential to bear in mind that Khalifeh's novel refers to the economic order of this particular time. The only time that Palestinian labour was used significantly was in the early days of settlement as highlighted in Chapter One, before the idea of 'Hebrew labour' or exclusive Jewish labour took hold, and in the brief post-1967 period in which *Wild Thorns* is set. The phenomenon of Palestinian labour in Israel largely ended with the first intifada when the Israeli closure policy resulted in a considerable reduction of Palestinians employed in Israel, although this was modified in subsequent months. Nevertheless, the perception that Palestinian workers represent a security threat to Israel prompted the Israeli state to replace Palestinian workers with other low-wage workers, including new immigrants from the former Soviet Union and other countries.<sup>46</sup> Palestinian labour is still integral to

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<sup>45</sup> Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 224.

<sup>46</sup> Hever, *The Political Economy*, 45.

Israeli economic production inside the West Bank, for example in settlement construction or in factories like Sodastream.

Usama goes on to evaluate how and why society has changed: ‘something was different. The servant girls were servants no more, and the class ladder was less steep. Everyone seemed well fed’ (27). Khalifeh illustrates that the improvements in standards of living for those individuals who constituted the formerly underprivileged class of Palestinian society means that a new class was introduced into Palestinian society after occupation. Elia Zureik argues that Palestinian peasantry underwent ‘marginal proletarianization’ following 1967, which resulted in two socio-economic consequences: the removal of Palestinians from traditional village life through their seeking of employment in Israel, and the lack of economic production due to the decline and stagnancy of local village agriculture.<sup>47</sup> When Usama goes to visit his family’s ancestral home, this dual change in circumstances is made explicit:

It was a large house, a real old-style mansion. There were marble pillars, high vaulted ceilings and an open courtyard paved with huge stones. In the middle of the courtyard was a pool, surrounded by lemon trees and sweet-smelling jasmine....But there was a sense that time had sapped the strength of everything in the house...There were no servants or family retainers left, they had all gone with the other workers to run the factories of Israel. These days a worker’s income rivalled that of the head of the household. (33)

The control of labour is no longer in the hands of the Palestinian upper classes, but has been transferred to the Israeli state which is able to offer economic incentives to the lower classes. This transformation of servants into a proletariat or working class

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<sup>47</sup> Elia Zureik, “Transformation of the Class Structure Among Arabs in Israel: From Peasantry to Proletariat,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 1 (1976): 39-66.

labour force, and the concomitant transformation of the relationship between classes is illustrated in terms of how these changes have fragmented the previous structure of Palestinian society.

In an interview Khalifeh argued that submitting to the new economic conditions created by the Israeli occupation was ‘an act of social defiance’ through which the transformed Palestinian peasants challenged traditional structures of class oppression.<sup>48</sup> This ‘act of social defiance’ is clearly evident in one of the workers who defends the incentives of working in Israel when he reveals ‘Deprivation? We’ve certainly had enough of that, I can tell you, professor. These days we workers are beginning to live like you privileged people always have’ (46). Moreover, as we saw from the passage I cited in the paragraph above: ‘[t]hese days a worker’s income rivalled that of the head of the household.’ (33) Mark Tessler recognises the economic impact of this transformation:

although many Palestinians acknowledged that there had also been gains since 1967, they asserted that most could have been achieved without occupation and, more fundamentally, that dependency and distortion, not economic development, had been the principal consequence of Israeli rule. ...the economies of the West Bank and Gaza were based largely, and increasingly, on the export of unskilled labour.<sup>49</sup>

Khalifeh’s evaluation in *Wild Thorns* shows that that this was only possible because of the economy of the OPT being subsumed, and thus made dependent on the Israeli economy. Specifically the pointed phrase: ‘they had all gone with the other workers

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<sup>48</sup> As cited in Muhammad Siddiq, “The Fiction of Sahar Khalifeh: Between Defiance and Deliverance,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no.2 (1987): 147-8.

<sup>49</sup> Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, 526.

to run the factories of Israel' demonstrates that the motivation for providing the Palestinians with employment were far from altruistic.

Moreover, the improvements for the newly proletarianized Palestinian inhabitants in the West Bank take place on an individual rather than societal level. The Israeli historian Ilan Pappé argues that '[l]ife under occupation was not the simple dichotomy of brutal occupier and an oppressed occupied. The impulse to rebel was mitigated by individual expectations of improvement and hopes of profiting from the new socio-economic conditions developing under the occupation'<sup>50</sup>. As such this sense of individualism enables Israel to continue to control labour and improve their economy as well as weakening the Palestinian desire to protest or resist. Shir Hever asserts that Israel 'made conscious efforts to improve the standard of living of Palestinians and increase employment and productivity, in order to improve their control over the occupied population and stifle resistance.'<sup>51</sup> In the passage from *Wild Thorns* above, Usama's family home, representing the bourgeois section of society, has fallen into disrepair as a result of this new employment: 'there was a sense that time had sapped the strength of everything in the house'. The sense of stagnation suggests that Palestinian development has stalled with the transformation of the economy along with class relations.

As I showed, albeit tangentially in Chapter One, agriculture was the main livelihood and way of life for most Palestinians prior to the occupation. However, following the occupation and as a result of Israeli military rule, one of the most

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<sup>50</sup> Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 202.

<sup>51</sup> Hever, *The Political Economy*, 9.

important resources which Israel capitalised on within the occupied territories was Palestinian labour, which had significant consequences for the neglect of agricultural land. The abandoned and uncultivated Karmi farm in *Wild Thorns* is described by Usama: '[t]he road to the farm looked as though it hadn't been used recently. Grass grew wild over the paths. The little building once used as a reception room was locked up.' (39) Adil, Usama's cousin, reinforces and explains the direct correlation between the decline of the farm and disappearance of the workers: 'The old farm had been as green as the fields, he thought, the plants grew up to my waist, the banana trees were as tall as the sky...our trees died of thirst, not fire, the workers took off and the land died' (51). At the start of the occupation, many Palestinian farmers abandoned their farmlands in order to work in Israel. Farmlands that were left uncultivated for a number of weeks were then confiscated by the Israeli state on the basis that they were not being properly utilised.<sup>52</sup>

Through the Israeli state's creation of employment opportunities in Israel for West Bankers, there was not only a decline in agricultural development but also a weakening of land control, as agriculture became no longer profitable for either labourers or Palestinian landlords. Farsoun asserts that the process was 'intended to rule out the possibility of returning the land to Arab control.'<sup>53</sup> In *Wild Thorns*, an elderly labourer, Abu Shehadeh, who has not left the farm, criticises the West Bank economic structure prior to Israeli occupation in which he worked as an agricultural labourer but was unable to own any land. He exclaims 'I'm just a hired hand. I've

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<sup>52</sup> Leila H. Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel: Labour, Land and Occupation* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005), 46.

<sup>53</sup> Farsoun, *Palestine and the Palestinians*, 218.

been here all my life. I don't own any land... The land isn't mine or Shahada's, so why should we care about it?' (42). The labourer expresses his continued presence on the land, although, unlike Usama, he does not feel connected to it or concerned about who has ownership. He also explains the motivation of those peasants who previously worked on the farm have gone to work in Israel, 'it's better over there... Lots of money... Yeah better over there. Lots of money. Plenty of easy work' (41). The demise of agriculture, and with it the decline of agricultural land as a source of wealth, translates into a further weakening of the Palestinian economy and the transformation, despite the serious inequalities, of the traditional Palestinian social structure. As such, Israel is responsible for a powerful combination of three inter-related actions: alienating Palestinian frontier/fertile land; renaming the land and preventing the return of Palestinians to the land.

Consequently, the narrative goes on to depict how the promise of increased consumption also weakens Palestinian resistance to Israeli domination. Through a representation of the disparity that exists between the prosperity of the Israeli market and the conditions of poverty in which the Palestinians population in the West Bank live, Khalifeh draws attention to further unevenness between the two societies. The Palestinians in *Wild Thorns* are presented as exploited because compliance with the Israeli market is their only option and commodity consumption enables Israeli control of capital to continue. Moreover, the traders in the OPT, following the start of the occupation, operated in a market totally controlled by Israel. As Usama observes:

A big handcart piled full of boxes and bags of foodstuffs passed between them, separating them momentarily. Still not speaking, they crossed the main boulevard. The street peddlers cried out their wares: 'Fish from Gaza!' 'Oranges from Jaffa!' 'Bananas from Jericho!'... people went about

their daily business, buying bread, vegetables and fruit. As they turned off into a narrow street leading to the old part of town, a stench of damp and rot, garbage and decay, assaulted Usama's nostrils. Rotten fruit and vegetables were strewn at the base of the walls and a rusty barrel of fish stood in the middle of the pavement. The cobblestones were littered with muddy bits of paper' (27-8).

The difference in material conditions clearly demonstrates how the Israeli occupation has created a persistent reality of inseparability between Israel and the West Bank and also caused internal divisions within Palestinian society. Pappé asserts that '[t]raders and businessmen strengthened their ties with the Israeli economy, lured by the hopes of a higher standard of living. The less fortunate members of society, poor, unemployed farmers and peasants live in cramped conditions'<sup>54</sup>. The underdevelopment of the latter section of society in *Wild Thorns* is evinced through a further description of a Palestinian neighbourhood in the West Bank:

Usama pushed open the creaking wooden door and they found themselves in a small, paved courtyard. In front of the steps stood a bucket of rubbish which oozed a black liquid... He tried to cover his embarrassment by gazing around him; filth and poverty were apparent everywhere. His nose was filled with the stench of decomposition and decay. He felt depressed and nauseated. (81)

The poverty and deprivations that Usama is confronted with highlights the living conditions that many West Bankers experienced. The repetition of 'stench' and 'decay' in the two passages reinforces the decline of Palestinian society and means that Palestinian development has stalled with the transformation of the economy along with class relations.

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<sup>54</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 202.

Moreover, the underdeveloped Palestinian economy deteriorated further due to the West Bank's dependence on Israeli imports for many of the goods Palestinians consumed. Mona Younis recognises that through 'a policy of "open borders" between Israel and the occupied territories, the latter were rapidly becoming exporters of cheap and unorganised labour and importers of Israeli goods'<sup>55</sup>. Near-exclusive importation of goods from Israel is combined with the double taxation that the state levies on the Palestinian inhabitants. Usama's friend appears to be accepting of this situation when he tells him 'I eat Israeli rice, Israeli tahini and Israeli sugar. Commodities lose their nationality as soon as they reach Eilat. And we pay double taxes on everything, first to the nation of origin, then to the new one' (21). The implication of the phrase 'Commodities lose their nationality' is that the double taxes are on imports from other countries (producing sugar, sesame, rice) which are then re-taxed as imports from Israel. However one character does recognise the consequences of compliance. Zuhdi observes, 'While the factory [in Israel] goes on producing and the people continue consuming. And the Shalom building keeps growing higher, the West Bank bellies get fatter' (139). The reference to the Shalom Tower is particularly significant because when it was built and *Wild Thorns* is set, it was the tallest building in the Middle East. As such, the combination of labour compliance and increasing levels of consumption from the Israeli market create superficial improvements in individual West Bankers' lives. However, these factors have only been achieved through increased Israeli economic prosperity: 'the factory goes on producing' which in turn means 'building[s] keep growing higher' and highlights the boom in Israeli urban development.

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<sup>55</sup> Younis, *Liberation and Democratization*, 114.



Complicity or acquiescence with the Israeli state also comes from the Palestinians who have benefited from opportunities abroad but not aided in the construction of the Palestinian economy. Ilan Pappé has identified the West Bank's economic underdevelopment after 1967 to be a result of a number of factors including the 'mass emigration' of West Bankers to the Gulf States in the 1970s.<sup>56</sup> During the oil boom of the 1970s, the neighbouring Gulf States provided a very attractive market for skilled Palestinian workers. Adil draws Usama's attention to the differences between Palestinians living in the occupied territories and those living in relative prosperity in other Arab states:

Palestinians in Kuwait, Dhahran and the Gulf? Let them help build industries in the West Bank and Gaza and we'd stop working "inside" straight away. But they won't do that. You know why? Because they don't want to risk their money; yet they want *us* to bear all the burdens of risk and sacrifice on our own. (98)

Palestinian society is not only spatially differentiated in terms of physical location, but also in the unevenness that this separation has created between the different groups' economic and social realities. Pappé also argues that immigration to the Gulf since the 1950s means that '[i]n the national Palestinian narrative, these refugees are disparagingly presented as having chosen personal wealth rather than political participation in the national effort'<sup>57</sup>. Intrinsically, Khalifeh's narrative demonstrates that the Palestinians in exile are perceived to be in a better position economically, but this has only been achieved at the expense of the deprivations and poverty of those Palestinians in the West Bank. Thus, Khalifeh represents a Palestinian population

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<sup>56</sup> Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 206. Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Men in the Sun* trans. Hilary Kilpatrick (Boulder, Colorado; London: Lynne Rienner, 1998) depicts three men's attempt to smuggle themselves into Kuwait in a large water tank.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

that is dispossessed and geographically fragmented in order to demonstrate the vast differences that exist between and function to separate the two groups. Her evaluation also simultaneously highlights that these groups' experiences are mutually dependent, and have both been caused by Israel's control of the economy which led to different levels of economic prosperity and thus development.

This juxtaposition of unevenness is reinforced by Basil who also makes apparent the motivations influencing West Bank Palestinians decisions to emigrate:

[O]ur families begin pressuring us to get the highest grades so we can become doctors and engineers. Once we've actually become doctors and engineers, they demand we pay them back for the cost of our studies. And our parents don't work their fingers to the bone paying for our education so that we'll return and work for peanuts at home. So the only solution is emigration, which means working in Saudi Arabia, Libya, and the Gulf. What's the result of all this? Educated people leave the country, and only workers and peasants remain. And that's exactly what Israel wants to happen. (59)

Indeed the fact that the educational system in the West Bank continued to be geared toward white-collar employment meant that emigration was the only option for graduates as the Palestinian labour market was unable to absorb them. Usama's mother recognises this problem when she tells her son 'Today there are absolutely no government jobs. And none in the UNRWA either' (37). The government and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees are the main employers in the West Bank and Gaza. Pappé also asserts that '[e]ducational infrastructure was essential for those anxious to escape from economic and social hardship, but opportunities were not always available...due to discriminatory laws and conduct, Palestinians could never hope to work in jobs that matched their

qualifications or answered their reasonable expectations.’<sup>58</sup> The discrepancy between education and occupation, then, meant that there were only two options open to Palestinians in the years following the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Either stay put, lower your expectations and be part of a society where ‘only workers and peasants remain’ or emigrate in order to fulfil your potential but live a life in exile. Either option, according to Adil comprises ‘exactly what Israel wants to happen’ because it allows the Israeli economy to flourish and further weakens Palestinian resistance to Israeli domination. However, it is important to note that labour exportation to the Gulf dropped dramatically in the late 1980s as a result of a number of factors. These factors included the collapse of the oil boom and the onset of the first intifada as well as the expulsion of Palestinian workers from Kuwait and other states as a consequence of the first Gulf War.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the combination of a stagnant economy and high Palestinian unemployment levels in the West Bank means that uneven development continues unabated.

In the novel’s denouement, in spite of the Israeli forces demolishing Adil’s house, which personifies his ties to the past and thus destroys his present, there is a resolution to re-build and re-plant all that has been lost. Adil explains, ‘You’d turn everything upside-down and begin again. Slowly, very slowly. Here a seedling. There a tree. Here a flower’ (206). Sari Hanafi asserts that ‘Palestinians have focused particularly on construction, which may be considered the most effective means of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 150.

<sup>59</sup> Jamil Hilal, “Assessing the Impact of Migration on Palestinian Society in the West Bank and Gaza,” CARIM Research Reports 2007/02, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI): European University Institute, 2007, 32. [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/7987/CARIM-RR\\_2007\\_02.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/7987/CARIM-RR_2007_02.pdf?sequence=1)

non-violent resistance'<sup>60</sup>. In spite of Adil's evocation of *sumûd* or steadfastness,<sup>61</sup> which refers to Palestinians who refuse to leave their homeland, the final lines of the novel suggest the lack of change to the status quo. As such, when Adil returns to the marketplace, '[h]e stood on the pavement watching the people on their way home, on their way to work. They lived their lives stoically, silently. Nothing had changed... People went about their business, buying vegetables, fruit and bread' (207).

However, unlike the Palestinian inhabitants who 'lived their lives stoically, silently', Khalifeh's narrative has been neither silent nor stoic. Indeed because Khalifeh's representation of the West Bank in *Wild Thorns* has made the reader aware of the exploitation of the Palestinians both economically and socially and also the reasons for the fragmentation of society, these last lines serve as a reinforcement and indictment of how unevenness will continue unless something is done to challenge it.

Moreover, Khalifeh acknowledges that the US-led global order ensures that unevenness is able to occur and continue. Israeli domination is backed up internally through military rule, but also externally through the military and economic resources provided by the U.S.<sup>62</sup> Usama and a group of men gathered round a radio listen to the news and hear that the 'American Secretary of Defence had made a new statement about arms shipments to Israel. Phantom jets. More and more phantoms.

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<sup>60</sup> Sari Hanafi, "Targeting Space Through Bio-Politics: The Israeli Colonial Project," *Palestine Report* (2004), accessed February 18, 2011, [http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~sh41/dr\\_sarry\\_website/publications/135\\_Ordre%20colonial\\_and\\_Huminitarian-pal-report.pdf](http://staff.aub.edu.lb/~sh41/dr_sarry_website/publications/135_Ordre%20colonial_and_Huminitarian-pal-report.pdf).

<sup>61</sup> I am indebted to Barbara Harlow on this point of Adil as an example of Raja Shehadeh's conceptualisation of the "third way". See Barbara Harlow, "Partitions and Precedents: Sahar Khalifeh and Palestinian Political Geography," in *Intersections: Gender, Nation, and Community in Arab Women's Novels* eds. Lisa Suhair Majaj, Paula W Sunderman, and Therese Saliba (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 2002), 113-31.

<sup>62</sup> Tom Segev, *Elvis in Jerusalem: Post-Zionism and the Americanization of Israel* trans. Haim Watzman (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 49.

Billions of dollars flooding into Israel's treasury' (179). While only the US provides direct military aid in the form of \$3 billion a year, other countries also support Israel by buying Israeli goods, including produce, electronics, and military technology.<sup>63</sup> Mona Younis argues that 'U.S. support has been, without question, vital to the state of Israel...aid has enabled Israeli citizens to live at a higher standard of living than their economy could have afforded them.'<sup>64</sup> The reason for this support can be explained by the way in which the state of Israel supported Western interests during the Cold War, and Israel/Palestine's proximity to the oil-rich Arab states proved to be strategically valuable to the Western powers, not least the U.S. In particular, the US government recognised how Israel could quash Arab revolutionary nationalism and protect US oil interests in the Middle East.<sup>65</sup> Also, in comparison to the Palestinians, the 'Israelis have vocal and ethnic counterparts'<sup>66</sup>, specifically in the U.S., who were able to effectively influence and thereby, create governmental support, both when the state of Israel was established and following the 1967 war, as well as during the present period. Khalifeh herself once stressed that

you cannot liberate the Arabs without liberating the Israelis;  
you cannot liberate the Israelis without liberating the  
Americans. It is a chain. You cannot liberate one part and  
ignore the other if you want the final solution...So the  
economic factor, the sociological aspect, the class system, the  
ruling power, the other powers from outside, imperialism,  
colonialism, they are so interrelated that you cannot solve

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<sup>63</sup> Avi Shlaim, "The United States and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," in *Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order* eds. Ken Booth and Timothy Dunne (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 182.

<sup>64</sup> Younis, *Liberation and Democratization*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> Abu-Manneh, "Israel in US Empire," 40; 45.

<sup>66</sup> Younis, *Liberation and Democratization*, 10.

one part of the problem and say this is the solution.  
NEVER.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, unevenness can only be tackled by taking into consideration the multiple components that enable it to perpetuate unabated and unchallenged. Consequently, *Wild Thorns* represents not only an evaluation but also an impassioned protest against the uneven local and global order.

### **The Adoption of Neoliberalism**

In 1977, the election of the Likud Party government, led by Menachem Begin, initiated a change in the direction of Israel's economic policies. This shift was a consequence of the introduction of 'a variety of steps including exposing local markets to imports...deregularisation of business practices....and drastic reductions of welfare spending.'<sup>68</sup> The formal introduction of neoliberal policy into the OPT came about as a consequence of the Paris Protocol, the section under the Oslo Accords which outlined the economic agreements between Israel and Palestine. Although the Accords ended direct military rule in some parts of the OPT and civilian rule was transferred to the Palestinian Authority, Israel continued to control Palestinian space (restructured and reorganised into three distinct areas, A, B and C) and the economic sphere.<sup>69</sup> Almost twenty years later, the Palestinian economy

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<sup>67</sup> Peter Nazareth, "An Interview with Sahar Khalifeh," *Iowa Review* 11, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 82. The year of this interview, 1980, is significant because it coincides with Israel's declaration that Jerusalem "whole and unified" is the Israeli capital, *Basic Law - Jerusalem, Capital of Israel*, Israel, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, this clause was declared "null and void" and "in violation of international law" by UN Security Council Resolution 478 (1980).

<sup>68</sup> George Ritzer, *Globalization: A Basic Text* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 2010), 98.

<sup>69</sup> Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 6-25. See also Raja Khalidi and Sahar Taghdisi-Rad, *The Economic Dimensions of Prolonged Occupation: Continuity and Change in Israeli Policy Towards the Palestinian Economy* (New York and Geneva: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2009).

continues to be dependent on Israel and on Western donors and funders for development aid and humanitarian assistance. As Maurya Wickstrom argues:

[w]hen the international community sends NGOs...they are relying on Palestine, the space of Palestine, to be a representation of a moment of fixed time, where history has brought about certain conditions. They are relying on it to be placated and tamed, a receptive surface, a place reduced to total dependency. They look to the space of Palestine in the future to represent yet another moment in the unfolding of a narrative of development: when Palestine will be a success story for neoliberalism.<sup>70</sup>

The World Bank propagates this neoliberal paradigm and enduring Palestinian dependence by stressing the need for Western donor aid to sustain the economy.<sup>71</sup>

Shir Hever acknowledges that Israel was ‘hoping to transform the occupation from a colonial into a neo-colonial project, to allow the Palestinians their own autonomy (in order to keep the population docile), but to ensure continued economic dependency.’<sup>72</sup> This idea of docility suggests a sense of Palestinian passivity with Israel which demonstrates the unequal relationship between the two actors. This inequity is re-emphasised by Edward Said who aptly described, in an essay written not long before his death, the way that the Oslo Accords ‘seeks not to establish peace but to effect pacification.’<sup>73</sup> The difference between peace and pacification is not merely one of semantics. Rather, while peace suggests a relationship between equals, pacification suggests the placating or subordination of a weaker group to a stronger

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<sup>70</sup> Maurya Wickstrom, *Performance in the Blockades of Neoliberalism: Thinking the Political Anew* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 46.

<sup>71</sup> World Bank, “Developing the Occupied Territories: An Investment in Peace,” (Washington, DC: The World Bank Group, 1993). [http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1993/09/01/000009265\\_3970311123238/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/1993/09/01/000009265_3970311123238/Rendered/PDF/multi0page.pdf)

<sup>72</sup> Hever, *The Political Economy*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Edward Said, “The Latest Peace Plan,” *Z Communications*, June 23, 2003, accessed January, 10, 2012, <http://www.zcommunications.org/the-latest-peace-plan-by-edward-said>.

one. Consequently, the combination of pacification and neoliberalism perpetuates the underdevelopment of the Palestinian economy and the continuation of the Israeli occupation.

The Palestinian Authority government, led by President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, in consultation with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, proposed the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan (PRDP) in December 2007. The program was based on ‘rebuilding the Palestinian national institutions’ and ‘developing the Palestinian public and private sectors.’<sup>74</sup> This plan was expanded with a neoliberal state-building program entitled ‘Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State’ in August 2009. The strategy paper reads that the PA are committed to ‘confront[ing] the whole world with the reality that Palestinians are united and steadfast in their determination to remain on their homeland, end the occupation, and achieve their freedom and independence.’ Further, the economic system in ‘Palestine shall be based on the principles of a free market economy.’<sup>75</sup> However, Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour argue that the program is

predicated upon delivering growth and prosperity without any strategy for resistance or challenge to the parameters of occupation. The program is inspired by a model of neoliberal governance increasingly widespread in the region, indeed in neo-colonial states around the world, but which socially,

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<sup>74</sup> The full report is available at: [www.mop-gov.ps/issues\\_details.php?pid=17](http://www.mop-gov.ps/issues_details.php?pid=17)

<sup>75</sup> United Nations, “Ending the Occupation, Establishing the State,” [http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/palestine/shared/documents/Ending%20Occupation%20Establishing%20the%20State%20\(August%202009\).pdf](http://www.un.int/wcm/webdav/site/palestine/shared/documents/Ending%20Occupation%20Establishing%20the%20State%20(August%202009).pdf)



culturally, and politically remains an alien creation of the Washington-based international financial institutions.<sup>76</sup>

As such, neoliberalism undermines state-building because it weakens any resistance efforts for national liberation through the pacification of the Palestinians.

### **Raja Shehadeh's *Occupation Diaries***

Born in 1951, Raja Shehadeh is a writer, human rights activist and land lawyer, who lives in Ramallah, West Bank. Shehadeh's narratives based on his journals – *The Third Way* (1984), *When the Bulbul Stopped Singing* (2003), *Palestinian Walks* (2008) and *Occupation Diaries* (2012) – are a combination of historical and travel writing as well as memoir. Prior to a close reading of Shehadeh's latest text, it is useful to explore briefly the function of memoir and its significance in Palestinian writing. In his study *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East*, Norbert Bugeja asserts that the memoir 'tends to challenge any entirely deterministic view of life. ... Thematically the memoir is cast as a narration of the past in the process of analysing the present, and a narration of the present through a process of re-valuing the past.'<sup>77</sup> As such, the form of memoir provides one way of interpreting and analysing the past and the present. The memoir and autobiography can often be considered one and the same. However, Thomas Larson negates the conflation of memoir and autobiography by arguing: 'memoir writers are so bent on activating the particular in their books that many are writing of the immediate past, even the still-corruptible present, not

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<sup>76</sup> Raja Khalidi and Sobhi Samour, "Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 8.

<sup>77</sup> Norbert Bugeja, *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing* (New York; London: Routledge, 2012), 17.

waiting for time to ripen or change what they know.’<sup>78</sup> In other words, memoir can provide a sense of immediacy to the lived experience and events being depicted. In the last thirty years Palestinian memoirs have proliferated, given the increased international circulation and consumption of Palestinian cultural production and visibility of the conflict.<sup>79</sup> A typical metropolitan response to the function of memoir from this context is highlighted by Ned Lazarus who asserts that this form provides ‘a microcosm of Palestinian historical experience.’<sup>80</sup> As such, in contrast to historical accounts, Palestinian memoir performs a dual role. Firstly, the memoirist ‘activates the particular’<sup>81</sup> by providing the quotidian details of everyday life and, also creates a ‘microcosm’ by the individual’s experiences representing the larger whole of all Palestinians.

