

Pursuing the Zionist Dream on the Palestinian Frontier: A Critical Approach to Herzl's *Altneuland*

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Abstract

This paper critically examines Theodore Herzl's canonical Zionist novel, *Altneuland* / *Old New Land* as a frontier narrative which depicts the process of Jewish immigration to Palestine as an inevitable historical process aiming to rescue European Jews from persecution and establish a multi-national Utopia on the land of Palestine. Unlike radical Zionist narratives which underlie the necessity of founding a purely Jewish state in the holy land, *Altneuland* depicts an egalitarian and cosmopolitan community shared by Jews, Arabs and other races. The paper emphasizes that Herzl's Zionist project in *Altneuland* is not an extension of western colonialism par excellence. Herzl's narrative is a pragmatic appropriation of frontier literature depicting Palestine as a new frontier and promoting a construct of mythology about enthusiastic individuals who thrived in the desert while serving the needs of an enterprising and progressive society. Unlike western colonial narratives which necessitate the elimination of the colonized natives, Herzl's novel assimilates the indigenious population in the emerging frontier community.

Keywords: Zionism, Frontier, Immigration, Palestine, Narrative, History, Jews, Colonization

INTRODUCTION

The story of the Zionist immigration to Palestine continues to live; Zionist literature reflects and recreates this experience in a heroic mode, re-enacting again and again the first moments of the colonization and settlement of the Palestinian landscape. The historical reality of pre-Zionist Palestine as a wasteland provided the spark to the growth and development of a well-known Zionist fiction tradition delineating a country without a people disfigured by the sight of swamps and empty desert. Nevertheless, Theodore Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, and a prolific writer of fiction on this topic, in his early work depicts Palestine as a land with a native population which will be the future homeland of the Jews. Herzl's *Altneuland*¹ (1902) not only refers to Palestine as "the land of the Jews" but also as a new frontier territory which will be invaded by European Jews who will establish a democratic and multi-cultural state on the European model.

In this context, the novel promotes and popularizes a construct of mythology about enthusiastic individuals who thrived in the desert while serving the needs of an enterprising and progressive society. Problems between immigrants and locals will be terminated- the Arabs and the Jews will live in harmony and tolerance. The re-settlement of the Ottoman province and later British mandate Palestine is viewed in a different way in Herzl's fiction. As a Zionist pioneer, Herzl propagated the return to Jewish soil, liberation through labor and the creation of an egalitarian and free society before the founding of the state. In *Altneuland*, the Palestinian frontier is not merely a splendid historical period or a symbol of the triumph of good over evil as militant Zionists claim but it offers the ideal of personal self-determination and responsible freedom. For Herzl, the reconciliation between Arabs and Jews is inevitable, therefore the relation between both sides is romantically delineated in *Altneuland*. Conflicts that are usually triggered by religious differences and political hostilities are invisible in the text.

In *Altneuland*, Herzl indicates that "Zion is only Zion" when tolerance reigns. The novel depicts the future of Palestine in the 1920's, though the text was written in 1902. The emerging state or what Herzl calls "the New Society" is cosmopolitan, and the Arabs have their place in Herzl's Old New Land: "Our motto must be now and forever: You are my brother". Herzl's narrative reveals that the

1 According to the *New York Review of Books*, *Altneuland (Old New Land)* is a utopian novel by Theodor Herzl (1860 – 1904), the founder of political Zionism. Outlining Herzl's vision for a Jewish state in the Land of Israel, this book became one of Zionism's establishing texts. It was translated into Hebrew as Tel Aviv, which directly influenced the choice of the same name for the Jewish-Zionist Jaffa suburb founded in 1909, which was to become a major Israeli city. This book was originally published in 1902 in German as *Altneuland*. This edition has updated translations of location-places, to conform better with modern usage. *Old New Land* is a nineteenth century utopian blueprint for a modern state of Israel.

return of the Jews to Palestine will not create any kind of conflict with the Arabs. The New Society is expected to stretch to include Beirut, Damascus, and other parts of the Arab world. The Arabs will be part of the emerging state in which God may be worshipped in “a temple, mosque, art museum or in a concert by the philharmonic”.

For example, the Jews who emigrated from Russia to Palestine built a modern colony [*Kibbutz*] in a spot which used to be a swamp. In the Zionist settlement of Neudorf, Rabbi Shmuel played a heroic role in the process of modernization. He was also “the comforter of the people of Neudorf, most of whom had come from Russia to take up the struggle with the ancient soil”. When the Russian immigrants came to the village, this fertile plain was still wasteland; the plain of Asochis over there—behind the mountain range to the north—was covered with swamps and the broad Valley of Jezreel to the south still showed the effects of age-long neglect” (124)².

Herzl’s narrative is packed with numerous references to many Zionists pioneers who participated in the establishment of the New Society, particularly Joseph Levy. He is a key Zionist character in the novel, and one of the Zionists who contributed to the implementation of Herzl’s project in Palestine: “Representatives of all kinds of industries call on him. He has contacts with England, Germany, France, and particularly with America.” (133). Levy was the first Jew “who thought of negotiating with large firms in England, France, and Germany before the beginning of our immigration” (148). Mr. Levy played a central role in the pre-immigration period: I established general headquarters in London at once, and appointed as department heads men whom either I knew personally, or who came highly recommended. There was Smith for passenger traffic, Steineck for construction, Rubenz for freight, Warszawski for purchasing machinery, Alladino for land purchase, Kohn and Brownstone for the commissariat, Harburger for seeds and saplings, Leonkin for the accounting department. Wellner was my general secretary. I name them as they occur to me. (142).

