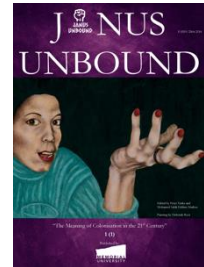

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Coinciding with the onset of the Arab Spring in 2011 and the protests that continued to sweep across the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, the past decade has seen a growing number of English-language studies dealing with Palestinian literature. Some scholars trace specific genres, like the short story or the novel, as aesthetic and political creations in relation to pivotal moments in Palestinian history—the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 Naksa, the 1987-93 First Intifada, and the 2000-05 Second Intifada (Farag 2016; Abu-Manneh 2016)—while others examine Palestinian writings in conjunction with other media (film) or national literatures (American, Israeli) within wider theoretical frameworks, such as postcolonial feminism, diasporic studies, or world literature (Ball 2012; Qabaha 2018; Lustig 2019). Much more scholarship is in the pipeline, as seen in the notes on the contributors to *Post-Millennial Palestine: Literature, Memory, and Resistance*. This edited volume of ten essays is a welcome and timely contribution to this critical corpus. Its most unique feature is its focus on mainly 21st century literary productions by second- or third-generation survivors of the Nakba; relatively new writers who are equally yet differently invested in the cause and idea of Palestine when compared to canonical authors such as Mahmoud Darwish, Emile Habibi, Fadwa Tuqan, Samira Azzam, and Ghassan Kanafani, to mention but a few. *Post-Millennial Palestine* takes as its starting point the derailed Oslo Accords of 1993, which could not but have induced a contemporary sensibility and poetics in the face of the failed peace process and the relentless encroachment on Palestinian land in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, accompanied by daily violations of the human and political rights of the occupied. This collection was published only a few months before the latest assault on Gaza in May 2021, a tragic event which, in cities around the world, triggered enormous shows of solidarity with Palestinians, as well as a renewed commitment to their just cause for statehood (whether through a one-state or a two-state solution).

The hyphen in the title of this collection is significant, one that can be viewed in connection with that in “post-colonial.” While all Arab nations regained their independence from British, French, or Italian colonial rule in the middle decades of the last century, Palestine was forcibly taken over by British-supported Israeli settlers who declared it a Zionist state in May 1948, resulting in the displacement of over 750,000 native inhabitants. Since decolonization, intellectuals and cultural workers from countries neighboring Palestine have had ample time to digest their various traumas by narrativizing their respective (r)evolutions in complex yet sufficiently linear trajectories in which the once oppressed become *post-colonial* subjects. Sudanese author Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1966) is a case in point.

No such “fusion” of past, present, and future has been possible for Palestinians whose lives continue to be punctured by loss but also by various expressions of resistance (*muqawama*) and steadfastness (*sumud*). The inability—for lack of sufficient time—to make or see events somehow congeal so that they may be interwoven into a more coherent national narrative is perhaps best illustrated by the announcement of the Third Intifada on three occasions: in 2008, 2012, and 2015. In line with earlier authors and scholars, here the contributors assert that the Nakba is an ongoing event that forces Palestinians, both those who never left and those in the diaspora, to remain inside this inaugural rupture, thus (re)experiencing the catastrophe every day. Paradoxically, however, since the Second Intifada—marking the turn of the third millennium that witnessed more visible power relations (the Separation Wall constructed in 2002) but also a greater global awareness (the launching of the BDS Movement in 2005)—(pro-) Palestinian writers and artists have had to contrive new mode(l)s of both remembering and reimagining this open wound, an act signaled by the hyphen in “post-millennial.” Collectively, they showcase Paul Ricœur’s definition of anamnesis, an intentional act of re-remembering (*remémoration*) required to activate a future-oriented historical (and legal) claim. To varying degrees, they exhibit what Carol Fadda-Conrey dubs a translocal consciousness that connects the here and there, the then and now, the personal and the political, the real and the remembered/imagined (2014, 108). More than any other literary corpus, the Palestinian one resembles Janus, the Roman god with one face looking forward and another looking backward.