The narrative of *Occupation Diaries* depicts life under occupation in the West Bank in the two years preceding the Palestinian bid for UN statehood in September 2011. Charlotta Salmi argues that Shehadeh’s texts ‘should also be considered as intervening in traditional postcolonial narratives of nationhood’ and ‘appear to eschew regressive forms of sectarian belonging in favour of narrating a wider geography which is defined by universal, rather than national, rights, his

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<sup>78</sup> Thomas Larson, *The Memoir and The Memoirist: Reading and Writing Personal Narrative* (Athens, Ohio: Swallow Press/Ohio University Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>79</sup> Bernard, *Rhetorics of Belonging*, 12. Notable memoirs include: Sahar Khalifeh’s *Memoirs of an Unrealistic Woman* (1986); Edward Said, *Out of Place: A Memoir* (1999); Sari Nusseibeh *Once Upon A Country: A Palestinian Life* (2009). Autobiographies include: Fadwa Tuqan, *A Mountainous Journey* (1990); Ghada Karmi, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* (2002).

<sup>80</sup> Ned Lazarus, “Memoir a Microcosm of the Palestinian Experience,” *Electronic Intifada*, April 11, 2011, accessed November, 4, 2013, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/memoir-microcosm-palestinian-experience/9840>.

<sup>81</sup> Larson, *The Memoir*, 16.

representation of the landscape is haunted by an ethnic national double.’<sup>82</sup> I agree that Shehadeh’s narratives offer a dismissal of ethnocentric depictions of geography by not focusing on ‘land rhetoric’. As I highlighted in the Introduction, this rhetoric, according to Shehadeh, refers to the highly emotional relationship to the land that is put forward by the elite of the proto-state and/or state and is often internalised by the inhabitants.<sup>83</sup> There is a need, Shehadeh acknowledges, for this process to be resisted and disputed.<sup>84</sup> However Salmi’s reading of Shehadeh ‘narrating a wider geography’ and offering a ‘representation of the landscape... haunted by an ethnic national double’ overlooks Shehadeh’s emphasis on the role of neoliberal policy in the transformation of Palestinian geography and landscape. Shehadeh criticises the PA’s state-building programme and the international community’s funding, both of which stifle Palestinian resistance. He shows that the on-going neoliberalism in Palestine has created a Palestinian economy that is dependent on Israel and Western donors and funders.

*Occupation Diaries* opens with a journal entry from 13 December 2009, and ends on 29 December 2011. Many of Shehadeh’s journal entries comprise observations about the built environment of the West Bank and the stimulation of urban growth:

There is nothing inherently wrong with development and construction; it is rather the way the building is taking place that is objectionable. It seems to be happening in a frenzy of hyperactivity. ... This is all part of the scheme devised by

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<sup>82</sup> 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, no. 4 (2012): 431.

<sup>83</sup> I am indebted to Barbara Parmenter who points out Shehadeh’s term in this way to highlight the Israelis’ and Palestinians’ emotional attachment to the land and home, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>84</sup> Raja Shehadeh, *The Third Way* (London: Quartet Books, 1982)

European and US funders, a policy of anti-insurgency not dissimilar to that pursued in Northern Ireland. It aims at the creation of jobs to distract people and make them have a larger stake in economic development, so they realize that they would be harmed by strikes and resistance efforts. It is a sort of shock absorber. It seems to have worked in Northern Ireland, thinks Blair, so why should it not in Palestine. (43)

Shehadeh articulates his distaste for the pace of neoliberal development, described as ‘a frenzy of hyperactivity’ which suggests a lack of internal control or regulation. As in *Wild Thorns*, in Shehadeh’s text the creation of employment opportunities is also used to pacify Palestinians and stifle resistance. He also emphasises that the methods that are used to create economic growth aim to ‘distract’ and ‘act as a shock absorber’, which emphasises that they are underhand and dubious and being used to divert attention away from ‘strikes and resistance efforts’.

A direct consequence of these neoliberal policies is evident through Shehadeh’s depiction of the way widespread urban growth has caused a disconnection of the Palestinians from the land:

The joy of living on the land, farming it and existing in harmony with it has gone. Land now means only investment and money as land prices keep on rising. The alienation, the forced exile from our land, even when we are still living on it, is more and more accentuated. (92)

He decries the way land is no longer cultivated and used for agriculture but has become a source of profit. The juxtaposition of ‘joy’ and ‘harmony’ with ‘alienation’ highlights Shehadeh’s contrasting views about the forms of development pursued in the past and the present. In a later entry Shehadeh provides a damning critique of the consequences of continuing neoliberal development and its connection with what he perceives to be acquiescence with the occupation:

Only after seeing the new city of Rawabi being constructed in the hills north of Ramallah did I understand the full ramifications of our defeat. Rather than struggle to gain our own space and assert our own way of life, we seek to copy the coloniser and use the same destructive methods that damage our land and national heritage. (158)

The entry draws attention to Shehadeh's perception that a genuine national geography is being undermined and eroded by the creation of an urban environment that he recognises as Israeli. The phrase 'destructive methods that damage our land' evokes a similar concern of Yizhar's narrator in *Preliminaries*, discussed in Chapter one, about how certain methods cause serious environmental damage. Shehadeh's critique also has echoes with Robert Spencer's insistence that 'we need a kind of "globalization-from-below," designed not to facilitate capital accumulation and thus perpetuate inequality but to protect labour rights and environmental standards and to enhance the prospects of peace and democracy.'<sup>85</sup> In another essay, Spencer makes the connection between environmental damage and 'colonial domination' in Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks*.<sup>86</sup> As such, while the construction of new cities in the West Bank suggests the success of Palestinian urban development, it also serves to 'perpetuate inequality', prevents Palestinians from disentangling their unequal relationship with Israel and thereby makes it more and more difficult for the 'the prospects of peace and democracy' to be achieved.

As we saw in *Wild Thorns*, the international community here plays a large role in the stifling of resistance to the occupation:

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<sup>85</sup> Robert Spencer, "Contented Homeland Peace: The Motif of Exile in Edward Said," in *Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation* eds. Adel Iskandar and Hakem Rustom (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2010), 406.

<sup>86</sup> 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, no. 1, (2010): 33-54.

The new course of economic development was determined by a political agenda inspired by Western funders and supported by the Palestinian Authority for ending the resistance before we had liberated our land and won our freedom. From potential revolutionaries we are turned into hostages to banks established since the Oslo deal. (165)

Shehadeh explains that on-going neoliberalism in Palestine has created a Palestinian economy that is not only dependent on Israel but also on Western donors and funders. His critique is directed at the Palestinian Authority for creating economic growth at the expense of resistance to Israeli control and effectively abandoning the project of Palestinian national liberation. A later journal entry continues to demonstrate that the Palestinian Authority is responsible for the fact that:

This morning once again I saw that many of our vegetables and most of our fruit now comes from Israel. Since last year's olive harvest over 9,000 trees, primarily olive trees, have been damaged or destroyed by settlers. So much land has been taken from Palestinian farmers, who were also deprived of water, that we now have to rely on Israel for most of our food. The Palestinian Authority does not help the farmers – it taxes them while the price of fuel is so high that transporting the produce from the farm to the market is prohibitively expensive. Whereas the budget for security is 35 per cent, agriculture gets a mere 2 per cent. (165-6)

Just as at the start of the occupation, as illustrated in *Wild Thorns*, Shehadeh notices that 'many of our vegetables and most of our fruit now comes from Israel' and he and his fellow West Bankers are continuing to 'have to rely on Israel for most of our food'.<sup>87</sup> This dependence on the Israeli market is increased by the actions of Israeli settlers and their land grabs and destruction of olive trees which makes it difficult for Palestinians to be self-sufficient. This demise of agriculture is not being addressed by the Palestinian Authority and their indirect measures of taxation and direct

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<sup>87</sup> See Naomi Zeveloff, 'The Five-Star Occupation,' *Guernica*, August 15, 2012, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.guernicamag.com/features/the-five-star-occupation/>.

measures of budget allocation which perpetuates the West Bank's dependence on Israel for food.

Shehadeh's *Occupation Diaries* explores a bottom-up perspective of the Israeli occupation and the Palestinian Authority's state-building programme in the West Bank. Taking his journal entries as a whole, his protest can be summed up by the observation that: 'we seek to copy the coloniser and use the same destructive methods that damage our land and national heritage' (158). The memoir draws attention to the negative effects that colonial mimicry has on the colonised subject, their psyche and the national identity of the built environment. The idea of the colonised mimicking the coloniser is a recurrent one in postcolonial studies. Homi Bhabha's article is the seminal text and he argues that 'the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite.'<sup>88</sup> In other words, mimicry means the colonised is always 'different' from the coloniser and creates 'slippage' which not only gives power to the colonised but also enables the colonised to 'subvert' the coloniser's 'civilising mission.' However, I challenge Bhabha's idea about colonial mimicry in order to assert that mimicking or imitating Israeli models of urban growth and moving away from agriculture cannot be interpreted as Palestinian agency or appropriation of coloniser's actions or culture to destabilise the coloniser's authority. Instead, mimicry creates problems by destroying any semblance of Palestinian national identity on the built environment. Moreover, neoliberal development acts as a 'shock absorber' and becomes a placating technique that creates certain benefits, including for urban growth and

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<sup>88</sup> Many studies which explore architecture in formerly colonised nations take as their point of departure: Homi Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: the Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" in *The Location of Culture* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 122.

employment opportunities but simultaneously quells resistance to the on-going occupation.

Exploring *Wild Thorns* and *Occupation Diaries* in tandem offers a Palestinian ‘bottom-up’ perspective to the historic and economic trajectory of the occupation in the West Bank. Khalifeh’s and Shehadeh’s narratives protest against Israel’s and the Palestinian Authority’s economic measures which prompted the pacification of the Palestinians and by extension weakened any resistance efforts for national liberation. The writers’ utilisation of realism enables them to evaluate the lived experiences of Palestinians in the West Bank with a view to transformation. This transformation is predicated on compelling the international readership to recognise how funding Israel and acquiescing with neoliberalism creates inequity between Israel and Palestine and perpetuates the continuation of the occupation. The turn to Sri Lanka in the next chapter signals an exploration of the same colonial, postcolonial and neo-colonial periods I explored above for Israel/Palestine. This comparison would not be possible within a national framework. Indeed my adoption of what Michael Niblett refers to as the ‘world-systems approach’ which ‘opens the way to comparing analogous moments... on a wider historical and geographical scale’<sup>89</sup> means it is possible to consider the aesthetic and political similarities and differences in the ways Sri Lankan texts depict the impact of uneven development.

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<sup>89</sup> Niblett, “World-Economy,” 24.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Colonial Capitalist Development in *The Village in the Jungle* and Indigenous Development in *The Waiting Earth*

[C]olonialism as a historical process involved the forced integration of hitherto uncivilised societies, or societies in which the capitalist mode of production was not hegemonic, into a capitalist world-system.

- Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*<sup>1</sup>

[T]he indigenous discourse of development is largely based on the historical and cultural ideology of the majority ethnic group – Sinhalese. Therefore, it seems plausible for indigenous development to be interpreted as a discourse of Sinhala nationalism which is exclusive of other ethnic groups in Sri Lanka.

- Nalani Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development in Postcolonial Sri Lanka*<sup>2</sup>

Basil Wright's forty-minute documentary film *Song of Ceylon*<sup>3</sup> (1934) centres on Sinhalese peasants and the effects that colonial capitalist development, particularly industrialism, had on their way of life. The first two sections of the film focus on labour in the fields, particularly paddy farming, and Buddhist religious rituals, repeatedly emphasising that the Sinhalese peasants have an intimate connection with the land. The voiceover informs the viewer: 'husbandry is the great employment of the country and in this the best men labour. Nor is it held in any disgrace that men of

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<sup>1</sup> Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 37.

<sup>2</sup> Nalani Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development in Postcolonial Sri Lanka* (Lanham, MD; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 16.

<sup>3</sup> Basil Wright, *Song of Ceylon*, 1934. Posted by Andrea D. N., May 25, 2008.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWlxvC-eb-g>  
This film and others like it comprise a part of the newly developed 'Colonial Film Archive.' 'Colonial Film: Moving Images of the British Empire'  
<http://www.colonialfilm.org.uk/projectevents>

the greatest quality to do any work whether at home or in the field.’<sup>4</sup> The factory work and industrialization depicted in the third section of the film initially implies that this way of life is being threatened by colonial exploitation of the land and labour, which the voiceover informs the viewer resulted in ‘new clearings, new roads, new buildings, new communication, new developments of natural resources.’<sup>5</sup> This voiceover is immediately followed by different voices from radio communications highlighting the commodity prices in Britain’s markets for commodities including oil and grain from Ceylon and other colonised countries. The voiceover continues: ‘[c]rown of the rich virgin island, rich in mines of all kinds of precious stones, like a maid decked with jewels’<sup>6</sup> and combines with images of the inhabitants of Colombo working noisy machines in factories and loading crates of commodities onto ships headed for London. However, in the final section of the film Wright returns to the Sinhalese villagers again paddy farming and taking part in a Buddhist ritual. In this section the ‘traditional’ Sinhalese images from the first section are juxtaposed with those images of industrialization which demonstrate the conflict between the Sinhalese and the British colonisers’ conceptualisation of development that arose in the years prior to Independence.

Consequently, the Government Film Unit (GFU) was established in 1948, coinciding with Sri Lanka’s Independence, when ‘the country was seeking a post-Independence identity’<sup>7</sup> and ‘vested with the responsibility to produce documentaries

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Boyle, “Preserving the documentary heritage,” *Sunday Times*. June 13, 2010, accessed February 11, 2014, [http://sundaytimes.lk/100613/Plus/plus\\_25.html](http://sundaytimes.lk/100613/Plus/plus_25.html), para.9.

on development, social and artistic issues.’<sup>8</sup> Specifically, a number of the documentary films produced during this early post-Independence period depict similar subjects and subject matter to *Song of Ceylon*: peasants living in rural communities and their labour and agricultural development. *Nelungama*<sup>9</sup> (dir. by Ralph Keene 1953) depicts a poor Sinhalese paddy farmer who has his land taken away from him by a greedy landowner. The government comes to his rescue by offering him new land which enables the peasant and his family to become self-sufficient. Another contemporaneous film is *Conquest in the Dry Zone* (dir. by Lester James Peries 1955) which follows the enactment of the government’s malaria eradication programme in the North, a region that is depicted as underdeveloped and no longer fertile. In both documentary films, the state’s focus on agricultural development and the peasant’s important place in cultivating, tilling and harvesting the land is emphasised. In 2008 many of Sri Lanka’s GFU documentary films from the colonial and early postcolonial periods, mentioned above, became a central part of a ‘tourist promotion project’, supported by international (US) funding, which proposed to preserve Sri Lanka’s (read Sinhalese) cultural heritage and promote it to a global audience.<sup>10</sup> As such, the international community is being unproblematically presented with a history of Sri Lanka’s colonial and postcolonial development that is partial because none of these films depict the lived experience of the Tamils.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Boyle “Preserving the ‘little bastards,’ ” *Himalmag*, June 2010, accessed March 14, 2014,

<http://www.himalmag.com/component/content/article/202.html>

<sup>9</sup> *Nelungama* directed by Ralph Keene, 1953.  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u179IGeovx4>

<sup>10</sup> Boyle, ‘Preserving...’

Consequently, the state continues to present the narrative of development as being an exclusively Sinhalese venture and dependent upon the occlusion of Tamil presence.

This chapter focuses on Sri Lankan writing in English, examining Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle*<sup>11</sup> (1913) alongside Punyakante Wijenaike's *The Waiting Earth*<sup>12</sup> (1966). Both texts focus on the lived experiences of peasants by centring on how this social group was affected economically and socially by different models of development in colonial Ceylon and postcolonial Sri Lanka. Reading *The Village in the Jungle* and *The Waiting Earth* in tandem offers a compelling opportunity for a new appreciation of the impact of British imperialism and its aftermath on literary production in Sri Lanka. I trace a historical trajectory from Woolf who sets his novel in a village during the colonial period and depicts the effects of colonial capitalist development to Wijenaike's narrative, which is set in a village twenty years after decolonisation and represents 'the indigenous discourse of development'<sup>13</sup>. This chapter argues that by exploring these texts together it is possible to draw out the changing idea of the peasantry, land use and agriculture in the British colonisers' and the Sri Lankan state's conceptualisation of development.

The reception of both of these novels in Sri Lanka registers an imaginative engagement with the writers' representations of the village and the peasantry. Rajiva

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<sup>11</sup> Leonard Woolf, *The Village in the Jungle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

<sup>12</sup> Punyakante Wijenaike, *The Waiting Earth* (Pitakotte: State Printing Corporation, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development*, 49.

Wijesinha has referred to the texts that fall into this category and characterises them as suffering from ‘the village well syndrome.’<sup>14</sup> Goonetilleke argued in 2011 that:

[v]illage-well literature evolved as a result of an attempt by the alienated Sri Lankan English writer to reconnect with rural village life in the 60’s and the early 70’s. Sri Lankan literature has come a long way since then. Now our writers deal with all manner of experiences and milieu.<sup>15</sup>

However, there was a wide discrepancy in the reception that their writers received during the periods in which Woolf and Wijenaike wrote their respective novels. This divergent approach is reflected in the reputation of the writers in Sri Lanka. Sri Lankan critics are vociferous in their praise of Woolf and focus on the verisimilitude of his imaginative engagement with peasant lived experience in *The Village in the Jungle*. Canonical in Sri Lanka, the novel is widely referred to as a ‘classic’ in Sri Lankan criticism both when it was first published and the present day. On the other hand, Sri Lankan critics express condemnation towards Wijenaike’s location as a member of the middle class and for writing about rural characters and situations that they consider she knows nothing about not being a peasant herself. However, I contend that it is precisely by representing the lived experiences of peasants that have differed significantly from their own that Woolf and Wijenaike emphasise their shared responsibility to engage with the individuals and communities that are affected by development yet often marginalised or unrecognised in literature and culture. In addition to the writers’ shared political engagement, the formal and

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<sup>14</sup> Rajiva Wijesinha, “Forms of Alienation: Sri Lankan Fiction in English,” *Navasilu: Journal of the English Association of Sri Lanka* 11 and 12 (1994): 103.

<sup>15</sup> Sajitha Prematunge and D.C. R. A. Goonetilleke, “Quality Critique,” *Daily News*, June 29, 2011, accessed August 23, 2012, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2001/pix/PrintPage.asp?REF=/2011/06/29/art01.asp>, paras. 21 and 22.

aesthetic similarities between their texts make them ideal for comparison. In both novels, the family saga considers how two generations of peasants were affected by and responded to development. By examining melodrama and other literary strategies including variable internal focalisation and free indirect discourse, I demonstrate Woolf's and Wijenaikē's critique of development. This chapter argues that the writers protest against the shortcomings of these practices by demonstrating the difficulties that the peasants experience with agricultural cultivation and impoverishment in both the colonial and postcolonial period.

The chapter begins with a brief background to the historical origins of development discourse in colonial Ceylon because it is relevant and essential for contextualising the novel's representation of imperialism and its effects on the peasantry. The rationale for the historical context is also drawn from Edward Said's assertion concerning the importance of ethical representation by the intellectual.<sup>16</sup> Prior to a close reading of *The Village in the Jungle* I account for the different critical responses to the novel which demonstrate the divergent reception in the metropole and in Sri Lanka. I also examine the literary and biographical contexts which demonstrate Woolf's political formation, specifically his response to imperialism which provides evidence of his intentionality in the novel.

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<sup>16</sup> Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures* (New York: Vintage, 1996). See also Neil Larsen, "Marxism, Postcolonialism and The Eighteenth Brumaire," in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 204–20, for a discussion of the poststructuralist position on "representation."

## Colonial Capitalist Development

During British colonial rule in Ceylon, 1796-1948, peasant economies were undermined and disrupted through colonisation's introduction and imposition of capitalism in mainly the central and southern regions of the island, which also transformed class relations, land rights and ownership. Mick Moore argues that peasant 'landlessness was blamed on the activities of 'capitalists', a term...used to refer to either plantation capitalists or smaller-scale operators, including money lenders, who were alleged to obtain land, either from the peasantry or the Crown, by dubious means'<sup>17</sup>. Specifically, the decline of peasant agriculture, the break-up of the village community and widespread poverty were perceived by the Sinhalese nationalist and political elite to be the worst outcomes brought about by the plantation system and market economy of colonisation. Nawaz Dawood recognises:

The plantation system produced in Sri Lanka, a social system with a distinct class structure, economy and a way of life that separates it from other types of societies which are not plantation dominated. The impact of the plantation system on our society can also be compared to that of a parasitic plant on a tree; the tree and the soil work incessantly to feed it and whilst it grows, the condition of the tree itself becomes debilitated. Whether one is directly connected with the plantation system or not, is not material in such a society, for all members of such society are drawn into its vortex.<sup>18</sup>

The colonial administration's creation of plantations not only transformed the class structure but can also be characterised as 'parasitic' because it exploited the indigenous inhabitants by replacing the cultivation of rice with cash crops, including coffee, tea and rubber.

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<sup>17</sup> Mick Moore, *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 38.

<sup>18</sup> Nawaz Dawood, *Tea and Poverty: Plantations and the Political Economy of Sri Lanka* (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Urban Rural Mission, 1980), 2.

Consequently, the approach of the colonial administration to development resulted in the stagnation of the indigenous inhabitants' agricultural sector which had been primarily focused on paddy farming. Ambalavaner Sivanandan explains that '[t]he type of capitalism that developed under the British had a differential impact on the different social formations and made capitalism's uneven development more uneven still. And what it could not cohere through organic capitalist development, it unified through administrative diktat'<sup>19</sup>. In the villages, peasant agriculture was based on chena cultivation which took place on the sparse land that was not being used for plantations but still owned by the crown. The colonial administration's 'diktat' was manifested at the village level through the annual permit system, whereby peasants had to apply to the village headman for a license before chena cultivation could be implemented. Simply put, the chena method allowed the peasant to slash and burn a small area of forest to in order to cultivate the land and grow grains and vegetables and was followed by a long fallow period.<sup>20</sup> Set in the historical and agricultural context of colonial Ceylon, peasant experience of chena cultivation is the principal subject matter of *The Village in the Jungle*<sup>21</sup>, which centres on landlessness, poverty, and poor living conditions as well as how land and labour is utilised.

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<sup>19</sup> Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "Sri Lanka: Racism and Politics of Underdevelopment," *Race & Class* 21, no.1 (Summer 1984): 2.

<sup>20</sup> D. W. Ananda Wickramasinghe and D. C. Cameron, "British Capital, Ceylonese Land, Indian Labour: The Imperialism and Colonialism of Evolution of Tea Plantations in Sri Lanka," accessed July 13, 2012, <http://www.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/ejrot/cmsconference/2005/proceedings/managementorganizational/wickramasiwick.pdf>.

<sup>21</sup> See also Jean Arasanayagam's poetry, particularly "Grotesque Etchings from 'The Disasters of War,'" which is set during the Civil War: 'The chenas yield new harvests/Rich gourds/Brimming with seed/Blood milk/Before/The villages go back to the forest' (20). The peasants 'want to go back to the golden earth...to sow our seed' (19), but discover that 'A sack that carried paddy/Or kurakkan or thala/Carries the new blood harvest' (19), in *Fault Lines: Three Plays* (Colombo: Godage International Publishers, 2008).



## Divergent Reception

*The Village in the Jungle* was originally published in English in 1913 and a Sinhala translation was published in 1947 as *Beddegama*. In an early but contemporaneous response to the novel, Woolf's friend Lytton Strachey remarked: 'I was disappointed to see that it was about nothing but blacks – whom really I don't much care for.'<sup>22</sup> Strachey's comments about Woolf's choice to depict the lived experience of peasants may be unsavoury, but are notable for the fact that they represent one of the only metropolitan criticisms of the novel that refers to Woolf's main characters. What little metropolitan criticism the novel has received falls into two main approaches. The first approach was concerned with the novel's relationship to modernism and the English literary canon, and argues that although the novel is set in Ceylon, its main focus is on the consideration of Woolf's views and perspectives<sup>23</sup> Such an analysis enables critics to read texts such as this one as being an expression of a 'universal' condition instead of being specifically about the peasants of colonial Ceylon. This tendency to read the text as being expressive of a 'universal' condition correlates with the metropolitan criticism of *Breakdown and Bereavement* and *Preliminaries* explored in Chapter One. *The Village in the Jungle* was written in the wake of texts like Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899) when modernist literature was beginning to articulate misgivings about empire. As Elleke Boehmer acknowledges: '[t]he material and psychic circulation of empire within the imperial homeland...was expressed in modernist writing in characteristic

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<sup>22</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Letters of Leonard Woolf*, ed. Fredric Spots (New York: Harcourt, 1989), 197.

<sup>23</sup> For a paradigmatic example of this criticism see David H. Flood "Leonard Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle*: A Modern Version of Pastoral," *Virginia Woolf Quarterly* 14 (Summer 1973): 78.

images and structures denoting perpetual uncertainty or hesitancy.’<sup>24</sup> Woolf’s novel was published before other better-known literary critiques of colonialism including E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924) and George Orwell’s *Burmese Days* (1934), and it foreshadowed the perspective posited by Forster and Orwell, who also distanced themselves from empire. In spite of this correlation, the novel has not found a canonical place in the modernist tradition of these other novels about empire. *The Village in the Jungle* can be set apart from other contemporaneous literary texts with a colonial setting in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries because the narrative is not framed around the perspective and experiences of a colonial officer but rather privileges the peasants’ perspective. This shift in perspective not only highlights the text’s distinction from Forster and Woolf’s other contemporaries but also ties in with Wijenaike’s narrative through the way in both writers importantly provide an alternate way of seeing, experiencing and understanding colonial and postcolonial development.

