

# “An Apartment to Remember”

## *Palestinian Memory in the Israeli Landscape*

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This essay offers a site-specific reading of Jaffa Slope Park, a newly opened public space on the city’s coastal border, in relation to both Ajami, the largely Arab neighborhood upon whose ruins it was built, and Ayman Sikseck’s memoiristic novel, *To Jaffa* (Hebrew, 2010). The park is analyzed within the broader discourse of Israeli landscape architecture, particularly the proliferation of memory-sites, while the novel is considered in relation to Hebrew literary history. Analyzing the production of Palestinian memory within Israeli culture allows us to rethink memory in a transnational setting, and to consider how the Nakba is remembered across different discursive realms shaped by geography, history and language.

*Now I walk in their path / looking down / past the lost village  
/ leaving behind a dusty past / of a ghost town / city of ruins /  
full of bleeding stones / grieving stones / marking the memory /  
of Jaffa’s native residents.*

Samah Shakra, “Sfat Yafo” (Jaffa’s Language)<sup>1</sup>

*Landscape serves as an aesthetic alibi for conquest.*

W. J. T. Mitchell, “Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine,  
and the American Wilderness”

I begin with a poem structured as a real-estate advertisement: a poem about a specific place—an apartment in Jaffa—that also intimates the untold story of that space. “Dirah lehazkir” (An apartment to remember)

was written by Ayman Sikseck, a young Palestinian Israeli writer, whose first novel appeared in Hebrew in 2010.

In the middle of Jaffa, renovated, nice (from Amidar),  
Three rooms, close to the sea –  
spacious, in a fashionable neighborhood,  
and the smell of parsley, and rain, and blood.<sup>2</sup>

The poem's title pays ironic homage to Leah Goldberg's classic children's tale, *Dirah lehaskir* (An apartment to let). Goldberg was a major figure within twentieth-century Hebrew culture: Lithuanian-born, she arrived in Palestine in 1935 and spent the next several decades writing mostly poetry and some fiction in Hebrew and translating prose and poetry from Russian, Italian and German. She was also an important cultural presence in Israel's early decades and founded the Department of Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, serving as mentor and inspiration to generations of poets and scholars, among them Dan Pagis and Yehuda Amichai. The volume referenced in Sikseck's poem was first published in 1948; the story advances in rhymed verse, relating the tale of an apartment building filled with animals—a fat and lazy hen, an obsessively tidy black cat, a squirrel who can't stop cracking nuts—who are looking for a new tenant. After interviewing a series of prospective tenants—including a pig—all of whom like the apartment's layout but find some fault with the building's present occupants, they finally settle on the dove; unlike the other animals, the dove does not like the apartment *itself* very much, but she does like the neighbors. Goldberg's fabled ingathering of the exiles stresses the importance of social space over physical space, intimating a kinder, gentler view of the Israeli state's melting pot: even though they eat different foods, have different habits and make different kinds of noises, they all ultimately get along.

Sikseck's nod to Goldberg,<sup>3</sup> one of the most beloved figures in Israeli culture, points to the historical importance of Hebrew literary texts in conceptualizing and producing Israeli space.<sup>4</sup> The link between the Hebrew language and territory is by now well established. From its nineteenth-century origins in eastern Europe, modern Hebrew literature often depicted the theologically privileged realm of Jerusalem and the ancient land of Israel, imagining a renewed Jewish national life there. Much Hebrew culture in Palestine in the early twentieth century, before

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the foundation of the State of Israel, was even more exuberantly devoted to describing a new national landscape and cultivating the symbolic value of its natural features as well as the emergent built environment. The physical return to the mythic homeland was enhanced by the cultural production of space that encouraged its new Jewish inhabitants to perceive themselves as both resident and master, largely at the expense of the land’s immediate natives, the local Palestinian population. Sikseck’s intervention here as an Arab citizen of Israel—a Palestinian Israeli—may be understood as a minority speech act in the language of the state; this thumbnail sketch of a single apartment both subverts official renderings of Israeli history and comments on contemporaneous struggles over actual territory within Israel/Palestine.

