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Hannah Boast

The recent growth of postcolonial ecocriticism has done much to dispel Rob Nixon's concern in the 1990s that 'literary environmentalism was developing, de facto, as an offshoot of American studies' (2011: 235). However, many key writers in postcolonial ecocriticism – notably Ken Saro-Wiwa, Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy, discussed by critics including Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin (2010) - are already canonical within postcolonial studies. The discovery of ecocriticism at the heart of postcolonialism allows new readings of well-studied texts and strengthens the academic legitimacy that ecocriticism has struggled to establish given its activist origins. However, the suspicion that the postcolonial canon is simply being 'translated' into an ecocritical mode is hard to avoid when shortcomings of postcolonial studies have also been reproduced.One shared blind spot is the absence of Israeli and Palestinian writing from postcolonial ecocriticism, mirroring the marginalisation of these literatures within postcolonial studies (Bernard 2010). In this essay I use the example of national imaginaries of nature in Israel/Palestine to draw out the changing environmental dimensions of the conflict, and to stress the potential for postcolonial ecocriticism to move beyond the postcolonial canon. I argue for an ecocriticism that is more closely aligned with geography and environmental history than has so far been the case in a field which remains in the shadow of its formative Heideggerean philosophies of 'dwelling' (Spencer 2010). In doing so, I foreground the need for a dialectical close reading of discursive techniques and the material histories of literary environments.

On the surface, the Israel-Palestine conflict appears to be about a contested partition of land. If this were so then, as Nasser Abufarha suggests, it might be resolved through material redistribution (2008: 343). The conflict is also about the ways in which land is imagined, and the sense of national belonging produced. We might call this intersection between nationalism and nature, with reference to Benedict Anderson's theory of nations as 'imagined communities' (1991), a 'national eco-imaginary'. William Cronon argues in the context of the American West that attributing national significance to nature can suppress alternative national narratives of belonging, becoming a tool of political power (1995: 42). As I discuss, national eco-imaginaries can also lead to the land itself being degraded.

This article explores the history of the Zionist national eco-imaginary in relation to the production of a Judaized landscape in Israel/Palestine over the twentieth century. Landscape will be a central term, as it captures the ways in which nations literally and figuratively construct nature, altering its appearance and investing it with significations; landscape is not an inert fact, but a

'cultural practice' (Mitchell 2002: 1). Creating an Israeli landscape began with the first Zionist settlers in the nineteenth century, but accelerated with the establishment of Israel in 1948 (Tal 2002: 82). The most striking way in which it has taken place is through afforestation by the Israeli environmental organisation *Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael*, the Jewish National Fund (JNF). Intensive planting in Israel/Palestine coincided with the rise of the Western green movement, which tends to see concern for nature as an unproblematic good, transcending politics.[1] In recent years, the JNF has aligned itself with this movement, positioning Israel as an environmental pioneer:

> Israel is the only country in the world that entered the twenty-first century with a net gain in the number of trees. Environmental policies may be fashionable today, but JNF UK has been pursuing them for decades. *JNF UK website*, 2011.

The environmentalist assumption that 'green is good' has obscured the ways in which trees, in Irus Braverman's words, have functioned as 'weapons of war' in Israel/Palestine (2009a: 319). I argue that Israel's apparently neutral planting has played a key role in the conflict, performing both the erasure of Palestine as an Arab space and the naturalisation of Israeli presence.

Scholars from environmental history (Benvenisti 2000), legal geography (Braverman 2009a; 2009b) and biology (Tal 2002) have analysed planting in Israel/Palestine. There has however been little critical response to depictions of forests in Israeli and Palestinian literature, despite the recent growth of ecocriticism. I address this absence by exploring the ways in which a text from the first years of Israel's history and a text published in the early twenty-first century engage with the Israeli national eco-imaginary.