In addition to his assistance in transferring European civilization to Palestine, Levy paved the way for the settlement of the holy land. He describes the dynamics of the immigration plan: »The first thing I did was to send Alladino to Palestine to buy up all the available land. He was a Sephardic Jew who traced his pedigree from a family whose ancestors had been among those expelled from Spain. I knew that the inscrutable Alladino could not be outwitted even by the shrewdest of real estate agents” (142). Levy sheds more light on the mechanism

2 All subsequent citations from the novel will be taken from the following edition: Herzl, Theodore. *Altneuland (Old New Land)*. Trans. Lotta Levensohn. Bloch Publishing Co. and Herzl Press: New York, 1941.

which brought about the construction of the Zionist project in Palestine: »I divided a map of Palestine into small squares, which I numbered. It was kept in my office, and an exact copy given to Alladino. He was simply to wire me the numbers of the parcels he had bought, and so I knew from hour to hour just how much land we already owned, and what kind of land it was” (143). In a related context, Levy proudly affirms that he was cooperating with “the Zionist district groups in Russia, Roumania, Galicia, and Algiers. All we needed was a record of the local Zionist groups arranged by districts and countries.” (145). He adds that “while the local Zionist groups were selecting their best human material for Palestine”, English, French, and German firms established “branches in Haifa, Jaffa, Jericho, and before the gates of Jerusalem” (149).

In his comments on the reaction of the native Palestinians to the Zionist immigration, Levy states: “These Palestinian Orientals were puzzled: Grave camels stopped stock still, and shook their heads” (149). He proceeds: “The native Arabs were taken by surprise at the advent of the Zionist immigration. The natives were astonished at the sudden appearance of Occidental goods in the country, and at first could find no explanation for the marvel” (150). Apparently, the Arabs of Palestine who were not marginalized during the process of colonization were thankful to the Zionists who brought civilization and European products to this part of the world: “The natives began to buy at once, and word of the new bazaars spread quickly to Damascus and Aleppo, to Bagdad and the Persian Gulf. The customers streamed in on all sides” (150).

In *Altneuland*, Herzl states that by the end of the nineteenth century humanity had already achieved a high degree of technical skill. The Jewish immigrants had to transplant existing inventions to the Palestinian frontier. The person who plays a significant role in bringing technology to the holy land is a Jewish engineer named, Steineck. Even in »Old-New-Land« it had been no more possible to change the laws of Nature than the nature of man. But, with the progress of civilization, men had come to understand natural forces better, and had learned how to utilize them. »The real founders of 'Old-New-Land,'« according to David Littwak, »were the hydraulic engineers. There was everything in having the swamps drained, the arid tracts irrigated, and a system of power supply installed” (175). In a related context, David highly appreciates the efforts of the Zionist pioneers who participated in the economic development of the New Society by bringing European products to the holy land and renewed the Hebrew currency, the shekel which is equal to a French franc: “When the Jewish immigration to Palestine began on a large scale, there was a sudden and enormous demand for merchandise. We had not yet produced anything, and needed everything. This was known to the whole world, because the Jewish immigration took place in the full light of day.” (94).

In Herzl's novel, the frontier is not meant to describe a border region, the outermost boundary or fringe of civilized settlement or the area where Zionist colonizers thrived to modernize the neglected land of Palestine but it refers to the entire land of Palestine. The frontier in Herzl's narrative has become a metaphor for an ever-receding illusive boundary line that was sometimes imagination and sometimes territorial reality. Metaphorically, the frontier is associated with sacrifice, idealism, individualism and the spiritual quest of the Zionist pioneers – the quest for freedom and unity. David Littwak depicted the New Society as a socialist utopia. He envisioned a community rising in the Land of Israel on a cooperative basis utilizing science and technology in the development of the Land. He told his European guests: Nothing on earth is perfect, not even our New Society. We content ourselves with making our young people physically fit (75).

In Herzl's fiction, the Palestinian frontier is not only a geographical concept but it is also an intellectual/spiritual reality which significantly contributed to the making of the inhabitants of the New Society. Herzl idealizes the frontier, identifying it as a continuous process of exploration and modernization which brings prosperity and happiness, simultaneously, to the Zionist pioneers escaping from European persecution, and to the native Palestinians struggling to escape from ages of poverty and backwardness. For Herzl, the virgin landscape of Palestine, which was neglected for centuries, has provided unlimited opportunities of success and prosperity for the Jewish immigrants and the native inhabitants of the land. When the first European Zionist-Friedrich-arrived in Palestine, accompanied by his German benefactor- Kingscourt- they found a wasteland: "Over the distant horizon loomed the deforested hills of Judaea. The bare slopes and the bleak, rocky valleys showed few traces of present or former cultivation" (42). They "hurried away from Jaffa, and went up to Jerusalem on the miserable railway. "If this is our land," remarked Friedrich sadly, "it has declined like our people." (43).

In the beginning, the Jewish immigrant who came from Europe was more authentically westernized, due to the experience of living in the West for centuries. For the new immigrant, Europe was the area of civilization, the home country from which s/he emigrated, and whose ways they had rejected in favor of the wilderness of Palestine. On the new frontier, the process of transformation took place, and the European Jew became the native son of the New Society. In the new immigrant community: "The words of Solomon glowed with a new vitality: The Lord hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. I have surely built. Thee a house of habitation, a place for Thee to dwell in forever" (187). After the interaction with the landscape of Palestine, the Jews were metamorphosed into Zionists deeply rooted in Palestinian soil. Even the German lord, Kingscourt, was impacted by his experience on the new frontier. The narrator "swore that he [Kingscourt] a Christian German nobleman, was becoming thoroughly »judaized« (171).

Unequivocally, the new frontier experience had begun with an escape from anti-Semitism and a search for the promised land³ but ended in a discovery of culture and lost identity. Restoring the ancient land of Palestine became synonymous with a search for values, history, and traditions. The first Jewish immigrants saw in Palestine an opportunity to regenerate their religious faith, their spirits, and the power of the Temple of Solomon. When Kingscourt and Friedrich approach “the Valley of Jehoshaphat” near Jerusalem, Friedrich became emotional: “I thought it was just something in the Bible. Here our Lord and Savior walked. »Jerusalem!« cried Friedrich in a half-whisper, his voice trembling. He did not understand why the sight of this strange city affected him so powerfully. Was it the memory of words heard in early childhood? Memories of Seder services of long-forgotten years stirred in him. One of the few Hebrew phrases he still knew rang in his ears: »Leshana Ha-baa be-Yerushalayim,«-«Next Year in Jerusalem!« (42). In the New Society, the Jews looked different simply because they were no longer ashamed of being Jews: “It was not only beggars and derelicts and relief applicants who professed Judaism in a suspiciously one-sided solidarity. No! The strong, the free, the successful Jews had returned home, and received more than they gave” (187). The narrator proceeds: “Other nations were still grateful to them when they produced some great thing; but the Jewish people asked nothing of its sons except not to be denied. The world is grateful to every great man when he brings it something; only the paternal home thanks the son who brings nothing but himself” (188).

