This article is a close, yet contextual, reading of two pairs of literary texts: autobiographical novels by Albert Camus and S. Yizhar; and short stories by Camus and Amos Oz. On this basis a conversation is created between the field of comparative settler colonialism on the one hand, and comparative literature on the other. Reciprocal insight is gained: the literature is related to the material context within which it was produced, and the socio-economic historical structures are illuminated by subjective human experience and consciousness.

I assert – without exaggerated fear or newfangled love of paradox – that only new nations have a past, that is, the autobiographical memory of that past; that is, they have living history. If time is successive, we should recognize that where there is the density of events, more time runs, and that the powerful sea belongs to this inconsequential side of the world. The conquest and colonization of these realms – fearful forts of clay stuck on the coast and from the horizon noticed by the shooting bows of the tribes – were of such ephemeral operation that a grandfather of mine, in 1872, could command the last important battle against the Indians, carrying out during the second half of the nineteenth century the conquering work of the sixteenth. Nevertheless, why bring up already dead destinies? I have not felt the weightlessness of time in Granada, in the shadow of towers hundreds of times more ancient than the fig trees, while I have on Pampa and Triunvirato: insipid place of English flagstones now, of
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

beautiful brick kilns three years ago, of chaotic horse yards five years ago. Time – a European emotion of men plentiful in days and thus their vindication and crown – circulates more impudently in these republics. The young, to their detriment, feel it. Here we are of the same time as time; we are its brothers.


In my book, The Returns of Zionism (2008), which is an intellectual and literary history of Zionism and Israel, I show that the context within which this history should be understood is the comparative study of white settler societies since the sixteenth century. This specific historical framing, I argue, is true not only for such issues as land, labour and institutions, but also for themes like consciousness, knowledge and literary imagination. Through this article, I would like to begin another project, more clearly comparative and more ambitious in its reach, on the culture of settler societies. In disciplinary terms, I wish to create a conversation between two fields of inquiry: the historically and sociologically grounded field of comparative settler colonialism on the one hand, and culture studies and comparative literature on the other.

European expansion and conquest from the sixteenth century onwards produced two related but clearly distinguishable forms of colonialism. One was metropole colonialism, in which European powers conquered and ruled vast territories without the immigration of Europeans seeking to make these territories their national home; British India is a good example of this form of colonialism. The other type was settler colonialism, in which conquest brought with it substantial waves of European settlers who, with the passage of time, sought to make the colony their national patrimony (the US and Australia are prime examples, but there are many others). This process entailed a relationship with the indigenous people that could range from dispossession to elimination, or from slavery – which for the most part did not use the native population – to cheap labour, depending on the economic and social formation of the given settler society. Power relations within the triangle comprising metropole-
indigenes-settlers have yielded one of three outcomes: the settlers managed to gain independence from the metropole and establish a nation-state, with dire consequences for the indigenous people (the US, Australia and Israel for instance); the settlers could not prevail and eventually had to leave (as happened in French Algeria and British Kenya); or the settlers won independence but with the passage of time were unable to prevent indigenous reassertion (as in South Africa and Rhodesia/Zimbabwe).

For a long time, colonialism tended to be associated exclusively with the first form, namely, metropole colonialism. The systematic and, especially, comparative examination of settler colonialism as a historically and analytically discrete phenomenon is relatively recent. This implies neither that all settler societies are identical nor that their historically distinct trajectories should be discarded; but rather that they are comparable, and that the comparison adds invaluable insight to the study of these societies by showing that they constitute a global phenomenon.

The achievements of the comparative study of settler colonialism have been at once scholarly and political. Several of these colonies gave birth to powerful nation-states which have asserted their own hegemonic narratives, both nationally and internationally. The comparative field not only questions these narratives through countervailing evidence and interpretation, but also offers an alternative account of the social formations themselves. In the process, three fundamental features common to these hegemonic settler myths are undermined. The first of these is the putative uniqueness of each settler nation. The second is their privileging of the settlers’ intentions as sovereign subjects, at the expense of the consequences (be what may the intentions), and at the expense of the natives’ consciousness. Third is the supposed inconsequence of the natives to the form each settler society takes; in other words, the conflict with the natives is not denied, but the fundamental role that this conflict has played in shaping the identity of the settler nation is written off.

Comparative settler colonialism is a *sine qua non* for a proper understanding of not only the past but also the present perfect. Here the work of the Australian scholar Patrick Wolfe has been pivotal. The originality and insight of Wolfe’s writings on this issue lies in his
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

appreciative critique of anti-colonial writers like Amilcar Cabral and Franz Fanon, and later ones like Gayatri Spivak. ‘For all the homage paid to heterogeneity and difference’, Wolfe observes, ‘the bulk of “post”-colonial theorizing is disabled by an oddly monolithic, and surprisingly unexamined, notion of colonialism’. One of the reasons for this, he argues,

consists in the historical accident (or is it?) that the native founders of the post-colonial canon came from franchise or dependent – as opposed to settler or creole – colonies. This gave these guerrilla theoreticians the advantage of speaking to an oppressed majority, on whose labor a colonizing minority was vulnerably dependent [...] But what if the colonizers are not dependent on native labor? – indeed, what if the natives themselves have been reduced to a small minority whose survival can hardly be seen to furnish the colonizing society with more than a remission from ideological embarrassment?

Wolfe attributes decisive explanatory significance to the fact that – in contrast to the colonial formation that Cabral or Fanon confronted – settler colonies were ‘not primarily established to extract surplus value from indigenous labor’. Rather, they were ‘premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land’. This created a situation in which it was ‘difficult to speak of an articulation between colonizer and native since the determinate articulation is not to a society but directly to the land, a precondition of social organization’. The bottom line is a formulation that other scholars of settler colonialism understandably cite: ‘Settler colonies were (are) premised on the elimination of the native societies. The split tensing reflects a determinate feature of settler colonization. The colonizers come to stay – invasion is a structure not an event’. ²

The process of thinking about settler colonialism, then, has consisted of two important components: how to understand it as a formation that is clearly distinguishable from metropole colonialism both historically and conceptually; how to understand it
comparatively, as a modular series of instances that cohere into a global formation, without erasing the historical specificity of each instance. This process has climaxed in a helpfully informative and stimulating book by Lorenzo Veracini. Discussing four themes (population, sovereignty, consciousness and narrative), Veracini’s work is ‘a call to establish settler colonial studies as an independent scholarly field’. Veracini’s intervention is commendable because it is simultaneously a stock taking of the existing body of literature, and a synthesis that opens up various ways forward. Doing so the author offers insights on the two components mentioned above. Considering the discreteness of settler colonialism, Veracini takes Wolfe’s argument farther. His ‘aim is not so much to confirm a conceptual distinction, but, rather, to emphasise dialectical opposition: colonial and settler colonial forms should not only be seen as separate but also construed as antithetical’. Cognizant of specific historical trajectories but insisting on the formation’s global spread, Veracini’s focus on settler colonial imaginaries and forms is stimulating. ‘[E]xtraordinarily different circumstances’, he explains, ‘are here juxtaposed on the basis of morphological contiguity’. I find the notion of ‘morphological contiguity’ promising, and in some sense this is precisely what some of my comparative analysis shows (see for example the reading offered later of opening passages in Camus’s and Yizhar’s autobiographical novels).

To turn to the literary side of the conversation, I compare two pairs of texts. The first pair comprises two settler autobiographical novels. One is Le Premier Homme, or The First Man by Albert Camus (1913-1960), which appeared in 1994, more than three decades after the author’s death. The other is Miqdamot, or Preliminaries by S. Yizhar (1916-2006), the writing of which was completed in 1991, when the author was 75 years old, and which was published a year later. The second pair of texts consists of two short stories: Camus’s ‘La Femme Adultére’ (The Adulterous Woman), which opens the 1957 collection of stories L’exil et le Royaume (Exile and Kingdom); and Amos Oz’s (born 1939) ‘Navadim ve-Tzefa’ (Nomad and Viper), which opens the 1965 collection Be-Artzot ha-Tan (Where the Jackal Howls).
I should like to elucidate what is meant by conversation between the two fields of inquiry, namely, comparative settler colonialism and comparative literature. In comparative settler colonialism, there are taxonomies of different types of settler colonies. The types that are pertinent to the present discussion are the settler plantation, in which the settlers sought from the natives both land and cheap labour and exploited indentured white as well as slave labour; and the pure settlement colony, which eschewed any non-white settler labour and sought from the natives ‘only’ their land, thereby rendering the mere presence of the natives on lands coveted for further settlement superfluous. In the plantation colony, the social and spatial boundaries between settlers and indigenes are porous and the two groups are visible to one another daily. In the pure settlement colony, the settler/indigene fault-line is rationalised, orderly, and dichotomous, settler supremacy and purity are rigidly controlled and regulated, and the indigenous people have been removed and contained, if they were not altogether exterminated.

In my analysis of settler literature, I shall argue that these socio-economic realities have played an acute role in shaping the experiences of authors and their literary imagination, and that the nuanced differences between the experience of a settler plantation on the one hand and that of a pure settlement colony on the other may express themselves in novels, novellas and short stories. I am not at all beholden to a rigidly material scheme, in which land and labour relations render immaterial the subjectivity of the author, his/her aesthetic specificity, and his/her literary sensibilities. On the contrary, I seek a more complete interpretation in which the material and the literary are in conversation. Thus, I believe, reciprocal insight is gained: the literature is related to the material context within which it was produced, and the socio-economic historical structures are illuminated by subjective human experience and consciousness. Furthermore, much of the commentary on literature in colonial situations presupposes that ‘colonialism’ is an obvious and uniform signifier; the result is that ‘colonial literature’ often seems self-explanatory. What is proposed here is to discern more precisely and
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

subtly different types of colonial formations and relate them to literature.

I suggest that for Camus (loosely) and Yizhar (literally), the formative settler context was the plantation colony, whereas for Oz, certainly in ‘Nomad and Viper’, the context was one of the clearest instances of the pure settlement colony, namely, the kibbutz. Although I shall not be rigidly seeking to show that the type of colony is the sole factor that explains these literary works separately or comparatively, I shall insist that the colony-type significantly framed the authors’ experience and imagination.

‘LE COLONISATEUR DE BONNE VOLONTÉ’: AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL NOVELS BY CAMUS AND YIZHAR

I am assuming that the main contours of Camus’s vita are well known, and I therefore allude only to specific details when necessary. S. Yizhar (1916-2006) is the pen-name of the Israeli author Yizhar Smilansky. He is arguably one of the two greatest Hebrew prose writers – the other is Yaakov Shabtai – among those for whom Hebrew is a mother tongue, as distinguished from the writers who emigrated from Eastern Europe like H.N. Bialik, Y.H. Brenner and S.Y. Agnon. Yizhar’s landscape descriptions and interior monologues pushed modern Hebrew prose to unsurpassed peaks. His aloofness and lack of marketing acumen or motivation have resulted in his relative anonymity in the past few decades, internationally and even nationally. This anonymity, however, must not be allowed to hide the vast superiority of his literary gift over that of the better known and translated writers.

