

***A Contrapuntal, Ecocritical Reading of Abysmal
Return in Contemporary Middle Eastern and Native American Fiction.***

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Abstract

This research offers a contrapuntal, ecocritical and comparative reading of contemporary Middle Eastern and Native American Fiction. Nature is emblematic of socio-political, psychological, archetypal and historical issues in David Grossman's novella "Yani on the Mountain", Murid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*, and Louis Erdrich's *Love Medicine*¹. The reading is also informed by Edward Said's contrapuntal approach highlighting absences and omissions as well as the portrayal of the Other. Nature, anthropomorphized and personified, is turned from an element of harmony to that of discord, thanks to man's chaos. Several images, symbols and motifs are recurrent in each work, in addition to the multiplicities of narratives and tenses. The cyclical narrative structure and zig-zag progression of story-telling accentuate the somehow morbid mood and sordid atmosphere. Furthermore, the authors' human dissatisfaction with chaos is crystallized in their statement on past and current affairs as well as the somehow gloomy future prospects. All this is best embodied in the womb-tomb motif prevalent in the three works, where the journey home is, in fact, an engulfment by abysmal return. Mythical as well as Biblical and Quranic allusions paradoxically strip the setting of the expected positive connotations, only to reinforce the apocalyptic quality of these counternarratives. Socio-political and historical subtexts glimmer beneath, reinforcing man's setting loose of evil in Pandora's Box. From Yiddish and Cannanite to Chippewa, the three works spark a journey of aesthetic beauty and involve the reader in an urgent commitment to pressing human needs. All this is beautifully done through abysmal return to Mother Nature.

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In *Literature, Nature and Other Ecofeminist Critiques*, Murphy explains that in Gaia imagery, the partheno/genetic initiator quickly becomes subservient to her son, Uranus (Murphy 59). Though this attaches “the patriarchal baggage” to nature, it is relevant in this study as regards how abusive and mutually destructive man’s relation to nature has become. Naturally and symbolically, the womb-tomb motif is linked to nature. The problem is that dying and return to a pristine state have drastically changed. Is the earth still principally our kind mother or tomb or have we transgressed against it to turn it to solely the tomb pole? Dying implies that in “a past golden age”, “an androgynous culture and psyche existed”, a return to the original unity (Murphy 68, 69). A paradigm shift is necessitated to deconstruct the intellectual edifice of the old paradigm, in which Gaia imagery is trapped (Murphy 69). In the three works discussed in this study, nature and culture are closely related, with spatialization centre point. In a way, however, this inextricable bond acts like a rewriting or a reinscribing of our relationship with the other: Israelis to Egyptian, Palestinians to Israelis, Native Americans to mainstream Americans. Nature acts like a warning sign that even she will not grant us the postmortuary paradisaic state. There might be some comfort in the voyage itself but the return is definitely apocalyptic in the three works. Murphy calls the notion of return a “re-turn” “towards an ecological spirituality, a new godless pantheism that decenters and untethers us and our thought” (120). This is embodied in the coyote or trickster archetypal figure that acts like a rebel deconstructing our beliefs and actions. The trickster is a mid-wife in Erdrich and both male and female in Grossman and male in Barghout.

It all aims at decentring the “anthropocentric underpinnings” (Murphy 141) both patriarchy and chauvinism have imposed on the treatment of the other. It works towards a pluralistic, human ideal, through the common final abode of the human race. One of the experiments Murphy cites is the “recognition of immersion in otherness” not otherness, embodied by the identification of the Pacific Mountains with the Chinese mountains, as a human “recognition of interrelationship” (Murphy 101). A case in point is “Yani on the Mountain” of Sinai, where Moses talked to God, a common transcendental symbol and parable in the three religions. No wonder why the mountain is a spatialized, transcendental and ascetic symbol for Rabbis, Monks and Sufis alike. Murphy cites “Pratitya-Samutpada”, meaning “dependent co-origination”, in other words, the womb, with “another mutual participant in interpreting the jeweled net of the world” (Murphy 102). He explains that the transcendental move here is not simply across the mountain but beyond and above (Murphy 98) to share another perspective. This notion is reminiscent of the moral geography of the novel, a notion postulated by Edward Said and applied through his contrapuntal approach. It eventually aims at offering a counternarrative to the hegemonic one, here, in three different but, paradoxically similar, cultures. The three works act as intermediary narratives, revising, from their liminal zone, the hegemonic historic events that led to anarchy and abysmal return, if ever we are even granted this re-turn.