JEWISH IMMIGRANTS ON THE PALESTINIAN FRONTIER

The story of Zionism started with the foundation of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine⁴. The journey of the European Jews eastward to settle on the Palestinian frontier and establish the state of Israel has been considered as an integral part of Jewish culture and history. In *Altneuland*, the Palestinian frontier, since its inception in the late nineteenth-century, has been associated with the development and civilization brought by European Jewish immigrants to Palestine. The new frontier has the capacity to liquidize divisions, smash separate identities and forge them into one. Interaction with the frontier creates a way of life that is authentically Jewish. Attending a musical composition, “Sabbatai levi” at the opera in Palestine,

3 Like Herzl, Chaim Weizmann argues that “there is a country which happens to be called Palestine, a country without a people, and, on the other hand, there exists the Jewish people, and it has no country” (cited in Eisenzweig, p. 282).

4 In *The Jewish State*, Herzl argues that he attempted to gain the approval of Sultan Abdul-Hamid to grant Palestine to the Jews in return for regulating “the whole finance of Turkey” (*The Jewish State* 30) but His Majesty rejected the offer saying to Herzl’s messenger: “Let the Jews save their billions. When my empire is partitioned, they might get Palestine for nothing” (*The Jewish State* 78).

Friedrich listened to the music and meditated on the thoughts it inspired, the significance of the Temple flashed upon him: "In the days of King Solomon, it had been a gorgeous symbol, adorned with gold and precious stones, attesting to the might and the pride of Israel. In the taste of those days, it had been decorated with costly bronze, and paneled with olive, cedar, and cypress—a joy to the eye of the beholder", however, the Jews could not have been grieving for it for *eighteen centuries*. Surely, they could not have been spending all this time mourning for a mere piece of ruined masonry. But, in the text, the Jews "sighed for an invisible something of which the stones had been a symbol. It had come back to rest in the rebuilt Temple, where stood the home returning sons of Israel who lifted up their souls to the invisible God as their fathers had done upon Mount Moriah" (189).

The Palestinian frontier witnessed the transformation of Friedrich, the European immigrant, who told his German friend in the beginning of the narrative "I have no connection with Palestine. I have never been there. It does not interest me. My ancestors left it eighteen hundred years ago. What should I seek there? I think that only anti-Semites can call Palestine our fatherland« (39). In the opera, Friedrich, who was brought up in the Jewish Ghettoes of Europe became aware of Jewish history. He realized that the Sabbatai Zevi "was a false messiah who appeared in Turkey in the seventeenth century. He succeeded in creating a large movement among the Oriental Jews, but in the end he himself became a renegade from Judaism and ended ignominiously« (97). Apparently, the Palestinian frontier experience played a significant role in purging the Jewish consciousness from European impacts transforming it into a new Zionist identity. It was the frontier spirit of adventure that liberated the Jewish genius from the dead land of the past. The new frontier was dynamic as it shifted with time and socio-economic desiderata. Moreover, the Zionist immigrants placed Palestine on the map of the modern, civilized world: "The great European express lines all connect with the Jerusalem line, just as the Palestinian railways in turn link up with Egypt and Northern Africa. The north-to south African railway (in which the German emperor was interested as long ago as the 1890's) and the Siberian railway to the Chinese border, complete the railway system of the Old World" (77).

It was the frontier experience which allowed the immigrants to overcome the trauma of persecution in Europe and transcend other cultural complexes. On the geographical frontier, Jews descending from different cultures meet and interact with other races—Arabs, Orientals, and Greeks. The new Palestinian frontier was thronged with people from all parts of the world: "Brilliant Oriental robes mingled with the sober costumes of the Occident, but the latter predominated. There were many Chinese, Persians, and Arabs in the streets, but the city itself seemed thoroughly European. One might easily imagine himself in some Italian port. The brilliant blue of sky and sea was reminiscent of the Riviera, but the buildings were

much cleaner and more modern. The traffic, though lively, was far less noisy” (59). The frontier interface becomes a hybridizing zone, the crucible and the catalyst which brings to a glorious mixture both settler and native, colonizer and colonized who attribute to form the national character of The New Society which is constructed on European values of tolerance and ethics of volunteering.

According to David Littwak, “All members of the New Society, men and women alike, are obligated to give two years to the service of the community. The usual thing is to give the two years between eighteen and twenty-after completing their studies. (I want to add, by the way, that education is free to the children of our members from the kindergarten through the university” (74). David points out that in the New Society “The men in the employ of the New Society worked only several hours a day, but they concentrated all their strength into those seven hours. They laid roads, dug canals, built houses, cleared stones from the fields that were to be plowed with electric plows, planted trees” (165). He affirms the Utopian vision of an emerging state built by Zionist immigrants in Palestine: “We are merely a society of citizens seeking to enjoy life through work and culture” (75). In the New Society, poverty is abolished and the bread of the poor is as cheap as the bread of the rich. In a pre-Zionist Palestine, the landlords used to exploit hundreds of thousands of people who work in the field of agriculture but the New Society liberated the poor Arabs from these inherited burdens.

In a post-Zionist Palestine, the New Society achieved numerous contributions in the area of agriculture, where “vegetables are shipped to all parts of Europe-to Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and St. Petersburg-by rail” (111). In their tour across the country, Kingscourt told Friedrich reached the extensive plain, which was thickly sown with wheat and oats, maize and hops, poppies and tobacco. There were trim villages and farmsteads in the valley and on the hillsides. Cows and sheep grazed ruminating in succulent meadows. Here and there great iron farm machines gleamed in the sunshine. The whole landscape was peaceful and joyous (121). During their first excursion in Palestine, Kingscourt and Friedrich visited the agricultural communities established by the early Jewish immigrants who came from Russia to Palestine. They were told that »the colonization movement began after the persecutions in Russia in the early 1880's. But, there are villages more remarkable than ours. There's Katrah, for instance, founded by university students who forsook their books for the plow.« (47).