Yizhar was born in Rehovot, one of the ethnic plantations (moshava in Hebrew; the term ‘ethnic plantation’ is Gershon Shafir’s) founded by the earliest wave of Zionist immigrants to Palestine. His parents were settlers from Eastern Europe. Yizhar retrospectively described himself as standing ‘between two founding uncles’. The paternal one, Moshe Smilansky of the First Aliya (the first wave of Zionist immigration in the 1880s and 1890s), was his great uncle, and by contemporary conventions on the right, that is, on the non-labourite side of the early settler community, the Yishuv. Moshe Smilansky was a wealthy grove owner, who employed both Arabs and
Jews (and paid the latter higher wages), a member of Brit Shalom, and a consistent adherent to bi-nationalism as a way to resolve the settler-indigene conflict. The maternal uncle, Yosef Weitz of the Second Aliya (1904-1914), was on the left, that is, he belonged to labour Zionism’s parties, Hapoel ha-Tza’ir and later Mapai. He was also a great ‘redeemer of land’ from the Arabs as director of the Jewish National Fund’s land department and as an arch ethnic cleanser in the 1948 war and in the forceful appropriation of Palestinian land in the first two decades of statehood.

One of the things that make Yizhar an incredibly interesting writer is the tension that inheres in his life and his work. As a member of Knesset of the hegemonic party Mapai (1949-1966) he served on the one hand as an organic intellectual – in the classic Gramscian sense – of Ben-Gurion’s statist regime. On the other hand, he was a bitter and ironic critic of the Zionist project, and especially of the erasure of rural – significantly, never of urban – Arab Palestine. Yizhar could write within less than a decade thoroughly different texts. In 1949, less than a year after he had taken part in the 1948 war as an intelligence officer, Yizhar wrote The Story of Khirbat Hiz’ah, in which a soldier-narrator recounts the cleansing of a village and exposes the depth and ferocity of the settlers’ resolution not just to displace the indigenes but to replace them. A decade later, in 1958, Yizhar published the massive novel, in excess of 1,000 pages, Days of Ziklag, for which he was awarded the Israel Prize. Days of Ziklag is, to quote a perceptive critic, a ‘narrated memorial’ (andartah mesupperet) for the Palmach warriors of 1948, which constructed them as the sacrificial and heroic not-yet-men tragic generation.¹³ So, within less than a decade Yizhar delivered one text which was a gut-wrenching literary account of the cleansing, and another in which the cleansers were mythologised as sacrificial pure boys.

Ultimately, I would venture, Yizhar’s oeuvre is an enormous literary achievement and an account of the twentieth century’s most successful settler-colonial project. Yizhar’s existentially posed question in Preliminaries – ‘What is it like to be the child of a settler?’ – is not an inappropriate synecdoche for his entire oeuvre.¹⁴ It is a complex literary account because the author incessantly dithers between an ironic understanding of the project of which he is part and a wholehearted identification with it. The paralysing indecision
that is so emblematic of Yizhar’s position – ironic distance from what has become, aching love for what was erased and indignant resentment of the erasure, being a mobilised organic intellectual of Ben-Gurion’s *mamlakhtiyut* (statism) and literary creator of the tender sacrificial boys of ’48 – is poetically expressed by his narrator in the 1963 story, ‘First Sermon’, which is part of a collection that was followed by three decades of depression and literary silence. That collection, *Stories of the Plain*, is essentially Yizhar’s elegy for rural Arab Palestine that had been erased and by then also buried.\(^\text{15}\)

The description is so marvellously vivid that it is possible to visualise Yizhar’s narrator wandering south-east of Tel-Aviv in the area of the early ethnic plantations of Rehovot, Ekron and Gederah, which is also the area of the Arab villages of Zarnuga, Qubeibeh, Yibneh, Abu Shusha, Mansoura, Naana, Qastina, all erased in 1948, lamenting the conspicuous absence of his childhood landscape that is no more. Alluding to the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Yizhar’s narrator intimates: ‘I too, like many of the good ones, am walking, my eyes in my nape, looking back, yearning gleefully, as a sort of Lot’s wife whose heart craved what had ended’.\(^\text{16}\) The key is the precision of the likening not to Lot’s wife, but to ‘a sort of Lot’s wife’. She disobeyed God, ‘rebelled’, turned her head back to look at what had been Sodom and Gomorrah, and was duly punished (‘But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt’, *Genesis*, 19:26). The most Yizhar could summon was eyes in his nape. He could neither disobey nor rebel; he could only walk away and lament.

The writing of *Preliminaries* was completed in the summer of 1991, when Yizhar was 75 years old. *Preliminaries* is more explicitly autobiographical than *The First Man*. An autobiographical novel, it is centred on the memories and experiences of a child who is almost vanishingly thin, socially marginal and lonely, and existentially anxious about himself, his family and community. Temporally, it is confined to the period 1918-1928, when the child was between two to twelve. Spatially, the movement is circular: from the rural-agricultural landscape of the ethnic plantations and Arab villages to the south-east of Tel-Aviv, to the expanding Tel-Aviv of the 1920s, and back to the rural world of origin. Dan Miron captures the novel’s essence through a Joyceian analogy, calling it Yizhar’s ‘Portrait of the Artist as a Young Boy’.\(^\text{17}\) The novel performs two tasks
simultaneously. The literary task ‘was to elucidate the aging writer’s oeuvre by supplying a key of sorts to his fictional world’. This is why I think one can understand Preliminaries under the paradoxical term of a retrospective Bildungsroman. The political task, to quote Miron, ‘was to deepen and expand his lifelong role as a conscientious observer and critic of the unfolding Zionist saga’. Both Miron and Yizhar are intrinsically located within ‘the unfolding Zionist saga’. However, if one were to look at it all extrinsically, one could understand Preliminaries as a literary account and stock-taking of a settler project that has its historical specificity and, at the same time, is comparable to the formation of other settler societies and is part of the global phenomenon of settler colonialism. Preliminaries appeared in English a year after Yizhar’s passing away in 2006. It should be read, however, together with two subsequent autobiographical texts: the first, Tzalhavim (Shimmering Light, 1993), extends Preliminaries into the 1930s; the second, Tzdadiyyim (Asides, 1996), is a collection of stories, which, like almost the entirety of Yizhar’s oeuvre, are set in pre-1948 Mandatory Palestine.

Camus worked on The First Man in 1959 and never finished it, as he died in a car accident in 1960. It was written while the Algerian War was raging. In characterising the novel as a whole, little can be added to Edward Hughes’s succinct statement:

In political and cultural terms, [Camus] was writing against decolonization. This unfinished, fictionalized autobiography recounts the life of the Cormery family, seen as typifying the lot of those descendants of 19th-century French settlers of Algeria. Camus’s tactic is to defend the position of the pieds-noirs, whom he regularly depicts as innocents, accidents of a colonial history that has not brought them economic and cultural advantage but rather hardship and the virtues of stubbornness and resilience needed to face up to such difficulty. In short, The First Man is an unapologetic defense and illustration of the French Algerians.
It was fortunate for the novel’s reception that it appeared in 1994 rather than upon the author’s untimely death. The latter timing would have engendered objections to the favorable depiction of the French Algerians, who at that point would have been associated with the OAS, not thought of as honest-to-God immigrants who faced immeasurable hardship. By the mid-1990s the anti-colonial French left had almost disappeared. Pandering to the days of empire became possible, and reveling in nostalgie quite permissible.

I have thought of numerous ways in which the comparison of these novels might be insightful. Here I wish to address three points: 1) the success or failure of each case of settler colonialism and consequently, what method of memory is employed in each of the novels; 2) the opening passage of each novel and the question of firstness; 3) the response of liberal critics to each of the novels. To state what is perhaps obvious, the main similarity between Camus and Yizhar is the way in which they have been perceived as moralists for whom justice was important, as critics of the communities to which they belonged and with whom they ultimately identified. That is why I think that ‘le colonisateur de bonne volonté’ so aptly encapsulates who they both were: good will they may have had, but colonisers they will always remain. However, the social difference between these two writers should be pointed out: Camus came out of a working class family of petits colons living in Belcourt, the white working class neighborhood of Algiers, whilst Yizhar belonged to the “Mayflower stratum” of the Zionist community of settlers and the state of Israel.

1. SETTLER MODES OF MEMORY

The basic difference between the fate of French Algeria (defeat and failure) and that of Zionist Israel is crucial for understanding the methods of memory that underlie The First Man and Preliminaries. When Camus was writing The First Man, the Algerian war was raging and the fate of French Algeria was uncertain. Hughes does an excellent job of reconstructing the sources that informed Camus’s attempt to create and enshrine a petit colon memory. An important source was a text published in 1930 by Maxime Rasteil, himself a settler whose vita had much in common with Camus’s, entitled Le Calvarie des Colons de 48. Rasteil’s book was a centenary, eulogistic
account of the heroic French settlers from 1830 on, laying emphasis on those with social origins going back to the defeated revolutionaries of 1848, the quarante-huitards. Camus used it as an archive of facts and experiences and, crucially, was inspired by a term Rasteil had borrowed from Renan, namely, l’immense oubli (the immense oblivion). Renan sensed this ‘immense oblivion’ when he stood inside a Breton graveyard, surrounded by tombs of ‘simple souls’. Rasteil quoted this passage.22

Chapter Two of The First Man describes Jacques Cormery’s/Camus’s visit to the Saint Brieuc cemetery to see for the first time the grave of his father, Henri Cormery, who had been killed at a young age in the First World War. Jacques/Camus reiterates Renan’s feeling that ‘Not one of them [of those buried in the graveyard] has made impact in the great order of things’.23 ‘No one had known him [Henri] but his mother and she had forgotten him’, Jacques says to himself. ‘And he had died unknown on this earth where he had fleetingly passed, like a stranger’.24

There is also, in my view, an important difference regarding the theme of oubli between the memory sought by Rasteil and Camus on the one hand and Renan on the other. This difference stems from the fact that Renan was thinking of a metropolitan nation whose existence within a nationalist logic was obvious, whereas Camus was trying to create a memory for a settler nation on the verge of dispersal. Benedict Anderson illuminates a passage in ‘What is a Nation?’ (1883), in which Renan averred that all French citizens ‘doit avoir oublié’ medieval and early modern atrocities. Anderson comments that

One is also struck by the peremptory syntax of doit avoir oublié (not doit oublier) – ‘obliged already to have forgotten’ – which suggests [...] that ‘already having forgotten’ ancient tragedies is a prime contemporary civic duty. In effect, Renan’s readers were being told to ‘have already forgotten’ what Renan’s own words assumed that they naturally remembered!25
Whereas Renan had instructed his readers to actively forget, Camus tried to create a memory that would prevent utter oblivion. That sensation of a last ditch attempt to save French Algeria’s petit colon community lest l’immense oubli set in irrevocably is evident in the closure of Jacques’s visit to Saint Brieuc:

He had to leave; there was nothing more for him to do here. But he could not turn away from this name, those dates. Under that slab were left only ashes and dust. But, for him, his father was again alive, a strange silent life, and it seemed to him that again he was going to forsake him, to leave his father to haunt yet another night the endless solitude he had been hurled into and then deserted.26

To borrow a phrase mentioned above in relation to Yizhar’s Days of Ziklag, it is as if at that moment, when he faced his father’s tombstone, Camus resolved to erect a ‘narrated memorial’ to the French Algerian settlers.

