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THE HOLY LAND IN TRANSIT: COLONIALISM AND THE QUEST FOR CANAAN

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

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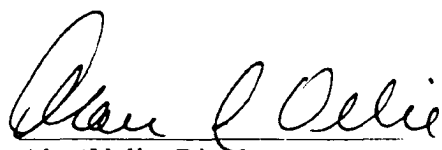
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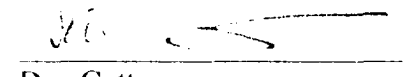
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A Dissertation APPROVED FOR THE
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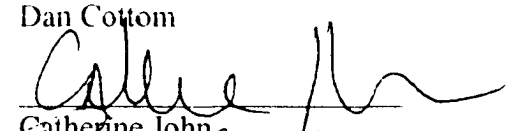
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ABSTRACT

Through a comparative analysis of colonialism in the New World and Holy Land with attention to how politics influence literary production, I examine the process by which settler societies transform theological narratives into national histories to justify their occupation of foreign land. In particular, I analyze the similarities between rhetoric employed by early colonialists in North America and that employed by Zionist immigrants in Palestine. In doing so, I examine histories, theories, and literary depictions of colonialism and inter-ethnic dialectics. Having established this comparative analysis, I then develop it further through the textual criticism in the second half of the dissertation, where I discuss Anishinaabe authors Gerald Vizenor and Winona LaDuke and Palestinian authors Liyana Badr and Emile Habiby.

Preface

Since entering doctoral school at the University of Oklahoma three years ago with a clear vision of my dissertation topic—a comparative analysis of Native Americans and Palestinians, with attention to how politics influence literary production—I have been asked repeatedly how that topic came into existence. It is a good question, one that I cannot answer even now, after six semesters of intense reading and research, after five seminars in Native Studies, and after three trips to the Middle East. If I were able to respond easily to any inquiry about my dissertation project, then I imagine there would have been no need for me to write the dissertation, and life would have been considerably easier these last three years.

I should preface my discussion by saying I wish sincerely that this dissertation were not needed. In fact, I hope that it will someday be an artifact that reflects historical conditions rather than political realities; that is, a window to the past rather than a mirror on the present. If that actually happens, it means the social and political realities that frame the concepts presented herein will have abated and justice will have prevailed for the Indigenous peoples I study, thus rendering moot my criticisms of colonization and imperialism. For one of my goals is not simply to cast light on how colonialism functions in particular situations, but to contribute to a culture working hard outside the Academy to eliminate colonialism. As a student, I was never much interested in work that failed to ground itself into pragmatic contexts relevant to the activist or general reader in addition to the specialist. Given the choice between Frantz Fanon or Homi

Bhabha, I would without hesitation pick up *Wretched of the Earth*—not just because it is a brilliant theoretical text, but because it gave me a feeling of empowerment outside the classroom. In my estimation, that is what the very best scholarship does, and the very best examples of literary criticism highlight aesthetics in literature that do the same. Now that my time has come to produce work, I refuse to abandon my sensibilities as a reader, which would essentially be an act of hypocrisy. I have therefore constructed this dissertation in a way that might satisfy academics as well as any reader interested in issues of justice for Indigenous peoples, especially if they are concerned with formulating resistant strategies or incorporating theoretical models into public debate. Only time will tell, of course, whether that approach has been successful.

More specifically, I conceptualize this project as traditional literary criticism. I will examine fiction in detail, placing emphasis on textual features that contribute to the critical framework detailed in the introduction and first chapter. In another sense, though, this project is also oriented toward literary theory. While I will spend much energy explicating texts in a thorough way, an approach that has—regrettably, in my opinion—lost appeal in today's English departments, I will contextualize those explications with broader theoretical designs. All theoretical positions expressed henceforth will be, I hope, relevant to academics and activists alike.

Before I proceed, I would like to answer the question of how this topic came into existence as my first attempt at constructing a theoretical position. As with many projects, the foundation for this one was and continues to be happenstance; that is to say, a coincidental discovery of something that already exists and need only be articulated. I was raised in Appalachia by Arab immigrants who nurtured my childhood interest in the

Middle East, Palestine particularly. My entire life has thus been dedicated to Palestinian politics and activism, and nothing has occupied my thoughts more than Israeli brutality and the way it is described so euphemistically in the United States, if even it is mentioned at all. For the majority of my life, Native America was nothing but an abstract backdrop to the old leftist politics I have since outgrown. I knew, as most Americans do, that the United States was constructed on other peoples' lands, and that terrible domestic atrocities occurred in America's past. But it was a knowledge without understanding, an abstraction without consciousness, an acknowledgment without history.

After I enrolled in an Indian novel seminar in college, however, I learned that Natives are alive *en masse* and engaging in myriad ways with the American polity. As I read Silko and Momaday and Welch—and the accompanying scholarship—I gradually realized that I had seen all the concepts before and that I had already read the history inspiring those novels' creation. And, in fact, I had. It was simply in the form of Palestinian history. Not only were the rhetorical techniques of the dominant power in both cases similar, at times they were identical. Even the language colonialists used in their errands was the same, as with the concepts of "noble savage" and "chosen people." *Similar* is an awfully weak word on which to predicate a comparative study. Had I found only similarities, this project would never have been conceived. The fact that I found identical discursive methods compelled me to pursue the possibility of looking in more detail at colonization across national boundaries. When I discovered that Zionist leaders drew inspiration from American history in conceptualizing ways to rid Palestine of its Indigenes, the project became a reality. Every week, I uncover more evidence to suggest that the United States and Israel are more than strategic partners. Numerous sources

indicate that they are actually bound historically and philosophically in ways that run much deeper than conventional political expediency, although it too is at play in their relationship.

More important, I have long had distaste for ethnocentric tunnel vision, a phenomenon that has recently plagued the Arab American community. In pressing the American government to reconsider its support for Israel, Arab Americans often reinforce (sometimes unwittingly, sometimes not) all of the colonial values framed in a vocabulary of enlightenment and civility. This is a disturbing development, for it indicates yet again the ability of mainstream American discourse to appropriate and paralyze activity attempting to hold it to its own ostensible standards. I find it unacceptable and hypocritical that Arab Americans work to transform American Near East policy without at least acknowledging the struggles of domestic ethnic groups with our government, both in the past and present. It is also by any standard insensitive and counterproductive. On the other hand, as a student of Native American Studies for over four years, I would like to see a more developed political consciousness that situates whatever crimes were/are committed against North American tribes within the complex of American foreign policy, which, unfortunately, offers no shortage of examples to analyze in regard to aggression.

In sum, then, I hope to help intellectually unite ethnic and national groups that on some level share common histories. At the very least, this project is an attempt to invoke dialogue. If that dialogue is successful, then we shall have new angles from which to develop arguments against American hegemony. That desire has constantly underscored the evolution of this topic.

Introduction: The Holy Land in Transit

> The people had been taught to despise themselves because they were left with barren land and dry rivers. But they were wrong. It was the white people who had nothing; it was the white people who were suffering as thieves do, never able to forget that their pride was wrapped in something stolen, something that had never been, and never could be, theirs.
>
> Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony*

> *—Good-bye, sir.*
> *—Where to?*
> *—Madness.*
> *—Which madness?*
> *—Any madness, for I have turned into words.*
>
> Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness*

There are over twenty towns in the United States named Canaan or New Canaan, and even Palestines (each pronounced *Palesteen*) in Arkansas, Illinois, and Texas. An important irony can be found here. In the Near East, the lands of Canaan and Palestine—in biblical times and in 1948—were eradicated in place of something new, only to reappear in the United States in place of something already there. Given the deeply-involved Judeo-Christian philosophy of initial, second-wave, and Victorian-era settlers to the Americas, it was perhaps inevitable that some newly established towns would adopt monikers conjuring the Holy Land, indicating that this pristine land of milk and honey was ripe for religious and material settlement.

Settlers give this observation crucial political meaning. The largest and most important context of analysis, however, is Native Americans (hereafter referred to as *Natives*)[1] and Palestinians, the indigenous inhabitants of these quixotic Edens. As the incidental Others who had the misfortune of living in lands promised at their expense to superior beings by a God to whom neither subscribed, a connection among these groups, even at the shallowest level, is obvious. Beyond their construction in colonial rhetoric as

invisible, unimportant, or savage (usually when their physical existence could no longer be denied), Natives and Palestinians have broad histories of militant and cultural resistance to occupation, continued attachments to the lands from which they were displaced or that are no longer under their control, impressive literary and intellectual traditions that were altered by the colonial process but can effectively be traced to pre-colonial times, lasting nationalist movements, and comprehensive Indigenous histories that challenge erroneous Western conceptions about their existence (or at times nonexistence). But they have, slowly yet without fail, risen from their fate in colonial theology—disappearance or annihilation—to demand an audience and secure redress.

Although references to commensurate situations in the Americas and Palestine are often made, nobody has produced a detailed comparative analysis. Such a project is plausible and perhaps imminent. I would argue that it is also necessary for numerous reasons I shall explore below. Any study involving only Natives or Palestinians can be highly complicated, so juxtaposing these diverse and extensive societies presents exhaustive challenges. With patience, though, a meticulous comparative analysis would add great depth to colonial discourse studies, as well as to the shared Indigenous project of dismantling imperialist ideologies.

This project, then, will remain fluid, and should be perceived as a work in progress that contributes to both Native and Palestine Studies, along with modern notions of Indigeneity in a neoliberal world. The complexities in such a project require comprehensive negotiation, and I hold no illusion that comparative models of any nature are without difficulty. I do, however, think it prudent to forge ahead with precise theoretical underpinnings based on the information currently available.

The present moment offers exciting possibilities to contextualize oppression within particular narratives that foregrounded the creation of the modern nation-state. This is especially resonant in the United States and Israel. Financial and philosophical American support for Israel remains integral to Israel's survival and has long been criticized as imperialist by opponents of the Israeli occupation. Yet these critiques rarely interrogate the covenantal relationship these nations share, which tacitly informs the American consciousness because of the United States' own grounding in Holy Land pathos. Natives and Palestinians, in other words, have already been engaged in commensurate Indigenous discourses without actually bringing these comparative possibilities to fruition. I will take what presently exists in their intellectual lexicons and catalog how Native America and Palestine are often interchangeable, for much of the colonial process in the United States summoned Holy Land themes that would repeat themselves in Palestine in the twentieth century. If White pioneers in the New World could name settlements Canaan, New Canaan, or Palestine, then it is possible for at least theoretical purposes to call Israel a New America.

This possibility is most significant because of the liberation parables settlers introduced. In both continents, a group arrived bearing stories alien to the native populations; these stories, sharing the same taproot, became the dominant narratives of the state. (The introduction of foreign stories into colonized lands resonates in all areas where conquest occurred, most of which emphasized a biblical relationship of the occupier with the land.) The United States and Israel are therefore more than mere political/strategic allies. Looking more deeply at their shared origin compels us to appraise colonization in other areas of the world in a manner that stresses historical

continuity in conjunction with local particulars. Although myriad comparisons can be made among Natives and Palestinians, I am most interested in the covenantal discourse employed by settlers in the New World and Holy Land, especially the way in which it has led to near-constant human, financial, and philosophical interplay between the two continents. More thorough investigations can be undertaken in the future as further developments occur in the study of colonization.

Shared Allusions

This topic is not the product of individual imagination. Anybody who reads extensively in both Native and Palestinian scholarship has probably noticed an enormous amount of shared terminology: colonization, displacement, dispossession, self-representation, self-determination, resistance, recovery, return, refugees, sovereignty, occupation, Diaspora, exile, nationalism, rejectionism, the land, homeland, identity, memory, imagination, orality, placelessness, Manifest Destiny. In fact, when scholars write about Native politics, it is not uncommon for the author to invoke Palestinians, a strategy repeated in much Palestinian writing.

In *Mixedblood Messages*, for instance, Louis Owens writes, "American Indians, who like Palestinians have had to struggle just to have a voice and be acknowledged as 'real,' have espoused what has seemed to be a losing cause for five centuries."[2] Jace Weaver borrows directly from the late Palestinian author and activist Ghassan Kanafani to better illustrate his communitist readings of Native literature:

> The phrase "resistance literature," according to Barbara Harlow in her book of the same name, was developed by Palestinian writer Ghassan

> Kanafani to describe the literature of that people. It presupposes a people's collective relationship to a common land, a common identity, or a common cause on the basis of which it is possible to distinguish between two modes of existence for the colonized, "occupation" or "exile." This distinction also presupposes an "occupying power" that has either exiled or subjugated—or, in the cases of Palestinians and Native Americans, exiled *and* subjugated—the colonized population and has, in addition, significantly intervened in the literary and cultural development of the people it has dispossessed and whose land it has occupied.[3]

This juxtaposition has already materialized in an essay by Benjamin Bennani and Katherine Warner Bennani in Richard F. Fleck's *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction.* In assessing Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* (*Rijal Fil Shams*) from within the same critical framework, the Bennanis provide an early instance of cross-cultural criticism that attacks colonization by offering multi-layered and heterogeneous perspectives. The central theme of their essay follows: "*Ceremony* and *Men in the Sun* are not removed from each other spiritually. Both are centered in lands where loss reigns among people struggling between old and new visions of themselves."[4]

When Native authors incorporate Palestinian politics into their scholarship, multiple purposes are served. First of all, the mention of Palestinians in a critical work by a Native and aimed primarily at a Native audience plays only an ancillary role in the authors' central theses. The result is essentially a contrived dichotomy between cultural

practice and political existence. From a political standpoint, anybody aware of the conditions in the occupied territories can draw them as an example that not only indicates a sustained pattern of colonialism, but also opens possibilities for cross-cultural communication in the ongoing dialogue to establish Indigenous critical lexicons. The authors' discussion of Palestinians suggests that colonization is far from complete in the United States. It has only expanded and exists in perpetuity with institutions formed during the first days of European contact. Their invocation of Palestinians creates a body of knowledge wherein an assumption, often unstated but clearly framed, intimates the ability to contextualize the particulars of New World settlement within the larger process of Western invasion. Owens and Weaver thus provide something of a cosmopolitan reading of Native politics without fully developing the tenets of inter-ethnic communication. What remains implicit in their statements can be made explicit by investigating these gaps.

Conversely, Mohamed Heikal argues that the Jewish "desire for a national home was a goal with which any American could sympathize, having parallels in US pioneer history. If Americans had driven the Indians from grazing lands to make space for themselves, why should they object to Jews expelling Palestinians?"[5] Edward Said recognizes a continuity between American overseas imperialism and its treatment of domestic Indigenes: "A correspondence is evident, but frequently disguised or forgotten, between the nineteenth-century doctrine of Manifest Destiny (the title of an 1890 book by John Fiske), the territorial expansion of the United States, the enormous literature of justification..., and the ceaselessly repeated formulae about the need for an American intervention against this or that aggression since World War Two."[6] Keith W. Whitelam,

in assessing what he calls the "silencing of Palestinian history," argues that an Orientalist impulse in Western knowledge spans the East and the Americas, for "[i]t is a characterization which dehumanizes, allowing the extermination of native populations, as in the case of Native Americans where it was regrettable but 'probably inevitable'; the claim is couched in terms of the progress that colonial or imperial rule will bring."[7]

These authors consolidate Natives into analyses of Palestinian politics for the same reasons discussed above in light of Native scholars. I would argue that in addition to those reasons, it is done to better clarify their points to an American readership. Few Americans are willing to admit or accept that a well-established Indigenous society was forcibly removed in Israel.[8] By situating the history of Palestinians with those of Natives, Palestine scholars furnish ontological validity to their subjects. This, of course, does not necessarily lead to sympathy or understanding, because physical existence is the least important requirement for political or intellectual gain. Rather, deeply imbued discursive mechanisms disavowing Natives and Palestinians as aggrieved political entities must be addressed.

I wish to make my point as plain as possible here before developing my theoretical premise. Two things I will argue against are selective sympathy and isolated analysis. To decry what has happened to the Native population in the United States and support, in theory or application, the comparable practices of Israel is to be sanctimonious and ignorant of the breadth of Western imperialism, and is ultimately unacceptable. By the same token, to denounce the past actions of American leaders toward Indians without also understanding current colonial practices and at least a sampling of Indian politics, particularly that Natives are not objects of the past, is to have

severely misplaced sentiments about the nature of modern American governance. A look at American policy in the Near East makes this clear. This project is one of many ways to challenge America's self-image as a humane democracy and offer useful inroads to better understand the intricacies of Western expansion.

The most pressing concern at this point is discerning why Native and Palestinian writers can allude to one another with such nonchalance and without qualification. This is the principal issue I hope to illustrate by assessing the covenantal narratives traversing the Americas and the Near East. From these narratives, we have opportunities to identify the underlying features of the modern industrial states imposed on foreign landscapes, especially the features that form the epistemology of national culture by eclipsing the connection of Indigenes with the land.

Critical Points for Comparison

In a recent article voicing displeasure at the insular tendencies of Palestinian intellectual production, Said suggests that Israeli brutality is exceptional in context of the particular issues that gave rise to Zionism and Palestinian resistance, yet well within the framework of colonialism as it occurred in most of the world. Expressing surprise at "how insulated from the rest of the world [Palestinians] keep [themselves]," Said argues that "a great deal can be learned from the history of other oppressed peoples in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and even Europe."[9] In this section, I shall answer Said's challenge and provide speculative groundwork for an Indigenous-centered critique of industrial global policy.

Much is being done today to liberate perception from the throes of colonial influence, which directly and obliquely guides our recognition of conflict and its

underlying characteristics.[10] A large number of Indigenous scholar-activists of myriad ethnicities are working diligently to construct new methods to assess various forms of oppression: corporate, military, intellectual, sexual, environmental.[11] These methodologies draw from the work of Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ghassan Kanafani, Vine Deloria, Jr., and other thinkers who advocate prioritizing Indigenous worldviews in order to avoid mimicking intellectual procedures of the elite and thus contributing—wittingly or not—to the policies that nurture poverty and injustice. This is relevant in studying garrison colonization because of the need to create contrapuntal alternatives to jingoistic narratives that delegitimize Indigenes as owners of land that has been commodified for economic or ideological purposes. Studying these situations in a comparative framework further implicates modern imperialism by refusing to approach any instance of oppression in a vacuum.

This is expressly relevant to Americans for numerous reasons. Thinkers in academe and in more popular political forums on the left tend to struggle within the confines of traditional American tenets of life, liberty, and justice in examining inequities at home and abroad. These concepts, however, are at times superficial, having coincided with slavery and with the Native genocide (one of the worst in human history). They are also employed with vigor during periods of overseas aggression. It is impossible, in other words, to separate the American notion of liberty from memories of treachery and plunder. Also instructive is the fact that, as many Africans and Natives are quick to point out, it was from tribal social systems that both Locke and Marx borrowed their ideas for a just society.

This brings us to Said's observation. For the past 100 years, Palestinians have endured a lasting incursion, resulting in incalculable suffering and gross loss of human life. Israeli-Palestinian discord is possibly the world's most intricate conflict in terms of intersecting discourses and competing land-ownership claims. As Said notes, however, Israeli occupation and settlement policy are in keeping with classic garrison colonialism in regard to technique and intention. The United States remains Israel's primary financial and philosophical supporter, in violation of international law and in isolation from the international community.[12] The principles guiding domestic strife with Natives, Blacks, and other minorities, therefore, are perceptible in the unceasing support granted Israel, which is often dubbed the only civilized outpost in a hostile region.

For these reasons, establishing historical and political connections across ethnic boundaries is of great importance. Said questions the reluctance of Palestinians to do so: "Why do [Palestinians] resist comparing [themselves], say, with the South African blacks, or with the American Indians, or with the Vietnamese? By comparing I don't mean mechanically or slavishly, but rather creatively and imaginatively."[13] The primary reason these sorts of comparisons remain few, existing mainly in experimental stages, is that Indigenes are still reestablishing and reconstructing their histories in the wake of colonization, which continues into the present in many cases. Furthermore, this kind of exercise is difficult to execute on the ground for those struggling to link their own communities into a unified form of activism.

Despite the problems, which I will recount more fully below, Said's challenge is prophetic. For Palestinians, it is timely because a strong domestic pro-Israeli consciousness impedes raising awareness about the miserable conditions under which

Palestinians live, even among certain leftist forums—*Dissent*, *The Boston Review*, *Pacifica Radio*—which often want nothing to do with criticizing Israel. Alternate strategies are thus necessitated by a stubborn refusal to (accurately) deem Israel the final garrison force in Asia. For Natives, deconstructing deeply-rooted racist tendencies from within the society that grants them credence and that relies upon their existence can be equally arduous. As a result, what has been dubbed reciprocal inter-communalism—fluid dialogue among ethnic groups with shared political motivations—becomes essential in replacing conventional academic models with ones tailored to national discourses geared toward liberation. In this sense, examining government abuse and intellectual traditions from an Indigenous rather than postcolonial or postmodern standpoint—creatively forging comparisons along the way—would help to provide critics and progressives of all backgrounds with an imaginative spark that is badly needed given the prosaic state of social theory today.

This sentiment is exemplified by numerous writers in the fields of ethnic studies and multiculturalism. Anouar Majid, simultaneously drawing from and challenging the established tenets of postcolonial theory, argues that "[a]lthough many scholars are eager to preserve and differentiate the world's various cultural legacies, they often do not question the foundations of the economic system that seems to have enriched elite minorities into a sort of intellectual complacency, nor do they venture beyond academic paradigms that prevent more holistic and transdisciplinary readings of culture and civilizations."[14] Likewise, Ifi Amadiume contends that "[t]here is now a need for consolidating a dialogic literature, as this compells [sic] statements, propositions, responses, conversation, and, therefore, a dialogic library. A dialogue necessitates the

existence of more than one view. A dialogue exposes the grounds on which we are standing—that is, our partiality or our position/theory on specific issues."[15]

Comprehensive inter-ethnic projects, not unlike the perspectives Majid and Amadiume offer, have been suggested by numerous writers, among them Diana Abu-Jaber,[16] Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Keith Whitelam, and Hilton Obenzinger, who has explored the Holy Land mentality of the American frontier in *American Palestine*. Although my project could also have focused in various capacities upon Maoris, Timorese, Aborigines, Black South Africans, Kurds, and a great many Indigenous peoples still under some form of colonial rule, the unique circumstances framing conquest in Native America and Palestine make it an extraordinary prototype for inter-communal dialogue.

I speak primarily of the religious tone assumed by foreign settlers in these lands, even when the movements in which they were involved were purportedly secular. In the case of Native America and Palestine, this discursive feature can be called the quest for Canaan, a phenomenon that has also existed in South Africa and Latin America. In *The Invention of Ancient Israel*, Whitelam details Europe's rapture with ancient Israel, what he calls the taproot of Western civilization. From these narratives, Europeans set out to discover new lands and claim them as economic dependents under the sovereignty of God, a process which most affects Indigenous societies in three ways: 1) their histories are silenced in place of Western metanarratives of progress and liberation; 2) lands are usurped under the alleged authority of God, leaving little room for humanistic dialogue among colonizer and colonized; and 3) the discourse of conquest is ultimately incorporated into all aspects of the colonizer's popular and intellectual institutions,

becoming normalized and perceived as natural over time. Across the world, according to Whitelam, "The land [being colonized] seems empty and devoid of interest apart from the vestiges of ancient monuments that are important for understanding the development of European civilization."[17]

Obenzinger helps us to understand the encounter Whitelam assesses by discussing the longstanding frontier mentality occupying the center of the collective American identity. He has accurately traced this attitude to what he calls a "Holy Land mania" that surfaced in the early nineteenth century and still exists with modern features today. The Holy Land mania Obenzinger theorizes is a transferal into the Americas of the underlying attitudes Whitelam identifies in Zionism, with necessary transitions fitted to whichever local particulars colonizers encountered. The source of settler and, later, national identity has remained identical on both continents. Moreover, the early development of Zionism and Americanism has followed comparable patterns when confronting the manner by which self-identification would be constructed, as illustrated by the following passage from *American Palestine*: "Certainly, Zionist ideological formation, as a secular movement, initially appeared to move *against* traditional notions of Jewish uniqueness in a desire to establish a 'normal' national life. I would argue, however, that the covenantal relationship is in fact at play even in such a seemingly inverted dynamic inscribed by early secular Zionists, just as it is also at play within Anglo-American colonial development, despite its great hybridity."[18] A few sentences later, Obenzinger more fully captures the migratory essence of the quest for Canaan, pointing out that "Puritan settlement certainly displayed all the features of the covenantal mind-set—for example, rigid congregational discipline of social mores through a unique ecclesiastical-juridical

establishment, along with the violent 'othering' of 'Amelkite' Indians and dissenting settlers alike."[19]

Both modern America and garrison Zionism continue to draw from this kind of rationale. The fact that Jews from any area of the world can emigrate to Palestine and replace a family that traces its lineage to the region for hundreds of years testifies to the persuasive nature of this discourse, as does the American license to discuss "regime change" in Iraq in the interests of "progress" and "civilization" as well as the need to "enlighten" the Iraqis with "American values," a discourse that succeeds precisely because of the foundations Obenzinger explores. The appropriation of the land itself into the covenant and, subsequently, into the identity of the nation-state also supplements the metaphysics of settlement, devalorizing the physical existence of Indigenes in the process. The towns in the United States named Canaan and New Canaan show that colonial projects do not exist in isolation.

Touching on this naming phenomenon and the same sort of interplay Whitelam and Obenzinger discuss, Warrior identifies the most solid point of comparison: "Many puritan preachers were fond of referring to Native Americans as Amelkites and Canaanites—in other words, people who, if they would not be converted, were worthy of annihilation. By examining such instances in theological and political writings, in sermons, and elsewhere, we can understand how America's self-image as a 'chosen people' has provided a rhetoric to mystify domination."[20] The Reverend Michael Prior enunciates some of Warrior's concerns by rereading the Exodus narrative from an Indigenous perspective. The conclusion he draws is instructive:

> What struck me most about the biblical narrative was that the divine promise of land was integrally linked with the mandate to exterminate the indigenous peoples, and I had to wrestle with my perception that those traditions were inherently oppressive and morally reprehensible. Even the Exodus narrative was problematic. While it portrays Yahweh as having compassion on the misery of his people, and as willing to deliver them from the Egyptians and bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey (Exodus 3.7-8) that was only part of the picture. Although the reading of Exodus 3, both in the Christian liturgy and in the classical texts of liberation theologies, halts abruptly in the middle of verse 8 at the description of the land as one "flowing with milk and honey," the biblical text itself continues, "to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites." Manifestly, the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, had no lack of indigenous peoples, and, according to the narrative, would soon flow with blood.[21]

I am looking at a specific era of ancient history in order to pinpoint a distinct foundational narrative widely employed during various times in Native America and Palestine. Although the construction of Natives as Holy Land tribes destined for extinction occurred primarily in New England and with more vigor among Puritans than other settler groups, the philosophies espoused in the Puritan framework were widely transferred into larger settings and played a salient role in the formation of a cohesive American consciousness which deemed Americans the chosen harbingers of a civilizing

mission that must tame flora, fauna, and human life. The manner in which Zionists rehashed this covenant in displacing Palestinians and occupying their land connotes rich temporal interactions among settler societies and the master narrative from which they generally draw. A comparative study is further made available by the fact that numerous settlers in Palestine today are American.[22] The physical journey across the Atlantic illustrates that the master narrative remains interchangeable even while investing itself into geographic particulars in order that it might fabricate for the immigrant population an identity that validates intrusion on foreign land.[23]

This master narrative is certainly not limited to Native America and Palestine. With varying political and temporal specifics, one can find comparable situations across the globe. The framework I employ can be modified to attempt comparative studies throughout the Americas, Africa, Asia, and the South Pacific. Such cross-cultural projects will certainly be assessed in full within the next twenty years. I have chosen to research Natives and Palestinians not simply because my position as an Arab American (Jordanian and Palestinian) gives me a personal stake in the two regions, but, more important, because the curious theological circumstances surrounding these situations make Natives and Palestinians exceptional subjects for interpreting injustice in profoundly institutional contexts. The transfer of Holy Land themes to the Americas and, later, back to Palestine—with both encounters conjuring a distinct discursive taproot even though Natives and Palestinians have no other historical connection to speak of—is a fascinating phenomenon that merits investigation beyond what I am able to present as an exploratory model here.

Normalized Invasion

The results of New World and Holy Land colonization have been well-documented by thousands of scholars of numerous nationalities. Therefore, I will only briefly offer some broad historical information in order to provide a statistical background for the forthcoming discussion of land and Indigeneity. I refer readers to the short list of texts in the notes if they wish to peruse historiography.[24]

It is difficult to summarize colonization in any area of the United States because of the manifold nations with a stake in the Americas during specific historical moments and the sheer number of tribes on the North American continent. On a large scale, though, there can be no doubt of the mass slaughter of Natives as the United States was formed and as it expanded westward. For most of the history of what is now the United States, every tract of land was controlled by hundreds of discrete tribes, each with its own language, rituals, and interests. By 1870, Natives occupied 140 million acres from a total of 1,905,000,000. Today, they tentatively control only 52 million acres in the contiguous United States.[25] Accompanying this dispossession was large-scale annihilation, land theft, forced assimilation, and an attempted destruction of all things Indian. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn describes a type of conquest that Palestinians have been known to use when describing Israel: "The invasion of North America by European peoples has been portrayed in history and literature as a benign movement directed by God, a movement of moral courage and physical endurance, a victory for all humanity."[26]

Though the numbers are in contest, many believe that over 12 million Natives were slaughtered within the borders of what would become the United States; in the Americas, the number may be as high as 100 million.[27] Today, Native America occupies

approximately 4% of the United States, yet receives most of its nuclear waste.[28] In addition, Natives remain the most economically depressed demographic in the country, lagging far behind Whites in health care coverage, per capita income, and household utilities. This poverty relates to the imposition of alien economic structures on largely agrarian societies, whereby Natives found themselves providing manual services for the settler nation. Just as Natives subsist as the lowest caste in industrial America, Palestinians have provided Israel the type of cheap labor needed to sustain its economy.

Other numbers are disgraceful. Sterilization of Native women peaked in 1975, when 25,000 were permanently sterilized, many by force. This practice continues today through coercion and misinformation, according to the Women of Color Partnership. Native men on poorer reservations have an average lifespan of 46 years, as opposed to 76 for the general population. These premature deaths damage the elder-apprentice relations so crucial to spiritual sustenance. Also distressing is the continued imposition of federal mandates in determining how tribal business is conducted; the George Bush, Sr., administration ratified Public Law 101-644, which legally restricted the definition of Indian artists to those recognized as Native by the federal government.

It is rare to read a piece of Native scholarship without a criticism of the United States' colonial practices. Owens writes, "For American Indians, the problem of identity comprehends centuries of colonial and postcolonial displacement, often brutally enforced peripherality, cultural denigration—including especially a harsh privileging of English over tribal languages—and systematic oppression by the monocentering 'westerning' impulse in America."[30] Maureen Konkle suggests that "[American] colonial epistemology begins with Europeans' production of knowledge about Native peoples as

ahistorical and depoliticized members of a group who share inborn characteristics that mark them as inferior to Europeans and deserving of subjection."[31] This type of criticism is part of an ongoing drive in Native America to establish a viable matrix for studying Native literature that appraises a fantasized American historiography along with Indigenous cultural issues affecting the tone and intention of contemporary Native letters. Underpinning these strategies is a concern with the covenant settlers employed to bind outsiders to the land. Modernized into a capitalist era, the land became a commodity from which transitory populations drew profit. Yet this development, as Philip Deloria has shown, induced the mimicry of Native dress and invented Native custom. The coupling of settlers with the land, in other words, encountered a barrier with the discovery of Indigenes, which necessitated their appropriation into the American imagination and their symbolic and physical removal from the landscape itself. The preservation of tribal discreteness—including first and foremost the retention of original landholdings—is more than simply maintaining visibility; it is survival in the metaphysical and corporeal sense.

Although it is difficult to juxtapose historical data into a meaningful comparison because of divergences among local conditions, a look at basic figures in Palestine also shows a considerable record of suffering (it is clear, in any event, that New World colonization has been the bloodiest to date). In having an extended conversation with a Palestinian, the word *nakba* is likely to be uttered. It translates to "catastrophe," the Palestinian descriptor for the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, when the State of Israel was created in place of Palestine via the destruction of over 400 Arab villages and when approximately 700,000 Arabs lost their homes and became refugees in the then

Jordanian-controlled West Bank, Egypt (which assumed control over Gaza), Lebanon, and Syria. These hardships were intensified after the 1967 War, Black September,[32] the Lebanese civil wars, the Intifada,[33] and, many would argue, the Oslo Accords.[34] According to the UN, there are currently eight million Palestinians in the world. 4.5 million are refugees, lacking even the most basic human rights. In Palestine, they are regularly subjected to curfews and usually have no free passage from Gaza to the West Bank; as a result, many families remain divided. It has been widely estimated that property losses of the Palestinians since 1948 can be placed at $146 billion, and lost income at over $300 billion.[35]

It would be unfair to say that the United States merely ignores what Europe and the entire Third World identify as a racist and jingoistic devastation. This is a catastrophe in which the United States is directly involved and which it has openly supported for over fifty years. Israel, with full American funding, has systematically denied the original inhabitants of its country any reentry, and has subjected a large section of Palestinian society to an ongoing military occupation, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, and willful murder. In other words, what the United States routinely uses as a premise for bombing other countries is excused—indeed praised—when undertaken by Israel. This support cannot properly be understood in a vacuum or simply as political strategy. Analyses that follow this pattern often assume that Americans inexplicably dislike Arabs or privilege economic interests over human need. In reality, more can be learned by investigating domestic policy in conjunction with overseas aggression. Understanding America's history with its own Indigenes helps Near East policy to become more concrete. Natives have long been combating the type of racism so common in Palestine. American rhetoric

in support of Israel is therefore a discourse to which Americans are accustomed. Patriotic socialization requires the erasure of Indigenous rights; Israelis thus enjoy American patronage with a history that can be traced to the appearance in North America of the first Europeans. These historical realities are incisive in understanding American acceptance of Israeli brutality; calculated misinformation and monetary support for settlements succeed because they are tainted by racist suppositions immediately familiar to Americans as the natural course of events. The covenant brought by settlers into both lands constantly crosses the Atlantic.

The result continues to be devastating. At a recent Trans-Arab Research Institute Right of Return Conference, Said explained that the Palestinian refugees were "displaced in 1948, 1967, and again in 1982 [from Lebanon] by the most naked acts of ethnic cleansing. Any other description of these acts by the Israeli army is a travesty of the truth, no matter how many protestations are heard from the unyielding supporters of Israel whether on the right or the left."[36] He went on to say,

> The Palestinians have endured decades of dispossession and raw agonies rarely endured by other peoples, and these agonies have either been ignored or denied and even more poignantly the perpetrators of these tragedies are celebrated for political and social achievements that make no mention at all of where those achievements actually begin—in the destruction of Palestinian society.[37]

Focused on the same sense of hypocrisy, economist Atif Kuburski argued that "utility claims for compensation have been used with a vengeance by Jews in regard to compensation from Germany, Austria, and others. It is highly appropriate that Palestinians use the same approach in regard to Israel."[38] We can detect from these passages, beyond a fixation on human rights and the selectivity of awareness in American society, a deep attachment to Palestine and the Palestinians as well as a continued desire to seek return and redress, binding features of the Palestinian people.

In a manner relevant to my thesis, both Said and Kuburski employ discussions of resistance that intersect with Native conceptions of historiography and legality. Analogous events, it can be said, necessitate corresponding responses, but in this case something larger is at work. Natives and Palestinians were put in a position where resistance became integrated into their cultures; once discrete peoples thus became bound by external circumstances that gradually developed into internal aspects of everyday life.[39] The philosophical taproot binding the colonial powers in these situations must be examined concurrent with local conditions, especially the influence of early settler identity on the personality of the state. When Indigenous resistance intersects with settler land expropriation and economic exploitation, contradictions in settler discourse inevitably arise. Comparative approaches improve our ability to identify and ultimately refute those contradictions.

Even though, as Said laments, Palestinians have been reluctant to properly contextualize their political struggle in continuity with other colonial projects, Natives have developed comparisons, albeit with little thoroughness. Diaspora Jewry, particularly the European Holocaust, has been appropriated into aspects of Native

discourse with efficacy. Africans also receive frequent mention in this scholarship, although comparative analyses of Natives and Africans tend to be attenuated even when accurate.[40]

These maneuvers indicate a precedent for thorough comparisons in Native Studies.[41] Such a prospect has long been bandied about as a possibility in Palestine Studies, although nobody has acted upon the impulse in full. In many ways, the linkage of Indigenous struggles is inevitable. Our generation of scholars and activists has the task of rethinking today's dynamic forms of colonialism in a world where globalization has become the dominant economic axiom. A fertile area of contestation can be found in Indigenous scholarship and in the literature of national liberation movements. Reciprocal inter-communalism might be the foundation for what has been called Indigenous Studies by writers who study areas of the world in which occupation is still a daily reality. Comparative approaches assume great significance for the following reasons: mass communications make it easier to engage in inter-ethnic dialogue; scholarship that rejects expansion or experimentation runs the risk of stagnating in familiar patterns; it is important to contextualize liberation struggles in a more understandable setting for a larger audience without sacrificing any group's discreteness; a vast field of study seems on the verge of separating itself from Western analytic paradigms, a possibility that merits investigation; and, perhaps most important, although postcolonialism has proved to be a groundbreaking theoretical school, its models of inquiry are ultimately limiting for those seeking more appropriate methods of conflict analysis to interrogate political interplay in occupied territories.

The final two points warrant some attention. The phrase *Indigenous Studies* in itself presents uncertainty, yet it is useful to explore its possibilities vis-à-vis postcolonial studies, the most meaningful school presently at our disposal. Quite simply, neither Natives nor Palestinians consider themselves to be postcolonial. And even if the field purports to represent peoples still living within colonial systems—a claim that can be found in the argument that the term *postcolonial* denotes all history from the moment of contact onwards—its broadness and internal inconsistencies render it slippery and at times counterproductive. Consequently, some work produced in postcolonial theory, the forum of choice for presenting various colonial and neocolonial histories, is only of limited use to both peoples. Craig Womack, to provide a strong example, protests that "it seems foolhardy to me to abandon a search for the affirmation of a national literary identity simply to fall in line with the latest literary trend."[42] Weaver also identifies some perils of postcolonial theory to Natives, writing, "it is amazing how often we are complicitous in this theoretical domination, either by fetishizing our own cultures and thus leaving our scholarship open to summary dismissal by non-Natives or by remaining preoccupied with questions of identity and authenticity—the very issues most interesting to non-Native critics—in our own criticism."[43]

Womack and Weaver most likely have in mind postcolonial debates about hybridity, cultural identity, states of dislocation, and border anxieties, all of which have inspired prolonged controversies in the field. While the controversies offer us insights into colonial, postcolonial, anticolonial, and decolonial issues, as well as into the nature of modern scholarship, Indigenous critics often perceive them to be counterproductive and detached from reality—or, more specifically, detached from their communities'

realities. The abstractness of postcolonial language contributes to such perceptions. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks has analyzed this tension, noting that "[t]he discipline of postcolonial studies...is a much more ambiguous one pedagogically [than multiculturalism], given that it is not really a minority studies. Rather than enhancing the girth of Western liberalism, postcolonial studies, if it is possible to speak of it as a unity or generalize its political impulse, would work to examine the conditions by which a group arrogates to itself the function of granting or denying recognition and respect."[44] We can see how Womack and Weaver contribute to the minority discourse that makes postcolonial studies "politically vulnerable." The internal ambivalence of the field, especially the unstable site of speaking that Seshadri-Crooks identifies, ultimately renders it undesirable for those who wish, in addition to critiquing "the discourses of modernity," to ground scholarship within a particular communal polity.

Like Womack and Weaver, Rashid Khalidi recognizes fundamental concerns in Palestinian society that often depart from theoretical conventions in the Academy:

> [Palestinians] have yet to achieve self-determination, independence, or statehood; they are only now painfully integrating their feeble parastate, which grew up in exile, into an administration with the limited powers the Israelis allow them; they have an economy in shambles after three decades of occupation and several years of *intifada*...; they control virtually no resources and have no real allies in the world. The Palestinians, of course, do have one asset in spite of everything: a powerful sense of national

> identity, which we have seen they were able to develop and maintain in spite of extraordinary vicissitudes.[45]

The argument Khalidi enumerates has long been integral in Native intellectual thought, and his forthrightness in postulating a solid sense of identity is something to which most Natives can relate. This is a marked departure from the currents of postcolonial theory, where the word "identity" seems to almost have assumed a negative connotation; at best, it denotes fantasia or oversimplification, as we have seen in Deniz Kandiyoti's readings of nationalism[46] and Paul Gilroy's analysis of cultural identity.[47] Given the very real and devastating invasions of the New World and Near East—forms of domination existing at present more strongly than ever—the assertion of national identity is not only fundamental to intellectual production, but also a cultural valorization running counter to the systematic erasure of Indigeneity in the modern imagination.

In addition to questions of identity, we would do well to confront the deep-seated nationalisms in both societies, which largely affect their literatures and grassroots politics. Even the most cosmopolitan of Native and Palestinian intellectuals, such as Silko, Warrior, Ashrawi, and Said, have difficulty reconciling their academic impulses with their grassroots histories in regard to the issue. That is, Natives and Palestinians are pulled between a commonsensical understanding of nationalism's dangers, on the one hand, and deep cultural impulses that stress national liberation, on the other. Postcolonial theory leaves little room for these negotiations, which demand attention in both traditions—preferably in a joint framework that includes all cultures involved in nationalism with liberationist expressions.[48] Different readings and new perspectives are

needed in the field based on tangible social realities. For example, postcolonial theory's most notable nationalist, Frantz Fanon, is rarely situated properly as a nationalist in the Academy, as evidenced by Homi Bhabha's Lacanian readings of his work, which usually ignore his grassroots organizing principles.[49] Fanon's brand of nationalism is still articulated with vigor, however, in Native, Palestine, and Black Critical Studies.