The other approach to Woolf’s novel is encapsulated by the metropolitan critics who read the text as a way to uncover or recover Woolf’s position as an imperialist or anti-imperialist. In such a reading Woolf’s autobiographies and diaries are used to offer further explanations of the novel. For instance, Stanford Patrick Rosenbaum argues: ‘[t]he diaries describe in their documentary way the world of the novel... Looking at the novel in the context of both the diaries and the autobiography brings

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<sup>24</sup> Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National, and the Postcolonial 1890-1920: Resistance in Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 172. See also Patrick Williams, “‘Simultaneous Uncontemporarities’: Theorizing Modernism and Empire,” in *Modernism and Empire*, eds. Howard J. Booth and Nigel Rigby (New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 13–38.

out more clearly...its subtext about imperialism.’<sup>25</sup> Such a reading of the novel, which relies on Woolf’s other writing to uncover his experience of and response to imperialism, means imperialism is configured as a ‘subtext’ of the novel or implicit. However, a closer reading of *The Village in the Jungle*, allows us to interpret imperialism as a ‘conscious and overt’<sup>26</sup> subject matter when one recognises that the narrative itself is centred on the effects of imperialism on the peasantry. Woolf’s depiction of the peasantry and his relationship to the canonical modernist writers and their novels is acknowledged in Sri Lankan criticism. Regi Siriwardena recognises that:

the neglect of Woolf’s novel by English readers has always surprised me; that many of us in Sri Lanka thought more highly of the book; and...that it was a novel unique in the English literature of the colonial era, since Woolf had succeeded in doing what none of his contemporaries, not even Kipling or Conrad or Forster, had attempted – to get inside the skins of Asian peasants.<sup>27</sup>

The audience and reception of the novel in Sri Lanka registers an imaginative engagement with peasant lived experience through the focus on both their internal and external lives and how this engagement sets the text apart from other contemporaneous colonial texts. Set in the historical and agricultural context of colonial Ceylon, the narrative of *The Village in the Jungle* centres on peasant experience of chena cultivation. This depiction of the peasantry from the ‘inside’ sets him apart from contemporary writers in the metropole and is lauded in Sri Lanka.

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<sup>25</sup> Stanford Patrick Rosenbaum, *Edwardian Bloomsbury: The Early Literary History of the Bloomsbury Group* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 423.

<sup>26</sup> Fredric Jameson, “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism,” *Social Text* 15 (Autumn 1986): 80.

<sup>27</sup> Regi Siriwardena, “Reassessment: Woolf and the Jungle Village,” in *The Village and the Jungle*, ed. Yasmine Gooneratne (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), 253.

In Sri Lanka, the text is part of school and university curricula; it has been made into a film, *Baddegama* (1980), which featured at the Cannes Film Festival; and it was even adapted into a play in 1994 by Ernest Macintyre. Unlike in Britain, where it has only recently been reprinted, in Sri Lanka the book has never been out of print in English or in its Sinhalese and Tamil translations.<sup>28</sup> The novel's enduring contemporary relevance is evidenced by the fact that newspaper articles which review new novels depicting Sri Lankan village life compare them to *The Village in the Jungle*.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the word most often used when referring to Woolf's novel is 'classic'. Drawing on this idea of the text as a 'classic', the novel's canonical status in Sri Lanka is derived from Sri Lankan critics who are enthusiastic in their praise and focus on the verisimilitude of Woolf's representation of the village and the peasantry. A.J. Gunawardana, an academic and scriptwriter for the film version of *The Village in the Jungle*, suggests that Woolf's depictions remain current in 1979: 'Jungle and village as painted by Woolf still survive in the country's southern extremity. Only the people are different - certainly not the disease stricken jungle dwellers of Woolf's time'<sup>30</sup>. The assessment and evaluation of the novel's verisimilitude, according to Sri Lankan critics, then, is derived from what Siriwardena emphasized above: Woolf's ability to 'get inside the skins of Asian peasants'<sup>31</sup>. While metropolitan critics read the novel as an extension of his autobiographical works and for what it illuminates about Woolf's imperial or anti-

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<sup>28</sup> Victoria Glendinning, *Leonard Woolf: A Biography* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2006), 154.

<sup>29</sup> See for example: K. S. Sivakumaran, "Moneragala Then (and even Now)," *Daily News*, July 9, 2008, accessed July, 27, 2012, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2008/07/09/art04.asp>.

<sup>30</sup> A.J. Gunawardana "The Village in the Jungle," *Sight and Sound* 49, no.1 (Winter 1979/80): 26-7.

<sup>31</sup> See above Siriwardena, "Reassessment.."

imperial mind-set, Sri Lankan critics focus on Woolf's depiction of the peasantry. A more nuanced reading of *The Village in the Jungle* allows us to bring the two readings of Sri Lankan and metropolitan critics together because I contend that a close reading of Woolf's novel needs to be more attuned to examining how the form and the content of the novel protests against the effects of imperialism on the peasantry.

The consideration of the literary and biographical context of Woolf's novel which follows demonstrates Woolf's political formation in relation to his response to imperialism which provides evidence of his intentionality to represent the peasant viewpoint in the novel. Leonard Sidney Woolf was born in London in 1880. He spent five years at Trinity College, Cambridge before joining the Colonial Civil Service in Ceylon as a Cadet in November 1904. In the first volume of his autobiography *Growing* he defined his younger self as being 'a very innocent, unconscious imperialist' when he arrived in Ceylon.<sup>32</sup> In August 1908 he was promoted to Assistant Government Agent for Hambantota. During Woolf's years in Hambantota, he believed that the villagers saw him as 'part of the white man's machine, which they did not understand', despite the fact that his attitude towards them was 'entirely benevolent and altruistic'. However he came to acknowledge 'the absurdity of a people of one civilization and mode of living trying to impose its rule upon an entirely different civilization and mode of life'<sup>33</sup>. Specifically, he was concerned about the destruction 'of the most ancient pastoral civilizations' which was brought

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<sup>32</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Growing: An Autobiography of the Years 1904-1911* (London: Hogarth Press, 1961), 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid* 191, 193.

about ‘when the restless European and his brand new industrial civilization began in the 18<sup>th</sup> century seriously to infiltrate into Asia’<sup>34</sup>. The word ‘infiltrate’ is key as it demonstrates Woolf’s recognition of the British colonial administration’s responsibility in stagnating the indigenous inhabitants’ rural way of life.

Following his return to London, Woolf wrote in his autobiography about the consequences of this infiltration: ‘[m]y seven years in the Ceylon Civil Service turned me from an aesthetic into a political animal. The social and economic squalor in which thousands of Sinhalese and Tamil villagers lived horrified me; I saw close at hand the evils of imperialism’<sup>35</sup>. Woolf’s transformation ‘from an aesthetic into a political animal’ is evidenced in his interest and direct involvement in politics and the writing that followed his return to London. His developing awareness that the ‘social and economic squalor’ was directly caused by imperialism resonates in this writing and includes *The Village in the Jungle* as well as the pamphlet *Economic Imperialism* (1920), *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (1920) and *Imperialism and Civilisation* (1928). In *Imperialism and Civilisation* he developed an economic critique of empire because he recognised that the British Empire was driven by ‘capitalistic imperialism’ and created conflict and the breakdown of the ‘internal cement of societies’<sup>36</sup>. I quote from this work at length:

Economic imperialism is only the logical application of capitalism and its principles to internationalism. Europeans have, as we have seen, approached Africa and Asia from the point of view: “What profit, what economic advantage can

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 31-2.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard Woolf, *The Journey Not the Arrival Matters: An Autobiography of the Years 1939-69* (London: Hogarth, 1969), 153.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Beginning Again: An Autobiography of the Years 1911-1918* (London: Hogarth, 1964), 117, 120.

we get out of these two continents?” The answer is obvious to anyone who has been educated in the school of capitalism; just as the holder of capital in Europe has been enabled to exploit the worker and consumer economically for his own profit, so the white man, armed with the power of the modern State, and the weapons of modern war, and the technical knowledge and machinery of modern industry and modern finance, can reduce to subjection, and then exploit economically for his own profit, the land and labour of the less developed Asiatic and African...in international society there have appeared clearly defined classes, the imperialist Powers of the West and the subject races of Africa and the East, the one ruling and exploiting, the other ruled and exploited.<sup>37</sup>

Woolf’s acknowledgement of European exploitation of colonised peoples’ land and labour through the imposition of capitalism is clearly reminiscent of Walter Rodney’s highly influential text, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1973), which I quoted from in the Introduction.<sup>38</sup> Woolf’s diagnosis of capitalism also has much in common with Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* which appeared in 1916 yet neither writer refers to the other. Lenin asserts that imperialism is:

the exploitation of an increasing number of small or weak nations by an extremely small group of the richest or more powerful nations – all these have given birth to those distinctive characteristics of imperialism which compel us to define it as parasitic capitalism...On the whole, capitalism is growing far more rapidly than before...this growth is becoming more and more uneven.<sup>39</sup>

Specifically, the link between Woolf, Rodney and Lenin is the designation of imperialism as the logical development of capitalism (as indicated in Lenin’s title).

However, inequality and unevenness is created and perpetuated through the

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<sup>37</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Economic Imperialism* (London: Swarthmore Press Ltd, 1920), 101-2.

<sup>38</sup> Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981), 14.

<sup>39</sup> Vladimir Lenin, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1965), 150-1.

concurrent appearance of concentrations of wealth for the coloniser who is in control of capital, and poverty and exploitation for the colonised. Woolf also recognises that imperialism created an interconnected capitalist system that was ‘international’ in character which is elaborated on by Neil Lazarus in the first epigraph to this chapter when Lazarus refers to colonialism as the imposition of capitalism on non-capitalist societies. In other words, Woolf’s analysis prefigures Wallerstein’s world systems theory. Woolf’s analyses of the way that the British colonial administration’s imposition of capitalism enabled the continued exploitation of the colonised and their resources is depicted in *The Village in the Jungle* through a representation of the consequences of this exploitation for the peasants.

### **Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle***

Set in the Hambantota district of rural Ceylon, *The Village in the Jungle* tells the story of the peasant Silindu and his twin daughters Punchi Menika and Hinnihami. Silindu angers the village headman, Babehami, by refusing to give him Punchi Menika in marriage. Instead, Punchi marries Babun Appu, the headman’s brother-in-law. Following a year of drought and disease in which many villagers die, including Hinnihami and Punchi Menika’s and Hinnihami’s children, Fernando, a money-lender, comes to stay in the village in order to collect the villagers’ outstanding debts from their chena crops. Fernando attempts to persuade Punchi Menika to leave her husband for him and enlists the help of the village headman to try and persuade Babun of his wife’s infidelity. When they fail, they determine that ‘No [chena] permit could be given to Babun and Silindu this year’ which means that ‘in a month they would be starving or forced to leave the village’ (105). This withholding of



chena permits is followed by the creation of a false charge of robbery against Babun and he is arrested. In the court scene which follows he is sentenced to six months' imprisonment. To avenge this deceitful act, Silindu kills the moneylender and the headman, gives himself up and receives a death sentence. Silindu is granted a reprieve, however, and his sentence is reduced to twenty years' imprisonment. In a matter of months both Babun and Silindu die in prison. The novel ends with the village steadily becoming more and more impoverished and diseased before 'the jungle surged forward over and blotted out the village' (177).

In his autobiography Woolf cites *The Village in the Jungle* as evidence of his own engagement with those Ceylonese villages that had been affected by imperialism, and of his critique of empire:

The jungle and the people who lived in the Sinhalese villages almost obsessed me in Ceylon. They continued to obsess me in London...*The Village in the Jungle* was a novel in which I tried somehow or other to vicariously to live their lives. It was also, in some curious way, the symbol of the anti-imperialism which had been growing upon me more and more in my last years in Ceylon. The Sinhalese way of life, in...above all those jungle villages, was what engrossed me in Ceylon...the control of the wheels of the intricate machinery of central administration, with the dreary pomp and circumstance of central government, filled me with misgiving and disgust.<sup>40</sup>

When one considers the novel as a vehicle which enabled Woolf 'vicariously to live their lives', it is not only the content of *The Village in the Jungle* but also the formal strategies Woolf uses which clearly resonate with this goal of depicting peasant lived experience. In his novel Woolf's 'use of translations of Sinhalese idiom and oral narrative forms' creates 'a view from within, of subjectivities which are in place in

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<sup>40</sup> Woolf, *Beginning Again*, 47-8.

this environment.’<sup>41</sup> One prime example is the exclamation: ‘O the dog! O the dog! O the dog! There is no one like these fishers for finding money and women everywhere.’ (181) Despite an omniscient narrator framing the opening and closing of the narrative, Yasmine Gooneratne refers to ‘Woolf’s anxiety to render his narrative voice as unobtrusive as possible’ which led him to ‘tone down the impression (to some degree inescapable in such a necessarily authoritative third-person narrative as this) that reader and narrator are on the outside, looking in upon the curious workings of the Sinhalese villager’s mind.’<sup>42</sup>

Specifically, the third-person narration of the main section of the narrative is focalised on the point of view of Silindu and his twin daughters. In his discussion of focalisation, Gérard Genette makes a distinction between narrative voice, the one ‘who speaks’, and perspective, the one ‘who sees’ and ‘who perceives’. He argues that ‘[i]n internal focalization, the focus coincides with the character, who then becomes the fictive “subject” of all the perceptions, including those that concern himself as an object’<sup>43</sup>. In other words, the narrator articulates only what the specific character knows and experiences. As Mervyn de Silva argues, ‘Woolf’s picture of the village community was a total one, a portrait of both the physical and inner life of the peasant, his beliefs, his ways of thinking and feeling’<sup>44</sup>. Extending this idea of a

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<sup>41</sup> Boehmer, *Empire, the National*, 207. See also Yasmine Gooneratne, “Leonard Woolf’s Waste Land: *The Village in the Jungle*,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 7, no.1 (1972): 33 and “A Novelist at Work: the Manuscript of Leonard Woolf’s *The Village in the Jungle*,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 18, no.1 (1983): 101-2.

<sup>42</sup> Gooneratne, “A Novelist at Work...”, 101-2.

<sup>43</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988), 74.

<sup>44</sup> As cited in Christopher Ondaatje, *Woolf in Ceylon: An Imperial Journey in the Shadow of Leonard Woolf, 1904-1911* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2005), 253.

‘total one’, Woolf’s novel is clearly indebted to the Jamesonian ideal of ‘mapping the totality’<sup>45</sup> and national allegory through the way that Silindu represents the peasantry which represents the village and by extension the nation. In Woolf’s novel the internal focalisation is variable<sup>46</sup> because it alternates between Silindu and his daughters. The significance of the inclusion of Silindu and the daughters’ perspectives is that it privileges their way of seeing and experiencing as Woolf imagines them over his own perspective. Moreover, by representing the lived experiences of peasants, both Woolf and Wijenaïke emphasise how these lives are lived, understood and experienced on both the level of the individual and society.

In the opening pages of *The Village in the Jungle*, Woolf represents the effects of the chena permit system on the livelihood and standard of living of the peasants, as well as the headman’s complicity with this system. The perspective of the peasants draws attention to:

The power which they felt hanging over them was by no means imaginary... The life and the village and of every man in it depended upon the cultivation of chenas... The villagers owned no jungle themselves; it belonged to the Crown, and no one might fell a tree or clear a chena without a permit from the Government. It was through these permits that the headman had his hold upon the villagers... the life of the unfortunate man who had offended the headman, would be full of dangers and difficulties. The permit applied for him would be very slow in reaching his hands... and woe betide him if he rashly cleared a chena without a permit at all.  
(21-2)

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<sup>45</sup> Fredric Jameson, ‘Modernism and Imperialism’ in *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, eds. S. Deane, Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward Said. (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 63. Similarly Perry Anderson wrote in 1998 of the need for ‘a totalizing comprehension of the new unlimited capitalism—a theory adequate to the global scale of its connexions and disjunctions.’ Perry Anderson, *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso, 1998), 6. See also Neil Larsen, *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative, and Nation in the Americas* (London; New York: Verso, 2001)

<sup>46</sup> Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 73-4.

The fact that the permit allocation system is based on the headman's own personal bias indicates corruption. The words 'power' and 'hold' reinforce the subjugated position that the peasants occupy in society. Internal focalisation reinforces this subjugation by conveying Silindu's emotions about the fact that he needs to approach the headman for help: 'Silindu sat in helpless silence...All that he felt was the misery of a new misfortune. At last, however, the pressing need of the moment again recurred to him' (24). The conversation that follows between Silindu and the headman demonstrates that chena cultivation may be unreliable but it is a source of survival:

“Ralahami, is there any objection to my clearing  
Nugagahahena next chena season?”

“There are three months before the chena season. Why think  
of that now?”

“When the belly is empty, the mouth talks of rice. Last year  
my chena crop was bad.” (24).

The headman leaves Silindu's question unanswered which suggests that he is unmoved by Silindu's predicament.

Consequently, Silindu's hunger means he is driven to begging the headman for a loan to help his family survive. He plaintively pleads to the headman: “Ralahami, it is only ten kurunies I am asking for – only ten kurunies – and surely the barn behind your house is full” (25). When this loan is refused he becomes more desperate: “Will you let me die of hunger? And my two children? Give but five kurunies, and I will repay it threefold.” (25). Chena cultivation is depicted as insufficient for subsistence, so the headman often loans the peasants rice and money. The proliferation of debt is emphasised in the novel:

the mainspring upon which the life of the village worked – debt. The villagers lived upon debt, and their debts were the main topic of their conversations. A good crop, from two to four acres of chena, would be enough to support a family for a year. But no one, not even the headman, ever enjoyed the full crop which he reaped, at the time of reaping a band of strangers from the town would come into the village... With the reaping of the chenas came the settlement of debts. With their little greasy notebooks, full of unintelligible letters and figures, they descended upon the chenas; and after calculations, wranglings, and abuse, the accounts were settled, and the strangers left the village, their carts loaded with pumpkins, sacks of grain... In the end the villager carried very little grain from his chena to his hut. (20)

Not even the headman is immune from the cycle of debt that envelops the entire village. The juxtaposition of ‘their carts loaded’ and ‘the villager carried very little grain’ emphasises the disparity between the affluence of those who are collecting the debt and the hardships and poverty experienced by the peasantry. The crops produced through chena cultivation are used by the peasants to pay off their debts, which means that they are left with less than the amount required ‘to support a family for a year’. This lack means that they are dependent on loans to feed their families, which fuels the cycle of debt and ensures they are unable to escape continued impoverishment. The unfavourable, negative depiction of the behaviour of the ‘strangers’ who collect the debt, combined with the way that their ledgers are ‘unintelligible’ suggests that the peasants are being exploited and victimised.

In both *The Village in the Jungle* and *The Waiting Earth*, the narrative follows the conventions of melodrama by revolving around the central protagonist, the father, whom the reader is invited to identify with through the writers’ representation of his victimisation. The socio-economic hardships of the peasantry as a group are equated to the individual circumstances of Silindu and his family. Elisabeth Anker argues that

melodrama ‘often translates into a critique of social, economic and political injustice...an insistence on viewing the operations of power through the eyes of those subjected most deeply to its conditions and constraints’<sup>47</sup>. In both narratives the father’s suffering is compounded by the actions of his daughter and the visual spectacle of her death. Conventionally, melodrama is associated with excessive emotions and over-the-top dramatic plotting which does characterise the shocking circumstances and event of each daughter’s death. In the discussion of melodrama which follows, I focus on Woolf’s use of this form in *The Village in the Jungle*.

Woolf’s use of melodrama is echoed and extended by Wijenaiké, as I discuss in more detail later in the chapter when I discuss *The Waiting Earth*. In Woolf’s novel, Silindu’s daughter, Hinnihami, adopts a wild fawn and nurses it with her own child. The other villagers believe the fawn to be an evil omen that could wreak havoc on the village, a claim which is perceived to be justified when the village experiences drought and disease. Woolf graphically depicts the villagers assaulting Hinnihami and torturing and killing the deer in front of her because of this belief:

A small band of men and boys from the village, and now were between her and the deer...They held her that she might see what they did. The deer was moaning in pain. One of the men cut a thin stick and struck him upon the hind legs until they were broken. Hinnihami fought and struggled, but she was powerless in their hands. At length, when they became tired of torturing them, they threw her down by the deer’s side and went away. (82-3)

Silindu finds her ‘the next morning, still sitting naked by the body of the deer’ (84) and takes her home where she dies. Similarly in *The Waiting Earth* Podhi Singho’s daughter discovers that she is pregnant following a relationship with her teacher and

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<sup>47</sup> Elisabeth Robin Anker, “The Venomous Eye: Melodrama and the Making of National Identity and State Power,” (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 2007), iv.

commits suicide by falling down a well. Both Woolf and Wijenaike depict how these deaths affect the father and increase his distress. In the wake of Hinnihami's death Silindu is portrayed as a victim of his difficult circumstances because he is unable to effect change. He recognises that, 'In the end he had lost her utterly; now indeed the house was empty. He was a fool, yes, a fool; he knew that; but how can a man know how to walk surrounded by all the snares of evil and disaster' (85). Both events reinforce the victimisation of the father because it is through his perspective and his emotive response that the events are focalised.

Moreover, melodrama 'assigns individual characters an unambiguous role in the Manichean conflict of good versus evil.'<sup>48</sup> Fredric Jameson argues that it is important to think of melodrama 'as a narrative instrument for managing social tensions and conflicts.'<sup>49</sup> The conflict between good and evil is established by Woolf's antithetical characterisation of the naïve, victimised Silindu and the more worldly and experienced headman and the money lender and debt collector. In the first pages of the novel Silindu is described in the following terms: '[s]ilent, inert, and sullen he worked in the chena or squatted about his compound...he was a quiet man, who did not easily recognise the hand which wronged him' (10). The headman, on the other hand, is dishonest and corrupt, as illustrated through his withdrawal of chena permits from Silindu's family because the daughter refuses to marry him. Likewise Fernando, the moneylender, is described as 'cunning, unscrupulous, with a smattering of education' (86). This polarised characterisation is cemented through

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<sup>48</sup> Rita Felski, "Introduction," in *Rethinking Tragedy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 7.

<sup>49</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (London: Methuen, 1981), 171.

the way that melodrama also derives a moral mandate for the protagonist's actions, by portraying actions as 'good' when they are taken in order to defeat 'evil'. The actions of the headman and Fernando are recognisable as 'evil' when they fabricate a charge of robbery against Silindu and his daughter's husband, Babun, after the daughter refuses to leave her husband for the moneylender. Babun is found guilty and sentenced to six months in prison and dies before he can be released. Internal focalisation conveys Silindu's recognition of his position and the impulse to take action:

He saw at last the malignity of the headman and how his life had been ruined by it. This last stroke made him aware of the long series of misfortunes, which he now felt were due to the same cause. This knowledge roused him at last from his resignation. (109)

The unambiguous reference to 'the malignity of the headman' reinforces Woolf's melodramatic characterisation of the headman as the evil villain of the novel. This characterisation emphasises Woolf's protest against the colonial administration because the headman was responsible for implementing the coloniser's policies in Ceylon.<sup>50</sup> As the victim of the novel, Silindu's 'good' actions endeavouring to overcome 'evil' take the form of the murders of the village headman and the moneylender. However, he subsequently receives a death sentence, before it is commuted to twenty years' imprisonment. An adherence to the conventions of melodrama means Woolf invites the reader to sympathise with Silindu and his actions. The form also reinforces his protest against those who abuse their power and contribute to the on-going victimisation of the peasants.

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<sup>50</sup> Roland Wenzlhuemer, *From Coffee to Tea Cultivation in Ceylon, 1880-1900: An Economic and Social History* (Boston, Mass.: Brill, 2008), 168-200.



In the entry for November 17 1909, in his Assistant Government Agent's diary, Woolf lamented the fact that because of corruption and peasant debt: 'villages in this District will gradually die out...by a slow process of extinction which will undoubtedly be accompanied by a considerable amount of distress.'<sup>51</sup> *The Village in the Jungle* concludes with the village undergoing the 'slow process of extinction':

The years had brought more evil, death, and decay upon the village ...Disease and hunger visited it year after year... Year after year, the rains from the north-east passed it by; only the sun beat down more pitilessly...the little patches of chena crop which the villagers tried to cultivate withered as soon as the young shoots showed above the ground...Disease and death took the old first...They struggled hard against the fate that hung over them, clinging to the place where they had been born and lived, the compound they knew, and the sterile chenas which they had sown. (176)

The words 'withered' and 'sterile' emphasise the hostile environment and the challenges that the peasants face in cultivating the land in what is represented as a futile desire to be self-sustainable. The narrative depicts how imperialism has affected traditional methods of agriculture making peasants impoverished and deprived and more vulnerable to famine and diseases like malaria. In the Introduction to Woolf's *Ceylon Diaries* Prakasakayo describes how

[t]he chief scourge of the district, and in fact the entire dry zone of Ceylon, during this time was malaria... With illness during cultivation time, planting was not properly done and as a result the crop and the income was poor. The income being poor the cultivator had to do with a poorer diet which weakened him still further.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Leonard Woolf, *Diaries in Ceylon 1908-11: Records of a Colonial Administrator* (Dehiwala; Sri Lanka: Tisara Press, 1962), 117.

<sup>52</sup> Prakasakayo "Introduction," in Leonard Woolf, *Diaries in Ceylon 1908-11: Records of a Colonial Administrator* (Dehiwala; Sri Lanka: Tisara Press, 1962), xxxix.

These two passages demonstrate that the continued existence of the peasantry is threatened. These areas are also a cause and effect of the underdevelopment of the land. The novel closes with the words: '[t]he village was forgotten, it disappeared into the jungle from which it had sprung, and with it she was cut off, forgotten' (178). However, Woolf's fictional construction of a Ceylonese village and the peasants are not doomed to be 'forgotten.' Rather than frame the narrative around the perspective and experiences of a colonial officer like many of the contemporaneous novels with a colonial setting, Woolf's utilisation of melodrama and internal focalisation creates a 'bottom-up' perspective to imperialism within colonial Ceylon. In so doing, *The Village in the Jungle* protests against colonial capitalist development by depicting the abuse of power and the on-going victimisation of the peasants, particularly their negative experience of chena cultivation and impoverishment.

The second half of this chapter also focuses on the peasantry, moving from the colonial period to the first two decades following on from Independence, examining Punyakante Wijenaïke's *The Waiting Earth* (1966) and the short story sequel 'Living on the Edge'<sup>53</sup> (2002). These texts depict the social and economic effects on the peasantry of the measures taken to tackle the stagnant Sri Lankan economy in the aftermath of British colonialism and independence in 1948. In particular, I explore Wijenaïke's representation of the Sri Lankan state's focus on development and the social upheaval caused by resettlement. Development refers to the discourses and practices that were initiated by the state in order to ensure the nation's economic

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<sup>53</sup> Punyakante Wijenaïke, 'Living on the Edge', *Daily News*, 17 July 2002.  
<<http://www.dailynews.lk/2002/07/17/fea02.html>>

growth, addressing two specific yet inter-related areas: agricultural production and poverty alleviation. These areas form the basis of what Nalani Hennayake terms the ‘indigenous discourse of development’, which comprises Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology and the recovery of a ‘glorious past.’<sup>54</sup> I assert that through *The Waiting Earth* and ‘Living on the Edge’ the writer expresses uncertainty about the extent of the agricultural development and poverty alleviation that the state can achieve. Wijenaikē’s protest against the shortcomings of this discourse and practice is encapsulated in her use of melodrama and free indirect discourse. This chapter argues that these literary strategies enable Wijenaikē to offer a critique of the Sinhalese elite, such that the texts can be regarded as literary and political interventions against government-enforced resettlement.

