

## RECENT BOOKS

### THE PARADOXES OF LIBERAL ZIONISM

**False Prophets of Peace: Liberal Zionism and the Struggle for Palestine**, by Tikva Honig-Parnass. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2011. viii + 212 pages. Notes to p. 254. Index to p. 262. \$20.00 paper.

*Reviewed by Josh Ruebner*

This September marks the twentieth anniversary of the signing of the Oslo accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), an agreement that ushered in an era of direct, bilateral negotiations aimed at establishing Israeli-Palestinian peace. In general, liberal Zionists placed great faith in the “peace process” initiated by this agreement, believing that a Palestinian bantustan-style “state” devoid of sovereignty, a renunciation of Palestinian refugees’ right of return, and an acceptance of Israel as a Jewish State that would permanently relegate its Palestinian citizens to separate and unequal status would be the desired and feasible outcome of these negotiations.

Few Israelis are better equipped than Tikva Honig-Parnass to debunk the racism that undergirds these policies and to disabuse liberal Zionists of the notion that this result could constitute the basis for a just and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace. Born in British Mandate Palestine, Honig-Parnass fought in the 1948 war, was secretary of the left-wing Zionist party Mapam and served in the Knesset as its representative from 1951 to 1954 before breaking ranks with Zionism in 1960 and joining Matzpen, the Israeli Socialist Organization.

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In her book *False Prophets of Peace*, Honig-Parnass sets out, in uncompromising language, “to refute the prevailing myths among progressive circles in the West about the Zionist Left in Israel” (p. 1). The myths which she persuasively demolishes include: that Israel can be both a democratic and Jewish state; that Israel bears no moral culpability for the Nakba—Israel’s dispossession and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948—and therefore no political responsibility toward Palestinian refugees; and that the establishment of a Palestinian state will usher in peaceful coexistence.

Instead, according to Honig-Parnass, the notion that Israel can be both Jewish and democratic, which relies on majoritarian arguments that are possible only because Israel denies millions of Palestinian refugees their right of return, “is a form of circular thinking in its most illogical expression: a democratic value (the rule of ‘the majority’) that legitimizes undemocratic policies to sustain this exact process” (pp. 42–43). She excoriates the “hypocritical stance” of “the great majority of the Zionist Left” in “supporting socialism and claiming to uphold universal human values, while at the same advocating ethnic cleansing” of Palestinians during and after Israel’s establishment (pp. 11–12). And she heaps scorn on the PLO for becoming the “full collaborationist leadership” that Israel “needed to confine the Palestinians onto their own South African Bantustan” (p. 166). Undoubtedly, Honig-Parnass’s assessments will be a bitter pill to swallow for adherents of a two-state resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Honig-Parnass is at her best, however, when analyzing the undemocratic and structurally discriminatory regime to which Israel subjects its Palestinian citizens, a subject that is too often ignored in many books dealing with Israel and the Palestinian people. She marshals statistics to show how Israel enforces, often through quasi-governmental institutions such as the Jewish Agency, discriminatory patterns of land use designed to privilege its Jewish citizens. For example, although

"Palestinians now comprise 72 percent of the population of the Galilee, they control only 16 percent of the land" (p. 39). She also demonstrates convincingly that attenuated progress toward civil rights for Palestinian citizens, often claimed by the Zionist left as evidence of Israel's democratic credentials, has not made a dent in Israel's refusal to accord them national rights. According to Honig-Parnass, "Unlike immigrant ethnic minorities, who are willing to be integrated into the state, its institutions, and its ideologies, and who will accept the hegemony of the majority group, the Palestinians demand more than just civil rights" (p. 55). She reminds her readers that "They are the indigenous people of the land, and they have no aspiration to integrate into the Zionist/Jewish state. The state was erected on their land, and, by definition, it denies them their national identity and national rights" (p. 55).

Honig-Parnass's narrative, however, tends to drag when she dissects the positions of various Zionist left, post-Zionist and post-modernist academics, as well as activists and organizations, nearly all of whom inevitably fail to measure up to her standards. At times, these disagreements seem abstruse, sometimes personal, and not particularly relevant for a general audience disconnected from the narrow Israeli academic venues in which these streams of thought are often debated.

In addition, the book could have been more meticulously copyedited. Bantustans are rendered as "Bandustans" (p. 52); Israel is stated to have unilaterally withdrawn from the Gaza Strip in "September 2006" rather than September 2005 (p. 40); and there are several examples of incomplete sentences and stray punctuation marks.

Despite these flaws, Honig-Parnass' book *False Prophets of Peace* is a welcome addition to a growing literature that persuasively explicates why Israeli-Palestinian peace has not been achieved to date and enunciates alternative principles of democracy and equality for finally attaining it.

#### GAY IDENTITIES IN ISRAELI CINEMA

**Soldiers, Rebels, and Drifters: Gay Representation in Israeli Cinema,** by Nir Cohen. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2012. x +199 pages.

Notes to p. 216. Bibliography to p. 234. Index to p. 254. \$27.95 paper.