A more interesting example can be found in Kwame Anthony Appiah's *In My Father's House*, where he assesses the "racial notions" and "intellectual grounding" of Zionism without ever using the words "Arab" or "Palestinian." Appiah's assessment of Zionism is not in itself troublesome, but in fact nuanced and insightful. Yet Appiah critiques Zionism without describing its relationship with Palestinian resistance, or the fact that much of its internal philosophy was developed in response to the discovery of Palestinians. Appiah's methodology thus indicates that agency is often muted in theoretical approaches to nationalism. More important, nationalism is invoked in the service of academic debate and not decolonial action.[50]

Judging from my work with Palestinians, a people who pride themselves on the moral strength of their national struggle, postcolonial theory is useful in myriad instances for any Indigenous society. It was, after all, one of Palestine's greatest activists, Said, who played a critical role in the formation of the field. Caution, however, is needed, as evidenced by Womack's and Weaver's warnings that any rush to immerse oneself in academic pursuits might cause one to lose sight of existent social patterns that demand study. More crucial, I think, is the geographical emphasis of postcolonial theory, which is largely situated in South Asia, a region already liberated from direct European rule. South Asians thus have an impetus and the luxury to interrogate neocolonialism,

globalization, identity, and the dangers of nationalism, which has generally been disastrous throughout Asia and Africa. Natives and Palestinians have much to learn from these examples, but they will assume more relevance upon liberation. Native and Palestinian thinkers will inevitably stress community, activism, sovereignty, and self-determination until that day arrives. This is not to say that postcolonial studies should be avoided or outright rejected, for many of its concerns and theoretical underpinnings can greatly supplement any analysis of agency, identity, and oppression, particularly those produced by scholars like Partha Chatterjee, Chandra Mohanty, Satya Mohanty, Edward Said, Anouar Majid, Anne McClintock, and so forth . I simply believe it is more useful to choose selectively from individual works of scholarship rather than becoming immersed in postcolonialism's linguistic and theoretical peculiarities.

In the meantime, reciprocal inter-communalism is an effective way to produce Indigenous archetypes that value emphasis on colonization as it is presently administered. This is invariably bound to neoliberal developments that continually alter global relations. I wish to be exploratory and open-ended, but also practical. Palestinians can only benefit by familiarizing themselves with Native tribes—their histories, encounters with foreign settlers (in many cases, the same settlers occupying their own land), armed struggles, survival tactics, scholarly models, successes and failures. The same, of course, is true inversely. And they can both assist in the collective improvement of native peoples by remembering instances of victory and noting moments of defeat from others around the world subsisting in similar conditions. More dialogue among colonized parties would also increase pressure on the neoliberal policies that thrive on the subjugation of Indigenous groups. The energy that might be generated in academe and

on the ground would certainly be a positive alternative to, say, the American Left, which often shies away from privileging the Indigenous voice in its discussions of oppression, even though Indigenous communities best understand the pain of globalization. *The Nation*, perhaps the most prestigious journal of liberal/left opinion, has a dismal record of reportage in Indian country, even when the issues at stake involve Native America, as do *The Progressive* and *The Multinational Monitor*. Anishinaabe activist Winona LaDuke's conflicts over Native sovereignty with the Nature Conservancy and Greenpeace, who refused to take into account Indigenous concerns when crafting environmental policies, offer yet another example of either unawareness or insensitivity on the part of some liberal/left activists.[51]

All this is to illustrate that diverse socio-political conditions around the globe require more than nuanced assessment; strategic intellectual separatism will ultimately be unavoidable. New ways of looking at colonialism as an integrated process are needed. Those with an occupying power in their midst might now articulate the connections among these garrison states, which thrive only by allying themselves with one another and drawing inspiration from the same historical origins. Nowhere is such a possibility more viable than in Native America and Palestine.

"We Belong to the Land"

We can now explore the connotations of Indigeneity as a term, a worldview, and an ontological reality; the elevation of covenantal parables into national narratives; the interplay of competing discourses within geopolitical boundaries; and the coupling of societies and human identity with land.

The best place to begin is with the covenant itself. This leads us to another passage from Warrior's "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," which illustrates the positive function a broad awareness can have in promoting the needs of one's own people. Focusing on Holy Land themes, Warrior provides a conceptual groundwork for inter-ethnic dialogue that simultaneously invests itself into the Native polity:

> The obvious characters in the [Exodus] story for Native Americans to identify with are the Canaanites, the people who already lived in the promised land. As a member of the Osage Nation of American Indians who stands in solidarity with other tribal people around the world, I read the Exodus story with Canaanite eyes. And, it is the Canaanite side of the story that has been overlooked by those seeking to articulate theologies of liberation. Especially ignored are those parts of the story that describe Yahweh's command to mercilessly annihilate the indigenous population.[52]

Warrior later points out that "[c]ommentaries and critical works rarely mention these texts. When they do, they express little concern for the status of the indigenes and their rights as human beings and as nations."[53] Implicit in Warrior's commentary is a concern for the status of modern Palestinians, who play a parallel role with the ancient tribes by also having occupied the land promised by God to European Jews. His conclusions correspond strongly with Khalidi's argument that Palestinians need to reassert their history in and involvement with the land in order to repoliticize themselves as human beings with rights and equal status.[54] Warrior unmasks the centrality of these narratives

in the modern garrison nation, foregrounding Khalidi's call for assertiveness in culture and historiography.

Modern Natives and Palestinians, therefore, can be brought together despite obvious differences because of the specific narratives so deeply marking their lives, narratives that have spent much time traversing the space between New World and Holy Land. It is worth quoting two more passages in order to show how deeply each people still feels the effects of such a tradition. In the first, Said writes,

> Consider that all of the Third World national liberation groups identified themselves with the displaced and dispossessed Palestinians, and Israel with colonialism. Historically, Zionist writers did not generally describe their own enterprise as a national liberation movement; they used a vocabulary specific to the moment of their vision in history—in the early twentieth century—which, while it contained important secular elements, was primarily religious and imperialist. The concepts of chosen People, Covenant, Redemption, Promised Land and God were central to it.... Arabs were routinely seen as corrupt, backward, irrelevant.[55]

Said's statement is illuminating when placed beside this excerpt from *That the People Might Live*:

> In the myths of conquest, Columbus and those who followed discovered a vast, virginal, primeval wilderness, sparsely inhabited by a few roaming

> savages with no fixed abode. Amer-European pioneers conquered this land, bending it to their plow and will, impressing form on what had previously been formless, taking what had been held in escrow for them from the foundation of the world, becoming in the process a peculiarly chosen people, "God's American Israel," in their battle with the new frontier. This myth pervaded the American psyche and was codified in Amer-European law.[56]

These evaluations can now be extended to a geographical setting. It has been established that colonial strategies exist interchangeably between Native America and Palestine, but perhaps the strongest possibility for a comparative study is the deep attachment each group expresses for the land from which it was displaced or that is now under foreign control. Such expressions complicate the covenantal bonds accompanying settlers to the land. Exodus narratives were and continue to be transposed from promissory fables into a competitive arena wherein force is required to legitimize the validity of the settler society by elevating its narratives to the status of national history. Indigenous claims to land are repeatedly delegitimized in the process.

Native and Palestinian discourses, however, clearly show that land is a central component of identity, spirituality, and philosophy. While Natives and Palestinians usually describe sovereignty and self-determination as key features that define their work, these concepts are bankrupt without an autonomous landbase on which to survive and flourish. I am essentially arguing for an organic or even grassroots approach to Indigenous literatures, one that privileges native voices and communal concerns above

prevailing theoretical models, which are useful, but can also be stifling when they supercede national aspirations or reject them offhand as a matter of doctrine.[57] The interaction of grassroots community movements with academic theory can at times be contentious, and I do not necessarily think either should be abandoned in postulating comparative Indigenous prototypes. The priority, however, must first be placed on a detailed understanding of the people being studied in a manner that favors their collective aspirations over the demands of the Academy. In *Red on Red*, Womack develops this position in his quest to locate a tenable Native literary criticism: "I will seek a literary criticism that emphasizes Native resistance movements against colonialism, confronts racism, discusses sovereignty and Native nationalism, seeks connections between literature and liberation struggles, and, finally, roots literature in land and culture."[58] Salma Khadra Jayyusi identifies a corresponding current in modern Palestinian letters. "Modern Palestinian experience is harsh, unrelenting, and all-penetrating; no Palestinian is free from its grip and no writer can evade it. It cannot be forgotten and its anguish cannot be transcended," she notes, paralleling Womack's theme in *Red on Red*. "Palestinians," she goes on to say,

> are committed by their very identity to a life determined by events and circumstances arising out of their own rejection of captivity and national loss, as well as by other people's intentions, suspicions, fears, and aggressions. There is no escape. For the writer to contemplate an orientation completely divorced from political life is to belie reality, to

> deny experience; for to engross oneself for too long in "normal" everyday experiences is to betray one's own life and one's own people.[59]

These passages are given credence within land-based discourses. Jeanette Armstrong writes, "I have heard elders explain that the language changed as we moved and spread over the land through time. My own father told me that it was the land that changed the language because there is special knowledge in each different place. All my elders say that it is land that holds all knowledge of life and death and is a constant teacher.... It is constantly communicating. Not to learn its language is to die."[60] Armstrong later moves this analysis from an Okanagan framework into a setting that holds relevance to Indigenes of all cultures: "In this sense, all indigenous peoples' languages are generated by a precise geography and arise from it. Over time and many generations of their people, it is their distinctive interaction with a precise geography which forms the way indigenous language is shaped and subsequently how the world is viewed, approached, and expressed verbally by its speakers."[61]

These sentiments are also adopted by Elizabeth Woody in "Voice of the Land: Giving the Good Word," where she expands Armstrong's observation to the difficulties tribes endure upon foreign settlement and land expropriation, aspects of Indigenous life often overlooked in formal conflict analyses. "One's identity as an indigenous person," she suggests, "is a hard and difficult awareness when you look at Indian extermination and removal, much of which was subsidized by the U.S. government for the purpose of western expansion. And when you really look, you soon realize that this happened in order to ensure that non-Indian newcomers would take root in a way that meant that

enormous amounts of people, forests, and animals in this rich homeland would be dispossessed or destroyed."[62] The land is centrally situated in these passages, which compels us to avoid blind nationalism or scholarly convention in our readings of Native letters; instead, a reflective geographical approach is offered.

Land is central to Palestinian identity in a related manner. Former Palestinian Liberation Organization [PLO] negotiator Hanan Ashrawi reveals important parallels in her political memoir, *This Side of Peace*. One scene recalls her departure to the negotiating table, in which the hopes and aspirations of Palestinians are bound to her mission. After she is told, "We are a trust, *amanah*, that we place in your hands," by an unnamed Palestinian, Ashrawi binds her narrative to the land in order to capture the emotional connotations of that exchange: "*Amanah* is a word redolent with meaning and suggestion, evoking a chain of echoes beyond the audible: a valuable possession placed in the care of a trusted person; a sense of trust and integrity; honesty and trustworthiness; a haven and sanctuary; safety and safe passage...and on.... I felt the enormity of its implications, and I cried.... I was also simply touched by trust, and I absorbed this *amanah* like our parched hills take in the first gentle autumn rain, and it seeped down into the roots of my being, where I had come from and who I had come to be."[63] In the marriage of *amanah* with the ambitions of the Palestine national struggle, Ashrawi simultaneously creates a contrapuntal alternative to Israeli master narratives and validates the struggle of millions of third-class citizens and refugees. The incorporation of *amanah* into the land and, subsequently, Ashrawi's physical being illustrate the rootedness of Palestinians to their ancestral home, a sentiment about North America also evident in Armstrong's and Woody's essays.

Echoes of this union can be found in Abuna Elias Chacour's[64] *We Belong to the Land*, another autobiographical/political text. Chacour conjures land-based themes that, like those of Woody, implicate the West in its commodification of a sacred entity, and, like Armstrong's passage, attach the Indigenes to its inner workings. He writes, "Mobile Western people have difficulty comprehending the significance of the land for Palestinians. We belong to the land. We identify with the land, which has been treasured, cultivated, and nurtured by countless generations of ancestors."[65] He later says, "The land is so holy, so sacred, to us because we have given it our sweat and blood. It rewards us with wonderful, immense crops. Father could collect up to three tons of dry figs from his fields. Palestinians are at one with their land, and part of them dies when they must be separated from it."[66]

It is the land that gives Indigenous communities their most lasting definition. Chacour's argument that something dies within the community when the people are removed from the land or when the land is massacred can be considered the foundational philosophy of any inter-Indigenous scholarship. A solid example comes from Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, which considers land a guiding motivation for armed conflict, a catalyst for rebellion Palestinians understand well. In fact, the central connection among Indigenous peoples still under foreign rule is articulated eloquently in the novel when the rebel Angelita La Escapia proclaims, "*We* are internationalists! *We* are not just tribal!"[67]

It is imperative before concluding to examine some complications of coupling people with land. In Native America, this union is trenchant, given credibility by Indians' undisputed status as Indigenes and the creation stories in each tribe that assert a physical origin in some region of North America. Numerous battles in Native-White

relations deal with symbolic land possession in contrast to legal land ownership, resulting from a system of acquisitions imposed arbitrarily on the tribes. While Whites, in other words, legally own American land according to their own rules of governance, Natives continue to stress the historical nature of this land as Native, which tends to give geography human features. And because any discussion of Native identity will invariably incorporate the tribal landscape, not even removal or extermination can rid the land of its autochthonous characteristics. Ultimately, then, Natives are able to successfully venerate land in their critiques of American conquest in a manner that not only denounces White settlement, but also keeps Natives eternally bound to the landscape in hope of return or restoration. The peopling of the land, as a strategy and a cultural reality, undermines the philosophical bedrock of White occupation.

For Palestinians, however, the ability to do the same is more difficult, even though it is attempted with comparable vigor. The covenant brought into Palestine by foreign Jews in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries dealt with a people already residing in Palestine (albeit in small numbers) and with a long history there. (I will discuss this more specifically below.) Yet in the context of modern Israel, an expansionist and military nation-state, the coupling of Palestinians in intimate fashion with the Holy Land is no less convincing. In fact, when adjoined to land-based discourse in Native America, as the quotations above indicate, the theoretical and political possibilities are extraordinary. To make this possible, it is crucial to dispense with nonsensical arguments—usually provided by uninformed newspaper columnists like Cal Thomas and Charles Krauthammer—that conceptualize the Arab-Israeli conflict as millennia-old tribal warfare. It is a modern instance of colonization initiated and

administered mainly by Europeans with little familiarity with the land, and no connection with it beyond an abstract biblical premise rooted in its own liturgical tradition. This recognition does not necessarily negate claims of Jewish spiritual involvement with Palestine, but to couch Zionism and Arab nationalism solely as religious acrimony limits our understanding of Zionism's colonial mandate and denigrates the motivations underpinning Palestinian resistance.

Bringing these possibilities to fruition requires analysis in Palestine Studies of the use of the term *Indigenous*—with a capital "I," denoting non-Western, agrarian, and communal worldviews fitted to specific parcels of land, something I will do in the following chapter. Palestinians themselves will welcome this designation because of its accuracy in describing their social systems and geographical location, and because of its political implications. Scholars of Palestine, in turn, have an impetus to assess the potential of this term to reciprocal inter-communalism and a more fully articulated sense of Palestinian belonging in the Holy Land. Not only are the Palestinians indigenous to this land, they are by all accounts the Indigenes of this land—whether Muslim, Christian, Druze, or Jew. The ethnocracy imported and implemented by European Jews, much like the ethnocracy normalized in the New World over the course of five centuries, drastically altered the indigenous social apparatus; the attempts, therefore, to retain vestiges of the pre-contact past and conjure it to underline a correlative nationalism are expressions of Indigeneity.[68] The massive programs throughout the century to de-Arabize Israel via sweeping Judaization plans illustrate how Palestinian Indigeneity was and continues to be glaring. Most crucial, though, might be the assertion of biological continuity among Palestinians with the ancient tribes occupying the Holy Land during the initial arrival of

Jews, claims vehemently rejected by the historiography of Joan Peters, Aryeh Avneri, Martin Peretz, Daniel Pipes, Martin Kramer and other scholars in support of the Zionist project.

Prospects and Problems

It might be an exaggeration to say that the modern histories of Natives and Palestinians are only superficially bound, but a comparative analysis would certainly be impossible without the presence of a colonial power. Therefore, the limitations of my criticism are obvious: it relies more on a political than cultural approach, and it remains provisional even in making empirical and theoretical assertions. I have tried to write an essay in the classic sense of the word—a discourse that makes suggestions and observations while inviting inquiry and critique in order that the material can be made more fully relevant in the future. In closing, I shall briefly acknowledge some problems and rearticulate the most resonant comparative foundation so the project can continue with practical connotations.

Because any comparative study risks homogenizing distinct cultures under a theoretical injunction, emphasizing differences, as myriad postcolonial scholars have argued, can be as meaningful as analyzing parallels. This is a valid warning, one to which I subscribe. On the other hand, I would also argue that in the case of Natives and Palestinians, the fact that such inherent differences exist and yet analogous events still draw them together furnishes an inter-ethnic context with great richness and far-reaching implications.

Any cross-cultural critique will encounter more differences among ethnic groups than can be contained, but the point of reference here continues to be the West and its

consistent use of certain patterns and strategies. Natives and Palestinians have already been referenced together in myriad instances; the occasion is now upon us to continue exploring why those references hold relevance. This is why I remain limited to covenantal promises and their consequences when put in transit by settler societies. Differences, then, need to be emphasized only when they affect those patterns and strategies. Nothing indicates that Natives and Palestinians have had contact in the past or would have in the present without the onset of Zionism, but circumstances beyond their control have nonetheless made them political brethren; their liberation struggles can go a long way in restructuring the way people interpret modern industrialization and globalization, which have produced a level of poverty and devastation unequaled in world history, and which continue to exploit Indigenes in order to prevent economic collapse.[69]

The most pertinent variation here is the continuous Jewish presence in Palestine/Israel since the ancient Davidic Kingdom.[70] This is a serious point of departure from what occurred in the Americas, where Europeans arrived permanently in the fifteenth century having no stake in the New World beyond an arrogant biblical premise and a desire for riches.[71] Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jews were escaping persecution; immigration to Palestine thus had validity beyond mere conquest. Nevertheless, this should not cloud our judgment of what Zionism essentially was and continues to be: a separatist colonial movement that far from being an innocent foray into an empty land promised by God, in reality led to a brutal and well-planned displacement replete with atrocities Israel continues to deny.[72] In terms of their claim

that they were escaping persecution, which lacked both the relevance and seriousness of Jewish realities, English (and other) settlers in the Americas used the same rationale.

My argument is not that Jews had or have no right to be in Palestine/Israel. Given their history in the region and their conditions in Diaspora, such an argument would border on hateful. Rather, it is the reprehensible manner by which Israel was actualized that must be exposed without excusing what happened to the Palestinians by referencing European oppression of Jews, events in which the Palestinians played no role. Furthermore, the Holy Land, as far as recorded and archeological history goes, has never been empty. Even before the first Jewish arrivals in ancient times, a vast and varied civilization occupied the land, and remnants of that civilization were incorporated into ancient Israel and remained after most Jews departed, eventually becoming absorbed into the Arab world during the seventh-century Islamic expansion.[73] The issue of Manifest Destiny in Palestine warrants interrogation, because the notion that one people's scriptural prophesies override the rights of another people's very existence is, in fact, the theological foundation of New World conquest. The covenantal aspect of settler colonialism has bound Natives and Palestinians to the same class of resistance despite the great differences in their cultures.

While a number of Jews are Indigenous to Palestine, most modern Israelis are not; they are merely indigenes insofar as their birth location denotes existence in a particular region. There is no need to split hairs over the national origin of Israelis, for Israel now constitutes a permanent nationality constructed on the land of historic Palestine. There is a need, however, to dichotomize the modern nation-state and the Indigenes once in control of its landmass. While the modern nation-state, formed under the auspices of

ethnic cleansing, dispossessed Palestinians and eliminated their right to live in the only region they have ever considered home, they remain Indigenous, along with a portion of Israeli Jews whose physical and cultural origins lie in the Holy Land. These complexities are cleverly examined in an article by Oren Yiftachel in which he studies the peripherality of Palestinians in conjunction with the Mizrahim (Arab Jews).[74] With the ascension of what Yiftachel calls "the Ashkenazi Jewish ethno-class" in Israel and the incorporation of Israel into American patronage, the systematic removal of Palestinians and the importation of foreign settlers seem to have conceptually recreated American conquest. The pervasiveness of Zionism's popular narratives at the expense of Palestinian history automatically propels Palestinians into the same political framework as American Natives, despite the considerable intricacies in ownership and identity in the Holy Land. Yiftachel's arguments are relevant to this point. His splintering of Israeli society into competing ethno-groups denotes that Israel's overarching consciousness—one that has been militarized gradually since 1967—has origins not in Middle Eastern culture but in nationalistic expressions of European realpolitik.

The covenant remains crucial here. I have included the brief discussion above because it is important not to devalue Jewish Indigeneity or Israeli nationality even when we endeavor to legitimate the right of Palestinians to live freely on the land from which they originated. Whereas Native writers can assert that American settlers had no historical or spiritual involvement with North America, such articulations, though they are indeed articulated, are untenable in regard to accuracy in Palestinian discourse, no matter how much Palestinians—especially extremists—wish to limit any Jewish identification with the Holy Land. This notable difference tempers my approach, but

does not greatly affect the potential to usefully explore garrison colonization in both lands. The ethnocratic, not national, characteristics of the United States and Israel are nearly identical; their deep camaraderie is not merely strategic, nor is it accidental. Understanding the interplay between these governments on all levels will create possibilities to identify and implicate the narratives underscoring neoliberalism, the West's latest form of colonization.

There can ultimately be no doubt that the modern histories of Natives and Palestinians have been painful, destructive, and replete with failure. They are also invariably bound by the philosophical groundwork of garrison colonization, which runs an ancient path between their lands. Nor are these injustices over. As Owens writes, "The five-centuries long deliberate effort to eradicate the original inhabitants of America and fully appropriate that colonized space is still going on today."[75] But we should never overlook their successes throughout history, and perhaps the most crucial connection of all: that each group has risen from its predetermined fate in colonial ideology to articulate a solid sense of identity and a positive vision for the future that will continue, against all expectations, until the goals of return and redress are realized in full. Long after the occupations end, the Natives and Palestinians will remain.

The Role of Literature

Most of what follows will explicate literary fiction. Some analysis of the relationship between literature and the political issues articulated above is therefore needed. With Native and Palestinian fiction, that relationship is far from nebulous. It is developed clearly in critical work, and is often evident in the literature itself.[76] Let me then recount briefly how history and colonial/decolonial politics are commonly

juxtaposed with literary analysis in the fields of Native and Palestine Studies. In the actual literary analysis that follows, I hope the juxtaposition will be implicit in the form and structure of the arguments, in a manner that allows the reader to make it explicit with little difficulty.

Quite simply, in Native and Palestine Studies, as with nearly all areas of criticism today, history and politics (including culture and geography) are considered essential to any literary exegesis—to any serious one, at least. This phenomenon began in literary criticism of all kinds long ago, with the rise of feminist, Marxist, structuralist, and other theoretical schools that challenged and eventually replaced New Critical methodologies. By the time the new historicist, cultural materialist, poststructural, and postcolonial schools had established themselves, history and politics were almost universally considered to be as important, if not more important than the text itself, and the author was proclaimed dead. Any discussion of the relationship between historical and literary analysis in Native and Palestine Studies, then, should first be couched in the larger trends that transformed English Studies from the 1960s onward.

Concurrent with and partly in response to these developments, ethnic and multicultural studies arose. These movements set themselves apart from popular critical theory first by attacking what they perceived as the Eurocentric foci of literary theory, and more generally by investing themselves in the study of particular ethnic or national groups with emphasis on cultural and material empowerment. Critics maintained certain methodological features from popular theory, however, and merely outfitted those features to the objectives of the ethnic group in question. That is to say, critics now

employ widely the trend toward framing the study of literature with historical and socio-political discussion in both literary theory and ethnic studies.

To say, then, that history, politics, and literature work in tandem in Native and Palestine Studies is to recapitulate what is by now an obvious point. What sets those fields apart are the accentuation placed on cultural functions in literature and a demand that literary critics immerse themselves in those cultural functions before even attempting to explicate the text. In short, the critic of Native literature should have an internal understanding of the community from which the literature is produced. Palestinians make the same demand of their critics. While that sort of demand is common in numerous intellectual areas, one would be hard-pressed to conflate those areas into the same class, because cultural and historical particularities dictate the way each group's critical apparatus is formed. This is true not only across ethnic lines, but sometimes also within the same ethnic group, as in the case of tribal-specific criticism.

Given these factors, I have little trouble situating textual criticism within a socio-political framework that assesses historical phenomena in conjunction with selectively chosen critical theories. A look at Native and Palestinian criticism illustrates that such an approach is common. For Natives, perhaps Jace Weaver stated it best when he wrote, "It is my hypothesis that Native literature both reflects and shapes contemporary Native identity and community and that what distinguishes it and makes it a valuable resource is what I term...'communitism.'"[77] Weaver offers a position that, with certain ideological and philosophical differences, has been either explored or implemented in the scholarship of numerous Natives, among them Robert Warrior, Paula Gunn Allen, Greg Sarris, Maureen Konkle, Craig Womack, Geary Hobson, Gerald Vizenor, Kimberly Blaeser, and

Roberta Hill. The notion that literature is not simply art or diversion, but rather expositions of communal values that must accurately portray or contribute in some way to the community, is well-embedded in Native Studies. History and colonial/decolonial politics, in other words, are essentially inseparable from literature. Literature, in a broad sense, is a display and critique of the community in total. To write a novel uncommitted to the community is in effect to have abandoned one's duty as an Indian author. At the very least, it is questionable whether that sort of work would be canonized as Native literature.

This phenomenon has caused plenty of arguments among critics and novelists, some of which have become heated in a personal manner. Those arguments generally revolve around a perception by critics and novelists that certain writers sometimes fail to accurately represent the community or create themes that do not induce a communal commitment on the part of readers. The most famous example is Leslie Silko's biting criticism of Louise Erdrich's fiction for not being "Indian" enough and for not approaching political issues in a manner explicit enough to satisfy Silko's taste. Ironically, Silko herself faced almost identical criticism after her novel *Gardens in the Dunes* was published.

This type of controversy exists in all areas of ethnic studies, so it is not surprising to see some Native authors position themselves as more "authentic" than others. Yet the controversy has long existed among authors and critics of all eras and areas, particularly when it pertains to the author's accountability to his or her community, nation, or government. When critics urge writers to work in the service of the community, then, they risk unwittingly invoking the same sort of sensibility that was used to effect political

conformity in the Soviet Union, Islamist Iran, and 1950s America. The intention of ethnic critics, of course, is totally different from that of leaders involved in the situations I just mentioned, yet one cannot help but to be wary of the method, as it has proved time and again that it has the potential to evolve into an injunction that demands obedience to what a few deem to be the common good.

My pointing out this danger is not meant to either proclaim or imply that an author's serving community interests or a critic's encouraging that service is a negative or perilous sensibility. In fact, we will see in my readings of Winona LaDuke and Liyana Badr that it has many positive functions. Rather, I would like to point out that by its very nature and based on historical reality such a methodology is problematic. The problems frame much of the debate we find in ethnic studies and yet they are also universal questions in all areas and genres of literary study. What, then, does it mean for an author to serve his or her community? How does that service come to fruition, if at all, given the dislike numerous communities evince for famous authors from those communities? And how, most important, can we read and interpret ethnic/national literatures when critical apparatuses demand particular socio-political and communal commitments on the part of critics? I will examine authors who uphold those commitments (LaDuke, Badr) and authors who challenge them (Vizenor, Habiby) in order to posit some answers.

The same undercurrents are present in Palestine Studies, and are just as controversial as the positions stated above. Like Weaver, Ami Elad-Bouskila invokes political realities to indicate that community inspires Palestinian authors and guides the expectations of its readers: "The sense of solidarity of the Palestinian community [after the 1967 War], some of whom lived in the Palestinian homeland within the state of Israel

or under Israeli rule in the occupied territories and some of whom lived without a homeland or a state, left a profound impression on modern Palestinian literature."[78] In a similar vein, nearly all Palestinian critics furnish their scholarship with emphasis on the literature's utility to the community. Although methodologies and interpretations differ vastly, writers such as Izzat Ghazzawi, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Edward Said, Hanan Ashrawi, and Barbara McKean Parmenter all acknowledge that Palestinian literature has affected and draws motivation from the politicization of Palestinian society, and that historical realities and thematic peculiarities usually compel scholars to privilege politics over aesthetics. Even Mahmoud Darwish, certainly Palestine's most accomplished artist and one of its more astute literary critics, concedes—albeit reluctantly—that no matter how much the author or critic admires poetics, explicit political discourse permeates all aspect of the Palestinian literary tradition, at least for the time being.[79]

Hence, my desire to highlight comparative models of colonialism in two separate continents primarily through the medium of literary criticism is tenable as long as attention is given to literary and critical features that corroborate my hypothesis based on their relationship with the dominant power. This is true not so much because I will construct my methodology with this goal in mind, but, more crucially, because Native and Palestinian critical traditions offer such a possibility by virtue of their own composition. Simply put, if two discrete peoples situate colonialism at the center or near-center of their work, and if that work illustrates clearly that analyses of colonialism on different continents share inherent features, then it is possible to invoke those features to underscore how certain forms of colonialism function in reality and in the imagination.

In closing, let me offer a brief summation of the methodology that I will use the remainder of this project. Although I am interested in making explicit comparisons between colonialism in the New World and Near East, it is much more tricky (and difficult) to juxtapose discrete national literatures. Literature is nearly indefinable in general, and affected so profoundly by individual style and cultural/communal particularities that only in special cases is one able to successfully perform cross-cultural critiques with a fixed approach. I mentioned above that a limitation of this project is the fact that I will rely more on political than cultural themes. The limitation merits some elaboration.

My literary analysis will concentrate on aesthetics, but usually insofar as those aesthetics inform the overarching structure of this dissertation. In other words, I am content to submit myself and the reader to the wealth of articles written about these books if other angles and viewpoints are desired, and to situate my own explications in context of the colonial dynamics enumerated here. I do not like the idea of forcing distinct literatures into limited interpretive space. First, doing so will frequently render the criticism reductionist or contrived, and will thus devalue the quality of the literature. More important, it will displace the artist and the art from their communal setting by forcing cultural expressions into a migratory position. It is more effective to detect, define, and discuss common themes that support a comparative thesis. To best accomplish that, enough room needs to be provided each text so that analysis can evolve without methodological constraints. The majority of the criticism that follows, then, will assess each book on its own, drawing attention where necessary to how the colonial process in the New World and Near East is encoded thematically, and how it shares either

parallel or identical features. I will identify how colonization frames or informs the construction of fiction and make implicit comparisons by highlighting common themes.

Choosing the primary sources for this undertaking has proved to be a challenge. I immediately eliminated poetry in favor of fiction for both pragmatic and philosophical reasons: I have long specialized in critical readings of fiction and the available fiction better informs the historical and political claims that follow. I suspect this is true mainly because the abstract structure of poetry, a highly developed genre in the Native and Palestinian traditions, is difficult to connect to a comparative historical paradigm, although I do believe that a critic well versed in poetry could successfully do so without oversimplifying the poetry. Selecting textual material continued to be problematic after the scope was narrowed to fiction and then more specifically to the novel. The problems, however, did not deal with a dearth of material to support my methodology, but instead with an overabundance. Not only did well known novels by Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, Louise Erdrich, Ghassan Kanafani, Sahar Khalifeh, and Anton Shammas create interesting analytical possibilities, so did lesser known work by Leanne Howe, Betty Louise Bell, Greg Sarris, Izzat Ghazzawi, Zeina Ghandour, and Yahya Yakhlif.

In any case, this is the type of problem anybody conceptualizing a dissertation would like to have, for it strengthens one's thesis and allows one to specify a methodology that will best highlight the concerns inherent in that thesis. A more crucial problem is that of heterogeneity. Palestinians comprise an occupied, exiled, and nationless community. Although four branches are generally considered to exist—in Israel, the occupied territories, refugee camps, and the West—one can say that Palestinians are truly an international people, and in many cases separate sub-

communities have little in common—as, for instance, with wealthy Chicagoans born in the United States and poverty-stricken refugees in camps in Lebanon. For these reasons, accommodating Palestinian literature within a singular rubric can be highly complicated.[80] One is confronted with the uncomfortable but undeniable fact that, similar to the situation of Indian tribes, there is no actual Palestinian nation. The national literature, then, is often produced in and draws inspiration from areas far from Palestine. In every sense of Benedict Anderson's usage,[81] Palestine exists in the imagination of all Palestinians; the reality of their geographic dispersal makes it a challenge for critics to theorize a unified national literature, even if Palestinians have managed to retain their discreteness as a national/ethnic group across the world.

The complexities are no less challenging in Native America. In fact, many of the dynamics that complicate approaches to Palestinian literature are central to approaches to Native literature, as well as to the controversies surrounding those approaches. In the context of this project, other complexities arise. In conceptualizing a comparative approach, I had to be careful not to invoke more problems beyond those that already exist inherently in comparative approaches. If producing a critical matrix to assess Native literature in all its cultural and ethnic heterogeneity has so far eluded scholars, then finding one that will allow it to be contextualized internationally might finally prove impossible. The first thing scholars opposed to a comparative analysis might point out is that too many internal issues need to be resolved before the literature is put in transit because by their nature comparative analyses imply that the subjects being compared have undergone enough scrutiny to transcend their immediate locations.

Given these complexities, I found it easiest and most prudent to narrow the scope of the textual criticism to particular communities. I will not, in other words, examine Anglophone Palestinian literature produced in the United States, although some of it is amenable to my thesis, because it would cross into Arab American issues and resituate the focus of my analysis. Nor will I examine literature from different Native tribes, even though some of it too is amenable to my thesis, because it would necessarily involve pan-Indian and inter-tribal questions that, while important, would be better confronted in another project with another methodology.

I chose what in my opinion best informs the theoretical framework of this dissertation without forcing me to broaden its scope beyond what a comparative analysis is generally able to accommodate. The idea of comparative textual criticism came from Anishinaabe Gerald Vizenor and Palestinian Israeli Emile Habiby, two authors who lend themselves to cross-cultural critique. Building from these two choices, I selected Anishinaabe Winona LaDuke and Palestinian Liyana Badr. The reasoning is simple: LaDuke and Vizenor are both Anishinaabe, which provides this project a more unified vision. Moreover, LaDuke's style and political sensibilities vary in relevant ways from those of Vizenor, which results in a diversity of viewpoints and aesthetics. The same reasoning guided my choice of Badr over other worthy authors: she writes as a Palestinian in exile, but also discusses social and historical issues in the occupied territories. Coupled with Habiby's illustration of the Palestinian population inside Israel, the main components of modern Palestinian life can be covered: that of the communities inside Israel, inside the occupied territories, and in exile throughout the Middle East.

And like LaDuke's relationship with Vizenor, Badr offers something of a didactic counterpoint to Habiby's satire.

The reduction of my textual criticism to Anishinaabe authors is worth brief mention. While Vizenor and LaDuke have enough merit as authors to warrant detailed critique, their appearance in a comparative dissertation is not a coincidence, nor is it necessarily a reflection of their artistic merit. The history of Anishinaabe-American relations is in many ways similar to the Zionist-Palestinian encounter. Such similarities, of course, bode well for a methodology that wishes to synthesize separate historical encounters. Rather than write a history book, I have provided a broad assessment of rhetoric in the New World and Holy Land in order to contextualize the literary criticism. Specific historical instances in both Anishinaabe country and Palestine will, I hope, be clear in the emphasis I place on certain textual features.

Chapter one will assess more specifically some of the issues discussed in this introduction, particularly the currency of the term *Indigeneity* and the manner in which a specific comparative groundwork can be articulated and how it might instruct political and activist contexts. Chapter two will discuss Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*, placing emphasis on colonial and Indigenous interplay. Chapter three will theorize the moral and historical perspectives at play in colonial and Indigenous cultures by looking at Israel's Kahan Commission Report, produced in the aftermath of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, in conjunction with Liyana Badr's *A Balcony over the Fakihani*. Chapter four will compare Gerald Vizenor and Emile Habiby by examining the trickster discourses present in their fiction. The conclusion will recount my efforts to put some theory into practice by teaching Native histories to Palestinian children in the Shatila Refugee Camp

in Lebanon. The scope of this dissertation, therefore, is rather broad, but I retain hope that the issues I cover will contribute somehow to any process of decolonization that occurs either inside or outside the Academy.

Notes

1. My vocabulary choice is simple and reflects more of a propensity for clarity in prose than a political motivation. *Native* is generally the word in use for Indians in Canada. I find it to be the most forthright and least complicated term that can be applied to the tribal peoples of North America, for, with a capital "N," it implies that the subject is indigenous to the continent and also indicates that he or she is Indian.

2. Louis Owens, *Mixedblood Messages* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1998), 130.

3. Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 11.

4. Benjamin Bennani and Katherine Warner Bennani, "No Ceremony for Men in the Sun: Sexuality, Personhood, and Nationhood in Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*," in *Critical Perspectives on Native American Fiction*, ed. Richard F. Fleck (Washington, D.C.: Three Continents, 1993), 246.

5. Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 61.

6. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 288.

7. Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 84.

8. An egregious example can be found in Joan Peters' *From Time Immemorial* (1984), which produced the classic argument that Palestine was an empty land during the years of Jewish colonization. Palestinians, a rhetorical fiction in Peters' account, emigrated to the land only during the twentieth century. Although this book has been condemned and exposed as fraudulent by scholars of all political leanings, *From Time Immemorial* continues to be cited by Israeli apologists.

9. Edward Said, "The Tragedy Deepens," *Znet*, 22 December 2000, <http://www.zmag.org/meastwatch/tragedy_deepens.htm> (22 December 2000).

10. The work of postcolonial scholars such as Gayatri Spivak, Aijaz Ahmad, and Ngugi wa Thiong'o have long been instrumental in setting up this sort of context. I am, however, thinking about more institutional aspects of knowledge as it is created in arenas such as education, media, and entertainment. I do not want to ultimately rely solely upon the discourse of postcolonialism, for while I

find it to be a necessary theoretical school for numerous reasons. I ultimately hope to theorize possible alternatives that will be more appropriate for societies currently under colonial rule.

11. These include Hilton Obenzinger, Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Hanan Ashrawi, Oba T'Shaka, Assata Shakur, Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, Rashid Khalidi, and Barbara Harlow.

12. Estimates of annual aid to Israel vary, but the most consistent figures place it between five and six billion dollars, including military machinery. It is not uncommon for only the United States and Micronesia to support Israel during UN votes.

13. Said, "The Tragedy Deepens."

14. Anouar Majid, *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 6.

15. Ifi Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 1997), 4.

16. Abu-Jaber, an American novelist of Palestinian-Jordanian origin, articulated such a possibility in an interview with Alice Evans in *Poets and Writers Magazine*. She gradually realized, she explained to Evans, that "the experiences of Native Americans were so similar to what was happening to Palestinians, the way they were slowly phased out or pushed back, how there were moments of violence, but that native peoples were always constituted as savages or barbarians." This recognition becomes integral to her novel *Arabian Jazz* when Jemorah Ramoud, an Arab American, and Ricky Ellis, a half-Onondagan gas station attendant, become lovers. Both have been made marginal by their community in upstate New York and first found solace with one another as children, without conversation. Although they never solidify a relationship, their intercourse symbolizes the entrance of one ethnic movement into the fold of another. See further Alice Evans, "Half and Half: A Profile of Diana Abu-Jaber," *Poets and Writers Magazine* 24 (1996): 48.

17. Whitelam, 41.

18. Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 27.

19. Ibid., 27.

20. Robert Allen Warrior, "A Native American Perspective: Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," in *Voices From the Margin*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (New York: Orbis, 1991), 283-84.

21. Michael Prior, "Confronting the Bible's Ethnic Cleansing in Palestine," *The Link* 33, no. 5 (2000): 4.

22. The most infamous of American West Bank settlers is Baruch Goldstein, who lived in the United States until he was an adult. A member of American Rabbi Meir Kahane's Kach Party, a notorious terrorist group, Goldstein murdered 52 worshipping Palestinians in 1995 in the Ibrahimi Mosque in al-Khalil (Hebron) before being caught and beaten to death. He was canonized as a martyr by settlers, who erected a statue in his honor in the settlement of Kiriat Arba.

23. Oklahoma's motto, "Native America," is an egregious example of this phenomenon, which is cleverly explored in Philip Deloria's *Playing Indian*. Israel's so-called national snack, falafel, a uniquely Arab dish, and its cultivation of "Israeli olive oil," a Palestinian product, can also be categorized in the same rubric.

24. For Native America, see: M. Annette Jaimes, *The State of Native America*; Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins*, *God is Red*, and *Red Earth, White Lies*; Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Peter Mancall and James Merrell, eds., *American Encounters*; Calvin Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History*; Phillip White, *American Indian Studies: A Bibliographic Guide*; Allison Lassieur, *Before the Storm*; and Sharon Helen Venne, *Our Elders Understand Our Rights*. For Palestine, see: Noam Chomsky, *The Fateful Triangle*; Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* and *Reflections on Exile*; Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity*; Keith Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel*; Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*; Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels*; Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace*; Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, *Original Sins*; Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel*; Naseer Aruri, *Occupation: Israel Over Palestine*; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*; and Ann M. Lesch and Dan Tschirgi, *Origins and Development of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*.

25. Although much of this dispossession can be attributed to a long list of broken treaties, it is also due to legislation aimed specifically at breaking up tribal sovereignty. The 1887 Dawes Act, which destroyed communal land holdings and purported to transform Natives into individual white farmers, accounts for much of the property transfers in the years to come.

26. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 29.

27. See further Lenore A. Stiffarm with Phil Lane, Jr., "The Demography of Native North America: A Question of American Indian Survival," in *The State of Native America*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 23-53.

28. See further Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations* (Boston: South End Press, 1999).

30. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 4.

31. Maureen Konkle, "Indian Literacy, U.S. Colonialism, and Literary Criticism," *American Literature* 69 (1997): 459.

32. A 1970 Civil War in Jordan between Palestinian rebels and the Royal Jordanian Army in which the Palestinians were defeated and the PLO expelled to Lebanon.

33. A citizen uprising in the occupied territories that began in 1987 and would continue for six years. International news reels were filled with images of Palestinian peasants, women, and children confronting the fully-armed Israeli army with stones, and chronic scenes of abuse on the part of the soldiers instilled one of the first feelings of sympathy for the Palestinians in the American public. Numerous Palestinian writers draw upon the Intifada as a source of strength and bravery.

34. The 1993 Resolution that culminated in the famous meeting of Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin on the White House lawn. It is considered by most Palestinians to be a forfeiture of their fundamental right of return and self-determination, a belief corroborated by the intensity of the current al-Aqsa Intifada.

35. For thorough (and stunning) economic statistics, see further Atif Kuburski, "Valuing Palestinian Losses in Today's Dollars," in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naseer Aruri (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto Press, 2001), 217-251.