Thanks to the efforts of the Jewish immigrants, huge industrial projects were implemented on the frontier. Near larger towns such as Tiberias, “industrial activities predominate and the farming is more or less incidental”. In the coastal zone, “which is very much like the Riviera, they grow (as in the vicinity of Nice) tomatoes, artichokes, melons..... etc.” (111). In terms of the establishment of mega-projects, a Zionist engineer called Fischer introduced his plans for his greatest

work: the canal from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea in which he utilized the difference in levels very cleverly (150). Furthermore, the Zionist modernizing project takes gigantic proportions in terms of the construction of a trans-continental railway system. The narrator illustrates: We made sure of a coast-line railway southward from Jaffa to Port Said and northward to Beirut, via Caesarea, Haifa, Tyre and Sidon, with a junction at Damascus. After that came the new line to Jerusalem; the Jordan Valley trunk line with spurs to the east and one to the west to Lake Kinneret; the Lebanon lines (151).

The New Society not only achieved industrial progress where “under our streets, tunnels have been provided for the reception of all kinds of pipes and cables” (87) but also utilized economic, industrial and agricultural sciences to enhance the prosperity of the Jewish population and serve the interests of the local natives: “The whole merit of our New Society is merely that it fostered the creation and development of the co-operatives by providing credits, and—what was even more important—by educating the masses to make use of them” (81). The co-operative method has become one of the strongest motives pushing toward the development and prosperity of the New Society. The New Society also advocated the co-operative method which serves the interests of the working class and the poor native community. Davis states: “I see in the New Society nothing but a syndicate of co-operative societies, a large syndicate which comprises all industry and commerce within itself, keeps the welfare of the workers in mind, and fosters the ideal for practical reasons” (220). He adds: »We are simply a large co-operative association composed of affiliated co-operatives. And this, our congress, is really nothing more than the general assembly of the co-operative association which is called the New Society” (215).

The advance of the Palestinian frontier has been synonymous with the growing stature, power and moral profundity of the Zionist immigrants. It was the frontier experience which brought prosperity and civilization to a pre-historic country. Unlike a pre-Zionist Palestine where there was no medical service, the New Society provides “medical aid to the sick, and finds work for the well” and “the various hospitals are connected with the charity headquarters by telephone” (73). Dr. Sascha, the Russian Jewish immigrant describes the medical achievements in the New Society: “When we come to Jerusalem large numbers of people, gentlemen, have had their eyesight saved or restored there. You can imagine what a benefaction that clinic is for the Orient. People come to it from all over Northern Africa and Asia. The blessings bestowed by our medical institutions have won us more friends in Palestine and the neighboring countries than all our industrial and technical progress» (105).

Explicitly, the Zionist achievements on the Palestinian frontier transformed a primitive land into a civilized country which becomes at the center of world tourism industry: “In the meantime, the tourist manager reserved accommodations for five hundred guests at first-class hotels in Italy, Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece,

and provided them with tickets on the Italian railways (they were to embark either at Naples or at Genoa, as they chose). Outwardly, the expedition resembled the pleasure tours of the Near East” (161). In addition to the contributions in the sphere of tourism, the New Society made progress in the political domain: “Candidates announce their desire to stand for election in the newspapers themselves. Each subscription slip has a coupon attached which serves as a ballot” (83). Unlike surrounding Arab countries governed by dictatorial regimes where personal liberties are confiscated, the New Society embraced the freedom of the press: “Newspapers founded and conducted by private individuals” (84). Nevertheless, in the democratic Utopia of the New Society, there are evil people with radical views who push toward the establishment of a purely Zionist state. One of them is Rabbi Dr. Geyer, who will pose as the rival of David Littwak in the presidential elections.

The Palestinian frontier enabled David to achieve the Zionist dream. David, who descends from the poorest Jewish classes in Vienna, is nominated to compete in the presidential elections in the New Society. Due to the potential provided by the new frontier, David becomes a member of the well-to-do class, an owner of a ship and a multi-national company. His family members were among the first immigrants who were swept along with the general tide of prosperity after they settled in Tiberias where they used to celebrate Jewish rituals such as “the Seder”. By the end of the narrative, David will be elected as the president of the New Society. In *Altneuland*, Herzl states that on the new frontier “the penniless young intelligentsia, for whom there were no opportunities in the anti-Semitic countries and who sank to the level of a hopeless, revolutionary-minded proletariat, these desperate, educated young men had become a great blessing for Palestine, for they had brought the latest methods of applied science into the country” (117).

Throughout *Altneuland*, using the perspective of David Littwak, one of its central characters, Herzl delineates Palestine as a new frontier invaded by enthusiastic Jewish settlers “who streamed into the country, had brought with them the experience of the whole civilized world. The trained men graduated from universities, technical, agricultural and commercial colleges had brought with them every type of skill required for building up the country” (118). Throughout the novel, Herzl confirms his view that Palestine is originally a Jewish land restored by Zionists. One of the immigrant Russian farmers at the Zionist colony of Neudorf emphasized: “It was always known that we Jews are a people, and that Palestine is the land of our ancestors” (126). Apparently, Herzl’s motto “land without people for a people without land”⁵ (Goldman 1955: 6) attempts to justify the immigration

5 Herzl summarized the Jewish question as follows: There is a people without a country (the Jews) and there is a country without a people (Palestine) and the Jewish problem could be solved by transporting “the landless people into the un-peopled land”.

of European Jews to Palestine on the basis of their lack to a homeland and the discrimination and persecution they suffered in Europe.