#### *Reviewed by Colleen Jankovic*

Riding the recent wave of English-language Israeli cinema scholarship, Penn State University post-doctoral fellow and new *Jewish Film & New Media* journal co-editor Nir Cohen's multi-textual cultural history traces the emergence of mainstream gay Israeli cultural politics in cinema. Cohen contextualizes the gay identities that he analyzes on screen by theorizing Jewish-Israel's "imagined gay community" (p. 5) via its urban formation in (and of) Tel Aviv, its appearance in film, television, and print media, and its relation to the legal battles that define Israel's "gay 90s." Bunkered down with a national studies and film appreciation framework, the book underscores the problems that plague much of Israeli cinema scholarship today. In addition to a focus almost exclusively on Jewish-Israeli directors and defensive, contradictory politics, Cohen's book is further marred by an overabundance of plot summary and curious research oversights.<sup>1</sup> The book also suffers from a formulaic structure: large chunks of Cohen's writing are organized by lists of films, episodes, and eras, lacking connection to a strong line of argument. In addition, the book has an alarming number of poorly integrated and unanalyzed quotations, which are neither followed with Cohen's analysis of these statements, nor with a paraphrase

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1. Cohen excludes important recent works: Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007); Rebecca Stein, "Explosive: Scenes from Israel's Gay Occupation," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 4 (2010), pp. 517-536; and Jason Todd Ritchie, "Queer Checkpoints: Sexuality, Survival, and the Paradoxes of Sovereignty in Israel-Palestine," PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010.

that would link these other scholars' ideas to Cohen's own arguments.

Cohen distinctly departs from the intersectional queer critique of his predecessor Raz Yosef's groundbreaking *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (2004). While Cohen laments abandoning his own initial desire to be "inclusive" (p. 17), and critiques hegemonic gay Israeli activism's Ashkenazi and masculinist focus for its negation of "a diversity of gay voices and experiences" (p. 186), he belies his own narrow focus through a lack of care when referring to the racialized and gendered subjects marginal to his study. He missteps with nearly every reference to transgender subjects, in the worst instance using the phrase "men-turned-into-women" (p. 42).

Conceptual flaws permeate even the most effective and teachable chapter, "Real Lives: New Israeli Nonfiction Gay Cinema," which contributes to world cinema and HIV/AIDS scholarship and focuses on various nonfiction cinematic modes, including hybrid forms and "domestic ethnography." Cohen compellingly traces the narrative and formal deconstruction of identity in films like Anat Dotan's self-reflexive *Last Post*, but his complaint about the "marginalization" of gay identity in Elle Flanders' *Zero Degrees of Separation* quickly abandons the book's attention to cultural and historical context. As Hoda El Shakry notes, accusations that *Zero* was not queer enough occurred throughout its exhibition.<sup>2</sup> Complaining that Flanders neglects "important insight into the ways traditional Palestinian society oppresses its gay members"—an analysis of Palestinian society attributed solely to Jeffrey Weeks<sup>3</sup>—Cohen mistakenly proceeds to read Ruth Shatz and Adi Barash's *Gan*

(*Garden* in its U.S. distribution) as a window "from the Arab/Palestinian perspective" onto the reality of the film's male sex workers. He reverses his otherwise careful analysis of documentary cinema's "artificial, constructed, discursive nature," whereby "films expose the fabrications, prejudices, and artifices" of dominant society (p. 132).

Aspiring to pave the road for other minority-focused studies and thereby destabilize the "Israeli master narrative" (p. 199), Cohen ultimately only reinforces a narrative about Israeli cinema's formal and conceptual progress from stark propaganda and blind patriotism to universal themes and neo-liberal multiculturalism. Despite citing "gay men and lesbians' role in representing 'liberal' Israel to the world" (p. 1), Cohen ignores the Israeli Film Fund and Foreign Ministry's recent investments in gay cinema, unwilling or unable to detect a new complexity in dominant Israeli discourse. Donning his own soft anti-nationalist alibi, he projects that "confusion" onto Eytan Fox's *Song of the Siren*, determining that "as much as the film comes to validate a less nationalist, politicized life in Israel, its creators do preach, to a certain extent, a return to the old Zionist values" (p. 49). Lest the reader think Cohen an anti-Zionist, however, he contradicts this mild anti-occupation rhetoric with mentions of "the security fence" and "the neighborhood of Gilo," a colonial settlement (p. 184).

A cursory look at the last few years of Israeli pinkwashing<sup>4</sup> in cinema<sup>5</sup> would have cleared up a "confusion" more aptly

2. Hoda El Shakry, "Apocalyptic Pasts, Orwellian Futures: Elle Flanders's *Zero Degrees of Separation*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 4 (2010), pp. 611–621.

3. Joseph Massad cites Weeks among white gay scholars working on Muslim societies who supply unquestioned neo-Orientalist explanatory frameworks for their interpretations of Arab male sexuality and behaviors: "the Western model as the only liberatory telos to be applied universally is never interrogated by Weeks." See Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 165.

4. A term made more widely accessible in an op-ed by Sarah Schulman. See Sarah Schulman, "Israel and 'Pinkwashing'," *New York Times*, 22 November 2011. Also see Heike Schotten and Haneen Maikay, "Queers Resisting Zionism: On Authority and Accountability Beyond Homonationalism," *Jadaliyya*, 10 October 2012. <http://www.jadaliyya.com>.

5. Take, for instance, the 2012 calls to boycott Yariv Mozer's *Invisible Men*, which received Israeli consulate funding for its inclusion in North American film festivals such as the Vancouver Queer Film Festival and San Francisco's International LGBT Film Festival Frameline. See "Vancouver Queer Film Festival: Come Out Against Israeli Apartheid!," *PinkwashingIsrael.com*, 24 August 2012. <http://www.pinkwashingisrael.com>.

applied to scholars like Cohen who defend and reiterate, rather than conscientiously critique, Zionism's supposedly apolitical and universal tolerance for Ashkenazi and white gay citizens and tourists, its projection of homophobia onto Palestinian and Arab societies, and its denial of the ongoing colonial situation.

### IMAGINATIONS IN EXILE

**Seeking Palestine: New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home**, edited by Penny Johnson and Raja Shehadeh. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2013. vii + 202 pages. \$16.00 paper.

#### *Reviewed by Matthew Abraham*

Penny Johnson and Raja Shehadeh's edited collection *Seeking Palestine: New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home* brings together fourteen impressive essays by a variety of intellectuals, writers, poets, and activists to answer two questions: "How do Palestinians live, imagine, and think about home and exile six decades after the dismemberment of historic Palestine and in the complicated present tense of a transitory and truncated Palestine?" and "What happens when 'the idea of Palestine' that animated so many around the globe becomes an 'Authority' and Palestine a patchwork of divided territory?"