A brief background of the historical origins of development discourse in Sri Lanka in the decades preceding decolonisation is essential for contextualizing the novel’s representation of the state’s postcolonial development. I examine the overlap in the Sinhalese nationalist discourse and development practice which demonstrates the foundations of policies introduced after independence. Specifically, the land and labour policies of the Sinhala elite<sup>55</sup> that begin to emerge in the first two decades of the twentieth century demonstrate how state colonisation in the dry zone, in particular the economic strategies and practices used after British colonisation that

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<sup>54</sup> Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> During the later stages British colonisation, the Sinhalese elite emerged and ‘invested capital in plantation agriculture.’ Kristian Stokke, “Sinhalese and Tamil Nationalism as Post-Colonial Political Projects From ‘Above’, 1948-1983,” *Political Geography* 17, no. 1 (1998): 19.

pertain to the control of space, have their origins in pre-1948 'peasant ideology.'<sup>56</sup> Similarly to Zionist settlement in Mandate Palestine there are two, albeit overlapping types of colonisation: one agricultural and one settlement-based. In Sri Lanka the state's control of land is termed 'colonisation' which refers to the creation of agricultural settlements in the interior of the island, particularly the northern and eastern regions.<sup>57</sup> An examination of the historical context demonstrates how and why nationalist discourse and development practice emerged and came to be strategically combined.

### **Indigenous Development**

A number of studies commissioned by the Sinhalese political and nationalist elite prior to decolonisation recognised the negative impact and far-reaching consequences of British colonial rule on the Sri Lankan economy.<sup>58</sup> These studies illuminated the lengthy, persistent process in which colonisation's introduction and imposition of capitalism, in mainly the central and southern regions of Sri Lanka, undermined and disrupted peasant economies and transformed class relations, land rights and ownership. Specifically, the worst outcomes brought about by the plantation system and market economy of colonisation was the decline of peasant agriculture, the disintegration of the village community and widespread poverty.

Consequently, a conflict between the Sinhalese nationalist elite and the British

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<sup>56</sup> A term first coined in the Sri Lankan context by Mick Moore in *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and "The Ideological History of the Sri Lankan 'peasantry.'" *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no.1 (1989): 187.

<sup>57</sup> G. H. Peiris, "The Current Land Reforms and Peasant Agriculture in Sri Lanka," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 5, no.1 (1975):78-89.

<sup>58</sup> See for example, N. Shanmugaratnam, "Impact of Plantation Economy and Colonial Policy on Sri Lanka Peasantry," *Economic and Political Weekly* 16, no. 3 (1981): 69-71+73-80.

colonisers' conceptualisation of development arose in the years prior to independence:

[T]wo broad views of what is development (in the fundamental sense what is desirable for the country) began to emerge. Firstly, there was the view of the colonizers for example, that the growth of plantation sector, which associated growth with socio-economic infrastructure of railways and other means of transport, together with the colonial bureaucracy was the best for the country. The opposing view, held by nationalist leaders such as Bandaranaike, emphasized self-sufficiency, self-reliance and sovereignty.<sup>59</sup>

For the Sinhalese, the peasant occupied a place of prime importance in agricultural production, economic recovery and state-building. They proposed that a key element for creating a self-sufficient nation was the improvement and development of the agricultural sector. As such, development policies constructed by the Sinhalese elite focused on how agricultural production could encourage economic growth and be accomplished through the paddy farming of the peasantry.

However, this 'peasant ideology' of the elite that emerged in the 1920s as a discourse of development was motivated by more than solely economic growth. Rather, the Sinhala elite also targeted the landlessness, poverty, and poor living conditions of the peasants that had been brought about by the colonisers' creation of the plantation sector, because they recognised that they needed to appeal to the rural Sinhala electorate in order to ensure electoral success. The discourse of development that the elite used to appeal to the high rural electorate in the 1920s and continued following independence in 1948 was driven by a populist Sinhala nationalism. The Sinhala nationalism that is present in the 'peasant ideology' is framed around the

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<sup>59</sup> Susantha Goonatilake, "Development Thinking as Cultural Neo-Colonialism - the Case of Sri Lanka," *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin* 7, no.1 (April 1975):18.

contention that the majority ethnic group of Sri Lanka, the Sinhalese-Buddhists, comprise a ‘distinct group with a distinct history’<sup>60</sup>. This kind of nationalism becomes exclusionary when the Sinhalese are equated with the nation-state, and Tamils experience discrimination as a result. In order to substantiate this contention the state created, and subsequently maintained, a close association between Sinhalese-Buddhist national history and the practice of development. Specifically, the notion of a Sri Lankan<sup>61</sup> national past is directly derived from the belief that the Sinhalese-Buddhists are the sole, exclusive heirs of Sri Lanka as stipulated in the *Mahavamsa* and other Buddhist chronicles.<sup>62</sup> There are striking parallels to Benedict Anderson’s conceptualisation of how the construction of a national past is a common feature of all efforts to create a sense of national community.<sup>63</sup> Sri Lanka as the island of Sinhalese-Buddhist heirs occupies a prime position in Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology through the dual concept of *Dhammadipa* (island of the Buddha) and *Sihadipa* (island of the Sinhala people).<sup>64</sup>

The national pre-colonial past as perceived by the Sinhalese elite, then, came to be used as the development ‘model for the future.’<sup>65</sup> Consequently, Sri Lankan

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<sup>60</sup> Moore, *The State*, 18.

<sup>61</sup> The constitution of 1972 renamed the country the Republic of Sri Lanka and among other changes made Sinhala and Buddhism as the national language and religion respectively. The word ‘Lanka’ is derived from Sanskrit and means island. Patrick Peebles, *The History of Sri Lanka* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2006), 124.

<sup>62</sup> Mohan, *Utopia and the Village*, 24.

<sup>63</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 187.

<sup>64</sup> Charles A. Hoole, “A Reassessment of Sinhalese Utopia: Explorative Essay on the Sri Lankan Crisis,” *Journal of Church and State* 95 (1991):100-2; Michael Roberts, “Problems of Collective Identity in a Multi-Ethnic Society: Sectional Nationalism vs. Ceylonese Nationalism 1900-1940” in *Collective Identities, Nationalisms and Protest in Modern Sri Lanka* ed. Michael Roberts (Colombo: Marga Institute, 1979), 341.

<sup>65</sup> Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development*, 49.

development discourse and practice asserts that Sri Lanka's "glorious past" prior to foreign domination and colonisation was developed and progressive. The two primary factors which figure prominently in evocations of the pre-colonial national past are the dry zone as the heartland of Sinhalese civilisation and the peasantry. It is the interdependence of these two elements, agricultural production and exclusionary Sinhala nationalism, that 'provided a space for the indigenous discourse of development to emerge and establish as a discourse of power.'<sup>66</sup>

The physical consequence of the state's indigenous discourse of development is apparent through the peasant resettlement schemes advocated by the Sinhalese elite, beginning around the mid-1930s and intensifying in the period following independence. It entailed the movement of thousands of Sinhalese peasants from the densely populated south and south-western regions to areas of the northern and eastern dry zone. Land colonisation and the distribution of state-owned land (crown land) for village expansion in the area of Sri Lanka known as the dry zone became the basic elements of the government's policies towards the Sinhala peasantry. Resettlement was also rhetorically used as a means of aiding the Sinhalese people in their return to the land of their 'ancient civilisation'. As such, agriculture facilitated through peasant 'colonisation', came to be considered, in the words of Don Stephen Senanayake, the first Prime Minister of independent Sri Lanka, as a truly 'patriotic endeavour' and necessitated the 'preservation' of the peasantry as a 'social group'<sup>67</sup>

The state infused Sinhalese nationalism with the vision that colonisation of the dry

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> D. S. Senanayake, *Agriculture and Patriotism* (Colombo: Cave., 1935).

zone was a ‘return to the heartland of the ancient irrigation civilisation of the Sinhalese’<sup>68</sup>.

### **Punyakante Wijenaikē and the Reception of Sri Lankan Literature**

Born in 1933 in Colombo, where she has lived most of her life, Punyakante Wijenaikē has written six novels and four collections of short stories, as well as more than one hundred stories published in newspapers, journals and anthologies. In the context of reception, in spite of the widespread disapproval of Wijenaikē’s work by Sri Lankan critics, one metropolitan critic enthusiastically claims that ‘[i]n Punyakante Wijenaikē Sri Lanka possess[es] one of the most underestimated fiction writers currently at work in the English language... Her work rewards the effort of discovery’<sup>69</sup>. The novels have been translated from English into both Sinhala and Tamil. *The Waiting Earth* is informed by Wijenaikē’s engagement with the specific economic agendas and nationalist discourse of the Sri Lankan state in the period immediately following decolonisation. Wijenaikē’s narrative represents the problem of peasant landlessness through the perspective of the protagonist, Podhi Singho, and shows how this condition affects every aspect of his life, including the social relations with his family and fellow villagers. Specifically, Wijenaikē depicts how Podhi Singho was affected by and responded to the ‘indigenous discourse of development’.

In terms of reception and audience Sri Lankan Anglophone literature occupies a troubled position both in the domestic and international context. Despite the fact that

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<sup>68</sup>Moore, *The State and Peasant*, 45.

<sup>69</sup> Alastair Niven, “The Fiction of Punyakante Wijenaikē,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 12, no.1 (1977): 55.



following independence Anglophone literature was ‘neglected...and even reviled’<sup>70</sup>, a stance cemented in 1956 due to the cultural nationalism stimulated by the ‘Sinhala Only’ Act, in the latter half of the 1960s there emerged a small group of writers who produced English literary texts in Sri Lanka. However, these texts and their writers were subject to similarly unfavourable criticism. These writers, who formed a privileged minority within the country, include Wijenaikē and her contemporary James Goonewardene. Writing in English, which amounted to ‘a form of cultural treason’<sup>71</sup> according to one writer, not only segregated Anglophone writers from other Sri Lankan writers but was thought to preclude the political commitment of their texts. From the 1960s Sri Lankan writing in English has often been subject to strong reactions from Sri Lankan literary critics ranging from derision and ridicule to condemnation and disgust. Goonetilleke asserts that Wijenaikē ‘is distanced from, and external to, village life. She does not really know or care about the village.’<sup>72</sup> These critics perceived an intrinsic link between being an Anglophone writer and an inability to produce narratives that were politically relevant to the nation. Chelva Kanaganayakam asserts that ‘the writings of, say Punyakante Wijenaikē and James Goonewardene, despite their obvious appeal to a certain sensibility and the ironies with which they described the urban scene, have remained outside the events that were shaping the country’<sup>73</sup>.

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<sup>70</sup> D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People 1917-2003* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2005), 12.

<sup>71</sup> Lakdasa Wikramasinha, “Note,” in *Lustre: Poems* (Kandy: Privately Published, 1965) 51, as cited in Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, 49.

<sup>72</sup> Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, 254-5.

<sup>73</sup> Chelva Kanaganayakam, “Dancing in the Rarefied Air: Reading Contemporary Sri Lankan Literature,” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 29, no.1 (January 1998), 53.

To say that Wijenaïke's and Goonewardene's texts 'have remained outside the events that were shaping the country' is disputable, however. In *The Waiting Earth* in particular, Wijenaïke's representation of and engagement with the state's development practices, specifically peasant resettlement, demonstrates that this novel warrants more critical attention than it has achieved thus far. This engagement with and resistance to state policy is encapsulated in the literary and formal strategies Wijenaïke uses. In particular, and as I explore in more detail below, the utilisation of melodrama and free indirect discourse are significant. As such, Wijenaïke's novel is politically and aesthetically important not only to the period in which it was written but also to a contemporary audience, as evidenced by its potential to represent, and thus aid understandings of, a past that is often omitted in the historical record and neglected in literary criticism.

The audience for most of Wijenaïke's works has been largely a domestic one. This domestic audience is in part due to the fact that these works have only been published in Sri Lanka but is also due to the status of Sri Lanka in the field of postcolonial literary studies within the UK and US. Undergraduate and graduate syllabi in these contexts regularly omit or pay cursory attention to Sri Lanka. A perusal of the reading lists for many of the institutions that offer postcolonial courses in their literature departments indicates that there is little or no reference, at the time of writing this thesis, to Sri Lanka. However, it is a prescribed text in the Sri Lanka's A-Level English literature syllabus<sup>74</sup> which demonstrates the discrepancies in literary canonicity. Nevertheless, the audience for Wijenaïke's texts is set to change

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<sup>74</sup> Maryse Jayasuriya *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009* (Lanham; Maryland: Lexington Books, 2012), 18.

and expand. Her novels, including *The Waiting Earth* were re-published by Messrs Samaranayake Publishers at the end of June 2011<sup>75</sup>. Samaranayake Publishers was created in order to publicise Sri Lankan fiction both domestically and internationally and hopes to promote works of local writers to wider readerships which will help take ‘Sri Lankan literature beyond our shores’<sup>76</sup>. The managing director of Samaranayake Publishers revealed that his motivation for re-publishing Wijenaiké’s works as well as several new Sri Lankan, exclusively Sinhalese, texts was ‘to promote the Sri Lankan identity in the sphere of world of literature, by providing an avenue to upcoming and aspiring writers in Sri Lanka to pursue authorship and to reach international readerships’<sup>77</sup>. Republication acts as a medium of dissemination and promotion of Sri Lankan Anglophone literature and means that these texts and their writers are that much closer to the wider audience that they deserve. The possible purpose of republication and contemporary relevance is because since the violent end of the civil war, publishers have recognised the need to rehabilitate Sinhala internationally.

### **Punyakante Wijenaiké’s *The Waiting Earth***

*The Waiting Earth* fulfils two primary criteria of the historical novel, as characterised by Georg Lukács. The text begins in a period earlier than when it was written and published, reconsidering and re-evaluating a defining period in Sri

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<sup>75</sup> *Sunday Times*, “Punyakante Wijenaiké gives tips on short story writing,” June 19, 2011, accessed August 31, 2011, [http://sundaytimes.lk/110619/Plus/plus\\_14.html](http://sundaytimes.lk/110619/Plus/plus_14.html).

<sup>76</sup> *The Island*, “Sri Lankan Literature Beyond Our Shores,” August 20, 2011, accessed September 15, 2011, [http://www.island.lk/index.php?page\\_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code\\_title=32851](http://www.island.lk/index.php?page_cat=article-details&page=article-details&code_title=32851).

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

Lanka's history. The text also depicts a transformation of socio-economic life through the representation of a group of characters whose lives are transformed by key historical events.<sup>78</sup> The historical events of the narrative take place over a span of roughly fifteen years and two generations. Indeed taking on the form of the family saga means that *The Waiting Earth* depicts everyday family life and characters who are involved in specific historical events. In the novel, the family saga depicts how peasants were affected by and responded to the 'indigenous discourse of development'.

*The Waiting Earth* narrates the story of a Sinhalese peasant, Podhi Singho, and his wife, Sellohamy, focusing on Podhi Singho's aspiration to own the land on which he has worked all his life. Wijenaikē represents the poverty and landlessness of the agrarian proletariat and the state's endeavour to address and resolve this situation through resettlement. Resettlement is depicted as being contingent on an understanding that the peasantry would agriculturally develop the dry zone region through paddy farming. Paddy farming was considered the primary method of making Sri Lanka self-sufficient in rice and thereby help to create an economically, self-sustainable nation.<sup>79</sup> The novel ends with Podhi Singho, the peasant protagonist, and his family leaving their home to resettle. Wijenaikē's short story sequel 'Living on the Edge' takes up the story of Podhi Singho after forty years have elapsed and makes it clear that paddy farming has not been sustainable, thereby questioning the economic growth that the state had hoped resettlement would create. Paddy

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<sup>78</sup> György Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969), 147.

<sup>79</sup> Sunil Bastian, "The Politics of Land Reform and Land Settlement in Sri Lanka," 3, accessed August 4, 2011, <http://www.panossouthasia.org/PDF/Politics%20of%20Land%20Reform%20in%20Sri%20Lanka.pdf>

agriculture is emphasised by the protagonist of *The Waiting Earth* whose reverence is directed not only towards the rice itself but also the labour that has created it: ‘Rice was a grain to be honoured. It had been grown by the sweat of his body... [and was] the fruits of his labour’ (168). Furthermore, the attraction of acquiring land in order to plant and grow one’s own food is valued highly as Podhi Singho’s son explains: ‘ “I wanted...I wanted to eat rice planted by you” ’ (319). This allusion to self-sufficiency and an increase in food production represent the material objectives of the development discourse associated with colonisation.

As will become clear in the reading of the novel that follows, Wijenaïke foregrounds how Podhi Singho was affected by and responded to this discourse. The narrative depicts the problem of peasant landlessness and the intended solution in the form of resettlement. I examine how Wijenaïke critiques the Sinhala elite through her misgivings associated with agricultural production and territoriality. The opening pages of the novel represent the land hunger that was experienced by the peasants in the wake of decolonisation. Wijenaïke depicts Podhi Singho yearning and aspiring to own the land on which he has lived and worked all his life:

Ever since he could remember he had been envious of those who held land. Land was plentiful, it was everywhere to see whether in the green rolling fields or in the jungle or even behind those distant hills. But none of it belonged to him. And he did not want just any piece of land either. He wanted a good square piece or two acres or more and which he could rightly claim...And he wanted it in this village where he had been born so that he felt it truly belonged to him as his birthright. (16)

The words ‘birthright’ and ‘claim’ reinforce Podhi Singho’s belief that he is entitled to the land. He also endeavours to justify his resentment towards those who are in possession of land through the observation that land is ‘everywhere to see’ and

methodically specifying that it is ‘in the green rolling fields or in the jungle or even behind those distant hills’ in order to emphasise that it is abundant. Such passages appear to directly allude to the Sinhala elite’s ‘peasant ideology’ that formed the basis of development discourse because Podhi Singho’s words explicitly depict the lament of a landless Sinhalese peasant. Moreover, it was precisely the appeal to this landlessness that the elite relied on for their electoral success.

Much of the literary criticism of *The Waiting Earth* has either denied the possibility that Wijenaïke’s work is aesthetically and politically important or argued that it promotes resettlement. In an early contemporaneous review Yasmine Gooneratne rather condescendingly asserted that: ‘[i]f the novel seems disappointing and the story thin and unnecessarily protracted in the telling, this is probably not unusual in a writer attempting the new and more demanding form of a full length novel’<sup>80</sup>. I agree with Gooneratne up to a point, as the characterisation often appears weak and subordinated to plot. The representation of peasant landlessness can seem too contrived, particularly in the numerous passages Wijenaïke devotes to Podhi Singho and his obsession with acquiring land. A mixture of desperation and desire is evident in one such emblematic passage: ‘he filled his mind with thoughts of the land and the land alone... This one thing he had yet to live for, this dream to keep him sane. He made his mind see this land now, made it lie open and naked for him and he saw his own body bend over it and his hand thrust the seed into the waiting earth’ (190). Such passages make it tempting to read *The Waiting Earth* as an unequivocal endorsement of the state’s development discourse,

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<sup>80</sup> Yasmine Gooneratne, “Ceylon,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 4, no.1-3 (March 1969): 62-6.

since through resettlement Podhi Singho would acquire the land that he so desperately seeks.

More recently Minoli Salgado has read the novel as an endorsement of peasant resettlement, thereby perceiving it as propaganda. Salgado provides a psychoanalytic reading of the text that focuses on the Freudian formulation of the uncanny or unhomely.<sup>81</sup> According to Salgado the uncanny takes on two key characteristics in the novel. Firstly, the ‘the impact of modernity’ combined with landlessness, which she equates with homelessness, creates increasingly alienated individuals and a breakdown in society. Secondly, the ‘land becomes obsessively fetishized’ whereby the protagonist’s obsession with his condition of landlessness is connected with his estrangement from his wife. Accordingly, Podhi Singho’s acquisition of land at the end of the novel is correlated with his reconciliation with his wife. This interpretation of Wijenaikē’s characterisation and plot trajectory lead Salgado to assertively conclude that

Wijenaikē reinscribes the connection between territorial boundaries and marital rights and makes a compelling case for the legitimacy of the colonisation scheme. The scheme comes to be justified through the text’s neutralisation of Singho’s land lust within the ambit of government policy.<sup>82</sup>

“Uncanny” does not really work in this context. The interpretation of the text as propaganda is reinforced by the way the denouement of the novel can appear supportive of state policies (Salgado) because it depicts Podhi Singho’s estrangement and landlessness being resolved through land colonisation and resettlement.

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<sup>81</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny* trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin, 2003)

<sup>82</sup> Minoli Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* (London: Routledge, 2007), 62.

However, not only does Salgado's reading miss other clues in the plot but it also overlooks the novel's formal strategies, both of which suggest that a happy outcome derived from resettlement is uncertain. While it would be fair to say that Wijenaïke engages with the discourse of development, the novel does not merely provide a self-fulfilling propagandist representation of the practice. A more nuanced reading of *The Waiting Earth* alerts us to Wijenaïke's utilisation of melodrama. Similarly to the aim of Woolf's use of melodrama in *The Village in the Jungle*, which I explored in detail above, I argue that both writers deploy melodrama in order to critique the respective forms of development in colonial Ceylon and postcolonial Sri Lanka. As Robert Heilman argues, 'melodrama has affinities with politics, tragedy and religion... [it] is the principal vehicle of protest and dissent'<sup>83</sup>. I argue that Wijenaïke appears to be drawing on Woolf's *The Village in the Jungle* because of the many similar melodramatic characteristics in the later novel. Writers use melodrama in order to articulate responses to heightened historical situations which could lead to the transformation of socioeconomic and/or political environments as well as social relations.<sup>84</sup> In *The Waiting Earth*, resettlement transforms not only many peasants' physical environments but correspondingly the socioeconomic environment of the entire nation. Paying attention to melodrama demonstrates Wijenaïke's uncertainty about the extent of the agricultural development and poverty alleviation that can be achieved through resettlement.

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<sup>83</sup> Robert Heilman, *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1969), 79 and 96.

<sup>84</sup> Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination*.



Peter Brooks asserts that melodrama is characterised by ‘the polarisation of good and evil... Their conflict suggests the need to recognize and confront evil, to combat and expel it, to purge the social order’ which is represented by ‘the confrontation of clearly identified antagonists and the expulsion of one of them.’<sup>85</sup> As in *The Village in the Jungle*, Wijenaike’s antithetical characterisation of the protagonist and another villager creates a conflict between good and evil. In *The Waiting Earth* the naïve Podhi Singho is contrasted with the more worldly and experienced Rappiel Appu. Podhi Singho recognises this oppositional relationship: ‘You are a learned man while I am but a poor, ignorant peasant’ (112). Appu challenges the dominant social order initially by a vocal protest against the landlord and tenant system in order to appeal to Podhi Singho’s landlessness. He suggests that land ownership should be taken away from the landlord: ‘a city man who has not even visited it for the past ten years’ (67) and transferred to the peasants who work and live on the land. However, later in the novel, it becomes apparent that Appu has used Podhi Singho’s naivety and obsession with land ownership to gain the other man’s trust. For instance, Podhi Singho’s confidence in and reliance on Appu’s good qualities enables Appu to employ Podhi Singho’s son in the city. Nevertheless, rather than legitimate business activities, Appu engages the young man in illegal boot-legging. Consequently, in keeping with the logic of melodrama, when Appu’s ‘evil’ actions become apparent, he is unable to return to the community. Taken together, Wijenaike’s plot and characterisation reveal the protagonist to be naïve, passive, simple and easily-duped. This characterisation is significant because, as I will illustrate below, it refutes Salgado who asserts that Podhi Singho’s perspective and the author’s perspective are

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, 13 and 17.

the same. The consequence of the separation between Podhi Singho and Wijenaike is particularly relevant when investigating the text's critique of resettlement.

Specifically, the text's use of free indirect discourse makes it clear that the perspectives of Podhi Singho are his alone, thereby demonstrating a separation between author and character. In Podi Singho's interior monologue, he considers the state's resettlement policy. He contemplates that:

[this policy] says that not anyone can be given this land. Only if a man is so poor that he finds it difficult to feed his family from day to day. If he has no work and is landless as well. Yes, yes, it is jungle land. But he would have to plant it with rice by himself and he would have to work for many months before he could have the first harvest. Yes, water will be provided, it says here, and the jungle must be cleared off this piece of land before it is given to a man. (56-7)

The first sentence is diegetic narration, but the second and third ('Only if a man...', 'If he has...') begin to suggest the voice of the character, especially in the fourth sentence and the demotic 'Yes, yes'. This blending of the external perspective of the narrator with the more subjective one of the character alerts the reader to the use of free indirect discourse. Using this literary technique means 'the narrator takes on the speech of the character, or, if one prefers, the character speaks through the voice of the narrator...the narrator is obliterated and the character *substitutes* for him'<sup>86</sup>.

According to Franco Moretti, a writer's utilization of free indirect discourse

clusters near the plot's major turning points: moments of doubt, fear, excitement and especially retrospective regret. And it makes sense because in these moments the character's emotions have that surplus intensity that is needed to "bridge" the structural gap between story and discourse... [and] at stake, here, is not just style, but the social function of literature as such... [using free indirect discourse] the

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<sup>86</sup> Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), 174.

vividness of emotional experience gains ground over the ethical message, which becomes implicit, ironic (and usually blander).<sup>87</sup>

The above passage from *The Waiting Earth* elicits from Podi Singho a direct emotional response, as represented by the enthusiastic “Yes, yes,” but also falls into what Moretti characterizes as one of the “plot’s major turning points” because it specifically refers to the potential fulfillment of land acquisition. The use of free indirect discourse, according to Moretti, also stages a conflict between emotional and ethical responses which are explicitly and implicitly represented in a novel. While the emotional response is depicted overtly through the words of the character, the reader’s ethical response, as intended by the author (hence the use of free indirect discourse), is implicit. According to Roy Pascal, in free indirect discourse, the reader recognises ‘a dual voice, which, through vocabulary, sentence structure, and intonation subtly fuses the two voices of the character and the narrator’. For Pascal, the ‘duality’ of the style is its key feature, and ‘may be heard as a tone of irony... underlying the statement of the character’<sup>88</sup>. In other words, bringing together the narrator’s voice with the character’s consciousness allows the possibility of an alternative, ironic, perspective on the character’s thoughts.

Consequently, as in the resettlement passage as cited above, there is often a disconnection in Wijenaiké’s and Podhi Singho’s perspectives. The repetition of ‘would have to’ coupled with the allusion to the long duration of toil and labour, ‘many months before he could have the first harvest’, suggests Podhi Singho’s

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<sup>87</sup> Franco Moretti, “Serious Century,” in *The Novel Volume 1: History, Geography, and Literature*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 393-4.

<sup>88</sup> Roy Pascal, *The Dual Voice: Free Indirect Speech and its Functioning in the Nineteenth-century European Novel* (Manchester: Manchester University Press; Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1977), 26 and 19.

determination that the land will yield the results that both the peasant and the state are aiming for. Also note ‘it says here’ in the passage, which underlines the idea that Podhi is naïve and easily duped. Podhi Singho’s explicit determination is undercut by Wijenaïke’s use of free indirect discourse to ironise and distance herself from Podhi Singho’s perspective on resettlement. In other words, it allows her to articulate that resettlement is open to critique.