A. B. Yehoshua's short story *Facing the Forests* (*FF*) was written in 1963, fifteen years after the Israeli War of Independence, while *Picnic Grounds* by Oz Shelach (*PG*), self-described as 'a novel in fragments', was published in 2003, and presents a contemporary perspective on attitudes towards nature in Israel. Yehoshua's story is written in the spare, modernist style characteristic of the Israeli authors known as the Generation of the State, which also includes Amos Oz and Aharon Appelfeld, who framed their disillusion with the Zionist project by challenging the realism of pre-1948 nation-building literature (Mintz 1997: 12). In contrast to the linear form of *FF*, *PG* collects together a number of very short 'fragments' which make up a novel, but one that could seemingly be read in any order, containing no overarching narrative or recurring characters. While these aesthetic differences are related to literary shifts in representation, as I discuss later, they also resonate with Israel's changing national eco-imaginary.

The forests in these texts have been interpreted as allegories of a deeper Israeli culture of

denial (Yael Zerubavel 1996: 81), but I argue for a reading which takes their portrayal of nature seriously, as a literal representation of the changing material histories of forests and arboriculture in Israel/Palestine. Comparative analysis of the texts reveals that their forests are not just symbols of false memory, but responses to and critiques of the changing relationship between landscape and Israeli national identity over time. Yehoshua and Shelach share many representational strategies; significantly, both link Palestinians metaphorically to the land, showing that it is impossible to understand the Israel-Palestine conflict without recognising its environmental politics. However, the differences between their texts give the most telling indication of the changes in the Israeli national eco-imaginary over time. I conclude by discussing the recent work of Raja Shehadeh, showing how his writing offers a valuable new paradigm for writing about the Israeli/Palestinian landscape.

To understand the connections between landscape and nationalism in Israel/Palestine, we should first establish a theoretical framework for analysing the role of forests in national eco-imaginaries. Juval Portugali writes that 'nationalism's elementary particles are territory, place and environment [...] in relation to people and their collective memories' (1993: 37). Marked by a community's activity over a long period of time, a landscape embodies national ways of life, and is frequently seen as the source of a national spirit (Smith 1986: 183). The tree features regularly as a symbol of national character, rootedness and permanence: examples are the English oak, the Lebanese cedar and the Japanese cherry blossom. The relation between collective memory and landscape is not simply a process of projection, but can motivate a desire to physically alter the land in order to protect or reproduce parts of national significance (Herb 1999: 23). As Mitchell observes, the power of ideological alterations of an environment is that their appearance as a 'given and inevitable' part of nature conceals their political origin (2002: 2). Landscape 'interpellates' the viewer in relation to this 'givenness' (Mitchell 2002: 2), creating a sense of homeland among members of a nation and producing their presence in the land as a natural fact, while excluding members of other nations from experiencing the same sense of belonging.

The national eco-imaginary becomes a domain of conflict when two nations claim a single area of land on the basis of differing collective memories and significances. In Israel/Palestine, two species of tree have taken on iconic status; the pine for Israel and the olive for Palestine. Since its 1901 inception, the JNF has planted over 240 million trees (JNF UK 2011), mostly pine, most since 1948 (Tal 2002: 77). This has transformed the landscape of Israel/Palestine – only ten percent of its forests today existed before 1948 (Pappe 2006: 225). Reading ideology into afforestation might appear unnecessary when there are environmental and economic reasons for the practice. Small-scale planting was introduced during the British Mandate to prevent soil erosion, while the early JNF harboured hopes of creating a timber industry (Tal 2002: 84-5). Nonetheless, pragmatic

concerns alone cannot explain the uprooting of indigenous Palestinian orange and olive trees that has taken place alongside planting (Braverman 2009b: 15). Neither can they account for the JNF preference for European-looking pine.