36. Listserv message from media@adc.org. Received 12 April 2000.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Israel, for instance, has provided abundant pretexts for the dispossession and protracted refugee status of the Palestinians. The most prominent used to be that there is no such thing as Palestinians, an assertion Golda Meir was fond of making, and a common American myth about Indians that Natives have been contesting for decades. Another rationale for the destruction of Palestinian society is that the

Arabs willingly sold all their property during British Mandatory rule. Of course, why 700,000 people would sell their homes in order to move into refugee camps and live in squalor and under military rule remains a mystery, yet something the majority of Americans finds perfectly reasonable. Rashid Khalidi, Walid Khalidi, and Ann Mosely Lesch have shown that most of the so-called land sales were done through absentee landlords in Beirut, and were met with severe resistance by the peasants who still felt the land to be theirs. A large amount of the Arab population, however, was simply expelled by force. In a more general sense, the strategy of colonizing any given people under a rubric of legalism, one usually created to supplement displacement and land theft, is a commonality that goes well beyond Palestine (see further Vine Deloria, Jr., and David Wilkins, *Tribes, Treaties, and Constitutional Tribulations*). A variation of the land sale claim is that Arabs arrived only after Jewish settlers cultivated the unused land. However, the most common, and perhaps grimmest element of Israeli colonial discourse is the incessant equation of Palestinians with Nazis, savages, and terrorists, or their customary dismissal as innate extremists (see further Steven Salaita, "Covering Murder: The American Media and the al-Aqsa Intifada," *Clamor Magazine* April/May 2001). These explanations are all, incidentally, circumstances with which Natives have long been familiar. Each is mirrored, in fact, in corresponding stages of American history.

40. These result in varying degrees of success, and are important here because they indicate that Natives are not satisfied to simply raise their voices in isolation, nor do they perceive their struggles to be a deviation from international politics in total. Linking their concerns with Indigenous communities across the world has become a commonality in the field, best evidenced by Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, which situates an impending tribal revolution in the Americas into a global setting that summons Africa as a source of inspiration.

41. While appropriating Jewish, African, and Asian themes into Native Studies is a useful exercise that warrants more complete inquiry, Palestinians perhaps best fit the design of inter-ethnic communication in the Native context. Diasporic Jewry as a comparative model has probably run its course, and does not present the abundance of interesting possibilities that a Native/Palestinian collation offers. An early example of this claim comes from the eminent philosopher, theologian, and scholar Vine Deloria, Jr.. An outspoken critic of religious fundamentalism in the United States and the treachery of America's broken treaties and two-faced proposals, Deloria has long been one of the strongest voices in the struggle for

Native rights. He has also likened the quest for Native liberation to the tenets of Zionism. In *Custer Died for Your Sins*, he writes,

> In transplanting Europe to these peaceful shores [the Americas], the colonists violated the most basic principle of man's history: certain lands are given to certain peoples. It is these peoples only who can flourish, thrive, and survive on the land. Intruders may hold sway for centuries but they will eventually be pushed from the land or the land itself will destroy them. The Holy Land, having been periodically conquered and beaten into submission by a multitude of invaders, today remains the land which God gave to Abraham and his descendants. So will America return to the red man. *Custer Died For Your Sins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 177-78.

Even given the time frame in which Deloria made this observation—when awareness of the Palestinians was at a minimum in the United States—the implications are flabbergasting. His argument not only corresponds with the Judeo-Christian fundamentalism that he devotes much of his writing to attacking, but two pages earlier he decries the fact that "[e]arly settlers [in America] made land a function of man, and with a plentitude of land, democracy appeared to be the inevitable desire of God." God's inevitable democracy is the exact rhetoric Israel employs in order to garner support for the removal of Palestinians, facts that have been available from Israeli sources for decades. Deloria overlooks the well-established Indigenous population that was sacrificed for Jews to be "given" the Holy Land, along with the fact that this land is also holy to Muslims and has been desecrated, not restored, by Israel, as hundreds of environmental reports attest. Given Deloria's position as a scholar advocating the rights of Indigenes against foreign invasion, the omission of Palestinians in his discussion of the Holy Land is unthinkable. His example thus undermines the criticisms of America he offers throughout the text. For a powerful and seminal thinker like Deloria, long involved with the human rights of the colonized, to glorify the Zionist conquest reveals the degree to which ancient and modern Palestinian history has been silenced in the United States.

There is more at work here, however. Deloria's statement can be conceptualized as a minor slippage, an assessment with which I would agree. Within this slippage, though, a paradigm can be created for reciprocal inter-communalism. That is to say, while Deloria's praise for a colonial entity may have been intended to occasion the opposite, the effect will be to damage some of his validity, whether wittingly or not. The same can be said of Said's reduction of Native literature to "a sad panorama produced by genocide and cultural amnesia," which drew a sharp rebuke from Owens (*Mixedblood Messages*, 36). These incidents denote a need to expand more extensively into the struggles of Indigenes around the world as a means of keeping one's critique in maximum standing and to foreground some sort of consistent understanding of the breadth of colonization even when assessing local applications.

42. Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 5-6.

43. Weaver, 22.

44. Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, "At the Margins of Postcolonial Studies: Part 1," in *The Pre-Occupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 7.

45. Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 205.

46. Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 376-91.

47. Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

48. This would include Kurds, Southern Sudanese, North Irish, Timorese, Maoris, Australian Aborigines, Zapatistas, American Black nationalists/separatists, Hawaiians, and Iraqis.

49. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

50. See Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

51. See Sonya Paul and Robert Perkinson, "Winona LaDuke: *The Progressive* Interview," *The Progressive*, October 1995, 36-39.

52. Warrior, "Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians," 279.

53. Ibid., 283.

54. Khalidi explains that when the indigenous population of Palestine is studied by outsiders, more often than not it "is an object rather than subject of history. It can be described by others, but cannot describe itself." *Palestinian Identity*, 92.

55. Edward Said, "Michael Walzer's *Exodus and Revolution*: A Canaanite Reading," in *Blaming the Victims*, ed. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchins (New York: Verso, 1988), 171-72.

56. Weaver, *That the People Might Live*, 17.

57. Following Weaver's lead, I define literature here as any linguistic activity, oral or written, invested in some way in the communal polity.

58. Womack, *Red on Red*, 11.

59. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction: Palestinian Literature in Modern Times," in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 2-3.

60. Jeannette C. Armstrong, "Land Speaking," in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*, ed. Simon J. Ortiz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 175-76.

61. Ibid., 178-79.

62. Elizabeth Woody, "Voice of the Land: Giving the Good Word," in *Speaking for the Generations: Native Writers on Writing*, ed. Simon J. Ortiz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1998), 151-52.

63. Hanan Ashrawi, *This Side of Peace* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 131-32.

64. "Abuna" means "our father" in Arabic, the title given to priests. Chacour is a Melkite priest; the Melkites are an ancient Christian sect that broke from Orthodox Christianity in the eleventh century when it allied itself with the pope in Rome against the patriarch of Constantinople.

65. Abuna Elias Chacour with Mary E. Jensen, *We Belong to the Land* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), 80.

66. Ibid., 80.

67. Leslie Marmon Silko, *Almanac of the Dead* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 515.

68. I employ the term "ethnocracy" exactly as Oren Yiftachel defines and utilizes it: "Ethnocracy is a specific expression of nationalism that exists in contested territories where a dominant ethos gains political control and uses the state apparatus to ethnicize the territory and society in question." See further "Ethnocracy and Its Discontents." *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 730.

69. Here I depart slightly from some claims made by Joseph Massad in the past, although his studies of Palestinian racialization and nationalism have influenced my work considerably. In "Palestinians and the Limits of Racialized Discourse," he stresses the irreconcilable differences among settler societies. About the settlement of North America, he writes, "Surely the continued emigration of Jews from their respective homelands is a constant reminder of the 'refugee' status the dominant discourse has accorded them, although this status is not accorded to the later gentile 'immigrants' into North America, except immigrants from socialist countries. Although 'white' discourse accords these émigrés the status of 'refugees' (while denying that status to Central American 'brown' refugees), their status is not used as the primary justification for the continued subjugation of the Native American people." This is only partly accurate. If we extend this analysis and look at the early settlement of the Americas, especially Puritan settlement in particular and British settlement in general, the refugee status Massad downplays actually formed a discursive taproot that would later constitute a crucial aspect of American national identity. This not only corresponds with the refugee stylings in Israel, but also accounts for much of the philosophical support Israel is given almost blindly by Americans. Despite Massad's warning that too many differences exist among garrison societies to fruitfully compose comparative models, Native America and Palestine, even following Massad's argument, are surely an exception. See further Joseph Massad, "Palestinians and the Limits of Racialized Discourse," *Social Text* 34 (1993): 98.

70. Demographics from biblical times are difficult to ascertain with full accuracy, for population numbers vary greatly among sources dealing with the matter, which are often guided by modern political motivations. We do know for certain, however, that a Jewish civilization flourished before they were expelled by the Romans. In modern times, Noam Chomsky, Rashid Khalidi, Simha Flapan, and Edward Said have placed the Jewish population in Ottoman Palestine at the start of the nineteenth-century Zionist movement at less than five percent.

71. I use the word "permanently" because evidence suggests that pre-Columbian landings occurred at numerous points in the history of North America, which further implicates Europeans in their aggressive actions.

72. Dating back to Theodore Herzl, it was always known that a population already resided in the coveted land of Palestine, even though Israel Zangwill's slogan, "The land without a people for the people without a land," publicly testified otherwise. In 1898, when Hitler was nine years old, Herzl proposed the first solution to the inconvenient problem of the Palestinians: "We shall try to spirit the penniless population (i.e. Arab) across the border by procuring employment for it in the transit countries, while denying it any employment in our own country." He went on to offer a more suitable role for them before they would be dispossessed: "If we move into a region where there are wild animals to which the Jews are not accustomed—big snakes, etc.—I shall use the natives, prior to giving them employment in the transitory countries, for the extermination of these animals. High premiums for the snake skins, etc., as well as their spawn." Zangwill, mysteriously the same person who coined the slogan denoting Palestine as an empty plain, also grappled with the fact that somebody was already in the land of milk and honey. In 1904, he wrote in *The Voice of Jerusalem*, "There is, however, a difficulty from which the Zionist dares not avert his eyes, though he rarely likes to face it. Palestine proper has already its inhabitants. The Pashalik of Jerusalem is already twice as thickly populated as the United States, having fifty-two souls to every square mile, and not 25 percent of them Jews; so we must be prepared either to drive out by the sword the tribes in possession as our forefathers did, or to grapple with the problem of a large alien population, mostly Mohammedan [sic]." See further Edward Henderson, *Maps and Mythology* (Washington, D.C.: American Educational Trust, no publication date provided).

73. Abuna Elias Chacour has a powerful story to illustrate this point. During a routine interrogation at Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv, he recounts this tale to the interrogating officer when asked "to which generation can you go back in Biram [his ancestral village]?": "One of my forefathers was sitting under our fig tree in front of our house one day. He was eating figs and enjoying God's gift to him in the land of his ancestors. Suddenly he saw down the path a poor stranger, a foreigner who was poorly dressed. His feet were bare, he was covered with dust, and he was tired, hungry, and thirsty. He looked scared. My forefather called to him. The stranger came. He was given food to eat, water to drink, clothes

to wear and a place to rest.... And then, after the foreigner was rested and about to leave, my ancestor asked him his name. He discovered that that foreigner was *your* forefather Abraham, coming from Iraq, Mesopotamia, a Gentile among a Gentile nation" (*We Belong to the Land*, 4).

74. Yiftachel writes, "My main argument is that Israel's ethnocratic regime, which facilitates the colonial Judaization of the country, has buttressed the dominance of the Ashkenazi Jewish ethno-class and enabled the 'blunting' and silencing of the resistance of both Palestinian Arabs and peripheral Mizrahim. Thus, despite notable differences, the marginalization of Palestinian Arabs and Mizrahi Jews is linked, deriving directly from *the very same Judaization ("de-Arabization") project* that positioned these communities in cultural, geographic, and economic peripheries [emphasis his]." See further Oren Yiftachel, "Ethnocracy and Its Discontents," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 728.

75. Owens, *Mixedblood Messages*, 129.

76. This is especially true of novelists who also publish as critics: Louis Owens, Craig Womack, Greg Sarris, Paula Gunn Allen, and others.

77. Weaver, ix.

78. Ami Elad-Bouskila, *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1999), 12.

79. For testimony about Palestinian literature from Palestinian writers, see, Robert Thompson and Izzat Ghazzawi, ed., *Innovation in Palestinian Literature: Testimonies of Palestinian Poets and Writers*, trans. Abdul-Fattah Jabr (Palestine: The Ogarit Centre for Publication and Translation, 2000).

80. This is in addition to the fact that, as Mohja Kahf has pointed out, all Levantine literary traditions, including Palestine's, are difficult to delineate along national lines since at various points they were all considered to by Syrian literature. They became discrete national literatures when the Levant, itself a European construct, was divided into the dependencies that later became nations. See further Mohja Kahf, "The Silences of Contemporary Syrian Literature," *World Literature Today* 75 (2001): 225-36.

81. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York and London: Verso, 1991).

Demystifying the Quest for Canaan: Observations on Mimesis in the New World and Holy Land

I once published an op-ed column supportive of Palestinian human rights in the *Houston Chronicle*. The article, which recounted a visit to the occupied territories to observe firsthand the al-Aqsa Intifada, predictably drew a spate of hate email from across the country. A good number of these responses avoided expressing rage in the form of threat or insult and instead attempted to engage political dialogue by invoking various strands of official Israeli protocol. The most interesting came from a communiqué distributed by the International Christian Zionist Center, which asked, "How should Israel solve the problems it has with Yasser Arafat and his terrorist affiliated organizations?" The first possibility is instructive: "The American Model: They destroyed the [American] Indians and let the rest live autonomously in designated reservations."[1]

Although there are problems with this formulation—the "rest" of Indian tribes do not all live on reservations and most tribes are anything but autonomous—the proposal offers important analytical possibilities. It corresponds with the many letters I received decrying the notion that Palestinians have a right to retain or return to their ancestral land. The authors employed a rhetorical device that can be summed up as follows: "If we return land to the Palestinians does this mean we should return the land to the Indians?" The insinuation, of course, is that returning land to Indians is absurd and, even if it had some credence, impossible; suggesting, therefore, that Palestinians have any right to theirs is equally absurd.

The authors acknowledge tacitly that Indigenous groups once occupied land usurped by the United States and Israel. They rely in turn on a classic colonial concept of "chosenness" in order to deflect attention from that tacit acknowledgment. More important, they highlight Indian dispossession not to reinforce a belief that Palestinians should be repatriated to land that is rightfully theirs, but to counter that claim. It is assumed, then, that the delegitimization of Indians is both pervasive and final. It is further assumed that Native-White interaction has ceased to be a dialectical contest staged by parties with disparate claims to identical commodities. Rather, the American version of events has prevailed and the Native voice is extinct or unimportant, even if it existed once before succumbing to the inevitable development of American progress. To support arcane Native claims is thus to oppose modernity and endorse narratives that are alternately unrealistic, unpatriotic, barbaric. Palestinians are well familiar with a similar story.

The relevance of such assumptions cannot be underestimated. American discourse has long illustrated how the power to name and define human life, human behavior, and human commodities creates dichotomies between the dominant public sphere and resistant undercurrents. Even if those resistant undercurrents often are attached to concepts of modernity and civility, they run counter to them and expose the fallacies of modern colonial discourse. In a political culture bound to colonialism or imperialism—or, in the cases of the United States and Israel, both—the assumptions regarding disenfranchised groups connote racism when evoked and examined. Agents of that political culture generally see no need to qualify their positions of enunciation; they

thus can contest—perhaps foolishly—Palestinian land reclamation by arguing against Indian repatriation.

By consigning respective struggles for justice into isolated moral categories, those with access to popular media effectively remove context as a viable instrument of political exchange. Palestinian and Native resistance, according to those responding to my *Chronicle* article, neither are interconnected nor relevant to the modern industrial complex. One exists only to demystify the other, and they never can be contextualized fluidly in a comparative model of analysis because narratives of conquest have been transformed into national imagination; the state ultimately disseminates whatever discourse it deems politically expedient in order that struggles with Indigenous groups will be perceived as local (and irrational) phenomena rather than broadly related encounters between the West and those whose lands it has expropriated. In this framework, what has happened to the Palestinians throughout the last century is not in any way connected to the European rush for Empire or the advent of garrison settlement and colonization. Such a framework absolves Israel of its responsibility in dispossession by conceptualizing Zionism as a unique effort framed by peculiar circumstances that necessitated the removal of Palestinians—at best, displacement is considered unfortunate, but more often is denied altogether. Conversely, the lack of context in discussing Native displacement sustains the overarching American national identity, in which scattered tribal nomads with little population and even smaller landholdings acted as unfortunate or belligerent impediments to the realization of a pseudo-utopian liberal democracy never before seen in world history. The large-scale destruction of life and land, resulting in the world's worst genocide and most dangerous environmental crisis, is usually muted in

order to preserve a particular version of history that supplements the mythos of America's pioneering ingenuity. That these events correspond in obvious and vivid ways with European activity on other continents is seen as irrelevant. That Natives are still alive in large numbers and struggling in myriad ways to regain stolen land and attain self-determination is even less important. Decontextualization has played an enormous role in the success of American colonial discourse, and, as I will demonstrate below, was not lost on those who later would construct narratives of ingenuity and deliverance in Palestine.

Subscribing to this tradition of decontextualization—most likely unwittingly—respondents to my newspaper column assumed that I also shared these assumptions and therefore would be receptive to pragmatic arguments that delegitimate Palestinian aspirations by transferring attention to the supposed folly of such flights of fancy in the United States. Yet in reality—again, most likely unwittingly—my argument was only reinforced and, with some work, can be made stronger and more useful. For I have only a simple response to the question, "If we return land to the Palestinians does this mean we should return the land to the Indians?": yes, the United States *should* return stolen land to the Indians. It is, after all, Indian land.

Savages, Terrorists, and the Animal Kingdom

Natives and Palestinians are perhaps the most versatile of earth's species. In their experiences with colonization, their images have traversed much of the animal kingdom. Not only have they always been savages and terrorists—insults that, no matter how dehumanizing, at least imply humanity—they also have been, alternately or simultaneously: cockroaches, lice, moles, snakes, swine, grasshoppers, beasts, ticks,

leeches. At other times they are transposed from living species to inanimate objects such as fecal matter or dead skin.

These designations are almost amusing in the sense that the racist impulses inspiring them are so severe that one is hard-pressed to take them seriously. In fact, however, all of them can be found in the written American and Israeli government conceptualizations of Indigenes at a time when those governments were deciding and debating how their domestic policies should be constructed. Each designation was uttered by an American president or Israeli Prime Minister, or by some other high ranking government official.[2] Given this reality, it is easy to understand how racism was institutionalized into colonial nations. The expressions of that racism change over time and according to expediency of the moment, but they have yet to be eliminated. Expressions of racism mutate based on the evolution of national culture, but they never can be expunged until national culture transforms itself by enacting meaningful reparations. Confronting transgressions with honesty is a prerequisite.

One need not turn solely toward Native and Palestinian scholarship in order to formulate a comparison between the two peoples. It is quite possible to do so by letting the United States and Israel speak for themselves. Robert F. Berkhofer, for instance, notes that "[b]oth the ideas of progress and religious millennialism hinted at the coming role of the United States in history. No wonder the Continental Congress adopted in 1783 as mottoes on the Great Seal of the United States both *annuit coeptis*, 'He [God] has smiled on our undertakings,' and *novus ordo seclorum*, 'a new order of the ages.'"[3] Those mottoes were elaborated into policy six years later by Henry Knox, who wrote, "As [White] population shall increase, and approach the Indian boundaries, game will be

diminished, and new purchases may be made for small considerations. This has been, and probably will be, the inevitable consequence of cultivation."[4]

We can compare these passages with two more from across the Atlantic. In one, Israeli statesman Moshe Dayan wrote to Israeli Jews in 1969, "We have not abandoned your dream and we have not forgotten your lesson. We have returned to the mountain, to the cradle of our people, to the inheritance of the Patriarchs, the land of the Judges and the fortress of the Kingdom of the House of David. We have returned to Hebron and Schem [Nablus], to Bethlehem and Anatot, to Jericho and the fords of the Jordan at Adam Ha'ir."[5] As for the Indigenous Arabs, in 1898 Theodore Herzl formulated a plan that makes it difficult to believe he was unfamiliar with Henry Knox: "The [Arab] property-owners will come over to our side. Both the process of expropriation and the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly. Let the owners of immovable property believe that they are cheating us, selling us things for more than they are worth. But we are not going to sell them anything back."[6]

Inscribed in this sort of consciousness is a sense of duty larger than the individual or the society itself: a religious duty to fulfill scripture, a social duty to undertake a civilizing mission, a personal duty to transform liturgy to sociology. Certainly the secular aspects of Americanism and Zionism complicate the relationship between history and theology. Invested in that secularism is a rhetorical impulse toward a divine gratification that is pre-written into contemporary human society. Historically, leaders have turned to God when support for the colonial mission is outside the possibility of political narratives. One can detect within Americanism and Zionism competing strands of essentialism that transform themselves based on the necessity of socialization, public

relations, and domestic and foreign policy. Underlying all those transformations is a reliance on biblical achievement to couch or excuse brutal behavior.

The biblical aspect of settler colonialism generally is considered to be a function of society's extremist elements. As Nur Masalha notes, "[F]or some religious extremists [in Israel], expulsion is not the final solution; they call for the total 'annihilation of the modern Amalek [i.e., Palestinians]'."[7] The Reverend Michael Prior illustrates how this sentiment has functioned in American history: "Many Puritan preachers referred to the Native Americans as Amalekites and Canaanites, who, if they refused to be converted, were worthy of annihilation. Thus Cotton Mather, author of *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702), delivered a sermon in Boston in September 1689, charging the members of the armed forces in New England to consider themselves to be Israel in the wilderness, confronted by Amalek: pure Israel was obliged to 'cast out [the Indians] as dirt in the streets' and eliminate and exterminate them."[8] Although these feelings certainly can be attributed to religious extremists, I would like to suggest that they are integral to the colonial errand, and that the colonial errand would fail miserably without them. That is to say, the relegation of religious extremism to the margin underestimates the extent to which the colonial regime—whether or not it purports to be secular—relies on its existence, to say nothing of its underpinnings. Even while Americanism and Zionism vocalize modern ideals of democratic enlightenment, they draw tacitly from and encourage the articulation of biblical ideals. Ethnic cleansing is not an appropriate human activity unless a deity sanctions such an act. Competing narratives, therefore, are both an inherent and calculated contradiction. Those narratives cannot be reconciled successfully without extremism, for democracy and enlightenment are the opposite of

imperialism and ethnic cleansing. Ethnic cleansing is allowed to occur from within a democratic and enlightened rubric only when democracy and enlightenment are endowed with extremist features that displace the meaning of the terms and inject them with ordinances supposedly outside of human control.

There are more examples of shared discourse among American and Zionist leaders. The following order from nineteenth-century American military officials illustrates that ethnic cleansing was not a desire of the margin, but a policy rooted in the center: "[K]ill and scalp all, little and big [because] nits make lice."[9] Likewise, in 1940 Lehi (Stern Gang) leader Avraham Stern developed his program of ethnic cleansing with this proclamation: Palestinian Arabs are "beasts of the desert, not a legitimate people."[10] Perhaps the most interesting of these statements came from President John Adams: "The Indians are as bigoted to their religion as the Mohametans [sic] are to their Koran."[11] The goal of America followed logically: "Apathy, barbarism, and heathenism must give way to energy, civilization, and Christianity."[12] One can find statements of this nature throughout Zionist history. Declaring that "[w]e Jews have nothing in common with what is denoted 'the East' and we thank God for that," Zionist Revisionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky explained in 1923 that "[e]very indigenous people will resist alien settlers as long as they see any hope of ridding themselves of the danger of foreign settlement."[13] As in the United States, Indigenous stubbornness ultimately made no difference in the decision—framed as a need—to colonize. Calling Palestinians a "yelling rabble dressed up in gaudy, savage rags," Jabotinsky devised a strategy parallel to Adams's: "Zionist colonization, even the most restricted, must either be terminated or carried out in defiance of the will of the native population."[14]

It should not be insinuated that these instances of colonial discourse simply exist parallel to one another, with no connection beyond the discursive features one is able to analyze as mimetic. ("Mimetic" is defined here in its traditional usage, as a form of imitation. I think imitation best contextualizes the type of rhetorical interplay with which I am concerned. More than that, however, "mimesis" also connotes a transferal of text from one object onto another; such a transferal appropriately symbolizes the dynamics of the covenant settlers have for centuries carried across the ocean, with each group copying onto foreign land the stories employed in another foreign land.) Certainly there is enough resemblance in the modes of colonial discourse I cite, and many others, to produce an effective comparison. Their mimesis, however, is not merely parallel, but confederated. Zionists drew inspiration from American history in colonizing Palestine, and American history also shaped the outlook of American leaders toward the Near East. Franklin Roosevelt, for example, was fond of referring to the Arabs as "noble savages,"[15] and, as Avi Shlaim indicates, the connection was undertaken by Moshe Dayan in a speech at a funeral for a Jewish farmer: "His funeral oration epitomized the stark philosophy of the 'Arab fighter,' that is, the equivalent of what Americans used to call the Indian fighter, a type common in the second generation of settlers in a country where newcomers are forced to fight the native population."[16]

More illuminating is the statement made by David Ben-Gurion to inspire Jewish colonization: "The history of American settlement shows how herculean were the tasks of the colonists who came to find the new Homeland in the New World...how many and how fierce the fights they fought with nature and wilder redskins, the sacrifices made before they unlocked the continent for mass influx and colonization."[17] The quote

indicates that there is no disjunction between popular discourse on the one hand—whether or not it is produced by extremists—and institutional policy on the other.[18] Both offer perspectives that aim to appease particular audiences and achieve certain objectives, and both view as necessary the removal of Indigenes and the colonization of the land. In fact, the very notion of extremism is rather paradoxical when we consider Ben-Gurion's statement. Although at base his philosophy is no different than those offered by right-wingers Avraham Stern or Vladimir Jabotinsky, one is designated an extremist based primarily on public relations rather than actual philosophy. In colonial situations, the center defines the extreme in order that the center's own extremist positions can be concealed behind diplomacy and thus validated under the guise of progress or rationality. Its underlying ethics are articulated by those it comes to define as extreme.

More crucial, that Ben-Gurion would conjure American conquest in order to inspire Near East colonization verifies that interplay across the Atlantic surpasses the discursive and theological levels. It is situated at the median of state power, and its outflow into dialogue at the popular level codifies state policy. There are in modern times, of course, abundant examples of state interchange between the United States and Israel. What would surprise people, and what not even the most learned scholars point out, is that the United States supported Israel before Israel even was created. That support had nothing to do with partnership and economic aid. It came through inspiration, perhaps the most useful gift to endow a budding garrison state.

Jewish Cowboys and Arab Indians

Even now, we only have begun to display the extent of interchange between the New World and Holy Land. Next, I want to review some popular/polemical comparisons

that are made in order to supplement the scholarly and political connections outlined above. While correlation at the state level is without doubt the most crucial aspect of any comparative project, comparisons offered by scholars and newspaper columnists are also relevant.

A particularly relevant example comes from former Lehi member Amos Kenan, who describes the mindset of Yishuv[19] soldiers during the 1948 War: "The Jewish cowboy, with his gun, protecting the Jewish settlers in the field, did not know that the Arab Indians considered Palestine their land."[20] A former columnist for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, Kenan is well aware of the images his sentence invokes.[21] His Jewish cowboys and Arab Indians accurately reflect the social dynamics at play in Zionism, which had (or has) no philosophical basis that did (or does) not exist outside American history, despite the claim by Zionists that Zionism's foundation rests in the Bible. Its discursive substructure may be rooted in a biblical premise, but, as Kenan notes, the realities it encountered in Palestine converted it to a form of dogma whereby the Palestinians were transformed conceptually into the Indians from across the ocean. Once the Jewish cowboys actually began their ethnic cleansing, the Palestinians were transformed into the physical remnants of Indian memory.

Others also challenge the Zionist narrative by decentering it from its mythical discourse. Ward Churchill is the most ardent Native critic of Zionism. In constructing theories about the genocidal qualities of American settlement, he inverts the American imagination by invoking Israeli politics; that is, he uses the same techniques that opponents of Zionism employ when referencing American history in order to criticize Israel, only in reverse. *A Little Matter of Genocide*, an immense and polemical text filled

with contentious positions, repeatedly points to the Nazi Holocaust to argue that by the world's criteria for genocide, American history is not only genocidal, but a series of genocides. It would seem, then, that Palestinians are irrelevant to Churchill's argument. This would be true if Churchill were shortsighted or ignorant of the developments in Jewish history after the Holocaust. However, while the Holocaust features prominently in Churchill's claim that genocide has occurred recurrently in American history, the force of his argument actually comes from the Palestinians, a people who have faced ethnic cleansing but not a genocide.[22] Since he outfits the particulars of Native history with an inter-ethnic framework, a convincing appeal is made that the United States provides us with the first example of modern genocide. (The Old Testament, as Churchill notes, provides us the first example.) Rather than being contextualized in the same category as the Nazi Holocaust, however, New World genocide either is devalorized or denied outright. Churchill thus attaches the concept of suffering and the public expression of suffering to power. Those with the power to influence a nation's policy are able to incorporate their narratives into the pageantry of that nation. Natives, as wards of the United States, the same nation that committed genocide, are unable to institutionalize remembrance into the American consciousness. Instead, the Nazi Holocaust and those committed by other nations are inserted into American ethos, both to reinforce America's self-professed civility and to provide a barrier behind which American genocide can be concealed. For Churchill, the Palestinians then become something of a rhetorical wild card. Noting that, like Natives, they are victims of ethnic cleansing and dispossession, Churchill argues that any understanding of atrocity must be situated in a fluid framework that collectively challenges the centers of power from which atrocities occur. For him, as

for all Palestinians, expositions on the Holocaust using the slogans "never forget" and "never again" ultimately must segue into an acknowledgment of Israel's crimes.[23] To do otherwise is to act in an ethnocentric manner that devalues the continued suffering of others around the world. More important, it is to allow condemnation of atrocity to be appropriated and controlled by those who commit atrocities themselves. History, when this happens, is a means to self-empowerment rather than transformation. Churchill therefore offers one of the most developed examples of reciprocal inter-communalism. His persuasive strength lies in the vast sources he utilizes in order to expose the underside of American history; but his rhetorical force lies in his ability to contextualize that history as a universal concept wherein the Nazi Holocaust and Israeli aggression are made to collide in order for Native voices to occupy the space the collision creates.

Israeli activist and former Knesset member Uri Avnery takes a similar approach in his article "AMERICA! AMERICA!, or: The Height of Chutzpah." Avnery endeavors to answer the question that has eluded nearly every Palestinian American, a question asked repeatedly: why does the United States support Israel so strongly if Israel is an oppressive state? Avnery enumerates many possibilities—including strategic implications, imperial benefits, pressure from the arms industry, and the strength of the Jewish lobby—but rejects them all as incomplete:

> I believe that the reason is more profound: the identification of the Zionist enterprise with the foundations of America. The Puritans who founded American society believed in the Bible, knew Hebrew, bore Biblical names, saw themselves as the "New Israel", called their country the "New

> Canaan", justified the annihilation of the Natives with the Biblical injunction against Amalek. The Zionist "pioneers" resemble the white settlers in America, the bad Palestinians are a new version of the "Bad Injuns."[24]

Avnery circumvents modern politics in order to examine the mythical foundations of the United States and Israel. In this sense, his discussion usefully supplements Churchill's arguments. Whereas Churchill interrogates the historical circumstances that constitute genocide, Avnery identifies the type of consciousness that underlies aggression and rejectionism. For both authors it is useless to offer stationary insights into colonialism; those put into transit best exert persuasive force.

Avnery's passage is especially relevant in light of Native Studies. The field has grown considerably in the past twenty years, and now, with literary studies at its center, covers disciplines ranging from Art History to Psychology. Despite its growth and scope, however, numerous topics have yet to be explored in full, as evidenced by the frequent call in books and articles to analyze underdeveloped areas. One of those underdeveloped areas deals with contextualization. Few writers convincingly have located Native histories with colonialism within international backdrops that identify the integrated process of imperialism with which Natives are involved. This is not to say that Natives do not attempt comparisons, for such was done with Black Americans as early as Vine Deloria's *Custer Died For Your Sins.*[25] Moreover, Natives have neither rejected nor abandoned the notion that America's multivalent colonial endeavors necessarily keep them from being isolated as political entities.

It is imperative to continue developing inter-communal contexts, because such contexts have not yet approached initial potential, much less intellectual success. It could help Native scholars to invoke international law more thoroughly to frame physical and intellectual claims to sovereignty. Moreover, inter-communal contexts could add important dimensions to critiques of American power, for by now it is difficult to mine new ground in the domestic framework. The mimesis of colonial practices in the New World and Near East is particularly interesting, not only because the demands of international law are applicable in both cases,[26] but also because discursive features in American politics now underwrite a new era of settlement and dispossession. That is to say, the conquest of the Americas is incomplete; it is steadily advancing to the River Jordan, with a new set of Arab Indians in the way.[27]

Counter-Narratives in Cartoons and Poems

Ethnic cleansing is not the result of an innate pathology that compels the ruthless to murder and dispossess. It is a calculated and conscious act born from the desire to absolve greed or hostility by striking from existence physical figures that might hinder absolution. Ethnic cleansing is the removal of humans in order that narratives will disappear. In this sense, ethnic cleansing, although complex beyond any categorical definition, functions essentially on two levels: a practical clearing of people for the purpose of one's colonial mission, whether that mission is grounded in greed or ideology; and a blinding of the national imagination so colonial history will be removed along with the dispossessed. It is only through ethnic cleansing that the average American can accept without nagging guilt the history of her nation, which is known to all but decontextualized from the present. It is only through ethnic cleansing that many Natives

remain consigned to reservations while Americans destroy sacred geography to the benefit of corporations or for simple recreation. Conversely, ethnic cleansing allows the Jewish settler to accept a home constructed on Arab farmland without knowing anything about the Indigenes she has displaced. It also allows the newspaper columnist to urge the government for more security so Israelis can enjoy shopping and sidewalk cafes while millions of Palestinians languish as refugees in tents in camps filled with disease and sewage. It is a mistake to conceptualize ethnic cleansing simply as a physical act. Its importance lies in its psychological power. Neither the colonial state nor its supporters has any history independent of ethnic cleansing. Or rather, they desire no history independent of ethnic cleansing.

The narratives and counter-histories produced by the dispossessed therefore assume great significance. They are based on a vision of history that was supposed to have been removed with the advent of ethnic cleansing, and they endow the colonial landscape with memories of its pre-contact tenants. The landscape itself then challenges the economy of garrison settlement. Not surprisingly, Americans and Israelis supportive of their governments' imperial policies become either angry or defensive when anything outside their ideology is inserted into their field of vision. One of the better ways to capitalize on this phenomenon is to draw instances of Indigenous resistance together where possible. In the New World and Holy Land, the imperative to do so is compelling since the discourse framing denial and ethnic cleansing on both continents can be reduced to a singular origin.

A striking example of how this can be done in a creative forum comes from Brazilian artist Latuff. On 31 January 2002, Latuff published a series of cartoons "on

behalf of brave Palestinian people."[28] The series consists of seven illustrations: "Black people after [the] U.S. Civil War, South-African black people in apartheid days, South-Vietnamese civilians during [the] Vietnam War, Tibetans under Chinese rule, Native Americans facing U.S. Cavalry, Natives from Chiapas facing Mexican troops and finally [the] Warsaw Ghetto."[29] Every plate depicts a moment of oppression in each group's history, with an individual, representing the oppressed community, uttering the line, "I am Palestinian." The project is a powerful way to deterritorialize Zionism's covenant with the Holy Land, as well as its claims to uniqueness within the complex of modern history. Latuff puts the Palestinian narrative into flight and stretches it across three continents. The narrative settles into the past, recreates itself in the present, and manages ultimately to traverse its own provincialism for the future. By outfitting oppressed individuals with a collective burden, Latuff deconstructs and clarifies the destruction inherent in living within a situation that limits personal freedom based on communal attachment. He also creates a resistant symbiosis across space and time, represented by the Palestinian, who is transfigured into a symbol of injustice before *al-nakba*, but who simultaneously is burdened with the endurance of that injustice. Israel is thus shown to be a nation that is part of rather than apart from the process of colonialism.





The fifth and sixth cartoons are particularly interesting (see illustrations above). The Natives in the New World are among the first victims of colonialism and ethnic cleansing. The Palestinians are the most recent. Yet the situations engendering colonialism have yet to be abated, as evidenced by the plaintive cry, "I am Palestinian." This line designates continuity between colonialism's founding points and its process of control in the present. The ethnic interchange offers valuable material for inter-communal critique: the Palestinian has been removed from her physical and temporal

realities only to endure persecution in her new existence, for that existence is the precursor to Zionism. Conversely, the Natives, still battling foreign occupation, acknowledge the continuation of the imperial legacy by displacing their struggle from local phenomena. Their struggle is the center of international resistance, and any anti-colonial expression begins with their act of speaking. In exploring colonization through sketches, Latuff challenges moral blindness by—literally—making oppression visible.

Poets Lee Maracle (Metis) and Mahmoud Darwish offer another instant of comparison in a creative forum. Maracle's "Poem to a Palestinian Child" is worth quoting in full:

> I hear a voice calling me from a place far away
> The voice of a girl child very much like my own
>
> of green grass and rich soil is Palestine.
>
> Bombs crash about her levelling her home
> Clutching an olive branch she raises a defiant fist
>
> of deep roots and copper sun is Palestine.
>
> I see a child rising from a place far away
> In one hand an olive branch in the other a gun
>
> of much sweat and red blood is Palestine.
>
> I hear you calling me. Raise my banner high
> (Victory), victory to Palestine I answer in kind
>
> of humble tears my salute to Palestine.[30]

Maracle's poem[31] works nicely in conjunction with Darwish's "Speech of the Red Indian," an epic piece that attaches the narratives of Canaan and America (Amalek) through a speech delivered by a Native to his conquerors. Two stanzas follow:

> Columbus was free to look for a language
> he couldn't find here,
> to look for gold in the skulls of our ancestors.
> He took his fill from the flesh of our living
> and our dead.
> So why is he bent on carrying out his deadly war
> even from the grave?

When we have nothing left to give
but a few ruinous trinkets, a few tiny feathers to
embroider our lakes?

All told,
you killed over seventy million hearts,
more than enough for you to return from slaughter
as king on the throne of a new age.[32]

Later, Darwish writes:

The Lord is white and the day is white.
You have your world and we have ours.
What the stranger says is truly strange.
He digs a well deep in the earth to bury the sky.
Truly strange, what the stranger says!
He hunts down our children, as well as butterflies.
O stranger, what promises do you make to our garden,
zinc flowers prettier than ours?
Fine.
But do you know that a deer
will never approach grass that's been
strained with our blood?[33]

He ends the poem by couching treachery in an ancestral framework that is put in transit:

O you who are guests in this place,
leave a few chairs empty

for your hosts to read out
the conditions for peace

in a treaty with the dead.[34]

Both Maracle and Darwish attempt the same thing Latuff had in mind in creating his sketches: the transformation of history from isolated episodes into a fluid continuum. Of particular interest is the point of view Darwish employs, which is that of a Native and implies that dispossession in Palestine, even over 400 years after Columbus's mission, is still part of the aftermath of that mission. He speaks, in short, as an Arab Indian. In the poem, the conquest of Palestine began with Columbus, but the conquest of the Americas began with Canaan. It is perpetual interchange. Of equal interest is Maracle's suggestion that as a Native who stands in solidarity with other colonized peoples, her hearing

permits her to detect voices of resistance from across the ocean. Implicit in the suggestion is an argument that esoteric knowledge is created under colonialism, and it is a knowledge that enhances the physical senses. Her salute to Palestine is not offered through words, but rather in the "red blood" she bestows on the Palestinian child.

The Latuff drawings and the two poems are creative texts and, as such, merit analysis vis-à-vis socio-political discourse. The identification with others in creative forums enhances our ability to perform comparative studies. The creative text elucidates historical paradigms and functions at the level of imagination, two ways it manages to provide ethical presence. Both creative and socio-political discourse are necessary to affect action in the political arena. The poems, for instance, broaden history in order to sharpen consciousness. That the authors chose Native America and Palestine is not happenstance, since both involve themselves with narratives that challenge rhetorically, historically, and politically intertwined covenants. Similarly, Latuff's drawings bring to our collective vision a representation of how those covenants inform modes of oppression. For the activist to act, then, she needs an image in order to map action. She also needs a language to transpose abstraction into strategy. Creative work can provide those necessities.

Intellectual Implosions

It is appropriate at this point to identify the sort of discourse advocates of colonialism employ. It is, after all, the impetus for anti-colonial activity and the main reason this inter-ethnic project exists. To appropriate colonial discourse into one's work wittingly or not will undermine the foundation of reciprocal inter-communalism and will open space for decolonialism's opponents. I want to look at two columns, one written by

right-wing scholar Michael Berliner and the other by left-wing journalist Christopher Hitchens. Even though each author's position of enunciation differs greatly, their arguments are indistinguishable and resemble the kind of writing one might find in propagandistic schoolbooks. Hitchens is a famous leftist considered to be a progressive voice advocating justice for the oppressed, so his tailspin into colonial pathology is especially illuminating. It is not necessarily surprising, however. Any nation's dominant discourse, particularly those dealing with deeply ingrained mythos, is often able to pervade the consciousness of even its strongest critics. This is especially true in the United States and Israel, where the populations are socialized in a way that construes Americans and Israelis as underdogs who overcame great odds and who continue to face imminent and irrational danger.

This sort of consciousness is one reason, in fact, that dialogue among Indigenous groups assumes such importance. I do not like the idea of locating decolonial scholarship in a leftist paradigm. Certainly Indigenous and Leftist American ambitions intersect often and are worth examination. The reasons for my wariness about the American Left—a wariness shared by myriad Natives and Palestinians, not to mention Indigenes in general—deal more with cultural than philosophical factors. Divergences between the American Left and Indigeneity demand more detail than space allows. For now, we simply can argue that decolonial narratives are best located within the foundations of Indigenous cultures, and that the American Left, with its amorphous and contradictory breadth, limits such an option. Sometimes, Indigenous values are what the American Left would define as unacceptably conservative; Leftist Americans thus demand a type of cultural transformation that Indigenes are unwilling to undertake.[35] Quite simply,

Indigenes often resent what is perceived as patronization or romanticization on the part of non-Indigenes who find interest in their struggles. Most crucial, the American Left, no matter how ardently it positions itself in opposition to America's imperial values, is ultimately an outgrowth of those values. This fact arises tacitly in all kinds of Leftist American discourse. Sometimes, as Hitchens illustrates, it also arises explicitly.