*The Waiting Earth* concludes with Podhi Singho, along with his wife and remaining son, setting off from their native village. In the final pages free indirect discourse once again enables Podhi Singho to reflect on what resettlement will entail. He hopes that he will be able ‘to send his old roots into the new soil without fear of their dying’ (321). Podhi Singho articulates a naïve optimism that resettlement will entail not only successful farming but also a better life. Nevertheless, the novel ends before we see any benefit from the land. Indeed, in the context of the novel as a whole, where all of the characters’ dreams are dashed one by one, it seems unlikely that this one would be satisfied. Despite the fact that earlier on in the text the state’s appeal to another poor peasant family’s landlessness is depicted with the assertion that ‘the land they seek so hungrily will be theirs’, (153) there are no reports of success, so we do not know if the alleviation of poverty and other benefits premised by the state come to fruition. Subsequently, rather than ‘justif[ying] resettlement and colonisation<sup>89</sup>, Wijenaïke questions and challenges it. Salgado fails to account for Wijenaïke’s representation of the land that is provided for the peasant in the dry zone as being of poor quality. This is acknowledged earlier

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<sup>89</sup> See above, Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka*, 62.

in the novel: ‘the sun in that distant place baked the earth so hard and dry that it was never an easy task for a man’s hoe to break the soil’ (152).

The short story sequel takes up the story of Podhi Singho after forty years have elapsed and makes it clear that paddy farming has not been sustainable, thereby questioning the economic growth that the state had hoped resettlement would create. ‘Living on the Edge’ continues to represent the limitations of the land. The land is depicted as being ‘dry and hard’ and the labour of farming is wearily referred to as ‘hard toil’. The narrative also refers to the character’s buying rice rather than growing their own which suggests that one of the state’s main objectives of resettlement, paddy farming, has not been sustainable. *The Waiting Earth*’s and ‘Living on the Edge’s’ representation of the peasantry putting the indigenous discourse of development into practice, then, suggests Wijenaik challenges the state’s policy for being ill-conceived and interconnected with the desire for territorial control over the whole of Sri Lanka.

Development discourse and practice not only legitimised the state’s colonisation and resettlement policies but also cemented the state’s territoriality through what Donald Smith refers to as the ‘Myth of Reconquest’<sup>90</sup>. The ‘Myth of Reconquest’ premised colonisation of the dry zone as embodying the return of the Sinhalese to the ancient hydraulic civilisation of the past. Tamil leaders regarded this policy as being designed and implemented with the intention of enabling the Sinhalese to ‘regain’ control over these regions previously dominated by Tamil communities:

For not only have large-scale irrigation schemes intruded  
Sinhalese settlers into areas formerly occupied by Tamil

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<sup>90</sup> Donald E. Smith, “Religion, Politics and the Myth of Reconquest,” in *Modern Sri Lanka: A Society in Transition*, eds. Tissa Fernando and Robert N. Kearney (New York: Syracuse University, 1979), 8.

speakers--Sri Lanka Tamils or Muslims--but this has been the conscious and admitted intention. There is thus the territorial dimension to what has been termed, in relation to Sinhalese political and cultural resurgence, 'The Myth of Reconquest' Land policy, and the ideologies which support it, have in general focused much more on the control of land than on the cultivation and use of land.<sup>91</sup>

Consequently, the allocation of agricultural land to landless and impoverished Sinhalese peasants in an area that the Tamils consider as part of their historical "Eelam" homeland means that the state utilised the strategy of resettlement in order to exercise control over a delimited area of space including its people and resources. Oren Yiftachel asserts that that this process amounts to 'the *Sinhalization of contested space*...[whereby] the Sri Lankan government encouraged Sinhalese to settle in the island's central and eastern regions, which previously were dominated and claimed by Tamils as part of their "own" regions'<sup>92</sup>.

At its fourth annual convention on August 19 1956, the Federal Party passed a resolution that read: 'the colonisation policy pursued by successive Governments since 1947 of planting Sinhalese population in the traditional homelands of the Tamil-speaking peoples is calculated to overwhelm and crush the Tamil-speaking people in their own national areas'. It went on to demand the 'immediate cessation of colonising the traditionally Tamil-speaking areas with Sinhalese people'<sup>93</sup>. While Tamils claim an ancestral or traditional homeland in and territoriality over the Northern and Eastern regions of Sri Lanka, where the dry zone is situated, the state

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<sup>91</sup> Moore, *The State*, 46-7.

<sup>92</sup> Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 24.

<sup>93</sup> Federal Party "Ilankai Tami l Arasu Kadchi Silver Anniversary Volume," (Jaffna, 1974): n.p. Unpublished and as cited in Patrick Peebles, "Colonization and ethnic conflict in the dry zone of Sri Lanka," *Journal of Asian Studies* 49 (1990): 30-55.

in the form of the Sinhalese-majority government from 1948 to the present day maintains this is a part of the homeland of an ancient Sinhalese population and, thus exercises territoriality over the whole of the island. The Tamil leadership believe the only way that they can exercise legitimate territorial control in the area that they allege is their homeland is through separatism and partition<sup>94</sup>.

In *The Waiting Earth*, Wijenaïke articulates her reservations about how the land will be acquired, developed and cultivated rather than how the territory will be controlled. However Salgado chooses to read the novel as a promotion of the state's territoriality because

[w]hen set within its historical context of peasant resettlement, a symptomatic reading of the novel reveals the contradictory political drives of ethnically engineered socialism – a central plank of the ethnic nationalism that emerged in the late 1950s. In this sense the novel, at once moving and measured in its lyricism, persuasively endorses controversial territorial measures.<sup>95</sup>

The idea of the text being 'at once moving and measured in its lyricism' highlights the text's emotional intensity yet neglects to tie it to Wijenaïke's clunky melodrama. Salgado supports the contention that Wijenaïke 'persuasively endorses controversial territorial measures' by reading the text as a straightforward endorsement of the Sri Lankan state providing land for the landless peasant, and by seeing the novel's conclusion as unambiguous. However, Podhi Singho's hope that he 'could send his old roots into the new soil without fear of their dying' (321) is telling. The use of free indirect discourse distinguishes between Podi Singho's and Wijenaïke's perspectives

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<sup>94</sup> Nihal Perera, "Territorial Spaces and National Identities: Representations of Sri Lanka," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 20 (1997): 25.

<sup>95</sup> Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka*, 61.

and suggests Podi Singho's assertion about the success of resettlement is not one that is shared by Wijenaïke.

The critique of territoriality is reinforced in the short story sequel. The narrative of 'Living on the Edge' depicts the resettlement of Podhi Singho and his family being under threat from '[t]he 'tigers' they called themselves and [they] came to drive him from his own land claiming it as theirs by right'. The 'tigers' refers to the Tamil Tigers, members of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) who sought independence and a sovereign state for the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. Although many of their actions to achieve this end were violent, their conflation with solely terrorist activity is untrue.<sup>96</sup> The use of 'claiming' and 'right' to describe the Tamils' sense of entitlement to this land echoes the terms Podhi Singho used when articulating his aspirations and yearning for land ownership in the novel. This correlation suggests that Wijenaïke acknowledges the difficulty in distinguishing between the two groups' territoriality. This difficulty suggests that unlike both the Sinhala and Tamil political elites who have very clear territorial claims, these claims are not reflected and represented in the perspectives of the peasants. The last lines of the text demonstrate a lingering uncertainty over whether the state will be able to continue exercising territoriality over the whole of Sri Lanka and continue to discount Tamil counter-claims through the words of Podhi Singho's son: 'We can wait and hope things will be all right and maybe we can keep our land'. Again, misgivings continue to plague Wijenaïke's representation of the territorial measures of the state: the words 'hope' and 'maybe' allude to the persistence of scepticism.

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<sup>96</sup> Gordon Weiss, *The Cage: The Fight for Sri Lanka and the Last Days of the Tamil Tigers* (London: Vintage, 2012)



Crucially, territoriality was a divisive issue between the Sinhalese and Tamil populations in Sri Lanka both in the period 1966 when *The Waiting Earth* was published and continued to be a source of conflict in 2002 when 'Living on the Edge' was written. Indeed, the state's contemporary land policy, especially after the May 2009 Tamil defeat, is one of 'land grabbing and dispossession in the name of security and development'<sup>97</sup> throughout the contested North and East. Indeed, because territoriality is still a highly contested issue today, I contend that Wijenaiké's critique needs to be recognised by a contemporary audience. The form of the open ending highlights to the reader that these issues are not resolved, yet can be reconsidered and possible alternatives explored.

Examining critically the historic and contemporary economic policies of colonial Ceylon and postcolonial Sri Lanka, Woolf's and Wijenaiké's fiction is not only informed by, but actively challenges the discourse and practice of development. By representing the lived experiences of peasants that have differed significantly from their own Woolf and Wijenaiké emphasise their common responsibility to engage with the individuals and communities that are affected by development yet often marginalised or unrecognised in Sri Lankan literature. Woolf's and Wijenaiké's political commitment also articulates the resistance to the coloniser's and state's policies. This commitment demonstrates the value of taking the literary representations and perspectives on development in *The Village in the Jungle*, *The Waiting Earth* and 'Living on the Edge' seriously. As such, Woolf's and Wijenaiké's texts may be recognised as a form of protest against the Sri Lankan state's enduring

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<sup>97</sup> N. Shanmugaratnam, "Reflections On Land and the National Question In Sri Lanka," *Journalists for Democracy in Sri Lanka*, July 13, 2012, accessed January 9, 2013, <http://www.jdslanka.org/index.php/2012-01-30-09-31-17/politics-a-economy/135-land-and-the-national-question-in-sri-lanka>.

and controversial indigenous development discourse. This protest continues to be relevant to the present day because agriculture comprises the main livelihood of almost seventy per cent of Sri Lanka's current population. Poverty and livelihood insecurity continues to plague this group,<sup>98</sup> particularly as a consequence of the neoliberal regime which is considered in the next chapter.

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<sup>98</sup> Sarath Fernando, "Peasants Situation and Human Rights in Sri Lanka," *Focus* 50 (December 2007). On-line at <http://www.hurights.or.jp/archives/focus/section2/2007/12/peasants-situation-and-human-rights-in-sri-lanka.html>

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Indigenous Thinking in State and NGO Development in *When Memory Dies* and ‘Shallow Canoes’**

[D]evelopment is not absent even where peace is not present but it is more uneven, more discriminating against large sections of people.

- N. Shanmugaratnam, “Challenges of Post-Disaster Development of Coastal Areas in Sri Lanka”<sup>1</sup>

Real development is not free trade zones and mammoth hydro-electric dams...It's waking up to our own needs and our own power.

- Sarvodaya Trainer, “Dharma and Development”<sup>2</sup>

On 3 October 2011, an editorial from the *Daily News*, a Sri Lankan English-language newspaper, commends the Sri Lankan state’s current development practices and discourses for their historic foundations. The writer demonstrates that the image of the ancient village continues to be considered a relevant paradigm of Sri Lankan development in the twenty-first century. He asserts:

The rampant poverty and material deprivation in Lanka’s dry zone tend to beg the question: how effective have been our development strategies? . . . some down-to-earth development thinking is called for . . . the Government’s . . . timely attempt to get back to the basics of development thinking, in a Lankan context. In a sense, it is a nostalgic throw back to the tank, temple and village concept. . . . As we see it, the fruits of development should be visible in the smallest of our villages and among the “smallest” of women

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<sup>1</sup> N. Shanmugaratnam, “Challenges of Post-disaster Development of Coastal Areas in Sri Lanka,” Consultative Workshop on Post-tsunami Reconstruction Experiences of Local NGOs, 23 November 23, 2005, accessed September 10, 2012, [http://www.imr.no/filarkiv/kopi\\_av\\_filarkiv/2006/05/Shanmugaratnam\\_Challenges\\_of\\_Post-disaster\\_Development\\_of\\_Coastal\\_Areas.pdf/en](http://www.imr.no/filarkiv/kopi_av_filarkiv/2006/05/Shanmugaratnam_Challenges_of_Post-disaster_Development_of_Coastal_Areas.pdf/en).

<sup>2</sup> Joanna Macy, “Dharma and Development,” accessed September 12, 2012, <http://www.joannamacy.net/the-sarvodaya-movement.html>.

and men. . . . We, therefore, commend this back to the soil approach of the Government.<sup>3</sup>

The editorial emphasizes how state development can restore this area to its former glory and establishes the importance of the tri-partite relationship of the water tank, the temple and the paddy field, which formed a powerful image of the village landscape and ‘a continuum between the glorious past and Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology.’<sup>4</sup> The state’s infusion of Sinhalese nationalism into contemporary development is evident. Indeed, the editorial resonates with the fact that there is a long literature, written by historians, anthropologists, and literary scholars, on the ways in which images of self-sufficient rural paradises support Sri Lankan self-imaginings as a Sinhala-Buddhist nation.<sup>5</sup> The combination of the village and paddy farming encapsulate the ideal model of early Sinhalese society which contemporary society should endeavour to emulate. According to the editorial, development strategies implemented by the contemporary state that endeavour to fulfill this vision of society will help to establish self-sufficiency and alleviate poverty in the present. As such, the development discourse and practice of the Sri Lankan state continues to be motivated by exclusionary Sinhala nationalism.

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<sup>3</sup> “Editorial: The Tank at the Centre of Development,” *Daily News*, August 6, 2004, accessed October 3, 2011, <http://www.dailynews.lk/2004/08/06/editorial.html>, para. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Michael D. Woost, “Nationalising the Local Past in Sri Lanka: Histories of Nation and Development in a Sinhalese Village,” *American Ethnologist* 20, no.3 (August 1993): 504-5.

<sup>5</sup> For insightful analyses of this trend, see Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 106-14; Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez, “Sri Lanka,” *The Encyclopedia of Religion and War*. Ed. Gabriel Palmer-Fernandez (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004), 407-12; Nira Wickramasinghe, *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History of Contested Identities* (London: C. Hurst, 2006) and Anupama Mohan, *Utopia and the Village in South Asian Literatures* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 24-32.

This chapter focuses on contemporary Sri Lankan writing in English, examining Ambalavaner Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies* <sup>6</sup>(1997) alongside Isankya Kodithuwakku's 'Shallow Canoes' from her short story collection *The Banana Tree Crisis* <sup>7</sup>(2006). The initial manifestation of the 'indigenous discourse of development'<sup>8</sup> in the form of resettlement was represented in *The Waiting Earth* and explored in the previous chapter. In this chapter Sivanandan's and Kodithuwakku's texts depict the way this discourse continued to be evident in subsequent approaches to development within Sri Lanka. In *When Memory Dies*, the economic policies of the government, and in 'Shallow Canoes' the practices of the NGO, Sarvodaya, are founded on indigenous development thinking, in view of the fact that these practices continue to draw on the notion of a 'glorious past' and Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism. I explore how Sivanandan and Kodithuwakku represent the lived experiences of the ethnic minorities of Sri Lanka, the Tamils and the Muslims, by centring on how they were affected by development and the accompanying social changes during the civil war and tsunami.<sup>9</sup> Sivanandan's narrative traces a trajectory from pastoral self-sufficiency towards the creation of divisions between the elite and impoverished masses and between Sinhala and Tamil. He criticises the Sri Lankan state's neoliberalism for the negative impact on equal resource allocation and the livelihoods of the Tamil communities who live in the north. Kodithuwakku's

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<sup>6</sup> Ambalavaner Sivanandan, *When Memory Dies* (London: Arcadia Books, 1997).

<sup>7</sup> Isankya Kodithuwakku, *The Banana Tree Crisis* (Colombo: Vijitha Yapa Publications, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Nalani Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development in Postcolonial Sri Lanka* (Lanham, MD; Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006), 49.

<sup>9</sup> The civil war began on 23 July 1983 and ended in 2009. The South Asian Tsunami struck on 26 December 2004.

narrative is set in a Tamil-Muslim village in the Eastern Province and depicts the different approaches to humanitarian assistance and development aid that were provided by local and international NGOs in the wake of the tsunami. She represents how Sarvodaya's approach to development successfully addresses inequity and livelihood revival. This chapter argues that by exploring *When Memory Dies* and 'Shallow Canoes' together it is possible to demonstrate the different attitudes and practices concerning resource allocation and communities' livelihoods in the Sri Lankan state's and Sarvodaya's approach to development.

The reception of *When Memory Dies* and 'Shallow Canoes' in the metropole registers an engagement with the effectiveness of each writer's pedagogical impulse. This idea of a text's didacticism is evident in the way both Sri Lankan critics and metropolitan readers evaluate how successful the two texts are as instructive or informative resources. Didacticism refers to the way that literature is produced in order to enhance the readers' knowledge and understanding [of Sri Lanka.] I offer a close reading of *When Memory Dies* and 'Shallow Canoes' that draws on didacticism to show how Sivanandan and Kodithuwakku use form and the content to protest against or support diverse ways of addressing resource allocation and communities' livelihoods. This chapter argues that the writers' divergent attitudes demonstrate that development continues to be a contentious and divisive issue in Sri Lanka today yet one that has clear implications for sustainable peace.

The chapter opens with a short close analysis of the first book of *When Memory Dies* because Sivanandan represents the impact of British imperialism on the Tamil community and the connection with the indigenous discourse of development. This analysis is followed by a brief background to the development approach that

emerged with the change of government in 1977 and is still used to this day in Sri Lanka. I offer this overview because it is relevant for contextualising how both narratives represent the effects of these economic policies on the Tamil and Muslim communities. Prior to a close reading of *When Memory Dies* and ‘Shallow Canoes’, I then account for the different critical responses to contemporary Anglophone Sri Lankan literature in Sri Lankan literary criticism in order to demonstrate how these critics approach and respond to different Sri Lankan writers and their texts. I also examine how this reception is similar to metropolitan readers and demonstrates a *way of reading* that is attuned to a writer’s didacticism and the text’s pedagogical function.

### **The Imposition of Capitalist Development**

In the opening pages of *When Memory Dies*, the British colonial power’s control of the economy and conceptualisation of development is depicted. The colonial administration’s creation of plantations exploited the indigenous inhabitants by replacing the cultivation of rice with cash crops, including coffee, tea and rubber. In an essay for the journal *Race and Class*, Sivanandan explains that:

[t]he type of capitalism that developed under the British had a differential impact on the different social formations and made capitalism’s uneven development more uneven still. And what it could not cohere through organic capitalist development, it unified through administrative diktat.<sup>10</sup>

In Ceylon, this uneven and contradictory process is most clearly seen in the introduction of railways and roads that connected distant parts of the country to one

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<sup>10</sup> A. Sivanandan, “Sri Lanka: Racism and Politics of Underdevelopment,” *Race & Class* 21, no.1 (Summer 1984): 2.

another. Later in the essay Sivanandan explains that ‘[b]y the end of the nineteenth century, the plantation ‘mode’ had begun to dominate the economy, subsume all other modes to its own uses, build an infrastructure of railways and roads to take its produce to the world market’.<sup>11</sup> In the first book of the novel, S.W. explains to the naïve Sahadevan the consequences of the colonial administration’s control of the economy at the beginning of the twentieth century:

Once, we were the granary of the East, now all we have to eat is tea and rubber’. He continues ‘I am not saying that everything [the British] did is bad. But we must ask ourselves why they did it, we cannot just believe what they say. They say they are bringing civilisation to us, with railways and roads, when what they are really doing is transporting the wealth out of the country. I am not saying that railways are a bad thing; after all, I am a railwayman myself, but we would have come to it in our own time, at our own speed. (38)

Significantly, S.W.’s teaching does not deny the importance of modernisation and industry; rather he acknowledges the fact that this kind of development enabled the continued exploitation of the island’s resources for the benefit of the colonisers. As such, Sahadevan learns how colonial capitalist development was responsible for ‘transporting the wealth out of the country’ and meant that Sri Lanka is no longer ‘the granary of the East’. One can note a similar portrayal of the introduction of railways in India in Gandhi’s *Hind Swaraj*:

Railways have also increased the frequency of famines, because, owing to facility of means of locomotion, people sell out their grain, and it is sent to the dearest markets. People become careless, and so the pressure of famine

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 3.



increases. They accentuate the evil nature of man. Bad men fulfil their evil designs with greater rapidity.<sup>12</sup>

Gandhi highlights how railways directly contributed to famine because subsistence crops were no longer part of a pre-capitalist exchange system but circulated further afield and often out of the country creating high incidences of starvation.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, colonial railway networks precipitated the stagnation of domestic economic growth and national self-sufficiency in Ceylon and in India these consequences caused famine.

In *When Memory Dies* Sahadevan also learns the consequences of the colonial administration's control of capital, land and resources at the beginning of the twentieth century on the everyday lives of the peasants. Sahadevan's father, Pandayan, has his land confiscated which means he is no longer able to derive his livelihood from the land through agricultural labour: 'now the land had been taken from him. His rhythm was broken...He was at outs with the world' (11). Sahadevan recognizes that colonial development practices have disturbed the indigenous way of life: 'The towns in fact seemed to have grown out of the villages as naturally as the buying and selling they [Tamil peasants] were so good at, and even the railway lines that broke through coconut land and paddy field' (19). During colonial rule, economic growth and agricultural development was influenced and motivated by modernisation and industrialisation, and comprised violent acts as evidenced through the emotive word choice of 'broke through'. Accordingly, the approach of the

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<sup>12</sup> M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*. Ed. Anthony J. Parel. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 47.

<sup>13</sup> Amartya Sen also makes a similar argument about the man-made nature of the Bengal Famine of 1943-4. Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981).

colonial administration to development resulted in the stagnation of the indigenous inhabitants' agricultural sector which had been primarily focused on paddy farming. During colonial rule, as well as immediately afterwards, the peasantry made up the single largest occupational class in Sri Lanka. The Tamils were less affected by colonial land and development policies that dispossessed and impoverished their Sinhalese counterparts as these policies did not extend into the Tamil-majority provinces in the north and east.<sup>14</sup> The emergence of an impoverished peasant class and underdeveloped economy in Sri Lanka resulted in the Sinhalese elite's adoption of the 'indigenous discourse of development' and created Sinhala/Tamil opposition.

### **State Policy and Neoliberalism: Historical Overview**

As I examined in the previous chapter, the 'indigenous discourse of development' emerged as a way for Sinhalese politicians to appeal to the impoverishment and landlessness of the Sinhalese peasantry, directly caused by imperialism, to ensure electoral success. As a result, while resettlement as the initial manifestation of the 'indigenous discourse of development' is represented in *The Waiting Earth*, the texts I discuss in this chapter depict the way this discourse continues to influence the state's economic policies. In 1977, the election of the United National Party (UNP) government, led by J. R. Jayewardene, instigated a re-orientation of Sri Lanka's economic discourse and practice. This shift was a consequence of Jayewardene's decision to follow the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's structural adjustment programme and signalled a move towards market-oriented development.

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<sup>14</sup> Mick Moore, *The State and Peasant Politics in Sri Lanka* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) and "The Ideological History of the Sri Lankan 'peasantry,'" *Modern Asian Studies* 23, no.1 (1989): 179-207.

Structural adjustment involved impoverished countries like Sri Lanka implementing neoliberal economic policies in return for international aid and loans.<sup>15</sup> The Sri Lankan state's creation and maintenance of an open economy brought with it an influx of foreign investment, international trade and tourism. While the combination of 'development programs and a liberal capitalist market-oriented policy' initially stimulated economic growth, it also contributed to a significant increase in poverty among the peasant and working class and a 'greater economic disparity between the wealthy capitalists and the rural poor.'<sup>16</sup> Neoliberalism also had a negative impact on equal resource allocation and propagated uneven development. Specifically, there were more benefits in the southern and central regions of Sri Lanka where the population is largely Sinhalese than in the north and east where the Tamils reside.

Moreover, development continued to be framed as a way to recreate the society of a Sinhalese "glorious past". As Hennayake argues, 'a conscious effort was made by the state to redefine development with an indigenous framework'.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the Sinhala ruling elite continued to rely on the Sinhala rural population for electoral support. In order to ensure this support, Sinhalese politicians continued to use nationalist rhetoric openly to position development programmes, like the Mahaweli project, as the rebirth of an ancient hydraulic civilisation of the Sinhalese past.<sup>18</sup>

Benedikt Korf argues that there is continuity in the state's development discourse

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Carrigan, *Postcolonial Tourism: Literature, Culture, and Environment* (London: Routledge 2011), xiv and 219. See also N. DeVotta, "Sri Lanka's Structural Adjustment Program and Its Impact on Indo-Lanka Relations," *Asian Survey* 38, no. 5 (1998): 457-73.

<sup>16</sup> Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, *Fundamentalisms Observed* (Chicago, Ill.; London: Chicago University Press, 1991), 643.

<sup>17</sup> Hennayake, *Culture, Politics, and Development*, 182.

<sup>18</sup> As documented in Serena Tennekoon, "Rituals of Development: The Accelerated Mahaweli Development Program of Sri Lanka," *American Ethnologist* 15 (1988): 294-310.

and practice from the idea of agricultural production through resettlement to the more contemporary development programmes and that: ‘[s]tate colonisation turned into hydraulic imperialism through the Accelerated Mahaweli Scheme, a large-scale irrigation scheme that sought to colonise large tracts of land in the north and east and the north-central provinces.’<sup>19</sup> Development discourse and practice not only legitimised the state’s colonisation and resettlement policies but also cemented the state’s continued territorial control over the whole of the island.

The Tamils’ experiences of political oppression and economic exploitation as well as the state’s control over the area that they consider to be their homeland exacerbated the tensions between the Tamils and the Sinhalese-majority government and were key factors that led to the outbreak of the civil war.<sup>20</sup> Tamil and Muslim agricultural development in the Northern and Eastern Provinces were adversely affected by the state’s decision to change and relax importation controls and create a free, unregulated market. Stanley Tambiah asserts that:

successive Sinhalese majoritarian governments have virtually occupied themselves with catering to the needs of the Sinhalese peasantry, while either discriminating against or being less caring about the interests and needs of the minorities who are the major native populations of the northern and eastern provinces.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Benedikt Korf, “Cartographic Violence: Engaging a Sinhala Kind of Geography,” in *Spatialising Politics: Culture and Geography in Postcolonial Sri Lanka*, eds. Catherine Brun and Tariq Jazeel. (New Delhi; London: Sage, 2009), 116.

<sup>20</sup> A. Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break-up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: C. Hurst; Hyderabad: Orient Longman, 1988); Kenneth D. Bush, *The Intra-Group Dimensions of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Learning to Read Between the Lines* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 68.

The uneven impact of the development policy is evident in *When Memory Dies* through Sivanandan's representation of how the Tamil communities' livelihoods were adversely affected and their villages could no longer be self-sustainable.