In David Grossman’s “Yani on the Mountain” (1980), nature is usually personified with negative connotations all along. The Biblical ascent of Moses on the mountain and the revelation of the Ten Commandments on the Sinai mountain are always foregrounded but with an opposite apocalyptic undertones, very much like the difficulty of attaining salvation at the hands of Jesus Christ because of the undeserving human beings in Yeats’ “The Second Coming” or Beckett’s *Waiting for*

Godot. The metaphor “The rock is only a massive lump” is reminiscent of a malignant tumour, the bushes are “stubborn” (“YM” 60); even ascent is far from that of Moses or Jesus Christ: “I climb a step in the rock, cling to protuberances with my hands, maneuver acrobatically between the familiar cracks. The ascent has to be accomplished in a certain way” (“YM” 61). The ironic, secular acrobatic maneuvers, together with the hazardous protrudings, fissures and cracks, undermine the current war and post-war state, only to culminate in the eventual bombing of the mountain to erase all traces of military presence.

Yani’s death-wish is eventually expressed in relationship to the mountain: “I want to vanish with the mountain; to lean against the green sacks and cease to be” (“YM” **122**). Yani’s identification with the mountain is interpreted by Nimra, the humanitarian activist, and Elisha, the idealist and poet, as part of Yani’s “chidish dreams”, in other words, military service and war as synonyms for nationalism and patriotism are nothing but “childish dreams”. “You’ve lost nine years of your life, wasted them here, can’t you see, this is the moment to do the right thing, Yani, come down from the mountain” (“YM” 79). The request “Yani, come down from the mountain” recurs like a refrain, ironically called: “Cato-esque conclusion” (“YM” 45) by Yani and reiterated by Nimra, the peace-seeker and humanitarian. Significantly enough, in France, the sewage “Watergate of Lyons”, the important journalistic scoop is related to Nimra, who is at one with nature. Indeed, she accentuates man’s transgression against nature, symbolized by the sewage and vomit in the stream “in the labyrinth of the underground city, between the canals of churning filth (“YM” 104). Nimra, disgusted at the human pollution of nature, vomits and “her vomit was borne away on the dark stream” (“YM” 104), further worsening the pollution. Unfortunately, Nimra’s disgust soon leads to her depression. Knowing the glaring difference between her and the transgressors against nature, Yani knows she will never ‘re-turn’ to him or to Elisha. “She had gone to die by herself, in a corner of her forest” (“YM” 105). Nimra’s inherent repugnance at the disgust intrinsic in humanity is foreshadowed right from the very first page of the novella; spitting and urinating contests amongst the soldiers are described in full detail, provoking readers’ revulsion. To make matters worse, the soldiers go and eat immediately afterwards, indicating a numbing of the natural human senses. Spit, piss, secrete saliva, and urinate are few amongst many of the terrible revolting contests of the soldiers, and, consequently, of warring humanity, shocking readers at the outset of the novella (“YM” 37-9).

The incessant allegorical identification of Yani and the mountain explains how the whole novella has been incessantly preparing the reader for the terrible climax, the huge transgression against nature: bombing the mountain to hide traces of the military intelligence base. Yani and his mountain were both abandoned by Nimra in a clear statement on the futility of war; Nimra “detested both cynicism and military obtuseness”, meaning she disagreed with Elisha, the cynic, and Yani, the soldier: “They left the mountain. They left me all by myself. They mocked my dreams (I wanted them both to volunteer for the regular army, like me, and go serving on the mountain); they shattered the foundations I built for myself”, Yani lamented (“YM” 78-9). The final touching apostrophe, where the officer is addressing the mountain in a poignant apologetic tone, reveals how human beings, by going into wars with each other, are no longer at one with nature by disrupting its harmonious rhythms. The personification portrays the mountain as a close friend betrayed by Yani: “Now all