The title of Sikseck’s poem turns on the phonetic similarity between *lehaskir* (to rent) and *lehazkir* (to remind);<sup>5</sup> this simple but clever word play allows the poet, in four quick lines, to slice through the seemingly benign vision of territorial ownership implicit in Goldberg’s story, whose illustrations depict a fantastical storybook castle unlike anything remotely local; the introduction of memory into the brisk business of Zionist real-estate transactions foregrounds the material displacement that was a consequence of this Jewish experiment in shared social space. While the Jews were busy ingathering their own exiles, Sikseck suggests, they were dispersing the Palestinians, creating a new kind of diaspora, including those internal exiles who after 1948 lived mere blocks from their former homes. This entire thought-experiment happens in Jaffa, the neglected “older sister” of Tel Aviv, the “first Hebrew city.”

Historically, Jaffa was a place of exotic alterity and danger in the Zionist literary imagination;<sup>6</sup> in a Palestinian’s hands, the memory of *al-Nakba* (the catastrophe, the Arabic term used to refer to the events of 1948), as well as life in the city before ’48, inevitably shapes the depiction of the present.<sup>7</sup> Parts of Jaffa were demolished during and after the war, and the city’s remaining neighborhoods were largely neglected for decades; it eventually became the object of gentrification, with the ancient port city reinvented as a pricy haven for artists and tourists, home to ice cream chains and falafel shops, and other more upscale eateries.<sup>8</sup> The displacement of another sort of interim population is also implicit in Sikseck’s highly coded poetic reading of space: the Mizrahi immigrants (Jews from Muslim countries) who lived in public housing built by Amidar, the state-run corporation

responsible for thousands of largely pre-fab neighborhoods of functional cheap housing for new Jewish immigrants. In the poem's real-estate driven topography, this Amidar housing attracts young, upwardly mobile Jewish families to Tel Aviv's "south"—which now includes a large population of refugees from sub-Saharan countries—and into Jaffa. These broader changes in the city also included the space adjacent to the "fashionable neighborhood" mentioned in Sikseck's poem, the newly landscaped Jaffa Slope Park, opened in 2010 and running along the Mediterranean up to the northern edge of the town of Bat Yam. Before it was a magnificent fifty-acre park, the area was an eyesore and an environmental disaster—first a dump, then a municipally sanctioned landfill. Before it became a landfill, it was part of Ajami, the Jaffa neighborhood where Sikseck's family lived.<sup>9</sup>

The homes of Ajami once stretched to the beach in parts, a diverse, largely working-class neighborhood of day-workers and small businesses, abutting the edge of Manshiyya to the north.<sup>10</sup> Palestinians also remember Ajami as the area where they were gathered and forced to live after losing their homes in '48.<sup>11</sup> According to one current resident: "In Jaffa there was a 'ghetto,' a defined area in Ajami that was closed in with a wire fence, gates and guard dogs. We lived here in the heart of the ghetto ... we had to get a permit in order to leave...."<sup>12</sup> While Palestinian memory should not be reduced to memory of the Nakba, memories of prewar Jaffa may be inseparable from the violence of '48. The final line of Sikseck's poem—a Proustian triad of Palestinian memory ("smell of parsley, and rain, and blood")—summons both idyllic domesticity and its rupture. The poem's dense layering of space, in which exile competes with gentrification, serves as a prelude of sorts to the intimate familiarity on display in Sikseck's first novel, the bildungsroman-qua-memoir *El Yaffo* (To Jaffa, 2010), where the city's recent past is largely hidden and only dimly perceived in both public and private spaces.

In his reading of Jaffa as a "lieu de mémoire," anthropologist Salim Tamari observes that the city figures in the imagination of the Palestinian diaspora as a magnificent and abandoned site of mythological proportions; in the memory of its former inhabitants and their descendents, Jaffa is a space that they cannot really visit or live in. This view of the city differs from that of the lived-city of Sikseck and his Palestinian contemporaries, who have either resided in Jaffa continuously since 1948 or moved to the city since.<sup>13</sup> Their voices potentially disrupt the nostalgic and often ideal-

ized view of prewar Jaffa, presenting instead a more complex, ambivalent rendering of the city as they remember it, and as it is still lived and seen “through their own eyes.”<sup>14</sup>