HERZL'S UTOPIA AND THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE ZIONIST DREAM

The events of the novel start in a Jewish suburb in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth-century. The readers are introduced to Dr. Friedrich Loewenberg, an educated young Jew who had a doctorate in law but like other European Jews did not find a job due to dominant anti-Semitic sentiments sweeping the European continent. Sunk in deep melancholy, he "sat at a round marble table in one of the most charming of Viennese cafes" where he remembers one of his Jewish friends, Oswald, who "went to Brazil to help in founding a Jewish labor settlement" (5) but he died there after catching yellow fever. Friedrich also lamented the current conditions of the unemployed Jewish "physicians, newly baked jurists, freshly graduated engineers" who "had completed their professional studies, and now they had nothing to do" (6). Friedrich also suffers from feelings of frustration and disappointment because he fails to marry a rich girl who belongs to the upper class: "If I were to ask Ernestine Loeffler's father for her hand, he would probably laugh at me. I am a mere lawyer's assistant, with a salary of forty gulden a month" (8).

The opening part of the novel overflows with references to European Jewish characters who are divided into three categories: well-established rich Jews who work in commercial and industrial activities, middle class Jews equipped with skills and academic degrees but are unemployed, and also a poor class, the inhabitants of the Jewish ghettos and slums. The reader confronts characters such as Mr. Leopold Weinberger, member of the firm of Samuel Weinberger and Sons of Bruenn and Mr. Laschner, one of the most important men on the stock exchange as well as Gruen and Blau, the two wittiest men in Vienna. Other Jewish figures such as Mr. Schlesinger, the representative of Baron Goldstein, the renowned banker, appeared in the opening part of the novel. The narrative also refers to, Mr. and Mrs. Loeffler, Mr. Weinberger, Mrs. Laschner, Dr. Walter, a lawyer, and Dr. Weiss, a rabbi from a provincial town in Moravia who refers to Zionism early in the novel as a political system aiming to rescue European Jews from persecution⁶: »A new movement has arisen within the last few years, which is called Zionism. Its aim is to solve the Jewish problem through colonization on a large scale. All who can no longer bear their present lot will return to our old home, to Palestine« (16).

6 Herzl summarized the Jewish question as follows: There is a people without a country (the Jews) and there is a country without a people (Palestine) and the Jewish problem could be solved by transporting "the landless people into the un-peopled land".

The reader is also introduced to the poor Jewish family of Hayim Littwak, the peddler, his wife, Rebecca, his daughter Miriam and his ambitious son David who will play a key role in the immigrant Jewish community in Palestine. Occasionally, According to the incidents of *Altneuland*, Friedrich occasionally provides financial assistance to the impoverished family of the Littwaks, who live in abject poverty in the Jewish Ghetto of Vienna. The Littwaks escaped from Eastern Europe to settle in an impoverished ghetto in Vienna. The narrator describes the first visit of Friedrich to this miserable Jewish family: The Littwaks' one-windowed room, too, was in darkness, though the woman was awake and sitting upright on her straw pallet. Friedrich noticed that the narrow room contained no stick of furniture whatever. Not a chair, table, or cupboard. On the window sill were a few small bottles and some broken pots. It was a picture of deepest poverty. A whimpering baby lay at the woman's flabby breast. The mother stared at him anxiously out of her hollow eyes (25). During the visit, Young David told Friedrich about his dream of immigrating and settling in Palestine: "I shall go to the Land of Israel with my parents and Miriam. That is our country. There we can be happy« (27).

The action of the novel moves forward and Schiffmann, one of Friedrich's Jewish friends, showed him an advertisement in a paper made by a German nobleman, Mr. Kingscourt. The German millionaire made his fortune in America, bought an island in the pacific and he is looking for "an educated, desperate young man willing to make a last experiment with his life". The rich German seeks a partner to accompany him in his Journey to stay in a remote island in the South Pacific, "a rocky little nest in Cook's Archipelago". He wants to live in isolation from human beings after his wife betrayed him by involving herself in an illicit sexual affair with his nephew. Friedrich met with Kingscourt and accepted the challenge. They sailed in Kingscourt's amazing yacht in their journey to the deserted island: "The yacht was rolling on the waters of Trieste harbor. The two men made their final purchases for the long journey in the town" (37). Near the island of Crete, Kingscourt told Friedrich: »Your fatherland lies ahead of us -Palestine« and encouraged him to visit Palestine before he "says farewell to the world". In the beginning, Friedrich was hesitant: "I have no connection with Palestine. I have never been there. It does not interest me. My ancestors left it eighteen hundred years ago" (39). Succumbing to the persuasion of Kingscourt and remembering David Littwak's emphatic statement about his intention to stay in his fatherland, Friedrich accepts to make an excursion in Palestine.

From the very beginning of the text, Palestine is depicted as a Jewish territory, the fatherland of Friedrich and David Littwak: "The prow of the yacht was turned toward Jaffa. Kingscourt and Friedrich spent several days in the old land of the Jews" (Herzl 1941:41). The two men were appalled by the backwardness and miserable conditions of the holy land. They spent few days visiting major Palestinian

cities including Jerusalem, then, they resumed their journey to the South Pacific island where they would stay for twenty-one years. Afterwards, Kingscourt and Friedrich decided to return to Europe. On their way back to Europe, they stopped at the harbor of Jaffa for the second time and decided to make a tour across the holy land. This time, they found a completely different Palestine populated by immigrating European Jews and Zionists who came from different European countries bringing civilization and advancement to a decadent country. The rest of the narrative strikingly displays the wide differences between the primitiveness of a pre-Zionist Palestine and the ultra-civilized Palestine in the post-Zionist era. Stunned by the civilized modernity of the Zionist Utopian state in Palestine, which was established in twenty-one years by Jewish pioneers, Kingscourt and Friedrich decided to join what Herzl calls "the New Society".