In what is by now an infamous article written amid quincentennial celebrations, Hitchens pillories Natives for "undertaking to protest the celebration of racism, conquest and plunder that impended on Columbus Day."[36] Hitchens derides such claims, arguing that the anti-Columbus movement is "sinister...because it is an ignorant celebration of stasis and backwardness, with an unpleasant tinge of self-hatred."[37] He later reinforces the most despicable stereotypes about Native cultures: "[T]hose who view the history of North America as a narrative of genocide and slavery are, it seems to me, hopelessly stuck on this reactionary position. They can think of the Western expansion of the United States only in terms of plague blankets, bootleg booze and dead buffalo, never in terms of the medicine chest, the wheel and the railway."[38] Hitchens's obvious unfamiliarity with Native Studies notwithstanding, his reasoning is ignorant and arrogant. Evincing a typical limitation of numerous White commentators, he is unable to interrogate his position of privilege, which allows him to scold Natives for their "stasis" and "backwardness." It is no surprise that he glorifies the conquest of the Americas, for his lack of grounding in Native discourse allows him to gloss over dispossession and genocide. Hitchens, in other words, is unable to see the history of the Americas for what it is, for to do so would be to admit his complicity in unspeakable horror. Denial rather than knowledge supports his essay. This he makes clear in his closing point: "[I]t is

sometimes unambiguously the case that a certain coincidence of ideas, technologies, population movements and politico-military victories leaves humanity on a slightly higher plane than it knew before. The transformation of part of the northern part of this continent into 'America' inaugurated a nearly boundless epoch of opportunity and innovation, and thus deserves to be celebrated with great vim and gusto, with or without the participation of those who wish they had never been born."[39]

Ironically, Hitchens is an ardent critic of Israel, and ridicules those who conceptualize Zionism as "a nearly boundless epoch of opportunity and innovation." He also decries Israel's pageantry, which always is executed "with great vim and gusto," and takes the state to task for excluding Palestinians in its national processions. It is apparent that Hitchens has not benefited intellectually or economically from Zionism and is therefore free to approach it with a critical eye. His regrettable article, published over a decade ago, thus undermines his validity as a critic, for it illustrates that he is unable to position Zionism accurately in the larger complex of imperialism from which its strategies were derived. Consequently, his discussions of Palestine are, in the end, useless, because they are rooted not in association, but hypocrisy and personal expediency. Based on his celebration of American conquest, it is best for supporters of Palestine to leave Hitchens and similar writers with a simple message: we do not need you.

Hitchens corroborates all of America's founding myths, the same myths that have evolved into a type of national imagination that endows the United States with the manifest right to invade other nations at will. That imagination allows unfettered support for Israel by investing the Zionist narrative into local expressions of Manifest Destiny.

That *The Nation* would publish such views is surprising, not because of its hatefulness, but because of its absolute lack of originality. One can find Hitchens's position, with attendant variations, in nearly every liberal, centrist, and conservative American ideology. Professor Michael Berliner, for instance, writing for the hyper-patriotic Ayn Rand Institute, seems almost to echo Hitchens seven years later. "It was Columbus' discovery [of America] for Western Europe," he suggests, "that led to the influx of ideas and people on which this nation was founded—and on which it still rests."[40] Berliner, as is fashionable in popular American and Zionist discourse, goes on to reinforce as truth those things that history has shown to be false: "Prior to 1492, what is now the United States was sparsely inhabited, unused, and undeveloped. The inhabitants were primarily hunters/gatherers, wandering across the land, living from hand to mouth and from day to day. There was virtually no change, no growth for thousands of years. With rare exception, life was nasty, brutish and short: there was no wheel, no written language, no division of labor, little agriculture and scant permanent settlement; but there were endless, bloody wars."[41] This argument, of course, totally ignores the Aztecs, Incas, and Mayans, who had all developed highly advanced and sophisticated civilizations by European standards well before the arrival of Europeans. Those interested in Palestine will surely be familiar with Berliner's argument; it is a palimpsest of the Zionist mythos reinforced on the American landscape. As Nur Masalha has noted, "When discussing the history of Israel, many biblical scholars and Israeli publicists begin with a section entitled the 'Land of Israel'. The land, until the arrival of European Jewish settlers, is virtually barren, desolate and empty, waiting to be made fertile and populated by Israel; it is the

rightful property of Jews (a divinely 'chosen people'), and their superiority is defined in military power."[42]

Political critique, whether produced by American Leftists or Conservatives, therefore has little value when its critics are unable to detach themselves from mythology, in which case they employ patriotic language that glorifies dispossession even when they purport to do the opposite. Ultimately, these problems need to be analyzed and corrected. It is generally in popular, not scholarly, arenas that ideology is formed and transformed. Ideology, as scholars ranging from Louis Althusser to Edward Said have illustrated, controls, usually invisibly, the perceptions of the world that humans bring to all areas of interaction. More important, countering national mythos by comparing rhetorical phenomena—the biblical covenant primary among them—demands a reassessment of popular ethos. Decolonization, both physically and intellectually, is not an isolated undertaking; to approach decolonization in isolation is to succeed only partially before it will be superceded or appropriated by the dominant ethos.

Moreover, if we are to continue exploring comparative foundations as a remedy to colonialism and academic stasis, then those foundations need to be applied carefully and accurately. Reciprocal inter-communalism is both a product and a process. That is to say, one cannot construct comparative projects from within cultural centers; they are instead the result of detectable mimesis one finds encoded in Indigenous discourse, along with migratory strategies arising from the metropole. Activist Nigel Parry provides us with a good example of how comparisons rooted in stereotype or misinformation benefit nobody but the colonizer. In requesting money for electronic projects related to the Intifada, he argues that "Mohammed and Samira Palestinian-American in Chicago or

Michigan needs to accept responsibility for making sure their people don't become the Middle East's version of the Native Americans who they can see around them in their American parks, their hope stolen by centuries of injustice, their pain cushioned by alcohol and drugs."[43]

While some might forgive Parry's condescending tone, his juxtaposition of Natives with Palestinians is unacceptable by any standard beyond New Ageism and colonial discourse. What is one to make of the moniker "Mohammed and Samira Palestinian-American," not to mention the claim that Natives, on "alcohol and drugs," have no hope and do nothing but occupy park benches? A better and more accurate comparison might have noted that Palestinians should be proud to be classified in conjunction with their Native brethren, and that Natives offer Palestinians thousands of examples of courage and dedication in resistance. Natives have lost most of their land, but not their hope. (In every place where colonialism occurred, the notion that Indigenes have lost hope was/is used to justify dispossession.) Parry's apparent unfamiliarity with the voluminous literature that documents the survival of hope among Natives leads him to an analogy that undermines both Native and Palestinian resistance by rendering analysis that reinforces the colonial gaze.

Parry's quote is an example of what Partha Chatterjee calls a "derivative discourse," a model of resistance that depends not on the exigencies of Indigenous culture, but on the colonizer's epistemology.[44] A derivative discourse can invent itself either tacitly or explicitly, but its main function in the end is to reinforce the colonizer's ideas and perceptions. Avoiding such pitfalls is the primary reason that an investment in the Indigenous polity is the only place to begin work on inter-ethnic scholarship.

Narratives As National History

I want to shift focus now and examine how settler parables in Native America and Palestine formed the groundwork of national history. The process of forming national history is complex, because the world now is carved into nation-states and each nation-state draws on mythical or imagined origins in disseminating (generally propagandistic) knowledge about its creation. Therefore, I will look specifically at the United States and Israel, and single out features beyond those shared by all nation-states; that is, features that appear uniquely in the New World and Holy Land, along with a handful of other settler nations.

We saw earlier that the same biblical covenant was deployed widely in Native America and Palestine. The parable needs to be situated in the contexts of the economic, social, political, and psychological aspects of colonialism. The parable itself does not inspire the colonial errand. Rather, it justifies it. It also demystifies conquest by doubling as a promissory notice and a document of public relations. The benefits colonizers derive from colonialism, then, are bound to the implementation of alien narratives onto Indigenous land. The United States and Israel have drawn great wealth and power at the expense of others, and in gaining that wealth and power have positioned themselves as international states whose narratives are powerful in international affairs. But how do they bestow legitimacy on those narratives when ethnic cleansing is built into their foundations, as well as their actual histories?

The answer can be found in convergence of the mythical past with the existential present. While discussions of colonization should focus on colonialism as a modern phenomenon, it is impossible to fully understand colonialism without an exegesis of how

the past, sometimes the ancient past, informs individual and national consciousness in the present. Simply stated, sometimes one version of history, whether or not it is accurate, supercedes others. The version that prevails becomes the dominant epistemological axiom when the nation-state is formed. The process is nearly identical in the United States and Israel, and accounts at least in part for the continued interchange between those nations.

To understand the foundation of the interchange, it is necessary to explore the destruction of Canaan as it is told in the Old Testament. Biblical scholarship shows, of course, that for nearly all of the history of the Holy Land, Palestinians have been the majority, as well as its original inhabitants. As Mohamed Heikal notes, "The religious map [of the Holy Land] was...immensely complicated when Joshua crossed the Jordan and introduced monotheism to Palestine. What the Jews considered the 'promised land' was in fact a country or a group of city-states in which the Canaanite religion had been established for at least 1700 years, and where other religions were competing for attention. No valid claim can be made that Judaism was the 'original' faith of the area now in dispute."[45] Heikal goes on to explain that the area henceforth was marked by constant struggle among Jews, Canaanites, and others, until the Assyrian and Roman conquests reduced the Jews to a minority. The wars, for the most part, were laid to rest with the coming of Islam in the seventh century, when the religion and the Arabic language united the region.

This synopsis, it should be mentioned, is not meant to delegitimize Jewish claims to residence in the Holy Land, especially the modern Israelis who have made a home there. It is usually a pernicious act to assert superiority based on ancient events that may

or may not be accurate. Rather, it is to show that history and the ability to speak are tied to power. Those with access to wealth and resources are generally the ones with the privilege to codify their narratives into standard knowledge, which informs both individual identity and national culture. How often, for example, do we hear of Canaanite history in the United States? It scarcely exists, because no Canaanite history was recorded into a text that provided the basis for colonialism or nation building (extending to the New World). Heikal makes this clear: "Any Jewish claim [to Palestine] based on past domination can...only refer to a short period—a few centuries at most. The exploits of kings Saul, David and Solomon would have no relevance now but for the fact that the Jewish version of military history was included in the Bible."[46] Over time, this version of history not only became the standard interpretation of Palestinian history at the expense of Palestinians, but later would provide the rhetoric needed to mystify ethnic cleansing and domination.[47]

Zionist myths rooted in selective readings of history are by no means unique. They are, of course, unique in terms of their own peculiar features, but not as political phenomena. Abundant examples exist of selective or simply false narratives ascending to dominance, not least among them the tales of European civility employed at all times during the colonial era. *Civilization* and *civility* were terms injected with meaning based on a European image and defined according to the particularities of European cultures, thus rendering uncivilized those with different social systems and worldviews. To this day, we ascribe civility to those with Victorian speech and mannerisms. An example that rivals, and perhaps surpasses in gravity, the biblical myths utilized in Native America and Palestine is that of ancient Egypt, which was displaced from its Black reality and

appropriated, along with ancient Israel, into the European imagination as a crucial foundation of its civilization.[48] As time passed, it mattered little that ancient Egypt was a largely Black African society, for Europeans absorbed it and used it as an explanation of the origins of their civility and as a conceptual real estate treatise to justify incursions into Africa. In other words, ancient Egypt actually became White because the metropole imposed on it a White image. Truth, in this sense, has less to do with reality than with how reality is composed by those with a stake in its composition.

Manipulation of historical reality is precisely the phenomenon at play regarding Zionism's claims to Palestine. More important, it is the same sort of phenomenon that one finds at play in the settlement of the New World. It is not enough simply to interrogate and challenge Zionism's claims to Eretz Israel based on human rights, international law, and political conduct. The foundation of those claims needs to be invoked and deconstructed, although we need not allow the ancient past to overtake a modern framework. To do so, in any case, is unnecessary, and would undoubtedly lead to the same type of selectivity that we find in Zionism. Quite simply, the comparative foundation of New World and Holy Land conquest offers us an aperture to the past that exerts influence on the present. If we are truly to understand the conquest of modern Palestine, then it would benefit Palestine scholars to first turn a critical eye toward the conquest of the Americas. Conversely, scholarship about the conquest of the Americas is incomplete without retelling the story of Joshua crossing the River Jordan, because American settlers transformed themselves continually into a Hebrew tribe endeavoring to conquer Amalek. When possible, Indigenous histories can be reclaimed despite their wanderings across the ocean in order that decolonial politics might be understood more

thoroughly. As Ania Loomba explains, "Dominant ideologies are never total or monolithic, never totally successful in incorporating all individuals and subjects into their structures. So, to uncover the rootedness of 'modern' knowledge systems in colonial practices is to begin what Raymond Williams called the process of 'unlearning' whereby we begin to question received truths."[49]

The quest for Canaan is thus mythical and tangible. It neither precedes nor follows colonialism. Instead, it creates and then recreates itself based on the circumstances of contact and the struggles that ensue thereafter. Certainly a society's biblical veneration inspires the search for a New Canaan to cultivate as God's treasure. But the quest for Canaan does not appear until the moment of contact actually occurs. The appearance of Indigenes reconstitutes the conqueror's self-image even more than the desire to expropriate new lands and resources. We cannot solely explore the quest for Canaan as policy analysis. The quest for Canaan is the underlying discursive structure that informs policy and mobilizes large numbers of people to assume a mythical self-image. That self-image allows them to regenerate themselves according to the mythos inherent in their parables and their actual encounters with the Promised Land. We can thus explore the quest for Canaan in conjunction with policy analysis—or, more specifically, as the groundwork that provides policy with a mythical vocabulary of exodus and liberation. If we are to comprehend fully the conquest of the Americas and Palestine, then, we first need to demystify the quest for Canaan. Juxtaposing Natives and Palestinians is the best way to begin.

In Conclusion: One Step Ahead of Balfour

When I was in Palestine in 2001, a visit to the Palestinian Center for Conflict Resolution caught my attention for what might seem a mundane reason. Hanging from the wall of the meeting room was a large map of the United States depicting its geopolitical boundaries from the time of European contact to the present. The map first depicts a landmass with exclusive Native ownership and completes its progression with the United States on that same landmass with a few discontiguous islands of government-controlled Indian land scattered throughout. The Center's director, Zoughbi Zoughbi, explained to his guests that the map was given to him by an American friend as a reminder of the fate of Palestinians if their resistance to the Israeli occupation fails.

At first glance, the warning seems rather melodramatic. Demographic studies, after all, show that in twenty years there will be more Palestinian Arabs than Israeli Jews in the Holy Land (Israel proper, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip). Indeed, demographic debates within Israel actually denote the propensity of many citizens and politicians toward ethnic cleansing. It is considered reasonable and responsible in Israel to deliberate ideas about how to curb the growth of Palestinians, or, worse, ideas about how best to remove them. An April, 2002 poll found that 46 percent of Israelis support the removal (euphemized as "transfer") of Palestinians.[50] Although the Palestinians soon will trump Israeli Jews demographically—and by all indications will continue to do so in the future barring any further catastrophes—the main issue is not demographics; it is land. Palestinians currently face a severe land shortage that becomes bleaker each year. 78 percent of their ancestral land has already been forfeited, and the remaining 22 percent is largely under Israeli control. Israel's rate of settlement is quickly commandeering

much of that 22 percent, as are the bypass roads used to isolate Palestinian cities from one another and connect the settlers to Israel proper. The land that Palestinians do control is insecure, not terribly unlike the land of many Indian reservations, and essentially worthless as a geopolitical commodity. Although most Natives will recoil at the suggestion that they are powerless or pitiable, their recent land-reclamation struggles—which are often unsuccessful or replete with federal stipulations mired in legalese—indicate that once the colonizing power has absorbed Indigenous land it takes more than moral fortitude to get it back. No tribe in the United States actually thought in the early days of contact that foreigners would steal its entire landbase.

The point here is obvious: we are seeing in Palestine a remarkable recreation of American frontier history, and we are seeing the garrison nation employ the same physical and discursive methods. American history reminds us of the urgency of the Palestinians' struggle for liberation. Palestine is not many settlements and bypass roads away from becoming a romantic map on somebody's wall.

That Zoughbi's banner of inspiration would be a cartographic depiction of Native dispossession is not happenstance. Palestinians hold great interest in Natives and revere them as veterans of resistance. Appropriately, the level of support for Palestinians in Native communities is much higher than that of the general American population. For both peoples, colonization was portrayed as beneficial—culturally, economically, and spiritually. But both peoples have held firmly to their right to self-determination on the lands from which they originated. In colonial discourse in the New World and Holy Land, comparisons are built inherently into the nature of mystification.

Finding those comparisons is of utmost importance because justice is necessarily comprehensive; isolated quests for justice usually evolve into ethnocentric self-interest. I try constantly to make myself aware of the dangers inherent in political tunnel-vision, foremost of which is the danger of becoming complicit with an unjust power structure rather than working to hold it to its own ostensible standards. The same is true of any group or individual proactively engaged with the American polity. For Natives, the utility of internationalist perspectives is gaining currency among activists and intellectuals. The strategic and ethical expediency of such an approach assists greatly in utilizing international human rights law in various areas of contestation and creates salient alliances that broaden the baseline of anti-imperial activity. While the strategic and intellectual benefits of cross-cultural communication are evident in rather obvious ways, the argument extends into ethical territory: it is not absurd to argue that singularity in one's approach to issues of justice is not only shortsighted, but also immoral. To attack Israel while tacitly accepting or overlooking America's unjust history with tribal peoples is immoral, as well.

Moreover, those who support Palestinians are mistaken when they claim American policy in favor of Israel began in the twentieth century. It is not a modern phenomenon, though Israel is a modern state. Biased American policy began in 1492, the moment of European contact on American shores. In fact, were it not for Holy Land ethos underlying expansionist activity from Plymouth to Alaska, it is doubtful the United States would have been fully realized in its current form. American settlers filled with religious talk were one step ahead of Arthur James Lord Balfour.

In recalling the map on Zoughbi's wall, I often wonder whether it was printed with pessimistic haste. Certainly there will be more to add to it one day as those tiny shadings denoting reservation lands grow into sovereign nations, perhaps not as healthy and grand as they once were, but acting as claimants of prior dignity, nonetheless. And I hope the wall on which it hangs soon will reside within an independent Palestinian state. There is no doubt that Natives and Palestinians have risen from their predetermined fate in colonial ideology to articulate a solid sense of identity and a positive vision for the future that will continue, against all expectations, until the goals of return and redress are realized in full. Continually exploring and explicating the underlying features of the colonial enterprise is one way authors and activists can help. Forging connections across the shadow lines drawn by imperialist artisans is a healthy way to ensure that occupiers of native lands do not evade their history as conquerors in today's culture of decontextualization. Imperialism and Empire may be the order of the day, but they are soulless institutions that induce moral sickness and thrive on paradigms that rationalize greed and murder. They also create political cultures that exist with these acts silently at their moral center. As invaders and occupiers continue the quest for Canaan, it is essential to ensure that Canaan is never found.

Notes

1. Christian Zionists, particularly in the United States, tend to be more adamant in their disgust toward Arabs than even right-wing Israelis. Although the Israeli government and many of the Israeli people accept Christian Zionists' philosophical and financial support (both considerable), others note, accurately, that the support is patronizing and anti-Semitic, for one motivation of Christian Zionists is to ultimately convert the Jews.

2. American culture has evolved to the point where no American politician would say such things—unless he or she is interested in a public relations nightmare. Therefore, in the United States, public discourse has been transformed to a more civil framework, even if underlying attitudes have not evolved at all in some cases, as evidenced by the absence of apologies or meaningful reparations on the part of American leaders. In Israel, unfortunately, racist insults in the media and government are frequent. While those insults elicit protest, it is not yet enough for a politician actually to damage his or her career. This difference can be attributed to a timeline of acculturation. Israel is still a fledgling nation involved in real wars with its Indigenes. The United States, for the most part, has moved past that point in its history; battles are now conducted in the courtroom and media. When physical wars occurred, however, many of its leaders were no different than the variety evinced now in Israel.

3. Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 137.

4. Ibid., 144.

5. Quoted in Nur Masalha, *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians* (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto, 2000), 16.

6. Quoted in Edward Henderson, *Maps and Mythology* (Washington DC: American Educational Trust, N.D., 6.

7. Masalha, 26.

8. Michael Prior, "The Right to Expel: The Bible and Ethnic Cleansing," in *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*, ed. Naseer Aruri (London and Sterling, Virginia: Pluto, 2001), 17.

9. Quoted in Ward Churchill, *A Little Matter of Genocide* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1997), 2.

10. Quoted in Masalha, 58.

11. Quoted in Glenn T. Morris, "International Law and Politics: Toward a Right to Self-Determination for Indigenous Peoples," in *The State of Native America*, ed. M. Annette Jaimes (Boston: South End Press, 1992), 68.

12. Ibid., 68.

13. Quoted in Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall* (New York: Norton, 2001), 12, 13.

14. Quoted in Masalha, 56, 57.

15. See Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 61.

16. Shlaim, 102.

17. Quoted in Naseer Aruri, "Preface," in *The Palestinian Resistance to Israeli Occupation*, ed. Naseer Aruri (Wilmette, Illinois: The Medina University Press International, 1970), 1-2.

18. Historiography shows that early Zionists and Israel's founding leaders had a solid understanding of New World conquest, and both admired and appropriated some techniques from that conquest. Conversely, American leaders identified with their nation's own past in assisting Zionists politically and in the public sphere. See further Mohamad Heikal, *Secret Channels*; Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*; and Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*.

19. The Yishuv was the Jewish, mainly immigrant community in Palestine before 1948.

20. Amos Kenan, "A Dream Betrayed," *The Nation*, 4 May 1998, 16.

21. Generally considered to be a member of Israel's peace movement, Keenan often is criticized by Arabs and leftist Israelis who feel that the early ideologies to which he was exposed as a member of the Stern group have not dissipated fully.

22. I reject the allegation made by numerous Palestinians that Zionist crimes constitute genocide, for such a position does not hold with the international principles that define genocide; instead, they fit nearly perfectly with definitions of ethnic cleansing.

23. Churchill in *Genocide* argues that by proclaiming Holocaust uniqueness, American Jews and Israelis "construct a conceptual screen behind which to hide the realities of Israel's ongoing genocide against the Palestinian population whose rights and property were usurped in its very creation," 74.

24. Uri Avnery, "AMERICA! AMERICA!, or: The Height of Chutzpah," *Gush Shalom*, 12 May 2001, <http://www.gush-shalom.org/archives/article144.html> (18 May 2001).

25. See the chapter "The Red and the Black," in *Custer Died for Your Sins* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1970).

26. For analyses of international law as it relates to Natives and Palestinians, see Sharon Helen Venne, *Our Elders Understand Our Rights: Evolving International Law Regarding Indigenous Peoples*; and Naseer Aruri, ed., *Palestinian Refugees: The Right of Return*. Although neither book invokes comparative frameworks concerning Natives and Palestinians, it is evident that international law applies to both of their struggles in a similar manner.

27. Two fascinating examples come from Sean Gonsalves, writing in the *Cape Cod Times* (27 February 2001), and Mohamed Khodr, writing in *The Palestine Chronicle* (July 2000). Gonsalves, recounting a trip to the West Bank, describes the experience of meeting a settler, Efraim Mayer, who "compared the formation and defense of the state of Israel as being similar to America's founding and what happened to Native Americans at the hands of the European settlers." Said Mayer: "Indian people in the United States are not going to ask for a piece of land. They are not going to do any intifada to pick up from the United States pieces of Los Angeles. I'm waiting for the moment when someone goes to the government of the United States and says: 'We are going to fight for a piece of land,' and then starts to take pieces of land in the capital of the United States. It will be the last time that this guy opens his mouth in the democratic land of the United States." The settler acknowledges, like the respondents to my *Chronicle* article, that Palestinians are indigenous in the same way as Indians. Despite his horrid misinformation (understandable considering he is a settler) about Indians and their multiple attempts to regain land, his position tells us much about his political ideology: the colonial authority is the only one that counts, and the most preferable type of Indigene is the one who understands his role in colonial theology and accepts silently his disenfranchisement. It would probably upset Mayer, then, to know that Natives are continually pressing the American government to return land, and that innumerable "Intifadas" have occurred in American history, with more likely to come.

Khodr, writing amid the 2000 Summer Olympics in Australia, concocts a fascinating argument—quite seriously, in my opinion—that "we need an Olympics for the ethnically cleansed." In criticizing the United States, Australia, and Israel for their acts of ethnic cleansing, he offers inter-ethnic contexts for consumption. "The United States," he notes, "was built on the genocide of Native Americans and

supported Israel to commit the same history of ethnically cleansing the Palestinians." He later says, "The truth that America, Australia, and Israel stole the land of the original inhabitants, corralled the natives into reserves akin to concentration camps, kept them out of sight and out of mind, erased their history from school books, refused to admit their moral and historical responsibility for the genocides they committed, even refusing a simple apology to the descendants of the natives, can no longer be hidden from the eyes and minds of the world."

28. See <http://sf.indymedia.org/news/2002/01/114980.php>.

29. Ibid. In email correspondence with the author, Latuff explains that "state-sponsored terrorism is the main target of my cartoons." About this particular series, he notes, "Since mainstream media intend to depict Palestinians as the bad guys in this everlasting Middle East conflict, I tried to make sure to people that, as a matter of fact, Palestinians are victims and not aggressors. Then I made a connection between many oppressed people in past and recent world history with Palestinians."

30. Lee Maracle, "Song to a Palestinian Child," in *Bent Box* (Penticon, British Columbia: Theytus Books, 2000), 33.

31. In the collection, *Bent Box*, Maracle makes other connections with El Salvador, Nicaragua, South Africa, and Vietnam. In the poem, "Women," in the same collection, Palestinians are the main protagonists, 34.

32. Mahmoud Darwish, "Speech of the Red Indian," in *The Adam of Two Edens*, ed., Munir Akash and Daniel Moore (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 131.

33. Ibid., 136.

34. Ibid., 145.

35. A good example comes from Christopher Hitchens, who writes, "How can a sensibility that represents mass emigration and immigration [to the Americas] as mere conquest and settler colonialism dare to call itself 'progressive'?" See further Christopher Hitchens, "Minority Report," *The Nation*, 19 October 1995, 5.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Michael S. Berliner, "Columbus Day: A Time to Celebrate," *The Ayn Rand Institute*, May 1999 <http://www.aynrand.org/objectivism/columbus.html>. (22 March 2002).

41. Ibid.

42. Masalha, 4.

43. Nigel Parry, "An Open Letter/Appeal from Nigel Parry to Palestinians in the Diaspora during the September 2000 Clashes," 7 October 2000 <http://www.nigelparry.com/help-addameer.html>. (21 March 2002).

44. See Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London: Zed Books, 1986). For a good synopsis of the derivative discourse theory, see Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

45. Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), 294.

46. Ibid., 295.

47. For an excellent analysis of this phenomenon, see Keith W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*. For analysis of biblical history and hermeneutic interpretations, see Norman K. Guttwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*; and Norman K. Guttwald and Richard A. Horsley, eds, *The Bible and Liberation*.

48. For one of the first, but still one of the most powerful examinations of this process, see Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origins of Civilization*.

49. Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 66.

50. To view the results of the poll online, as well as explicit examples of how some Israelis articulate biblical narratives in justifying their colonization, see <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2002/04/03/60II/main505292.shtml>

Digging Up the Bones of the Past: Colonial and Indigenous Interplay in Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*

In decolonization, there is the need of a complete calling in question of the colonial situation. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: "The last shall be first and the first last." Decolonization is the putting into practice of this sentence. That is why, if we try to describe it, all decolonization is successful.

--Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*

Anishinaabe politician, author, and activist Winona LaDuke is one of the most recognizable tribal figures in modern America. Attaining minor fame as Ralph Nader's vice presidential candidate on the Green Party ticket in 1996 and 2000, LaDuke has often been assigned the role of Native spokesperson by non-Natives in both mainstream and leftist media.[1] The attention given LaDuke is focused overwhelmingly on her land reclamation and environmental work, which are detailed in *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Although LaDuke's status as a notable Indian is well established among non-Indian Americans, it is considerably more nebulous within Native Studies itself. Also, despite—or perhaps because of—her notoriety as an activist and environmentalist, LaDuke's work as a novelist has gone virtually unnoticed by either American or Native critics. Only a handful of reviews met the publication of her 1997 novel, *Last Standing Woman*, which has also received scant critical attention.[2] This chapter attempts to address that deficit by looking in detail at *Last Standing Woman*, placing emphasis on the interplay between White settlers and Indigenous Anishinaabeg.

While the multivocal, nonlinear structure in *Last Standing Woman* has been employed often in Native fiction—and, more specifically, in the fiction of LaDuke's Anishinaabe contemporary Louise Erdrich—the novel offers readers and scholars

valuable textual features for consumption and critique. One difficulty of examining the book, in fact, lies in the wide range of themes LaDuke presents: religious, feminist, activist, environmental, tribal, historical, colonial, decolonial, postcolonial, biographical, autobiographical. This ambitious range, coupled with the large number of characters in the book, challenges the reader and complicates the task of the critic. It is clear that when setting out to construct her first novel, LaDuke intended to avoid the comforts of conventional fictive expression by representing myriad voices in as many contexts as the scope of the project could accommodate.

Because of the novel's heterogeneity and the limitations of this project's methodology, I will narrow my framework to the novel's historical, colonial, decolonial, and postcolonial aspects, drawing from tribal, activist, and autobiographical themes where necessary to illuminate the primary concern of this chapter: the manner in which the encroachment of White settlers onto Anishinaabe land transformed Anishinaabe society and produced a cultural, political, and national interplay between colonizer and Indigene that underlies the development of both plot and character in *Last Standing Woman*.

The national interplay is especially crucial; it highlights the conflict between two separate ethnic groups struggling for the same parcels of land as separate national entities. That is to say, the categories of "ethnic" and "national" are conflated to the point that they evolve into the same entity; ethnic conflict therefore presupposes and ultimately foregrounds national conflict. All other conflicts in the text stem from this dispute. The portrayal of Indigenous-settler interplay may not be the greatest poetic contribution of the novel, but it is ubiquitous throughout the stories and worth critical appraisal. Of

particular importance is conceptualizing what end such an approach meets. In invoking a series of cultural and national interactions for discussion, I do not intend to argue that LaDuke creates a space for mediation, as critics such as James Ruppert have argued in regard to other novels,[3] nor am I much interested in the now well-worn concept of ambidexterity, which in a broad way asserts that subjects are able to move back and forth with varying degrees between separate cultural norms. While both of these paradigms may be at work in minor ways in *Last Standing Woman*, neither offers the reader or critic a comprehensive basis for interpretive projects. Instead, they would lead one to reductive categories. Disparate ethnic groups with disparate narratives focused on the struggle for identical commodities and the power to name and control those commodities interact in complicated arenas of contestation. The interaction, no matter its nature, will never be simple enough to assess using a fixed theoretical rubric. *Last Standing Woman* is no exception.

The Bones of the Past

Last Standing Woman focuses almost exclusively on the Anishinaabe people. Perhaps not by accident, the "cast of characters" presented at the opening of the book lists only Native characters, some with tiny roles, while no White characters are mentioned, even though some are crucial to the development of the narrative. LaDuke's strong interest in her people probably influenced the amount of Anishinaabe history, biography, and perhaps autobiography she incorporates into the plot. Before I analyze the interplay between settler and Native societies, it would be useful to briefly recount some of these features to better contextualize the forthcoming critique.

LaDuke does not try to hide the real nature of the events she presents. In a disclaimer at the start of the book, she writes, "This is a work of fiction although the circumstances, history, and traditional stories, as well as some of the characters, are true, retold to the best of my ability."[4] To approach *Last Standing Woman* simply as an historical novel is dubious, however. Although the genre still exists, it is rare when modern historical fiction is also deemed literary; the appearance of a historical masterpiece such as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or James Welch's *Fools Crow* is an infrequent occasion. First of all, the characters, plot structures, and textual features are often underdeveloped in historical fiction because the author focuses on fictionalizing actual events at the expense of these things; the development of characters and storylines in historical fiction, in other words, is contingent on a predetermined course of past events. In *Last Standing Woman*, LaDuke manages to move beyond this formula and employ artistic license in her fictive rendition of modern Anishinaabe history. The historicity of the novel is a structural strategy, not a comprehensive structure.

We can look momentarily at one way this strategy functions. A constant theme throughout the work is the effect of the past on the present. To LaDuke, these effects are not merely cosmetic; the unfolding of each historical moment will reverberate indefinitely in a cycle with consequences not only in the present, but also on the past and for the future. These moments are expressed metaphorically at times. The recurrent theme of ancestors' bones, for instance, can be read both literally and symbolically. Throughout the second part of the book, Anishinaabe characters fight to reclaim the bones of their ancestors, which were unearthed and sent to various East Coast museums or forgotten in the rush of modern construction. While the struggle over these bones of

the past actually occurs and is presented as a literal contest in *Last Standing Woman*, its metaphorical qualities are crucial. The fight to uncover hidden histories and return to the people items of the past wrested from them throughout the ages guides the plot development of numerous Native texts and frames the arenas of contestation in *Last Standing Woman*. LaDuke is concerned not only with the actual bones of the past, but also with the effort to name and control those bones by correcting the historical mythologies that became institutionalized in the colonial culture. In an interview with *The Progressive*, she speaks forthrightly about the desire to transform and rename: "The last 400 years have been about building empires. This is not sustainable. Empires are about taking what doesn't belong to you and consuming more than you need. In order to move forward, we need to acknowledge this ongoing history. This is the fundamental paradigm of appropriation that remains unquestioned in America. We need to ask, 'What right does the United States really have to this place?'"[5]

The theft of Anishinaabe bones is only one horror in a series of pernicious colonial encounters, many of which LaDuke recreates with passion. The novel, which spans the years 1800-2018, introduces the encroachment of settlers and missionaries into Anishinaabe territory. That encroachment, according to historian Melissa L. Meyer, resulted in considerable social upheaval: "As Euroamericans created societies of their own, they increasingly sought to incorporate or absorb the land and resources of Indian groups. But the concomitant of incorporation for native people, one that world-systems theorists usually mention only in passing, was marginalization."[6] This not only initiated the dissolution of lifeways, according to Meyer, but, more important, the expropriation of land: "Substantial land cessions began with the 1837 Treaty negotiated at St. Peter's, the

first treaty to recognize the rights of the 'Chippewa Nation' to cede portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin."[7] Much land would be lost in the following decades: "Through a negotiation process that often placed them at a disadvantage, the Anishinaabeg relinquished the larger portion of northern Minnesota between 1837 and 1883."[8]

LaDuke illustrates how the loss of land transformed Anishinaabe spiritual practices and social systems. She details the rapid changes governmental infringement onto Anishinaabe territory entailed—for instance, when the Anishinaabe Diaspora has reached its full extent in 1930: "That year, many were to go. Soon there were no longer enough to attend to the ceremonies. The drums were left on their own."[9] The changes are not limited to the Natives, however; corrupt agricultural bylaws, as presented in the novel, permit banks to withhold operating loans to White farmers, inflaming tensions among farmers and Indians. LaDuke also examines changes within government policy and among white settlers. Her multi-dimensional exploration of conflicting cultures and national narratives is perpetually fluid, allowing for a thorough gaze at the comprehensive dynamics of colonialism in Minnesota. This approach is important in creating fuller aesthetic designs from which to frame dialogue among characters and institutions with conflicting interests and worldviews: Lance Wagosh and Elaine Mandamin, the tribal chairman and the principled community activist; Norman Grist and George Agawaateshkan, the bigoted White farmer and the advocate of Anishinaabe traditions; individual farming and egalitarian agriculture; hierarchical social systems and cyclical worldviews. Although much of *Last Standing Woman* is predicated on exposing the results of land theft and cultural sacrifice, LaDuke avoids recounting or creating simple binaries for ethical consumption. Rather, she complicates each conflict, ranging

from the interpersonal to those involving entire nations. Readers are offered a wide range of interplay as a result. These relationships are crucial to the expression of moral complexity in the text.

The invocation of broad historical dynamics is relevant to this point. LaDuke moves beyond the theft of land as a historical groundwork to frame the narrative's progression. The technique is a realistic presentation of actual events. "Settlement," Meyer explains, "did not threaten the Anishinaabeg as much as deforestation, environmental degradation, and declining animal populations did."[10] The actualization of these threats is presented throughout the novel, sometimes in detail, along with more extensive analyses of modern conflict in northern Minnesota. Some of the more notable historical portrayals in the novel include the Dakota War of 1862,[11] the advent of the 1867 Nelson Act,[12] the ratification of the 1887 Dawes Allotment Act, the sale of allotments to White settlers, the appearance of government anthropologists at White Earth, the devastation of forests by logging companies, the consolidation of organized Anishinaabe resistance, the occupation by Anishinaabe activists of tribal headquarters, and the legal struggle to regain stolen land.

It would be reasonable to argue that the unearthing of these "bones of the past" is more than a political and aesthetic strategy. LaDuke probably had culture in mind, as well. According to Basil Johnston, "Traditionally, Anishinaubae history and heritage were taught by the elders and others, who instructed the people in everything from history, geography, and botany to astronomy, language, and spiritual heritage, at family and community gatherings during the winter months.... The nightly winter gatherings were lessons, not simply storytelling sessions as so many people refer to them today."[13]

LaDuke, then, had no desire to construct the present independently of the past. Perhaps she had no point of reference to do so, either. Readers are thus shown a continual dialogue among various episodes that converge as a function of memory, and that are called into existence with the spoken word. In *Last Standing Woman*, the present invariably includes the past, and the past is an inevitable object of imagination.

This may help to explain why LaDuke incorporates biography and autobiography into the narrative. While many first novels rely on these techniques, often as a cover for underdeveloped authorial skills, in *Last Standing Woman* LaDuke seems to consciously prescribe them as a function of the text. LaDuke's incorporation of Anishinaabe history into the plot probably also necessitated an approach to characterization filled with realism. The biographical sections of the novel are, of course, marked by great artistic license. Their biographical elements are detectable, nonetheless. American Indian Movement [AIM] activist Warren Wabun, for instance, bears a resemblance to Anishinaabe activist Dennis Banks. Numerous characters are also given traits based on members of the White Earth Land Recovery Project, a grassroots group LaDuke helped found in 1988. Autobiographical elements are more subtle, but apparent throughout. LaDuke resembles community leader Elaine Mandamin, who leads the Protect Our Land Coalition, an organization similar to the White Earth Land Recovery Project. I would argue that although LaDuke certainly had her own life in mind when employing Elaine, she is not a fully autobiographical character; she simply shares qualities with the author. This claim is viable because Alanis Nordstrom also encapsulates some of LaDuke's own history and personality. Alanis's father, Jim (aka, Jim Good Fox), spent time as a Hollywood Indian extra, something LaDuke's own father, Vincent, did in the late fifties

and early sixties.[14] Moreover, Alanis's tacit desire to sacrifice her comfortable professional life off the reservation in order to return home to White Earth—something she does eventually—is akin to LaDuke's own experience. LaDuke, who grew up on the West Coast, explains, "Ever since I was little I wanted to come back and work in the Indian community. My father is from White Earth, and I never felt entirely accepted on the West Coast."[15]

These biographical and autobiographical themes indicate LaDuke's commitment to her community. They also connote a type of politics and view of ecology connected to place-based encounters. In the novel, the politics and ecology of place are given a hierarchical arrangement in which the Anishinaabe community is afforded ecological stewardship over the land. The land, in turn, sustains the community's collective identity and ultimately incorporates ecology into all political expression. That political expression arises most explicitly with the appearance of settlers and missionaries—and, by extension, government bureaucracy. The place-based encounter, then, is both violent and personal. Its violence transforms ecological political identity into a resistant consciousness that inspires the people—bearers of the land's identity—to challenge those who reduce land to demographics and statistics. While settlers and government agents wish to expropriate the land for economic or ideological reasons, the Indigenes resist that expropriation by keeping their identity bound to land.

The biographical and autobiographical themes are thus a product of the place-based encounter that informs the structure of politics and ecology in the text and that remains inseparable from real history. Rather than craft a pan-Indian novel or a story set in an Indian nation other than her own, LaDuke chose to concentrate on the

Anishinaabeg, a decision that lent itself to realism. This overtly political and historical approach can certainly be attributed in part to the limitations of a fledgling writer, but this type of analysis will not explain the approach fully. I would argue that the novel's realistic structure is generally in keeping with Jace Weaver's communitist readings of Native literature.[16] Weaver's theory, which argues that a commitment to community and activism ("communitism") acts as a thematic marker in Native letters, has not become the prevailing theoretical rubric in Native literary criticism, but it offers points of relevance in critically examining Native texts. Despite the problematics of the communitist formulation—which derives primarily from novels such as Leslie Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer* that seem to break Weaver's pattern by complicating perceptions of "community"—it can usefully contextualize *Last Standing Woman*. Community (the Anishinaabeg) and activism (the return of land and self-determination to the Anishinaabeg) both underline the development of the narrative. In fact, both act as catalysts in the imposition of resolution onto various textual conflicts. The traces of biography and autobiography that can be found throughout the book, therefore, intimate a calculated convergence of fiction and reality. Reality is used to frame fiction, and, more important, to guide its internal ethics and provide it with communal appeal.

While I am concerned with LaDuke's activism insofar as it informs numerous themes in the novel, I will place more emphasis on textual criticism that follows generally with the communitist framework, as it is the most appropriate Native critical rubric for this particular book. Another useful methodology comes from Robert Warrior.

In *Tribal Secrets*, Warrior explores questions about Native literature by accentuating productive models of critical inquiry. He writes,

> If [the Native] struggle is anything, it is the struggle for sovereignty, and if sovereignty is anything, it is a way of life. That way of life is not a matter of defining a political ideology or having a detached discussion about the unifying structures and essences of American Indian traditions. It is a decision—a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies—to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process.[17]

This passage is of particular interest in relation to *Last Standing Woman*, which clearly inspires analysis of sovereignty and "the unifying structures and essence of American Indian traditions," which I will assess below. Taken together, Weaver's communitism and Warrior's intellectual sovereignty underline LaDuke's creative offering. I will use these models—along with, to a lesser degree, the work of Louis Owens and Craig Womack, and a sampling of postcolonial theories about the creation and maintenance of identity and memory—to guide my critique. This all furnishes context for an analysis of the novel's underlying features. Assessments of history and politics can contribute to a broad understanding of the book's overarching structure and general aesthetics, but to overlook interplay and national signification would render any analysis incomplete. It is in this spirit that I will focus on the interaction of Anishinaabe civilization with American society, with which it battled over land and resources and within which it was forcefully absorbed. The renewed battles for land and resources and

the conscious detachment of the Anishinaabeg from American social systems further offer the critic opportunities to examine the politics of occupation, dispossession, and resistance, along with its attendant discursive substructure.