Camus then deployed this form of memory to celebrate the small-time, hard-working and largely forgotten settlers. In the appeal that Camus makes, the ‘terre de l’oubli’ – the land of oblivion – becomes the place of memory and what threatens to be a cultural void can now accommodate the petit colon. Typical of settler memory, both Rasteil’s and Camus’s texts, to cite Hughes, ‘champion the small-time colonizer and eschew the situation of the native Algerians’.27 In stark contrast, because his is a settler project that gave birth to a powerful nation-state, Yizhar remembers through a method that might be called, in the words of Miron, the ‘future perfect modality’.28 This is an intricate presentation, in which there is constant tension between a historicist unfolding that adheres to what the child-protagonist could have known and sensed within the confines of his context on the one hand, and explicit or implicit knowledge of what the future has in store on the other. The past, in other words, is always already impregnated with the future.

The result is that contrary to Camus, who remembers the soon to be vanquished settlers and ignores the indigenes, Yizhar can
afford to recount the settlers’ story and simultaneously remember that which they erased. For example, in the opening part of the novel, Yizhar masterfully describes the horrible episode in 1918 of the child-protagonist, at that point a toddler, being rushed by his parents in a cart pulled by two mules to the physician, after having been ferociously attacked by an entire nest of wasps under a carob tree while his father had been plowing the obstinate land (I shall return to this passage later). Their route goes through the Arab village of Mansoura. The narrator interrupts the father’s interior monologue – one of the chief characteristics of Yizhar’s writing – and inserts in a matter-of-fact register a point of information: ‘Today there is no Mansoura and you won’t find it, it has been wiped out, it no longer exists, and in its place there is just a road, eucalyptus trees, and some stone ruins’.29

Whereas in mentioning Mansoura’s destruction it is clear that Yizhar abruptly departs from the historicist unfolding and jumps to the post-1948 era, in another example he intentionally oscillates between what is happening right now and what the narrator knows or, more confusingly, assumes would happen in the future. It is the 1921 Arab uprising and Yizhar’s family is seeking shelter together with other Jewish settlers in a house in Neve Tzedek, a southern Tel-Aviv neighbourhood on the edge of Jaffa. The child narrator opines:

Recklessness. The whole idea of a Jewish neighbourhood next to Jaffa, living from each other by day and separating at night, the enlightened, the clean, the cultured, the builders of the Land on this side and the natives, the backward, the filthy, who have caused the desolation of the land on that side. Not just Jews (Daddy calls them ‘our brethren’) against Muslims (whom Daddy calls ‘Mohammedans’), not just immigrants against indigenous people, not just the progressives against the primitives, Europeans against Asiatics, but as if it were as simple as that, as if they could sort out their differences peacefully here of their own accord, without a wall between them, without iron gates between them, without weapons for the day of reckoning—what is this: naivety, folly, or criminal behaviour?30
While the term ‘future perfect modality’ put forth by Miron is apt and insightful, its solely temporal dimension fails to capture the spatial dimension of Yizhar’s remembrance. In this sense it is possible to provocatively suggest that Yizhar’s memory is morphologically – not ideologically – more Palestinian than Zionist. With one important exception, the novel Giluy Eliyahu (Discovering Elijah, 1999), which is set in the 1973 war, Yizhar never wrote a piece whose referential context is post-1948. Yizhar’s narrators may, implicitly or explicitly, be reminiscing from a statehood vantage-point (i.e., after 1948), and they may also employ, as in Preliminaries, the future perfect modality that introduces awareness of what would transpire, and we shall immediately see for what purpose; but nothing in Yizhar’s writing actually occurs after 1948.

The narrators’ statehood vantage-point and the introduction of the future perfect modality fulfil the same function: they afford Yizhar the estranged irony vis-à-vis the settler project of which he is a part, and they are used invariably to lament the erasure of rural Arab Palestine and to summon the buried landscape. In ‘A Story that has not Begun,’ (1963), for example, the narrator keeps lamenting to his interlocutor the disappearance of Arab Palestine from the landscape as an existential state of mind, recalling with intimate familiarity what had been, avoiding sentimentalised portrayals of what was buried, and – with irony so biting that he himself struggles to bear it – commenting on the rationally modernised, technological reality that is his world’s disinheritance. ‘I am but one seeing man’, he falters, ‘and his heart aches too much to see. Here is a place that has left its place and is not. Neither enemies here, nor non-enemies, just a story of that which happened in the past tense’.31 Now, everything is

outwardly painted anew. New names also given to all. More civilized of course, and from the Bible too. They covered and disinherited him on his way to exile, and may there be peace upon Israel. Masmiyye has become Mashmi‘a Shalom [Peace Announcer], Qastina I don’t know, perhaps Keshet-Te‘ena [Fig-Bow] and more probably Ka‘as ve-Tina [Anger and Resentment]. Let’s not go on.32
It should now be clear why I suggested that the morphology of Yizhar’s remembering is more Palestinian than Zionist, especially when one thinks of the memory of Palestinians who live in exile either in other countries throughout the Middle East or in Western Europe and America (see for instance the historic-geographical life-project of Salman Abu-Sitta, or the novel *Gate of the Sun* by Elias Khoury, even though he is not Palestinian). Like them, he almost physically cannot extricate himself from pre-1948 Palestine; like them, he is consumed by the disappearance of rural Arab Palestine, whereas the urban part enters neither his consciousness nor his imagination. In his beautifully moving afterword to *Khirbat Hiz’a*’s recent English rendering, David Shulman captures the point, observing that ‘Yizhar is perhaps the greatest poet of Palestinian landscape in modern Hebrew’.

I have already mentioned the crucial difference between the (ethnic) plantation and the pure settlement colony, and I shall return to it more thoroughly when Amos Oz’s writing enters the discussion. It is worth pointing out here too that Yizhar’s formative settler experience was the vaguely bi-national reality of the ethnic plantations (*moshava* in the singular) to the south-east of Tel-Aviv, and the pre-1948 Arab villages. His memories of that world, which was not idyllic but in which the settler-indigene fault-line was porous and messy, underlie his regret at its passing and his resentment of the project that destroyed it. Interviewing Yizhar for *Haaretz* (8 April 2005), Meron Rapoport asked: ‘Why were you the only member of your generation who saw the catastrophe that befell the Arabs?’ He replied:

The others were attentive only to relationships with other people, among themselves. I looked at the landscape, the landscape was a central part of my personality, and that’s why I saw the Arabs. The landscape was the paper on which everything was written, and afterwards it gets torn and nobody looks at the paper.
There is another reason for Yizhar’s refusal to have a post-1948 memory, which supplements the disappearance of rural Arab Palestine: the disappearance – subjectively for Yizhar this time, not objectively – of his community of first generation native settlers, especially the untimely death of his beloved maternal cousin, Yehiam Weitz. I intend to dwell on this elsewhere. Here I should briefly note that this is what occupies Yizhar most in *Shimmering Light* (*Tzalhavim*, 1993), the sequel to *Preliminaries*: the construction of the first native settler nucleus. *Shimmering Light*, which looks at these native settlers in their teens in the late 1920s and early 1930s, in a way ‘anticipates’ their resignation – especially Yehiam Weitz’s, whose oedipal resentment of the life charted for him by his father Yosef is more than hinted at – to being sacrificed for the Zionist project in the 1940s in *Days of Ziklag*.

The world Yizhar cared to remember consisted, then, of the mixed landscape of the Jewish ethnic plantations and Arab villages, and of the small community of the first native settlers. The Arab component of the rural landscape vanished in the wake of the 1948 war’s ethnic cleansing; the vanishing of the community was embodied, subjectively for Yizhar, in the death of Yehiam Weitz in the Palmach operation of the Night of the Bridges on 16-17 June 1946. To borrow now a Camus-related term, everything that came after the cosmos of Mandatory Palestine between Tel-Aviv and Qastina was, as far as Yizhar was concerned, an immense oubli. The contradiction that inheres in the Yizharian memory, in which the destruction of rural Palestine was carried out by the lamenting native settlers at the behest of their castrating fathers, is brutally expressed by the poet of the Palmach generation, Haim Guri (born 1923). He was a much more typical representative of that generational group than Yizhar. In his recent memoir, Guri intimates: ‘This world [rural Arab Palestine] has been destroyed forever. And my heart often cries when I recall it […] Many of us loved the [Arab] villages we blew up’.36

Two related questions must finally be addressed: why, as I emphasise, does Yizhar achingly miss rural, never urban, Mandatory Palestine? In precisely what sense is Yizhar’s nostalgia for rural Palestine settler colonial? The first part of the question is pertinent because, as Ilan Pappé has recently asserted, urban Palestine was not less cleansed than the rural areas.37 The reason is that if and
when the settler colonial gaze notices natives, it does so because they are part of the landscape of that gaze. As Yizhar confirmed in the interview cited earlier, and as the 1963 collection *Stories of the Plain* amply demonstrates, his landscape included the pre-‘48 Arab villages between Tel-Aviv and Qastina but it excluded the cities; that landscape did include Tel-Aviv, but Tel-Aviv was and remains the city most exclusive of Arabs and Muslims in the Mediterranean and Europe.

It is tempting to explain Yizhar’s nostalgia for rural Arab Palestine that is no more as a common colonial trope: craving that which one’s own colonisation destroyed, as shown by Renato Rosaldo. I think that this is truer of Guri’s brutal nostalgia than Yizhar’s. I would tentatively suggest that the explanation for Yizhar’s nostalgic pain should be sought not in literary commentary but in Veracini’s attempt to theorise settler colonialism. Specifically, in his discussion of sovereignty Veracini subtly identifies the variety of notions of sovereignty which settlers can imagine and within which they can operate, both diachronically (according to the stage of the unfolding colonisation and without the prolepsis that assumes an eventual nation-state) and synchronically (e.g., settlers can advantageously use meropole sovereignty and at the same time demand independence from it in the name of their right to obtain sovereignty). Obviously this is not a framework that entered Yizhar’s consciousness. I would nonetheless argue that he instinctively understood this: that the world for which he yearned and the disappearance of which he mourned, the landscape cohabited by the Jewish ethnic plantations and the Arab villages, was predicated upon limited (settler) sovereignty, upon something that might be crudely termed a state minus.

2. LITERARY RENDERINGS OF THE SETTLER CONTRACT

In a masterful essay, Carole Pateman puts forth the notion of the settler contract. It emanates from her collaboration with Charles Mills that brings together her book *The Sexual Contract* and his *The Racial Contract*. Their joint study broaches the extent to which the contract as such entails, perforce, domination. In the essay, Pateman offers a narrative of the term terra nullius in the context of the history of three settler societies: the United States, Australia, and Canada. She
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’. 

explores, through this term, the ideological mechanisms used by the settlers to justify and legitimise their projects, and offers a reading of Grotius and Locke that runs against the grain of the main body of scholarship on early modern political thought.41

Pateman explains that ‘In The Racial Contract, Charles Mills discusses an expropriation contract appropriate to “the white settler state”, where “the establishment of a society thus implies the denial that a society already existed”’.42 She then offers a succinct definition:

The settler contract is a specific form of the expropriation contract and refers to the dispossession of, and rule over, Native inhabitants by British settlers in the two New Worlds. Colonialism in general subordinates, exploits, kills, rapes, and makes maximum use of the colonized and their resources and lands. When colonists are planted in a terra nullius, an empty state of nature, the aim is not merely to dominate, govern, and use but to create a civil society. Therefore, the settlers have to make an original – settler contract.43

I propose that the opening passages in The First Man and Preliminaries are literary instances of what Pateman calls the settler contract. I do not suggest that either Camus or Yizhar had the settler contract as such in mind. They were also well aware that something had already existed in the world into which they came. My point is that the way they chose to set the stage for their autobiographical novels evinces settler consciousness and narrative structure. In that consciousness, there has to be an element of firstness that establishes, or at least reasserts, the settler/indigene fault-line spatially and, by implication, temporally (what is being created is civil society, whereas what existed is state of nature, to use Pateman’s terminology of political thought). In the narrative structure, there has to be a meaningful beginning not just chronologically, but in the sense of genesis.
Both *The First Man* and *Preliminaries* open with ominously threatening situations in the very early lives of the authors. Both narratives are set in a wilderness strewn with small islands of cultivation; in both, the father’s deed is foundational and the mother’s more instinctive and biological. Camus entitled the beginning of his novel ‘In Search of a Father’; Yizhar divided his into ‘Wasp’, ‘Sting’ and ‘Doctor’.