The most immediate way in which afforestation serves Israeli state interests is that the materiality of trees allows them to mark strategically-important space as Israeli until permanent ownership markers are built (Cohen 1993: 151). Forests also provide camouflage for military activity (Amir and Rechtman 2006: 43). However, the cultural significance of planting can be traced to the ancient descriptions of Palestine as heavily forested that ground the Zionist eco-imaginary. In the Bible, southern Galilee is called the 'woods of nations' (Tal 2002: 37), while the first century BC historian Josephus described Palestine as a 'blooming garden' with 'fruit trees of all kinds' (Cohen 1993: 41). Two thousand years later, Mark Twain was disappointed to encounter the 'desolate country' of Palestine (1869: 488), and Herzl was surprised to discover upon his only visit that Palestine did not mirror his Austrian homeland (Cohen 1993: 47).

The wadis, deserts and olive groves of Palestine were represented as the result of poor environmental stewardship, not as diverse ecosystems in their own right (Benvenisti 2000: 60), integrated into Palestinian ways of life. Afforestation was part of the process of 'redeeming the land' and recreating Palestine as the mythical Jewish *moledet*, homeland. It also recalls a peculiarly modern colonial discourse, termed 'conservation imperialism' by Ramachandra Guha (1997), in which a claimed superior ecological sensitivity justifies the expropriation of land from its indigenous population. Israel's appropriation of land in the name of nature is mirrored in the attitudes of many biologists, conservation organisations and governments towards what are seen as internationally significant areas of biodiversity and wilderness. Mark Dowie (2009), Zoe Young (2002), and Ramachandra Guha (1997) have recorded the harmful effects on indigenous people of interventions on behalf of the 'global environment', which Guha condemns as 'an ecologically-updated version of the White Man's Burden' (1997: 104). Removing indigenous inhabitants and placing their land into the hands of 'experts' risks erasing local knowledge that is vital to ecosystem management. Israeli forest history illustrates the environmental damage caused by this approach.

In the 1930s, pine was chosen as the tree to 'redeem' the land of Israel/Palestine, specifically *Pinus halepensis*, Aleppo pine. It was believed to be climax fauna for the region (Biger and Liphschitz 2001: 428), a term which, in the theory of succession, describes the plants contained in an ecosystem in its final, stable state. This has since been disputed, not least because the concept of succession has been overhauled (Worster 1994: 393), but because climatic factors and pine's susceptibility to pests have shown it to be unsuited to the Israeli/Palestinian environment; Biger and Liphschitz show that, despite the claims of theologians and mid-century Israeli biologists, pine was

rare in historic Palestine (2001: 428). Problems with pine were discovered as early as 1933, yet pine remained the favoured species until the 1970s and still represents a high percentage of JNF-planted forests (Tal 2002: 85-6). Pines also damaged indigenous ecosystems: fallen needles create a poisonous ground cover that prevents other plants and most animals from surviving, while the process of preparing land for planting - fires, heavy machinery and pesticides – stripped the soil (Tal 2002: 94-5).

The choice of pine represents a stigmatisation of Arab landscapes and an imposition of a 'moral geography' in which Israel/Palestine is redeemed by being produced in the image of a 'civilised' European landscape. Planting forests that conform to the picturesque, a key influence on Western ecological sensibilities (Bate 2000: 138), demonstrates Israel's European-style environmental values, bolstering its claim to being 'culturally, politically and economically', just not 'geographically' part of Europe (Pinhas Sapir, cited in Nissim Rejwan 1999: 96). Erasing the 'Arab-ness' of Israel/Palestine by planting pines also imposes a new historical narrative on the landscape, reinforcing the Zionist idea of Palestine as *terra nullius* prior to Jewish settlement, while naturalising Israel's presence. Interpreting pines as 'planted over the past' becomes compelling when we consider that many Israeli forests and parks cover Palestinian villages destroyed in 1948 (Pappe 2006: 229).

JNF forests feature prominently in *FF* and *PG* and are usually read as symbols of broader Israeli cultural problems. *FF* is set in a newly-created JNF forest, planted over a razed Palestinian village. Consisting of 'pines, always and only the one species, obstinately, unvaryingly' (207), it could be any early JNF monoculture plantation. The protagonist, a nameless student struggling for inspiration with writing, becomes a 'fire watcher' in the forest on his friends' advice (204). His only companions are an old Arab labourer whose tongue was cut out 'during the war' and the Arab's daughter. The student is gradually forced to learn the truth about the forest, which is finally burnt down by the Arab, revealing the ruined village 'born anew in its basic outlines' (233). *FF* is typically read as a 'return of the repressed' political narrative; Zerubavel interprets the fire as the 'liberation' of a Palestinian memory suppressed by Israeli 'national monuments' (1996: 81). Benvenisti (2000: 325-7) and Urian (1997: 101) offer similar interpretations.