"A Peculiar Kind of Hatred"

LaDuke occasionally reverts to socio-political commentary during transitional points in the narrative. One of the more powerful of these commentaries deals with the normalization of racism among garrison settler societies. The narrator, Ishkwegaabawiikwe (Last Standing Woman), suggests that "[t]here is a peculiar kind of hatred in the northwoods, a hatred born of the guilt of privilege, a hatred born of living with three generations of complicity in the theft of lives and land."[18] She goes on to say,

> The poverty of dispossession is almost overwhelming. So is the poverty of complicity and guilt. In America, poverty is relative, but it still causes shame. That shame, combined with guilt and a feeling of powerlessness, creates an atmosphere in which hatred buds, blossoms, and flourishes. The hatred passes from father to son and from mother to daughter. Each generation feels the hatred and it penetrates deeper to justify a myth.[19]

These passages powerfully highlight the psychology of colonization by evoking an attitude about the moral culpability underlying American sensibilities that is common among Native critics, and indeed among many minority scholars. They also illustrate the workings of a national narrative predicated on the oppression of others. Much more is at work, however. Ishkwegaabawiikwe implies that settlement inevitably results in poverty

not only for the dispossessed, but also for the settlers themselves. This poverty is multivalent, transcending simple economics. It also affects the social perceptions of those either directly or indirectly complicit in the suffering of others—a poverty of altruism and egalitarianism, so to speak.

The passages also highlight LaDuke's propensity for formulaic plot structures, for the language appears to be rather didactic. A similar style is used in other areas of the novel, and is most evident in dialogue. It is difficult to determine whether that didacticism is an authorial strategy or an unintended structural fallacy, and it is perhaps irrelevant to speculate. It holds a more specified importance in that one cannot decontextualize the didacticism from communitism. This point, of course, does not mean that didacticism and communitism are inseparable or that communitist methodologies are necessarily didactic. Rather, it indicates that communitism lends itself to didacticism and that didactic methodologies sometimes guide Native fiction that emphasizes community empowerment (Louis Owens, *Bone Game*; Lee Maracle, *Ravensong*; Paula Gunn Allen, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*). Indeed, the same is true of some Palestinian fiction (Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, *The Ship*; Yahya Yakhlif, *A Lake Beyond the Wind*; Yasmin Zahran, *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*). We will see in chapter four how Native and Palestinian authors sometimes use a different approach in attempting in fiction to strengthen their communities. Didactic fictive qualities are, in the case of *Last Standing Woman*, a heavy-handed response to heavy-handed American imposition. LaDuke's critique of that imposition ultimately permits her to display more features of the Anishinaabe than the settler community.

Furthermore, she is able to complicate colonial and Indigenous interplay. It is one of the stronger qualities of *Last Standing Woman* that LaDuke avoids a simple oppressor/oppressed binary in describing Indian-White relations. Although real estate agents and government bureaucrats are rightly depicted without sympathy as conniving thieves, the White tenants of stolen land are shown to be unwitting victims of government treachery along with the Natives. In one scene where White farmers gather to discuss the fraudulent nature of their land purchases and the threat of Indian repatriation, it is made clear that the Natives are not the only victims of dishonesty: "'It's not the Indians' fault,' John Makela said loudly from the midst of the murmurs and nods. He was a tall lanky man in a plaid shirt with rolled-up sleeves. The room went silent as all eyes turned to him. Forks now rested on plates. 'This has to do with the federal government screwing us all up, and they only just figured it out.'"[20] This does not preclude criticism of their role in land expropriation, though. Rather, it complicates simplistic historical valuations by showing colonialism to be a layered and complex process. As a result, an extensive groundwork exists for a nuanced look at the manner in which competing claims of Indigeneity intersect with colonialism and resistance.

This is further made possible by the novel's structure. The final section, "Journal of Ishkwegaabawiikwe," confirms that the novel, as a reflection of the Anishinaabe worldview, is intended to be cyclical rather than linear: "I do not believe that time is linear. Instead, I have come to believe that time is in cycles, and that the future is a part of our past and the past is a part of our future. Always, however, we are in new cycles. The cycles omit some pieces and collect other pieces of our stories and our lives."[21] Ishkwegaabawiikwe's proclamation is reminiscent of a personal philosophy LaDuke has

expressed in the past. In an interview with the *Multinational Monitor*, she explains that "[w]e have to figure out how to leave things alone, and build an economic system that's not built on a linear model, but instead on a cyclical model, because that's the natural world—it's cyclical and not linear. That is going to take a lot of transformation."[22] LaDuke succeeded in transferring this sentiment into an artistic setting. A cyclical foundation is evident not only in unorthodox temporal designs that defy consistency on a linear scale, but also in the repetition of the name *Ishkwegaabawiikwe* and the continuation of spiritual practices through the generations. The fight to reclaim land can also be seen as a perpetual cultural duty that necessitates continual resistance in cyclical form. In fact, it is most appropriate to conceptualize the novel's structure as a series of cycles because of its overlapping temporal sequences and inter-generational themes. Nothing, in other words, attaches neatly to anything else; the reader must complete a set of interconnected cycles in the form of flashbacks and flashforwards before finding cohesion in the multivocal stories presented by the narrator.

Within these cycles, the interplay of ethnicities and nations finds ample expression. I will take a look at some of them now in a point-by-point fashion, placing emphasis on various forms of dialogue between the Anishinaabe and American nations.

Dispossession

The expropriation of Anishinaabe land was a complex and extensive process. Since the Anishinaabe nation once extended from throughout the Great Lakes region to the upper Plains, it is difficult to assess such broad historical dynamics in conjunction with any work of literary fiction. I am concerned with the scope of dispossession LaDuke presents in the text, which is essentially limited to White Earth. This

dispossession occurs in a variety of ways, initiated by the ambitions of American expansionism, which, LaDuke indicates, is connected to capitalist voracity. (Dispossession in the novel is also a byproduct of neocolonialism and corrupt tribal leadership, which will be treated below in another section.) Two conditions in particular are worth our attention: the encroachment of logging companies and the chicanery of White realtors who operate under the protection of American government officials.

The logging companies are shown to be purveyors of extraordinary destruction. That such a portrayal would appear in a LaDuke novel is hardly surprising since she has often expressed vitriol at their treachery. She notes, for instance, that Anishinaabe "lands were taken primarily by lumber companies. So the foundations of some great fortunes were based on somebody else's worth.... The miracle of America's prosperity was to the detriment of indigenous people."[23] This formulation is fictively illustrated in *Last Standing Woman*. It is explained that in the late eighties "the tribal government had been lavishly entertained by a number of large corporations interested in logging the land and building a pulp plant expansion on the reservation. Finally, Potlatch, a British conglomerate, leased almost half of the tribal land from the tribal government and entered an agreement to build a new mill."[24] This comes on the heels of a longstanding logging presence on the reservation: "After years of having trees and land stolen out from underneath their feet, giving away reservation land for logging and milling was the final straw."[25]

Readers are thus shown a set of conflicts bound to both biological and environmental factors. While the logging companies are meant to be perceived as negative institutions, they are considered exemplars of ingenuity in the overarching

American imagination. In keeping with realism, LaDuke recreates the ascendance of corporate culture into the American identity. In this national axiology, exploitation becomes normalized as a cultural enterprise. This cultural enterprise, however, lies in stark contrast to pre-contact Anishinaabe forms of egalitarian governance. Interplay, therefore, is rooted in incongruous worldviews and social systems. The result, according to LaDuke in an interview with Tim King, has been devastating: "Our land sustains our spirit.... The loss of our land has resulted in the loss of our traditional values."[26] We can posit reasonably that since LaDuke's primary concern is the recovery of that land—and, by extension, the accompanying traditional values—her fiction contains an activist aesthetics predicated on transforming commonsensical mores of the dominant culture. The aesthetics, to borrow a term from Edward Said, are contrapuntal insofar as they appropriate colonial discourse and expose its ethical fallacies. This has long been a fictive technique in Native America; to continue interrogating its underpinnings would help explicate crucial dialectical patterns in the literature arising from various Indian nations.

The expropriation of Native lands though unscrupulous realtors functions similarly, though without as much subtlety. In *Last Standing Woman*, questionable land sales are conducted mostly by Lucky Waller, referred to as a "land stealer" in the book. When Mesabe and his wife, Equayzaince, visit Waller in 1916 to repay a monetary loan granted to Mesabe's grandmother, Mindemoyen, they are treated to the nuances of American legality. Waller informs them that the money was not used for a loan, but as a land purchase:

> "You keep that money," Waller puffed. "It's all taken care of."
>
> Mesabe insisted on paying back the money. He pushed the pile of fifty single dollar bills across the desk to Waller, but the speculator would not touch the money from the Indians.
>
> "No, thank you," Waller said, as if he was politely refusing an offer. "I bought that land, and I don't intend to sell it back," he said, impatiently stating his version of the obvious.[27]

Mesabe later provides his version of the transaction: "She has not sold the land. She only borrowed money from you. Now we're here to pay it back."[28] Waller, however, has the legal leverage to retain the land not only because of the jurisprudence of the American legal system within which he works, but also because he tricked the non-English-speaking Mindemoyen into formalizing what she thought was simply a loan with her thumbprint. (The same thing happened to LaDuke's own great-great-grandmother, who could not read or write English.)

Waller represents a system of ordinances alien to the Anishinaabeg. The concept of "law" is important here. Waller's ability to legally wrest land from the Natives through a trickery that is upheld by the tenets of American legality connotes, first and foremost, a divergence in worldviews.[29] This legality is both hierarchical and arbitrary. It is hierarchical because it forges legitimacy based on its ability to forcefully assert its hegemony; it is arbitrary because it works in the service of its own broader political ideology and imposes its will on reluctant subjects. Differences between Anishinaabe and American requirements for landholding often catalyze various conflicts throughout

the text. The legal dialectic itself, in other words, is the conflict. It has no resolution based on negotiation as the Americans define it, because that definition exists within its own peculiar legal features—legal features that can never be neutral because their creation can feasibly be attributed in part to a desire to expedite the process of land appropriation. And even when they nominally favor the return of land to Natives, state ideology and so-called national interest usually preclude legal obligation. LaDuke, in turn, employs a strategy of cultural and geographical restoration to counter these hegemonic maneuvers of the colonial power. She declines entry into the conceptual boundaries of American governance, preferring instead to empower the Anishinaabeg based on their own national imagination.

An attempt of this nature is never without difficulty. The United States is a reality that continually shapes the daily lives of its Native wards. Sensitive to this fact, LaDuke avoids expressions of nativism; instead, she enters into a textual dialectic with agents of the colonial culture. The cyclical structure of the novel allows her to draw meaningfully from the past in order to contextualize each moment of contestation in the present. The survival of the Anishinaabeg in the novel is thus constantly fluid and transformative. Such poetic strategies intersect with Craig Womack's "Red Stick" approach to Native literature, which assumes that "Indian viewpoints cohere, that Indian resistance can be successful, that Native critical centers are possible, that working from within the nation, rather than looking toward the outside, is a legitimate way of examining literature, that subverting the literary status quo rather than being subverted *by* it constitutes a meaningful alternative."[30]

Neocolonialism

Neocolonialism has become a serious problem for numerous tribes. While certain Indian nations have managed to avoid neocolonialist leanings, others have recently experienced them in various ways as a consequence of their liberation movements. The Anishinaabeg are among the Indian nations to have splintered as a result of a corrupt or autocratic tribal government. The corruption of the Anishinaabe tribal council in the seventies and eighties was tied to economic benefits afforded the council by logging companies, against the wishes of the tribe itself.

Neocolonialism is almost always connected to disparate economic privilege, and its creation is a form of mimicry outfitted to whichever local conditions give it definition. As Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman observe, neocolonialism is a continued incursion of Western influence, even if Western occupiers have been physically removed from the indigenous landscape (which is not the case with any Native tribe). "This continuing Western influence," they write, "located in flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military and the ideological (but with an over-riding economic purpose), was named neo-colonialism by Marxists, though the term was quickly taken up by leaders of newly or soon to be independent countries. Although the name apparently privileges the colonial, the process itself can be seen to be yet another manifestation of imperialism."[31] The "manifestation of imperialism" evinced by the corrupt tribal government in *Last Standing Woman* arrives primarily in the form of corporate greed. Its pandering to the whims of lumber executives produces an archetypal class division in which members of the tribe lose resources without spiritual or monetary compensation while leaders in the position to make decisions grow disparately wealthy.

LaDuke depicts this economic and philosophical schism in relation to corporate exploitation. Lance Wagosh, the tribal chairman in the late eighties, is shown to be little more than a lackey. When the tribe opposes the construction of new lumber mills, the tribal council assents nonetheless. The reason soon becomes obvious: "Money and favors for approving the new mill's permit were already beginning to roll into the council. Lance Wagosh bought a brand spanking new, fully pinstriped, turquoise-colored Chevy extended-cab four-wheel-drive pickup truck, and a new sparkle-finish bass boat with a 150-horsepower Mercury outboard motor appeared on a trailer in the driveway of another representative's house."[32] These events lead reservation activists to destroy logging equipment and occupy tribal headquarters.

In this sequence, the interplay between colonizer and colonized becomes layered and difficult to explicate as part of any formulaic theory. It is indicative of LaDuke's sensibilities as a thinker that she chose to avoid simplistic social relationships that dichotomize conflicts into right/wrong binaries based solely on ethnic affiliation. She is more concerned with oppression and exploitation as ideological tools and political realities. Ethnicity, therefore, is never a prescriptive motivation for certain forms of behavior in the text. Since exploitation is made to be dynamic, the Anishinaabeg themselves, although the longstanding recipients of imperialism, are not automatically disqualified as oppressors by mere virtue of their tribal identity. The loss of egalitarian integrity can be described as one of the more tragic results of colonization. In exposing Anishinaabe neocolonialism, LaDuke attempts to restore that egalitarian integrity by invoking cultural legacies and traditional governance as viable solutions to economic and environmental disarray.

In order to construct such propositions, LaDuke interrogates the assumptions underlying American social norms. Conceptions of "right" and "wrong" are predicated on ethical perceptions from within the colonial culture—it has the power to decide what type of behavior is accepted or censured, and can do so with support based on extensive strategies of citizen socialization. And it has the power to exercise oppression by force because it has been normalized as a commonsensical and necessary form of domestic order in the American consciousness. For instance, the justifications issued by Wagosh for his behavior in the wake of the tribal offices takeover[33] are premised not on his own actions, but on the perceived intransigence of the activists. When asked by radio DJ Tim Harvala about why his own Anishinaabe subjects might take such drastic action, context is of no consequence to Wagosh, who ignores Harvala's prompts and instead deploys responses he feels will evoke a supportive response among American listeners. "'These people are terrorists. They are destroying federal and tribal property.' He paused. 'They have never clearly presented a grievance, and all we know is that they're violating the law."[34] Wagosh's testimony is supported by his lawyer, who remarks, "The point is...they are breaking the law. You can see that for yourself, and you can't expect us to defend them."[35]

The irony here is most likely intended. The point, of course, has nothing to do with whether or not the activists are breaking the law; it has everything to do, on the other hand, with their receiving adequate representation in momentous decisions made in their name without their support—decisions that benefit only a few at the expense of the environment and the struggle for self-determination. We can see in Wagosh's discourse the power of naming in the American colonial culture, which has evolved over time from

a settler discourse into a national consciousness. That is to say, when Whites first arrived on Native land, any resistance they met was conceptualized as terrorism; it is apparent in Wagosh's passage how this formula has survived into contemporary times essentially intact. Those who break the accepted status quo, even when that status quo is visibly unjust, are immediately dubbed *terrorists* or other pejorative designations. This culture is countered by a proactive social mobilization undertaken by the occupiers of the tribal offices. Occupation leader Elaine Mandamin, for instance, tells a different story: "The issues are always too complicated for the media to explain in fifty words or less so they just breeze over them. And the FBI isn't interested in letting our demands get out because public opinion might side with us. They prefer to just paint us as crazed terrorists." She later provides documentation "on how we lost the land and the legislation, the deal with Potlatch, the burial ground desecration, and what we know about the tribal government's collaboration. These are just the highlights."[36] The social action, we can see, is located in opposition to the commonplaces of the dominant culture. Even while it draws inspiration from Indigenous traditions, then, it is firmly positioned in modernity, indicating the dynamic nature of both culture and cultural recovery.

It would be a mistake to view these interchanges simply as competing forms of discourse, even though in a limited sense they all are that. First of all, since *Last Standing Woman* is an activist treatise as well as work of literary fiction, I find it important to move beyond vocabulary in analyzing its themes. More important, a discernible value judgement underlies the conflicts presented above. This fact will render untenable any analysis in which truth is relative as an object situated within socially constructed abstractions. In *Last Standing Woman*, a trenchant evaluation of who is

acting justly—and whose actions are with justification—is essential to any critical dissemination of the text. If all actions are viewed relatively, then no implication of the colonial and neocolonial regimes will have enough currency to adequately represent the intentions of the author, which are geared in part toward social transformation. These oppositional but intertwined discourses, in short, are hierarchical throughout the novel. The first hierarchy is attached to power: in America's political culture, colonial discourse supercedes active Anishinaabe voices and has the ability to name and define resistance in negative terms. The more important hierarchy is attached to morality: in the novel's aesthetic structure, Anishinaabe voices are given textual authority and have the ability to rename and redefine colonial discourse based on the inherent strength of their resistance.

Sovereignty

These conflicts inevitably lead us to the question of sovereignty, perhaps the preeminent and most controversial issue in Native America today. Although the amount of sovereignty afforded each tribe in the United States varies, the Native struggle for sovereignty has generally produced mixed results replete with ironies. When a tribe, for example, wrests jurisdiction of its internal political affairs from American jurisprudence, its members often find that there is little recourse in the event of dishonest leadership because the American polity has been eliminated as a forum of contestation. Conversely, when the American polity plays a direct role in any tribe's internal political affairs, corruption and bureaucratic imposition compel that tribe to seek more self-determination, usually in the form of sovereignty. These issues are all related ultimately to the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, which granted tribal governments certain organizational power but also left the United States Department of the Interior as responsible federal

party for oversight in tribal resource management. In addition, James J. Rawls has demonstrated in his evaluation of modern American legislation, such as *Santa Clara Pueblo v. Martinez* (1978), *Oliphant v. Suqamish Tribe* (1978), *Arizona v. California* (1983), *County of Oneida v. Oneida Indian Nation* (1985), and the numerous cutbacks initiated by the Reagan administration, that tribal resource management tends to be unsteady even if various powers have been transferred from the federal government to Indian tribes.[37]

No assessment of dispossession and neocolonialism in *Last Standing Woman* can develop completely without a brief examination of the sovereignty problem. LaDuke, it should be mentioned, does not explicitly approach questions of sovereignty in the novel, nor does she discuss them frequently in interviews or political writings. If we are to explore sovereignty in *Last Standing Woman*, then, it will be on the assumption that its unstated existence influences the conflicts among American officials, tribal authorities, and tribal activists. Since dispossession and neocolonialism in Native America are usually bound to the sovereignty question, it seems appropriate to conceptualize the land-reclamation struggle and tribal offices takeover to some degree as byproducts of ambivalence in regard to the utility and limitations of sovereignty at White Earth. This ambivalence has generated a lack of clarity in governmental jurisdiction and a layering in the relationship between Natives and Whites.

For the Anishinaabe activists, the tribal offices takeover is the result of unavailable or intractable legal systems. The activists are marginalized in both American and Anishinaabe courts, left without legal recourse to successfully litigate their grievances because of the ambivalent nature of Anishinaabe jurisdiction as it relates to

the peculiarities of federal law. Some ironies ensue, the most relevant of which LaDuke makes clear. It is a measure of sovereignty that allows the tribal council to make momentous economic decisions of its own accord; ideally, these decisions would be made in accordance with traditional Anishinaabe governance, wherein egalitarianism guides a collective decision-making process. However, the onset of neocolonialism, itself an outgrowth of colonization and dispossession, occasioned a mimicry of colonial influence, and thus the survival of colonization despite its changed dynamics. What allowed for the logging contract between the tribal council and the corporations, therefore, also disallows dissenting Anishinaabe meaningful representation to contest agreements that will harm the tribe and its surrounding environment. Lance Wagosh makes this clear when he explains to the activists, "We have the authority to negotiate and sign leases."[38] The activists, lacking the ability to challenge injustice in the colonial or tribal courts, subsequently circumvent standard legal procedures and seek to expand participatory options through direct action rather than acquiesce to the existent social and legal norms. In essence, they attempt to reformulate the institution of sovereignty and strip it of its counterproductive ironies.

In reformulating this institution, sovereignty as a concept and legal procedure comes into question. Judging by the actions and goals of the Protect Our Earth Coalition, LaDuke conceives of sovereignty outside the boundaries of legal interchange. Rather, it exists in the imagination, in memory, and in tradition. In *Last Standing Woman*, sovereignty ceases to remain a complex and often intractable controversy and is instead carried into alternate dimensions. This is evident in a statement Warren Wabun issues to reporters during the occupation: "This is our survival." In fact, LaDuke avoids the word

totally even while dealing explicitly with its reverberations probably because she is more concerned with self-determination and independence as political realities rather than with sovereignty as a legislative technicality. Both self-determination and independence would be inherent in any ideal sovereignty but are rarely realized in actuality among tribes either aspiring to or having acquired sovereign status. The type of self-determination and independence LaDuke advocates includes protection of the environment (flora and fauna), reinvigoration of Anishinaabe traditions, and education promoting collective Anishinaabe interests.

For this to occur, three things must be challenged and ultimately eliminated: 1) sovereignty that privileges certain groups within tribes at the expense of others, to the detriment of tribal peoples as a whole; 2) the continued existence of neocolonialists who are given credence in the colonial culture as tribal voices but act in reality as mouthpieces for that culture's interests; and 3) the degradation of "bones of the past" and the lack of human voices to recite life-bearing stories out of slumber and into existence. In the novel, the dialogue between colonizer and Native is invariably rerouted along this path by Native characters who tacitly reinforce Anishinaabe worldviews by defining those worldviews in opposition to foreign philosophies forced on them by agents of American imperialism.

Anthropology

LaDuke's writing is generally forthright, but complex enough to furnish the realistic tone with a poetic counterpoint to social critique. In one area, however, the tone lapses into heavy-handed commentary. The section that introduces anthropologist Dr.

Ales Hrdlicka is replete with blunt commentary ridiculing the early anthropological enterprise.[39]

It is no surprise that LaDuke forfeits subtlety in discussing early twentieth-century anthropology. What can be described as disdain often marks opinions of anthropologists among Indians of all tribes. Even Anishinaabe author, poet, and scholar Gerald Vizenor, usually playful and sardonic, speaks of anthropologists with scorn. When asked by A. Robert Lee "Why have you been so fierce in the views you have entertained about anthropology?," Vizenor replies,

> I have not been fierce enough about anthropology. There are no measures of fierceness that could be reparations for the theft of native irony, humor, and original stories. There's not enough time to be critical of the academic enterprise of cultural anthropology. This work that plagues every native in the universe is despicable; it's only in the interests of profits and power that these studies and simulations of culture are given institutional authority. Cultural anthropologists pose with their booty, and universities honor these academic predators with advanced degrees, and then they go out to create even more anthropologists to study natives and others around the world. Imagine that injustice in the name of higher education and academic ethics. Consider the arrogance of a culture that believes in outside experts, the experts who create simulations, and consider a culture that believes in such experts over natives, over the wit and wisdom of native stories, and the cultural predators who reduce the

> original, mythic, and ironic perceptions of natives to mere material evidence.[40]

We can consider this passage broadly representative of the way Western anthropology is received in the field of Native American Studies.

LaDuke's fictive representation of Hrdlicka and his anthropological theories is no less scornful. The Natives themselves, many of whom were issued threats to their livelihood if they refused to cooperate with Hrdlicka's research, consider him a charlatan whose methodology approaches outright insanity. One Indian summarizes Hrdlicka's findings with a mixture of shock and amusement: "The doctor man says I am a full blood and my brother is a mixed blood."[41] Mindemoyen, a full-blood, is given a similar diagnosis: "You will be happy to know that you are of mixed blood descent."[42] Her response is typical of other Anishinaabeg who are offended by the doctor's physical violations: "'*Chimookomaan geweenadis*,' she gasped. 'The white man is crazy.'"[43]

The introduction of anthropology at White Earth is a scientific counterpart to the ascendance of American law. Both were foreign to the Anishinaabeg but managed nevertheless to impose themselves on the tribe. The anthropological complex is easier to analyze than either neocolonialism or American legalism because its foundations are mired in racist notions of biological determinism; it is therefore unethical by mere virtue of its pseudo-scientific manifestations. More crucial, though, the emergence of anthropologists signaled the depredation of sacred ground, including the theft of tribal relics and skeletal remains. The interaction of anthropologists with Indians in *Last*

Standing Woman traverses legalism, discourse, and culture and forces readers to also consider the corporeal effects of colonization. This applies to the living and the dead.

In the novel, the appearance of Hrdlicka and his racist methodologies not only represents actual history, but is also symbolic of a physical violation that compromised the spatial integrity of the Anishinaabeg by transforming a community that was interconnected physically and spiritually into individual science experiments. Diseases such as smallpox and tuberculosis also compromise spatial integrity. Hrdlicka's foreign inscriptions on the Indigenous body are characteristic of an altered landscape—both geographical and bodily. The removal of bones from the landscape is also relevant to this point. This type of desecration is related to Western scientific inquiry, which has a long history of physical violation well beyond Native America. (The use of human subjects for scientific inquiry played out gruesomely during the Holocaust, for instance.) Years after his visit, Hrdlicka is exposed as a fraud and in the nineties Moose Hansford, a reservation activist working in response to the 1990 Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, volunteers to transport ancestors' bones from the Smithsonian back to White Earth for ceremonial reburial. In this case, the resistance outlasts injustice and LaDuke manages to impose resolution on the conflict.

Colonial and Indigenous interplay, then, is less complicated in this instance. Anthropological science is heavy-handed and un-nuanced, and LaDuke's ridicule of that science is equally forthright. LaDuke presents readers with a binary in which ethical sensibilities are mobilized to reject unjust scientific inquiry. In the battle of moral integrity, as in the battle for the physical relics and bones themselves, the Anishinaabe narrative prevails.

My critique is relatively simplistic here, illustrating opposing ethical axioms and explicating LaDuke's either/or challenge to readers, in which she impels those readers into a proactive stance based on the moral strength of the Anishinaabe position. I offer this interpretation in the spirit of LaDuke's aesthetic peculiarities in that section of the novel. To make the reading more interesting, one might explore LaDuke's own role as an author vis-à-vis anthropology. Her history as an expatriate who decided to return to White Earth and become active in its political affairs can place her own authority in question with political opponents and skeptical critics alike. Such a critique is not offered in order to further obfuscate academic debates about authority and identity; rather, it reflects an issue LaDuke herself explores subtly in the text.

One scene in particular captures the ambivalence of LaDuke's positioning as a simultaneous insider and outsider to Anishinaabe culture. After FBI agents fire upon Alanis Nordstrom during the occupation, the following scene transpires:

> Willie [Schneider] picked her up, and she stammered at him, half angry, half hysterical, telling him what had just happened as if he did not know. "Why did they shoot at me?" she demanded of Willie, who looked blankly back at her and saw a face flushed with fury and fear. "Why did they shoot at me? I am not..." she almost said *I am not one of you*, and then caught herself [emphasis in original].[44]

Alanis, through a gradual process of re-assimilation, eventually realizes that she is, in fact, an Anishinaabe, and ultimately integrates herself into White Earth culture, during

which her self-professed perspective as an outsider diminishes over time. She marries Willie and, in a rather heavy-handed exposition of LaDuke's sentiments regarding her own belonging at White Earth, gives birth to the third Ishkwegaabawiikwe, the narrator/storyteller of *Last Standing Woman.*

While this sequence provides the novel with a necessary plot resolution, the type of transformation Alanis undergoes is never so simple in actuality for diasporic Natives. Whereas the White Earth Anishinaabeg readily accept Alanis in the book, most tribes across the United States employ more stringent, albeit unofficial (i.e., grassroots) standards in bestowing insider status on those who grew up removed from the tribe and its primary landbase. The particulars of this phenomenon, of course, depend on each tribe and its social habits, but it is fair to suggest that in general a large number of Indians are tacitly wary of those who grew up off the reservation. One's position of enunciation and one's ability to speak for the group are in great debate in all aspects of modern Native Studies.

This is all broadly connected to the history of anthropologists on reservations. The racist presuppositions anthropologists brought to and extracted from Indian country continue to reverberate both on and off the reservation. They have also largely become normalized as common knowledge in America's popular culture, consigned to continual dialogue with the resistant voices arising from Native America. Moreover, early anthropological paradigms have been sporadically internalized—either deliberately or unwittingly—by a number of Natives themselves, resulting in something of an unconscious anthropology; that is, a mimicry of colonial knowledge under the guise of authenticity, given credence as legitimate in the dominant society but rejected as

inauthentic on the reservation. LaDuke's political opponents on and off White Earth can surely use this phenomenon to damage her authorial credibility, and any Native author is aware of the often-contentious dynamics that mark popular and scholarly receptions of Indian literature. Given all these factors, LaDuke's position of enunciation is worth attention, not simply because the field of Native Studies places emphasis on these matters, but because it is something LaDuke herself incorporates into the structure of *Last Standing Woman.*

We can see that LaDuke, particularly in the case of Alanis, contests the standard perceptions of authenticity in Native America and attempts to preempt any accusation that she is an interloper. Because she understands the sensitivity to external epistemological impositions on the reservation, she avoids playing the role of unconscious anthropologist by providing the narrative with layered voices that supplement the recitation of Ishkwegaabawiikwe's story. She thus creates a novel whose philosophical underpinnings are given to the narrator and the characters for articulation. Because of the novel's structural complexity, LaDuke manages to position herself as an observer who endeavors to chronicle and not lecture. Textual authority is relegated to Ishkwegaabawiikwe, and the tribe, by virtue of LaDuke's recreation of actual events, retains the capacity to disseminate its history on its own terms. She also relegates moments of didacticism to the strictures of Anishinaabe political narratives, which are in turn reflected by biographical and autobiographical characters. The current dearth of criticism, even among Anishinaabe scholars, makes it difficult to discern whether LaDuke succeeded in diminishing her authority by producing a communal text, for judgment of this attempt can come only when numerous Anishinaabe readers speak about

them. It is notable, however, that LaDuke deliberately avoids using unconscious anthropological expressions, preferring instead to recapitulate, with aesthetic markers, the unfolding of Indian-White relations in overlapping patterns.

The appearance of Ales Hrdlicka, then, mitigates any impulse to implicate the Anishinaabe characters who evince latent tendencies to appropriate American discourse as a moral stimulus. So heavy-handed is Hrdlicka's methodology that he acts as the center from which subsequent cultural conflicts emanate. The interplay is, in the end, multivalent: rather than existing as a linear arena for binary exchange, Indian-White dialogue is perpetually fluid, cyclical like the text from which it derives its layered expression.

In Conclusion: Colonial and Indigenous Interplay

The lament of every traditional critic is the lack of space with which to work. As a result, important poetic and political features are inevitably omitted in the explication of literary works. This is true here. One is able to approach *Last Standing Woman* from any number of perspectives. I have focused mainly on the interplay between Natives and Whites at the expense other textual elements. The main reason for this methodology is because cultural and political interaction is featured prominently in the novel. Moreover, it is crucial for critics of Indigenous literatures to continue unearthing relevant colonial patterns as they are articulated in creative forums. This not only helps us better understand the texts themselves, but also provides important socio-political knowledge and offers the possibility of international dialogue among Indigenous groups.

As the above analysis indicates to some degree, in a communitist novel like *Last Standing Woman* the act of creating fiction conditions the history incorporated into that

fiction, while the history allows the fiction to be located in a particular space and time. LaDuke's approach, then, complicates distinctions between myth, legend, and history. Every theme, no matter its primary intent, serves to dissolve the social categories so prevalent in Euro-America. The result is a rich depiction of Anishinaabe life that incorporates individual components of existence into the communal whole. Furthermore, we can see in *Last Standing Woman* that conflicting political, social, and cultural narratives foreground much of the action, a realistic strategy often employed in Native fiction. LaDuke, however, avoids using negotiation as the catalyst for resolution. Rather, she creates ethical boundaries that also act as the groundwork of respective national imaginations. The conflict between Natives and Whites, in other words, is presented as a struggle between two nations, and LaDuke is interested in assisting the Anishinaabeg in the full restoration of their self-determination. She constructs persuasive ethical markers throughout the novel to assist in this task. These are not, it should be mentioned, ethno-ethical markers; when Native characters collaborate either physically or philosophically with colonizers, the same type of condemnation is applied to them. In fact, Native literary critics have given little attention to neocolonialism despite the fact that Indian collaborators fill the pages of Native fiction. Other aspects of cultural and political interplay also remain attenuated in certain areas. Ultimately, applying focused criticism to interchange rooted in conflict can greatly assist the desire among critics worldwide to fully demarcate and understand the scope and effects of imperialism and garrison occupation.

Although *Last Standing Woman*, like all novels, is unique, the motivations underpinning much of the narrative are not. Much literature produced by writers of color

explores and questions the conventional dichotomy between fiction and history. I have situated some of my criticism in a postcolonial framework, but a more appropriate site of analysis remains what is usually dubbed ethnic studies, i.e., disciplines that explore the history, politics, and literature of particular ethnic groups with emphasis on internally constructed critical paradigms. In the African American, Asian American, and Arab American traditions, novelists commonly employ historical aesthetics in order to dissolve the boundaries between sociology and creative expression. A reading of Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* or Toni Cade Bambara's *Those Bones Are Not My Child*, for instance, will show that the authors raise similar questions about the relationship among the novel, the oral tradition, and the historical text. In Native America, various novels also raise those questions, among them Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Betty Louise Bell's *Faces in the Moon*, and Leanne Howe's *Shell Shaker*. We are thus able to situate *Last Standing Woman* in a particular tradition of narrative fiction found in the canons of other ethnic groups.

Most important, we are able to learn about respect, survival, and preservation from a nation still struggling for full independence. LaDuke herself puts it best: "In our case, we're a forced culture. The Creator gave the Anishinaabeg people an immensely biodiverse forest. And he said, 'Within this forest you will find all of your medicines. All the things you need to make your houses. All the foods you will need to sustain your families. The materials for all the baskets and other objects of amazing beauty that you can make. You can fashion all of those things from this land, upon which I'm putting you. You job, though, is to take care of that which I gave you. You have a good life.

You have to take care of those responsibilities yourself, because I gave you the ability to think.' That is in essence our teaching."[45]

Notes

1. LaDuke receives frequent mention in more marginal publications such as *Ms.* and *The Progressive* but has also been profiled in mainstream giants like *Time* and *People.*

2. The most notable critical study to date has been Jean Strandness, "When the Windigo Spirit Swept Across the Plains...: Ojibway Perceptions of the Settlement of the Midwest," *Midamerica: The Yearbook of the Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature* 25 (1998).

3. See James Ruppert, "Mediation in Contemporary Native American Writing," in *Native American Perspectives on Literature and History*, ed. Alan R. Velie and Gerald Vizenor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 7-24.

4. Winona LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman* (Stillwater, MN: Voyageur Press, 1997), 10.

5. Sonya Paul and Robert Perkinson, "*The Progressive* Interview: Winona LaDuke," *The Progressive*, October 1995, 39.

6. Melissa L. Meyer, *The White Earth Tragedy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 3.

7. Ibid., 36-37.

8. Ibid., 37.

9. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 102.

10. Meyer, 2.

11. According to historians Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, the causes of war extended beyond "cultural conflict" and can be largely attributed to government treachery. They write, "Added to the problems growing out of cultural conflict was the failure of reservation administrators to meet the obligations incurred in government treaties. Too few schools were built or teachers provided, and instruction in farming was insufficient. Goods intended for allotments turned up for sale at exorbitant prices in traders' stores where desperate Indians purchased them on credit, thereby creating yet another trader's claim against annuities. A corrupt Office of Indian Affairs did nothing; on the contrary, by allowing inflated claims to be assessed against the annuities earmarked for a whole band, the Office made matters worse." See further Gary Clayton Anderson and Alan R. Woolworth, eds., *Through Dakota Eyes* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1988), 19.

12. The Nelson Act laid the groundwork for the creation of the White Earth Reservation.

13. Basil Johnston, *The Manitous* (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), xx.

14. See Margaret Nelson and Marjorie Rosen, "Friend of the Earth," *People*, 28 November 1994, 149.

15. Paul and Perkinson, "*The Progressive* Interview: Winona LaDuke," 37.

16. Weaver notes that communitism "is formed by a combination of the words 'community' and 'activism.' Literature is communitist to the extent that it has a proactive commitment to Native community, including what I term the 'wider community' of Creation itself. In communities that have too often been fractured and rendered dysfunctional by the effects of more than 500 years of colonialism, to promote communitist values means to participate in the healing of the grief and sense of exile felt by Native communities and the pained individuals in them." See further Jace Weaver, *That the People Might Live* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), xiii.

17. Robert Allen Warrior, *Tribal Secrets* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1995), 123.

18. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 126.

19. Ibid., 126.

20. Ibid., 137.

21. Ibid., 299.

22. "Native Struggles for Land and Life: An Interview with Winona LaDuke," *Multinational Monitor*, December 1999, 23.

23. Ibid., 20.

24. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 147.

25. Ibid., 147.

26. Tim King, "Native Americans Take Back Land," *The Progressive*, August 1994, 14.

27. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 89.

28. Ibid., 89.

29. In her interview with *The Progressive*, LaDuke forthrightly calls this to our attention. When speaking of the battles waged by the White Earth Land Recovery Project to reclaim stolen land, she invokes the hierarchy of legal privilege: "We have fought for a long time to get back our land and have not had that much success in the legal system. To be honest with you, I think that's because we're kind of in

the court of the thief." In fact, the land reclamation struggle has had only limited success: "We haven't had success in getting [the government] to return much land. They have returned 10,000 of the 250,000 acres which they have."

30. Craig Womack, *Red on Red* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 12.

31. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 3.

32. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 149.

33. LaDuke does not employ imaginative artistic license in depicting a takeover of tribal headquarters. It actually happened at White Earth in 1986, for reasons nearly identical to those presented in the novel. During that time, over 500 people were arrested.

34. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 169.

35. Ibid., 169.

36. Ibid., 179.

37. Rawls offers an important synthesis of the nuances and implications of sovereignty, especially as it relates to freedoms and limitations allowed by the federal government. See further, James J. Rawls, *Chief Red Fox is Dead: A History of Native Americans Since 1945* (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1996).

38. Ibid., 219

39. Like other characters in the novel, Dr. Ales Hrdlicka was an actual person whose real name is used in the novel. Melissa Meyer recounts some of Hrdlicka's undertakings on the reservation: "In 1916, Dr. Hrdlicka traveled to the White Earth Reservation with Commissioner Robert C. Bell to gather further evidence for his anthropometric inquiry [a theory that claimed to scientifically distinguish full-bloods from mixed-bloods]. They drove from home to home to examine individual Indians whose status was in question, directing special attention to 'the skin of the body, especially that of the chest, to the hair and eyes, physiognomy and a number of other features, such as the nails, gums and teeth.' One test Hrdlicka employed 'consisted of drawing with some force the nail of the fore-finger over the chest' which created a

'reddening, or hyperaemia, along the lines drawn.' Supposedly, mixed bloods' skin reacted more vividly—unless they were anemic," 168.

40. Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 90.

41. LaDuke, *Last Standing Woman*, 64.

42. Ibid., 65.

43. Ibid., 65.

44. Ibid., 186.

45. "Native Struggles for Land and Life," 23.

The Kahan Commission Report and *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*: A Tale of Two Fictions

Deportation

Before they came for me
I took my voice and hid it under the dawn
so they found only my bleeding mouth, my broken
hands, my eyes empty of vision

They traveled
to every corner of my country,
frustration building
The sound of my voice split their heads like thunder,
my agony pumped through their veins

Later they took my bleeding mouth, my broken hands,
my eyes empty of vision
and threw them past the horizon
So I left them with a voice
singing its song of love for my country
which they will never understand
never embrace and never possess.

--Aminah Kazak

This chapter will shift emphasis from interplay to perspective. We saw in our discussion of *Last Standing Woman* that dialogue between colonizer and colonized develops and transpires in layered sequences. LaDuke generally endows those sequences with a hierarchical structure based on ethical positions she imposes on the text. All novelists bring ethical positions into their fiction. LaDuke's are noteworthy because they are predicated on resistant undercurrents bound to discrete cultural expressions. LaDuke allows her Anishinaabe characters to interact in multiple ways with colonial agents and institutions, but that interaction is always outfitted toward Anishinaabe empowerment. I spent little time in my analysis exploring the strategies underpinning the desire for empowerment, in either poetic or political terms. That will be done here in our look at

Liyana Badr's *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*, another semi-historical novel that works effectively in conjunction with *Last Standing Woman*. Whereas the last chapter focused on the moral currency of national interaction, this one will discuss the political and historical conditions that provide morality with its persuasive force. Either analytic approach can work successfully with both books.

I will proceed by examining two conceptualizations of the 1975-83 Lebanese Civil War, one literary and the other legal. The Civil War reached an international scale upon Israel's intervention in the early eighties, and produced even larger attention when reports of a mass civilian slaughter in two Beirut refugee camps, Sabra and Shatila, appeared in the Western media. *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* offers a fictional look into the lives of various Palestinians during the war, as opposed to the Kahan Commission Report, which deals primarily with the Israeli government and Israeli soldiers. As a result of these two starkly different interpretations of the same war, much of what I will discuss is perspective, by which I mean the social and moral methods of conceptualizing and explaining a set of events. Regarding the Lebanese Civil War, I will look specifically at the Israeli intervention and the massacre of civilians, events readily acknowledged by both Palestinians and the government of Israel. The purposes of acknowledgment in these two cases, however, differ greatly, and in these contrasts we have a fertile basis for examining social and ethnic constructions and how they affect the language of politics and the manufacture of knowledge. A crucial facet of literature is perspective, which helps determine how the author's stories achieve their larger ends—aesthetic, political, social, philosophical, moral, and so forth. Perspective allows an author to choose from a variety of strategies to employ according to the sensibilities of

the target audience. Accordingly, a critical methodology that assesses the interaction between author and reader gains a clearer stake in understanding the moral intricacies of social conflict (in this case, Lebanon's Civil War) based on the political perspective the author uses and the political expectations of the author's audience.