This essay offers a comparative analysis of the poetics of space in *El Yafu* and Jaffa Slope Park, retrieving and reading material traces of Palestinian memories visible in the physical landscape. Recent scholarship on urban space in Israel/Palestine has examined both discursive and material formations alongside one another, in an attempt to more fully appreciate the ways in which place is experienced. These works reveal how space is produced through the interplay of different domains, including cultural and social expressions as well as physical brick-and-mortar forms.<sup>15</sup> My analysis of Sikseck’s novel and the domain of the park embeds both within a broader discussion of memory culture. In this reading, Palestinian memory, as depicted within *El Yafu* and produced in the park, simultaneously builds upon and dismantles essential traits of Israeli memory culture. The novel draws expressly on the intimate relation between Hebrew and Jewishness posited in Israeli cultural and political discourse in order to subvert their historical connection.<sup>16</sup> This process unfolds throughout the novel, especially through its depiction of the protagonist’s movements in urban space in Jaffa and in Tel Aviv to the north. The space of the park, as we shall see, may be read within the broader discourse of Israeli landscape architecture, particularly the proliferation of memorials and memory-sites relating to both the Shoah and military battles, as well as in relation to select memories of Palestinian and Jewish Israeli residents of the city. Together the novel and the park contribute to our sense of how Palestinian history, specifically the Nakba, may be made manifest in contemporary Israeli discourse.

An analysis of the production of Palestinian memory within Israeli culture—that is, as part of, not apart from, Israeli culture—provides an opportunity to consider the evolution of national identity in the politically contested domain of Israel/Palestine. Even while taking into account the “differentials of access and power that mark the public sphere,”<sup>17</sup> a reading of the poetics of space—of the representation of memory and temporality in specific sites—can help us better understand the meaning of competing pasts in the public sphere, and how to make more visible those vernacular memories not expressly attached to national forms. As Andreas Huyssen notes in his work on the politics of memory, an interdisciplinary reading

of how memory figures in a broad array of material and literary artifacts can deepen our appreciation of “urban spaces as lived spaces that shape collective imaginaries.”<sup>18</sup> My intention here is not to defuse the impact of Palestinian memories by appropriating or absorbing them within an Israeli-Jewish frame;<sup>19</sup> nor do I wish to efface the real and difficult inequities currently characterizing the political distribution of space and power in Israel/Palestine. Indeed, public discussion of Palestinian memory is limited, to say the least, within Israel since the passage of a law in 2011—colloquially known as the Nakba Bill—which instituted fines and other penalties for state-supported groups or institutions that commemorate the Nakba, in particular those events that treat Independence Day as a day of mourning.<sup>20</sup> Rather, I offer a meditation on a specific place and its cultural production: reading a Hebrew novel by a Palestinian Israeli, alongside a park designed and produced by the Israeli authorities, encourages us to rethink memory across the narrow boundaries of the nation, and to consider how the past is remembered differently across discursive realms shaped by geography, history and language.

#### AYMAN SIKSECK BETWEEN *YAJFA* AND *YAFU*

My reading of *El Yafu* as both bildungsroman and memoir is enriched by recent scholarship on postcolonial life writing, a body of work typified by its appropriation and critique of canonical coming-of-age narrative forms. Postcolonial writers “reshape the story of education as one of becoming alienated subjects of double legacies.” In doing so, their works “interrogate the form’s ideology of development, self-determination, and incorporation of citizens into the new nation.”<sup>21</sup> Such an appreciation of the relationship between language, identity and the nation enables my reading of *El Yafu* as an intervention within modern Hebrew writing’s historical association with Jewish national and collective forms. In other words, Sikseck’s book offers its protagonist-subject as a kind of fractured synecdoche, a part whose relation to the whole of the nation is incomplete or flawed. These “imperfections” emerge in connection with the protagonist’s identity as a Palestinian Israeli, with roots in Jaffa and the Hebrew language in which the book is written.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, a sense of brokenness, specifically in relation to language, is alluded to in the book’s epigraph, a poem by Salman

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Masalha, “I write Hebrew”: “I write in the Hebrew language / Which is not my native tongue, / In order to get lost in the world. / He who doesn’t get lost won’t / Find the whole.”<sup>23</sup> Masalha, a leading figure in Palestinian Israeli letters, posits the strangeness of Hebrew—the language of the Other—and a kind of deliberate losing of the self as a prerequisite to some form of completeness.