Fragments in *PG* are frequently set in JNF forests with a violent history. The tone is set by the first fragment, 'One Afternoon' (1), in which a history professor takes his son for a picnic in a 'quiet pinewood' where they arrange 'three square stones' around their fire as a windbreak. The narrator indicates the origin of these unnaturally-shaped stones with his spare remark that the area was 'formerly known as Deir Yassin' (1), the site of a pivotal 1948 massacre of Palestinian villagers. Little critical material on *PG* exists, but it has been interpreted as a comment on the 'denial

embedded in Israeli culture', specifically the failure to acknowledge responsibility for the Nakba, with forests as one part of Israel's selective memory (Coleman 2001; Mariko 2009: 89-107; Ehrenreich 2003).

In conventional readings of *FF* and *PG*, the forests function as potentially substitutable symbols. However, Yehoshua and Shelach's ways of representing the forests are fundamental to understanding the changes in Israel's national eco-imaginary over the forty years between their times of writing. In *FF*, we see that forests are not yet fully integrated into national narratives. *FF* was written when afforestation was new, and the foreignness of the forests is seen in the characters' surprise that forests might grow in Israel. When it is first suggested that the student could become a fire watcher he 'is astonished, laughs inordinately' and exclaims 'Forests...What forests? Since when do we have forests in this country?' (204). Yehoshua's description of an 'odd, charming stone house' at a 'high altitude' among the 'young, slender pines' (207-8) recalls an Alpine landscape, suggesting the Europeanising undertones of Israeli afforestation. As discussed, reshaping the land played a key role in erasing the history of an Arab presence in Israel/Palestine. Comments by visitors to Yehoshua's forest indicate that this process had not yet entirely succeeded. A group of hikers asks, 'Where is this Arab village that is marked on the map?' (219).

The forests in *PG* still cause characters in 'The Road to Jerusalem' to remind themselves they are not in Switzerland (57), but generally contrast sharply with Yehoshua's rather artificial forest. After over forty years the forests appear natural and have become integrated into Israeli life, becoming significant within national identity as sites for performances of belonging to the land. While the dominant sense of Yehoshua's forest is an unnerving 'Silence, a silence of trees' (208) and tourists visit infrequently, forests in *PG* are always described in relation to recreational and cultural activities taking place within them, showing how extensive planting and its accompanying cultural performances have become in the years separating the texts.

PG includes various cultural practices that engage with the national eco-imaginary. The fragment 'Tu B'shvat' (29), named after the Jewish festival which celebrates 'the new year of the trees', depicts children participating in the annual tree planting ritual. Prior to Israel's creation Tu B'shvat was a minor event in the Jewish calendar and did not involve planting, but during the latter half of the twentieth century it evolved into a patriotic performance of 'rootedness' (Bardenstein 1999: 160). Other fragments narrate *yediat ha'aretz*, 'knowing the land', a broad school subject which is described by Benvenisti as a combination of 'geography, geology, history, ethnology, botany and zoology', taught to nurture a sense of intimate association with and belonging to the land (2000: 57). The phrase '*yediat ha'aretz*' is not used in *PG*, but alluded to in episodes such as 'Being First' (21), which describes a primary school trip to a nearby forest to learn about pines, and 'Tea

Outdoors', in which Young Guardian members 'learned to taste the land' on a forest expedition by making a drink from wild plants (77).