On an autumn night in 1913, Henri (a Frenchman) and Lucie (a Spaniard) Cormery had arrived on a third class coach of the train from Algiers to Bône, where an Arab awaited them. He takes them on a wagon pulled by a pair of horses to the Saint-Apôtre property, of which Henri had been hired as manager. The property is in fact the familiar French Algerian unit consisting of vineyards and a winery. The pregnant Lucie is closer to giving birth than was calculated. On the way, the frequency of her contractions grows, as does her pain. Upon their arrival in the farm, Henri improvises a bed for Lucie, leaves her with the Arab and his daughter-in-law, and rides to the nearby village to get the doctor. By the time Henri and the doctor return, Lucie has already given birth; the Arab woman decided to leave for the doctor the task of cutting the umbilical cord. Since Henri was directed to the doctor’s home by the owner of ‘Mme Jacques’s Farm Canteen’, he names the newly born boy Jacques. It is not clear whether ‘the First Man’ is the giver of the name or the named, or perhaps both.

The way to Saint-Apôtre feels like wilderness (state of nature), with few reassuring reminders of civilisation (civil society), all of them related to French settlers. The rain

shone in the weak light of the lamp [lit by the Arab], and, all around, it peopled the utter darkness with its soft sound. Now and then the wagon skirted spiny bushes; small trees were faintly lit for a few seconds. But the rest of the time it rolled through an empty space made still more vast by the dark of night. The smell of scorched grass, or, suddenly, the strong odour of manure, was all that suggested they were passing by land under cultivation.44
The only identifiable human habitation is that of French settlers; where Arabs live is unclear. It is the Arab who points out the settlement for them. ‘Indeed they could see, to the left of the road and a little farther on, the lights of Solférino blurred by the rain’.45

Since the seventeenth century, both materially and ideologically, cultivation was a pivotal marker of the settler/indigene fault-line, as well as one of the main mechanisms through which the former claimed ownership over the latter’s land.46 The signifiers of cultivation, striation of the land by dividing it into plots, and fields ploughed into straight furrows, are fundamental components of a settler Manichean imagination, which divides the landscape into a state of nature like wilderness and rationalised civil society. It might be helpful to cast this Manichean imagination in the language of Deleuze: the striated garden of sedentary man versus the smooth, libidinal space of the nomad. These signifiers appear in *The First Man* when Jacques Cormery remembers his father, that first eventful autumn night in 1913, and French colonial settlement in Algeria.

Trying to conjure up his father ‘on the dock at Bône among the emigrants’, Jacques sees Henri ‘there, resolute, sombre, teeth clenched, and, after all, was this not the same road he had taken from Bône to Solférino, almost forty years earlier, on the wagon, under the same autumn sky?’47 Only at that time the settler contract had yet to be crafted, for the road did not exist for emigrants: the women and children piled onto the army’s gun carriages, the men on foot, cutting by guesswork across the swampy plain or the spiny brush, under the hostile eyes of occasional groups of Arabs watching them from a distance, accompanied almost constantly by a howling pack of Kabyle dogs, until at the end of the day they reached the same country his father had forty years earlier – flat, surrounded by distant heights, *without a dwelling, without a single plot of cultivated land [...] nothing but bare empty space.*48
Camus then reassures us that this state of nature would be replaced by civil society: ‘The houses would come later, they would be built and the land would be portioned out, and work, blessed work would save them all’. Having reminisced and described the act of first settlement, Camus (via Rasteil) returns to the trope of oblivion and to the settler’s need for serial firstness. He has Jacques ‘wandering through the night of the years in the land of oblivion where each one is the first man’.

The comparable passage in Preliminaries is much longer, not so much because there is more to tell, but because of Yizhar’s expansive writing, in which narrative description is frequently suspended in favor of interior monologues, landscape portrayals, and political and existential observations, and because of the future perfect modality, which, as explained earlier, makes it possible for Yizhar’s narrator to remember in a non-historicist manner. The toddler narrator is with his father, who is plowing a field not far from Rehovot in late July 1918. ‘There is no weight at all to any child who sits like him on the edge of the furrows that Daddy is making’, the narrator observes. Unfortunately, the child has been seated under a carob tree and incurred the wrath of an entire nest of wasps, which attack him ferociously. Horrified, the father scuttles home, and with the mother joining him they rush the toddler to the doctor in a cart pulled by a pair of mules. The way seems to last forever, meandering as it does in the landscape which Yizhar’s narrator, unlike Camus’s, charts by identifying both Arab villages and Jewish settlements.

As always with Yizhar, the opening passage of his autobiographical novel is also ambivalent. It starts with what may seem an unequivocal settler statement, evincing the consciousness I have been examining; yet at the same time the narrator also conveys ironic distance (note the mule’s perspective in the quotation below). It is never clear whether he completely shares the pathos and the ideology, or whether he just ethnographically reports them in order to reconstruct the Zeitgeist faithfully. The child narrator describes his father tilling the land with much physical hardship. It is unclear, he intimates whether it is hard because the compacted surface of this stubborn soil has not been touched for thousands of
years, if ever, and no man has touched it, or assailed its innocent wholeness or sniffed its touch, or because of the contempt of the mule which has had no part in the decision to make a field here, because there is no land that can be dismissed as not worth this effort [...] and Daddy has only to finish this one rectangle, as a final act of possession of the ground and the ploughing like a last signature on the deed of ownership.52

Yizhar’s ambivalence is, as I have already argued, fundamental. One of its main manifestations is precisely, using Pateman’s terminology again, to question the moral and existential desirability of transforming a state of nature into civil society. This questioning, however, is the ultimate confirmation of Yizhar’s settler consciousness, for it shows time and again that in his vision Palestine really had been in a state of nature, and the Zionist settlers truly were transforming it into civil society. It is in this context that the narrator raises the question, which I mentioned earlier as a synecdoche for Yizhar’s life and work, ‘What is it like to be the child of a settler?’53 Whatever it may have been like, the child of a settler he certainly was.

The significance of the wasps’ attack on the toddler should be seen in light of this ambivalence. One possibility is that the toddler survived the deadly onslaught of the environment upon which colonisation is enacted, where, to recall Camus, ‘each one is the first man’. But there is another possibility for understanding the message of the venom injected by the wasps into the narrator’s body. This message is conveyed by Yizhar – here as on many other occasions throughout his oeuvre – through the reification of Palestine’s state of nature into something that has its own desire and aesthetic sensibility, and whose violation may have grave consequences for the violator. Yizhar’s consciousness and imagination is settler colonial to the core. He gives agency to a reified landscape of which the indigenous Palestinians are a part, just like the fauna and flora, but never to the indigenous Palestinians as human subjects.

‘And what is it like?’, the narrator further asks before he proceeds to have an epiphany:
As though you are suddenly seized by a realization that maybe it was a fundamental mistake. That maybe this land doesn’t want us at all, really. Because we came here to make changes that it doesn’t want. It doesn’t want any Herzl Forest. It doesn’t want any citrus groves on a sandy clay hill. It doesn’t want the sandy clay to change at all, but to be left as it is, including this miserable halfa, and for this dried-up halfa covered in white snails to continue to cover this hillside, with all kinds of miserable thistles, that may be centaurea, and that is precisely what it wants there to be here...and this is precisely the beauty that we are incapable of comprehending: that what has been created here over a thousand years or perhaps two thousand is wiser, more right and true, and even more beautiful than anything that might occur to the impatient minds of all those who have come to change everything here only because they have strength, a lot of strength, and limited intelligence or none at all, even though they might have read every kind of book in the world.54

It is also evident that this fixed agelessness can contain within itself the natives who are part of the landscape:

and even the plain behind ought to remain huge and empty, without anything on it, hardly even any dust, only it alone, gigantic, open and empty, without anything on it, no tree no shade and no road, only perhaps a few flocks of sheep here or herds of goats there scattered unnoticed, swallowed up in the total infinity, or perhaps also a low-built Arab village, that changes nothing in it and does not compel it to change in any way, and on which the passage of time leaves no traces [...] and nothing changes in it [...] and it is so right for it to remain just so, without any change, because what there is is entirely whole and even, and no one should start
travelling along roads here, no carts hurrying along, no one absently doing something and doing things to compel this place to become something it would be a pity for it to become.55

At one level, this is a manifestation of the not unfamiliar view that those who violate primordial nature might pay for it. Although cast differently, a similar dichotomy is observed by Goldie in his analysis of Australian, Canadian and New Zealand settler literatures: ‘Recent overtly environmentalist texts reflect this absolutist opposition between indigene-nature and white-technology, often with one or two white characters who go through a process of indigenization which leads them to swear allegiance to the holistic cause of indigenous ecology’.56 At another level, this is the ultimate fantasy of an aging native settler who likes neither statehood nor modernisation nor immigrants, and wishes he could return to the small community of the early ethnic plantations and hold on to its landscape.

3. LIBERAL COMMENTARY

I would like to end the discussion on the autobiographical settler novels by Camus and Yizhar with an observation on how liberal critics have written about these two novels in particular and the authors’ oeuvre in general. At the beginning of this essay I pointed out three fundamental features which typify hegemonic settler colonial narratives. The third of these is the supposed inconsequence of the natives to the form each settler society takes; in other words, the conflict with the natives is not denied, but the pivotal role that this conflict has played in shaping the identity of the settler nation is written off. The more liberal expressions of hegemonic white settler consciousness take on board the settler-indigene interaction and conflict. This consciousness, however, is bifurcated into two parallel narratives, which, like in Euclidean geometry, never meet. One narrative is the domain of settler-indigene relations (‘what we have done’); the other narrative is the ambit of the settler nation’s formation and identity (‘who we are’). The anxiety over the presence of the former in the latter is intense. I submit that the liberal commentary on Camus and Yizhar is essentially a particular manifestation of this anxiety.
The commentary on Camus is, of course, voluminous. For the limited purpose of the present discussion, it is worthwhile to note that the English texts which most clearly insist that Camus was a colonialist writer are Conor Cruise O’Brien’s *Albert Camus* (1970) and Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). The notable liberal reactions have come from Michael Walzer (1988), Tony Judt (1998), and most recently, David Carroll (2007), and Robert Zaretsky (2010).57 I focus on Caroll and Zaretsky because they evince the recent (i.e., post September 11) liberal American interest in Camus.