The Proclamation of Independence

The tenets of Manifest Destiny in the Kahan Commission Report were played out much earlier in the 1948 State of Israel Proclamation of Independence, which proclaims, "[Jews] brought the blessings of progress to all inhabitants of the country and looked forward to sovereign independence."[1] Much like the pioneering settlers of the New World, Zionist colonizers constructed themselves as bearers of enlightenment to a heretofore savage land.[2] This role is noted elsewhere in the Proclamation of Independence, which calls on Jews everywhere to assist in the development of the land, a task, the reader can infer, the Arabs were unable to perform. The attitudes displayed in this Proclamation were fundamental in construing the Arab as either a nonentity or the bearer of irrational aggression. Most Arabs, of course, would explain the situation in different terms, but the power to enact laws falls to those in the position to colonize. The colonized subsequently had no means of challenging or formulating the legislation of the dominant power, and so they were left to accept their fate as dramatized in the theology of divine progress. Much of the Israeli legislation directly before and after 1948 placed the onus of responsibility on Arabs for their own Diaspora, with the reasoning ranging from the argument that Palestinians willingly sold all their property to the duplicitous explanation that Arabs arrived only after Jewish immigrants cultivated the unused land. These reasonings developed into popular conceptions of who and what Palestinians are if

they were even considered to exist, serving a double-edged purpose: dehumanization and justification.

Briefly examining the legislative history of Israeli dealings with Arabs during this time, then, is a prudent way to approach modern Palestinian literature, whose themes deal largely with displacement as it occurred both legally and forcefully. This sentiment is articulated by Ami Elad-Bouskila, who argues that "[a]ny discussion of Palestinian literature must reach beyond purely literary issues into areas that cast light not just on its literature, but on Palestinian society itself."[3] Dispossession is the unavoidable thematic driving force of Palestinian authors, and this theme is invariably tied into the legal groundwork of Israeli treatment of their people. In discussing Palestinian writing one must go beyond the literary texts and also look into the political events that form much of the texts' contents. This is especially true of Badr's *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*, whose flashbacks into Palestine are the foundation of her display of the fragmented present in a war fought by refugees.

The Kahan Commission Report

The Kahan Commission Report was produced during the Lebanese Civil War, at the same time as *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* is set. The Report was sanctioned by the State of Israel following the 1982 massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon,[4] and was drafted by then Supreme Court President, Yitzhak Kahan, Supreme Court Justice Aharon Barak, and Israeli Defense Force Major General Yonah Efrat. The Commission was a watershed event in Israeli politics. Following the slaughter, some 400,000 protesters convened on Tel Aviv to demand an investigation into the massacres, which had received heavy coverage on the international news. Prime Minister

Menachem Begin was at first reluctant to probe into the event: "Goyim kill goyim, and they come to hang the Jews."[5] Under increasing domestic and international pressure, however, he named the Commission, "which was charged with ascertaining 'all the facts and factors connected with the atrocity.'"[6]

The public presentation of the commissioners' findings led to virtual hysteria, to use the phrase of then Knesset member David Magen. The Report drew an explicit distinction between direct and indirect responsibility. As William Smith observes, "It asserted flatly that the atrocities in the refugee camps were perpetrated by members of the Lebanese Phalangist forces, not by Israeli soldiers. The report described rumors that Israeli soldiers had been in the camps during the massacre as 'completely groundless,' and it denied that Israeli forces had any prior knowledge that a massacre would occur."[7] This assertion was laughable to anyone who took the trouble to read the plethora of Israeli, American, and Palestinian testimonies describing the Israeli soldiers not only as providing Phalangist militia direct access to the refugees, but also as shining lights on the camps during the three-day slaughter. It was, nevertheless, the premise on which the Commission was founded and its conclusions presented.

The Report implicated Defense Minister Ariel Sharon under the charge of "indirect responsibility." This charge led to his subsequent resignation under heavy pressure and to a successful lawsuit he filed against *Time* magazine two years later for incriminating him under false premises. The lawsuit thus cleared his name and served as the basis for his political reemergence.[8] Also implicated under the charge of indifference were Brigadier General Amos Yaron, Major General Yehoshua Saguy, Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan, and Major General Amir Drori. The Report, Smith explains, "was hailed in

the U.S. and Western Europe as a remarkable example of self-criticism by a democratic society."[9]

The Kahan Commission Report was more than anything a document of public relations, intended to quell an angry domestic citizenry and an international audience suddenly becoming skeptical about the righteousness of Israel's military cause. The exercise was successful, as evidenced by an excerpt of reactions Smith offers:

> Said the *New York Times*: "How rare the nation that seeks salvation by revealing such shame." In France, Interior Minister Gaston Defferre remarked, "This report is the honor of Israel. It gives the world a new lesson in democracy." The Italian Communist paper *L'Unita* called the report "a turning point for Israel," while Italian Journalist Arrigo Levi wrote in *La Stampa* of Turin: "It would be difficult to find any other nation at war that would let itself be subject to such an open and hard self-criticism."[10]

Also involved in this "new lesson in democracy" was the dichotomy between guilt for committing an atrocity and guilt for not responsibly preventing one, the primary basis for Israel's absolution in a massacre that it instigated, supported, and escaped not only without scrutiny by any international governing body, but also setting a new example for other Western democracies to follow. Sharon, a man with numerous political enemies in the Israeli Cabinet and Knesset, played the obligatory fall guy while the government and, more important, the political construction of Israel as a humane democracy were

strengthened. A young Palestinian woman in Lebanon during the massacre sums up the Report's publication with succinct clarity: "The Israeli judges did not tell half the truth. They just said enough to try to convince the world that they are honest people."[11]

If the actions of the Israel Defense Forces [IDF] were bellicose and detestable, and the construction of the murdered Palestinians as terrorists absurd, the effects of the Kahan Commission Report on Israel and beyond were ingenious and salutary, particularly as an exercise in the use of socio-political constructions to sustain an errand of aggression. As Robert Fisk explains, "Journalists who pointed out, with factual accuracy, that as an occupier, Israel was responsible for what went on inside the camps, were accused by Begin's government in Jerusalem of committing a 'blood libel' against Jews. 'No one will preach to us moral values or respect for human life, on whose basis we were educated and will continue to educate generations of fighters in Israel,' the Israeli government portentously announced."[12]

These issues become more complex. It would be inaccurate to call the Report a non-accusatory document. Beyond its role as a record of absolution, its moral stance was also based on a view of the supposedly intrinsic immorality of the Palestinians. Fisk notes that "the Kahan commission report was a flawed document. The title of the inquiry—into 'the events at the refugee camps...'—managed to avoid the fatal, politically embarrassing word 'Palestinian'. Was this not in fact an inquiry into 'the events at the *Palestinian* refugee camps'? But that is not what it said. And why did the commission use the word 'events' when it meant 'massacre'?"[13] Fisk touches on the central concern of my discussion: the use of language to sustain, appease, and regulate a domestic audience that for the most part had, and still has, been conditioned to accept the

employment of government newspeak in the defense of the divine foundation of Israel and the very foundation of the audience's own political sensibilities. This performance involves a perception of what the Palestinian is both as opposed to the Israeli and in the context of his or her own innate constitution. In fact, the most important suggestion I will have to make is that the Kahan Commission Report would have failed to appease anybody without the Palestinian-as-terrorist stereotype.

We must, therefore, look at the Commission's formation and its findings in a larger setting. First, while it was convened specifically to investigate the murders at Sabra and Shatila, its context encompasses the entire Civil War dating back to the mid-seventies. In the Report, an examination of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon, the dealings of Palestinians with Phalangists, and the Israeli decision to intervene is conducted in order to deflect attention from the camp incidents and legitimate Israel's military presence through reference to Palestinian war crimes and terrorism. So even though the Report and *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* differ in many other respects, both can be seen as separate presentations of the Civil War as a whole, with a specific emphasis on the Palestinians' role in it. The Report typifies Israeli state doctrine and policy concerning the war, and *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* a communal Palestinian perspective.

Of particular interest is the Report's introduction by Abba Eban, whose argument follows contradictory lines characteristic of Israeli apologist propaganda at the time. Eban is adamant in blaming the fate of the Palestinians on themselves, while at the same time having to confess that certain atrocities were indeed committed under the direction of Israel (I speak here primarily of the Sabra and Shatila massacres). In the grand style of

Robert McNamara, however, Eban frames this confession of brutality in a manner designed so that the nobility of Israel's intentions should never come into question. Even the most virtuous of nations, such as Israel, Eban argues, can fall victim to its very sense of decency. Palestinian civilians during the Lebanese Civil War were slaughtered by Israeli and Phalangist forces not out of brutality, he proposes, but because the need to preserve human hope and goodness was so strong that necessary miscalculations were made. It is also noteworthy that he admits that the formation of the Kahan Commission was not done in the interests of probing into the mass murder of Palestinian civilians, but to "cleanse the army" that permitted the atrocity "of any doubt" of its responsibility. The responsibility for bringing the Israeli military into the conflict is given to Palestinians, none of whom were sanctioned to serve on the panel of inquiry.

Eban defends this position by situating the Israeli Beirut bombings and the refugee camp massacres in a larger context:

> The memories of the bombardment of Beirut during July and August had injured the image of Israel as a humane democracy, and such episodes as the denial of water to the city in the heat of summer had evoked strong protests in Israel itself. But some of these impressions had been softened by the recollection of great cruelties inflicted on the Lebanese nation by the PLO before the Israeli invasion had even been conceived, and the hope that a new and better order of relations might be built on the debris of the war was shared by many who would not have advocated the war in the first place.[14]

He completes his summation by placing Israel itself in a more mythic and biblical framework:

> Three thousand years ago King David, having performed a spectacularly unworthy crime, received a visit from the prophet Nathan, who denounced his monarch with searing rhetoric: "Thou art the man." In ancient civilizations there is no parallel to this Hebrew notion of a ruler being subject to a law, as though he were his own subject. In other parts of the Middle East a swift and agonizing death would be the fate of anyone who laid doubt on royal infallibility. The appeal to a tribunal of conscience that stands above and apart from power is part of the prophetic tradition. It is only thus that power is humanized by being brought under the covenant of reason and law.[15]

Eban thus finalizes his argument that Israel was not only justified but acting with divine humanity in its bombardment and indirect slaying of civilians. The allusion to a natural matriculation toward law and order on the part of the Israelis suggests that Palestinians have yet to acquire such an institution (nor, according to Eban, have they ever). This is one reason why in the Western media the word "terrorist" can be used so loosely to describe an Arab but is an unthinkable descriptor to apply to a Jew.

The systematic blaming of Palestinians for their fate has been well-documented by Israeli, American, and Arab scholars. We can say with relative ease that it has at this

point in time been established in colonial discourse studies that Zionist colonization in the Near East was not simply a matter of persecuted Jews rising above their Arab persecutors in heroic manner. But in popular discourse—the American media, movies, sitcoms, and so forth—Eban's writings would find little resistance, for Palestinian voices tend to be dismissed as the ramblings of fanatics and pervasive Arab stereotypes have not been deterritorialized with as much success as those applied to women, Natives, Blacks, Latinos, and Jews. The massive attempt to change the script of the Twentieth Century Fox film *The Siege*, for example, in which Arabs are portrayed as monolithic threats to American national security, went unheeded by the studio, which received numerous complaints from Arab American awareness groups. In less obvious form, the aggressive Arab stereotype made its way into Spike Lee's *Get On the Bus*, a film coincidentally about racial consciousness, where a Jewish character explains to a group of African Americans that Jews must always be on the lookout for Nazis and Arabs.[16] This sort of thing is complemented by the fact that there also exists in the United States a great romance, based on its own history, of identifying with those wresting Edenic land from savages in the name of prophesy and progress.

If we keep the function of stereotype in popular culture in mind, we can better understand the context for Badr's three stories. In a Knesset speech on the Report, for instance, Sharon claimed forthrightly, "We have declared a war of destruction on Palestinian terror."[17] He then proceeded to scold his detractors: "You are throwing oil on the fire. You are throwing oil on the fire of anti-Semitism. A bonfire of blood libels."[18] He ended his speech in nationalistic glorification: "We succeeded despite these attempts against the Government to consolidate our positions in Lebanon, to enhance our

gains, and above all, at this moment, we are continuing the mopping-up operations and the collection of spoils from the centers of terror in West Beirut, and by so doing, we will complete this unprecedented operation of expelling the terror organizations from Beirut."[19] Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, on the other hand, who at one point interrupted Sharon's speech by asking "Why are you lying again?," seemed to adopt a more critical stance. He did so, however, without admitting to any Israeli aggression: "We are sure that the Israeli Defense Forces did not lend its hand to this spilling of blood."[20] Even in calling Sharon a liar, he reinforced the propaganda defending his government's manifest right to carry out action against a more savage people: "Why did we have to burden our soldiers with danger and bring indirectly on ourselves—with complete blindness—a responsibility that we cannot bear?"[21] Only a tactical position, not a moral one, is interrogated. In fact, Peres absolved Israel of responsibility in its Beirut campaign by announcing that it was undertaken in blindness—driven by the pursuit of moral purity.

The Commission Report itself was summed up well by Eban. The in-depth inquiry into war crimes in Lebanon concluded that while Israel indirectly allowed civilian bloodshed, it should be excused because the pursuit of terrorism was so strong as to warrant such oversights except in the case of Sharon and a few others, the ones who did not responsibly carry out their humanitarian duties as Israelis. Thus, nearly every time the word "Palestinian" arises, it is followed by "terrorists," while "Phalangist" or "Israeli," the two groups actually being interrogated for acts of terrorism, are followed by the word "organizations." In fact, the Report concludes that rather than receiving punishment, the Israeli Defense Forces should be commended for their sacrifice: "In the

war the I.D.F. waged in Lebanon, many civilians were injured and much loss of life was caused, despite the effort the I.D.F. and its soldiers made not to harm civilians. On more than one occasion, this effort caused I.D.F. troops additional casualties."[22] The closing remark is equally self-congratulatory: "We do not deceive ourselves that the results of this inquiry will convince or satisfy those who have prejudices or selective consciences, but this inquiry was not intended for such people. We have striven and have spared no effort to arrive at the truth, and we hope that all persons of good will who will examine the issue without prejudice will be convinced that the inquiry was conducted without any bias."[23] Needless to say, the fact that the inquiry into war crimes was conducted by the same government that dispatched the army to commit them makes obvious who such people with "prejudices or selective consciences" are.

To analyze how this rhetorical logic worked, we must turn to the discourse marking Arabs as congenital extremists. Once it was determined that rogue bands of terrorists were marauding around the Lebanese countryside frightening women and children (an element of discourse with which many American citizens can certainly identify), playing the role of hero and entering the fray even against one's better judgment were bound to be praiseworthy actions, even when innocents got killed in the process. Accordingly, the Kahan Commissioners and Eban note that were it not for Palestinians, the IDF never would have entered Lebanon to start with. It is purposely forgotten that were it not for the creation of a Zionist state on Arab lands, the Palestinians never would have entered Lebanon either.

An attention to these sorts of rhetorical complexities, as Homi Bhabha and others have keenly noted, allows one to turn Western history on itself by examining its

ambivalent processes of language and representation. Bhabha has argued that we should displace Western discourse and resituate it on the frontiers of Third World transformations; then, as John Phillips suggests, we can examine "the ways in which the contradictions and inconsistencies of colonial discourse produce a locus of instability from which the central epistemological, ontological, and legislative terms of the West can be challenged."[24] The moral context of perspective is crucial here. Israel's two primary audiences for the Report, its own populace and the Western media, needed to share certain implicit assumptions in order for the Commission's investigation and findings to be praised. In other words, what looks like contradictory, self-aggrandizing nonsense for the Palestinian or Israeli who was not captivated by the government rationale makes perfect sense to one whose ethical groundwork is premised on the state's exposition of the responsibility of a democratic nation. 400,000 people demanded an explanation for the military's inhumanity and were later treated to an investigation that bemoaned the government's lack of nobility. That the Israeli military would wittingly and calculatedly commit atrocities as part of the very creation and foundation of the state is to most incomprehensible; that an Arab would is considered commonplace and unquestioned. This kind of fact used to be commonly referred to as propaganda or indoctrination; I prefer to use the term perspective to examine how the ethical interpellations between state and society create specific, often unstated, values that form the foundation of judgment and cognition.

This is an important method for looking at literature, and particularly useful for Palestinian novels, which deal with a number of uniquely complex political situations. The words "propaganda" and "indoctrination," as they are commonly used, imply that

knowledge is passed on to a populace from a central location, usually the state, which uses a historical groundwork to sustain compliance in its citizens when it acts against other countries or sectors of its own society. (Americans, for example, are fond of referring to the "Founding Fathers" as exemplars of statesmanship and equality, and rarely mention that most owned slaves and contributed indirectly to what ultimately became the largest mass murders in world history.) These concepts, however, limit a detailed look into literary texts. "Perspective" is a more nuanced term, one that demands critics analyze the way the author interacts with the reader, the reader with his or her society, and the state with the text. In other words, social complexities require a nuanced look at how an author, be it a government official or a novelist, approaches an audience and what he or she expects the audience to accept without qualification. How the author's own political sensibilities shape the text is also of importance. In Israel/Palestine, where two distinct peoples share essentially the same space, writing toward an Arab audience necessitates a different rhetorical strategy than one would use with a Jewish readership. This becomes clear when the same set of events leads to wholly different interpretations (a commonality in the Near East). Understanding why certain rationalizations succeed with certain audiences is one way of better fully seeing how an aesthetic or political technique functions in literary fiction.[25]

For instance, once the perspective of looking at Israel's presence in Lebanon changes, so does the moral visualization of what occurred. Whether Palestinian civilians were killed is not in question from any angle. Why they were killed is. Concerning Israel's claim that it was in Lebanon merely to protect itself against Arab terrorism, David Gilmour writes, "For anyone who knew anything about the Israeli army, the idea

that it could be vulnerable to any guerrilla force was of course laughable. Israelis have claimed that theirs is the third or fourth military power in the world and General Eitan has gone even further, declaring that 'if the Russians start a war against Israel, the Israeli Defense Forces will win'. How the same man can also claim that the PLO represented a serious military threat to Israel is a mystery."[26] Gilmour exposes here another discursive subtlety and linguistic contradiction common in colonial epistemology.

Before proceeding to an analysis of Badr, I want to emphasize that it is important not to regard these shifts in perspective from simply an oppressor/victim binary. The contexts of language, morality, and force within which Palestinian, Phalangist, and Israeli violence exist create infinite evaluative possibilities. My purpose is not to determine who is more wrong or right, but to set up a context wherein Israel explanations of the Palestinian presence in Lebanon can be differentiated from the voice of an author whose concern, in part, is to challenge the popular perception of the Palestinians as hostile. At the same time, it is important to recall that in the Lebanese Civil War it was the Palestinian population, both military and civilian, that was under siege from Jews and Christians (readily acknowledged by all sides involved). It is this horror of being under attack that produces the thematic basis of Badr's stories. These events should never be ignored, and we should not transform what were actual lost lives into mere objects of theory.

Never Forgetting Memory: The Testimony of *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*

Having seen Eban's conception of memory, we can now turn to Badr and see the change in perspective concerning Lebanon's Civil War and the predetermined findings of the Kahan Commission. The contradiction plays itself out richly here. The stories in *A*

Balcony Over the Fakihani are partially matters of remembering Palestine and speaking against the use of force against Palestinians by Israel and the Christian Phalangists. In that regard, we can consider them to be more than art; they are political statements and expositions of suffering and loss. The Kahan Commission Report, on the other hand, was intended as an inquiry into the facts of Israel's invasion and a means of finding the truth. The findings, however, were fitted toward absolving Israel of any responsibility and placing the casualties at blame for the violence directed at them. Therefore, an element of fiction exists in the so-called facts. In looking at *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* we get a different sense of what occurred, through creative narrative, according to those who were there to suffer the bombardment and slaughter. To say so is not to predetermine judgment, but to understand better the language and perspective of Jews and Arabs as they both rely on the use of Palestinian stereotypes to achieve opposite political ends.

Badr's positionality as a writer is worth examining. A well-known novelist, she was born in Jerusalem in 1950 to a nationalist family. Her father, a doctor, was imprisoned during her childhood because of his outspoken nationalism and gained a reputation among Palestinians for his patriotic and philanthropic work. Because of both her parents' scrutiny from Israeli authorities, Badr has had an unsettled life. Her family fled to Jordan after the 1967 invasion, then to Beirut after Black September. She returned to Palestine in 1994 after stints in Damascus, Tunis, and Amman, currently runs the Cinema and Audiovisual Department at the Palestinian Ministry of Culture in Ramallah, and is a founding editor of the ministry's periodical, *Dafater Thaqafiyya*.[27] Her frenetic life offers her a unique perspective in conceptualizing and portraying the events of the Lebanese Civil War, primarily as a Palestinian who directly understands the life of exile

and the consequences of speaking against the colonial state. As a result, her characters' trajectories are similar to her family's and her own: Israeli military occupation in 1948 and displacement in 1967 from Palestine, in 1970 from Jordan, and from Lebanon during the war. Badr's primary audience is the community of Arab writers and a Palestinian readership. Her writing is also a testimony for and about Palestinian Arabs, and carries political weight well beyond their own society. The humanization of the Palestinian and the amelioration of the Palestinian stigma in other areas of the world, especially the West, on some level motivates practically every current Palestinian author. The translation of any Arabic novel into English, to provide a broad example, is seen as a minor triumph in the Arab and Arab American communities. Badr is first and foremost concerned with her own community, the Palestinians in exile or under occupation, but also with presenting that community to a larger audience for the purpose of accessibility and understanding.

The three stories in *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* are told from multivocal perspectives, a common technique in Arabic fiction, and are intertwined with one another to form a larger, cohesive tale. Badr's discussion of the war takes a different course from what we saw in the Kahan Commission Report. Her look into the Civil War begins with the siege on Tal al-Zaatar[28] and follows no chronological progression from there. Although the book is brief, its scope is much larger than that of the Report, which confines itself to the Palestinian society in Lebanon with no explanation of what led to its arrival there. Badr, on the other hand, examines the initial tension of the war (predating 1975) and the pertinent events that ultimately placed so many Palestinians in Lebanon. The novel is a complex look into the difficulties different peoples and religions face when forced into the same space. It begins on the battlefront in 1976 and eventually gives the

reader a sense of what created the pressures that led to the violence. The Report, in contrast, essentially focuses on the result of the violence, allowing itself room to provide retrospective glances that better justify Israel's military force. These two works intersect quite clearly, though, in how both provide a general illustration of a Palestinian inhabitation that goes well beyond Sabra and Shatila.

Badr's stories are set in two landscapes, refugee camp and city, in a virtual continuum of violence. These scenes of fury are presented with unsentimental frankness throughout the narrative. Badr wants readers to know that the lives of her characters are based on human lives during years of intense civil war. The sort of discourse used in documents such as the Kahan Commission Report is deterritorialized by her shifting episodic perspectives. These expose the living realities of warfare and personalize the stories of those involved in it. The events also move us beyond rote United Nations refugee statistics and news reports so that rather than hearing an impersonal account of the deaths of 18,000 people, we become familiar with characters whose personalities, likes, desires, fallacies, and situations we come to know and appreciate. This personalization of those involved in warfare helps deconstruct the stigma of terrorist attributed to Palestinians and moves readers away from essentialization by asking them to look at the suffering of people who bear qualities much different than what many expect of them.

Graphic imagery as a means of recreating reality is never shunned. Yusra, the protagonist of "A Land of Rock and Thyme," speaks very matter-of-factly about the circumstances of war: "Everyone expected death; no one in Tal al-Zaatar thought to live

out their natural life."[29] When Yusra's family takes flight from Beirut, she recounts this scene of terror:

> At first nothing happened on the road we took. Then, in groups, we passed through their posts where they stood on the two sides of the road, and they started killing people left and right. We didn't look at them; if you looked at them and met the eye of one of them, perhaps you might be dragged away. I never looked. They'd come among us and pick out whoever they wanted, then simply kill him. On both sides of the road there were landrovers and armed men with crosses on their necks.
>
> A man was walking next to me, his shoulder brushing mine. They grabbed him by the shoulder. "For God's sake," he said to them. "Which God?" they replied. Before I knew what was happening, he'd fallen to the ground; there was a revolver and a single shot to the temple.[30]

The campaign continues as Yusra's family journeys along the Dikwana road and it eventually reaches her younger brother:

> Before we set off we all warned one another how, if you're questioned, you must answer: "I'm Lebanese." But he was a young man in the first flush of manhood, in his fifteenth year. People had become weak with hunger during the siege, but his face had grown round and healthy. He'd got taller during the siege and his body had shot up in a quite uncanny

> way. On the way one of them stopped him and asked, "Lebanese or Palestinian?" "Palestinian," Jamal answered. A bullet to the head, just like that.[31]

Badr's stylistic technique here is notable in that the violence appears to occur without human agency, as if the guns shot themselves. From this, many conclusions can be drawn. It first seems as though Badr simply refuses to allow the Phalangist soldiers a human identification, but the commentary is more complex. She reverts to a rather anonymous conception of what the Phalangists are in order to emphasize who the Palestinians are. The war itself and the shootings themselves are impersonal in this episode, but the reader's emotions are attached to those at whom the bullets are aimed. The shooter is left out on purpose; his actions, rather than the stories behind them, are what concern Badr.

None of Yusra's family is allowed to stop and touch the murdered Jamal, for "[i]f any of us were to stop by somebody who'd been killed, they'd pick us out and finish us off at once.... We moved on, right past him."[32] The scene reaches full gravity when Yusra's mother discovers what has occurred: "When she saw him she fell into the ditch, with my baby brother that she was carrying, in an indescribable state. She was a mother, the mother of Jamal who lay stretched out on the road as if asleep or in a faint. She couldn't stop by him either."[33] Beyond the demonstration of hardship is a more serious function at work here. The Phalangist soldiers have no way of telling the Lebanese Christians from the Muslim or Druze Palestinians, for both groups are Semites. Consequently, it becomes important to note the division in social and religious

philosophies fundamental to Lebanon's Civil War. This point becomes even more serious when we remember that Jews and Palestinians also share the same racial background. What Badr does by bringing racial similarity to the fore of a scene where Christian militia, with Jewish backing, are indiscriminately murdering Muslims is to criticize doctrinal constructions in which certain peoples assume the role of subhuman. There is also a criticism of dogma, because for a person randomly to kill others without culpability it is necessary for the killer to know that he is not shooting an actual human being, but rather somebody of inferior stock who deserves death.

Displays of violence continue in the next story, "A Balcony Over the Fakihani," which has three narrators: the protagonist, Su'ad; her husband, Umar; and her sister, Jinan. Su'ad recalls a scene in the camps that were to later become so famous: "May 1973—and tank gun and machine gun fire on Shatila camp. There were no shelters in the camp, so people fled to Sabra, where they hid in the doorways of buildings or in warehouses.... The sky was lit with green and red stars, and the thunder and lightning wasn't real thunder and lightning, but bullets from machine guns and small arms. We were running and stumbling, carrying the two babies, bottles of milk and bags of clothes and diapers."[34] After the bout of shelling ends, Su'ad makes a startling discovery: "Next morning, as I was giving Ruba [her daughter] some milk, I noticed a white hair in the middle of her head. I couldn't believe a baby's hair could turn white."[35] The white hair is a symbol of a certain type of wisdom that even children acquire by living as besieged refugees, which physically becomes fixed as an element of life and identity. The Palestinian child is inscribed with what it means to be in Diaspora, a condition of being that dominates Yusra's thoughts in the prior story when thinking about her unborn child:

"Another person would be born. It would be a Palestinian, from its first moment in the world."[36] When one reads this episode in the context of documents such as the Kahan Commission Report, it becomes recognizable how heavy-handed are the dominant stereotypes of Palestinians that Badr is trying to counter. As a result, her use of symbolism is also rather heavy-handed at times. This is exemplified by the fact that she makes a baby, rather than a bearded *feda'i*,[37] an example of inscription in this scene. The innocent baby generates a level of sympathy in readers that even the most grief-stricken adult could never induce.

If one assesses this phenomenon in the context of *Last Standing Woman*, it becomes apparent that heavy-handed symbolism and emotional expressions of hardship define much of the literature conceived as de- or anti-colonial. The relativist, Indigenous articulation of suffering thus becomes a universal moral statement when encoded in literary fiction. That statement, in fact, finds its way into critical work produced by scholars of the same ethnicity as the authors in question. Salma Khadra Jayyusi provides an example of how this criticism works for Palestinians: "For the [Palestinian] writer to contemplate an orientation completely divorced from political life is to belie reality, to deny experience; for to engross oneself for too long in 'normal' everyday experiences is to betray one's own life and one's own people. This means that Palestinian writers have little scope for endulging in escapism; they are compromised by the events of contemporary history even before they are born."[38] One can also find this type of approach in the theory of Native criticism offered by Craig Womack: "I feel that Native perspectives have to do with allowing Indian people to speak for themselves, that is to say, with prioritizing Native voices. Those voices may vary in quality, but they rise out

of a historical reality wherein Native people have been excluded from discourse concerning their own cultures, and Indian people must be, ultimately will be, heard."[39] These passages illustrate that, despite whatever universal functions bind literature of any variety into one broad class, work created by colonized authors and inspired at least in part by colonialism remains indivisible from the historical and sociological conditions that constitute oppression.

In the final story of *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*, "The Canary and the Sea," readers are given the tale of Abu Husain al-Shuwaiki, a *feda'i* eventually shot down and captured by Israeli soldiers in Beirut. "The Canary and the Sea" is perhaps the most politically charged of the three stories with regard to its signs and symbols. Abu Husain periodically recounts what it is to be a Palestinian during the time of the war. When remembering his home village, Shuwaika (a border town), for instance, he can't help but recollect how division permeates so many lives: "People standing near the frontier on our side were forbidden to look over onto the other; and if anyone so much as stretched out their hand or put it over the border, they were killed straightway by the Israelis."[40] And in the tradition of post-1948 Palestinian verse, Badr authors a discourse of geographical remembrance in Abu Husain, who talks poetically of his original home, saying, "Shuwaika, my home village, is an expanse of green at the end of a mountain range, with lemon and orange groves and silver sunbeams on the olive leaves, and if you stand on the roof of our house you can see the sea and the Natanya district—alas for Natanya, which I can no longer visit, and the sea stretching out to the far horizon!"[41]

The reality of Abu Husain's present, however, stands in stark contrast to this memory. His proposal for marriage to a Lebanese woman is refused because of his

Palestinian background, and only after he proves that some of his genealogy is Lebanese is he reluctantly permitted by her family to continue with the engagement. In Lebanon, he "soon came to feel that the word Palestinian had a different meaning...conjuring up, immediately, the army, authority, and the secret police."[42] Bigoted attitudes, which Abu Husain enumerates with disgust, are conveyed in this scene:

> In 1972 I was working as a shop foreman in a factory for making wooden furniture in East Beirut. The owner of the factory was a decent man, but he had a brother in the Phalangist Party. There were three or four of us Palestinians working for him, and after May 1973 he came to resent us and made it clear our presence there was an embarrassment to him. "You're refugees," he'd say, "and yet you try and tell us how to do things. This is our country. You shouldn't be here at all." We argued with him, and finally lost our tempers and left. I didn't care, because our wages were always less than other peoples'. They always used to call us "the Palestinians," and the way they said it had a special ring that upset me.[43]

Commentary about this type of sensibility appears throughout the three stories. An understanding of how these attitudes are morally and ethnologically situated is crucial in how we look at them. In the Kahan Commission Report, the assumption that Palestinians are unwelcome nuisances destroying the infrastructure of a foreign land is essential to the success of the Report's rhetoric. The same assumption pervades the world of Badr's novel, although her goal is to dismantle the Report's findings by construing stereotype as

destructive and inequitable. Furthermore, the differences of perspective on the war in the Report and in *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* divulge how morality is indivisible from the connotations of sociopolitical knowledge. In other words, morality gives currency to political motivations.

We can consider this statement in a more general framework. Satya Mohanty spends much time interrogating the issues discussed above in his book, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History*. Many of the conclusions he draws are instructive for our purposes, this one particularly:

> The notion of epistemic privilege I outlined, a notion central to the realist understanding of identity, shows us why this should be the case. If our views about our identities are partly explanations of the world in which we live and these explanations are based on the knowledge we gather from our social activities, then the claim that oppressed social groups have a special kind of knowledge about the world as it affects them is hardly a mysterious one requiring idealist assumptions about cultural essences or inaccessible particularities. Rather it is an empirical claim, tied to a wider (empirical and theoretical) account of the society in which these groups live. And therefore any claim about the epistemic privilege of a particular social group will be only as convincing as the social theory and description that accompany it.[44]

This argument contextualizes effectively any literary analysis in which ethical claims denouncing colonial forms of subordination are made.

The contextualization is especially relevant to Abu Husain's placelessness. In "The Canary and the Sea," the most noteworthy event occurs after Abu Husain has been seriously wounded and then captured by Israeli soldiers. The intricacies of the Arab-Israeli conflict are unveiled with clarity in this exchange in the interrogation room:

> "Do you like the Jews?" one of them asked.
>
> "That's a silly question," I said. "We've nothing against the Jews. They're our cousins."
>
> "So why are you fighting us?"
>
> "I'll tell you," I said. "But let me ask you a question first. Where do you come from?"
>
> "I'm an Iraqi Jew."
>
> "How about that fellow next to you?"
>
> "He's Yemeni."
>
> "And him?"
>
> "He's from Canada."
>
> "All right then, so you're all from different countries. Palestine's our country. And you're occupying it against our will."
>
> The soldier who was speaking to me carried on stitching my hand, but a fair-haired man with glasses got up and punched me in the face.[45]

Badr expects readers to identify with Abu Husain's position in rigidly partisan fashion. The Iraqi, Yemeni, and Canadian Jews, of course, have their own reasons, perhaps both biblical and social, for returning to the promised Jewish homeland. Badr overlooks the stories that may have led these characters to Israel and thus comes dangerously close to doing what she so adamantly decries, which is to force characters into rigid stereotypes. The dialogue, however, is set up more toward making a philosophical point that at base is rarely questioned: Israel is occupying Palestine against the will of its original inhabitants. Remembering that the creation of Israel was not and is not a consensual matter is vital in post-1948 Palestinian literature, even as artistic and thematic framings of that remembrance differ. Interestingly, Badr also implies that race plays a large role in this colonial process, for the "fair-haired man with glasses," we can assume, is of European background. Even more interesting is that a different sort of stereotype is employed, one directed at Europeans. It is the fair-haired man who strikes the restrained, brown-skinned subject and who thus symbolizes a Eurocentric colonial errand into the Orient, while the Sephardic Jews engage in more subtle methods of coercion. The symbolism is rather ambivalent, given that Sephardic Jews generally support hardline policies against the Palestinians and clamor for their removal. In highlighting the torturer's Whiteness, Badr seems be identifying his foreignness. The conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, unlike the conflict between Lebanese Maronites and Palestinian Muslims, functions not only on religious lines, but on a color line as well.

The interrogation continues, and when Abu Husain refuses to submit the information his captors desire, they shave off half his mustache rather than torture him in a conventional manner. This act for the Arab is a direct attack on one's pride and one's

sense of manhood. Introducing this scene is one way for Badr to symbolize a certain amount of degradation that comes along with being a refugee. It is also an example of torture in the form of mockery. The suggestiveness of the image of half a mustache, like a strand of white hair, is deliberately blunt as a means of combating stereotype by altering physical appearance. In the case of Abu Husain, losing half his mustache creates a sense of loss and a separation of identity. The exile exists in two different ontological spheres, Abu Husain reveals, one based on actual memory and the other in his recreation of it.

We can notice how the ontology of exile plays out after the death of Su'ad's husband, Umar, in "A Balcony Over the Fakihani." The funeral scene follows:

> At the airport the fighters raised their hands in a military salute and fired twenty-one times into the air. Only now could he go back to the country he'd left twenty years before. Another year was about to begin, and he'd go there bearing the new name he'd chosen: Umar, Umar the martyr. He left, and with him went our laughter that rang out like silver bells. The coffin swayed above the hands that bore it, draped in the Palestinian flag, with wreaths of gorgeous roses adorning it. Had he been alive, he would have made fun of us for the black we were wearing; his smile would have flashed as he waved good-bye. Don't worry, he would have cried, I'll soon be back. If he'd been alive, he would have been laughing at what he liked to call our groundless fears.[46]

The divisions between life and death have been skewed, and we are left with another irony: Umar is most alive only after he is dead. The Palestinians here as in Badr's other stories, both civilians and *feda'iyin*, are pulled between multivalent subjectivities, sometimes juxtaposed and other times at extreme poles. This situation compliments the multivocality and rapid point of view shifts throughout the narrative, for to be serious about presenting the Palestinian lives during the Lebanese Civil War, Badr must reject spatial and temporal continuity.

Behind all the violence and mayhem, Badr leaves room to recreate memories of Palestine, as is done almost universally in modern Palestinian writing. When Yusra reads her husband Ahmad's diary, she comes across "curving lines that he'd clearly drawn himself. It was a miniature map of Palestine. I read what he'd written by it: 'Remember. This must be turned into a reality.'"[47] At one point, Ahmad speaks of his hometown, and Yusra exclaims, "You're lucky!... At least you've seen the town you came from."[48] Later, Su'ad reminisces about meeting her husband before Black September during a training session for the *feda'iyin*: "Most of the young men who joined the Resistance chose new names as a talisman, in memory of some hero or as a reminder of a certain place."[49]

Place, however, is not a simple thing. It has multiple meanings for Palestinians. Its most important connotation is in relation to *Filastin*, the ancestral land, a binding feature of the Palestinian people, but for exiles certain levels of rootedness have also been forged in various places throughout the world. Accordingly, there are incompatible schisms concerning place in *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*. A rather schizophrenic and fragmented course of events carries readers back and forth through flashback and the

existential present to variegated landscapes: Palestinian communities in refugee camps; battle scenes; Mandatory Palestine; Black September; the 1948 War; the 1967 War; and the Lebanese Civil War. Such is the life of a nationless people, and the situations Badr has seen as one of the exiled form the conceptions of Diaspora that color her writing.

From an artistic and aesthetic standpoint, *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* seems on the surface quite simplistic in terms of its presentation of scenery and its use of forthright, melodramatic language (as exemplified by the repeated use of exclamation points, which is the closest symbol the translators were able to use in trying to accurately convert the text from its original Arabic). The stories certainly lack the stylistic sophistication of Emile Habiby's *The Secret Life of Saeed*, Mahmoud Darwish's *Memory For Forgetfulness*, or Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, to use three examples of notable Palestinian works, but nonetheless contain measures that sufficiently enable Badr to achieve the philosophical and artistic goals her narratives entail.

The multivocal perspectivism is the most obvious aesthetic measure. A common saying among Palestinian refugee camp residents is, "My story is the story of my people. You cannot separate the I and the we." This concept, indicating both a communal bond and an unwillingness to abandon the discreteness of being Palestinian by being absorbed into the Arab world at large, compliments multivocality well, for instead of a focus on one or few individuals, the same episodes are told by different narrators. As a result, readers are given a collective rather than individual look at the events of war as experienced by members of the Palestinian community. Within the multiple narratives and intersecting storylines is the symbolic message of loss attached to the destruction of the Beirut Fakihani district, where Palestinians assembled on the balconies to share in the

life of exile. In one scene Su'ad recalls the communal spirit of the balcony gatherings, which marked an escape from the tensions of life in an ethnically and religiously divided city:

> The balcony of ours in Fakihani was on the corner of the block, right opposite the Rahmeh Building. Jinan and I would sit there every afternoon, with the children close by inside playing house or watching the Sinbad series, and we'd tell one another our troubles, and talk about the high prices and the problems of life.... Umar would join us to drink lightly sweetened coffee, and we'd discuss our daily affairs with concealed bitterness or sarcastic comments. Umar was a natural humorist. He'd stretch out his hand towards Jinan, and his eyes would sparkle with merriment as she raised her own hand and laughingly slapped his. He'd make us roar with laughter, from the bottom of our hearts. Acquaintances or neighbors would drop in, and I'd bring chairs out from inside, moving, myself, to the old bedside table when the place had filled up.[50]

In the overall description of the Fakihani district, Badr portrays life as diverse and bustling in a time when neighbors were involved with one another on a first-name basis. This portrayal lies in sharp contrast with the war scenes so prevalent throughout the stories. The departure from battle landscapes serves two aesthetic purposes: it helps readers visualize Palestinians in an environment where they are not acting as commandos

or struggling refugees, and it sets up the symbolic context of something more than material or territorial loss when the district is destroyed.

Badr's political intentions in the novel and her almost journalistic manner of presenting various incidents during a wide time frame do not necessarily lend themselves to structural complexities. Her straightforward writing style creates a rather blunt presentation of what she intends as a realistic depiction of the familial, political, and collective situations of numerous Palestinians caught in Lebanon during one of the fiercest wars in the modern history of the Middle East. Yet she does employ numerous nuances and symbols that help distinguish the novel from anything else written about the war. In one scene, for example, Badr retreats to the classic Arabic storytelling ritual of poetry and relays the sequence in verse form. Furthermore, the manner in which she treats time is quite unconventional, as readers are shuttled in and out of rapid flashback scenes that give us a larger understanding of the characters' lives. This technique also draws readers into a more interactive engagement with the characters' realities—just as they have no means of temporal continuity, neither does the reader involved in their stories. The most important use of symbolism, however, occurs in the political message Badr interweaves into the outcome of each story. Neither her tone nor the tone of her characters lapses into defeatism, and transformation and continuation are the ultimate themes of the novel, leaving a heavier mark than memories of death and violence. The artistic sequence of each story, therefore, is also highly political, as the will to resist the imposition of the colonizer outweighs the Israeli metadrama in which Palestinian lives are determined by a fate larger than themselves, a fate over which they are supposed to have no control.