The most common forest location in *PG* is, inevitably, picnic grounds, and it is in these spaces that the most unsettling re-narrativisation of the Israeli/Palestinian landscape takes place. Unlike Yehoshua's hikers, visitors to Shelach's picnic grounds are rarely aware of their former life as the sites of Palestinian villages. In 'Being First' children from the Jerusalem suburb Bayt HaKerem break the shells of pine nuts by crushing them on what are suggestively described as 'flat rocks' (21), without realising that, as in 'One Afternoon' (1), these stones could easily be from one of the Palestinian homes under Jerusalem Forest. If Yehoshua's hikers had discovered the stones it is likely that they would have drawn this connection. However, since *FF* was written, elaborate new histories have been created around selected ruins of Palestinian villages that were deliberately left in picnic grounds by the JNF, to complement the narratives created by planting. Stones are presented through information signs as the remains of Crusader castles, so ancient that they are 'part of nature' (Benvenisti 2000: 303). This history appears to have been accepted by Shelach's schoolchildren.

The processes of creating a unified historical narrative of the landscape may have gained in complexity since Yehoshua described a single, unnamed forest, but the form of Shelach's novel suggests that contemporary narratives are not necessarily more stable. The careful attention paid by Shelach to locating specific activities in named forests or areas nearby combines with the paratactic narrative structure, which leaps between apparently unconnected episodes, to produce a productive spatial metaphor. This suggests both the shrinking of Israel through the new highways mentioned in the text (15, 63, 99), recalling David Harvey's observation of the 'time-space compression' of contemporary capitalism (1990: 147), at the same time as indicating the increasing complication of Israel's geography through its West Bank expansion, reflected in the cover image of the Jerusalem map split by a dotted Green Line. Shelach's novel also gestures through its typographic presentation at the way in which material facts influence our interpretations, signalling through blank pages and heavy indents around the text that the imagination is strongly implicated in writing over discontinuities in both national and literary narratives to create coherence. While *FF* questions the process of establishing a national eco-imaginary, the interplay between text, form and materiality in *PG* suggests that this eco-imaginary is impossible to sustain.

One way in which both texts subvert the narratives of Israeli rootedness embodied in the forests is through metaphorical slippages between representations of Palestinians and Palestinian ecosystems. Vladimir Jabotinsky posited a Palestinian connection to nature in order to denigrate Palestinians as barbarous and ignorant, describing them as 'a yelling rabble dressed up in gaudy, savage rags' (cited in Said and Hitchens 2001: 241). However, the links between Palestinians and

nature in Yehoshua and Shelach's texts are closer to the Palestinian tradition of resisting Israeli colonisation through articulating Palestinian belonging to the land, seen in Mahmoud Darwish (1984: 13) and Ghassan Kanafani (1958). Military allusions to describe the creation of forests feature in both *FF* and *PG*, suggesting continuity between environmental damage and Palestinian displacement. In *FF* the pines are personified as soldiers: 'erect, slim, serious; like a company of new recruits awaiting their commander' (215). In the fragment "Ayn Lavan', Shelach describes a hike in a pine forest near Qiryat Menachem by two Israeli families, during which they come across what is apparently a natural spring surrounded by walnut trees (55). The trees are 'bare of leaves', suggesting that they are struggling to survive, and have 'white branches like upraised arms', an image blending the white flag and submissive posture of surrender. The title 'Ayn Lavan' translates as 'white spring', which might be taken to mean that the earth has surrendered to conquest.[2] Often the only way to uncover the buried historical narrative of a piece of land in Israel/Palestine is to search for indigenous trees planted by Palestinians around their homes (2010: 82) and the positioning of trees near a spring in this fragment certainly echoes the topography of a Palestinian village. This interpretation is lent plausibility by the location of Qiryat Menachem near Jerusalem Forest.

The greatest representational contrast between *FF* and *PG* is the threats to the forests in each text. The main risk to the forest in *FF* is the Arab labourer, who is suspected of harbouring a wish to set fire to the forest (213, 222) and who eventually does. Arson has featured in Palestinian liberation since the beginnings of resistance in the 1920s; in the first intifada it caused one third of forest fires in Israel (Fighel 2009: 803). Since forests are central to Israeli narratives of national belonging, burning them is a powerful symbolic act of resistance to the Israeli presence, and a rejection of the Nakba denial represented by planting. In this sense *FF* anticipates the importance that national eco-imaginaries would assume as the conflict deepened.