Significantly, Carroll already makes it clear in his preface that it was a rereading of *The First Man* that distanced him from O’Brien and Said:

Reading the novel led me to question both my own assumptions about Camus and those of his most vocal critics and to reread all of his work. In rereading his essays on Algeria and the novels and short stories that take place in his homeland and discovering that they give a much more complex view of French-Arab relations under colonialism than has been generally acknowledged, I became convinced that what is most interesting in Camus’s writings and missing from the picture of the ‘colonialist Camus’ constructed by his most militant postcolonial critics is what Camus himself called ‘the Algerian’ in him.58

Putting aside the utter misunderstanding (or willful misrepresentation) evinced by the attribution of ‘postcolonial’ to O’Brien and Said, Carroll strikingly cannot bring himself to see that Camus’s Algerian-ness, from the moment he toyed with a Mediterranean vision in the late 1930s, was a European-settler Algerian-ness in which the place of the native Algerians was, to put it mildly, rather unclear. In his 1937 lecture, ‘The New Mediterranean Culture’, for example, Camus offered this hilarious observation: ‘Protestantism is, actually, Catholicism wrenched from the Mediterranean, and from the simultaneously pernicious and inspiring influence of this sea’.59 Representative of the text as a whole, which
offers a couple of empty gestures to the fact that there are Arabs in North Africa, Camus’s observation makes it patently clear that what he had in mind was to re-invoke a Christian Latin Mediterranean, extended to the sea’s southern littoral and distinct from Protestant northern Europe. Referring to the same 1937 text by Camus, Zaretsky too speaks of his ‘Mediterranean nationalism’.\textsuperscript{60} I am mystified by a reading of Camus’s Mediterranean vision of the 1930s that finds in it an accommodation of his would-be Arab Muslim fellow citizens.

The point about the bifurcation of settler-indigene relations on the one hand and settler colonial identity on the other, can be brought to the fore most effectively by looking at Carroll’s interpretation of Camus’s best known work,\textit{ The Stranger} (\textit{L’Étranger}, 1942). The interpretations he challenges – Pierre Nora’s and O’Brien’s – are not identical, but their upshot is similar. For O’Brien, \textit{The Stranger}, in which the murdered Arab is nameless like most Arabs in much of Camus’s oeuvre, serves ‘to indict Camus for being a colonialist writer who accepts the myth of and chief justification for colonialism, the superiority of the colonizers over the colonized’.\textsuperscript{61} Nora praises Camus as a highly gifted and honest author, whose imagination ‘avoids the repression of the French-Republican super-ego’,\textsuperscript{62} and therefore genuinely expresses the French Algerian consciousness. In \textit{The Stranger}, according to Carroll, ‘Nora finds evidence that allows him to indict an entire pied-noir community for its violent hatred of the colonised, while at the same time praising Camus’ “genius” and honesty for expressing the blood lust of his people and portraying their guilt for their unjust treatment of Arabs – and even worse, for their repressed desire for genocide’.\textsuperscript{63}

Carroll’s alternative interpretation is the following. Meursault, the novel’s petit colon protagonist who had murdered a nameless Arab on Algiers’s beach, is tried, found guilty and executed. The murder, Carroll avers, is of secondary importance in the novel, a narrative device that facilitates, as it were, the trial. It is there that ‘Meursault loses his place as a French citizen in colonial society and over the course of the second half of the novel is increasingly identified with and put in the place of the colonized Arab, the anonymous indigenous Arab’.\textsuperscript{64} What Camus did, according to Carroll, was “Otherise” Meursault, and put into question ‘his
birthright and identity as a French citizen’. Given that this was a colonial society, by Otherising Mersault, Camus ‘Arabized’ him.

Carroll goes on to argue that Mersault’s trial was not about the actual crime he had committed, otherwise extenuating circumstances should have resulted in the accusation of manslaughter rather than pre-meditated murder (which is a bit puzzling, since Mersault shot the Arab five times from close range; how much more murderous does a murder have to be, with or without the blazing North African sun?). Rather,

[t]he trial is tagged to prove that Mersault is not French and in fact is not even human, not in legal terms but, more importantly, in moral, religious, and metaphysical terms. During his trial, Mersault is judged not for what he did but what for what he is, for what the judicial system represents him as being or [...] transforms him into being through the prosecutor’s reconstruction of his life and the stories told by witnesses.

What unites Camus and Carroll is the need to distance the indigene from the discussion of who we – the settlers, the colonisers, the Europeans, the West – are. If Carroll’s interpretation is plausible (that Camus ‘Otherised’ Mersault to make his circumstance that of an indigenous colonised Arab), surely he should have gone on to ask why on earth couldn’t Camus write directly about an Arab, one who would have a name and subjectivity? Why is it that Camus needed the circumvention of an ‘Arabized’ French Algerian in order to write a novel on his colonial society? The point for my argument is not the extent to which Carroll’s reading of The Stranger is credible, but the fact that it evinces the colonial anxiety – an anxiety he shares with Camus – of the colonised becoming an intrinsic part of the colonising society’s identity. This is what explains why in Carroll’s reading the murder is of secondary importance: once the indigene has facilitated the narrative’s unfolding by being murdered, he must disappear from consciousness.

The context of the War on Terror is present in Carroll’s analysis. This is indicated not only by the book’s sub-title
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

(‘Colonialism, Terrorism, Justice’) and his own comments. It is evident, with less self-awareness perhaps, in the quotation above, that ‘Meursault is judged not for what he did but what for what he is’. It is impossible not to note how this resonates with one of the central slogans of the War on Terror, whereby ‘they hate us for our way of life’ – i.e., for who we are; implicitly, not for what we do.

Zionist Israeli critics have endeavored to make sure that Yizhar’s work is not read as an attempt to collapse into a single narrative the settler-indigene struggle on the one hand, and the forging of Zionist Israeli identity on the other. They labour to de-historicise and de-politicise Yizhar’s writing by constantly resorting to the allegorical interpretation. Yizhar’s ultimate goal, so goes this line of argument, is never the concrete historical reality to which he refers and out of which he emerges, but always some general and philosophical statement on the human condition or on the timeless and placeless struggle of the individual to retain his freedom vis-à-vis the collective. Let me illustrate this through two authoritative scholars of Hebrew literature, recipients of the Israel prize, Dan Miron (mentioned earlier) and Gershon Shaked.

On several occasions, Yizhar has alluded to the accident in the 1930s that killed both his older brother, who was dashing around on his motorcycle, and an Arab friend who was riding behind him, in the setting of the bi-national landscape of the ethnic plantation and the Arab village in pre-48 rural Palestine. Dan Miron comments:

In another late story [‘A Story that has not Begun’] [...] Yizhar goes almost the point [sic] of ceremonious splendor in describing a motorcycle dash, which ends in collision with a train and death. This is the most extreme embodiment, in Yizhar’s work, of the tension between human collective existence (the train) and the individual liberated in the momentum of his freedom (the motorcyclist). Here there is not a hint of possible compromise; and as to submission, we are led to understand that death, especially that which comes during a dash of freedom, is better.67
That the dashing motorcyclist was Yizhar’s older brother, that behind him on the dashing motorcycle was his Arab friend (who doesn’t even exist as an abstract figure in Miron’s interpretation), that the motorcycle was dashing in the concrete landscape shared by the moshava and the Arab village matter not at all. They are all stripped of concretely historical and political—even personal—significance, and recast solely as an abstract allegory of the individual’s search for freedom from the collective.

Shaked was probably the most influential scholar of Hebrew literature of his generation (like Yizhar, he died in 2006). In an essay on Preliminaries, Shaked too resorts to the individual’s struggle with the imposing collective as a way to allegorise Yizhar’s concretely historical allusions to this general thematic. He further allegorises the individual’s guilt for being aloof from the collective, and for looking at it from an extrinsic vantage-point, expressed in a register of estranged ethnographic curiosity. Like Miron, Shaked ultimately dismisses the concretely historical foundation of Yizhar’s literature and its political ramifications. Shaked does not ignore the fact that, for Yizhar, the colonial struggle between settlers and indigenous people is significant (though he reduces this significance to a bare minimum), but he empties it of any concrete consequence, and indemnifies Yizhar against the possible ‘charge’ of being too critical of the collective. And in doing so he reveals his own colonial sensibility.

Shaked addresses one of the most powerful passages in the entire novel, one in which Yizhar wonders whether the whole settler project is ephemeral because of its foreignness to the environment and its aggression against the land and its indigenous dwellers and cultivators. It is a truly compelling text – at once a statement on a settler-colonial situation and a modernising project in general, and an allusion to a very concrete settler-colonial situation occurring in a particular environment in which, for instance, erased villages are named, as was shown earlier.

Shaked robs the passage of its force by attributing to it, again, an allegorical meaning. Yizhar’s child narrator is unforgiving of civilisation undoing nature, and of the settlers taking away ‘the land’s innocence and virginity’. This wrecks ‘the dream of eternal childhood of the naïve child, in whose life eternal childhood [...] is bound with
the assimilation into the completeness that exists in complete [sic] nature alone’. In this interpretation, Yizhar’s ostensible resentment of ‘the settling Jews’ is also allegorical. Shaked reads Yizhar’s prose not as resentful of the destruction of an actual natural and human landscape by particular settlers with a nameable ideology, but instead as allegorically indignant: they represent the element that facilitated the ‘swallowing up’ of nature by civilisation, in the struggle between nature and civilisation, which is beyond or without history.

For Shaked, ‘Yizhar’s only drama is the drama between the settlers and the land’. Shaked is a scholar who is ideologically committed to a settler society, so this observation confirms Patrick Wolfe’s argument that, in a pure settlement type of settler formation, it is ‘difficult to speak of an articulation between colonizer and native since the determinate articulation is not to a society but directly to the land, a precondition of social organization’. Later, Shaked seems to recall that perhaps the land came with an annoying appendix, and here the colonial mindset becomes manifest. ‘As an adult’, Shaked opines, Yizhar ‘thinks that man’s struggle with nature is futile and the land (and the Arab world is part of that land) would inevitably overcome those who disturb it’. Shaked’s fidelity to his calling as one of the Zionist project’s gatekeepers does not permit him to be content with neutering Yizhar through the allegorical strategy. To remove lingering doubts, he has to wind up stating that Yizhar is a good Zionist and that all the rest is secondary at best. Thus, Shaked avers that these yearnings for the destruction of the ‘Zionist’ entity and for the return of the Israeli landscape to the bosom of great mother nature come out of an extraordinary libidinal power, a power which shows that that under-current, which appears chiefly in the reflections of the narrator from the vantage-point of narrative-time, is not part of the foundational layer of the novella, which is suffused and overflowing with love for Eretz Israel and love for the founding fathers.