The contributors to this collection have dedicated their lives to exploring how Palestinians—whose stories of dispossession, loss, and exile resist Zionism's political dominance—might achieve what Edward Said called "the permission to narrate," a refusal to remain silent about the magnitude of the Palestinian communal loss in the aftermath of 1948. The main title of the collection, "Seeking Palestine," recognizes that the concept of Palestine is incomplete and still being

formed in and through the memories of Nakba survivors and their descendants. These exiles' relationships to a Palestine that was, a Palestine that is, and a Palestine still-to-be-formed emerge in the context of the creation of memories mediated by the complex dynamics of personal histories. As Rana Barakat writes in her "The Right to Wait," "Palestine, the symbol, is our homeland; Palestine, the idea, is our dream—these two are the claim of the location; Palestine, the place, is the reality of home or perhaps the impossibility of it" (p. 139).

To live as an exile is to live in a state of suspended animation, in a state of uncertainty and longing for a sense of home and comfort, even though this feeling recedes over time. For the Palestinian exile, one's experience is marked by innumerable ironies: the irony of watching one's homeland overtaken by those who continually seek to erase indigenous identifications with that land while denying the collective identity of that indigenous population; the irony of being denied a history as part of another community's supposed liberation project; and the irony of seeing people from throughout the world, with no connection to Palestine, "returning" home as citizens of the state of Israel, while Palestinians are deprived of the right to visit an ancestral home. Each of the essays in this collection deals with these ironies in creative and complex ways.

The contributors draw upon personal stories to convey how their exile from Palestine shapes their memories of the past, as well as their perceptions of events in the present. The condition of exile continually re-narrates the past and frames the present.

What strikes the reader of this collection is how the contributors transform the most mundane of events—the remnants of an old colonial building such as the Tegart Compound, which had been transformed into an Israeli military headquarters, an adventurous taxi ride in the occupied territories, a watch that stops ticking at an Israeli checkpoint—into meaningful memory pathways leading back to a connection in Palestine. For the contributors, Palestine exists as much more than a mere memory; it lives on in the daily experiences of those living under occupation and in the diaspora.

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For example, in her essay “Pushing at the Door: My Father’s Political Education and Mine,” Lila Abu-Lughod provides a touching remembrance of her late father Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, one of the foremost scholars on the question of Palestine. In reviewing her father’s political development, she comes to develop a greater sense of her identity in relation to Palestine: “To be a Palestinian in America is to learn to navigate this chasm in understandings of the world, to feel the hostility. For much of my life, being Palestinian could be put in the background. The luxury of the diaspora. The fruits of being second generation. The consequences of being mixed. But it was always there, to be managed” (p. 55).

*Seeking Palestine: New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home* makes a significant contribution to the existing literature dealing with how indigenous populations transform trauma, absence, and loss into radical intervention.

#### TWO FACES OF THE PALESTINIAN MEMOIR

**Born in Jerusalem, Born Palestinian: A Memoir**, by Jacob J. Nammam. Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2012. vii + 137 pages. Epilogue to p. 147. Maps and notes to p. 152. \$15.00 paper.

**Occupation Diaries**, by Raja Shehadeh. New York and London: OR Books, 2012. 205 pages. Acknowledgments to p. 207. \$18.00 paper.

#### *Reviewed by Steven Salaita*

The memoir has been a strong component of the modern Palestinian literary tradition. The Anglophone memoir has been especially popular within the last two decades, with such notable titles as Edward Said’s *Out of Place* and Izzeldin Abuelaish’s *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor’s Journey on the Road to Peace and Human Dignity*. Such memoirs range from political reflection (e.g. Sari Nusseibeh’s *Once Upon a Country*:

*A Palestinian Life*) to more abstract, artistic narrative (e.g. Mourid Barghouti’s *I Saw Ramallah*), sometimes combining the two styles (as in the case of Ghada Karmi’s *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*). Two notable additions to this tradition have recently been published: Jacob J. Nammam’s *Born in Jerusalem, Born Palestinian* and Raja Shehadeh’s *Occupation Diaries*. Both titles extend the parameters of the English-language Palestinian memoir.

One cannot help but notice that in the modern Palestinian memoir, the authors often loudly proclaim a cultural/national identity, either through the use of a place-name or the term “Palestinian” as a distinct ethnic category. Such cultural proclamations indicate that the modern Palestinian memoir is inherently politicized, as evidenced by the age-old habit shared by writers of colonized nations of asserting peoplehood as simple act of straightforward subversion.

This phenomenon continues in the work of Nammam and Shehadeh. Nammam emphasizes his Palestinian birth, and thus his moral claim to ownership of disputed territory, while Shehadeh combines the reflective medium of diary writing with topical observations, indicating that reflection on one’s life in Palestine is difficult, perhaps impossible, without also thinking about the politics of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Nammam is not immune to this phenomenon. For both authors, the complexities of Palestinian identity—an identity in exile in the case of Nammam—pervade their stories and reflections. Likewise, for both, emphasis on the preservation of heritage is accompanied by the belief that Palestinian culture cannot be fully preserved in the absence of lasting political liberation.

Whereas Shehadeh is firmly embedded in Palestine, some of Nammam’s story takes place in the United States. He spends considerable time on his family’s backstory, however. Explaining that “the Nammamreh [plural of Nammam] of Palestine were one of the leading families in al-Quds,” Nammam highlights a continued connection to Palestine even for those who emigrated: “The extended family members who remained in Palestine after the start of the Israeli occupation were tied to the land and each possessed a key to a home in Palestine”

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(p. 4). For Nammar, these keys signify a historic attachment to the land of Palestine that transcends the physical exigencies of geographic dispersal.