that remains is the slow counting of hours. Only remorse toward the mountain beneath our feet, which trusts us so blindly, oblivious to our treachery, the treachery of the grasshoppers who have been stepping on its surface for all these years” (“YM” 106). The apologetic tone is accentuated by the subsequent medical metaphor, Yani sees himself and his colleagues as causing a malignant tumour in the body of the mountain: “a heavy lump condensing inside it, tearing its guts apart, spraying it in all directions” (“YM” 106). Anagnorisis, coming at the hands of Nimra and Elisha, is also linked to angry nature, mainly because of man’s warring attitude and unnatural behaviour: “People our age all over the world were living full, complete lives during those wonderful years, while we were here in the sand storms, and the thunderstorms, always half-starved, afraid of unseen enemies, eating our lives away” (“YM” 124).

The apocalyptic overtones are expressed in the opening of the abyss (“YM” 106), both literally and metaphorically, out of which “giant lizards, are escaping in all directions, in haste and great confusion, their tails dragging behind them and drawing lines in the sand, and their faces, their grinning monster faces, are grim” (“YM” 107). The dystopia is best expressed in a perfect image of Doomsday, when all creatures are frantically wandering in horror:

Geckos and spiders, beetles and jerboas, a countless multitude of tiny creatures is swarming everywhere today. The sand beneath my feet is full of activity. The birds of prey, the buzzards and the hawks, circle the sky expectantly, gather in their wings and claws, swoop again and again, bringing a swift death to these little denizens of the dark, which some mysterious force has banished from their usual haunts and sent scurrying into the sunlight (“YM” 107).

The earth, therefore, is not still, the abyss is widening, and utter devastation is imminent. This abysmal return to Yani’s homeland was foreshadowed very early in the novella: “I turn away from the edge of the cliff, toward the position set well back from the abyss. These days I’m not sufficiently sure of myself. I feel comfortable sitting on the damp ground between the disintegrating sandbags (“YM” 44). The “gathering darkness of the abyss amid the vegetation sprouting wildly over the camp’s sewage pipe” (“YM” 46) foreshadows the above-mentioned sewage Watergate scoop.

After its bombing, the mountain top will ultimately “tread on corpses”, including “mine”, meaning Yani’s, is another unnatural personification of nature highlighting the ‘tomb’ pole and, in the meantime, the alienation and estrangement of the soldiers. This is spelt out at the end in one of the rare explicit statements on war and peace² (“YM” 116-19). This has been the last in a whole line of antagonized nature personifications and metaphors, due to man’s unnatural behaviour: the very first word of the novella is the “wind” that soon turns out to be a “malevolent wind” (“YM” 37, 66, 73). Similarly, the natural connotations of the sun endowing people with warmth and light are subverted: we have the “pale light of the sick sun” instead (“YM” 73). Our “primal fear” is as frightening as the thickest bush (“YM” 47); the “rapid dancing jet” “cleaved the air like a hissing snake” (“YM” 38) and even the thin, tall friend is as ominous as a raven (“YM” 38). Furthermore, the “thorny branches” are beating down the tangled growth of the tree trunks (“YM” 46). Significantly enough, Nimra, the humanitarian activist and philanthropist, ends up somehow clinically depressed; Elisha, the poet, drowned in cynicism; Yani, the patriot and nationalist, with a death-

wish to die with the bombardment of the mountain; and Mark Nestor, the lecturer in Russian literature at the University of Buenos Aires, tortured and miserably failing too miserably to spread any message of love. It is like a revisionist counternarrative on the part of Grossman, the “Post-Zionist”³, to what is considered patriotism and belonging since all four paths of peace, literature, war, and love have been ruthlessly thwarted in almost all continents of the world mentioned in the novella.

