CHAPTER TWO

THE ISRAELI INCORPORATION REGIME

COLONIZING THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY

The four great powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land ...

Memorandum by Mr. Arthur J. Balfour, August 11, 1919 (Woodward and Butler 2005a, 208).

Modern political Zionism is, in both thought and practice, a product of a colonial world order. The depiction of the Zionist movement as a settler colonial project is neither new, nor was it a characterization that Zionist ideologues shied away from. Even Altneuland (“Old-New Land”), a novel written by the father of political Zionism, Theodor Herzl, which aimed at propagating his utopian vision of a Jewish Palestine, openly adopts the language and logic of colonialism. While not a direct blueprint for Herzl’s Jewish state, nor a manuscript that can be brought to the level of reality, Altneuland is one of the first and most comprehensive literary accounts of a Jewish society in Palestine. Unlike Herzl’s more famous publication, Der Judenstaat (“The State of the Jews”), which served as the ideological bedrock and outlined the organizational structure of Zionism, Altneuland does depict an existing Arab population in Palestine. However, in its representation of Arabs in Palestine, it too places them within a hegemonic colonial order. Indeed, there is a connection between the bedrock of modern Zionism (including its liberal-Zionist variant) and that of the colonial

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1 One of the most lucid and thorough readings of the Zionist movement as a colonial project was written by Maxime Rodinson. Arguing that the Zionist movement to create the State of Israel effectively corresponds into the European-American project of colonialism, Rodinson concludes: “Wanting to create a purely Jewish, or predominantly Jewish, state in an Arab Palestine in the twentieth century could not help but lead to a colonial-type situation and to the development (completely normal, sociologically speaking) of a racist state of mind, and in the final analysis to a military confrontation between the two ethnic groups” (2004, 74). Important insights into studies of the Zionist colonization of Palestine can also be found in Piterberg (2008).
logic of the fictional text. Not only do they share Herzlian thought as a central tenet in their formation and development but also, more importantly, they both conjure the dream of integration, emancipation and coexistence.

Intended for a non-Zionist audience and aimed at securing non-Jewish support for the Zionist movement, Herzl uses the fictional structure of *Altneuland* to express “his own visions of Zionism in its purest, most uncompromising form” (Herzl 1987, vi). Beginning in 1902, the novel follows the main character, Friedrich Löwenberg, a twenty-three year old Jewish Viennese lawyer, who, alienated by the decadence of Jewish-European bourgeoisie, decides to join an Americanized Prussian philanthropist named Kingscourt with a distaste for humankind to withdraw to a remote island. “Disgusted with life,” Löwenberg agrees to a “life-long obligation” to Kingscourt, and decides to dissolve all of his existing social, cultural and financial ties to the Jewish bourgeois circles in which he had long sought inclusion (Herzl 1987, 32). The novel details their brief visit to Palestine during their journey to the island in 1902 and their observations of the land two decades later during what they had anticipated would be a brief return to civilization. Their second visit to the land reveals that during their twenty year absence: the “empty and deserted” town of Acre had undergone a “miracle;” Haifa had become a “magnificent city” with “cosmopolitan traffic in the streets” that “seemed thoroughly European;” Tiberias had become the “Garden of Eden ... a new gem ... [with] verdure and bloom everywhere;” Mount Hermon overlooked “the smaller ranges and the rejuvenated land;” Jericho and the Jordan Valley worked with “the newest and best agricultural machinery available” and produced “abundant crops ... which brought rich profits;” the Dead Sea had been stirred to life; and Jerusalem, once a “picture of desolation” now had its sacred hills endowed with “new, vigorous, joyous life [and] many splendid new structures,” which transformed the ancient city into a “twentieth century metropolis” (Herzl 1987, 58–59, 61, 161, 241, 247). All in all, Palestine had ascended from a “forsaken” land, “a state of extreme decay [with] poor Turks, dirty Arabs, [and] timid Jews ... indolent, beggarly and hopeless,” into a technologically advanced, agriculturally cultivated, intellectually progressive, economically prosperous “Promised Land” (Herzl 1987, 42).

A “truly modern commonwealth,” the Palestine built by the Zionist colonialists had been “fructified into a garden and a home for people who had once been poor, weak, hopeless and homeless” (Herzl 1987, 223, 244).

The utopian vision of a Jewish commonwealth depicted in *Altneuland* develops according to a clear colonial logic: through the immigration of a