In many ways, *Born in Jerusalem, Born Palestinian* is a traditional immigrant success story, of the variety so prominent in the American literary landscape. Nammar came to the United States in his early twenties, having been displaced from West Jerusalem along with his family seven years prior. His early years in Palestine were not always idyllic, but they were happy, and Nammar recalls those years with a fondness he communicates well to the reader.

Nammar was educated in Catholic schools and explains that his “parents placed great value on Christian upbringing and education” (p. 19). However, like the vast majority of Palestinians of the mid-twentieth century, national identity and good interfaith relations overpowered any inclination his family may have had to sectarianism. Nammar’s father, Yousef, had distaste for ethno-religious conflict, perhaps because of his unpopular marriage to Nammar’s mother, Tuma, born in Armenia and thus unsuitable, according to his family, as a spouse.

Nammar presents this background alongside a conversational history of Palestine, told, unsurprisingly (and compellingly), from the point of view of a dispossessed family. Readers do not hear in detail how outsider status influenced Nammar’s adult life in the United States, but such a subtext pervades Nammar’s maturation into a successful businessman. In total, *Born in Jerusalem, Born Palestinian* is less about Nammar, the American businessman, and more about Nammar, the Palestinian child born amid a tumultuous and tragic moment in his people’s history.

The structure of *Occupation Diaries* differs substantially. Both books are about Palestinian life and both, in addition to being well-written, illuminate profound devotion to the future of Palestine, but Shehadeh turns in more of an abstract effort that consciously employs literary devices to achieve a distinct aesthetic. A noteworthy device of *Occupation Diaries* is its minimalism. The structure of the book is exactly as its title promises, a series of entries organized in chronological days, a diary. Shehadeh

includes no introduction or framing narratives, unlike the more conventional memoir structure in his 2002 book, *Strangers in the House*. All context exists within the diary itself, which includes dates and fabulous photographs, both landscape and portraiture. The only text outside the format of diary is in a brief postscript, dated 6 May 2012, sharing Shehadeh’s reflections on the death of Sabri Garaib, whose case was Shehadeh’s first project at Al-Haq, the human rights organization he continues to lead. The book begins on 13 December 2009 and ends on 29 December 2011, a period leading up to a Palestinian statehood bid at the United Nations (UN).

Shehadeh does not thematize the statehood bid, but uses it as a consistent reference point. His reflections range from political outrage to the beauty and restfulness of the Palestinian landscape. Both elements are evident in the first entry, where Shehadeh discusses the pleasures of a picnic alongside an inter-cine squabble over religious versus secular comportments that almost led to a fistfight. On its own, the Islamist-secularist binary is too simplistic, but Shehadeh develops his assessment of internal Palestinian politics with admirable nuance.

*Occupation Diaries* has no consistent motif. As one would expect from an actual diary, Shehadeh sometimes employs stream-of-consciousness. Although his thoughts can appear random, however, they all cohere around matters of Palestinian culture and politics. The format allows for frank observation of the sort one rarely finds in scholarship or even in op-eds. About the Hebrew language, for instance, Shehadeh declares, “I cannot stand to hear Hebrew, which has become the language of interrogations, of summonses, of encounters with the military, and of rude soldiers giving orders” (p. 103).

Despite the forthrightness of this observation, Shehadeh evinces no specific political loyalties. He mentions dozens of Israeli Jewish friends and makes no indication of rejecting the very presence of Israel. He does not advocate for a particular party or ideology. He gives readers plenty of opportunities to agree or disagree with a sentiment, proposal,

or ethic, which enhances the enjoyment and usefulness of reading.

Both *Born in Jerusalem, Born Palestinian* and *Occupation Diaries* are highly recommended. Either title might work well as a supplement to scholarship or journalism in courses dealing with Palestine or Palestinian or Anglophone Arab literature, as well as for a pleasurable read.

Of special interest is the contribution to and continued development of the modern Palestinian memoir by Nammar and Shehadeh. Both authors draw from and extend a lively and diverse component of Palestinian literary production. Many have argued that the health of any culture can be discerned by the breadth and depth of its art. If that is true, then Nammar and Shehadeh's books indicate that Palestinian culture continues to flourish despite the physical, economic, and emotional effects of dispossession.

#### RE-PACKAGING PALESTINE: TOURIST LITERATURE

**Walking Palestine: 25 Journeys into the West Bank**, by Stefan Szepesi. Forward by Raja Shehadeh. Interlink Walking Guides. Northampton, Massachusetts: Interlink Books, 2012. 272 pages. \$22.95 paper. **Palestine (Bradt Travel Guides)**, by Sarah Irving. Chalfont St. Peter: Bradt Travel Guides/Guilford, Conn.: Globe Pequot Press, 2011. viii + 328 pages. \$25.99 paper.

##### *Reviewed by Glenn Bowman*

One normally expects a guidebook to provide a preview of place, emphasizing its attractions while suggesting means of avoiding problem sites or situations. A guidebook to Palestine has a more complex task. Whether covering solely the West Bank of Palestine, as *Walking Palestine* does, or encompassing the West Bank and Gaza Strip with forays into "Palestinian Communities in Israel,"

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as the Bradt guide does, a guidebook to Palestine must convince its readers that a territory under military occupation, blotched with the spreading cancer of settlements, and known through media coverage of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) attacks and 'terrorist' resistance, is safe to visit and likely to reward the effort. Both of these texts manage that task, but the strategies they follow in doing so, and the different ways that they "package" place, suggest very different audiences.