### **Sri Lankan Anglophone Writing: Audiences and Reception**

The reception of Sri Lankan Anglophone writing from the past twenty years resonates with the way Deepika Bahri draws on the term 'the burden of representation' and explains as the expectation that these texts should depict the political, economic and social order of Sri Lanka from the perspective of the native.<sup>22</sup> I examine both the international and Sri Lankan audience of these texts which demonstrates the evaluation criteria that readers deploy. My focus on audiences endeavours to begin to redress Helen Tiffin's observation made almost twenty five years ago, in a period when the institutionalization of postcolonial studies was beginning, that 'there have been few studies of the implied audience or audiences of post-colonial texts. This is a curious omission given the degree to which questions of the kind have a direct bearing on any analysis of the discursive field.'<sup>23</sup> Indeed, more recently in 2012, the editors of *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* continue to bemoan this lack of focus on audiences in postcolonial studies: 'the audience in postcolonial studies persists as a marginal figure.'<sup>24</sup> In addressing these different audiences, Sri Lankan and international, I

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<sup>22</sup> Deepika Bahri, *Native Intelligence: Aesthetics, Politics, and Postcolonial Literature* (Minneapolis; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Helen Tiffin, "Decolonization and Audience: Erna Brodber's *Myal* and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*," *SPAN: Journal of the South Pacific Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies* 30 (1990): 27.

<sup>24</sup> Bethan Benwell, James Proctor and Gemma Robinson, "Introduction," in *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception* (London: Routledge, 2012), 6.

draw on the concept of “interpretive community”,<sup>25</sup> a term coined by the literary critic Stanley Fish, whereby meaning is derived from the reading community rather than the intention of the author.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, a community is united in their acceptance of a certain interpretation of a text and as Fish argues: ‘[i]nterpretation is not the art of construing but the art of constructing.’<sup>27</sup> The concept of the interpretive community, then, can be used to distinguish between the different categories of audience for both texts. As such, I explore metropolitan and Sri Lankan institutional reception alongside ‘non-professional’ metropolitan readers who post reviews on public websites like Amazon in order to demonstrate readers’ expectations and consumption of contemporary Sri Lankan Anglophone writing.

In the early 1990s, the Sri Lankan literary critic D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke was dismissive of Sri Lankan writing in English, particularly the texts produced about the ethnic conflict, arguing that:

The writers in English are obviously on the sidelines, sensitive souls responding to a situation engendered by politicians, who are not like [sic] to consider their viewpoints, and by militants and soldiers who do not read the language in which they write and in any case would not be influenced by either the pity or the propaganda of a comfortable and cushioned class who share neither their privations nor their perceptions.<sup>28</sup>

Goonetilleke asserts that it is the middle-class subject position of the Sri Lankan writer in English that separates them from lived experiences of people who are

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<sup>25</sup> Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> Stanley Fish, “How to Recognize a Poem When You See One,” *op. cit.*, 322-337.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 327.

<sup>28</sup> D. C. R. A. Goonetilleke, “Sri Lanka's ‘Ethnic’ Conflict in Its Literature in English,” *World Literature Today* 66, no. 3 (Summer 1992): 451.

affected by the civil war, which means that these writers are unable to represent ‘the actual conflict in all its complexity, with its tangled web of wrongs – economic, political and physical.’<sup>29</sup> The terms of this criticism have striking parallels with the kind that was levelled at Wijenaikē for writing in English: her middle-class subject position apparently makes her unable to produce narratives that are politically relevant to the nation. As in the case of Wijenaikē, this criticism is clearly invalid when one considers Sivanandan’s novel and Kodithuwakku’s ‘Shallow Canoes’ which present the reader with realist representations of living and working in Sri Lanka that evaluate socio-economic relations. As I highlighted in Chapter Two, the ‘alliance’ of socialist realism and critical realism is derived from the way they both depict the totality of society.<sup>30</sup> In explaining the difference from critical realism, Lukács highlights that socialist realism is ‘based on a concrete socialist perspective’ and ‘this perspective [is used] to describe the forces working towards socialism *from the inside*.’<sup>31</sup> In other words, the experiences of the proletariat are highlighted. I argue that both writers in this chapter deploy socialist realism in order to present the reader with representations of working class Tamils and Muslims living and working in Sri Lanka. Additionally within the Lukácsian framework, the narrative point of view in socialist realist texts inhabits the perspective of such characters and ‘rooted

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 453. And in 2012, a newspaper critic acknowledges the absence of the civil war in Sri Lankan texts and the possible causes: ‘Notably absent from all these narratives is the war and its aftermath. Is Sri Lankan literature suddenly post-war, or are those stories still too raw? No writer should be forced to address any particular topic, nor speak for her country. ... Still, one can’t help but feel the writers have somehow missed their material. The Sri Lanka glimpsed through these fictions, if visible at all, is seen through a kind of a sideways lens — leaving a haunting absence at the centre of the frame.’ Minal Hajratwala, “After the War,” *Time Out Mumbai*, 13 April 2012, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://www.timeoutmumbai.net/books/features/after-war>, paras. 11 and 12.

<sup>30</sup> György Lukács, *The Meaning of Contemporary Realism*, Trans. John and Necke Mander (London: Merlin Press, 1979), 100.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, 93.

in a socialist understanding of reality.’<sup>32</sup> This point of view in *When Memory Dies* and ‘Shallow Canoes’ means there is an ‘on the ground’ analysis and evaluation of socio-economic relations and a promotion of socialism.

Moreover, there is not simply the writer’s choice to use socialist realism to articulate the totality of society but rather the critic’s expectation that this realism is the only form that can depict the reality of everyday life in Sri Lanka. In other words, the critics’ valorisation of realistic representation is a reaction against certain forms and a preference for others. Dilshan Boange demonstrates the genealogy for this preference and how it has only changed recently:

The notion that a work of fiction ought to present a story that is ‘realistic’ is rather predominant amongst Sri Lankans. ... the root of that critical thinking was the result of the significant influx of Soviet literature to Sri Lanka in the form of Sinhala translations during the latter part of the last century, when novels and short stories of the genre called ‘Socialist realism’ found a growing readership here.<sup>33</sup>

The reference to ‘Soviet Literature’ highlights the close ties between Sri Lanka and Russia, beginning with the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1957. Since then, both nations have influenced one another’s culture including writers reading texts in translation.<sup>34</sup> As I explore in more detail below, Sivanandan and Kodithuwakku fulfil this expectation and preference for socialist realism through their representations of the working class Tamils and Muslims, during the civil war and tsunami. I contend, then, that the questioning of the legitimacy of middle-class Anglophone writing is

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>33</sup> Dilshan Boange, “Fictionalization and Realism,” *The Nation*, December 30, 2012, accessed January 9, 2012, <http://www.nation.lk/edition/literature/item/14038-fictionalization-and-realism.html>, para. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Thanura Mendis, “Celebrating Russian - Lankan camaraderie,” *Daily News* 8 October, 2014, accessed 2 April, 2015 <http://www.dailynews.lk/?q=features/celebrating-russian-lankan-camaraderie>



unfounded in the case of these writers because their writing resists the state's neoliberalism and does not exoticize Sri Lanka for a metropolitan audience.

The Sri Lankan institutional reception of *When Memory Dies* reflects a more favourable critique of Sivanandan's political commitment than we saw concerning Wijenaiké's in the previous chapter. As a number of critics have noted, the text occupies a unique position in Anglophone Sri Lankan literature due to its representation of Tamil and Sinhalese working class co-existence which enables the writer to create 'unconventional lines of affiliation'.<sup>35</sup> Walter Perera asserts that *When Memory Dies* 'triumphs' due to the fact that:

No Sri Lankan novelist has succeeded in exploring the salient issues of this century with the sensitivity, thoroughness, and impartiality demonstrated by Sivanandan. It is a novel that should be prescribed reading for courses on Literature, Political Science, and Modern History in Sri Lanka.<sup>36</sup>

There are clear parallels in the critical reception of Kodithuwakku and her writing.

K. N. O. Dharmadasa argues that in *The Banana Tree Crisis*

Isankya has very boldly ventured into an area where many other writers would hesitate to tread. That is, dealing with live and contemporary events and issues. She has taken up controversial themes such as the civil war and the plight of the displaced people, internal as well as international, and the post Tsunami scenario in the Sinhala-speaking Kalutara as

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<sup>35</sup> Sharanya Jayawickrama, "Cross-Cultural Resistance in A. Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*," *Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Sri Lankan Literature* (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Darwin College, University of Cambridge, 2005), 45. See also Walter Perera, "Attempting the Sri Lankan Novel of Resistance and Reconciliation: A Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*," *The Sri Lankan Journal of the Humanities* 23, no.1/2 (1997): 13-27; Minoli Salgado, *Writing Sri Lanka: Literature, Resistance and the Politics of Place* (London: Routledge, 2007) and Qadri Ismail, *Abiding by Sri Lanka: on Peace, Place, and Postcoloniality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2005).

<sup>36</sup> Walter Perera, "Sri Lanka," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 33, no.3 (1998): 204.

well as the Tamil-speaking and Tamil-Muslim inhabited Batticaloa.<sup>37</sup>

The reference to Kodithuwakku's anthology exploring 'live and contemporary events and issues' is evocative of Perera's assertion about Sivanandan novel 'exploring the salient issues of this century' which suggests that Sri Lankan think highly of these writers because their texts' subject matter is relevant and current. Indeed, these critics argue that such a representation of contemporary Sri Lanka is what makes the writers original. In contrast, the critique directed at 'expatriate'<sup>38</sup> writer Michael Ondaatje is framed in very contradictory terms: 'the artist in this version is not a participant in the social process; he does not get drawn into the act of living, which involves the need to deal with the burning issues of his time.'<sup>39</sup> The interpretive community that comprises Sri Lankan institutional criticism approaches and consumes Sri Lankan Anglophone writing because of the writer's political commitment with the 'burning' issues of the contemporary period.

Moreover, Perera's call for Sivanandan's text to become a part of undergraduate and graduate syllabi<sup>40</sup> demonstrates the discrepancy in metropolitan and Sri Lankan

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<sup>37</sup> K.N.O. Dharmadasa "The Banana Tree Crisis: The Arrival of a New Writer," *The Island*, July 30, 2008, accessed September 3, 2012, <http://www.island.lk/2008/07/30/midweek5.html>, para. 30.

<sup>38</sup> A term that is widely used, often derogatively, in Sri Lankan institutional literary criticism and used to differentiate Sri Lankan writers that reside out with Sri Lanka from those who are resident in Sri Lanka. The exception is Sivanandan who is widely praised. See Yasmine Gooneratne, "The English Educated in Sri Lanka: An Assessment of Their Cultural Role," *South Asia Bulletin* 12, no.1 (1992): 2-33; Walter Perera, "Images of Sri Lanka through Expatriate Eyes: Romesh Guneseckera's *Reef*," *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 30, no.63 (1995): 63-78.

<sup>39</sup> Arun P. Mukherjee, "The Sri Lankan Poets in Canada: An Alternative View," *The Toronto South Asian Review* 3, no. 2 (1984): 34.

<sup>40</sup> In recent email correspondence with myself, Perera revealed that since 2000: 'Sri Lankan Literature in English is taught along with Indian Literature in English in a course called Postcolonial Creativity II in the 4th year... This course involves African, Caribbean and Australian Literature. We teach full courses on Sri Lankan Writing in English at the Postgraduate Diploma and MA/MPhil levels. I have a course on the Sri Lankan Expatriate Novel and there is another, largely unfocused course in which the instructor can teach anything he wants on SLWE from the early 20th century to the present'. Walter Perera, e-mail to the author, November 1, 2012.

institutional reception and impact because postcolonial studies in the UK and US regularly pays cursory attention to Sri Lanka.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the type of disciplines that could benefit from Sivanandan ‘exploring the salient issues of this century’, literature as well as ‘Political Science and Modern History’, reveals that the text is approached as a textbook from one of these disciplines rather than interpreted for its literary qualities as a novel. As such, the narrative is favourably received because the content can be used to teach students about Sri Lanka, which suggests the novel is perceived as performing a pedagogical function. The consequence of this type of reading is that Sri Lankan writing comes to be regarded as deterministic and merely providing a narration of events which follow a teleological history. As a consequence of such determinism, there is a limited close reading that is neither attuned to the articulation of historical alternatives or missed opportunities, nor to an awareness of the possibility that a writer may choose to omit, occlude or embellish certain events. Thus, the writer’s agency is neglected, despite the fact that it can provide imaginative reformulations or reinventions of everyday life.

In addition, the idea of a text’s didacticism is evident in the way that ‘non-professional’ international critics, as opposed to literary critics in university institutions, approach and consume the two texts. A survey of readers’ responses that forms this international interpretive community demonstrates that they approach the novel with certain expectations about what they want the narrative to do; this approach is evidenced from the reviews posted on the Amazon UK and US websites. Neelam Srivastava acknowledges that ‘[t]he value of the Amazon site as a source for

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<sup>41</sup>Reading through the reading lists for many of the institutions that offer postcolonial courses in their literature departments I could find no general or specialist modules that included Sri Lanka.

reader response to the novel [Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*]' because of the way that '[r]eaders often respond to previous readers' comments, thus engendering a lively debate around the novel, a sort of online reading group.'<sup>42</sup> On the whole, the readers of the texts considered in this chapter derive their sense of enjoyment of the texts and a positive evaluation from a parallel they draw between the overtness of the narratives' political engagement and its pedagogical function. One reviewer of *When Memory Dies* on Amazon UK, identified as Dean Moriarty, reveals that: '[i]n "when memory dies" we learn about Sri Lankan history, from the 1920s up until the emerging civil war at the beginning of the 1980s'. Another reviewer picks up on the text's pedagogical impulse:

The Tamil-Sinhalese conflict is one that remains largely ignored and misunderstood by the western world. By telling us a simple story, Sivanandan is able to convey the very real problems faced by Tamils and Sinhalese alike. I was glad to see that someone has at last shed some truth upon the history of the conflict in an easily digestible form...It is an enjoyable and easy read and what's more, you'll learn something without even realising you're being taught.<sup>43</sup>

Consuming the novel provides a positive way to 'learn' and be 'taught' through the acquisition of new knowledge and a better understanding about Sri Lanka. The pedagogical effect is expressed explicitly through the content of the narrative and implicitly through the use of formal strategies. Indeed the comment about the 'an easily digestible form' is useful for explaining how didacticism is part of the novel's aesthetic effect. Metropolitan literary critics have also drawn attention to the way

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<sup>42</sup> Neelam Srivastava, "Reading after Terror: *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and First-World Allegory," *Postcolonial Audiences: Readers, Viewers and Reception*, eds. Bethan Benwell, James Proctor and Gemma Robinson (London: Routledge, 2012), 179.

<sup>43</sup> Dean Moriarty (27 October 2010) and A Customer (13 May 2000) available at: [http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/190085001X/ref=sr\\_cr\\_hist\\_all?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1](http://www.amazon.co.uk/product-reviews/190085001X/ref=sr_cr_hist_all?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1)

that in the narrative of *When Memory Dies* the historical disquisitions of the older characters often perform a pedagogical<sup>44</sup> function because they teach the younger character about Sri Lankan history.

In a similar fashion Susan Stricken's review of *The Banana Tree Crisis* on Amazon.com reveals: 'I can't speak for her future as a mathematician, but Kodithuwakku certainly has a bright future as not just a writer, but perhaps as well a journalist or activist'<sup>45</sup>. The reference to journalism and activism which provides and disseminates factual information to a wide audience suggests that the reviewer is picking up on Kodithuwakku's stories playing a similar function. In terms of the journalistic style of Kodithuwakku's text one can note that following the end of the main narrative of 'Shallow Canoes' there is the phrase: 'Inspired by the article, "Women Riding the Wave," by Farah Farouque in the December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005 edition of *The Sunday Morning Herald*' (197).<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the above review's reference to 'activism' provides a parallel with Sivanandan and his writing because Sivanandan is widely recognised and often identifies himself as being an activist for minority rights. However, in an illuminating discussion Arundhati Roy argues that the term 'writer-activist' is inappropriate and inaccurate because it is:

strategically positioned to diminish both writers and activists.  
It seeks to reduce the scope, the range, the sweep, of what a

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<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as Chris Searle asserts, the novel is 'a work of creative pedagogy as well as a piece of imaginative fiction' in "Teacher and Interrupter," in *A World to Win: Essays in Honour of A. Sivanandan*, eds. Colin Prescod and Hazel Waters *Race & Class: A Journal for Black and Third World Liberation* 41, no. 1/2 (1999): 114.

<sup>45</sup> Susan Stricken (23 January 2010) available at: [http://www.amazon.com/Banana-Tree-Crisis-Isankya-Kodithuwakku/product-reviews/9551266358/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_see\\_all\\_summary?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending](http://www.amazon.com/Banana-Tree-Crisis-Isankya-Kodithuwakku/product-reviews/9551266358/ref=cm_cr_dp_see_all_summary?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending)

<sup>46</sup> Farah Farouque, "Women Riding the Wave," *The Sunday Morning Herald*, December 24, 2005, accessed September 26, 2013, <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/women-riding-the-wave/2005/12/23/1135032186823.html>.

writer is and can be. It suggests, somehow, that writers by definition are too effete to come up with the clarity, the explicitness, the reasoning, the passion, the grit, the audacity and, if necessary, the vulgarity, to publically take up a political position. ...But the more fundamental problem I have with the term is that this attempt to 'professionalize' protest has the effect of containing the problem and suggesting that it's up to the professionals – activists and writer-activists – to deal with it. The fact is that what's happening today is not a 'problem', and the issues that some of us are raising are not 'causes'. They are huge political and social upheavals that are convulsing the world. One is not involved by virtue of being a writer or activist. One is involved because one is a human being. Writing about it just happens to be the most effective thing a writer can do.<sup>47</sup>

The relationship between the role of the writer and the activist has often been regarded as tenuous, and as Roy implies here, writers can often be as explicit, impassioned and knowledgeable as activists in their political protests. Indeed Roy's assertion about the responsibility of writers to ask questions about social, economic and political injustices is precisely what Sivanandan's and Kodithuwakku's texts do.

A further reviewer of *The Banana Tree Crisis*, Philip Spires, argues that:

'[o]ccasionally a reader chances on a real discovery...the subject matter of these stories gets right to the heart of the social structure of Sri Lanka, its political and religious conflicts, its war, its highly unequal society, even its often fractious relationship with Britain, its former colonial master'.<sup>48</sup> The enumerating of what 'the subject matter' explores is reminiscent of the above review of Sri Lankan academic, Dharmadasa, when he details the collection's 'controversial themes'. This similarity suggests that both Sri Lankan institutional and metropolitan international interpretive

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<sup>47</sup> Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2001), 23-4.

<sup>48</sup> Philip Spires (29 August 2012) available at [http://www.amazon.com/Banana-Tree-Crisis-Isankya-Kodithuwakku/product-reviews/9551266358/ref=cm\\_cr\\_dp\\_see\\_all\\_summary?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending](http://www.amazon.com/Banana-Tree-Crisis-Isankya-Kodithuwakku/product-reviews/9551266358/ref=cm_cr_dp_see_all_summary?ie=UTF8&showViewpoints=1&sortBy=bySubmissionDateDescending)

communities measure these texts on the basis of their representations of contemporary Sri Lankan lived experiences. I draw attention to these shared tendencies to demonstrate that these texts are evaluated for how successfully they produce a pedagogical effect and provide the reader with a new way of understanding contemporary Sri Lanka.

The consideration of the literary and biographical context of Sivanandan's novel which follows demonstrates the correspondence in his political writing and his fiction. Ambalavaner Sivanandan is a Sri Lankan-born Tamil activist, intellectual and writer who was born in 1923. He migrated to Britain in 1958 following the anti-Tamil riots of 1956. He was the Director of the Institute of Race Relations in London as well as founding editor of the journal *Race and Class*. *When Memory Dies* is Sivanandan's first fictional publication; it won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for the Eurasia region for a first work of fiction and the Sagittarius Prize from the Society of Authors. John Berger highly praised the novel: 'it takes nerve to stay so close to the substantial reality of those who have suffered such pain and hope. It is a wonderful novel which will undoubtedly last.'<sup>49</sup> Berger also reemphasises his perception that the novel's longevity can be attributed to Sivanandan resisting 'post-modern cop-outs,'<sup>50</sup> in other words adopting a realist narrative. Sivanandan himself is explicit about being a political writer, even in his fiction and in an interview with Birmingham Black History Month he asserted: 'I do not make a distinction between political writing and creative writing...I try to be creative in my political writing and

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<sup>49</sup> As quoted in Melissa Benn, "A Class Act," *The Guardian*, December 4, 1999, accessed September 2, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/books/1999/dec/04/4>, para. 6.

<sup>50</sup> John Berger, "Review," *The Guardian* as cited on the back cover of *When Memory Dies*

political in my creative writing...I am both a political writer and a creative writer... there is no dichotomy in my life'.<sup>51</sup> One can argue, then, that Sivanandan built on academic research in order to construct a fictional narrative. Specifically, the overlap in Sivanandan's political writing and his fiction can be seen through the passages from his essays in *Race and Class* that correspond to the narrative of *When Memory Dies*. The close relationship between the novel and the essay "Sri Lanka: Racism and Politics of Underdevelopment",<sup>52</sup> in particular, can be seen in the direct echoes between the two, through the use of the same language and polemic tone.

#### A. Sivanandan's *When Memory Dies*

Sivanandan's narrative traces a trajectory from the turn of the twentieth century until the 1980s and focuses on three generations of a Tamil peasant family who live and work in Jaffna. Structurally, the novel comprises three parts, each centring on a different member of the family and a defining period from history; it is, as Chris Searle asserts, 'an authentic epic novel...because it records a particular heroic period of Sri Lankan history'.<sup>53</sup> Similarly to Wijenaiké's novel as I explored in Chapter Three, *When Memory Dies* embodies Lukács' notion that the historical novel depicts a transformation of socio-economic life through the representation of a group of

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<sup>51</sup> Raj Pal, "An Interview with Sivanandan," September 2001, accessed September 23, 2011, <http://birminghamblackhistory.com/interviews/an-interview-with-sivanandan.html>.

<sup>52</sup> A. Sivanandan, "Sri Lanka: Racism and Politics of Underdevelopment," *Race & Class* 21, no.1 (Summer 1984): 2, republished as "Sri Lanka: A Case Study" in *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism*, ed. A. Sivanandan (London; New York: Verso, 1990), 199-

<sup>53</sup> Chris Searle, "Teacher and Interrupter," in Prescod and Waters, op.cit., 115.



characters whose lives are transformed by key historical events.<sup>54</sup> The generational structure of *When Memory Dies* means that the older generation often takes on the role of the storyteller and the younger generation becomes the audience. Memory is connected to storytelling, according to Walter Benjamin, and creates ‘a chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation’.<sup>55</sup> *When Memory Dies* family memories and accounts are passed on from one generation to the next through word of mouth and also comprise summaries and analyses of key historical and political events. Consequently, the older characters’ historical disquisitions often perform a pedagogical<sup>56</sup> function because they also teach the younger character about Sri Lankan history. In other words, the relationship between the older and younger generation becomes one of teacher and student respectively. Sivanandan identifies with the role of a storyteller: ‘I am not a novelist. I am a storyteller. Novelists are made. Storytellers are born. Novelists are made in these writers’ workshops. I am not interested in being a novelist’<sup>57</sup>. Sivanandan himself clearly understands and shares this dual role of teacher and storyteller as the novel’s historical disquisitions correspond closely to certain passages (as seen in more detail below) from his essays in *Race and Class*.

In the second book of *When Memory Dies* Sivanandan recognises the populist discourse that the state used is concerned with neoliberalism or trickle-down

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<sup>54</sup> György Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1969), 147.

<sup>55</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Story-Teller: Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov,” trans. Harry Zohn, *Chicago Review* 16, no. 1 (Winter-Spring, 1963): 92.

<sup>56</sup> Indeed, as Chris Searle asserts, the novel is ‘a work of creative pedagogy as well as a piece of imaginative fiction’ in “Teacher and Interrupter,” 114.

<sup>57</sup> Pal, “An Interview with Sivanandan.”

economics and Sinhala nationalism. As David Harvey asserts: '[u]nder the assumption ...of 'trickle down', neoliberal theory holds that the elimination of poverty (both domestically and worldwide) can best be secured through free markets and free trade.'<sup>58</sup> Trickle-down economics refers to the idea that economic incentives provided by government to businesses and the wealthy will be advantageous to impoverished individuals and groups by improving the economy as a whole. Economic populism addresses the problem of inclusiveness in capitalist economic development and works by convincing those groups which will not get an equal allocation of resources that the state's economic policies will be beneficial for themselves. In Sri Lanka, populist discourse was used by the UNP politicians to appeal specifically to the Sinhalese peasants and working class, in order to gain their electoral support, and worked by promising a share of certain resources that would become available through foreign investment and international trade. Sivanandan recognises the state's use of populist discourse to garner public support for the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme and exposes the negative effects of trickle-down economics on society. Indeed in the following passage he depicts this same populist discourse to show its failings:

Yankee Dickie Perera, prime minister in waiting for forty years, was champing at the bit to make his blueprint run. The waters of the great Mahaweli would be dammed and directed to irrigate the land, and free trade zones open up the country to 'the robber barons of international industry...There would be work for everyone and money to buy all the foreign goods they had so long set their hearts on. There would be import controls and no exchange controls and no need for subsidised rice or free medicine. There would be a free market for the

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<sup>58</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 64-5.

rich and poverty coupons for the poor, and television and Coca-Cola for all. (274)

It is clear that this this is not redistribution in the socialist sense, as Sivanandan's ironic phrase 'free market for the rich and poverty coupons for the poor' makes clear. Rather the use of pseudo-populist discourse exposes how the state tried to convince those who won't get a fair share of resources that these policies are in their best interests. While certain benefits 'trickle down' inevitably, for instance more prosperous industries means more 'work for everyone', this is never enough to make up for the numerous benefits 'trickling up', in particular the 'free market for all the rich' which the state hoped would generate rapid economic growth. As Pankaj Mishra asserts

there was always a problem with this idea of progress directed by the invisible hand of free markets: It could only be persuasive so long as growth was on an upward trajectory and appeared to be spreading its benefits widely. ... Many...have discovered that self-regulating markets and the trickle-down effect are unlikely to produce widespread prosperity.<sup>59</sup>

Indeed both the language and heavily ironic tone in *When Memory Dies* reinforces the kind of deceitful case being made here. Sivanandan's withering critique can be seen in phrases including 'television and Coca-Cola for all' and 'money to buy all the foreign goods they had so long set their hearts on' which reinforces how the associated benefits of 'import controls and no exchange controls' were made appealing to the poor masses. However, these resources are clearly not going to help

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<sup>59</sup> Pankaj Mishra, "State of Global Capitalism in 2014: The Narrative," *Star Tribune*, January 4, 2014, accessed January 8, 2014, <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/238659721.html>, para. 8.

alleviate poverty and therefore cannot create a more equal society as policies addressing fairer wages, better working conditions and food shortages could. Sivanandan's text, then, reveals a protest against the Sri Lankan state's pursuing of free market policy and exposes the fact that rapid economic growth may create a prosperous state and wealthy Sinhalese elite but at the expense of the continued impoverishment of the poorest sections of society.