As in Grossman, nature is antagonistic to human beings in Barghouti’s autobiography *I Saw Ramallah* (2000). The Biblical and Quranic parable of Ezekiel and the wasteland or Jerusalem recurs poignantly throughout the novel; unfortunately, however, resurrection seems unattainable this time. At the outset of the novel, water is acting with the enemy to strip the Palestinians of their life: streams and rivers are almost dry, while death by water reminds us of both TS Eliot and Louise Erdrich. “Water without water. As though the water apologized for its presence on this boundary between two histories, two faiths, two tragedies” (*I Saw Ramallah* 11). The Jordan River is narrow, without proper water or sound. Returning to Ramallah, Barghouti was shocked to see how narrow and dry the river has turned: “it had become a river without water. Almost without water. Nature had colluded with Israel in stealing its water. It used to have a voice, now it was a silent river, a river like a parked car” (*ISR* 5). Both the Palestinians and the river have poignantly lost their voice; they no longer have an identity or a say in matters. Their life is being lived for them while critical decisions are being made on their behalf.

Prelapsarian Eden and Eden after the Fall form the very first antithetical image that strikes Barghouti once he steps into his family’s courtyard thirty years later:

I used to tell my Egyptian friends at university that Palestine was green and covered with trees and shrubs and wild flowers. What are these flowers. What are these hills? Bare and chalky. Had I been lying to people, then?

Did I paint for strangers an ideal picture of Palestine because I had lost it? I said to myself, when Tamim comes here he will think I have been describing another country (*ISR* 28).

This is the Biblical and Quranic allusion to Ezekiel’s “pale waste land” (*ISR* 12), Jerusalem of the past, only this time with no hope of resurrection whatsoever. Eden here is the image Barghouti retained of Palestine with its olives, figs and palm trees, only traces of the past now. Barghouti wonders how he is going to explain the discrepancy to his son Tamim, “Had I been describing Deir Ghassanah with its surrounding olive groves, and convincing myself I was describing the whole country?” (*ISR* 29). Ironically enough, even his own place that used to abound in olives and figs is now almost barren: “Instead of the tree I saw a large cement block. The fig had been cut off at the point where its awesome trunk met the earth” (*ISR* 55). Artificiality has encroached upon signs of life; nature is now chocked by cement. Similarly, asphalt encroaches upon the beauty of the hills to add another element of artificiality further chocking nature; significantly, they are both overlooking the settlements (*ISR* 30). Similarly, steel flowers ironically act like lilac fingerprints (*ISR* 38).

To accentuate the bitter loss of paradise, figs and olives should be contextualized as another Quranic allusion; it is both literal and metaphorical. Intertextuality stresses the loss as linked to abysmal return: “*Does the stranger return to where he was? / Is he himself returning to a place? / Our house!*” (*ISR* 55). After exile, Barghouti felt as if he sinned to buy olive oil: “From the day we knew anything we knew that olives and oil were there in our houses. Nobody from the village ever bought oil or olives. The village sells oil and olives to Ramallah, Amman, to the Gulf” (*ISR* 58). Similarly, when Barghouti bought one fig for one dollar in Vienna, he felt apologetic to the fig tree of his childhood that had become like a family member to him. He explains it to his wife and son, both writers like him too, in a personification, similar to Yani’s apology to the mountain: “I said to Radwa and Tamim that I had committed a crime against the fig tree of Dar Ra’d” (*ISR* 59). Pebbles and rocks (*ISR* 6, 39, 61) form another Biblical allusion, also reminiscent of William Blake’s poems about the two sides of Jesus Christ. Like Grossman and Erdrich, the negative connotations and inverted symbolic import are all we get in Barghouti. Similarly, the “dust of the land” (*ISR* 28) is reminiscent of the Biblical “from dust to dust”. Other instances of nature as related to death are: raindrops and flowers, as related to the graveyard, as well as cactus plant in the cemetery (*ISR* 66). The palm tree is the furthest from the ones in paradise (*ISR* 65); the spring is obstinate (*ISR* 36) and the mountains are nothing but bare (*ISR* 28).