Both Stefan Szepesi and Sarah Irving work to counter stereotyped images of the place and its people: Szepesi organizes itineraries challenging "the one-dimensional view of Palestine as merely a jumble of small enclaves dominated by concrete and dusty streets, its inhabitants battered by occupation, internal conflict and poverty" (p. 18), while Irving comments that "most Palestinians don't want to be seen first and foremost as a 'political issue'" (p. viii). Szepesi, however, challenges that view with "different images: green rolling hills and spectacular gorges; mysterious caves and ruins going back centuries, . . . charming villages, good restaurants and very hospitable people" (p. 18), while Irving continues her comment with ". . . even if they certainly want the situation they have to live in recognised by the international community, and . . . want justice and peace for themselves and their children" (p. viii). The difference is symptomatic of the authors' respective backgrounds.

Stefan Szepesi is a Dutch economist, initially posted to Jerusalem to advise on European Union (EU) aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA), who later joined the Quartet as an economic advisor to Tony Blair. While his prose style in *Walking Palestine* is not afflicted by his professional calling, one cannot help but sense that his links with Blair and Blair's neoliberal 'packaging' of Palestine shape the vision that he relays. Blair writes on the back cover that "Stefan's book shows what a beautiful place Palestine is and how rewarding it is, for Palestinians and visitors alike, to explore its natural and cultural heritage on foot."

Raja Shehadeh, whose 2008 *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape* is evoked by Szepesi's title, puts Blair's anodyne statement into context

when he writes in the foreword that “much of the landscape in the West Bank is rapidly being destroyed by road works, expansion of existing cities and the . . . hastily built Jewish settlements that stand out as artificial impositions on the delicate features and contours of this ancient land” (p. 8).

In his own book, Shehadeh juxtaposes a beautiful, historic and vulnerable landscape with a colonizing project indifferent to place and people, thereby accentuating the tragedy and promoting resistance; Szepesi, packaging the territory for nature tourism, attempts—while not denying occupation—to minimize its impact. He notes that violent incidents which might endanger walkers “usually take place at specific flashpoints of conflict: Israeli checkpoints, areas close to the separation barrier or areas where Israeli settlements or outposts are located closely [sic] to Palestinian villages or in some cases in or near to or on Palestinian land . . . [and points out that] the trails in this book intentionally avoid these areas and . . . you are advised to do the same” (p. 25). While he doesn’t ignore the occupation and its impact (something that would be impossible to do anywhere in the occupied Palestinian territories), his attempts to provide a ‘balanced’ narrative give rise to some jarring representations. When he maps a route through the Battir region (noting but underplaying its enclavement), he advises walkers not to cross the railway line into ‘Israel’s Jerusalem Forest’ since “if you do, Israel’s security folk will come down the hill for you faster than you can say *baitinjan battiri*” (p. 248).

Sarah Irving’s relationship to Palestine and its politics is radically different; she contributes to *Electronic Intifada* and has published *Gaza Beneath the Bombs* (2010, with Sharyn Lock) and *Leila Khaled: Icon of Palestinian Liberation* (2013). Such a genealogy might lead one to fear that her guide would veer towards the overtly political, ignoring the region’s wealth of natural and cultural treasures. However, like Bradt’s previous guide to Palestine (Henry Stedman, 2000, discontinued in the wake of the al-Aqsa intifada), Irving’s guide offers an alluring introduction to place and people without downplaying the politics of the situation and the risks—and moral quandaries—

that they present to visitors. Irving covers the whole of what had been Mandate Palestine, placing the Palestinian people and their culture at the heart of the book rather than restricting herself to the limited, and retreating, regions that remain ‘safe’ for tourism.

Szepesi’s text, of course, is about landscape walks and has a largely rural focus, peripheralizing the towns and cities that provide Irving with much of her material. Even so, when they both visit the same site—such as Solomon’s Pools outside of Artas—their descriptions are tellingly different. Szepesi dedicates a full page to the Pools but concludes by condemning “a Palestinian business venture” which built the adjoining convention center and proposes to build “a large entertainment area right onto one of Palestine’s most spectacular archaeological sites” (p. 224). Irving describes the Pools and their history, noting their partial renovation and the plans to develop a resort and convention center, but closes by mentioning that the project has “been put back to the tune of nearly \$1 million by damage inflicted by Israeli shelling during the Second Intifada” (p. 161).

There are a couple of relatively minor mistakes in Irving’s guide: St. Jerome is not buried underneath the Church of the Nativity (p. 154) but in Rome’s church of St. Mary Major, and while Copts may constitute the largest Christian population *in the Arab world*, they are not “the largest Christian denomination in the world” (p. 99). But all in all, the book is a rich, detailed and compelling guide giving readers a fulsome view of a fascinating land and people damaged by occupation.

Both books are rich in resources for the visitor, providing descriptions and contact details not only of restaurants and lodgings, but, more importantly, of NGOs, environmental, cultural and political associations, and websites that can further enrich a visit. Both attend to problems of getting into, and travelling within, the territories (although Irving, unlike Szepesi, writes of specific aggressions such as Israeli customs officials stealing foreign passports to use in secret service assassination plots). Szepesi’s guide is for walkers, and as such provides detailed itineraries, ‘field tested’ by himself and friends. One wonders, however,



whether its emphasis on attracting tourists might sometimes endanger those following its instructions. In his description of walking Wadi Qelt, Szepesi uses the Adam and Almon settlements as landmarks, but comments of encounters on the route only that “you will likely come across Bedouins” herding goats and sheep (p. 201). Irving, describing the same walk, emphasizes that “armed guards from the nearby settlements now enforce a sunset curfew . . . [and] settlers . . . clamp down on access, claiming that the wadi and surrounding hills are ‘closed’ to hikers at night” (p. 131). *Walking Palestine* may have a very specific nature-loving audience in mind, but that audience too would appreciate knowing of the risks to which the encompassing political context is likely to expose them.