As the scene continues, Sivanandan emphasises that this populist discourse was intended for Sri Lanka's majority constituency, the Sinhalese, and it was this group who needed to be convinced of the development programme in order to ensure the politicians' electoral success:

Patriotism and capitalism, the package was appealing...Saint Dickie presented his programme as the sublime expression of *dharmista* government and himself as the reincarnation of an ancient Buddhist leader, Parakrama the Irrigator no less... And accordingly, on the marshes of Kotte, he would decree to be builded anew the mythic city of Dickie-pura, from where to dispense his righteous rule. But first, his people must choose him...Now they would be called upon to elect him too, the once and future king, twice over, first as prime minister and then, when he had arranged the constitution to his satisfaction, as president. (274)

Sivanandan exposes how the state's appeal, the explicit recourse to ancestral glory, was also a populist move. It is apparent that contemporary development is premised on the ancient Sinhalese civilization of the past because it has 'builded anew the mythic city' of the ancient Sinhalese king. This correspondence enables the Prime Minister to legitimise the resource allocation and the neoliberal development project. He also utilises Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist discourse to draw a direct correspondence between the relationship that he has with contemporary society and the one that ancient Buddhist kings 'Parakrama the Irrigator', had with the Dry Zone

civilisations of the past. Sinhala nationalism is evident in political rhetoric; when President Jayawardene became President of Sri Lanka in 1978 he asserted: ‘We have had an unbroken line of monarchs from Vjjaya to Elizabeth II for over 2,500 years... and now myself, the 360th head of state from Viiaya in unbroken line’.<sup>60</sup> Indeed, populist discourse was also used to help the prime minister to attain political legitimacy and cement his position as the head of a Sinhala-Buddhist state. However, Sivanandan’s critique of Jayewardene and his endeavours to generate electoral support is stressed through the continued use of pseudo-populist discourse. In particular, the sneering reference to Jayewardene being able to ‘dispense his righteous rule’ and the sarcastic language of ‘Saint Dickie presented his programme as the sublime expression of *dharmista* government’<sup>61</sup> emphasise Sivanandan’s overt disgust with the aspiring Prime Minister’s deceptions. Patrick McCully highlights how the construction of big dams has become central to nation-building discourse and practice: ‘massive dams symbolize. ...the might of the state that built them, making huge dams a favourite of nation-builders and autocrats.’<sup>62</sup> As a whole, representing the government and their economic policies in such derisive terms coupled with a sneering tone suggests that the motivations of the development project is reproached and challenged.

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<sup>60</sup> As cited in Bruce Kapferer, *Legends of People, Myths of State: Violence, Intolerance and Political Culture in Sri Lanka and Australia* (Washington, D.C., etc.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>61</sup> The term ‘dharma’ is a key concept in both Hinduism and Buddhism and means duty. According to Tessa J. Bartholomeusz: ‘a government based on the alleged principles that Buddhist kings...used to govern in ancient days,’ *In Defence of Dharma: Just-war Ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka* (London: Routledge, 2002), 36.

<sup>62</sup> Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams* (London: Zed Books, 1996), 237.

Moreover, Sivanandan's critique of 'trickle-down' economics is depicted through the third section of the novel, which represents the consequences neoliberalism had for the Tamil community. Tamil agricultural development was adversely affected by the state's decision to change and relax importation controls and create a free, unregulated market. According to Newton Gunasinghe, this free-market economy 'ruined the Jaffna middle peasantry, one of the most productive [and hitherto prosperous] sections of the Lankan agricultural population'<sup>63</sup>. Specifically, the introduction of foreign capital into Sri Lanka and particularly the Dry Zone region, which the state relied on to create and maintain an open economy, had a disastrous effect on the cash crops, and subsequently the livelihood, of the Tamil farmers.

Sivanandan asserts in an essay that:

none of these developments went to the North and East. If it was indeed capitalism flourishing in the rest of the country, it was making no headway in the Tamil areas...Tamil land in the North, where it was not being state-settled by Sinhalese colonialists, was not going to be irrigated by the Mahaweli project either. The small-market gardener in Jaffna who produced cash crops like onions and chillies and potatoes was hit by the import of these commodities from India and Pakistan. Tamil industry did not have government blessing or blandishment to inveigle foreign capital.<sup>64</sup>

In *When Memory Dies* the generational structure once again means that the young Vijay is taught by the elder Devi, in very similar language that Sivanandan used in the passage from the essay above, about the effects that have been experienced by the Tamil community:

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<sup>63</sup> Newton Gunasinghe, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Perceptions and Solutions," in *Facets of Ethnicity in Sri Lanka*, eds. Charles Abeysekera and Newton Gunasinghe (Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 1987), 70.

<sup>64</sup> Sivanandan, "Sri Lanka," 241-2.

she told Vijay slowly, but feelingly, how the green of the chillies and the onions he saw over there was only the green of hope, not of expectation: ‘his’ government had flooded the South with cheap imports of foodstuffs from India and they had no market to sell their produce in. What good was a market garden without a market? The government was doing this to them . . . just because they were Tamils. (333-4)

Vijay and the reader learn that the Tamil community’s perception was that the transformation in importation controls not only strengthened the state’s links with global capitalism but was an intentional act, ‘just because they were Tamils’. Indeed a previous conversation in the novel demonstrates how importation of the very same crops that the Tamils themselves grow has led to poverty:

“You see, even if your government cuts us off, we can grow our own food,” Yogi remarked.

“You can’t live on onions and chillies and a bit of pumpkin, son, can you? But that is all we can grow on small bits of land even with your electricity... We can never feed ourselves till we have large-scale farming and regular labour, but all our land is broken up and scattered and –” (332).

Tamil economic growth was dependent on two sectors: fishing and agriculture. Unable to sell the produce from the crops that once provided them with their livelihood, Sivanandan shows that the state’s economic policies led to the downturn in Tamil agricultural production and resulted in the North’s inability to be self-sufficient. Sivanandan’s narrative criticises the Sri Lankan state’s neoliberalism for the negative impact on equal resource allocation and the livelihoods of the Tamil communities who live in the north and east. The resulting poverty also exacerbated the tensions between the Tamils and the Sinhalese-majority government.

In addition to characterising this section of the novel as pedagogical, like the sections that came before it, it can also be regarded as anti-deterministic. History and

historiography are often defined as deterministic, ‘downplaying the role of emotion’ and ‘lived experience’ in order to ‘reduce uncertainty about the possibility of events turning out differently.’<sup>65</sup> Conversely, fiction is often considered an important and necessary corrective to the determinism of official, teleological history.<sup>66</sup> However, according to Timothy Brennan, in the third section of *When Memory Dies* the presence of a deterministic perspective precludes the imaginative reformulations or reinventions of historical alternatives. Brennan refers to this viewpoint as ‘knowing’ and asserts that its appearance in the novel is derived from the fact that

Sivanandan’s rhetoric is driven by the force of principle to a truth-telling that would, politically, have been better to fictionalise...I’ve often wondered what the effect might have been if the final chapters had refused to narrate the actual history of contemporary Sri Lanka with its descent into sectoralist carnage, but instead imagined the outcome he wanted for Sri Lanka – a socialist, or multicultural, Sri Lanka...The logic of the saga-form dictates the unsatisfying, and uncharacteristic, conclusion that our lives typically end in tragedy that must be content with knowing tragedy’s perennial nature. And it is knowing, finally, that links the author to the polemicist on the pages of *When Memory Dies* which cannot be free from the essays.<sup>67</sup>

Brennan suggests that Sivanandan’s text should be considered a deterministic historical novel that insists on the closure, preservation and non-transformative nature of the past because Sivanandan is unable to ‘imagine the outcome he wanted for Sri Lanka – a socialist, or multicultural, Sri Lanka’. However, I contend that Brennan’s reading can be challenged because although Sivanandan does not

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<sup>65</sup> Richard Lebow, *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2010), 257.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid and Hayden White, *The Fiction of Narrative: Essays on History, Literature, and Theory, 1957-2007* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

<sup>67</sup> Timothy Brennan, “Poetry and Polemic,” in Prescod and Waters, op.cit., 32.



represent the transformation of the past, he does allude to historical alternatives or missed opportunities. Specifically, through the use of what Crystal Bartolovich terms ‘critical counterfactualism’, which evokes a yearning for what ‘might have been’,<sup>68</sup> Sivanandan challenges the status quo.

On the level of form, the novel’s counterfactual potential can be registered through Sivanandan’s use of ‘romance-across-the-divide.’<sup>69</sup> Thomas Pavel argues that there has always been an intrinsic link between the novel and a depiction of romantic love and the bringing together of couples and how this depiction resonates with the couple’s environment.<sup>70</sup> Pavel expands on this correlation in a later monograph and highlights the role and purpose of formal techniques:

form is usually intimately related to content, an essential part of what makes it intelligible and meaningful. ... Artistic *will to form* may well manifest the freedom of the human spirit.<sup>71</sup>

The phrase ‘Artistic *will to form*’ chimes with Theodor Adorno’s assertion ‘what makes artworks socially significant is content that articulates itself in formal structures.’<sup>72</sup> Moreover, the reference to ‘the freedom of the human spirit’ highlights the potential for forms like ‘romance-across-the-divide’ can provide in creating imaginable alternatives. The basic model for the ‘romance-across-the-divide’ plot is

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<sup>68</sup> Crystal Bartolovich, “History after the End of History: Critical Counterfactualism and Revolution,” *New Formations* 59 (2006): 66.

<sup>69</sup> Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State*, 112-4 and Priyamvada Gopal, *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History and Narration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 72-3. The consideration of ‘romance-across-the-divide’ has also been discussed in the Israeli-Palestinian context

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Pavel, “The Novel in Search of Itself: A Historical Morphology,” in *The Novel, Volume 2: Forms and Themes*, ed. Franco Moretti (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Pavel, *The Lives of the Novel: A History* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), 13.

<sup>72</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 327

two members of divided ethnic and/or religious communities who endeavour to overcome the almost insurmountable challenges presented by violence, racism and prejudice in order to start and sustain a romantic relationship. This particular narrative was also used, as Doris Sommer has shown, by nineteenth-century Latin American writers. These writers used it ‘as a means of imaginatively unifying newly independent states made up of economically and ethnically diverse populations.’<sup>73</sup> However, while Sommer recognises that in these narratives there is a representation of romantic fulfilment through the sexual union of the partners which represents national unification,<sup>74</sup> in partition narratives the romance is only able to carry on in exile or, more often, it is tragically cut short by one or both partners’ violent deaths.<sup>75</sup> In *When Memory Dies* the romance between Tamil Vijay and Sinhalese Lali ends in the violent rape and murder of Lali by a Sinhalese gang. However, it is important not to interpret the violent thwarting of the romance as evidence of the impossibility of Sivanandan imagining the lovers, and, thus the two communities, from ever being united.

Rather, the inherent protest of “romance-across-the-divide” lies in the way it refutes the perceived divide between two ethnically disparate groups. This refutation, Anna Bernard asserts, ‘is its [the genre’s] particular form of counterfactualism, in which the social order where the lovers might be united is *not* unimaginable’.<sup>76</sup> The novel’s representation of the romantic love that exists between Lali and Vijay,

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<sup>73</sup> Anna Bernard, “Forms of Memory,” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 30 (2010): 8.

<sup>74</sup> Doris Sommer, *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>75</sup> Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation-State*, 112.

<sup>76</sup> Bernard, “Forms of Memory,” 9.

between Sinhala and Tamil, demonstrates how Sivanandan embraces the imagination of an alternative society and state structure. These alternatives are based on social harmony, human universals and in Pavel's terms above 'the freedom of the human spirit' and, thus negate the ethnically stratified society that exists in contemporary Sri Lanka. Sivanandan's novel depicts, therefore, a critique of territorial separation and exclusionary Sinhala nationalism. As such, Sivanandan also adheres to Bartolovich's assertion that it 'is imperative to develop a critical counterfactualism that makes alternatives to the present imaginable'.<sup>77</sup> Many critics have recognised the text's representation of Tamil and Sinhalese co-existence which enables the writer to create 'unconventional lines of affiliation'.<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, it is specifically the form of 'romance-across-the-divide' that explicitly alerts the reader to *When Memory Dies* being an anti-separatist novel.

The denouement of Sivanandan's narrative contains a conversation overheard by Vijay, between two Tamils who have different views about separatism and development. While one represents an endorsement of Tamil territorial control in the north and east, the other depicts an anti-partitionist/separatist stance. The first speaker opens the debate with an explanation for class stratification in Tamil society. His perception is that the economic prosperity of the Tamils in Colombo has only been achieved at the expense of the deprivations and poverty of those Tamils in Jaffna and other areas of Eelam.<sup>79</sup> Indeed, he asserts that exiled Tamils who have

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<sup>77</sup> Bartolovich, "History after the End of History," 74.

<sup>78</sup> Jayawickrama, "Cross-Cultural Resistance...", 54.

<sup>79</sup> There is a striking parallel with Khalifeh's representation of the different levels of prosperity for Palestinians living and working in the West Bank and those in the Gulf as I explore in Chapter Two.

actively improved the Sinhalese economy have done so at the expense of the underdevelopment of the Tamil economy:

“That’s all you Colombo Tamils can think of...How to suck up to the Sinhalese and make a little money. Where’s your dignity and self-respect?”

“Self-respect? On an empty stomach?”

“Well come back home and help us develop our country.”

‘Yes, our country, Eelam. Why, what do you want? To live as a second-class citizen of Sri bloody Sinhalese Lanka all your life?’

‘You are mad. Two countries? In one tiny little island? We’ve got to learn to live together.’

‘Yes, but after we get Eelam. Then we can live as equals.’ (341).

The allusion to ‘two countries’ reveals the advocacy of separatism in the form of partition as a solution to uneven development. However, it is clear that Sivanandan is on the side of the second speaker as throughout the novel he has depicted the harmony that existed between the Tamil and Sinhalese working class and the yearning for national reunification through ‘romance-across-the-divide’.

Consequently, Sivanandan demonstrates the importance of staying attuned to the socio-economic inequity existing in Sri Lanka which needs to be redressed and that is expressed through the sentiments of ‘We’ve got to learn to live together’. Indeed, while it is important to read *When Memory Dies* as anti-deterministic (*pace* Brennan) and anti-separatist, Sivanandan clearly does not advocate the maintenance of the status quo whereby conditions in Sri Lanka remain the same. Indeed, *The Waiting Earth* is similar to Sivanandan’s text in this sense as it is clear Wijenaike has misgivings about the socio-economic benefits that were to be derived from the

fulfilment of contemporary development practices and criticizes the accompanying territorial control. Nevertheless, Sivanandan takes his protest one step further by imagining an alternative social order and state structure that is based on social harmony and equal development.

The creation of an alternative social order depends on the transformation of the current one. In particular, since the international community's support for Sri Lanka's development projects perpetuates Sinhalese and Tamils' inequity, this support must be questioned if a different society is to come into being. Indeed, foreign financial aid has, since decolonisation in 1948, provided at least half of the overall costs of all development projects in Sri Lanka.<sup>80</sup> The Victoria Dam, constructed as part of the Accelerated Mahaweli Development Programme, benefited by a donation of £100 million from the British government. This donation not only enabled construction work to begin on this project but resulted in much of the work itself being carried out by British companies.<sup>81</sup> Furthermore, on 12th April 1985, the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher made the following speech at the commissioning of Victoria Dam:

For centuries Mahaweli Ganga has flowed unchecked through these hills. With the commissioning today of the Victoria dam, its energy is harnessed to a noble cause – the development of the full potential of your land, your natural resources and your people. This great engineering feat is a product of the modern age but it rests on a tradition stretching back some 2000 years. In the days of the ancient

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<sup>80</sup> John Madeley, "Leaks and Landslide Loom in Sri Lanka," *New Scientist* 7 (April 1988): 16.

<sup>81</sup> Department for International Development – U.K., "Victoria Project: Sri Lanka," accessed July 4, 2011, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Documents/publications1/evaluation/ev392s.pdf>.

kings' mighty irrigation works were the heart of a flourishing civilisation.<sup>82</sup>

Indeed, it is important to note the colonial allusions in the name of the dam: Victoria being the monarch of the British Empire when Ceylon was colonised. Specifically, the former mother country's support for irrigation development in the dry zone resulted in an unambiguous endorsement of the state's infusion of Sinhalese nationalism with the vision that state colonisation of the dry zone was 'a return to the heartland of the ancient irrigation civilisation of the Sinhalese.'<sup>83</sup> In *When Memory Dies* international support for the AMDP is depicted with Sivanandan's characteristic cutting language: 'The waters of the great Mahaweli would be dammed and directed to irrigate the land, and free trade zones open up the country to the robber barons of international industry' (274). A tone of disgust is evident and suggests the international community is exploiting the Sri Lankan economy for its own benefits and with little thought to the effects their actions will have on the indigenous communities in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, the novel represents the negative effects of indigenous thinking and neoliberal development on the Tamil population which is derived from international support for the state's actions. As illustrated above, Sivanandan provides evidence for the lack of international support for the Tamils in one of his essays: 'Tamil industry did not have government blessing or blandishment to inveigle foreign capital.'<sup>84</sup> Taking the novel and the essay together, Sivanandan clearly protests

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<sup>82</sup> Riolta Sri Lanka Holidays, "Waterworld: Modern irrigation Projects of Sri Lanka," accessed July 25, 2011, <http://www.mysrilankaholidays.com/modern-irrigation-projects.html>, para. 18.

<sup>83</sup> Moore, *The State and Peasant*, 45.

<sup>84</sup> Sivanandan, "Sri Lanka," 241.

against the one-sided and biased nature of the support of the international community. This protest is also more likely to be heard by virtue of the fact that the text is written in English and, thus more accessible to an international English-speaking interpretive community. Wilfrid Jayasuriya observes that ‘it is the possible prospect of an international audience which spurs the energy of writers in English now.’<sup>85</sup> *When Memory Dies* was ensured a position in the global marketplace by virtue of the fact that it was written and published in London. Indeed this position means that Sivanandan’s work has reached an international audience and benefited from increased recognition and exposure in English-speaking literary, and non-literary, contexts. As such, it is important to recognise the value of engaging with the text as pedagogy. The pedagogical impulse teaches the reader that the international community’s sole support of state bodies and actors perpetuates inequality in Sri Lanka. Indeed, and as I argued in Chapter Two about the Israeli state, acknowledgment of this role is often the first step in challenging international complicity or indifference to a state’s actions.

### **Tsunami: Humanitarian Assistance, Development Aid and Sarvodaya**

The international response to the South Asian Tsunami which struck Sri Lanka in 2004 was widespread and unprecedented. Humanitarian assistance and development aid was provided by both local and international NGOs. Set in the district of Batticaloa in the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka, Isankya Kodithuwakku’s ‘Shallow Canoes’ tells the story of two families who live in the explicitly described ‘Tamil-

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<sup>85</sup> Wilfrid Jayasuriya, *Sri Lanka’s Modern English Literature: A Case Study in Literary Theory* (New Delhi: Navrang, 1994), 102.

Muslim village' (171) of Thiruchikudy. The narrative focuses on Ameena and Umayal, their respective husbands, Abdul and Raju, and their experiences of the tsunami and its aftermath. Many of their immediate and extended family 'perished in the roaring waters' (173) and 'the water had flattened their house. Scattered their belongings with it so far and so wide' (171). The villagers' boats, which are a key source of the coastal community's fishing livelihoods, are smashed and destroyed. In a matter of days after the tsunami, NGOs from across the world flock to the village to offer assistance. One of the fictional NGOs, Sisters for Sisters, adopts a top-down approach to boat allocation and neglects to take into consideration the needs and views of the villagers. Consequently, there is an over-allocation of boats which results in over-fishing and a depletion of fish stocks as well as hungry and impoverished villagers. Another NGO, Sarvodaya, is attentive to making the villagers a part of the decision making process and 'gave boats only to those who had engaged in fishing before the Tsunami. Depleting the fish stocks in the sea too, had to be avoided at all costs' (195). As such, the short story ends with a positive depiction of Sarvodaya's indigenous development which starts at the grassroots, inclusively incorporates all ethnic groups and enables sustainable development and livelihood revival.

The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement is the largest nongovernmental organisation (NGO) in Sri Lanka. The official name of the movement explains its work and philosophy. *Sarvodaya* means the 'uplifting or embracing of all' and *Shramadana* refers to the 'sharing of labour'.<sup>86</sup> The Movement originated in 1958

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<sup>86</sup> Craig Mackintosh, "Letters from Sri Lanka – The Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement, and the Ten Basic Needs," September 21, 2009, <http://permaculturenews.org/2009/09/21/letters-from-sri-lanka-the-sarvodaya-shramadana-movement-and-the-ten-basic-needs/>, para. 21.



because ‘Sri Lanka (Ceylon), like many other newly independent nations, was a victim of western colonialism for well over four centuries. Economic exploitation of the conquered peoples was the prime motivation of the colonial powers.’<sup>87</sup> In other words, Sarvodaya was established as way of counteracting the widespread poverty in Sri Lankan villages that had been caused by imperialism’s economic exploitation of the peasantry. The founder of the Movement, A. T. Ariyaratne explains their on-going development model in detail:

Development should be man-centred. The changes that are brought about in the socio-economic and political environment should be such that they contribute to the fullest development of the personality of the individuals living in that society...Development should start from the grass-roots, from the village up. People should fully participate in planning for development and in the implementation of such plans.<sup>88</sup>

Sarvodaya approaches development, according to Ariyaratne, ‘from the grassroots’ or bottom-up which enables individuals and villages to be part of the process from making decisions to taking action. In one of the general overviews of Sarvodaya, *Dharma and Development*, Joanna Macy recollects her induction to the movement as a volunteer. She refers to how she and her fellow volunteers were taught about how Sarvodaya’s distances itself from the state’s free markets and free trade: “Real development is not free trade zones and mammoth hydro-electric dams,” the young

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<sup>87</sup> Sarvodaya, “The ‘100 Village Development,’ ” accessed September 24, 2012, <http://www.sarvodaya.org/about/philosophy/collected-works-vol-1/100-village-development>, para. 1.

<sup>88</sup> A.T. Ariyaratne, “Sarvodaya in a Buddhist Society,” in *The Sri Lanka Reader: History, Culture, Politics* ed. John Clifford Holt (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 379.

trainer told us. “It's waking up to our own needs and our own power”.<sup>89</sup> As such, Sarvodaya recognizes that development should not be imposed through the top-down approach adopted by the state where neoliberal economic policies are financially supported and dictated by organisations including the International Monetary Fund.

Sarvodaya's alternative strategy of development is also aligned with nation-building and focuses on the micro-level in the form of the self-sufficient, autonomous village. Ariyaratne asserts that: ‘[n]ational development plans should be based, not partially but totally on this broad-based people's participation. It should first strive to meet the basic needs of the people and not artificially created wants that are a blind imitation from materialistic cultures’.<sup>90</sup> This development also relies on a Sinhalese-Buddhist ideology<sup>91</sup>, as evidenced by Ariyaratne's assertion that the ‘principles of social conduct taught in Buddhism form the basis for its village development programmes. The land, wealth, knowledge skills, resources have to be shared by all and not utilised for one's well-being only.’<sup>92</sup> There is a significant contrast with the Prime Minister, Jayewardene, who was negatively represented in *When Memory Dies* for deploying populist discourse to appeal to Sinhala voters. Specifically, as I highlighted above, Jayewardene is critiqued for using Sinhala-Buddhist nationalist discourse to legitimate development policies concerning resource allocation that created inequity and disharmony between the Sinhalese and

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<sup>89</sup> Joanna Macy, “Dharma and Development,” accessed September 12, 2012 <http://www.joannamacy.net/the-sarvodaya-movement.html>, para. 3.

<sup>90</sup> Ariyaratne, “Sarvodaya in a Buddhist Society,” 379.

<sup>91</sup> This point is made and critiqued by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>92</sup> Ariyaratne, “Sarvodaya in a Buddhist Society,” 378.

Tamils. Sarvodaya's pledge that 'resources have to be shared by all' signals ecumenism and a break away from the state's exclusionary nationalism and is evidenced by the fact that their development practices take place in all regions and encompass all ethnicities in Sri Lanka.

Sarvodaya was one of many NGOs that responded to the consequences of the tsunami on all communities including the Tamil and Muslim communities who live in Sri Lanka's Eastern Provinces. The South Asian Tsunami struck on 26 December 2004, killing over 200,000 people and affecting the livelihoods and housing of millions more. Naomi Klein states that in Sri Lanka '[s]mall-boat fishing people... made up 80 per cent of the victims; in some areas the number is closer to 98 per cent'<sup>93</sup>. In a Tsunami progress report, published by Sarvodaya three years after the tsunami, the movement describes how it provided initial relief in the form of food, water, shelter and clothing, before moving 'towards re-building the nation under the theme of "Tsunami to Deshodaya (awakening the nation)", stressing the need of concrete actions to rebuild the devastated areas and lives'.<sup>94</sup> Sarvodaya's model for the rehabilitation work undertaken in the wake of the tsunami is one in which development discourse and practice is interdependent with nation-building. This model is inclusive and not based on exclusionary nationalism as evidenced by the fact that the Sinhalese are not solely being equated with the nation-state, and Tamils, Muslims and other minorities are not experiencing discrimination.

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<sup>93</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (London: Penguin, 2008), 388.

<sup>94</sup> Sarvodaya, "Sarvodaya Tsunami to Deshodaya Plan," Third Year Progress Report January to December 2007, 3, accessed September 17, 2012, [http://www.sarvodaya.org/wp-content/Sarvodaya\\_Tsunami\\_Third\\_Year\\_%20Progress\\_Report.pdf](http://www.sarvodaya.org/wp-content/Sarvodaya_Tsunami_Third_Year_%20Progress_Report.pdf), 3.

Additionally, Sarvodaya recognises that there is a connection between development and peace because: ‘disaster... [can be regarded as an] opportunity to promote ethnic harmony and peace in the country on one hand by mobilizing its people and on the other hand by just distribution of resources to all parts of the country and to people of all ethnic groups’.<sup>95</sup> This focus on equality and inclusivity resonates with the trajectory of development aid thinking in ethnic conflicts. It has moved away from ‘working around conflict’ whereby development aid is provided without taking conflicts into account and ‘working in conflict’ where humanitarian relief and development aid is offered in a way that takes a conflict into account, towards ‘working on conflict’ by providing development aid with the intention of reducing conflicts.<sup>96</sup> As Shanmugaratnam asserts: ‘development and peace are interlinked’.<sup>97</sup> The key development outcome of livelihood revival that Sarvodaya addressed in all coastal areas and that is depicted in ‘Shallow Canoes’ is the responsible replacement of the many damaged and destroyed boats of the fishing communities.