Equally poignant is the poetic, dreamlike quality of Barghouti’s autobiography, triggering off the simulacrum, the copy or the mirage connotations. The antithesis strikes the reader right at the outset of the novel, with a series of interrupted rhetorical questions:

And now I pass from my exile to their... homeland? My homeland?
The West Bank and Gaza? The Occupied Territories? The Areas?
Judea and Samaria? The Autonomous Government? Israel? Palestine?
Is there any other country in the world that so perplexes you with its
names? Last time I was clear and things were clear. Now I am
ambiguous and vague. Everything is ambiguous and vague (*ISR* 13).

A contrapuntal reading highlights the hegemony of the Other aspect. Ambiguity and ambivalence strike the resounding note; only one thing is crystal clear and the furthest from vagueness: occupation as a stark overwhelming fact:

The soldier with the yarmulke is not vague. At least his gun is very
shiny. His gun is my personal history. It is the history of my
estrangement. His gun took us from us the land of the poem and left us
with the poem of the land. In his hand he holds earth, and in our hands
we hold a mirage (*ISR* 13).

The mirage image is a Quranic allusion too, accentuating the simulacrum idea. Elsewhere, the reference to Disney works also to stress the same idea. This is enhanced by the intertextuality, specifically with the literary allusion to the romantic writer al-Manfaluti or the linking of Frantz Fanon to the “gloomy skies” (*ISR* 16):

Can I write with their pens on their snow-white paper the things that
come to my mind now that martyrs also are part of reality, and that the

blood of the freedom fighters and the young people of the Intifada is also real. They are not invented by Walt Disney or born of the imagination of al-Manfaluti. Living people grow old but martyrs grow younger (*ISR* 37).

The above quotation triggers off Edward Said's notion of the "gravity of history" that cannot be simply silenced, excluded or textualized, hence the urgent need for contextualizing and historicizing in Barghouti. His liminal position, reminiscent of Said's own *Out of Place*⁴ autobiography, further highlights the motif of return as national; it is the unattainable right of return⁵ for millions of refugees. Harping on "gates of exile" (*ISR* 22), both a Biblical allusion to Exodus and a Classical one to gates of Troy, together with the constant crossing of thresholds (*ISR* 36), underline the liminality. Another clue to the same effect is the academic terminology (*ISR* 12, 14), triggering off poetry and literary criticism as the unifying background of the author, his wife and son. This gives a deeper dimension to Palestine as an image in a text book, with no equivalent in reality, all-present in history books and maps but no longer in geography books and maps. "When Palestine is no longer a chain worn with an evening dress, an ornament or a memory or a golden Qur'an, when we walk on Palestinian dust, and wipe it off our shirt collars and off our shoes" (*ISR* 23).

Similarly, in Erdrich's episodic *Love Medicine* (1987-2009), June, the character most at one with nature, is shockingly the one killed by nature, namely, snow and Chinook wind: "The snow fell deeper that Easter than it had in forty years, but June walked over it like water and came home" (*LM* 6). Like Barghouti, it is related to water and abysmal return. However frail nature is, latent power will be manifested soon in an attempt to stop man's transgression:

With every root I prized up there was return, as if I was kin to its secret lesson. The touch got stronger as I worked through the grassy afternoon. Uncurling from me like a seed out of the blackness where I was lost, the touch spread. The spiked leaves full of bitter mother's milk. A buried root. A nuisance people dig up and throw in the sun to wither. A globe of frail seeds that's indestructible (*LM* 254).