#### NARRATING 1967

**The 1967 Arab-Israeli War: Origins & Consequences**, edited by Wm. Roger Louis & Avi Shlaim. Cambridge University Press, 2012. 313 pages. Index to p. 325. \$29.99 paper. **The Six-Day War & Israeli Self-Defense: Questioning the Legal Basis for Preventive War**, by John Quigley. Cambridge University Press, 2013. 192 pages. Notes to p. 243. Index to p. 266. \$29.99 paper.

#### *Reviewed by Thomas Reifer*

Though seldom acknowledged, today’s Middle East and world live in the shadow not only of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1948, but also of the second defeat of combined Arab armies in the 1967 war, a blow sounding the death knell of pan-Arabism, the rise of political Islam, and a more independent Palestinian nationalism. The war saw Israel’s emergence as a U.S. strategic asset, with the United States sending billions of dollars in arms and assistance annually, in a strategic partnership unequalled in world history. Equally unappreciated is

the degree to which the West has increasingly portrayed Israel’s first strike against Egypt as exemplifying Israeli self-defense. This failure to recognize and condemn Israel’s initiation of war, as John Quigley compellingly argues, helps legitimize Israel’s over 40 years of illegal occupation and rule over millions of Palestinians, as well as the more recent aggressive U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, not to mention Israeli and U.S. use of drone assassinations.

As Noam Chomsky noted in *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel & the Palestinians*, Michael Walzer, in *Just & Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, while admitting Egypt was unlikely to attack Israel and the latter’s recognition of this fact, nevertheless considers Israel’s surprise 1967 military attack as ‘just’. The attack is the only one in his survey of 2,500 years of warfare that he considers a “clear case of legitimate anticipation,” of resistance to aggression, and thus a just war (p. 85). Moreover, Walzer argues: “It is worth setting down some cases about which we have I think, no doubts: the German attack on Belgium in 1914, the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, the Japanese attack on China, the German and Italian interventions in Spain, the Russian invasion of Finland, the Nazi conquests of Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, Belgium, and Holland, the Russians invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, the Egyptian challenge to Israel in 1967. . . .” (p. 292). Thus Israeli aggression becomes resistance to aggression, with Egypt comparable to Nazi Germany, as Iran is often considered today.

To be sure, as these books show, the war’s origins are complex, including various cross-border raids and attacks by Arab-supported Palestinian fedayeen, Israel, and its Arab neighbors. Quigley cites Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan’s discussion of how some eighty percent or more of the incidents started in the Golan Heights: “We would send a tractor to plow . . . knowing in advance that the Syrians would start shooting. . . . And then we’d fire back, and later send in the Air Force” (p. 10). One such incident took place on 7 April 1967, leading to the Israeli shooting down of six Syrian MIG-21 aircraft.

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Avi Shlaim, author of two generally excellent chapters on Israel and Jordan, describes an Israeli "Generals' Revolt:" "Throughout the crisis, most . . . army leaders were chomping at the bit; they had the scent of battle in their nostrils and were not about to turn back . . . The military bore a large share of the responsibility for the escalation of the conflict with Syria, and this conflict was the trigger for a general war. . . ." (p. 24). Indeed, on 12 May 1967, Israeli chief of staff Yitzhak Rabin gave a newspaper interview in which he "threatened to occupy Damascus and overthrow the Syrian regime," while many of the Arab states made their own blood curdling threats against Israel, egged on by inter-Arab and inter-Palestinian competition in this era of pan-Arabism and the emergence of Palestinian nationalism and radicalism (p. 25).

Around 13 May, the Soviets informed Egypt of Israel's deployment of up to twelve brigades on the Israel-Syrian border in preparation for an attack on Syria. While these numbers were wildly inaccurate, reports of a possible Israeli strike on Syria did have some credibility, as both books note. Egypt subsequently moved troops into the Sinai near the armistice line, while successfully asking for the removal of the United Nations Emergency Force from the Sinai and Gaza Strip and announcing restrictions on the supply of strategic materials to Israel via the Straits of Tiran. Israel had long considered such a move to be a *casus belli* for war, despite its ability to resupply through other ports and the legal ambiguity of this action, given the uncertain status of the Straits. Cross-border raids included Israel's largest military operation since Suez; its 13 November 1966 West Bank Samu raid (which took place following the 4 November Egyptian-Syrian defense pact) killed twenty-one Jordanian soldiers and destroyed 118 houses. This raid marked an escalation of the conflict that eventually led to a 30 May 1967 Egyptian-Jordanian defense pact, with Jordanian forces put under Nasser's command.

When the director of Israel's Mossad, Meir Amit, secretly visited the United States right before the war to let the United States know of Israeli plans, U.S. Pentagon Chief Robert McNamara, in consultation with President Johnson, "in

effect . . . gave Israel a green light to launch a preemptive strike against Egypt" (Shlaim, p. 38). Yet as Quigley documents, after Israel's initiation of war, it portrayed itself as the victim of an Egyptian surprise attack. In fact, Israel's own 5 June strikes were decisive, destroying most of Egypt's, Syria's, and Jordan's air forces and airfields. With Israel's first strike, reprisals and counter-reprisals, along with Egypt's mutual defense treaties, Israel now entered into wars with Syria and Jordan—the latter "a reluctant belligerent" (Shlaim p. 99). Then, notwithstanding a mandatory (UN) Security Council ceasefire, Israel went on to occupy the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, egged on by Israel's "settlement lobby," creating a massive new wave of Palestinian refugees (Shlaim, p. 49).