And after this acrobatics he concludes:
Beyond all the ideologies, chronicles and histories Yizhar celebrates in this novella the remembrance of his childhood and erects in its honor and memory—a beautiful Eretz Israel of words. Fiction overwhelmed reality here, and like in Goethe’s work the Dichtung (fiction) is more interesting, complex and rich than Warheit (reality). What is at stake in this liberal attempt to undermine, if not deny altogether, the centrality of the colonial situation for the understanding of literature? I would venture that at stake is white liberal segregationism, in the widest possible sense of the term. The exclusionary fundamental that inheres in that mindset lies not in the denial of colonialism altogether or even of the wrong that was done to the colonised who had been dispossessed or enslaved (though this happens too). Instead, it lies in denying that the interaction with the colonised is the history of who the colonisers collectively are, be they settler or metropole, but especially the former. What is ultimately denied is the extent to which the non-white world has been an intrinsic part of what is construed as Western history and culture. To admit, in other words, that the literatures of Camus and Yizhar are incomprehensible without the settler-indigene struggle is tantamount to admitting that ‘our’ interaction with the indigenous people and ‘our’ collective identity and history are inextricably intertwined. This admission would be too unsettling to bear.

ECSTACIES WITH NO NATIVES: CAMUS AND OZ

At the heart of both ‘The Adulterous Woman’ and ‘Nomad and Viper’ are women who at the climactic end of the stories experience sexual ecstasy in settler colonial situations; in both cases, these female experiences were written by settler colonial men. In ‘The Adulterous Woman’, Janine and Marcel are French Algerians who reside in one of the main coastal cities, possibly Algiers. In the inter-war period, Marcel had given up the study of law to take over from his parents their dry-goods business. Ordinarily, he preferred the comfort of his shop, but as business slowed down after the Second World War,
Marcel decided to travel to the inland areas and, selling directly to Arab-Algerian merchants, to traverse the villages of the upper plateau and the south. Janine accompanied him at his behest. At the end of a taxing bus ride they stop at an oasis. In the middle of the night Janine, wide awake, sneaks out of their hotel room and returns to the top of a fort she had climbed earlier that evening with Marcel. Alone in a cold cosmic night, she has a liberating, ecstatic experience, after which she goes back to the hotel. The story ends with Janine ‘weeping copiously, unable to restrain herself’.76

The narrator of ‘Nomad and Viper’ reports that following a devastating drought in southern Israel sometime between the 1948 and 1967 wars, the Bedouins were permitted by ‘the military authorities’ to move north for a ‘whole population […] could not be abandoned to the horrors of starvation’.77 A Bedouin tribe thus sets camp in the vicinity of an unnamed kibbutz. The narrative then splits into two related sub-plots. An allegation that the Bedouins were stealing and damaging property leads to a meeting between Etkin, a veteran kibbutz member and its secretary, and the head of the tribe, in which the latter takes responsibility for some thefts, pays for them, and also apologises for the misconduct of the tribe’s youth. The kibbutz’s young members, however, refuse to accept what they deem Etkin’s soft reaction and decide on a punitive raid against the tribe. Geula, a single female member of the kibbutz, is known for the excellent coffee she prepares during the collective’s assemblies and for what looks like an affair she may be having with the narrator. Just before the kibbutz assembly in which the generational conflict over how to respond to the Bedouins’ presence is played out, Geula, while wandering in the fields, encounters a young Bedouin shepherd with whom she has a rather vacuous exchange. Lying on the grass overtaken by an emotional mixture of rage and rejection, she hallucinates that the young Bedouin tried to rape her, and dies after being bitten by a viper. As she lay dying, Geula ‘watched the gang of youngsters crossing the lawn on their way to the fields and the wadi to even the score with the nomads’.78

1. COLONIAL FEATURES

Both stories contain numerous familiar colonial features that are comparable to other colonial (con)texts. The Arabs are in both cases
nameless, a stereotypical group devoid of any subjectivity or individuality. In fact, they have no existence that is independent of the settler perspective and gaze. Noteworthy is the extent to which the colonial observer is unsettled and ultimately threatened by what seems to her the silent impassivity of the (Arab) natives. During the long trip on the bus, Camus’s narrator notes:

The bus was full of Arabs pretending to sleep, shrouded in their burnooses. Some had folded their legs on the seat and swayed more than the others in the car’s motion. Their silence and impassivity began to weigh on Janine; it seemed to her as if she had been travelling for days with that mute escort.\(^7\!^9\)

Less than a century earlier Mark Twain conveyed a comparable sentiment, in *Innocents Abroad* (1872), with a more explicitly violent consequence:

They [Arabs surrounding the travellers’ camp in Palestine] reminded me much of Indians [...]. They had but little clothing, but such as they had was fanciful in character and fantastic in its arrangement. Any little absurd gewgaw or gimcrack they had they disposed in such a way as to attract attention most readily. They sat in silence, and with tireless patience watched our every motion with that vile, uncomplaining impoliteness which is so truly Indian, and which makes a white man so nervous and uncomfortable and savage that he wants to exterminate the whole tribe.\(^8\!^0\)

Comparable instances abound in ‘Nomad and Viper’ too. The descriptions of the kibbutzniks’ violence and of the punitive company on its way to wreak havoc with the Bedouin camp resemble Twain’s in both the justification of the white man’s aggression and the irony of the respective narrators:
In defense of the perpetrators of the aforementioned act of vengeance I must state clearly that the shepherd in question had an infuriatingly sly face. He was blind in one eye, broken-nosed, drooling; and his mouth—on this the men responsible were unanimous—was set with long, curved fangs like a fox’s. And the Bedouins would certainly not forget this lesson.81

Describing the ethos and actions of the young settler generation in the kibbutz, the narrator explains that ‘We are not the kind to take things lying down. We are no believers in forbearance or vegetarianism [...] Decency constrains me not to dwell in detail on certain isolated and exceptional acts of reprisal [...] such as cattle rustling, stoning a nomad boy, or beating one of the shepherds senseless’.82 This would not be an inappropriate description of the ethos and actions of the Jewish settlers in the post-1967 Occupied Territories.

As the story is brought to an end, the narrator joins the posse: ‘We were carrying short, thick sticks. Excitement was dilating our pupils. And the blood was drumming in our temples’.83 Several of these descriptions are also reminiscent of numerous examples of violent actions taken by white settlers in Australia, amply quoted and discussed by Henry Reynolds in one of his studies of the Australian settler project. ‘By Fear Alone’ is a section in which Reynolds surveys the ‘logic’ used by the settlers to justify their murderous violence against the Aboriginals. His quotations are uncannily interchangeable with those the kibbutz youngsters deploy to reject Etkin’s moderate approach and justify their brutality. Thus, a Tasmanian settler opined that the only way to deal with ‘the blacks’ was to ‘dismay them so that revenge may be drowned in terror’.84 A newspaper editor in north Australia stated in 1877 that the capability of the police force had to be ‘equal at least to terrifying the blacks to such an extent that they would not venture to interfere with either the settlers or their property’.85

Oz experienced kibbutz life as a member. He grew up in Jerusalem in a petty bourgeois Revisionist – later Herut, which would become Likud’s nucleus – family, and after the tragic suicide of his mother in 1952, he moved to Kibbutz Hulda (on the old road from
Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem). This was also an oedipal rejection of his father and of Revisionist Zionism, and a concomitant metamorphosis into a Labor Zionist organic intellectual; without this, he could not have had a successful literary career. *Where the Jackals Howl*, the collection of stories which included ‘Nomad and Viper’, was written in the period 1962-1965 and was Oz’s first published work. Had he used the sub-title of Reynolds’s study, *Reports from the Edge of White Settlement*, it would not have been inappropriate.

Oz seems to have had a long fascination with settler punitive posses. Reminiscing in 1993 about his childhood in Jerusalem, he manifested that fascination and retrospectively revealed how desperate he was for Labor Zionist – that is, settler – trappings and pedigree. He told an adoring audience at Berkeley:

> The new Jews were no more familiar to me [than the old kind], perhaps less. They were just the opposite, but I never saw them; they were not to be seen in Jerusalem. They were far away. They breed in the kibbutzim, in the Palmach, in the Negev and Galilee. Always elsewhere. They were tough and blond and tender and powerful and uncomplicated. They toiled over the land all day and in the evening, made wild love to the kibbutz girls, and then later at night picked up their submachine guns, and dashed out to smash the hostile red Indians or Arabs, before calling it a day.86

Then there is Geula’s hallucination of rape by the Bedouin shepherd she had encountered in the grove. This requires a philological comment. *Where the Jackals Howl* appeared in two editions: the original is from 1965, and the second from 1975. In the latter’s cover page, a note was inserted stating that ‘The stories had been written in the years 1962-1965 and were corrected in 1975’. The English translation is based on the 1975 edition. The detailed comparison I have conducted between the original version of ‘Nomad and Viper’ (composed in 1963) and the corrected version from 1975 reveals meaningful differences. Concerning the hallucinatory rape, both versions convey a sort of sexual excitement on Geula’s part.
during her exchange with the Bedouin shepherd, and the narrative of neither version would sustain the veracity of an actual rape. However, in the original version (which, again, is unavailable in English) her sensation of an actual rape – and account thereof in an interior monologue – is significantly more detailed and tangible, as is the attendant justification it lends to punitive violence in a way that is also comparable to Reynolds’s reports on Australia’s white settlers. Also, in the original version, after the shepherd had swiftly gathered his flock and vanished, the narrator states that the ‘young girl’s body was flooded by nausea, even though the nomad had not touched her at all’. This statement was omitted from the 1975 corrected version.

2. SETTLER COLONIAL FORMATIONS

From the settler colonial moments in ‘The Adulterous Woman’ and ‘Nomad and Viper’, I now turn to highlight two important differences between them. The first relates to the history, sociology and economy of settler societies, while the second is more literary.

In addressing first the socio-economic taxonomy of settler colonies, I remind the reader of the pertinent comments at the beginning of this article. One of the striking differences between ‘The Adulterous Woman’ and ‘Nomad and Viper’ – given that what they share is the settler situation – is movement in space. In the former story, the settlers are on the move in search of livelihood; Marcel must find the Arab merchants in their own dwellings to try and do business directly with them. In contrast, in ‘Nomad and Viper’ the settlers are already stationary and the indigenes are on the move in a desperate attempt to survive. It should be clarified that the fact that in the story the indigenes are Bedouins does not account for movement, for according to the narrative itself they are far away from their traditional grazing habitat in the Negev Desert, having been permitted by the army to go north. This is not the place to discuss the treatment of the Bedouins by the settler state. It can only be noted that it comprised cleansing in the 1948 war, followed by massive appropriation of grazing land, forcible resettlement in the Galilee of some, and later forcible settlement of most Bedouins in shanty towns in the south. The Bedouins who chose to create their own small communities live in what the state calls ‘unrecognized settlements’, to which it denies water, electricity and sewage, to say
nothing of education. In recent years, it has simply been destroying them.