We have no way of exhaustively explaining what colonization truly is. We can only look at its methods and effects, and even then no standard exegesis avoids being stereotyped and reductionist. What we can do as literary critics, as readers, as human beings, however, is understand which perspectives contribute to the methodology of the colonial process and which perspectives exist in the art of the colonized. Much of *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* I have not been able to cover, perhaps every critic's lament. But I have tried to communicate Badr's themes as they are situated in two diametrically opposite spheres: Israel's legal dealings with the Palestinian populace in Lebanon and Badr's stories about that same population, which sees something that was lost and something still longed for daily. This longing is exemplified by Abu Husain upon his release from detention inside Israel: "I wept, not alone, but with all the prisoners returning with me on the bus. I hadn't wept since I was wounded, but I wept now. There was the country that was beyond my reach, and there was the sea—the sea shimmering and gleaming behind the roofs of Shuwaika, the village which I was even now leaving behind me! It had nothing to say to us, as if it had no understanding of the secret of our tears."[51]

In Conclusion: A Violent Essentialism

Although the concepts of location and identity are still hotly debated in colonial discourse studies, in this passage Stephen Slemon writes about them with rare clarity:

> The forms of colonialist power differ radically across cultural locations, and its intersections with other orders of oppression are always complex and multivalent. But, wherever a globalised theory of the colonial might

> lead us, we need to remember that resistances to colonialist power always find material presence at the local, and so the research and training we carry out in the field of post-colonialism, whatever else it does, must always find ways to address the local, if only on the order of material applications.[52]

Applying even this modest theoretical injunction to Palestinians is difficult, for they first need to define what "local" means to them, which is a plethora of geopolitically discrete places. Yet, at the same time, Slemon's argument that material applications at least give coherence to any people with a common history and vision certainly applies to modern Palestinian writers who, no matter where they reside, share the desire to reconstruct what Palestine means to them and what it means to be Palestinian. This was not lost on the refugees in Lebanon during the war, David Gilmour writes:

> In spite of their degrading refugee status, the Palestinians retained much of their social cohesion. Their village and family ties survived outside Palestine and so did many of their customs. Their camps were organized so that refugees who had once been neighbours in their village in Galilee were again neighbours in Ain el-Hilweh or Borj al-Barajneh [refugee camps]. This has helped to preserve the Palestinian identity even in the most unpromising conditions. Contrary to the hopes and expectations of their enemies, who believed the refugees would quickly lose their identity

> and be absorbed in the Arab world, the sense of being Palestinian has actually increased during the long years of their exile.[53]

And as the murdered Ahmad shows us in a paragraph Yusra finds written in his photo album, the dream of return never lives far from the Palestinian author's words: "These pictures make me feel like I've become a professional—an expert photographer. I've taken them to embody phases of a life: phases of darkness, and phases of light. There are times of bitterness and there will be times of beauty and tenderness and light. Those times will come."[54]

As the stereotypes in the Kahan Commission Report and the multivocal lives of the displaced in Badr's stories reveal, the acts of survival and continuation sometimes exist in what is not, rather than in the violence of what essentially is.

Notes

1. Quoted in Walter Laqueur, *The Arab-Israel Reader* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1970), 159.

2. Examples of this are many. Golda Meir, for instance, once told the UN General Assembly, "Those who rule out negotiation in the Middle East, those who year after year engage in sterile and stereotyped speeches of hostility, should know that their attitude is irrelevant to the basic theme of the international community and can have no echo in an organization which has proclaimed peace to be synonymous with human survival: that they are assaulting the foundations of human progress" (qtd. in Laqueur, 205). Yitzhak Rabin, upon receiving an honorary doctorate from Hebrew University, explained to the crowd, "However, today, the University has conferred this honorary title on us in recognition of our Army's superiority of spirit and morals as it was revealed in the heat of war [1967], for we are standing in this place by virtue of battle which though forced upon us was forged into a victory astounding the world" (qtd. in Laqueur, 278). Finally, a portion of Moshe Dayan's 1968 speech to a graduating class at the Israel Army Staff and Command College follows: "[Former Zionist James] Ruppin's heart-searching over a path to agreement with the Arabs had thus come full circle. The fulfillment of Zionism embodied the solution to the 'Arab question'. Does this mean that Ruppin realized he was wrong [concerning his desire to address the Arab question], while his colleagues in the leadership, whom he called 'naïve' and 'ignorant of the Arab problem', were correct? Not at all. The prevalent point of view held that the 'Arab question' should be left alone, and it would find its own solution thanks to the prosperity, the development, the progress and the culture which the Jews would bring to the Arabs of the country. Ruppin, on the other hand, stopped dealing with the 'Arab question', because he realized that the Arabs would not agree to Zionism, *in spite* of all these things [emphasis his]" (qtd. in Laqueur, 534-35). In looking at these statements, and realizing that many more exist, it is easy to comprehend Eban's theology in his framing of the Kahan Commission Report.

3. Ami Elad-Bouskila, *Modern Palestinian Literature and Culture* (Portland: Frank Cass, 1999), 1.

4. The massacre was conducted on September 16-18, 1982, by Phalangist forces under Israeli auspices. Death figures range from 300 to as many as 3000, all civilian. The most viable number seems to be 2000.

5. William E. Smith, "The Verdict is Guilty," *Time*, 21 February 1983, 27.

6. Ibid., 27.

7. Ibid., 28.

8. Sharon would later become Prime Minister during the early stages of the al-Aqsa Intifada. He would also be indicted for war crimes by a Belgian court.

9. Smith, 26.

10. Ibid., 26.

11. Roberto Suro, "'I Cannot Think Too Much,'" *Time*, 21 February 1983, 34.

12. Robert Fisk, *Pity the Nation* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), 382-83.

13. Ibid., 383. This is not to say that the Palestinians are not mentioned in the Report. Fisk goes on to say, "There were repeated references in the commission's final report to Palestinian 'terrorists' in the camps—presumably the 2000 strangely elusive and undiscovered 'terrorists' of whom Sharon had spoken in early September 1982—but the judges provided not a single piece of evidence to substantiate the allegation that these 'terrorists' existed. Indeed, the only real terrorists in the camps—the Christian militiamen who were sent there by the Israelis—were respectfully described by the judges as Phalangists, or 'soldiers'. *Soldiers* [emphasis his]," 383.

14. Abba Eban, *The Beirut Massacre: The Complete Kahan Commission Report* (New York: Karz-Cohl, 1983), X.

15. Ibid., XVI.

16. The equation of Arabs with Nazis has been common since 1948, as it is the most effective way to indicate that a people are irrationally and dangerously hostile. This is perhaps the most grim stigma Arabs have been given considering anti-Semitism was wholly a European creation having nothing to do with Arabs.

17. Eban, 121.

18. Ibid., 127.

19. Ibid., 128.

20. Ibid., 131.

21. Ibid., 132.

22. Ibid., 105.

23. Ibid., 106.

24. John Phillips, "Lagging Behind: Bhabha, Post-colonial Theory and the Future," in *Travel Writing and Empire*, ed. Steve Clark (New York: Zed, 1999), 64.

25. For this task, the reader-response theories of Stanley Fish and Louise Rosenblatt, and. to a lesser degree, Norman Holland and David Bleich, can be useful. For my purposes, however, their usefulness is also limited, for my argument relies mainly on the cultural criticism produced from within particular ethnic communities. Reader-response work, then, can help to supplement the particulars of cultural critique, but should not be seen as comprehensive as theoretical markers when discussing Indigenous literatures.

26. David Gilmour, *Lebanon, The Fractured Country* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 162.

27. Her other published fiction includes *A Compass for the Sunflower, Stories of Love and Pursuit, I Want the Day, Golden Hell, The Eye of the Mirror*, and *Stars of Jericho.*

28. A Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut. In June, 1967, Maronite forces captured the camp after a 53-day siege and slaughtered over 1000 civilians.

29. Liyana Badr, *A Balcony Over the Fakihani*, trans. Peter Clark and Christopher Tingley. (New York: Interlink, 1993), 11.

30. Ibid., 13-14.

31. Ibid., 14.

32. Ibid., 15.

33. Ibid., 15.

34. Ibid., 45.

35. Ibid., 45-46.

36. Ibid., 25.

37. Plural *Feda'iyin*. The *Feda'iyin* are Palestinian commandos, or to be more specific, those willing to die for their country.

38. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction: Palestinian Literature in Modern Times," in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 3.

39. Craig Womack, *Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1999), 3-4.

40. Badr, 90.

41. Ibid., 90.

42. Ibid., 95.

43. Ibid., 96.

44. Satya Mohanty, *Literary Theory and the Claims of History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 234-35.

45. Badr, 118-19.

46. Ibid., 80.

47. Ibid., 21.

48. Ibid., 22.

49. Ibid., 36.

50. Ibid., 34-35.

51. Ibid., 125.

52. Stephen Slemon, "The Scramble for Post-colonialism," in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (New York: Routledge, 1995), 52.

53. Gilmour, 90.

54. Badr, 29.

Reimagining the Munificence of an Ass: The Strange Circumstances of Vizenor and Habiby

Most of this project has focused on two interrelated phenomena: the conjoint discursive strategies employed by settler nations; and modes of counter-discourse that inform Indigenous aesthetics in fiction. I would like, in this last chapter, to bring those two closer together by tying them into a textual discussion that juxtaposes authors from discrete cultures who, as far as anybody knows, never had contact either critically or in person. Perhaps it is discomfiting (or foolish) that in order to attempt critical synthesis I have chosen Gerald Vizenor and Emile Habiby, two writers who ardently resist the impetus of critics to define and demarcate their work, much less tie it into anything. An intercultural reading of their novels, however, illustrates that despite their resistance to concrete exegesis, they provide us the ability to do precisely that. In fact, they provide that ability more readily than authors who seem to produce fiction—consciously or unconsciously—according to the hermeneutics of a particular theoretical discourse, a testament to Vizenor and Habiby's intellectual acumen.

Before I enter into that critique, though, I would like to briefly revisit some of the issues raised in the first chapter in order to properly frame the forthcoming analysis. We saw in the first chapter that neither a casual nor causal relationship defines the alliance of Israel and the United States. It is defined by an institutionalized mimesis that appeared in modern form with the first wave of New World settlers, although its theological expressions long predate the emergence of nation-states as political entities. It would seem that some sort of markers exist in decolonial discourse that allow us to better

identify how colonial discourse achieves mastery and recreates itself at all levels of society. It would also seem that decolonial discourse would have, in spite of disparate cultural circumstances, summoned comparable operative functions based on the type of strategy needed to challenge or undermine a shared form of colonialism—the rereading of theology and the reclamation of language, to provide two examples. Shared resistant strategies are certainly evident in many of the issues I examined in the introduction and first chapter; and we saw in the second and third chapters, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, how interconnected social phenomena produce artistic themes and styles that allow readers to consider or actually create inter-communal criticism.

There is precedence for this methodology. Literary criticism and critical theory have evolved to the point where elaborate inter-communal, intercultural, and inter-spatial scholarship has appeared and been developed and redeveloped. Hilton Obenzinger, for instance, provides an example of textual criticism that not only links American writers of different eras and sensibilities, but also conjoins that link to ancient Israel, modern Palestine, and Native America.[1] Jeanne Rosier Smith has drawn together Asia American, Native American, and Africa American work in assessing what she terms "mythic gambols in American ethnic literature."[2] Barbara Harlow does the same but in an international framework in examining writers from Palestine, El Salvador, and South Africa.[3] These undertakings are part of what Ngugi Wa Thiongo recently described as reading the world "beyond the boundary of the other."[4] He advises writers and critics to seek "a way to clarify connections between one culture and another, literature and politics, literature and economics, literature and the environment, literature and psychology, between the parts and the whole."[5]

The theoretical models with which we can work are extensive, as the examples above indicate. In working with theory, I generally prefer what might be called regenerative interrogation; that is, the continual re-invoking and reassessment of questions central to highlighting relevant strategies and impediments in decolonization. I shall therefore frame the forthcoming analysis with emphasis on the strand of colonial discourse that summons and re-imagines biblical deliverance. Both Vizenor and Habiby, as we will see, lend themselves perfectly to an inter-communal and anti-dogmatic methodology.

Colonial language in the New World and Holy Land accentuated an indivisible relationship between Man and God. Man was not only to work in God's service, but also guard—violently, if necessary—the earthly function of Man in physically manifesting God's will. While Cotton Mather's diatribes connote the extreme articulation of that function, other New World leaders using more muted language advanced Mather's theological underpinnings. Their narratives helped to form the discursive basis of America's national history; enunciation of the process is still detectable today, sometimes candidly but more often tacitly.[6] In Israel, the enunciation is, for the most part, candid. Without it, Israelis—especially the substantial ultra-religious right—would lack the mythology necessary for self-identification as stewards of the occupied territories.

In situations where settlers justify land expropriation by summoning ancient and usually ethnocentric narratives, the narratives ultimately disappear after moments of contact alter their authenticity, as when the "democratic" characteristics of Israel superceded the language of chosenness. They are then inscribed in material exhibitions of conflict and power, as when West Bank settlers rehash the language of chosenness to

contextualize their encounter with Palestinians. But even while the narratives destroy themselves, they are re-invented and augmented based on the contest for dominance. Neither the United States nor Israel employs the actual language of Exodus in dealing with Indigenes, yet both rely on that language, predating their existence as nations. Those narratives are still functional and necessary; they simply have evolved into particular verbal machinations based on whichever governing factors are dictated by Indigenous resistance. That is to say, there is no colonial discourse without the natives. Vizenor and Habiby were clever enough to realize that limiting counter-discourse to specific gestures such as nationalist polemic or a derivative discourse would only reinforce the colonial imagination. Resisting the alluring concept of counter-discourse, however, might usher colonial discourse into obscurity. The authors thus produced a new arena for interaction.

The Tricksters and Their Stories

Vizenor and Habiby consciously invoke and challenge the biblical aspect of settler colonialism. They also ridicule it and those who cite it to justify theft or oppression. This is the main reason they can be contextualized together and analyzed using the same approach. Other reasons also exist, as I will demonstrate below. First, I would like to offer some information about the authors and the two novels I have chosen.

Vizenor, along with Vine Deloria, Jr., N. Scott Momaday, and Leslie Marmon Silko, may be the most prominent figure in Native American Studies. He is certainly the most diverse and prolific. An Anishinaabe journalist, novelist, essayist, literary critic, poet, dramatist, screenwriter, and memoirist, he has evinced extraordinary range as an author and philosopher. All of his work beyond haiku has focused in some way on the

trickster figure. As A. Robert Lee notes, "given the sheer abundance, and matching invention, of Vizenor's own fiction and stories, as in turn of his haiku and other poetry, essay work, autobiography and forays into screen writing and drama, any looker-on from either side of the Atlantic (or well beyond) might be forgiven for thinking him a Native American Renaissance virtually in his own right."[7]

Vizenor has inspired an enormous amount of critical work.[8] As one might expect, the criticism is polarized: in most cases, critics either ridicule and dismiss him or approach his work with reverence. Vizenor's style helps to induce that polarization. Effective readings of Vizenor escape the trend, although, because Vizenor is so resistant to entrapment, they often unwittingly ignore crucial points of analysis. In turn, the majority of Vizenor scholarship is repetitive or bland (especially in relation to the author on whom attention is focused). His least read novels are *Dead Voices* and *The Trickster of Liberty*. I will focus here on *The Trickster of Liberty* for four reasons: 1) its aesthetics and stylistics closely resemble the work of Emile Habiby; 2) lack of critical attention on the novel provides more opportunity for original Vizenor readings; 3) it is underrated as a work of art; and 4) its themes reveal a great deal about the nature of colonialism and the folly of uncritical resistance.

The late Emile Habiby is an equally central figure in modern Palestinian literature. Habiby was in an ideal position to write satirical fiction intended to question the rigid assumptions through which Israeli and Palestinian voices are expressed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi observes that "Habiby has the advantage of writing from the inside, experiencing firsthand not only the events of the period, but also the conditions under which the Palestinian Arabs have been living."[9] A three-term Knesset member from

Rakah, the Communist Party of Israel [ICP],[10] Habiby remained inside Israel after its formation and, like most Palestinians not removed to other nations, became a citizen of the new state. He was fluent in Hebrew and, along with a handful of other Palestinian Israeli authors, began a new trend of writing in the language. His flagship novel, *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*—sometimes translated as *The Strange Circumstances of the Disappearance of Sa'id the Luckless Pessoptimist*—was written in Arabic and became a sensation in the Arab world after its publication in Haifa in 1974.

The Secret Life of Saeed has been compared to the work of Voltaire, Jaroslav Hasek, and Bertolt Brecht, along with various European authors famous for their Communist leanings or sharp social commentary. The comparisons are all tenable, especially with Voltaire, since Habiby emphasized the influence of *Candide* on his most famous novel and dedicated a portion of one chapter to a dialogue about Candide. I want to broaden the range of criticism, however, by suggesting that *The Secret Life of Saeed* can also be read as a modern trickster novel. To approach the novel with a framework focused on Indigenous tricksterism allows critics and readers to better integrate Palestinian history into the body of scholarship that has begun forging connections across borders and cultures. More important, it permits us to better understand the nature of discourse as a transformative object in the lives of both colonizer and colonized.

There are numerous reasons why *The Secret Life of Saeed* lends itself to the type of reading described above. To borrow from an assessment of Vizenor's fiction, the novel's "witty and often surreal narratives move freely across the genres of novel, autobiography, history, myth and fantasy. While some of his work is more clearly fiction or reportage, the genres are always in an unstable and often exhilarating relation, with the

result that the reader is never allowed to forget the complexity of any situation involving the representation, including self-representation, of [Palestinians]."[11] These qualities are, of course, aesthetic. Their existence in fiction does not automatically connote trickster fiction, though they account for most of the elements that one generally finds in that type of literature. It can be considered a trickster novel because of the existence of a character, Saeed, whose purpose is to alter or disrupt the daily proceedings of state and society, and who also—sometimes by accident—catalyzes the progress and exposes the folly of his own community. Moreover, in literature the trickster is a conscious invocation of a cultural icon usually intended to serve as a peculiar form of discourse in opposition to other discourses. As soon as the trickster is displaced from oral tradition and transcribed on paper, it serves a distinct literary function. The literary trickster creates and develops particular themes based on its cultural posture: aesthetic, historical, social, political, environmental, and so forth. Palestine has a long tradition of tricksters called by other names. Saeed is a literary manifestation of the characters, usually nameless, venerated in Palestinian folktales.

Because of their close interaction with the dominant society and the biting self-criticism in their satire, both Vizenor and Habiby have been accused of complicity or cowardice. People who offer such accusations are not familiar with the purpose and nature of satire; nor are they, because of narrow conceptions of nationalism, able to approach Vizenor and Habiby's sophisticated ideas with equal sophistication. In fact, abandoning the orthodoxies that exist in nationalism is the first thing one is compelled to do when reading either author. The tricksters in both novels are neither nationalists nor propagandists. They are cultural icons appropriated from non-print traditions who seek

nationalists and propagandists and then degrade the contradictions implicit in their narratives. The trickster is never stable, but the dictums of the state and those it dominates are even more unstable. It is from this instability that the trickster draws its strength.

This brings up a crucial question: What exactly do we mean when we invoke the word "trickster" in relation to literary fiction? And what type of trickster are we talking about? It is easier to answer this question in relation to Vizenor, who draws from the tradition of Nanabozho. Alan Velie explains, "Nanabozho—or Wenebojo, Manabozo or Nanabush, depending on how anthropologists recorded the Anishinaabe word—was the chief culture hero of the Anishinaabe, and a very complex figure, a combination of savior and rogue not unlike tricksters who have served as the heroes in western literature. According to Anishinaabe tradition, he was the son of Epingshmook, a spirit, and Winonah, a mortal woman. Nanabozho combines the traits of manidos, or spirits, with the traits of animals and humans."[12] Velie goes on to say, "Nanabozho, like all tricksters, is constantly on the move. Trickster tales of all tribes inevitably begin with a variation of the formula, 'Trickster was going along when...' The trickster is a figure of insatiable appetites, and no moral constraints when it comes to filling them. He is fond of playing tricks, but more often than not he is a buffoon who ends up as the butt of the joke."[13]

Velie's assessment, which frames his reading of Vizenor's literary tricksters, does not correspond totally with certain descriptions recently formulated in academe. Many scholars cast the trickster in a more positive light, seeing it only as a victorious presence and cultural hero. Louis Owens, for instance, suggests that Vizenor's tricksters insist "upon values of community versus individuality, upon syncretic and dynamic values

versus the cultural suicide inherent in stasis, upon the most delicate of harmonies between humanity and the world we inhabit, and upon our ultimate responsibility for that world."[14] Owens' groundbreaking study of the Indian novel, *Other Destinies*, treats an inordinate amount of characters as tricksters and avoids construing any of them as "buffoons" or the "butt of jokes." Rather, they are considered to be the protectors of all tribal values; any characters who protect tribal values, in turn, are considered to be tricksters.

Likewise, Jeanne Rosier Smith writes,

> Interpreter, storyteller, and transformer, the trickster is a master of borders and exchange, injecting multiple perspectives to challenge all that is stultifying, stratified, bland, or prescriptive. Tricksters embody the complexity, diversity, and paradoxes of literary studies today, which demand the recognition of competing voices. In multicultural debates, trickster is a lively, diverse, unpredictable, vital actor, enlivening postmodern discourse and everyday lives. It is no accident that many contemporary writers and critics call upon the trickster in their expression of contemporary life and thought. Trickster is a profoundly cross-cultural and therefore truly American phenomenon.[15]

Smith's passage indicates that the trickster is indeed indefinable, because her definition leaves us with more questions than answers, particularly when we contextualize it with competing definitions. Is the trickster really a "truly American phenomenon"? It seems

unlikely, since the trickster is a cultural icon among peoples across the world. Perhaps the trickster is an "American phenomenon" only in the sense that it characterizes the ambivalence and uncertainty of border crossing, placelessness, and interaction; and, with its emphasis on disorder and deconstruction, acts as a creative entity that can be called to analyze the tropes and complexities of modern American life. Ultimately, though, the trickster itself is not American, except for Brin Rabbit and Coyote, and accomplishes more than "enlivening postmodern discourse and everyday lives," even though it does do those things.

In *Trickster Makes This World*, a broad study that surveys tricksters of all varieties, Lewis Hyde draws from various strands of thought and offers a useful and thorough evaluation:

> [T]rickster is a boundary-crosser. Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce. He also attends the internal boundaries by which groups articulate their social life. We constantly distinguish—right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead—and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction. Trickster is the creative idiot, therefore, the wise fool, the gray-haired baby, the cross-dresser, the speaker of sacred profanities. Where someone's sense of honorable behavior has left him unable to act, trickster will appear to suggest an amoral action, something right/wrong that will get life going again.

> Trickster is the mythic embodiment of ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, contradiction and paradox.[16]

Hyde's definition corresponds more with Velie's than Owens's or Smith's. While admiring the trickster's ability "to get life going again," he leaves room to acknowledge that the trickster is also a "creative idiot" and "wise fool," just as Velie reveals that it is sometimes a "buffoon" and the "butt of jokes." I will keep their passages in mind throughout the chapter, as I believe they best describe the type of characters we encounter in *The Trickster of Liberty* and *The Secret Life of Saeed*, more so, in any case, than the circumscribed tricksters offered by Smith and Owens.

It should be mentioned that modern critics have greatly expanded academic conceptions of the trickster and its role in literature and critical theory. Early scholarship, most famously that of Paul Radin and Carl Jung, either misread or limited the trickster's ability to transform, in addition to reading the trickster from a Western perspective considered unacceptable by today's standards.[17] Scholarly reinterpretations of the trickster are important because they amplify our ability to consider fiction from broader perspectives. This is especially true in regard to the trickster as a form of discourse in competition with and acting against other discourses. Vizenor's invocation of postmodernism to rehearse the conditions for tricksterism by repeatedly highlighting the role of language in the creation of meaning is part of this phenomenon.[18] Accordingly, and not surprising, *The Secret Life of Saeed* is considered to be one of the first, and finest, examples of postmodern Arabic fiction. Although I will place emphasis on textual features and pragmatic political strategies in the following reading, I will treat the

trickster as a discursive figure interacting, sometimes productively and sometimes destructively, with the discursive mechanisms of state and society. To be more specific, I will emphasize how Vizenor and Habiby employ tricksterism as a strategic response to the assumptions underlying the vocabulary one finds among settler societies.

The Novels

One doesn't need justification for offering readings of Vizenor that focus on tricksters and tricksterism. Indeed, the large body of Vizenor criticism has continually defined and redefined the trickster's role in postmodern satire without reaching a consensus. Vizenor would likely be disappointed if one were ever reached. I suspect that subsequent work, never far away, would undermine the consensus. The heterogeneity of the scholarship reflects Vizenor's style. As Barry O'Connell observes, "if one rejects, as Vizenor so explicitly has, the impulse toward any absolute, then there cannot be any single alternative form towards which one works."[19]

While scholarship has covered much of Vizenor's work, little criticism has actually provided an inter-ethnic context, a rather bewildering fact given the internationalist nature of both the trickster figure and Vizenor's postmodern themes. Vizenor himself would prefer creative analyses that cross borders and disrupt any tidy perception of the world readers might hold. The form and content of his writing reveal that he too is a trickster whose presence in the text helps determine the course of events. It is only by situating Vizenor's fiction in larger contexts focused on interplay between colonizer and colonized that the fiction is read to full effect, for Vizenor is, one could argue, the consummate internationalist even while drawing heavily from Anishinaabe oral and cultural traditions.[20]

The Trickster of Liberty, his third novel, tracks members of the Browne family, a clan of tricksters living on their government land allotment, Patronia, on the White Earth Reservation. Most of the action centers on Luster Browne and Novena Mae Ironmoccasin's nine grandchildren, born to Luster and Novena's oldest son, Shadow Box, and his wife, Wink Martin. The novel's structure is developed logically, as with all of Vizenor's fiction, although the themes therein follow only the logic of upheaval. Each chapter is dedicated to a particular trickster from the Patronia Baronage, with the exception of Garlic Browne, who died of a lighting strike, and Mime Browne, the mute twin sister of Tulip Browne who was raped and murdered behind the reservation mission one day after Garlic's death. The novel's first chapter recounts Luster's meeting with Novena and the history behind Patronia, serving as a frame of reference throughout subsequent chapters. Framing the novel's action is an introduction in the form of dialogue between cultural anthropologist Eastman Shicer and reservation trickster Sergeant Alexina Hobraiser, which, according to Bonnie Lee, "'liberates the mind' of the reader for what follows."[21]

In the introduction, Vizenor disabuses readers of any affinity they may feel for the social sciences, anthropology in particular. He uses the dialogue between Alexina and Eastman, interspersed with various quotations from famous postmodernists and poststructuralists, to inform readers that the trickster discourse he employs is meant to effect fluidity wherever stagnation exists. He warns that "[t]o imagine the tribal trickster is to relume human unities; colonial surveillance, monologues, and racial separations are overturned in discourse."[22] Careful not to "imagine" his subject, he later says,

> The trickster is lascivious, an erotic shimmer, a burn that sunders dioramas and terminal creeds; an enchanter, comic liberator, and word healer. The trickster mediates wild bodies and adamant minds; a chance in third person narratives to turn aside the cold litanies and catechistic monodramas over the measured roads to civilization. The implied author, narrators, the readers, listeners, and the characters, liven a comic and communal discourse.[23]

The "comic and communal discourse" about which Vizenor speaks actually recreates and redefines the "roads to civilization," roads that made their appearance centuries before settlers descended on the Anishinaabe nation.

Let us turn briefly now to *The Secret Life of Saeed*. One needs some justification for offering readings of Habiby that focus on tricksters and tricksterism. His fiction is rightly read as satire by many critics, but tricksterism is not part of the Palestinian critical lexicon, although it has a deep legacy in oral folk culture. In addition, Palestinian critics tend to examine textual features that inform readers' knowledge of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Such an approach is tenable since nearly all Palestinian authors write in some way toward the conflict, but it can be debilitating when trying to find an aesthetic model underlying fictive narratives. It also limits the internationalization of the work by eliminating any possibility of reciprocal inter-communalism, a communicative strategy that I believe consciously guides the intention of numerous writers.[24]

A close reading of *The Secret Life of Saeed* allows one to build on existing criticism by situating the text in more imaginative contexts, most notably tricksterism

derived from folk culture and anti-universality as a universal theme. A look at ancient tales of sexual awakening, husbands and wives, society, and the universe illustrates that Habiby clearly was influenced by the tricky verbal play of his Levantine culture.[25] The influence of oral culture on an approach focused on inducing disorder via wordplay, trickery, malapropism, and incompetence endows *The Secret Life of Saeed* with the central qualities of the modern trickster novel. Dilip Hiro notes that "[s]ardonic humor is one of the hallmarks of Habibi's literary writing."[26] That hallmark propelled *The Secret Life of Saeed* to fame and rendered it one of the most mature Arabic novels of its day.

Structurally, the novel is no more complex than *The Trickster of Liberty*, although, like *The Trickster of Liberty*, the conclusions one might draw from the text are at best ambivalent. Unlike the *Trickster of Liberty*, however, which is incohesive enough to merit categorization as short stories, *The Secret Life of Saeed* is structured more traditionally as a novel. The novel's main protagonist, Saeed, a Palestinian Israeli like Habiby, "is a comic hero, a fool, in fact, who recounts the secrets of his life in the state of Israel in the form of a letter to an unnamed friend."[27] Each letter constitutes one of the novel's three sections. The "unnamed friend" actually narrates the story, though Saeed, the authorial figure in the letters, dominates most of the action. At times, though, one cannot tell whether Saeed is narrating in the form of a letter or if the unnamed friend is providing context for that letter. As in Vizenor's work, it is impossible to determine whether the confused narration is an unintended mistake or a calculated ploy.[28]

Saeed interacts, invariably with great hilarity, with numerous characters, both Palestinian Arab and Israeli Jew. He is, according to Jayyusi, a "wise fool, a comic hero who is an informer for the State of Israel. However, his stupidity and cowardice, and his

outspoken candor, turn him into a victim rather than a villain. Never wholly successful in his attempts to please the Zionist state, he finally reverses roles to become a supporter of Palestinian resistance."[29] He keeps company with a core of people whose names, like those in *The Trickster of Liberty*, are allegorical: Yuaad and her daughter Yuaad ("to be returned"); his wife Baqiyya ("one who stays"); his son Walaa ("loyal"); his Jewish superior in the Union of Palestine Workers, Jabob; and the Big Man of Small Stature, an ubiquitous character who represents state power. There is also the purported space creature Saeed encounters in the ancient catacombs underneath the coastal city of Acre, who ultimately transports Saeed into obscurity in the unknown location where he composes his three letters. Saeed's last name is philosophical, not allegorical. He explains that the word *Pessoptimist*

> combines two qualities, pessimism and optimism, that have been blended perfectly in the character of all members of our family since our first divorced mother, the Cypriot. It is said that the first to so name us was Tamerlane, following the second massacre of Baghdad. This was when it was reported to him that my first ancestor, Abjar son of Abjar, mounted on his horse outside the city walls, had stared back at the tongues of flame and shouted, "After me, the deluge!"
>
> Take me, for example. I don't differentiate between optimism and pessimism and am quite at a loss as to which of the two characterizes me. When I awake each morning I thank the Lord he did not take my soul

> during the night. If harm befalls me during the day, I thank Him that it was no worse. So which am I, a pessimist or an optimist?[30]

It is indicative of Saeed's nature that he would describe himself with a question rather than a statement. Rather than choosing between fixed definitions—and, by extension, modes of behavior—he combines them to create something new and indefinable. Habiby's commentary on the limiting nature of naming foregrounds his belief, expressed continually in *The Secret Life of Saeed*, that constant transformation allows the oppressed a type of critical inquiry to articulate theories of injustice that might impale the state on its own contradictions. If we alter popular discourse, Saeed seems to be saying, then we invent the ability to alter the state's mechanisms of mental and material domination. The impulse toward tricksterism is longstanding in Saeed's genealogy, as evidenced by Abjar son of Abjar's proclamation vowing to extinguish the destruction unleashed by the notorious Tamerlane.

While *The Trickster of Liberty* and *The Secret Life of Saeed* are both satire, it is not this attribute that allows them to be juxtaposed. There are countless forms of satire in all genres, so jointly analyzing texts with the same framework simply because they are both satirical is not always prudent. Their similarities are wide-ranging, but can be narrowed to five factors: 1) they are the same type of satire, that which draws upon cultural icons to challenge state authority and, simultaneously, the culture from which those icons are drawn; 2) they emphasize Indigenous resistance and reclamation of Indigenous history while turning a critical eye toward strategies Indigenes use in aspiring to resistance and reclamation; 3) their conclusions, however unstable, compel readers to

view the particulars of the Indigenous past and present in a broad dynamic that stresses the interconnected nature of native voices; 4) they are aware of the quest for Canaan and cleverly invert it by exposing moral and pragmatic disparities within its unsteady vocabulary; and 5) they share common themes and techniques, which reveal to us important things about the nature of settler colonialism and its effects on the Indigenous nations that settlers encountered.

The Munificence of an Ass

In considering the type of theory one can best apply to non-Western literatures, Barbara Christian makes a point worth attention:

> I am inclined to say that our [people of color's] theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, because dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking.[31]

Christian's observation reminds us of Vizenor's notion that postmodernism recapitulates the language games and forms of interpersonal deconstruction that existed in Native communities long before postmodernism was brought into academe as a specialized discipline in various departments.[32] Habiby's literary sensibilities do not much differ, as Jayyusi illustrates:

> Habiby frequently incorporates words, phrases and proverbs from the Palestinian idiom. His style is succinct and emotionally restrained, yet

> suggestive. His tone is usually muted, and almost never lapses into the trap of rhetoric. Instead of the loud, direct tone of other literary writings that denounce aggression and glorify resistance, Habiby manages to accomplish the same with wit, irony, sarcasm, ridicule, over-simplified candor, understatement, double meaning, paradoxes, puns, and play on words.[33]

The postmodern strategies in *The Secret Life of Saeed*, like those in *The Trickster of Liberty*, reveal that cultural traditions included in fiction predate the institutionalization of theory in academic circles. This point, though somewhat obvious, is relevant because Vizenor and Habiby challenge forms of thought entrenched in human civilization for centuries; the type of response they offer, then, culls an alternate past that contests the limits of various academic dogmas (Eurocentrism, cultural anthropology, realpolitik, neoliberalism). As Christian suggests, Indigenous methods of theorizing do not often escape the boundaries of Indigenous cultures.

These concepts help guide the excellent reading of *The Secret Life of Saeed* published recently by Nancy Coffin. Challenging much of the previous orthodoxy concerning the novel, Coffin contends that critical approaches that glorify the apparent espousal of armed resistance—a vital part of Palestinian culture—"reflect more about the ideological inclinations of the reader than they do about the content of the text."[34] A more astute interpretation, Coffin suggests, will realize that "armed struggle is portrayed as immature, impatient, and suicidal"[35] because "the text offers a critique of its own presentation of the views of the armed resistance movement."[36] Coffin accentuates the

complexity of the text by dedicating space to Habiby's unflattering perception of Palestinian resistance vis-à-vis Israeli oppression.

In fact, nearly everything in Habiby's satire is unflattering, including Saeed, although he is generally likable. He reveals at the start of the novel that his life in Israel was all due to the munificence of an ass because a disoriented donkey wandered into the path of a bullet aimed for him: "My subsequent life in Israel, then, was really a gift from that unfortunate beast. What value then, honored sir, should we assign to this life of mine?"[37] The question is crucial but indefinable. One cannot accurately guess how much value Habiby would have readers assign to Saeed's life since Saeed is an imaginative trickster whose folly often renders him little more than a symbolic instigator. As a wise fool, his very existence is an oxymoron. Readers are left to decide the fate of this strange character, and, as a result, their own assumptions as they are interpolated between the polarized machinations of Israeli colonialism and Palestinian dispossession.

Vizenor too reveals little of substance about his characters beyond their unique qualities as tricksters. They deride and disrupt, and they sometimes narrate, but they never patronize or explicate. Tulip Browne, for instance, a private detective, is hired by Professor Terrocious Pan-Anna of the University of California-Berkeley to recover a computer stolen from the Native American Indian Mixedblood Studies Department. Before she accepts his request, she enumerates a list of stipulations:

> "First, my report will be in the oral tradition and told to you, no one else, in less than a week," she emphasized. "I will describe several scenes and imagined events as stories, but the interpretation and resolution of the

> information will be yours, not mine. There will be no written report unless the same information is given to the police at the same time. You must agree to these conditions."[38]

As a trickster, Tulip refuses to acquiesce to formal standards. Instead, she relies on the oral tradition even in undertaking something as formulaic as detective work. The conditions Tulip imposes on Terrocious denote, as Kimberly Blaeser points out, a common sentiment among Vizenor's characters, who "frequently resist classification, subvert notions of concrete form, and inhabit more than one region of being."[39] Vizenor, like LaDuke, is also incorporating nonfiction events into his fiction. Terrocious was Vizenor's chair in the Native American Studies Department at the University of California-Berkeley who was dismissed for sexual misconduct.

The fact that Tulip undermines the conventions of legality and academia indicates that Vizenor can be read across borders, for there is no provincial or national precept binding his text to routine or expectation. Vizenor's critique of colonial culture resembles the intention, if not pattern, of other Indigenous authors, for Tulip makes herself an oralist when she declines to be a pragmatist. Her stories serve a pragmatic function, but they do not belong either to her or Terrocious. They are uncontainable the moment they are spoken into existence. The motivation guiding the characters' behavior—that is to say, acting to dissolve all points of reference—is to subvert orthodoxy by teasing the official language offered by agents of the state or settler community. We can see this play out in *The Secret Life of Saeed* when Saeed, always the bumbling interloper, expresses his loyalty to the state so ardently that "the authorities saw

it as disloyalty."[40] During the June 1967 War,[41] Israel announced to Arab residents of the newly occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip that they should hang a white sheet on their roofs as a sign of surrender. Saeed, following the edict so closely that he exposes its absurdity, hangs a flag on the roof of his house on Jabal Street in Haifa, far from the West Bank on the Israeli coast, drawing the ire of the Big Man of Small Stature. Jacob comes to express the Big Man's displeasure:

> He yelled, "Lower it, you mule!"
>
> I lowered my head until it touched his very feet and asked, "Did they appoint you King of the West Bank, Your Majesty?"[42]

Saeed's inability to comprehend the directions of his superiors usually results in bungled operations whose ridiculous development stretches the bounds of reality.[43] The Big Man's dominance is therefore restricted because of a person whose actions are so stupid that they emasculate the logic of the state. Vizenor explores the convergence of fantasy with reality in the same way.

We have seen how postmodernists create theoretical moves with similar emphasis on the slipperiness of language and the inability of political systems to remain self-sustaining—for instance, in Fredric Jameson's assertion that "the underside of culture is blood, torture, death and horror,"[44] which implies that any nation's cultural underside—conditions tricksters most expose—is more worthy of attention than its conventional features. The use of the word "underside," in fact, is in itself slippery, for, as a trickster might point out, who can rightfully distinguish underside from topside? Expositions on

power and the influence of power on popular perception thus assume critical importance. In the fiction of Vizenor and Habiby, the contradictions inherent in power inspire both ridicule and reaffirmation.

We should not be surprised that this technique is employed by characters who either owe their existence to an ass or dispatch mongrels to disturb academic lectures. If the quest for Canaan is a rigid juridical mentality that sustains self-identity through a violent, often scriptural, process of othering, then tricksterism in postmodern fiction is ultimately a reflection not of resistant self-fashioning, but the underside of the othering process. We all, it can be said, owe our existence to the munificence of an ass.

Dropping into the Last Lecture

I mentioned earlier that one of the more potent qualities of *The Trickster of Liberty* and *The Secret Life of Saeed* is satire critical not only of colonialism, but also of the types of resistance deployed in response to colonialism. Self-critical satire is crucial to our comprehension of the quest for Canaan. The quest for Canaan summons narratives fashioned from selective historical readings that, via their attachment to centers of power, eventually crystallize into authoritative national histories with the ability to justify various forms of jingoism. There is thus great potential for resistant narratives to correspondingly entreat narratives fashioned from selective historical readings. Those narratives often preach Indigenous reaffirmation based on images of Indigenes developed in the colonizer's society. Authors who turn a critical eye toward resistance struggles they either participate in or support play a positive (and necessary) role in the health of those struggles. When self-criticisms from different cultures imitate one another by chance or accident, it is evident that satirists, even in challenging established boundaries,

themselves work within certain boundaries. The boundaries of concern here reveal much about the effect of colonial imposition on Indigenous social structures and, subsequently, artistic expression.

Vizenor is probably the most controversial and outrageous satirist in Indian literature. Much of the controversy results from his unflattering—indeed, derisive—depiction of leaders of the American Indian Movement [AIM], which gained notoriety in the sixties and seventies before eventually disbanding. Vizenor developed his skepticism about the efficacy and utility of AIM when reporting on the 1973 Wounded Knee occupation for the *Minneapolis Tribune*. In his autobiography, within which he ridicules AIM's media-hungry leaders, he writes,

> The American Indian Movement overturned the burdens of colonial education, and burned manners at the best institutions. Rather, the media-borne tribal simulations, and transvaluations, raised the romantic notions of a material and spiritual revolution in America. Media simulations and ersatz leaders have no real constituencies; the media men, and there were men under the media masks, had learned to rave in television scenes. Some of these men were paroled felons, seldom bound to praise and pleasure; some were wicked, and sold hallucinogens to tribal children. Some of these men were moved by personal power; literature and communal dreams were rare in their travels.[45]

A reader unfamiliar with Vizenor might expect that his airing of disagreements with the AIM leadership would be limited to nonfiction, but in fact the opposite is true. He reserves his most pointed commentary for fiction, something not even a casual reader can miss in *The Trickster of Liberty*.

The commentary, one could argue, exists in the entire range of Vizenor's fiction in the sense that the "tribal values" he invokes from the oral tradition work to depose the "media Indians" he so detests. At times, though, that commentary becomes explicit and, in this reader's opinion, constitutes the funniest portion of Vizenor's always funny work. In *The Trickster of Liberty*, Vizenor's scorn is represented by Coke de Fountain, "an urban pantribal radical and dealer in cocaine,"[46] and Homer Yellow Snow, "the spurious tribal author" who poses a question central to Native American Studies upon his arrival at the White Earth Reservation: "Would you believe I was once an Indian?"[47]

Coke de Fountain and Homer Yellow Snow appear at White Earth because Father Mother Browne, a former priest once called Father Father Mother, retires to the reservation after renouncing his priesthood and opens a tavern named "the Edge of the White Earth," which allows mixedblood educators, tribal radicals, writers, painters, geneticists, psychotaxidermists, and various pretenders "to step over the edge ...[for] one last call before they dropped into their new names and social identities."[48] The Edge of the White Earth is a place of atonement, a tavern where media Indians and Indians who mimic—purposely or inadvertently—imposed colonial values confess their sins before assuming different identities. In this section Vizenor makes his most valuable points about the nature of dialectics in a colonizer-colonized relationship. His satirical rendition of the influence of dominant ethics on tribal traditions denotes two crucial things: that

those ethics are pervasive and underline all aspects of everyday life, including the lives of Indigenes who consider their traditionalism impervious; and that escaping those ethics is actually possible if one critically analyzes the assumptions guiding all forms of behavior by framing critical analysis within an oral tradition.

Coke de Fountain, molded in the image of an AIM radical, refuses to analyze the assumptions guiding his behavior.[49] He therefore poses as an activist whose work is indispensable to Native communities, including the protection of "sacred traditions." The narrator describes de Fountain in a contemptuous tone:

> His tribal career unfolded in prison, where he studied tribal philosophies and blossomed when he was paroled in braids and a bone choker. He bore a dark cultural frown, posed as a new colonial victim, and learned his racial diatribes in church basements; radical and stoical postures were tied to federal programs. The race to represent the poor started with loose money and ran down to the end with loose power. When the dash was blocked, the radical restored his power over the poor with narcotics; he inspired his urban warriors with cocaine.[50]

It is notable that Vizenor describes de Fountain's activism as a "career," which implies that de Fountain has built his income and prestige at the expense of those he purports to represent. The very concept of representation, of course, is anathema to Vizenor, but his criticism here extends beyond that belief. With typical irreverence, he suggests that the entire idea of resistance is a Western construct formed in a colonial framework, and it is

therefore not the job of the Indigene to resist. Rather, it is his or her responsibility to tell stories. Tribal "posers," as Vizenor dubs them, are given that opportunity at the Last Lecture on the Edge.