The Louis and Shlaim volume is particularly good on many aspects of the 1967 crisis, including the extent to which Egypt's armed forces were massively tied down in Yemen. Yet the volume is uneven, especially regarding the gap between the empirical evidence cited and the conclusions of some of the authors. For example, Avi Shlaim, one of Israel's noted "new historians," while acknowledging that Israel first attacked Egypt, somehow arrives at the astonishing conclusion that "the June 1967 War was a defensive war, not an offensive war, let alone an expansionist war," going on to say "the June War was neither a classic war of choice nor an unambiguous war of no-choice, but something in between—an inescapable war of choice" (pp. 54–55).

In 1967, Israel was the only country in the world to argue that its attack was defensive, despite subsequent claims by numerous international legal experts that UN inaction at the time proves Israel's self-defense claims, now virtually taken for granted in the West. As Quigley shows, though, the United States nevertheless stymied condemnation of Israel's aggression in the UN Security Council. Israel's 1967 attack—albeit in clear violation of international law and the UN Charter—was increasingly framed in the West as one of self-defense in a chorus joined enthusiastically by Western intellectuals. Yet many supporters of Israel's 1967 attack seem unable to honestly explore whether the moral and ethical

consequences that flowed from this aggressive war of expansion—over forty years of instability, illegal occupation and successive wars—were truly worse than the alternatives.

Since the 1967 war, there have been many opportunities for peace, as called for in another outcome of the war, UN Resolution 242, via a two-state solution and a return to Israel's pre-1967 borders. Yet Israel's ostensible willingness to embrace peace and security in lieu of continued territorial expansion, illegal occupation, and related wars, including wars of aggression—long repeated as fact by Western intellectuals, statespersons and court historians—has been revealed to be an empty promise. Avi Raz has compellingly documented this in *The Bride & the Dowry: Israel, Jordan, & the Palestinians in the Aftermath of the June 1967 War* and his *Diplomatic History* article, "The Generous Peace Offer that was Never Offered: The Israeli Cabinet Resolution of June 19, 1967." As the world approaches the hundredth anniversary of the outbreak of World War I, echoing today's emphasis on preemptive and preventive wars, including a possible U.S. and/or Israeli attack against Iran, these two volumes offer important cautionary lessons in their dangers.

#### EUROPE'S WANING INFLUENCE

##### **Inglorious Disarray: Europe, Israel and the Palestinians since 1967,**

by Rory Miller. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. 194 pages. Notes to p. 242. Bibliography to p. 254. Index to p. 275. \$35.00 cloth.

##### *Reviewed by Philip Leech*

At the UN General Assembly in November 2011, the vote over whether to elevate Palestine to a non-member observer state effectively split Europe in half. Of the twenty-seven European Union (EU) members, fourteen elected to support the Palestinian Liberation Organization's (PLO) request, twelve abstained, and the Czech Republic sided with Israel, the

United States, Canada, and five other countries in voting against the motion. In a statement issued on the same day as the vote, Baroness Catherine Ashton, the European Commission's spokesperson for external affairs, reiterated the EU's support for Palestinian statehood "when appropriate" and "as part of a solution to the conflict."<sup>1</sup> Recalling the 1999 Berlin Declaration, Ashton also highlighted the fact that European advocacy for a 'two-state solution' had preceded both the United States' shift to formally accept that as a goal and the celebrated Arab Peace Initiative.

As Rory Miller's *Inglorious Disarray: Europe, Israel and the Palestinians since 1967* recounts, the EU could also look back to various other occasions when European diplomacy led the way to what would later become the mainstream positions in Washington, Jerusalem, and the Arab capitals. Particularly groundbreaking was the Venice Declaration in 1980 that informally recognized the PLO as a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, a decade before the U.S.-led Madrid Conference, where Palestinian representatives merely comprised part of the Jordanian delegation. Yet, as Miller explains, while Venice represented a "highpoint" in the European Community's "attempt to develop a 'distinctive role' in the search for Middle East peace," both its conception and execution were indicative of the kind of weakness that still plagues Europe's relationship to the conflict today (p. 94).

Though Venice demonstrated that it was possible for the Europeans to speak coherently on the issue, this achievement was born out of necessity—an energy dependent relationship with the oil producing states and frustration at U.S.-Egyptian bilateralism at Camp David—rather than conviction. Furthermore, notwithstanding its apparent boldness, Venice contained too few significant measures to actually impose Europe's will on the course of events; the PLO was not formally recognized and Israel was

1. European Union, "Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union on the Middle East Peace Process," news release, 29 November 2012, <http://www.council.europa.eu>.

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left merely antagonized, with little in the way of meaningful restraints imposed on its actions.

If Venice was the peak of coherent European efforts to provide leadership, or at least an independent alternative, then what followed was a steep decline. As Miller argues, Europe remained essentially sidelined during the escalation of conflict during the 1980s and in the post-cold war era. Though divided over the two wars in Iraq, the community—battered, as well, by the torrid experience of the disintegration of Yugoslavia—accepted the United States' dominance, once the diplomatic efforts of the Oslo process became public, and effectively bankrolled the U.S. leadership of the 'Road Map' (beginning in 2003) despite the fact that a similar plan emanating from Danish representatives a year earlier had been ignored (p. 161).

However, perhaps the epitome of European ineffectuality was the division and eventual meek acceptance of the U.S. insistence on an aid boycott of the Palestinians that followed Hamas' election victory in 2006. In accepting this, the EU not only demonstrated the same profound hypocrisy as the United States—in trumpeting the virtue of democratic elections only to reject their results—but also the weakness of an organization unable to withstand pressure from across the Atlantic.

Rory Miller is a professor of Middle East and Mediterranean Studies at King's College in London. His previous contributions to the field have focused on British imperial history in Palestine and on Irish relations to Israel, the Palestinians and the conflict. Miller is also a frequent contributor to the public debate through articles in the press and popular journals on international affairs. *Inglorious Disarray* delivers a lucid and meticulously researched account of the European relationship with the Israel-Palestine conflict since 1967. Resting on an array of sources, including confidential memoranda, academic literature and media articles, the book provides a broad and readable survey of events during that period. As such, it serves not only as a valuable research focus in its own right but also as a useful source of context for narrower studies on either the particular relations between European states and

the conflict or on the stuttering emergence of a European foreign policy.