When the first European settlers -Kingscourt and Friedrich- arrived in a pre-Zionist Jaffa, they were appalled by the repulsive scenes of the dirty city and its rough people: "Jaffa made a very unpleasant impression upon them. The town was in a state of extreme decay. Landing was difficult in the forsaken harbor. The alleys were dirty and neglected, full of vile odors" (41). In *Altneuland*, the native inhabitants of the country constitute a primitive minority of backward folks: "Everywhere misery in bright Oriental rags. Poor Turks, dirty Arabs lounged about-indolent, beggarly and hopeless. A peculiar, tomblike odor of mold caught one's breath"(42). Moving from the city of Jaffa to Jerusalem, the visitors-Kingscourt and Friedrich- were shocked by the deterioration of the holy city: "They hurried away from Jaffa, and went up to Jerusalem on the miserable railway. "If this is our land," remarked Friedrich sadly, "it has declined like our people." (43). On the way leading to the city of Jerusalem Friedrich and Kingscourt were thunderstruck by the dirty appearance of the natives: "The inhabitants of the blackish Arab villages looked like brigands. Naked children played in the dirty alleys" (42). In Jerusalem, they were upset by the inhospitable spectacle of the ancient city: "Jerusalem by daylight was less alluring-shouting, odors, a flurry of dirty colors, crowds of ragged people in narrow, musty lanes, beggars, sick people, hungry children, screeching women, shouting tradesmen. The once royal city of Jerusalem could have sunk no lower (43).

Herzl's narrative indicates that the Zionist immigrants are ordained by God to create an idealistic society on the land which witnessed "the miracles of Moses". The narrative refers to the moral responsibility of the Zionist immigrants to bring civilization to the primitive land of Palestine. According to Herzl's novel, the colonized Palestinians gained benefits from the process of colonization because the colonizers came to civilize a wasteland country. The native Palestinians, according to Herzl's narrative, lived in a country inhabited by other Oriental races in addition to the Greeks. When Prince Hohenlohe, Imperial Chancellor of Prussia,

asked Herzl who dwells on the lands that Herzl intended to purchase in Palestine, Herzl responded, "Oh, the whole mixed multitude of the Orient, Arabs, Greeks" (Eisenzweig 1981: 281). When the first Europeans -Friedrich and Kingscourt-arrived in Palestine, they found a wasteland: "Over the distant horizon loomed the deforested hills of Judaea. The bare slopes and the bleak, rocky valleys showed few traces of present or former cultivation" (42).

The first wave of settlers who immigrated to Palestine came from Russia. The frontier of settlement proceeded in different directions and the expanding frontier was the line of the most rapid and effective Judaizing process of Palestine. During their visit to Jerusalem, Kingscourt and Friedrich met with one of the Zionist pioneers, who migrated from Russia. They met with him near the Wailing Wall: "Besides the praying beggars and the guides, there was present a gentleman in European clothing, who turned and spoke to them (44). After talking with him about the deterioration of the Jewish people in Diaspora, he replies: "If you ever come to us in Russia, you will realize that a Jewish nation still exists. We have a living tradition, a love of the past, and faith in the future. The best and most cultured men among us have remained true to Judaism as a nation" (45). The stranger is the Russian oculist, Dr. Eichenstamm, who came to Palestine with his daughter, Dr. Sascha, to provide eye treatment to the Russian Jews who newly immigrated to Palestine: "We are not here solely for pleasure, gentlemen. We are interested in eye diseases (46).

Sasha suggested that Kingscourt and Friedrich should visit the colonies established by the newly immigrant Jews in Palestine: »Our Jewish settlements, they are the most remarkable phenomenon in modern Jewish life" (45). Then, Sasha proceeds: "Societies in Europe and America, the so-called 'Lovers of Zion,' promote the transformation of Jews into farmers in this old land of ours. A number of such Jewish villages already exist. Several rich philanthropists have also contributed funds for the purpose. Our old soil is productive again. You must visit the Jewish villages before you leave Palestine« (46).

When Friedrich and Kingscourt reached the Jewish settlements, Eichenstamm told them that the colonization movement began in Palestine after the persecutions of the Jews in Russia⁷ in the early 1880's. Approaching the colonies, "they looked at Rishon-le-Zion, Rehobot, and other villages that lay like oases in the desolate countryside. Many industrious hands must have worked here to restore fertility to the soil, they realized, as they gazed upon well-cultivated fields,

7 By 1899, and during Sultan Abdul-Hamid's reign, nine Zionist settlements were already established in Palestine. These settlements helped to accommodate thousands of Russian Jews who escaped to Palestine as a result of their persecution in Russia after being accused of "the assassination of the Tsar Alexander the Second of Russia in 1882" according to the Zionist thinker Menachem Ussishkin (cited in Al-Swafiri p. 178).

stately vineyards and luxuriant orange groves.” (47). In the aftermath of their visit to the Jewish colonies in Palestine, the European visitors returned to the yacht in the harbor of Jaffa. They sailed toward Port Said in Egypt, where they anchored for a couple of days, then they crossed the Suez Canal and entered the Red Sea waters in December 1902 navigating their way toward the remote island in the South Pacific.

After spending twenty-one years on the South Pacific Island, the two friends—Friedrich and Kingscourt—decided to return to Europe. On their way back home, Kingscourt encouraged Friedrich to take a look at the lands of his “blessed ancestors”. They crossed the *Mediterranean*, and disembarked at Port Said but this time they found that people no longer travel to Asia via the Suez Canal. In Port Said, an Egyptian city located on the banks of the Suez Canal “the shabby bazaars no longer swarmed with the vivid, multicolored, polyglot pageant that had once been typical of the town. The most fashionable globe-trotters had been accustomed to pass through Port Said; but now, except for the natives, only a few half-drunken sailors lounged before the dirty cafes” (53). Friedrich and Kingscourt were told that travelers to Asia preferred to use Palestinian harbors rather than the Suez Canal. At the harbor of Port Said, Kingscourt and Friedrich “learned from the captain of a German trading vessel that traffic between Europe and Asia had taken a new route—via Palestine” (54). They told the German captain that twenty years ago Palestine was a forsaken country. The captain explains: “You’ll find fast boats to all the European and American ports at Haifa and Jaffa» (55).

THE IMAGE OF POST-ZIONIST PALESTINE

In a pre-Zionist Palestine, Jaffa was a dirty city, but in the aftermath of the Jewish/Zionist immigration to Palestine, the city was transformed into a modernized commercial hub: “A magnificent city had been built beside the sapphire blue Mediterranean. The magnificent stone dams showed the harbor for what it was: the safest and most convenient port in the eastern Mediterranean” (57). Arriving at the Jaffa harbor, they found “great ships, such as were already known at the end of the nineteenth century, lay anchored in the roadstead between Acco and the foot of the Carmel” (56). Instead of the cottages and dirty slums inhabited by the local population in the pre-Zionist era, “thousands of white villas gleamed out of luxuriant green gardens all the way from Acco to Mount Carmel”. The inhabitants of these villas are well-dressed and civilized European immigrants.