As with the comparison with Yizhar, here too this difference is fundamentally linked to the success and strength of each settler project, or lack thereof. French Algeria ultimately collapsed and disappeared, and though there are no direct indications in the story of a consciousness of this eventuality, the uncertainty of its fate must have weighed on Camus. That is why in ‘Nomad and Viper’, the indigenous Bedouins seem superfluous in the land-labour formation, whereas in ‘The Adulterous Woman’, the impression is diametrically opposite (I shall return later to the land-labour formation in greater detail). The Janine and Marcel whom Camus depicts are insecure and completely isolated among Arabs during most of the narrative (no self-respecting Labor Zionist Israeli would share a bus with so many Arabs at the time of the story – late 1950s most probably – much less so nowadays). The characterisation of the settlers in ‘The Adulterous Woman’ seems to have anticipated the petit colon memory Camus would be trying to construct two years later in The First Man: hard-working, hard-done-by (the metropole, the indigenes, and life in general) people, trying to survive. When the narrator looks at Janine pondering during the long bus ride, he tells us that among other thoughts, she was rehearsing what she liked and disliked about Marcel when she had married him two decades earlier. She disliked several of his features, but ‘she liked his courage in facing up to life, which he shared with all the French of this country’.87

To further explain the difference, it is helpful to look at the opening passage of ‘Nomad and Viper’:

The famine brought them. They fled north from the horrors of famine, together with their dusty flocks. From September to April the desert had not known a moment’s relief from drought [...] The military authorities gave the situation their urgent attention. Despite certain hesitations, they decided to open the roads leading north to the Bedouins. A whole population – men, women, and children – could not simply be abandoned to the horrors of starvation.88
Yizhak Laor implores us to compare this particular story with the non-fiction account of the expulsion of Arabs through Ayn Husub to Jordan in May 1950, and with the Hasbarah (propaganda) pamphlet circulated in the 1950s that described in an idyllic fashion how the immigrants from Middle Eastern countries were being settled in the country’s empty spaces. ‘Now return to Oz’s story’, he asks his readers.

Not only ‘we were here already’ and ‘they come from the desert’, but note also the army’s good will, its being overcome with compassion (‘we were already here and we are right/righteous’). How closely the world described here resembles a colonial narrative. I would submit that ‘the world described here’ does not just resemble ‘a colonial narrative’; rather, it is a colonial narrative.

This difference between the two stories prompts a wider observation. As stated earlier, the taxonomy of settler colonialism is based on various land-labour formations. Two important types are the plantation colony and the pure settlement colony. In both types of colonial settlement, land must be obtained and wrested away from its indigenous dwellers one way or another. The essential difference is that whilst the plantation is predicated upon the use of indigenous labour (or at any rate, of labour that is not exclusively a white settler one), the pure settlement purposefully eschews any labour that is not settler white; and what is ideally desired from the indigenous society is its land and subsequent disappearance (hence Wolfe’s observation that in the pure settlement type the articulation is not so much between coloniser and colonised as directly between coloniser and land). Drawing on this taxonomy, Gershon Shafir added a variation he called the ethnic plantation (also mentioned earlier), with which he perceptively analysed the initial phase of Zionist settlement (1882-1904). This was a phase in which, informed by the model of the French plantation colony in Algeria that was applied in Palestine by Rothschild’s experts, cheap Arab labour was sought and used. In Hebrew, the contemporaries called this type of colony moshava;
Yizhar was born and spent much of his life in this kind of colony. With the ascendancy of Labor Zionism, colonisation and settlement shifted irrevocably to its own version of the pure settlement colony in the form of the kevutza, kibbutz (obviously the best known) and moshav.  

With this distinction in mind, I wish to suggest that, in a fundamental sense, an analogous distinction can be drawn between Oz’s ‘Nomad and Viper’ on the one hand, and the other three texts on the other. Oz’s story reflects his experience in Kibbutz Hulda, some of which is recounted in his autobiographical novel A Story of Love and Darkness (Hebrew 2002, English 2004). It so clearly conveys the forcefully demarcated fault-line, so rationalised and orderly, between settler and indigene. Since, unlike other cases of pure settlement colonisation such as North America and Australia, the attempts completely to eliminate Palestinian Arabs have been thus far unsuccessful, the material and discursive ability to maintain a hermetic separation both within and without the Green Line has been quintessential in determining what Israel actually is. There could not be a Zionist – i.e., settler – state unless the settler community was kept racially pure and physically insulated. ‘Nomad and Viper’ drives home not only the separation, but also the sense of a frontier ethos, which the existence of a state and an exponentially growing asymmetry of power relations do nothing to remove.

In stark contrast, Yizhar’s Preliminaries and Camus’s two texts ought to be understood in the context of the (ethnic) plantation colony in these two respects: the objective reality to which these texts relate or within which they are set, and the experience and imagination of the authors. This does not mean that the material reality of the plantation colony’s land-labour formation corresponds in a simple point-to-point manner to the literary artefact; strictly speaking, only Yizhar’s is a precise plantation colony world, whereas in The First Man there are instances of it, and in ‘The Adulterous Woman’ none at all. Figuratively, however, the context of these texts is one in which the settler-indigene fault-line is much more porous and messy than in Oz’s pure settlement kibbutz. Whether owing to a different land-labour formation or because of a less unequal power structure (or both), the settlers in these three texts have to interact
with the indigenous people around them in a meaningfully different way.

3. SEXUAL EXCITEMENT

If the first difference between the two short stories brought to the fore the theme of settler colonies as material formations, the second is a more literary commentary on the climax of the two stories, in which Janine and Geula experience sexual excitement. As mentioned earlier, what ‘The Adulterous Woman’ and ‘Nomad and Viper’ share is the fact that the colonial women’s intimate moments were written by male colonial authors and were set in colonial contexts. They are also both – though difference begins to matter here – predicated on the appearance of the colonised and their subsequent disappearance as something that facilitates the colonial sexual moment. To use the chilling euphemism of the Israeli bureaucracy in the process of looting Palestinian land after 1948, it is as if the indigenes being *present absentees* was a prerequisite for colonial sexual excitement.

If the foregoing is what the texts share, what sets them apart is the relative caution of ‘The Adulterous Woman’ and the fact that it is open to more than one reading, versus the uncouthness and vulgarity of ‘Nomad and Viper’ and the fact that it is one-dimensional.

Janine climbs to the terrace atop the fort for the first time in the early evening of their arrival to the oasis. What prevents her from having the elation she would have late at night, what hinders the completion of her union with a cosmic stretch of nature that is tinged with a sexual possibility, is the presence of Marcel and, in a vaguer way, the presence of Arabs. The sensation conveyed during her first time on the terrace is that she is almost there but not quite. She is accompanied by Marcel and his mere presence is a *coitus interruptus*; and on the way up, there was an old Arab, and from the terrace she could vaguely see and hear things Arab. ‘Her exaltation had left her. Now she felt too tall, too thick, too white too for this world she had just entered’.91

The absolute solitude of the night removes all these. ‘Not a breath, not a sound [...] disturbed the solitude and silence surrounding Janine’.92 The description of Janine sneaking out of the hotel room is one of a woman en route to an illicit rendezvous. The
depiction of her achieving perfect unison with the vastness around her can be interpreted as a sort of sexual ecstasy, an impression Said shares in *Culture and Imperialism*, but it is subtle, open-ended and delicate.\(^93\) ‘Janine could not tear herself from contemplating those drifting flares. She was turning with them, and the apparently stationary progress little by little identified her with the core of her being, where cold and desire were now vying with each other’.\(^94\) She feels perfectly in tune with the ‘sky above her’ that ‘was moving in a sort of slow gyration’.\(^95\) Then,

[h]er whole belly pressed against the parapet as she strained toward the moving sky [...]. the water of night began to fill Janine, drowned the cold, rose gradually from the hidden core of her being and overflowed in wave after wave, rising up even to her mouth full of moans. The next moment, the whole sky stretched out over her, fallen on her back on the cold earth.\(^96\)

The account of Janine’s nocturnal experience in the Algerian plateau opens itself up to two readings, between which tension inheres. In a colonial (or anti-colonial) reading, Janine is a settler woman who needs the colony’s vastness, the ‘strange kingdom [...] that would never be hers’, in order to reach ‘the hidden core of her being’. Moreover, she needs the sights and sounds of the colonised, the sights and sounds that signify Arabness to her, but at the same time her experience cannot be complete unless the night cleanses them. In a feminist reading, Janine is a woman seeking liberation from a stifling married life. Lying awake next to Marcel, just before running into the night, Janine ‘drew back from Marcel. No, she was overcoming nothing, she was not happy, she was going to die, in truth, without being liberated’.\(^97\) In this reading, which is closer to the surface of the text, the (sexual) elation is liberating because a man is not needed, because Marcel, the husband, is absent. The tension between the two readings should not be allayed.

No such luck for Geula. Not to belabour the obvious – the Bedouin shepherd as the stereotypical native conduit for realised and unrealised colonial sexual fantasies, the subsequently necessary
disappearance of the native for the unfolding of the colonial fantasy, and so forth – I would like to return to the difference between the original (which appeared in 1965 and was written in 1963) and the corrected, 1975 versions of ‘Nomad and Viper’. I have already alluded to this difference earlier, but it is truly striking in the description of Geula being bitten by the viper as she is lying in the grass after the encounter with the Bedouin. The original version, which is inaccessible to the non-Hebrew reader, had contained three pivotal things that were omitted or unrecognisably altered in the corrected version (on which the English translation is based). Firstly, the memory of the sexual intercourse (that never occurred) with the Bedouin is enhanced. Secondly, the ‘encounter’ with the snake – the phallic symbol *par excellence* – is highly sexualised, to put it mildly (in Semitic languages nouns are gendered, and both snake and viper are masculine nouns). Thirdly, a clear connection is established between Geula’s morbid sexual ecstasy and the departure of the punitive posse. It would seem that someone told Oz in the process of preparing the second edition to curb the libidinal enthusiasm.

Some of these passages in the original version are worth citing to understand how Oz evolved as a writer. Lying in the grass after the encounter with the shepherd, Geula’s complete relaxation ‘did not yet reach post-coital contentment [purqan in Hebrew, which has a clear, though literary, post-orgasm connotation], but she seems mildly conciliated [...] That savage who had brought her to submission and conquered her body is irremovably on her mind. It is for his ears that she is humming her tunes. Momentarily she shuts her eyes and scolds him sadly’.98 A few minutes later, as the furious viper approaches (she is blocking its hole), ‘owing to the poetic excitement the young woman might not notice the snake at all’.99 Even after it bites her, Geula just feels a momentary pain, and fatally assumes that a thorn got stuck in her ankle. Note Oz’s viper: ‘Since he [I am intentionally following the gendered Hebrew noun here] had released his venom, the snake reached post-coital contentment [purqan, again]. Coiling lazily, he removes himself from the scene. The extent of his fatigue forbids him from moving too far. Satiation leads to slumber’.100

The viper’s victim can now experience what she had not reached moments earlier. Like the snake’s, ‘Geula’s eyes are open
too [...] A faint pain, tender pain, spreads in her blood and appeases her entire body [...] A shuddering of pleasure makes her quiver. She now listens to the sweet wave spreading through her body and intoxicating the blood flow. Geula responds to the sweet wave with utter submission'.101 Now the lads are on their way to wreak havoc with the Bedouins, Geula is dying in the grass and the story is brought to a closure:

Owing to the gushing pleasure Geula does not come forth to wish us luck and extend us her blessing. The girl is brimming over with pleasure, which covers her with soothing chill. She is still crushing with her fingers a dry twig. Her fingers are very soft. Soft and replete with pleasure.102

The themes that had appeared in ‘Nomad and Viper’ (and other stories in Where the Jackals Howl) – vulgar sex from a putatively female perspective, hyper-masculine and tortured Israeli men, white women fantasising about wild sex with brown, colonised men – were developed and enhanced in Oz’s subsequent novels. This development has vindicated comments such as Perry Anderson’s, that what Amos Oz’s literature offers is ‘the mixture of machismo and schmaltz’.103 Tellingly and mischievously, Laor entitled a chapter he wrote on this writer ‘The sex life of the security forces: The corporality of the handsome and military Israeli in Amos Oz’.104 The novel that launched Oz’s career to fame and glory was Mikha’el Shely (My Michael, 1968). As he has revealed more than three decades later in Story of Love and Darkness, that early novel too was autobiographical, especially through the tedious and verbose character of Michael himself, whom Oz likened to his father. What Oz has not divulged, nor most likely would he, is that in My Michael commenced the construction of his most significant ‘Other’: the Mizrahi Jew, whom Oz has feared and hated, and has done so with growing vengeance after Likud came to power in 1977 in several novels.