The above is a postcolonial reading of the Arab as revealer of historical truth. However, Yehoshua's preoccupation with Israeli ecology and the increasing awareness of the environmental problems caused by afforestation prior to publication of *FF* (Tal 2002: 94-5) underscore the need for an additional ecocritical interpretation. The possibility of postcolonial and ecocritical readings indicates that each version alone only accesses half of the text's meaning, and that a full understanding of the story - and by extension, the conflict - requires both perspectives.

Yehoshua's tongue-less Arab can be read as an ecological agent, restoring the ecological balance of the land by burning down the harmful pines. His muteness symbolises the silencing of alternative histories of the conflict, yet his lack of the power of speech, often seen as a uniquely human quality, places him on the borderline between the human and nonhuman worlds. This

impression is sustained by the mirroring of the Arab's silence with the silence of the pines, and by the way in which he and his daughter appear to move amongst the trees 'as though the forest had conceived them' (219). This section is set in summer, when forest fires occur naturally in Israel (Kliot 1996: 2). The key contributory factor of 'hot desert winds' (230) is mentioned just before the fire is started, implying that the Arab's actions are akin to a natural force. The rejection of pines in the conclusion gives the lie to the JNF afforestation manager's assertion that 'nature itself is harnessed to our great enterprise here' (221). The manager's comment echoes a JNF hydrologist in the 1950s, who, in response to a Dutch hydrologist's concern that peat deposits might spoil attempts to drain the Huleh swamp, reportedly declared: 'Our peat is Zionist peat. It will not do damage' (cited in Tal 2002: 97).

Forty years later, the main threat to the Israeli national eco-imaginary is not Palestinian, but Israeli. In contemporary Israel, the industry, urban expansion and infrastructure of late capitalism and the specific political need to translate the Occupation into 'facts on the ground' through development (Weizman 2007) threaten to engulf the forests. As discussed above, many fragments in *PG* are set in Jerusalem Forest, which, although the city's 'green lung', has been damaged by human activities. It was threatened at the turn of the millennium by a proposed expansion of the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway, has been shrunk drastically since its 1950s creation, and spoiled ecologically and aesthetically by construction refuse and pylons (Tsur 2001). In Shelach's 'Waking Up', Jerusalem Forest is a 'wood', a 'buffer strip between luxury residential areas and the highway to Tel-Aviv' (15); in ''Ayn Lavan', mountain scenery is spoilt by an 'egg-packing factory' and a 'small double-peaked mound of construction refuse' (55). Shelach's fragments illustrate a tension in Israeli identity, between the Zionist image of the kibbutz-dwelling, land-labouring *Sabra* and the modern city-dwelling Israeli.

These two fragments appear to criticise the narratives of denial embodied by the forests, yet also to mourn their demise. Examining other fragments indicates that contemporary development and planting in *FF* and *PG* stem from an enduring attitude towards nature. The Israeli eco-imaginary is a way of possessing the land rather than belonging to it, leading to environmental degradation. In Shelach's 'The End' (87), the narrator remarks that an orchard owner who sells his land had 'developed a sense of belonging to the land, which meant that the land belonged to him'. Shelach contrasts these modes of belonging in 'The Night Sky' (67), which presents two ways of communing with the land: that of a Palestinian village which was 'bombed out and later razed' and of visitors to the picnic ground created on its site. The village is described as a paradigm of sustainable living: 'pastures and natural flowerbeds, donkeys, farmer children, olive groves, and even carrots, onions and lettuces that grew scattered among the olives'. In contrast, a single, bleak

adjective summarises the picnic ground: 'dusty'. For Shelach, the picnic ground is part of the same assault on the land as 'industrialisation' and 'armored vehicles [...] grinding the desert sand'. This suggests, ironically, that Palestinian village life represented the Zionist ideal of 'knowing the land' more successfully than any of Israel's parks.