In his foreword to *Post-Millennial Palestine*, Bashir Abu-Manneh explains why Palestinian texts, many of which are either diasporic or by non-Palestinians, are multilingual, written mostly in Arabic and in English, but also in other European languages. Yet, he gives examples of only Arabo- and Anglophone ones. He argues that writings from inside and outside Palestine are complementary in charting the beleaguered entity’s common destiny. In the introduction, the two editors contend that this collection “negotiates the urgency for Palestinians to reclaim and retain their heritage in a continually unstable and fretful present” (9) with a view to the future—conforming with Ilan Pappé’s assertion that the dramatic changes on the ground after 2000 prompt “the need to look for a new conversation about Palestine” (2015, 10). In so doing, these texts display a new “language” that furnishes, pragmatically, counter-histories aimed at combating “official” narratives imposed by Israeli settler-colonialism. In this sense, Nabil Anani’s colorful *Mother’s Embrace* (featuring a Palestinian woman in a traditional

thobe hugging Jerusalem as though it was her child) on the book's cover is emblematic. Invoking Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the editors argue further that historical incidents related to the Palestinian question are rhizomatic insofar as any new point of rupture remains relational to its historical foundations.

The volume is divided into three parts. Part I comprises four chapters on the theme of "Palestinian Archives: Catastrophe, Exile, and Life Writing." In the first chapter, Tahrir Hamdi investigates the reconfiguration of Late Style resistance, at once an attitude and an aesthetic principle, in the oeuvres of Edward Said, Mahmoud Darwish, and Mourid Barghouti, contending that these intellectuals' works foreground an "oppositional criticism in the face of divisionist agendas" (31). Marked by anger and a refusal to succumb to old age and death, this "lateness" is also practiced by contemporary authors who resist dispossession in the form of a metaphorical lateness based on an awareness of how endings (must) constitute new beginnings in the struggle for self-determination. Next, Lindsey Moore reads three memoirs—by Edward Said, his sister Jean Said Makdisi, and his mother-in-law Wadad Makdisi Cortas—within the scope of "critical Levantinism" (61) to demonstrate how each brings into relief "embedded [and] expansive models of being Palestinian," resulting from the Levant's cultural and religious syncretism, in stark contrast to Israel's ethno-nationalist logic of partition. In the following chapter, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of a chronotope that underscores the organic relationship between time and space, Ahmad Qabaha problematizes the concept of repatriation to Palestine in the continued absence of a political solution. He does so by showing how returning home, in Ghada Karmi's 2005 memoir, sets into motion other feelings of estrangement and exile instead of turning uprootedness into reconnection. In chapter four, Sophia Brown links the surge in Palestinian life writing and oral history projects to the post-2000 memoir boom and to growing concerns, worldwide, with issues of citizenship, belonging, and human rights. This subgenre blossomed into a major branch of contemporary Palestinian literature, thanks in part to the exclusion of Palestinian refugees from the terms of the Oslo negotiations. Brown also maintains that including some of these testimonies alongside others by sympathetic non-Palestinians in English-language anthologies helps influence international public opinion and increase solidarity. Contrary to Edward Said's view, her subsequent reading of Mischa Hiller's "Onions and Diamonds" in *Seeking Palestine* (2013) distinguishes between exile as an intellectual aspiration bound up with a symbolic return and dispossession as a physical condition aiming for an actual one. In Randa Jarrar's "Imagining Myself in Palestine" in *Letters to Palestine* (2015), Brown underscores the irony inherent in the author's erasure of her presence on social media to enable an entry that is denied nonetheless. Overall, Brown maintains that anthologized short stories, by privileging specific themes and/or moments, are suitable for linking the personal to the political.