Interestingly, in My Michael too, this construction brought together (settler) colonialism and gender. Michael’s wife in the novel,
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

Hannah Gonen, is a white middle-class Jewish Israeli from one of the more affluent neighborhoods in West Jerusalem. Hannah Gonen is also Oz’s narrator. She is constantly having dreams about wild, sometimes violent, sometimes orgiastic sex with non-white men, sometimes Arab, sometimes Mizrahi Jews, sometimes both. Hannah recounts these dreams in great detail. Most of these dreams are rather familiar to the reader of colonial literature.

Oz’s colonial imagination did not stop with that rather frequent trope. In an interesting twist towards what I have called elsewhere ‘domestic Orientalism’, his female protagonist not only has fantasies about wild sex with ‘Orientals’, but later in the novel having these wild sexual fantasies is predicated upon imagining herself an Oriental woman. And not just an Oriental woman in general, but an Oriental, Jewish Israeli one:

The poet Saul leaned over to intoxicate me with his moustache and his warm odor. Rahamim Rahamimov the handsome taxi driver came too and clasped me round the waist like a wild man [...] Hands pressed my body. Kneaded. Pounded. Probed. I laughed and screamed with all my strength. Soundlessly. The soldiers thronged and closed round me in their mottled battle dress. A furious masculine smell exuded from them in waves. I was all theirs. I was Yvonne Azulai. Yvonne Azulai, the opposite of Hannah Gonen. I was cold. Flooded.105

For the uninitiated into Israeli culture, it should be clarified that Yvonne Azulai signifies a North African Jewish woman, most probably a Moroccan one. It would not be a huge interpretive intervention to suggest that in order to experience the sexual fantasy described above, Hannah Gonen, the proper white woman, must become a Moroccan slut. Oz’s anxiety about the disappearance of Ashkenazi, Labor Zionist Israeliness was exacerbated, and its main expressions were the fear of the penetration (literally and figuratively) of ‘foreign elements’ like exilic and Mizrahi Jews into what had been the pure body of the settler community/nation. Novels such as Perfect Peace
(1984) and *Black Box* (1987) are expressions of this anxiety, for which the Palestinian Arabs are too excluded to even be the ‘Other’.

Attention should be drawn to the fact that Oz’s writing seems to fit well with settler colonial literature on theme of sexuality. For example, Hannah Gonen’s need to dream of orgiastic sex as Yvonne Azulai may be a particular instance of the way in which male settler authors view white women as repressed and anti-sexual versus the pure, yet libidinal and uninhibited indigenous woman.106 More generally, Goldie offers an apt summation:

There have been a series of transformations in the various aspects of the commodity of sexuality. The [indigenous] maiden has ranged from ethereal goddess to voracious succubus. In her capacity as the agent of indigenization she has been perfect temptress and perfect terror. The [indigenous] male has been a captor, the phallic rage of the wilderness, and an incubus as agent of feminist liberation, an indigenizer to equal his sisters. Yet throughout the indigene remains the same commodity, the same object of white desire and white fear.107

**CONCLUSION**

The treatment of settler colonialism as a discrete global phenomenon has become increasingly appealing. The buoyancy of comparative settler colonialism is evidenced by the growing number of studies that adhere to its ‘language’, as well as by the inauguration of an international journal, *settler colonial studies*, which emanates from one of the chief settler colonial societies, Australia. In this article I have begun to extend the analysis of settler colonialism as a distinct historical formation from – to use Marxist terminology – the base to the superstructure, specifically to literature.

I have put forward a twofold insistence. On the one hand I showed that a reading of literary texts must be placed in precise material contexts that differ from one another in the land-labour formations. For this purpose I have made use of available taxonomies.
of settler colonial colonies, several of which gave birth to settler nation-states. On the other hand, I illustrated how literature offers invaluable insights that cannot be gained from a purely structural reconstruction of the material formation. I underscored, in other words, the complimentary nature of the approach I propose.

The usefulness of approach I pursue can be highlighted if we briefly mention a stimulating discussion of settler literature by Caroline Rooney. She starts from the recognition that settler literature is distinctive by arguing that the ‘Southern African farm novel’ constitutes a literary sub-genre. Rooney then identifies the canonical Anglophone texts in Olive Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), Doris Lessing’s *The Grass is Singing* (1950), and J.M. Coetzee’s *In the Heart of the Country* (1977). She characterises the canonical novel as one of ‘entrapment or regression’ and interestingly shows how it is informed by its metropolitan counterpart, George Eliot’s first and foremost. Finally, Rooney reads a watercolour painting of a Zimbabwean farm, which she uses to point out an alternative farm narrative that ‘offers a pioneering myth and logic’.

Rooney’s essay is pregnant with stimulating possibilities to further develop research on settler literature. Significantly, however, when Rooney sets out to provide a context for her reading of the painting, it soon become evident that the context she charts is strictly literary. Rooney is unconcerned with what precisely ‘the Southern African farm’ is as a socio-economic formation, whether there is more than one type of ‘farm’, what the farm is in relation to settler colonial formations in other geographies, and so on. My hope is that this article illustrates that the conversation between the material context and the literary text may be as revealing as the one between Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* and Schreiner’s *The Story of an African Farm*.

Rooney’s intervention is a brief, stimulating sketch. More systematic works have tried to survey and systematise settler colonial literature. This corpus is helpful because it starts from an acute awareness of the discreteness of settler colonialism as a historical formation; this awareness has in turn led to important observations on the discreteness of the literatures of the societies that resulted from this historical formation. Especially fruitful is the
tension created by the dual dialectic that underpins the settler situation: imitation of the metropolitan centre and search for material and cultural independence from it; and disavowal of the natives and desire for them. Problematic, in my view, is the frequent placement of settler colonial literature in larger bodies of discussion on post-colonial literature. This placement creates a tension, which is scholarly, political and moral. On the one hand numerous scholars insist that settler colonialism is discrete as both a historical formation and literary field; on the other hand, however, they also insist that settler literatures are a legitimate part of post-colonial literary studies.\textsuperscript{109}

To return to Wolfe, one of the most distinctive features of settler colonialism—materially and culturally—is arguably its ‘present perfectness’ (‘invasion is a structure, not an event’). In precisely what sense is this formation post-colonial? And, momentarily putting aside Gaza and the west Bank, how does one convince the Israeli Palestinians in the Galilee or the Triangles that theirs has been a post-colonial experience after 1948?

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\section*{BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE}

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\section*{NOTES}


\footnote{2 Quotations are from Patrick Wolfe, \textit{Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event} (London: Cassell, 1999), pp.1-3.}

\footnote{3 Lorenzo Veracini, \textit{Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview} (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).}

\footnote{4 Veracini, \textit{Settler Colonialism}, p. 11.}

\footnote{5 Veracini, \textit{Settler Colonialism}, pp. 11-12.}

\footnote{6 Veracini, \textit{Settler Colonialism}, p. 12.}

\footnote{7 All these texts have English translations, to which I ordinarily refer unless stated otherwise. Albert Camus, \textit{The First Man}, Translated by David Hapgood (London:}
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.


10 For a recent contribution see Robert Zaretsky, Albert Camus: Elements of a Life (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010).


13 Laor, Narratives with no Natives, p. 50. Palmach is an acronym which stands for storm troops. It was the elite component of the Hagana, the main pre-state Jewish military organization, and the backbone of the IDF in the 1948 war. Ben-Gurion disbanded the Palmach in 1948 because most of its high-ranking officers were affiliated with competing labor parties.

14 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 52.

15 S. Yizhar, ‘First Sermon’, Stories of the Plain (Tel-Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1963) [Hebrew].

16 Yizhar, ‘First Sermon’, p.101


Camus, The First Man, p. 22.


26 Camus, The First Man, p. 22.


28 See Miron ‘Introduction’.

29 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 64.

30 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 136.


34 David Shulman, ‘Afterword’, S. Yizhar, Khirbet Khizeh, Translated by Nicholas de Lange and Yaacob Dweck (Jerusalem: Ibis, 2008 [1949]), p. 120.

35 Meron Rapaport, ‘Yizhar’s Landscape’, Haaretz, 08/04/05.


40 Veracini, Settler Colonialism, Chapter Two.

41 Carole Pateman, ‘The Settler Contract’, Carole Pateman, Charles W. Mills, Contract and Domination (Cambridge: Polity Press), pp. 35-78. This is not a co-authored book in the conventional sense: each author wrote her/his chapters, and these are brought together by a dialogue between them in the opening chapter.


44 Camus, The First Man, p. 5.

45 Camus, The First Man, p. 7.

46 Pateman’s discussion of this point is subsumed under the right to husbandry.

47 Camus, The First Man, p. 188.

48 Camus, The First Man, p. 188; emphasis added.

49 Camus, The First Man, pp. 188-189.

50 Camus, The First Man, p. 195.

51 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 46.

52 Yizhar, Preliminaries, pp. 43-44.

53 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 52.

54 Yizhar, Preliminaries, p. 86.

55 Yizhar, Preliminaries, pp. 86-87.

56 Goldie, Fear and Temptation, pp. 36-37.


58 Carroll, Albert Camus the Algerian, p. xiii.


60 Zaretsky, Albert Camus, p. 39. For an insightful interpretation on this ‘Mediterraneanism’ and on attempts to construe French Algeria as a ‘return’ see

61 Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian*, p. 25.
63 Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian*, p. 25.
64 Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian*, pp. 31-32.
65 Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian*, p. 32.
66 Carroll, *Albert Camus the Algerian*, p.33; emphasis in the original.
72 See n. 2 above.
73 Shaked, ‘A Beautiful Eretz Israel of Words’, p.198; emphasis added.
85 Reynolds, *Frontier*.
88 Oz, ‘Nomad and Viper’ 1975, p. 21.
90 The crucial parts in Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* are chapters three, six and seven.
95 Camus, ‘The Adulterous Woman’, p. 32.
99 Oz, ‘Nomad and Viper’, 1965, p. 40 [Hebrew].
100 Oz, ‘Nomad and Viper’, 1965, p. 40 [Hebrew].
Piterberg, ‘Literature of Settler Societies’.

101 Oz, ‘Nomad and Viper’, 1965, p. 40 [Hebrew].
102 Oz, ‘Nomad and Viper’, 1965, p. 41 [Hebrew].
104 Laor, Narratives with no Natives.
105 Amos Oz, My Michael, Translated by Nicolas de Lange (New York: Harcourt, 1972), p.174; emphasis added. Laor too was struck by this passage (Narratives with no Natives, p.80).
106 See Goldie, Fear and Temptation, p. 77.
107 Goldie, Fear and Temptation, p. 84.