Perhaps the key lesson to learn from Miller's account is that, though European hands are clearly deeply tied to the structure and form of contemporary politics in Israel-Palestine (and the broader Middle East), the grip they hold over emerging events has grown evidently feeble. Furthermore, it is the incoherence of European foreign policy-making itself that is, in part, responsible for that weakness.

#### AN AMERICAN LEGACY IN JERUSALEM

**Anna's House: The American Colony in Jerusalem**, by Odd Karsten Tveit. Nicosia, Cyprus: Rimal Publications. Translated by Peter Scott-Hansen. 399 pages. Index to p. 406. \$14.00 paper.

##### *Reviewed by Penny Johnson*

In 1881, Anna and Horatio Spafford led a small band of Americans, mostly from Chicago, to Jerusalem to await Jesus' appearance on the Mount of Olives, heralding the Kingdom of Heaven. The Second Coming, its date calculated using a large tape measure on the Great Pyramid in Cairo by a maverick Scottish astronomer, failed to materialize (p. 25). Nonetheless, the Overcomers, as they called themselves, joined later by another wave of Swedish immigrants, went on to found the American Colony, then a religious and charitable settlement (although resolutely non-missionary) and now a luxury hotel in East Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. After the death of Horatio, the charismatic "Mother Anna," deploying both strength of character and frequent divine revelations, was firmly in charge of the Colony's charitable work, properties and religious and personal conduct—banning, for example, both marriage and medicine for twenty-two years, until her own daughter, Bertha, wanted to wed.

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Veteran Norwegian journalist Odd Karsten Tveit, drawing on the Colony's archives and a substantial number of memoirs of varying reliability, tells its story with a reporter's eye for interesting detail, colorful characters—of whom there are a plethora—and the telling twist of fate. However, the reader wonders what story Tveit intends to tell. Is it a quintessentially American saga with Jerusalem, as ideal city and iconic backdrop? Or is the story of the American Colony meant to substantially add to our understanding of Jerusalem's late Ottoman and Mandate history?

Certainly, stories of a charismatic cult, a paranoid U.S. consul charging the settlers with lurid sexual conduct, several American lawsuits reported in sensational press, and a utopian commune ending in a profitable commercial activity and acrimonious property disputes have a decidedly American ring. There are also moments in Tveit's account of the Colony's everyday interactions with Jerusalem life, but too often Tveit treats these two dimensions separately. Those seeking Jerusalem may feel bogged down in the first chapters recounting Anna and Horatio's life in the United States, including a dramatic account of Anna's tragic loss of four children during a terrifying shipwreck on the Atlantic in 1873. Those intrigued by the Colony's characters and progression may wonder why they are reading a vivid, if standard, account of Herzl's audiences with Kaiser Wilhelm or Churchill's visit to Palestine in 1922. A number of signal characters, including Djemal Pasha, General Gordon, T.E. Lawrence, and various Husseinis, do weave in and out of the American Colony story—there is even a brief but charged encounter between Fawzi Kawukji and Bertha Spafford at a checkpoint near al-Bireh in 1936 (p. 364). However, the integration of the story of Jerusalem and of the Colony remains quite uneven.

Although there is a brief discussion of the "Jerusalem Fever" that affected individual eccentric Westerners and religious colonies alike, the Colony is not examined in the context of either the other European religious settlements in Palestine at the time or the wave of millenarian and utopian movements in the late nineteenth century (pp. 76–77). The two strands most successfully intertwine in the

account of World War I in Jerusalem, where Tveit vividly brings to life a city under siege by military rule and conscription, hunger, disease, and locusts, with the Colony (the ban on medicine lifted) playing a significant role in nursing the wounded and afflicted. Tveit warmly acknowledges the assistance of Jerusalem historians Albert Aghazarian and George Hintlian, and one suspects that the latter's detailed knowledge of the war period enriched Tveit's narrative. Tveit is less successful in his portrayal of the 1936–39 revolt, when life at the American Colony was abandoned. It would have been interesting to know how the Colony, already by then a rather upscale tourist destination, weathered that major storm.

Indeed, another, less elevated, strand linking the two narratives is the development of tourism and the commercial enterprises surrounding it. The registration of the American Colony Store at the New Grand Hotel at Jaffa Gate as a private company under the names of Bertha Spafford's husband and another Colony resident was a source of great controversy among other Colony members who had given all their property to the common cause. Under the leadership of Bertha Spafford, as strong-minded as her mother, if considerably less religious, the American Colony Hotel became the scene of elaborate parties in the heated social scene of the British Mandate, although she continued and even expanded the Colony's educational activities.

The hotel—and even its bar—survived the 1948 Nakba and its aftermath, as did several of Bertha Spafford's charitable enterprises, despite the rapid disintegration of the Colony community. But one of the most telling moments of integration between Arab and American comes in a moment of mutual illusion at the end of Tveit's story. In June 1948, Bertha travels to the United States "with the blessings of several prominent Palestinians and church leaders" in order "to present the Arabs' case" (p. 389). Her advocacy for the Arab cause is a long way from Mother Anna's view of Zionist immigration as the "ingathering of exiles" and the first step to the Kingdom of Heaven. Spafford brought a personal letter from King Abdullah and requested a meeting with President Harry Truman to deliver it. Unsurprisingly, there

was no meeting and the letter was returned unopened.

It is fortunate that small presses still survive to publish interesting (and perhaps eccentric) books out of the

mainstream. On a minor note, it is unfortunate that the index in this particular publication is plagued by incorrect pagination, which hopefully will be corrected in another edition.