Part II, titled "Palestinian Aesthetics: Icons, Haptics, and Palimpsests," starts off with Sarah Irving's discussion of yet another genre, post-millennial Palestinian poetry, arguing that Najwan Darwish, notwithstanding his iconoclastic style in *Nothing More to Lose* (2014), is obliged nonetheless to tackle the same mythical imagery found in the work of an earlier generation of Palestinian poets. But he does so with a twist as he blends historical figures, like Jesus Christ and the 12th

century Muslim warrior Salah al-Din, with more recent references to the multiple Palestinian Intifadas. Departing from earlier poets who favored a Self-Other dichotomy, for instance between the legendary Kurdish commander and the colonizing crusaders, Darwish reworks these icons to critique both the colonizer and the colonized in order to better reflect (on) the “more complex politics of the post-Oslo generation” (115). In chapter six, Michael Pritchard zeroes in on Adania Shibli’s trauma novella *Touch* (2002), which deals with events prior to the First Intifada, with an unnamed girl taking center stage, to demonstrate how this text’s verbal design diverges from “prevailing styles of Palestinian literature that tend to privilege optical, distant, and highly contextualized narratives” (121). Instead, Shibli prioritizes the near and haptic to render a Palestine both embodied and felt. Employing Slavoj Žižek’s theories, Pritchard shows how the girl, and the text, encourage an ethical engagement on the part of the reader by delivering palpable incidents of subjective, symbolic, and systemic violence against a young person inhabiting a long-time traumatized place. Next, Rachel Gregory Fox illustrates the ways in which Susan Abulhawa’s non-linear novels—*Mornings in Jenin* (2006) and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015)—function as palimpsests that cut across borders, generations, and time periods. Borrowing Laura Marks’s cinematic model of enfoldment, Fox shows how palimpsestic memories in Abulhawa’s texts oscillate between enfolding (forgetting) and unfolding (foregrounding), and how the act of return necessitates the bridging of individual and genealogical memory. With regard to Palestinian acts of remembrance, Fox maintains, like several other contributors, that the “post” in Marianne Hirsch’s definition of postmemory—like that in “post-colonial”—is again rather unique since the past continues to strongly determine both the present and the future.

Part III, titled “Palestinian Horizons: Endings and Beginnings, or Taking Flight,” begins with Nora Parr’s discussion of Arabic-language texts by Adania Shibli, Maya Abu al-Hayyat, and Mahmoud Amer, all of whom, she argues, succeed in forging a new language that is better suited to accompanying current crises. They declare an end to existing symbolic structures before heralding generation-specific visions and words to confront world politics. The only “path out of the quagmire of ‘post-’” (172), Parr argues, is for them to create new verbal tools. Next, Tom Sperlinger investigates the multiple alternatives to death and stagnation contained in the word “out” in Selma Dabbagh’s *Out of It* (2011). He shows how the novel’s different locales, Gaza, London, and an unidentified Gulf state, and distinctive modes of formal and informal education become points of hope in resisting an ongoing colonial situation. In the final chapter, Anna Ball focuses on flight in both Lisa Suhair Majaj’s diasporic poetry and Sama Alshaibi’s video art as a feminocentric poetic and political motif that “migrates creatively across generational, gendered, spatial, and formal contexts” (191). As a *movement*, it articulates national interstitialities, routes of transnational solidarity, and possible rearrivals.

The 15-page list of cited works and the nine-page index are very useful for anyone interested in this burgeoning area of both scholarly and creative output. Equally valuable are the cross-references found in most chapters. An additional chapter, however, on Palestinian writing produced in “France, Germany, and Chile” (4), for example, would have helped paint a larger and more entangled picture of the contemporary scene/market. Until a just solution is forged to end

the 73-year Israeli-Palestinian conflict, writing from and about occupied Palestine is bound to draw potential futures against the backdrop of accumulated daily nakbas; and so, until then, the fact that “Palestine” and “palimpsest” share the first three letters will remain in the minds of many a strong associative/mnemonic device. Ultimately, in a happier future, even if many do not actually return, Palestine will have returned to them.

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Biography

Syrine Hout is Chair of the Department of English and Professor of English and comparative literature at the American University of Beirut. Her research focuses primarily on questions of identity, militarization, trauma, nationalism, and transnationalism in contemporary diasporic Lebanese writings and cinematic productions. She is currently developing a monograph on multilingualism, with particular emphasis on code-switching, in Anglophone Lebanese fiction.

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