Unlike Homer Yellow Snow,[51] who solemnly confesses his dishonesty before dropping into an entirely new identity, de Fountain—described by Father Mother as "the man who took the most and gave the least back"—remains defiant.[52] The audience at the tavern, unimpressed with de Fountain's exploits and craving atonement, heckles de Fountain when he claims that "we did it [the Wounded Knee takeover] for the elders, so the elders could be proud again."[53] In response, he is told "bullshit"; "You did it for the money and blondes"; "you, and your mouth, we want to forget, we want to forget what you have done to our memories"; "Your conscience is cocaine"; and "Your mother earth is a blonde."[54] The insults only enrage de Fountain, who refuses to alter his identity: "'This is not my last lecture. Never, never,' he told Father Mother. 'Why should I give my last lecture to those tomahawks?'"[55]

The scene is essentially a diatribe against the AIM leadership and what Vizenor considers their parasitic and/or egotistical motivations.[56] It appears to be unusually forthcoming for a novel, but all of Vizenor's fiction, with the exception of *Dead Voices*, offers readers buffoonish characters meant to illustrate the very worst (and best) in particular philosophies and modes of behavior. Vizenor's dislike of AIM leaders, symbolized by de Fountain, can be narrowed to one factor, as he informs us repeatedly in interviews and nonfiction: their abandonment of the oral tradition in place of conceptions of Indians produced by the dominant society and appropriated by Natives as authentic.[57] For Vizenor, nothing is certain outside of stories, and real stories never rely on certainty,

but instead on imagination. In this way, he contests the parameters of the quest for Canaan, which demands of its advocates unyielding discipline to a rigidly formed consciousness developed in response to narratives that expedite the pursuit of colonialism. That discipline is one of the precursors to modern patriotism, a mindset wholly antithetical to tricksterism.

We can see how the contest plays out in Homer Yellow Snow's last lecture. Although Yellow Snow has no pretentious about his phony past and visits the Edge of the White Earth in order to confess and begin a new life in secret, he is no less contentious than de Fountain. A "pretend" Indian, he defies the authenticity of "real" Indians. "Save one or two academic skeptics," he declares, "I had the entire white and tribal worlds believing in me as a writer and historian, and eating out of my hand as a philosopher, especially when I raised foundation support for films and tribal seminars."[58] To the disdain of his audience, Yellow Snow proceeds to contextualize the most difficult issues facing Vizenor's oft-discussed identity wars: "What other culture could be so easily duped?.... Listen, all it took was a little dark skin, a descriptive name, turquoise and silver, and that was about it, my friends. With that much, anyone could become an Indian."[59] Before leaving the tavern, Yellow Snow snidely shares the *tour de force* of his speech: "[A]ll of you needed me, white and tribal, to absolve your insecurities and convince the world that you were more than a lost whisper in a museum, more than a stick figure on birchbark or a faded mark on buffalo hide."[60] "If you knew who you were," he closes, "why did you find it so easy to believe in me?.... [B]ecause you too want to be white, and no matter what you say in public, you trust whites more than you trust Indians, which is to say, you trust pretend Indians more than real ones."[61]

It is unclear whether Yellow Snow directs his comments at the Indians of the de Fountain variety or at the so-called "real" Indians gathered in the lecture hall to hear the confessions of those who have either exploited or misrepresented their community. It is most likely both, since no conception of "real" or "authentic" Indians can exist without charlatanism. In *The Trickster of Liberty*, no event is isolated, and every story exists in order to inform a central, though materially decentralized, philosophy.

The reaction of Yellow Snow's audience is as instructive as his lecture. Not letting his comments—or insults, depending on how they are construed—go unchallenged, an elder interrupts him to proclaim, "We duped the whites more than they duped us, we even duped them to think they were duping us."[62] Another women says, "You duped yourself to pretend you were like us.... You're the white, you're the victim, and that's your problem not ours, so who's the dupe?"[63] Her question seems to mirror Vizenor's quandary. At this point, he may be speaking directly through her when she asks "who's the dupe?" The answer, just like the question, is ultimately indeterminate. In this instant, everybody is in some way "the dupe," because each individual's identity is bound to the conduct of every other individual. That is to say, the categories of "real" and "fake" are created because of disputes over the management of the communal polity; analyzing those categories in search of a solution is futile, since they are both indefinable and devoid of nuance.

Clearly, Vizenor perceives Yellow Snow to be an unsympathetic character, but based on the movement of the text, he is unconvinced that Yellow Snow's speech is total rubbish. His performance actually inspires introspection among audience members. What does it reveal, then, that an authentic poser can challenge the comfortable

presuppositions of those who detest him? It tells us that one does not maintain a stable identity in a world where culture is constantly in flux. However, we also see that the anger Yellow Snow generates in the audience reaffirms his feeling of righteousness. It should be remembered that Yellow Snow never expresses remorse for what he did; instead, he expresses fatigue and sorrow because somebody uncovered his charade. One gets the feeling that Yellow Snow would happily continue being an Indian imposter if circumstances permitted. His aura of self-importance is exaggerated, but his comments are not altogether nonsensical. Yellow Snow's intellectual legitimacy, despite his ethical depravity, is a symptom of de Fountain's influence on Indian country.

It is possible that Vizenor wants to direct readers' attention to the sheer folly that debates over legitimacy generate. I would like to suggest, however, that a more astute reading of the scene will illustrate that Vizenor actually comments on the effect of settler narratives on the health of Indigenous stories. The narratives that settlers transported to the New World in general and White Earth in particular demanded a universalizing tendency among their advocates. As a result, they became strict moral statutes and inflexible worldviews, meeting the fundamental conditions for manufacturing a national history. Anybody who subsequently was absorbed into the national consciousness evoked in conjunction with totalizing narratives faced a dilemma with self-perception and self-identification because nation formation is inevitably bound to the authority of the colonial leadership. Beyond the quandaries inherent in imposition, mimicry, and ambivalence, all results of colonialism and theorized at length in the Academy, we are forced to assess the failed attempts of Indigenes to recover cultural features that once underlined their moral consciousness. In Vizenor's mind, the cultural feature most worth

attention is the oral tradition, which he believes was hijacked by anthropology and injected tacitly with anthropological values when reclaimed by Indigenes. The ultimate potency of the quest for Canaan is not its ability to persuade or justify, but its longevity, because it continually reinforces itself by remapping its own assumptions, and also by destabilizing, usurping, and then refashioning Indigenous worldviews.[64] This is why Vizenor dislikes rigid or stable discourse, because—tacitly or not—it strengthens the conditions that obstruct the recital of actual tribal stories. And it is why he mocks or admonishes members of his own community who reinforce those conditions.

Philosophically, Habiby treats these issues with Vizenor's brand of skepticism. Satire in *The Secret Life of Saeed* is usually heavy-handed, as it is in *The Trickster of Liberty*, though it is difficult to imagine an author who states points as outrageously as Vizenor. Habiby comes close. About Vizenor, Franchot Ballinger has observed, "Like many satirists, he does not see his duty as including the re-educating of our minds. He is more intent on liberating them, and the trickster principle is the agency by which he would accomplish this task."[65] Ballinger's analysis is tenable in approaching *The Secret Life of Saeed*. Like Vizenor, Habiby has no lecture to give or advice to offer. Instead, he lives the irony he presents in fiction: he cannot explicate what needs to be done correctly, he can only expose and denounce what is done incorrectly. In the context of Palestinian resistance, the fallacies are numerous.

The Secret Life of Saeed demands that readers confront the paralysis of the Arab leadership and local spokespeople. Although there are no Coke de Fountains or anybody quite as preposterous, Habiby's intention does not fundamentally differ from Vizenor's: to incite readers to action based not on embracing the orthodoxies uttered incessantly by

prominent leaders, but on creating resistant strategies based on perpetual critique and arrant questioning. Palestinian culture, an indefinable but sacred communal entity, will then offer guidance.

Such a philosophy is made clear when Saeed meets an old teacher in the Jazzar Mosque after the founding of Israel. The mosque is filled with refugees attempting to reunite with their families. When Saeed is asked about the state of the refugees' villages, his confusion denotes Habiby's unwillingness to form a decolonial consciousness based on the romance of history:

> Please do not expect me, my dear sir, after all this time, to remember the names of all the villages laid waste to which these figures made claim that evening in the courtyard of the Jazzar mosque. We of Haifa used to know more about the villages of Scotland than we did about those of Galilee. Most of these villages I have never heard mentioned except for that one evening.[66]

When Saeed's teacher offers Saeed advice, Habiby's position as one who accepts only non-positions becomes more explicit. His resistance to any sort of intractable historical consciousness is revealed in a statement made by the dimwitted Saeed, meant, no doubt, to be a jab at the viability of Zionism. Saeed asks if "the rank of Alluf for the Israeli generals derived from [Mamluk leader] Qalawun's title?," to which the teacher responds, "God forbid, my son. No. That is derived from the word for a leader of a thousand men, a term used in the Bible. Oh, no! These aren't Mamluks or Crusaders. These are people

returning to their country after an absence of two thousand years." Saeed's reaction is illuminating: "My, what prodigious memories they have!"[67]

The scene continues along these lines. The teacher later remarks, "There is nothing on earth more holy than human blood. That is why our country is called the Holy Land."[68] This statement exposes Habiby's disgust with ethonationalism, especially the sort of ethnonationalism underpinned by violent religious sensibilities. Habiby's disdain for the kind of historical acerbity one finds inscribed in movements like Zionism becomes transparent when the teacher, tired from attempting to reunite refugees, tells Saeed, "Conquerors, my son, consider as true history only what they have themselves fabricated."[69] Before morning, Israeli authorities force the refugees to leave the mosque: "They were put on big trucks which carried them, as my teacher told me later, to the northern borders. There the trucks dumped them and then returned."[70] Saeed, the bumbling collaborator, returns to the service of the Big Man of Small Stature.

In his service to the Big Man, however, he continues to uncover, through the disruption of Israeli state processions, the problems endemic to Palestinian resistance. As a *feda'i* tells an officer at the Lebanese border after being asked, "Where are your weapons, my gallant warriors?": "Our weapon is knowledge, and we're quite penniless."[71] The sentiment is expressed more clearly in a story the space creature tells Saeed in the catacombs of Acre:

> He grew calmer and replied, "My advice will not help you. However, I will tell you a story I heard, set in Persia, about an axe without a handle that was thrown among some trees.

> "The trees said to each other, 'This has not been thrown here for any good reason.'
>
> "But one perfectly ordinary tree observed: 'Provided none of you provide a stick for its arse, you have nothing to fear from it.'[72]

Habiby includes the story as a clever way of informing Palestinians that resistance without critical inquiry has transformed even harmless features of Israeli colonialism into dangerous problems, just as Vizenor's "media Indians" and "urban tribal educators" have sharpened the foundation of America's colonial culture. Saeed, as Coffin observes, is himself complicit: "Sa'id...blithely ignores the spaceman's wisdom and spends the next twenty years doing precisely what he has been warned against: he himself provides the handle for the Israeli axe head."[73]

Coffin's reading merits some elaboration. While Saeed's blithe ignorance supplements Israel's power, it simultaneously limits it, as a result of his trickster heterogeneity. When Saeed's foolishness does not actually disturb the Israeli bureaucracy, it unmasks that bureaucracy's intrinsic contradictions. When, for instance, seventeen Palestinian children are killed after an abandoned landmine explodes in Sandala as the children were walking home from school, Saeed's superior Jacob lectures Saeed for questioning who installed the mine, in the process revealing the true nature of Western democracies developed concurrent with dispossession:

> Immediately after this incident, Jacob, my boss, summoned us all and delivered a lecture against the Communists—anti-Semites, as he said—

> who instigate people to strike and demonstrate and who were claiming that it had been an Israeli mine. He went on to state, moreover, that our committee, the Union of Palestine Workers, was a democratic organization in a democratic state and that therefore we were free to announce that the mine had been left either by the British or by the Arabs.[74]

Habiby, of course, is poking fun at Israel, but something more serious is at work. His satire is not critical of the downside of democracy; it is critical of democracy itself. It would be easy to attribute that dislike to Habiby's career as a Communist politician, for certainly it is informed by it. The critique extends beyond personal expediency, though. Habiby is pointing out that democracy—or discourse about democracy—inevitably frames colonial aggression in Palestine. As a result, one cannot praise Israel's democracy without also implicitly supporting colonialism; the two are inexorably connected, at least insofar as we contemplate democracy as a modern discursive phenomenon with peculiar political circumstances and not as an actual governing system. Habiby seems to be saying that in modernity there is nothing democratic about democracy. The bungled logic of the state allows him to support that belief without even pointing to the destruction of Palestinian society.

It would be a mistake to confuse Habiby's skepticism with cynicism, because the terms are different and Habiby elaborates their difference in the text. Cynicism implies lack of hope and action, whereas skepticism generally indicates a lack of credulity. Like Vizenor in his relationship to Anishinaabe politics, Habiby refuses to accept that

Palestinians will forever remain dispossessed. He simply wishes to reclaim the axe handle and whittle it down with irony, tricksterism, humor, and comedy, all acting in the service of pervasive self-scrutiny.

The trickster characters Vizenor and Habiby produce are never perfect, nor are they necessarily moral heroes. They are, however, cultural heroes that attempt to benefit the living and spiritual conditions of their respective societies. At times their attempts are incidental or accidental, but the effect of nearly all their actions is ultimately positive. Such is the existential function of the trickster. As literary figures, the trickster's utility is amplified. The literary trickster forms an unusual relationship with readers. It always keeps us off guard and guessing, so we thus are reminded of our own contradictory approaches to reading and the slipperiness of the textual analyses we impose on fluent textual features. More important, since the trickster asks us to unlearn the assumptions we use to guide our understanding of colonialism, we are able to access colonialism's most hidden functions. Tricksters, as Vizenor would inform us, never educate. They simply compel readers to question their own education in order that stories can be revived.

In Conclusion: Colonial Discourse Across the Atlantic

In this chapter, I have not concentrated on all the main aspects of *The Trickster of Liberty* and *The Secret Life of Saeed*, or even on their most important aspects. I have discussed textual elements that contribute to our understanding of settler colonialism, though I find it reductionist to critique literature without at least some emphasis on aestheticism. In the case of Vizenor and Habiby, the contradiction I just offered is not

ultimately contradictory: both authors' aesthetics inform the dialectics of colonialism and liberation.

As reading Vizenor and Habiby illustrates, there is something inherent in settler colonialism that transforms discrete colonized societies in fundamentally related ways. *The Trickster of Liberty* and *The Secret Life of Saeed* are alike in method and intention—and no less in philosophy—although their authors had no contact and positioned themselves within vastly different cultural traditions. When reading across cultures, it is not the Indigenous cultural traditions that demand comparison. It is the governing factors of the colonial culture and how that culture affects the strategies of decolonial writers. In the end, then, the literary trickster, unlike its counterpart from the oral tradition, is not only a wise fool or cultural hero, but also a confrontational and destabilizing discourse set in motion against the debilitating language of the oppressor.

The fact that Vizenor and Habiby spend much time critiquing the debilitating language of Indigenous decolonization indicates how complex are issues of representation and resistance. But even self-critical satire is influenced by the quest for Canaan, which induces the sort of mimicry that Vizenor and Habiby so deplore. This has been discussed in a broader context by Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, who note,

> If texts exist in what—to be deliberately unfashionable—one could call a dialectical relationship with their social and historical context—produced by, but also productive of, particular forms of knowledge, ideologies, power relations, institutions and practices—then an analysis of the texts of imperialism has a particular urgency, given their implication in far-

> reaching, and continuing, systems of domination and economic exploitation.[75]

It can be argued that the tricksterism utilized by Vizenor and Habiby is highly concerned with "particular forms of knowledge, ideologies, power relations, institutions and practices," almost exclusively so. Within that concern, however, are also strong analyses of the texts—"texts" including discourse and vocabulary—of imperialism. In order to maximize those analyses, Vizenor and Habiby examine their own cultures to see where the textual authority of colonialism has affected the cultural texts of Indigenous storytellers. They thus reevaluate the quest for Canaan by inversion.

Whatever else it is, the quest for Canaan is more than anything an austere centralizing mindset that invokes selective readings of history and transposes them into historical signifiers that reduce consciousness to manifest pursuits of theological destiny. The use of tricksterism in the novels of Vizenor and Habiby is therefore no accident. By what discourse can they effectively challenge state imposition? To employ the conventions of the colonial culture would only reinforce the unjust standards by which Indigenes are judged. Culture then becomes extremely important. No figure better encapsulates the pastiche of Indigenous cultures in all their brilliance and foolishness than the trickster. When we encounter mimetic behavioral patterns among tricksters of different cultures, our ability to analyze both aesthetics and politics is buttressed and finally infinite. Colonialism will never be understood without infinite inter-communalism.

While neither Vizenor nor Habiby involves reciprocal inter-communalism in his vocabulary, it underlies much of the social commentary each offers; that involvement is especially apparent in the emphasis their tricksters place on border crossing and in their opposition to ethnonationalism. We saw with Winona LaDuke and Liyana Badr that it is possible in literature to inscribe aesthetics with politico-histories to create an interplay between colonizer and Indigene that inevitably is partisan in favor of Indigenous narratives. With Vizenor and Habiby, however, the interplay is built into the philosophical composition of the trickster and can be as derisive of the Indigenous culture as it is of settler rationale. As a result, the trickster's ironic performances are necessarily transnational. Our readings of them can therefore be inter-communal. When we endeavor to comprehend ethnic cleansing in its appalling totality, those performances are indispensable. They induce an extraordinary amount of tempo and motion, none so important as their ardent focus on survival.

Notes

1. See Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

2. See Jeanne Rosier Smith, *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

3. See Barbara Harlow, *After Lives: Legacies of Revolutionary Writing* (London and New York: Verso Press, 1996).

4. Ngugi Wa Thiongo, "Borders and Bridges: Seeking Connections between Things," in *The Preoccupation of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Fawzia Afzal-Khan and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 120.

5. Ibid., 119.

6. It is generally most explicit during times of war. Such is evident in the discourse after September 11, when President Bush and other leaders undertook a "clash of civilizations" and a "war on terror" and "backwardness" in order to save "civilization."

7. A. Robert Lee, "Introduction," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 3.

8. For the first and still most effective book-length study, see Kimberly Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

9. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction," in *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, by Emile Habiby (Columbia, LA: Readers International, 1989), x.

10. A large number of Palestinian Israelis—that is, Palestinian citizens of Israel inside the 1967 Green Line—support the CPI whether or not they are Communist because the party advocates civil liberties for Palestinians. Habiby, however, was actually a Communist.

11. David Murray, "Crossblood Strategies in the Writings of Gerald Vizenor," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 20.

12. Alan Velie, "Gerald Vizenor's Indian Gothic," *MELUS* 17, no. 1 (1991): 78.

13. Ibid., 19.

14. Louis Owens, *Other Destinies* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992), 230.

15. Jeanne Rosier Smith, *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), xiii.

16. Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World* (New York: North Point Press, 1998), 7.

17. See Paul Radin, *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology* (New York: Schocken Book, 1972). Jung's famous essay, "On the Psychology of the Trickster Figure," is anthologized in the book.

18. Elaine A. Jahner writes, "Vizenor learned a lot about technique from postmodern writers and theorists whom he reads as though they were novelists. He has taken their strategic emphasis on performance and game theory and set it in productive relation to the performance contexts of traditional storytelling which keep any given culture's cognitive style alive." See further Elaine A. Jahner, "Trickster Discourse and Postmodern Strategies," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 41.

19. Barry O'Connell, "Gerald Vizenor's 'Delicious Dancing with Time': Trickster History from Ideology," in *Loosening the Seams: Interpretations of Gerald Vizenor*, ed. A. Robert Lee (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 2000), 65.

20. This fact has made Vizenor a controversial figure in Native American Studies. Authors who prefer pluralism to any form of cosmopolitanism and tribal nationalism to postmodernism have offered sharp criticism of Vizenor's approach. One such author is Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, who has derided what she calls Vizenor's "whoever wants to be tribal can join the tribe" methodology. See further Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, *Why I Can't Read Wallace Stegner and Other Essays* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 85.

21. Bonnie Lee, Review, *The Trickster of Liberty*, by Gerald Vizenor, *American Indian Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (1990): 437.

22. Gerald Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988), x.

23. Ibid., x.

24. I draw this conclusion simply by reading texts and deducing authors' intentions based on certain themes, though I am aware of the intentional fallacy. More important, however, the sentiment has

been expressed to me in conversations with various writers, among them Liyana Badr, Izzat Ghazzawi, and Yahya Yakhlif.

25. For an excellent and wide-ranging collection of traditional Palestinian folktales, see Ibrahim Muhawi and Sharif Kanaana, *Speak Bird, Speak Again: Palestinian Arab Folktales* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). A great irony can be found in the fact that the collection is introduced by University of California Anthropologist Alan Dundas, who is ridiculed by Vizenor in *The Trickster of Liberty*.

26. Dilip Hiro, "A Giant of Arabic Literature," *The Middle East* 247, no. 1 (1995): 42.

27. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction," in *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, xi.

28. In her review of *The Trickster of Liberty*, Bonnie Lee points out that "[n]umerous instances of what appear to be typographical errors (e.g., missing quotation marks, (p. xvi); italics for only part of a title, (pp. xvi-xvii); the single use of the name 'Beat' for Alexina Hobraiser, (p. xvii); the misspelling of Momaday as 'Momady,' (p. xiii); and apparently Alan Dundes as 'Dundas' throughout) distract the reader. If they are deliberate authorial usages, they serve no apparent purpose," 438.

29. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Introduction: Palestinian Literature in Modern Times," in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 34.

30. Emile Habiby, *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, trans. Salma Khadra Jayyusi and Trevor Le Gassick. (Columbia, LA: Readers International, 1989), 12.

31. Barbara Christian, "The Race for Theory," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 1 (1988): 68.

32. Vizenor writes, "The word *postmodernism* is a clever condition: an invitation to narrative chance in a new language game and an overture to amend the formal interpretations and transubstantiation of tribal literatures." A few paragraphs later, he suggests, "Native American Indian literatures are tribal discourse, more discourse. The oral and written narratives are language games, comic discourse rather than mere responses to colonialist demands or social science theories." See further Gerald Vizenor, "A Postmodern Introduction," in *Narrative Chance*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 4.

33. Jayyusi, "Introduction," in *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, xiii.

34. Nancy Coffin, "Reading Inside and Out: A Look at Habibi's *Pessoptimist*," *Arab Studies Journal* 8, no. 2/9, no. 1 (2000, 2001): 40.

35. Ibid., 41.

36. Ibid., 43.

37. Habiby, 6.

38. Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, 72.

39. Kimberly Blaeser, *Gerald Vizenor: Writing in the Oral Tradition* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996), 139.

40. Habiby, 120.

41. The war is more commonly known as the Six-Day War, though Arabs are reluctant to employ the term. Some of the reluctance has to do with deeply rooted humiliation at having lost the war so rapidly, as well as hesitation to confront the pain memories of the event invariably induce. The main reason Arabs avoid the term, however, is the proclamation made by Israeli soldiers that "we beat the Arabs in six days, and on the seventh day we rested."

42. Habiby, 121.

43. Jayyusi observes, "Saeed's exaggerated demonstrations of loyalty to the State, for example, are masked with innocence to appear true, but they convey the opposite meaning—the suggestion that a terrible punishment lies in wait for those who are not loyal. Never abusive, obscene, or violent, he relies on an attitude of assumed innocence, which pretends ignorant of the real issues, and by speaking with childlike naivete about these issues, he uncovers their horror and absurdity," Introduction, *The Secret Life of Saeed, The Ill-Fated Pessoptimist*, xiv.

44. Fredric Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," in *Postmodernism: A Reader*, ed. Thomas Docherty (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 65.

45. Gerald Vizenor, *Shadow Distance: A Gerald Vizenor Reader* (Hanover and London: Weslyan University Press, 1994), 34. Vizenor reveals in his autobiography that once his reports, critical of AIM, were printed in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, some AIM members threatened him, culminating in his flight from Wounded Knee.

46. Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, 111.

47. Ibid., 114.

48. Ibid., 108.

49. Most critics agree that Coke de Fountain is based on former AIM leader Dennis Banks. For Vizenor's direct comments on AIM and Dennis Banks, see the essay "Dennis of Wounded Knee" in *The People Named the Chippewa*, where Vizenor claims that Banks was a double agent working in the service of the FBI.

50. Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, 111.

51. Most critics agree that Homer Yellow Snow is based on the famous author and spiritualist Jamake Highwater, an American of Greek background who pretended to be Indian and was subsequently exposed and discredited in the field of Native American Studies.

52. Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, 112.

53. Ibid., 112.

54. Ibid., 112, 113.

55. Ibid., 114.

56. For a thorough and evenhanded account of AIM activism, see Paul Chaat Smith and Robert Allen Warrior, *Like A Hurricane: The Indian Movement from Alcatraz to Wounded Knee* (New York: The New Press).

57. See further Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

58. Vizenor, *The Trickster of Liberty*, 117.

59. Ibid., 117.

60. Ibid., 117.

61. Ibid., 117-18.

62. Ibid., 117.

63. Ibid., 117.

64. An interesting analysis of these complexities is offered by Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, who writes, "Reconceptualizing culture as everyday actions, discourses, and events, cultural studies has helped

unsettle the static analysis of bordered tribes to reveal the lived experience of individual Indians in the unity and difference of collectively constructed cultures." She later writes, "Today, in the cultural resurgence of 'Indianness' that North America is experiencing—traces of which are found in the bricolage of popular culture in everything from the feathers and beads of fashion and New Age prophets to Robbie Robertson, *Dances with Wolves*, and the Walt Disney film *Pocahontas*—land and Indians remain yoked together in the academic images and popular narratives that circulate in the discourses of Native and other North Americans. Images of Indians and land remain a barometer of both the difference attributed to Indians and that expressed by Native Americans themselves." See further Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, "Indian Country: Negotiating the Meaning of Land in Native America," in *Disciplinarity and Dissent in Cultural Studies*, ed. Cary Nelson and Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar (New York: Routledge, 1996), 151.

65. Franchot Ballinger, Review, *The Trickster of Liberty*, by Gerald Vizenor, *MELUS* 16, no. 4 (1989-1990): 137.

66. Habiby, 22.

67. Ibid., 24.

68. Ibid., 24.

69. Ibid., 25.

70. Ibid., 26.

71. Ibid., 34.

72. Ibid., 39.

73. Coffin, 36.

74. Habiby, 57-58.

75. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams, "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: An Introduction," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, ed. Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 5.

Conclusion: Dreamcatchers on the Last Frontier

The Earth is Closing on Us

The earth is closing on us, pushing us through the last passage, and
we tear off our limbs to pass through.
The earth is squeezing us. I wish we were its wheat so we could die
and live again. I wish the earth were our mother
So she'd be kind to us. I wish we were pictures on the rocks for our
dreams to carry
As mirrors. We saw the faces of those to be killed by the last of us in
the last defense of the soul.
We cried over their children's feast. We saw the faces of those who'll
throw our children
Out of the windows of this last space. Our star will hang up mirrors.
Where should we go after the last frontiers? Where should the birds
fly after the last sky?
Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air? We will
write our names with scarlet steam.
We will cut off the hand of the song to be finished by our flesh.
We will die here, here in the last passage. Here and here our blood
will plant its olive tree.

--Mahmoud Darwish

I spent summer, 2002, living in the Shatila Refugee Camp. Residing in Lebanon's most notorious camp impressed on me the sheer complexity that exists in situations where one society becomes placeless at the same moment that another society roots itself in the site of the placeless society's origin. A contest of magnificent proportions results, as we have seen for nearly a hundred years in the Middle East, and as we saw for hundreds of years in the New World—in many ways, that in the New World has not ceased, but with the exception of some locales in Latin America has generally grown quiet.

Most Americans would be shocked if they were aware of the miserable living conditions in Shatila. Inhabited by approximately 12,000 refugees, the camp is severely overcrowded. Dilapidated cinder buildings rise over 100 feet, many leaning precariously at non-perpendicular angles. The entire camp looks as if it may explode at any moment into rubble. It is impossible to avoid the stench of feces, for small streams of sewage meander through Shatila's corridors. Heaps of garbage and scrap metal occupy the space in front of the school and community center. Children are at high risk of disease; few adults have health care.

When walking through the maze of pale concrete in alleys wide enough for only one person, I would inevitably see rats rummaging through piles of rotted fruit and month-old refuse. Shatila has no phone lines. The electricity never functions properly. Near the camp is the infamous site where in 1982 Phalangists abetted by Israelis dumped hundreds of bodies. In the grave lie the remains of women who were raped and had their vaginas sliced by razors; children who had their arms and legs severed by machetes; and babies ripped with knives from their mothers' bellies. Their presence is continuous in Shatila. The Lebanese government disallows Palestinians space to expand their living area. The camp thus straddles the mass grave.

As citizens of no state, it is nearly impossible for Shatilans to travel. As "aliens" in Lebanon, they are unable to work in white-collar professions. Unemployment and poverty are epidemic. The lucky ones find menial work. Most wait in line for inadequate UN rations. The people of the camp are memorialized in Mahmoud Darwish's famous poem, "The Earth Is Closing On Us," written during Israel's siege in 1982. During that time, it seemed as if the Palestinians would be displaced yet again. "Where will we go?"

Darwish implored. There was no possibility of escape. They had already reached the last frontier.

There is something remarkable about the concept of a "last frontier." Whatever it is, Natives and Palestinians exist within it. They negotiate its boundaries. They traverse its spaces. They cross its borders only to find themselves within other last frontiers. Sometimes the spaces between last frontiers are united by circumstances that arise from within the dominant cultures that perpetuate the existence of the borders and boundaries that evoke terminal frontiers. For all the horror of Shatila—and indeed of most Palestinian refugee camps—one can also find horror in most places where displaced people reside. The particulars of their locations differ, but the common feature is a peculiar type of suffering born of disenfranchisement.

It is not surprising, then, that connections are forged among the world's dispossessed. Sometimes those connections are in the service of comfort, a way for the disenfranchised to summon the hope and dignity of fellowship with strangers. Sometimes they are inquiries into the nature of colonialism and its attendant tragedies. Sometimes they are a way to construct inspiration.

These explanations were offered me when I noticed a dreamcatcher hanging from the wall in Shatila's cramped video store. The dreamcatcher, a pan-Indian symbol often sold as a kitschy tourist souvenir, has long been used by various tribes to ward off evil spirits that arrive in nightmares. A wooden hoop filled with netting with four feathers dangling from the bottom perimeter, dreamcatchers are common in bedrooms and on rearview mirrors in Indian country. The one I saw posted near the doorway in the video

store could have been considered a coincidence, albeit a noteworthy one. It was the second I had seen in a week, however. I was therefore compelled to investigate.

When I asked the shop owner where he had acquired the dreamcatcher, he replied, "From America. It is from the *Hindi Ahmar*." Throughout the Arab world, Natives are called *Hindi Ahmar*, which translates literally to "Red Indian." (The origin of the word *Hindi* is not difficult to understand. *Ahmar* is the Arabic word for "red.") In fact, I heard a great deal about the *Hindi Ahmar* during my ten weeks in Shatila, just as I did the previous two summers in Palestine. "My nephew brought it for me," the owner continued, "because there are many bad dreams in Shatila."

What, I inquired, did he know of the Natives beyond the dreamcatcher. "They suffered very much. America took all their land. They are like us, refugees," he said, looking at me as if I were doltish, because in Shatila that knowledge is assumed. I have learned from traveling to the Middle East that most Palestinians have some understanding of Native tribes, though they never study them in secondary school or university. It is not an understanding that would satisfy most academics or tribal members, for it is a rudimentary comprehension bound to the convenience of their own political situation. That is to say, Palestinians know the tragic portions of Native histories in part because those histories verify their oppositional stance toward the American government. This is only half the equation, though. Palestinians admire Natives and view them with great respect. In the refugee camps, Natives are considered to be the most decorated veterans of resistance, and also those who best understand the horror of displacement and dispossession.

Even though the Palestinians' understanding of Native politics is predicated largely on maltreatment by European settlers and the American government, it is, in a paradoxical way, a more thorough understanding than one finds among average Americans educated formally in American history. Perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a more *honest* understanding, if not of the Natives' role in the fabric of American life, including the military, then at least of America's aggressively expansionist past. Those dark areas of American history so often glossed over or ignored in the American education system and in popular culture are confronted forthrightly by Palestinians. As people who have experienced ethnic cleansing, it is neither unreasonable nor surprising for them to focus on others who have suffered the same fate. Abstract historical camaraderie is enough to invoke reciprocal inter-communalism. In some cases, one finds that Palestinians actually appropriate Native symbols to articulate their disapproval of America's support of Israel.

Such appropriations reveal a great deal about settler colonialism, most of which are self-evident—for example, that it inspires historical bonds across borders and sometimes invokes similar forms of resistance. Self-evident features, however, do not allow us to cross borders intellectually because intellectuals need more theoretical depth in order to produce viable comparisons. We are given the opportunity to cross borders intellectually only by analyzing strategies and assumptions that possess analogous qualities. The symbolism that one encounters upon seeing dreamcatchers somewhere in an overcrowded refugee camp is extraordinary, especially as it relates to exhibitions of cross-cultural identification. It would be a shame for scholars of both Palestine and Native America to let these phenomena go unnoticed.

Other issues came to my attention more explicitly during my time in Shatila. One evening, I was watching television with Nadia and Ali, parents of the family with whom I lived, when Ali happened upon *Thunderheart* on the movie channel. He and Nadia immediately paid attention; it was obvious that they were familiar with the film. "This is about the *Hindi Ahmar*," he told me. "It is very good. You see here that the American police oppress them like we are in Lebanon." One cannot expect refugees in Shatila who barely speak English to be aware of the minor controversies surrounding *Thunderheart*, which was received lukewarmly in Indian country, but is generally acknowledged as a sympathetic and worthwhile depiction of Natives. Ali and Nadia, in addition to the other Shatilans who have viewed the movie, naturally focus on the interaction of White authorities and Native resistors. They grow angry when they see political prisoners. They applaud when one prisoner escapes with the authorities standing nearby. They curse when Lakota characters recount their history of dispossession and their unsuccessful struggle for repatriation. In short, they impose their own political conditions and aspirations on a fictive rendition of colonial interaction. Inter-communalism, as this example illustrates, expunges the space between fiction and reality and produces a different set of issues. Those issues are necessarily international.

The internationalist character of settler colonialism and forms of resistance invoked in response to it became especially clear in the daily English-language session I conducted with some of Shatila's teenagers. They were, as teenagers everywhere tend to be, curious about other cultures; they therefore asked numerous questions of their foreign teacher. Their curiosity was buttressed by the fact that I am American. My nation is a fascinating entity to Palestinians since they simultaneously despise its politics and

appropriate much—sometimes without knowing it—from its popular culture. Because of this peculiar and unavoidable relationship, my students practiced their English vocabulary by making inquires about the United States and copying the meaning of words they did not understand during the course of my responses. One of the first things they asked about are the *Hindi Ahmar*. Specifically, they wanted to know if there are many remaining, for, like much of the world, my students were under the impression that Natives are near extinction.

After I assured them that Natives do not constitute a large demographic but exist *en masse* and fight hard for the restoration of their national rights, the teenagers wanted to know what they are doing in that fight. I explained that, beyond some places in Mexico, Peru, and Colombia, the era of armed resistance seems to be over, although nobody can accurately predict what the future will hold. The battle, I noted, now exists in the courtroom and media, in academe and congress, in rivers and sacred hunting grounds. Its principal players are not garrison soldiers and *fedai'iyin*, but politicians and well-dressed lawyers. The fact that the students retained interest in these explanations indicates that on some level they realize it will take more than Katyushas to return to Palestine. Transporting inter-ethnic communalism from the theoretical text to the classroom thus serves a variety of positive functions.

I want to focus briefly on those functions, for they inform practical ways to utilize the theories we construct and debate in the Academy. Theories, it has always been my opinion, are ultimately useless unless they can be employed outside their immediate context and serve to educate or improve the living conditions of those not fortunate enough to encounter them firsthand in the college classroom. Those that never leave the

ivory tower deserve to stay there. The greatest intellectuals make their discourse relevant to the people on whose backs other intellectuals forge their careers.

I have, of course, borrowed from numerous intellectuals in making these assertions, foremost among them Edward Said, Barbara Christian, Jace Weaver, Toni Cade Bambara, Anouar Majid, and Oyeronke Oyewumi. All of these scholars, particularly Said in *Representations of the Intellectual*, urge others to theorize ways to use academic ideas in the service of non-academic endeavors, while also noting that broad humanistic standards must guide that theorization and its effects when put into practice. Although a wide range of scholarship that examines the relationship between theory and practice influences my community work, none has been so important as Said's assertion that a reflective ethical positioning should constantly guide both the theory and practice of humanistic values. It was in this spirit that I decided before entering Shatila that I would take some of the concepts discussed in my dissertation and apply them somehow in the classrooms to which I was entrusted.

The response I got was overwhelming, and not only from teenagers. The adults who requested English tutoring—mothers with hundreds of daily chores in addition to numerous children—expressed great curiosity in the decolonial struggle of others around the world, especially in Native America. While most Palestinians were more interested in the periods of North America's past that saw Natives attack White settlements, just as Palestinian resistance groups do today, the entire gamut of history from the moment of contact to the era of Anishinaabe vice presidential candidates inspired engaged discussion. It would be impossible for me to recount, when sharing information I have

learned during five years of studying Native literature, the number of times I heard, "That's exactly what happened to us."

Analyzing the quest for Canaan, then, is not only an original way to approach critical theory and literary criticism, it can also, given the right circumstances, be a revolutionary educational model. I am no education specialist, so it may be presumptuous of me to suggest that radical historical readings that make connections across cultures might contribute in some way to already existing battles for empowerment; but based on the response I got in Shatila from introducing Native Studies, it is worth serious consideration.

Let me highlight a few examples. We can begin by assessing the interest Palestinians evince in learning about Native violence against White settlers—something, of course, that has dominated Palestinian life for over 100 years, especially since the advent of the suicide bomber. With youngsters, such a pedagogical approach both reaffirms and dismantles their conception of popular resistance strategies, which are rarely challenged in public in Palestinian society. When the compulsions of a particular society disallow deviation from the so-called common voice, alternate historical narratives can sometimes broaden the consciousness of decolonial advocates. History has shown time and again that decolonial movements which open themselves to alternative influences are most successful. The transformation of the African National Congress in the eighties and nineties from a militant resistance group to a comprehensive governing apparatus provides a strong example, as does the use of nonviolent civil disobedience in East Timor during the same period.

How, then, can a pedagogical approach that emphasizes Native forms of warfare to Palestinian teenagers both reaffirm and dismantle those teenagers' political sensibilities? First, it helps to situate Palestinian violence in a continuum that provides it an important historical framework. If raids on West Bank settlements are part of a specific historical pattern, then they are not, as Palestinians are told repeatedly, products of a deranged or irrationally anti-Semitic mentality. They are actions contrived in the interests of survival. On the other hand, they are not necessarily, as Native land reclamation struggles indicate, foolproof modes of resistance; at times, they are counterproductive. Natives constantly evaluated and reevaluated the economy of their insurgencies based not only on cultural/philosophical factors, but also in relation to the resources at their disposal. The Palestinians are currently involved in one of the world's last colonial wars; it can only help them when debating strategy to summon a set of historical precedents—this, of course, extends to those who study decolonialism in the Academy.

Above all, the students with whom I worked exhibited admiration for the *Hindi Ahmar*. That admiration existed well before my arrival. I simply attempted to enhance it by providing it with a modicum of information. The students were themselves able to theorize a variety of connections: the biblical underpinnings of settler narratives; the classification of people based on ethnicity; the taxonomy of race and gender; the shared horror of ethnic cleansing; the appalling results of dispossession; the struggle for acknowledgment and repatriation. Even more obscure connections were detected and discussed: the existence of native collaborators on both continents; the mutual aesthetic patterns in literature; the marginalization of historical figures; the shared origin of Israel

and America's unique relationship; the complicity of scholarship in denial of ethnic cleansing.

In my interaction with adults, these issues often provoked heated conversation. Palestinians tend to cite the displacement of Natives as proof of inherent American depravity. It is a simplistic perception that is to be expected of people who have suffered unspeakably and whose suffering has been openly bankrolled by the United States. Despite its simplicity, however, there is some truth to the belief. I do not mean to suggest that the American project and those who support it are depraved. Rather, I would like to point out that an unacknowledged history with Natives in the American mainstream accounts for numerous domestic problems and has long informed overseas aggression. Moreover, the Palestinian assertion that America's record of ethnic cleansing has allowed it to maintain Israel's military occupation is entirely accurate. It is tenable on theological, philosophical, political, and practical levels.

Those curious about the underlying strategies and ramifications of garrison colonialism can thus expedite advances in the field of colonial discourse studies by demystifying the quest for Canaan and applying the resultant findings in practical fashion. Our findings, in any case, will be worthless if they have no pragmatic qualities. It is no accident, for example, that Palestinians admire Natives and that Natives express much higher levels of support for Palestinians than the rest of the American populace. Determining why it is no accident will take years of investigation. The investigative process will benefit both peoples, as well as the state of theory in modern academe. The quest for Canaan always finds a way to regenerate itself; its opponents are therefore compelled to theorize useful models of regenerative interrogation.

My approach, of course, has concentrated on literary factors framed by deeply rooted political circumstances. Literary criticism is only one of many interconnected processes of investigation. In my mind, it may be the most interesting and revelatory, but the investigation of colonialism should never start or stop with literature or anything else. As long as colonialism exists, the process will be ongoing, and will never fail to demand fluidity among its serious analysts. I am once again reminded of the map of the United States hanging from Zoughbi Zoughbi's wall in Palestine. Coupled with the dreamcatchers on display in two stores in Shatila, it illustrates with striking clarity that Indigenous peoples transcend their immediate political conditions when contemplating their encounters with messianic extremism.

Ultimately, I introduced inter-ethnic communalism to the classrooms of Shatila to help my students ascertain better comprehension not of abstract events in distant locations, but of Shatila itself. I would like to do the same elsewhere, and I believe it is something useful for others to consider. In dislocating ourselves from familiar locations in order to gain a clearer understanding of them, we might finally allow the boundaries to evaporate on the last frontier.

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