Like Barghouti, spring, in Erdrich, is cruel and Easter is the furthest from signifying resurrection: "After that false spring, when the storm blew in covering the state, all the snow melted off and it was summer. It was almost hot by the week after Easter, when I found out, in Mama's letter, that June was gone, not only dead but suddenly buried, vanished off the land like the sudden snow" (*LM* 7). The womb of the earth turns out to be the tomb and final abode, not really the womb: "I felt smallness, how the earth divided into bits and kept dividing" (*LM* 333). Unfortunately, this fate applies to June too, who is part and parcel of nature: "They weren't expecting her up home on the reservation" (*LM* 3). Right at the outset of the technically unique novel, the word "reservation" strikes the 'ghetto' connotations as related to the history of Native Americans, to be casually tackled in the coming parts of the novel. Though a long time has elapsed, June's steps on her way back home were confident; intuitively, she felt part and parcel of nature. However, the return home, betrayed her trust with the injustice of humanity all set against her: "She had walked far enough to see the dull orange glow, the canopy of low, lit clouds over Williston, when she decided to walk home instead of going back there"; "A Chinook wind, she told herself. She made

a right turn off the road, walked up a drift frozen over a snow fence, and began to pick her way through the swirls of dead grass and icy crust of open ranchland” (*LM* 6). These tragic scenes have to be read in conjunction with an earlier scene, narrated towards the end of the novel, however, that further explains June’s harmony with nature: “June swam without effort, rolled, dived up and down like a fish, took Gordie farther and farther, away from shore, toward the middle of the lake” (*LM* 266). Elsewhere, when Gordie was looking for her, he found her under water: “then all of a sudden she rose before Gordie, reeds drooping off her shoulders, the water streaming down her face and the snaky ends of her hair” (*LM* 266). It is the perfect image of someone incredibly and rhythmically harmonious with nature, only to be betrayed by the ugly side of nature, a kind of statement on the innocent lives lost in this world because others wrongly misunderstand the frontier myth as uprooting nature and those at one with nature in the process of crossing all borders, at the expense of humanity.

In Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*, June, the character at one with nature, has always been seen as typically Native American. Sometime earlier, Chippewa Gods and American Indian water monster Missepeshu as well as Biblical God are brought to bear on a historical incident of ethnic cleansing of Native Americans; again, the problem does not lie in religions but in man’s abuse of religion (*LM* 232). As usual in the novel, the springboard from which all events stem is June. June plays the narrative role of Nimra and, sometimes, Yani, in Grossman and of Barghouti himself in his autobiography; the four form the uniting narrative springboard, from which the nature motif stems. Here, it is the memory of “Aunt June left by a white man to wander off in the snow” (*LM* 232). “How else to explain my touch don’t work, and further back, to the old-time Indians who was swept away in the outright germ warfare and dirty-dog killing of the whites. In those times, us Indians was so much kindlier than now” (*LM* 233). Indeed, this is one of the rare incidents of explicit condemnation of the injustices committed against Native Americans in the past and of the abuse of religions. As in Grossman, in Erdrich, historicizing events and the political context are rarely directly provided but dropped every now and then, like flashes that highlight or interpret certain incidents. This stands in juxtaposition with the hegemony of the Other and the incessant historicizing of events; the reason is clear: exilic consciousness is not merely rhetorical but literal, symbolized by the Identity Card that is denied Palestinians, together with the right of return or even temporary stay. The contested historic nomadic state has been imposed on them; the luxury of being implicit and ambivalent, as in Grossman and Erdrich, cannot be afforded by Barghouti, as representative of refugees and diaspora all around the world.

A Contrapuntal reading, therefore, easily discerns that the Other, both Egyptian and Palestinian (“YM” 67, 90-1), is mostly absent and silent, from the perspective of Yani; the “hostile desert” is linked to the “unseen enemy” (“YM” 56). When it comes to the humanitarian, all-loving Nimra, however, there is her relationship to Arab friends in London (“YM” 73) and giving shelter to Arabs (“YM” 93). There is one mention of the Arab with explosives amidst Israelis (“YM” 122), together with scattered references to Egyptian settings, starting with Sinai and Dahab to Cairo and Luxor (“YM” 53, 47), let alone the centralized implicit of the import of the human reversal of the connotations and echoes of the Biblical revelation of the Ten Commandments on Mount *Tour* in Sinai.