At the harbor of Jaffa, Kingscourt and Friedrich met with David Littwak, the poor Jew Friedrich has known at the Cafe Birkenreis of Vienna in the beginning of the narrative. David once more thanks Friedrich for the generous help which

saved his family from starvation more than twenty years ago. David has immigrated to Palestine and was able to achieve the Zionist dream in the land of the ancestors. Now he is a businessman and a ship owner. As their guide, David told Kingscourt and Friedrich that Jaffa housed colonial banks and the branch offices of European shipping companies. Jaffa which was a pre-historic city prior to Zionist immigration was transformed into a modern metropolis: "There were many Chinese, Persians and Arabs in the streets, but the city itself seemed thoroughly European. One might easily imagine himself in some Italian port" (59). In the post-Zionist era, the city is characterized by "the absence of draught animals from the streets. There was no hoof beat of horses, no crackling of whips, no rumbling of wheels". The European Jewish immigrants brought civilization to the city: "automobiles speeded noiselessly by on rubber tires, with only occasional toots of warning" in addition to "an electric overhead train" (60).

David took the guests -Kingscourt and Friedrich- in a tour around the Jaffa city in his luxurious car led by his driver, Friedrichsheim, a Jew originally from Vienna. David explained to the guests that Jewish immigration to Palestine was an inevitable historical process: "At the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, life was made intolerable for us Jews« (62). Palestine provided the only safe refuge for Jews persecuted by European anti-Semitism: "The persecutions were social and economic. Jewish merchants were boycotted, Jewish workingmen starved out. Jew-hatred employed its newest as well as its oldest devices. The blood myth was revived" (63). David introduced other examples of Jewish hatred in Europe: The Jews were accused of poisoning the press, as in the Middle Ages, they had been accused of poisoning the wells. As workingmen, the Jews were hated by their Christian fellows for undercutting the wage standards. As business men, they were dubbed profiteers. They were forced out of government posts. The law courts were prejudiced against them. They were humiliated everywhere in civil life (64).

The only solution for the Jewish dilemma in Europe was provided by the Zionists who advocated immigration to the land of their ancestors. Eventually, "the Jewish immigration took place in the full light of day" (94). In Palestine, the early immigrants, according to David, decided to set up a "New Society on our precious old soil" (63). Herzl, in *Altneuland*, depicts a multi-cultural and religiously tolerant Utopian society constructed on the European models. David Littwak points out that in the New Society "we punish only those crimes and misdemeanors which were penalized in enlightened European states. Nothing is forbidden here that was not forbidden there" (92). Using David as a mouthpiece, Herzl explains: "The fundamental principles of humanitarianism are generally accepted among us. As far as religion goes, you will find Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and Brahmin houses of worship near our own synagogues" (64). In a similar context,

David raises the issue of the holy shrines in Palestine during a talk with his European guests: "With the advent of Zionism at the end of the nineteenth century, the problem of the Holy Places came up. The Christian Holy Places have been held by non-Christians from time immemorial. Geoffrey of Bouillon and his knights grieved because Palestine was held by the Moslems". However, the Zionists, unlike the Muslims, prefer to detain the Christian Shrines in Palestine permanently as the common possession of Christendom. When you visit Nazareth or Jerusalem or Bethlehem you will see peaceful processions of pilgrims of all the nations" (121).

In the post-Zionist era, "Palestine has the same comforts as in the European large cities" (97). In the emerging Jewish state, the Arabs enjoy many benefits. Reschid Bey, a member of the New Society is introduced to Kingscourt and Friedrich as "a handsome man of thirty-five. He wore dark European clothing and a red fez. His salute to them was the Oriental gesture, which signifies lifting and kissing the dust" (65). He was educated in Germany and "his father was among the first to understand the beneficent character of the Jewish immigration". Reschid became rich because he kept pace with the economic progress of the emerging Zionist state. When Kingscourt asked Reschid about the attitudes of the former inhabitants, the numerous Moslem Arabs, toward the Zionist settlers who occupied their native land, he replied: Those who had nothing stood to lose nothing, and could only gain. And they did gain: Opportunities to work, means of livelihood, prosperity. Nothing could have been more wretched than an Arab village at the end of the nineteenth century. The peasants' clay hovels were unfit for stables. The children lay naked and neglected in the streets, and grew up like dumb beasts (114).

As a result of the Zionist immigration to Palestine, the barren land which was neglected for centuries by the Arabs and Turks was metamorphosed into a civilized community and thriving Jewish settlements. According to Reschid's narrative, the Arab Palestinians should be grateful to the Zionist settlers who turned the swamps and bare hills of Palestine into paradise transforming the Palestinian wasteland into a modern Utopia called the New Society. In a post-Zionist Palestine, modernized villages were constructed by immigrants. These villages "are scattered all over our prosperous land. Up yonder, in the Valley of Jezreel, for example, you must not expect to see the filthy nests that used to be called villages in Palestine (111).

When Kingscourt asked Reschid: "You Moslems. Don't you regard these Jews as intruders?", the latter responded: would you call a man a robber who takes nothing from you, but brings you something instead? The Jews have enriched us. Why should we be angry with them? They dwell among us like brothers. Why should we not love them? I have never had a better friend among my co-religionists than

David Littwak (115). Further, the Jewish immigrants are portrayed by Reschid as wise folks who used to “judge between the Arabs” at times of Arab-Arab hostilities: We Moslems have always had better relations with the Jews than you Christians. When the first Jewish colonists settled here half a century ago, Arabs went to the Jews to judge between them, and often asked the Jewish village councils for help and advice. There was no difficulty in that respect (116).