Qualification is needed here, since claims of a 'deep' Palestinian connection to the land verge on Orientalism, and it would be naive to assume that the pastoral society described in 'The Night Sky' would have been assured indefinitely, even without Israel's interference. This is pertinent when a third of Palestinians lived in urban areas prior to 1948 (Benvenisti 2000: 6-7). However, it should not stop us from recognising that vast areas of land have been transformed since the creation of Israel, and that the removal of Palestinian villagers from their farms in many cases represented the substitution of unsustainable for sustainable ways of life.

PG and *FF* show that investing land with national symbolism can allow us to forget that its capacity to embody our ideas and aspirations is subject to ecological laws. In the case of Israel/Palestine, the narrative privileging green, picturesque, Europeanised landscapes has led to Israel's fire-prone and pest-ravaged forests. Yehoshua and Shelach's criticisms of the Israeli approach to nature indicate the need for a reimagining of landscape in Israel/Palestine in a way that is conscious of its potential for political appropriation, while working to restore a sense of its fundamental materiality.

In conclusion, I would like to gesture briefly to a potentially productive mode of re-imagining the Israeli/Palestinian environment, as embodied in the work of Raja Shehadeh. Shehadeh translates the Palestinian cause into the vocabulary of ecological justice, campaigning for equal access to land and resources, yet avoids replacing one national eco-imaginary with another. He rejects the nationalistic mode of seeing that frames a landscape as abstract grand vistas, focusing on sensory experience of individual environmental details: 'we decided to stop by the side of the road whenever we felt like it and examine the wild flowers in their beauty – the bugloss, the poppies, cyclamens and hollyhocks' (2010: 49). Shehadeh's practice involves 'knowing the land', only without the false histories and environmental irresponsibility that this practice entails.

Shehadeh suggests that justice for Palestinians and careful use of Israel/Palestine's environment would not mean removing Israelis; instead, shared environmental concern could contribute to conflict resolution. Shehadeh puts forward this argument in *Palestinian Walks* (2008), a memoir in which he reprises the role of a postcolonial Thoreau, recording decades of wanderings around the Ramallah hills and their changing landscape under occupation. Robert Spencer points out that Shehadeh's digressive form reinforces the critique of dominating attitudes towards land in the content, by resisting forcing landscape into a 'systematic vision' (2010: 40). On his penultimate

walk, Shehadeh encounters a young Israeli settler, with whom a polite but terse conversation descends into a political argument (194). A fragile peace emerges when the men acknowledge a shared love of the land, including 'the little stream we each call by the same name, after the same tree, pronounced in our different ways' (201). Shehadeh reflects that 'These are my hills despite how things are turning out. But they also belong to whoever can appreciate them' (202). This is no vague declaration of global ecological citizenship; it demonstrates a love for local features of a specific land that transcends their nationalist significations. Existing transnational environmental initiatives in Israel/Palestine show that this is not overoptimistic (Jeremy Benstein 2003).

Shehadeh's tentative post-national moment offers a reimagining of the connection between landscape and identity in the direction pointed towards by Yehoshua and Shelach. Israeli national identity cannot be understood without reference to its environmental component, yet as Shehadeh indicates, there will be no resolution to the conflict unless nationalistic, possessive attitudes towards not just land, but landscape, are overcome. Critics eager to expand postcolonial ecocriticism beyond its current geographical limitations might consider the role of national eco-imaginaries in the Israel-Palestine context, and the possibilities they present for producing an ecocritical practice rooted firmly in both the literary and material worlds.

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[1] This can largely be attributed to the enduring popularity of deep ecology, a form of ecocentrism which, in the words of one of its principal ecocritical advocates, Jonathan Bate, doubts the value of 'the crude old model of Left and Right' as a basis for dealing with environmental crisis (1991: 3-4). See Devall and Sessions (1985).

[2] I am grateful to Anna Bernard for this translation.