On the other hand, a contrapuntal reading of Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah* shows that the Other is never absent; in fact, it is sovereign, overwhelmingly present and omnipotent. Like Grossman and Erdrich, what Said calls, "the moral geography of the novel" is revealed to be the furthest from what he calls 'secular'; setting is heavily loaded with ideological filiation and attachment. In Barghouti, however, the novel is an autobiography, with real-life names of the author and his family. Furthermore, the gravity of history is clear in the outspoken condemnation of Zionism, as totally distinct from Judaism, and the constant historicizing of events. Historicizing is also present in casual references in Erdrich but without the clear condemnation by Native Americans of the Other or of early settlers. Crossing borders or frontiers is also more obvious in Barghouti and Erdrich.

Historicizing events and the political context are rarely directly provided by Erdrich but dropped every now and then, like flashes that highlight or interpret certain incidents. The past frontier myth is reiterated in border-crossings, only here with rivers or streams not promising the faintest glimmer of purgation: "It's a dark, thick, twisting river. The bed is deep and narrow. I thought of June. The water played in whorls beneath me or flexed over sunken cars" (*LM* 333). Like Barghouti, the bridge is a recurrent symbol and the great ancient ocean has shrunk to a small river:

I'd heard that this river was the last of an ancient ocean, miles deep, that once had covered the Dakotas and solved all our problems. It was easy to still imagine us beneath them vast unreasonable waves, but the truth is we live on dry land. I got inside. The morning was clear. A good road led on. So there was nothing to do but cross the water and bring her home (*LM* 333).

Like Barghouti, home coming and water crossing are related to the bridge and the borders: "I came to the bridge over the boundary river. I was getting pretty close to home now" (*LM* 333). Earlier, this is related to the borders, either of the reservation or the historic frontier: "We held each other's arms, tight and manly, when we got to the border. A windbreak swallowed him up" (*LM* 333). This frontier myth generally applies to the three works. Metaphorically, the idea of nurturing corruption and discrimination (the Eastern or European side) is thus perceived to take place at the expense of uprooting the Western frontier with all its connotations of primeval innocence and nobility, equality, purity, integrity, freedom, honour, and agrarianism, in brief, nature, as symbolized by Native Americans or "The Last of the Mohicans"⁶. One alternative is the 're-turn'⁷ to the trickster or the coyote figure not literally smuggling immigrants but defying authority and challenging human injustices, induced by ideological, racist or classist notions, thus 'returning' to nature, both physical and inner.

Notes

1. The following abbreviations will be used:

YM: "Yani on the Mountain"

ISR: *I Saw Ramallah*

LM: *Love Medicine*

2. The call for peace and lamenting war are further elaborated on in Grossman's later novel *To the End of the Land*.

3. Grossman is considered one of the Post-Zionist intellectuals and activists. See *Haaretz* article in the **References** section for his petition against the destruction of Palestinian villages; it was signed by world Nobel Laureates and intellectuals.

4. Said's contrapuntal approach is applied in his Ph.D. thesis on Joseph Conrad and his *Culture and Imperialism*. His notions of filiation, affiliation, secular criticism and the gravity of history are all expounded in depth in his *The World, the Text and the Critic*. *Out of Place*, as its title indicates, is an extensive exploration of his personal liminality, an individual postcolonial dimension that turns into national or even international, as related to postcolonial intellectuals in exile. In his Foreword to Barghouti's autobiography, Said comments on Sinai's desert and the right of return (viii), reiterated on both in the text itself (9, 10, 38).

5. The same journey of home return is replayed later on with his son Tamim in Barghouti's *Born There, Born Here*. Another clue to the same effect is the literary allusion to the motif of waiting and intellectual 'hats' symbol in *Waiting for Godot*.

6. Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* has launched the new typically American Western genre, together with the symbolic connotation of the encroaching colonial rule, or Europe, or the East versus the extermination of the typically noble Native American core inside the souls of Americans. See also Turner's *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* for an understanding of both literal and symbolic connotations of the frontier.

7. "Re-turn", according to Murphy's use, is the revolutionary "turn again" (120). The trickster or coyote is a typically Native American and also Jungian archetypal rebel that helps us "build bridges from self to another" and "foster an awareness of otherness" (Murphy 141).

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