### **Isankya Kodithuwakku’s ‘Shallow Canoes’**

Isankya Kodithuwakku was born in Sri Lanka in 1982 and studied Mathematics at Kenyon College, Ohio before switching to a degree in creative writing. *The Banana Tree Crisis* was published in 2006, almost ten years after *When Memory Dies*. A few months after publication, the short story collection was shortlisted for the Gratiaen

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Jonathan Goodhand, *Aid, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka* (London: DFID, 2000), 10-12.

<sup>97</sup> Shanmugaratnam, “Challenges of Post-disaster Development...,” 1.

Award. The following year it was a co-winner of this Award which was established by Michael Ondaatje for Anglophone writers resident in Sri Lanka.<sup>98</sup> The judges described the text as ‘neither patronizing nor self-absorbed, unpretentious yet poetic and very simply, compelling and beautiful.’<sup>99</sup> The book also won the State Literary Award for the best English literary work produced in Sri Lanka during the previous year. The Sri Lankan critics’ negative reception of a writer’s subject position influencing what subjects they have the experience or ‘right’ to write about, and his or her choice to write in English, both of which are evident in examinations of Wijenaikē’s work, does not appear in the criticism of Kodithuwakku’s anthology. Nonetheless Kodithuwakku appears aware of this particular negative criticism when she relates: ‘I have travelled and seen a lot of Sri Lanka. Moreover the work I conducted with “Sarvodaya” gave me a lot of exposure. It’s true that I am not an expert but I have interacted with these people’<sup>100</sup>. She returned to Sri Lanka after graduation, where she spent a year volunteering with Sarvodaya. The final two stories in *The Banana Tree Crisis*, ‘Buffer Zone’ and ‘Shallow Canoes’, are based on her time volunteering with Sarvodaya where she was involved in their approach to development and encountered and worked with tsunami survivors.<sup>101</sup> However, in

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<sup>98</sup> “The Gratiaen Award,” accessed September 19, 2012, <http://www.gratiaen.com/>.

<sup>99</sup> As cited in Ruhanie Perera, “Countdown to the Gratiaen,” *The Sunday Times*, March 11, 2007, accessed September 21, 2012, [http://sundaytimes.lk/070311/Plus/011\\_pls.html](http://sundaytimes.lk/070311/Plus/011_pls.html).

<sup>100</sup> Sajitha Prematunge, “Everyone Has a Story,” *Sunday Observer*, August 10, 2008, accessed September 3, 2012, <http://www.sundayobserver.lk/2008/08/10/plus05.asp>, para. 10.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Pradeepthaya is derived from ‘pradeep’ meaning light. I am grateful to Claire Chambers for pointing out this translation.

these narratives she uses the pseudonym Pradeepthaya<sup>102</sup> when referring to Sarvodaya.

One possible reason for the lack of sustained critical engagement with the form of the short story is it often considered to be a poor substitute when it is compared with the novel. Sabry Hafez argues that the short story examines ‘the small fragments of the large fresco,’<sup>103</sup> contrary to the all-encompassing perspective of the novel. This idea of ‘fragments’ in relation to the genre resonates with Gyanendra Pandey’s concept of the ‘fragment’ which refers to both historical accounts retrieved from ‘subaltern’ groups and to the groups themselves. The lived experiences of the Muslims who comprise one of Sri Lanka’s ethnic minorities and who are often underrepresented in Sri Lankan literature is the focus of ‘Shallow Canoes.’

Furthermore, Maggie Awadalla and Paul March-Russell argue that:

dissidence arises from who and what the short story focuses upon. The form’s potential capacity for dissidence is magnified by its ambiguous cultural position: on the one hand, a visibly commercial product residing in popular magazines and sub-literary genres, and on the other hand praised by writers for its technical difficulty and associated with small press, avant-garde or counter-cultural titles. Simultaneously a product of mass and minority culture, the short story defies categorization.<sup>104</sup>

Drawing on this ‘potential capacity for dissidence’ or resistance in the form of the short story, I argue that ‘Shallow Canoes’ protests against how humanitarian

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<sup>103</sup> Sabry Hafez, *The Quest for Identities: The Development of the Modern Arabic Short Story* (London: Saqi, 2007), 38.

<sup>104</sup> Maggie Awadalla and Paul March-Russell, *The Postcolonial Short Story: Contemporary Essays* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 4.

assistance and development aid that were provided by certain international NGOs in the wake of the tsunami were ill-conceived and unsustainable.

‘Shallow Canoes’ opens with the image of a rural paradise:

Thiruchikudy was placed on a narrow strip of land fenced in by a lagoon of green waters on one side and the blue sea with its white-crested waves on the other... [The waves] flowed in as calmly as the waters of the lagoon washed the shore of the village. These shores were of soft sand and bleached as white as chalk. But when the noonday sun was bright in the sky, it shone like bits of diamonds. (167)

Kodithuwakku’s similes of the sand and sea feel rather weak and strained and rather like the scene setting writers use for travel features in newspapers or tourism brochures. Similar limp language continues when she goes on to represent the village. The village is depicted as existing in a pre-lapsarian age in which the inhabitants are innocent and the landscape is unspoilt and static: ‘[t]ime might have changed the world around them...but it only had minimum impact on the inhabitants of the village. ...The essence of the lives and minds of the people of Thiruchikudy remained as constant as the unchanging clay walls and thatched roofs of their houses.’ (169-70) Sri Lanka’s image as a paradise, and subsequently as a paradise lost during the conflict, is explored in two recent monographs from 2009: Sharae Deckard’s, *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* and Melanie Murray’s *Island Paradise*.<sup>105</sup> One of the most recurrent criticisms levelled at Sarvodaya is its vision of a ‘village society’ and the past Sri Lankan civilization is idealised and romantic and is essentially ‘a projection of the

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<sup>105</sup> See Sharae Deckard, *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden* (London: Routledge, 2009), Melanie Murray, *Island Paradise: The Myth An Examination of Contemporary Caribbean and Sri Lankan Writing* (Amsterdam; New York: Rodopi, 2009)

bourgeoisie, a fantasy that has no social reality'.<sup>106</sup> However, Kodithuwakku subsequent depictions are more grounded in the economic and 'social reality':

the inhabitants of the village were completely dependent on the two bodies of water for all their needs. The prawns from the lagoon and the fish from the sea fed their children and provided the villagers with something to sell to the *mudalalis* from town. This money brought them all their other needs.  
(168)

The villagers' livelihood of fishing through mass prawn aquaculture is presented as the lynchpin of the Eastern Provinces' on-going endeavour to be self-sufficient and self-sustainable.<sup>107</sup>

However, the civil war and then the tsunami threaten Thiruchikudy's autonomy. First 'a group of Black Tigers entered the mosque as Muslim men of the village knelt and brought their foreheads to the ground. The tigers opened their machine guns' (170-1) which made many of the Muslim inhabitants flee the 'Tamil-Muslim village' (171). Nevertheless many decide to return to their homes in the weeks following the incident. And '[w]hen the waters came' (171) both Muslims and Tamils alike 'perished in the roaring waters' (173). The villagers' ability to provide for themselves, allowing the village not to depend on any aid and support from external sources for survival, is compromised. The consequences of the tsunami on the villagers' livelihoods are spelled out: '[t]he Tsunami had not spared a single boat in the village. There was no fish or prawns to eat, no fish or prawns to sell... The home-grown produce in their gardens had vanished too, what was already sown

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<sup>106</sup> Gombrich and Obeyesekere, *Buddhism Transformed*, 250.

<sup>107</sup> For filmic representations of how the Tsunami affected the fishing livelihoods in Sri Lankan villages, see Daniel Klein and Mirra Fine's documentary: "Do Not Blame the Sea," <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0Nsh-ThCI0>.



washed away and the seeds necessary to restart now beyond the cashless villagers' (175). The depiction of the destroyed fishing boats and agricultural produce highlights how integral these resources are to the villagers' occupation and income. Kodithuwakku's repetition of 'no fish and prawns' as well as 'vanished' and 'washed away' reinforces how quickly and thoroughly the village became vulnerable and dependent on outside humanitarian relief and development aid in the wake of the tsunami.

In the days immediately following the tsunami, international and national agencies travelled to all the affected regions, including Batticaloa. In 'Shallow Canoes' the multitude of NGOs that flocked to Sri Lanka in the wake of the tsunami to provide humanitarian assistance and development aid is depicted:

Oxfam was not the only relief organization active in the area. Pradeepthaya was constructing new wells and toilets. A Japanese union was providing scholarships... The government was handing out its cash stipends and packages of dry goods... A number of groups were also trying to find land in the area to erect permanent shelters for the survivors of Thiruchikudy. The only space available was the now-bare land between the sea and the lagoon, but placed within the government buffer zone, no one could get construction work passed on it. (174-5)

The formal diction, clipped sentences and matter of fact tone convey the narrative's similarities with unbiased and unembellished reportage. Kodithuwakku's repeated use of past continuous verbs highlights that on-going process of the different versions of assistance that the relief agencies are offering. The government's creation of the buffer zone relates to the area that was within one hundred metres in the south and west and within two hundred metres in the north and east from the sea. In this area there was to be no construction of new buildings or reconstruction of damaged

buildings, including homes. As Naomi Klein explains: '[a]id workers complained that the Sri Lankan government was putting up roadblocks at every turn – first declaring the buffer zone, then refusing to provide alternative land to build on'.<sup>108</sup>

The narrator's reference to 'trying to find land in the area' suggests the difficulty NGOs experienced when endeavouring to provide new housing as they were limited in terms of where they were able to resettle communities.

As the narrative progresses there is an unfavourable depiction of one of the NGOs, Sisters for Sisters, and Kodithuwakku criticises their approach to development because it neglects to consult with the villagers. Sisters for Sisters recognized 'that the most important need in the village was means of going back to the fishing livelihood' (176) which is an assessment that has been backed up by many development experts including Sarvodaya and the UN.<sup>109</sup> Consequently Sisters for Sisters 'decided to import boats from Australia...they also noted how women had never been able to go out to sea in the past with all the boats in the village owned by the men. The three Australians decided to hand out the boats to only women of the village' (176). When the boats arrive from Australia, many of the female villagers receive a boat or a part share in one and 'Ameena and Umayal got one canoe to share' (176). In the weeks that follow many of the women take to the seas and return to their village with large catches of fish.

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<sup>108</sup> Klein, *The Shock Doctrine*, 391.

<sup>109</sup> UN News Centre, "UN Takes First Step in Rebuilding Sri Lanka's Fishing Fleet, Destroyed By Tsunami," accessed September 28, 2012, <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=13229&Cr=tsunami&Cr1>.

However, in a matter of weeks, the consequence of providing fishing boats to the inexperienced and neglecting to provide training is a serious case of overfishing. The conversation between Ameena and Umayal's husbands, expresses their reaction:

‘ “You're right, brother,” he said. “So many prawns were caught in the last few weeks.”  
“Too many,” Abdul replied. “These stupid foreigners come here and make their own decisions without considering our culture.” (194)

The outraged tone and emphatically asserted ‘stupid foreigners’ conveys their disgust at Sisters for Sisters for not taking into account conditions ‘on the ground’. Overfishing prawns in particular is a real problem of globalization whereby global export-led demand for prawns and shrimps causes their depletion because consumption is too high to be sustainable.<sup>110</sup> This lack of sustainability means fishing communities face ever-increasing impoverishment because no fish means decreased livelihood and insufficient diet. The consequences of the international NGOs actions are spelt out: ‘The next few days were desolate. The families had no rupees except for what was coming in from the “Cash for Work” schemes. The women started joining them too, doing the minor work’ (194). It is clear, that rather than livelihood revival, Sisters for Sisters’ approach to development has led to overfishing, which caused both economic and ecological impoverishment for the village.

‘Shallow Canoes’ concludes with the Sarvodaya approach to development being celebrated:

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<sup>110</sup> William W. Taylor, Michael G. Schechter and Lois G. Wolfson, *Globalization: Effects on Fisheries Resources* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press 2007)

Pradeepthaya noted the crisis in the village and stepped up with a scheme. It arranged loans for the women to restart the small livelihoods projects they had done before the Tsunami...Pradeepthaya also asked the heads of the old fishing families...and they filled out applications to receive boats and both Raju and Abdul did so...The movement too, had learned the lesson the village did and gave boats to only those who had engaged in fishing before the Tsunami. Depleting the fish stocks in the sea too, had to be avoided at all costs. (195)

Sarvodaya is aware of the very real risk of overfishing which occurred in some areas when certain NGOs gave out more boats to communities than what they had owned before the tsunami.<sup>111</sup> Sustainable development refers to those ‘practices [which] are generally seen as ecologically sensitive forms of development that maintain intergenerational equity, meeting present needs without compromising those of future generations.’<sup>112</sup> The organisation is also attentive to making the villagers a part of the decision making process. Both men and women are part of the process of making the village self-sufficient and self-sustainable through their participation in livelihood reconstruction.

Considering *When Memory Dies* and ‘Shallow Canoes’ highlights the Sri Lankan state’s and Sarvodaya’s development discourses and practices. Sivanandan’s novel criticises the Sri Lankan state’s neoliberalism for the negative impact on equal resource allocation and the livelihoods of the Tamil communities who live in the north. Kodithuwakku’s short story ‘Shallow Canoes’ explores how alternative indigenous development thinking in Sri Lanka based on equality and inclusivity is an

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<sup>111</sup> Shanmugaratnam, “Challenges of Post-disaster Development,” 10.

<sup>112</sup> Anthony Carrigan, “‘Out of this great tragedy will come a world class tourism destination’: Disaster, Ecology, and Post-Tsunami Tourism Development in Sri Lanka,” in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, eds. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 289.

important tool for villages becoming self-sufficient and self-sustainable. Indeed, considering these texts as pedagogical resources for the type of development thinking that *When Memory Dies* protests against and 'Shallow Canoes' advocates is essential when one considers that this thinking could provide a blueprint for helping to conceptualise more equal allocation of resources and self-sustainable communities. And if adopted by the state then this blueprint can address the economic exploitation of the ethnic minorities and, thereby begin to combat the uneven development in Sri Lanka and beyond.

## CONCLUSION

[G]eography is not an inert container, is not a box where cultural history “happens”, but an active force, that pervades the literary field and shapes it in depth. Making the connection between geography and literature explicit, then...will allow us to see some significant relationships that have so far escaped us.

- Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel*<sup>1</sup>

I don't want [World Food Program] flour and the lentils. ...I want the international community to pressure Israel so I can use my own resources on my own land.

- Abu Sakr, *The Do Gooders*<sup>2</sup>

Franco Moretti's reference to '[m]aking the connection between geography and literature explicit' resonates with the multidisciplinary angle of my project because in this thesis I explored how literature can offer a potential snapshot of resistance to the uneven geographical development of capitalism in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka. The texts that I discussed reveal the ways in which development and nationalism were strategically interconnected and inscribed in space. In keeping with Moretti's call for the recognition that 'geography is not an inert container...but an active force that pervades the literary field', I challenged those recurring perceptions of the geographical space of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka as a 'container'<sup>3</sup>, or fixed and stable, because the literature I examined suggests the active transformation of these nation-states since the beginning of the twentieth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel, 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1999), 3.

<sup>2</sup> As cited in Sarah Irving, "A Confused and Contradictory Film on How Foreigners "Help" Palestine," *The Electronic Intifada*, February 3, 2014, accessed February 3, 2014, <http://electronicintifada.net/content/confused-and-contradictory-film-how-foreigners-help-palestine/13101>.

<sup>3</sup> The nation-state as 'container' is conceptualised by the influential sociologist Anthony Giddens, *Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism: The Nation-state and Violence* (Berkeley, Ca.: University of California Press, 1987), 12.

This thesis utilised a world-systemic framework and offered close readings to trace the historical trajectory of uneven development and social change in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka. This trajectory created chronological coherence, moving from the colonial, to the postcolonial and then the present neo-colonial period. Collectively, these chapters analysed a wide selection of literary texts by writers including Theodor Herzl, Sahar Khalifeh, Punyakante Wijenaikē and Ambalavaner Sivanandan which depict the evolution of separatist ethnonational conflict. I drew on a range of genres including novels, short stories and travelogues/ memoir. At the beginning of each chapter, I also referred to other cultural production, particularly visual representations and forms including art and documentary film which either promotes or protests against development.

I examined the reception, audience and consumption of this literature in both its domestic and international context. I accounted for the different critical responses to the texts which demonstrate the divergent reception in the domestic context and in the metropole as well as the conflicting reactions from readers within the academy and those outside. Moreover, non-professional readers consume Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan texts as a way to learn and understand about the conflicts in these regions. These readers derive their sense of enjoyment of these texts and a positive evaluation from a parallel they draw between the overtness of the narratives' political engagement and its pedagogical function, indeed the more overt this pedagogical effect the more likely the text is to be rated highly.

Throughout this thesis I considered the fraught relationship between postcolonial studies and the contexts of Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka. Postcolonial studies scholarship initially occluded then marginalized these contexts before moving

towards the recognition of ‘the value of a literary study that seeks to demonstrate the collective and cross-cultural impact of the various modern forms of colonialism and imperialism on artistic production across the globe.’<sup>4</sup> My study, then, represents a vital step in putting not only development firmly on the agenda of postcolonial studies but also Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka.

I focussed on narratives which critique the dominant discourse of development in their societies, through the formal and literary strategies that the writers utilise such as utopia, realism and melodrama. This resistance is invaluable when one considers that development continues to be a contentious and divisive issue in Israel/Palestine, Sri Lanka and beyond today, yet one that has clear implications for sustainable peace. In a recent *Guardian* newspaper article, a Tamil living in the north asserts: ‘OK, so there is some development but that is not real freedom ... this is not true peace.’<sup>5</sup> Although this example is taken from the Sri Lankan context, one can draw a parallel with the Palestinians in Israel/Palestine and other ethnic minorities in ethnocratic states. As the Palestinian farmer in the second epigraph to this conclusion forcefully articulates: ‘I don’t want [World Food Program] flour and the lentils. ... I want the international community to pressure Israel so I can use my own resources on my own land.’<sup>6</sup> Specifically, development in the form of humanitarian assistance or aid donations can often be regarded as a method of pacification but for many exploited groups does not weaken resistance and the desire for independence and

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard, “*Rhetorics of Belonging*,” 21.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Burke, “Sri Lanka's economic boom fails to erase painful civil war memories,” *The Guardian*, October 8, 2013, accessed October 9, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/oct/08/sri-lanka-economic-boom-civil-war>, para.3.

<sup>6</sup> “A Confused and Contradictory Film...”



national liberation. Amartya Sen argues that economic growth must be combined with human freedom: '[t]he role of economic growth in expanding opportunities has to be integrated into a more fundamental understanding of the process of development as the expansion of human capability to lead more worthwhile and more free lives.'<sup>7</sup> It is precisely because uneven development in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka continues to exist, evolve and exacerbate tensions that it must be resisted in literature. Consequently, literature can play an invaluable role in anticipating, if not imagining, alternatives to and transformations of the current world order.

The necessarily limited textual engagement undertaken within this thesis means that there are certain aspects that were unavoidably not included. The reason for my choice of texts being restricted to those originally written in English or in English translation is derived from the fact that these texts have entered into international circulation. Each chapter demonstrated that the international community's support of or indifference to state discourses and practices perpetuates inequality in Israel/Palestine and Sri Lanka. Indeed acknowledgment of this role and 'passivity' is often the first step in challenging international complicity or indifference to a state's actions. These writers' representations of unequal power relations and uneven development offer their readers an opportunity for such acknowledgement.

One thing I was not able to discuss in the main body of the thesis for reasons of space is Palestinian literature that is set in and explores Gaza. An exploration of Gaza would offer fruitful new avenues for exploring what Sara Roy has called 'de-development' which is an 'economic policy designed to ensure that there will be no

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<sup>7</sup> Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 295.

economic base, even one that is malformed, to support an independent indigenous existence.<sup>8</sup> Avi Shlaim argues that

Four decades of Israeli control did incalculable damage to the economy of the Gaza Strip. With a large population of 1948 refugees crammed into a tiny strip of land, with no infrastructure or natural resources, Gaza's prospects were never bright. Gaza, however, is not simply a case of economic under-development but a uniquely cruel case of deliberate de-development. To use the Biblical phrase, Israel turned the people of Gaza into the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, into a source of cheap labour and a captive market for Israeli goods. The development of local industry was actively impeded so as to make it impossible for the Palestinians to end their subordination to Israel and to establish the economic underpinnings essential for real political independence.<sup>9</sup>

As such, the situation for Palestinians in Gaza is worse than Palestinian citizens of Israel, and West Bankers, because of 'no infrastructure or natural resources' created by 'a uniquely cruel case of deliberate de-development' which perpetuates the dependence on Israel and on-going occupation. An apt case study to begin discussing Gaza's literary production could be the recently published short story collection: *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine*.<sup>10</sup> In an interview to promote the collection, the editor and one of the contributors, Refaat Alareer, emphasised the way the text protests against the occupation: '[w]riting is a

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<sup>8</sup> Sara M. Roy, *The Gaza Strip: The Political Economy of De-development* (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1995), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Avi Shlaim, "How Israel brought Gaza to the brink of humanitarian catastrophe," *The Guardian*, January 7, 2009, accessed September 20, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jan/07/gaza-israel-palestine>, para.3.

<sup>10</sup> Refaat Alareer, *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine* (Just World Books, 2014).

form of resistance; [a] refusal to surrender.’<sup>11</sup> Joe Sacco’s graphic novel/travelogue *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), Susan Abulhawa’s memoir *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) and Selma Dabbagh’s novel *Out of It* (2011)<sup>12</sup> are also three notable texts which would merit analysis in the future. In addition, 2013 marked the publication of two travel writing/travelogues, not written by Palestinians, but drawing on interviews.<sup>13</sup> An interesting avenue to explore would be the role that these texts play in the international community and the significance of the fact that they were written by an international ‘observer’.

In Israeli literature there has been an outpouring of texts which explore the lived experience of Israelis serving in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF). In *The People of Forever Are Not Afraid* (2013)<sup>14</sup> Shani Boianjiu depicts three young women’s lives before, during and after their service in the IDF, based in part on her own two years of mandatory conscription but, in her own words, avowedly fictional.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the organisation “Breaking the Silence”, set up to support Israeli soldiers to express their stories and experiences during their time of service in the Occupied Palestinian

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<sup>11</sup> Yazan al-Saadi, “Gaza Writers Resist War and Siege through Fiction,” *Alakhbar English*, January 28, 2014, accessed January 28, 2014, <http://english.al-akhbar.com/content/gaza-writers-resist-war-and-siege-through-fiction>.

<sup>12</sup> Joe Sacco, *Footnotes in Gaza* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2009); Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010) and Selma Dabbagh, *Out of It* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Louisa B. Waugh, *Meet Me in Gaza: Uncommon Stories of Life Inside the Strip* (New York: Saqi, 2013) and Dervla Murphy and Avi Shlaim, *A Month by the Sea: Encounters in Gaza* (London: Eland Publishing Ltd, 2013)

<sup>14</sup> Shani Boianjiu, *The People of Forever Are Not Afraid* (London: Hogarth, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Naomi Skwarna, “We’re Not So Different, You and I: An Interview with Shani Boianjiu,” *Random House of Canada*, July 3, 2013, accessed August 4, 2014, <http://www.randomhouse.ca/hazlitt/feature/were-not-so-different-you-and-i-interview-shani-boianjiu>

Territories, has a website which provides an archive of these testimonies.<sup>16</sup> The archive itself has a number of categories, including ‘loss of livelihood’ which is of particular relevance to a consideration of development. Specifically, a number of these testimonies depict how the IDF were responsible for adversely affecting Palestinian communities’ livelihoods, meaning their villages could no longer be self-sustainable. One of the Board of Directors, Noam Chayut, has also written a memoir based on his own testimony entitled *The Girl Who Stole My Holocaust*<sup>17</sup> which was published in 2013. Further research could consider the way these narratives represent Palestinians who derive their livelihoods either from the land through agricultural labour or from the sea through fishing.

In Sri Lanka, human rights writing/reportage is a burgeoning form of writing which reflects its ascendancy in postcolonial studies scholarship.<sup>18</sup> One such example is Frances Harrison’s *Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka’s Hidden War*<sup>19</sup> which was published in 2013. Human Rights Reports from a growing number of organisations have also traced the civil war and its aftermath, including the relationship between land use, development and conflict.<sup>20</sup> One of the

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<sup>16</sup> “Breaking the Silence,” accessed October 17, 2013, <http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/>.

<sup>17</sup> Noam Chayut, *The Girl Who Stole My Holocaust* (London: Verso, 2013).

<sup>18</sup> Works include: Joseph R Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), Ron Dudai, “Advocacy with Footnotes: The Human Rights Report as a Literary Genre,” *Human Rights Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (2006): 783-95.

<sup>19</sup> Frances Harrison, *Still Counting the Dead: Survivors of Sri Lanka’s Hidden War* (Portobello Books Ltd, 2013)

<sup>20</sup> Amongst the domestic Sri Lankan and international organisations include: Institute of Human Rights, <http://ihrsrilanka.org/about/> Sri Lanka Campaign for Peace and Justice, <http://www.srilankacampaign.org/welcome.htm> Tamil Centre for Human Rights, <http://www.tchr.net/home.html> Sri Lanka Brief, <http://www.srilankabrief.org/> Human Rights Watch, [www.hrw.org/asia/sri-lanka](http://www.hrw.org/asia/sri-lanka) University Teachers for Human Rights, <http://www.uthr.org/index.html>

contemporary fictional works to engage with Sri Lanka is Nayomi Munaweera's *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*<sup>21</sup>, a family saga similar in scope to *When Memory Dies*, which traces the period from Sri Lankan independence up to and including the civil war. Another text set partly during the civil war is Shyam Selvadurai's *The Hungry Ghosts*<sup>22</sup>. Both of these texts made the longlist for the DSC Prize for South Asian Literature 2014.

I would like to close by briefly considering the contexts of future study that have been made apparent through examining Israeli, Palestinian and Sri Lankan literature which depicts and critiques the historical trajectory of capitalist development. Additional areas which warrant further exploration are literatures that are derived from other separatist ethnonational conflicts – including Kashmir, Yugoslavia and Cyprus. There is much potential in a study of literary representations of uneven development in contexts where there are conflicting claims to a homeland or where land ownership is contested. Adhering to the epilogue of my introduction, future research in postcolonial studies needs to be attuned to discovering 'the effects of combined and uneven development structurally, socially, and aesthetically'<sup>23</sup> and acknowledging how literature can create hope that there is an alternative to ethnonational conflicts and the unequal local and global order.

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<sup>21</sup> Nayomi Munaweera, *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* (Perera - Hussein Publishing House, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Shyam Selvadurai, *The Hungry Ghosts* (London: Telegram Books, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Parry, "What is Left in Postcolonial Studies?" 344.

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