CONCLUSION

In colonial American literature, the colonizers justified colonization on the basis of a series of colonial myths such the Manifest Destiny myth, the cannibalistic/man-eating myth and the savagery-civilization equation. In *Altneuland*, Herzl ignores most of the mythology which provides justifications for the process of colonization. There are more than fifty passages in the old Testament which all refer to promises of the holy land. God had promised the Jews Canaan as their “ever-lasting covenant”: “To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion you will inherit” (Psalm 105:1as 1, Cited in Gohar, 2001, p. 92). In the first book of Genesis, God appeared to Abraham and said to him: ‘Look around from where you are, to the north and south, to the east and west. All the land that you see I will give to you and your offspring forever. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you’. (Genesis 13:14-17, Cited in Gohar, 2001, p.39). However, Herzl’s Zionist project on the Palestinian frontier is not motivated by radical religious doctrines. It is not based on the sacredness of the Jews, or the holiness of the land or the divinity of the Torah. His project does not connote any messianic vision par excellence. While the idea of establishing a bi-national state in Palestine is apparent in Herzl’s novel, it becomes an impossibility in other Zionist narratives⁸. Writers such as Leon Uris for example did not want to make any compromise between the Arabs and the Jews but he insisted on a policy of power and strength. In *The Haj*, he depicted the Jews as the majority of population and consequently the ruling class unwilling to enter into negotiations and compromises with the Arabs⁹.

Herzl’s Zionist project primarily aims to find a solution for the European Jews jeopardized by the threats of genocide and anti-Semitism. Referring to the Jewish immigrants, who escaped from persecution in Europe, the narrator points out: “They had their own communities in the Ghettoes, to be sure; but there they lived

8 See Saddik Gohar: »Narratives of Colonialism, Race and Ideology in Leon Uris’s *The Haj*. *Studies in Islam and the Middle East* Vol.3.1 (2006): 1-16.

9 See Saddik Gohar: »The Distortion of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Contemporary American Fiction: A Study of *the Haj*«. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies* Vol. 8 (2007): 31-48.

under oppression. In the Judengasse, they had been without honor and without rights; and when they left it, they ceased to be Jews. Freedom and a sense of solidarity were both needed. Only then could the Jews erect a House to the Almighty God Whom children envision thus and wise men so, but who is everywhere present as the Will-to-Good” (189). Therefore, the frontier is a shaping force underpinning the social, cultural, moral, economic and political norms that provided a basis for the Jewish immigration to the land of the forefathers. On the frontier, the Diaspora Jews regained their history and cultural identity: “Jews had prayed in many temples, splendid and simple, in all the languages of the Diaspora. The invisible God, the Omnipresent, must have been equally near to them everywhere. Yet only here was the true Temple because only here had the Jews built up a free commonwealth in which they could strive for the loftiest human aims” (187).

The policy of the Zionist pioneers who came to modernize Palestine is not shaped by extreme religious ideologies or ethnic doctrines. They were triggered by the spirit of pragmatism and optimism cherished by the immigrants who escape from annihilation. In part one of the narrative, Kingscourt told Friedrich: Everything needful for the making of a better world exists already. And do you know, man, who could show the way? You! You Jews! Just because you're so badly off. You've nothing to lose. You could make the experimental land for humanity. Over yonder, where we were, you could create a new commonwealth. On that ancient soil, Old-New-Land! (50). In *Altneuland*, Herzl did not push vehemently for the colonization and settlement of Palestine but he was seeking for a safe asylum for the persecuted European Jews. He was convinced that the return of the Jews to their native land is necessary and desirable.

Nevertheless, Herzl was more convinced that the creation of settlement societies and the support of the working class to establish a complex of agricultural colonies were both a dream and moral duty toward the immigrants and the native community. Unlike radical colonial narratives which exclude the colonized natives, *Altneuland* assimilates the Arab population into the New Society. The Muslim Arab community, represented by Reschid Bey's family played a crucial role in The New Society. Reschid Bey, the Palestinian and his wife, Fatma are members of the New Zionist Society. Reschid plays an important role in internal politics and he was a vehement supporter of David Littwak during the presidential elections.

In western colonial narratives, eliminating the colonized subaltern is crucial for the fulfillment of the process of colonization¹⁰. Though slightly affected by Biblical promises and religious mythology about the Promised Land, Herzl's

10 See Saddik Gohar: “The Palestinian Question in *the Haj*”. *Tanta Faculty of Arts Journal* (January - 1995): 73-114.

Zionist project did not follow the policies of European colonialism par excellence. Throughout the text, Herzl refers to the establishment of a society rather than an independent Jewish state. David Littwak told Kingscourt: "Nothing on earth is perfect, not even our New Society. We have no state, like the Europeans of your time" (75). This approach was rejected by militant Zionists¹¹ who rejected Herzl's narrative on the basis that it propagates for a multi-national society rather than a purely Jewish state. In *Altneuland*, Herzl does not consider the founding of Israel as part of a holy plan or a salvation process which includes the occupation and settlement of all Eretz Israel. While western colonization is forced by brutal military force, the emerging immigrant community in Palestine does not have an army or any similar repressive apparatus. Unlike European imperialist policies in overseas colonies which endorsed genocidal campaigns against native populations, Herzl's project does not aim to uproot the indigenous Palestinians or remove them out of their land but he wants to integrate them in the New Society. In this context, *Altneuland*, unlike colonial texts, does not introduce what Jean-Francoise Lyotard calls "grand narrative" (Lyotard 1979:23) simply because it is not shaped by radical political perspectives or extreme Zionist agendas.

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V iskanju sionističnega sna na palestinski meji: kritičen pristop k Herzlovemu romanu *Altneuland*

Članek kritično obravnava kanonični sionistični roman Theodora Herzla, *Altneuland / Old New Land* kot narativ o meji, saj predstavlja process judovskega priseljevanja v Palestino kot neizbežen zgodovinski process, ki poskuša rešiti evropske Žide pred preganjanjem in vzpostaviti večnacionalno utopijo na palestinskem ozemlju, kot egalitarno in kozmopolit-sko skupnost Judov, Arabcev in drugih skupnosti.

Ključne besede: sionizem, meja, priseljevanje, Palestina, Narativ, judovska zgodovina, kolonizacija.