*El Yafu* details the peregrinations of young Jaffans in and out of the city’s crumbling neighborhoods and on the edges of Tel Aviv’s urban sprawl. The narrator-protagonist, a kind of alter-ego for the author, writes his life story in his Hebrew journal, dimly cognizant of the absent literary voices of an Arabic past and the memory of Palestinian space. As he moves through Hebrew *Yafu*, he looks for signs of Arabic *Yafa*, express markers of the city’s pre-Israeli past: “this time I found it on a manhole cover, a few streets away from home, stuck to the tar pavement ... there it was, without a doubt, on the cover, in Latin and Arabic letters: ‘The Palestine Fund.’”<sup>24</sup> Outside the neighborhood mosque, waiting for his father to finish the evening prayer, he notices an old sign in English and Arabic—“Palestine Government, Al-Zahra School, 1938”—and notes in his journal: “That night, as the congregants streamed out of the mosque, I wanted to pick up a sharp stone from the side of the road and engrave the Hebrew letters underneath: P-a-l-e-s-t-i-n-e, so that the passersby will know you are here in Hebrew as well” (26–27). This complex scene, in which the flâneur-writer-protagonist is embedded in a discursive setting both local and familial as well as broadly historical, is bookended by another set towards the end of the novel, where he traces the Arabic letter “alef” in oil with a branch in the parking lot (99).<sup>25</sup> Together the scenes frame the protagonist’s hybrid identity as a writer, in which Hebrew and Arabic jockey to depict a present that is itself shaped by a traumatic past.<sup>26</sup>

While waiting in line at a beer festival in Tel Aviv with his Jewish girlfriend, Nitzan, Sikseck’s protagonist overhears a conversation in Arabic—one of few instances in the book where Arabic speech is represented *as Arabic* (though in Hebrew letters)—and joins in, using the Hebrew term for “butterscotch.” When asked where he is from, he replies, “Min yafa” (from Jaffa, in Arabic), which is met with the following response: “Understood.... Now it’s clear why you spoke Hebrew every other word” (lit. “why Hebrew bumped into you”) (114). Arabic “Yafa,” not Hebrew “Yafu” of the novel’s title, is perceived as a place where two languages

“bump into one another.” The author commented on this situation in an interview:

In the city I was born in, Jaffa ... the official language is Hebrew although the majority of inhabitants are Arabic [*sic*]. For this reason, I was never as fluent in my mother tongue, Arabic, as I was in Hebrew, and for a long time I was more familiar with Hebrew than with Arabic literature.<sup>27</sup>

The slight difference between “Yafo” and “Yafa” resembles the poem’s play on *lehazkir* and *lehaskir*, the small but meaningful fricative difference between “renting” and “reminding,” “almost the same, *but not quite*.”<sup>28</sup> These competing identities are expressly felt through literary and cultural allegiances. For example, while shopping with a friend in Jaffa’s bustling flea market, the friend purchases a print by Salvador Dali. As the protagonist remarks that “today is the anniversary of Bialik’s death,” the shopkeeper overhears their conversation: “Bialik? That’s what you remember,” the shopkeeper asked them in Arabic, and takes down a book, a collection of stories by the Palestinian writer, Ghassan Kanafani. “Who your age these days knows who Ghassan Kanafani is ... it’s the anniversary of Bialik’s death, and this Dali that you love so much. Give you a book in Arabic and you’re confused, can’t make out the letters.” After they leave the shop, the protagonist reflects: “how is it that I remembered the anniversary of Bialik’s death, but forgot most of the stories in ‘Land of the Sad Oranges?’” (39–40).<sup>29</sup> While the poetry of Hayim Nahman Bialik, a central figure in the Hebrew literary revival, has served as a touchstone in the work of other Palestinian Israeli writers, most famously in Anton Shammas’s novel *Arabesques* (1986),<sup>30</sup> the reference here draws not on the poet’s words but on the location of his burial site: Tel Aviv’s Trumpeldor Cemetery. The annual commemoration is open to the public and includes a graveside ceremony as well as an evening of readings and lectures about the poet and his life. The reference thus seems to embed the protagonist’s inner conflict, experienced in Jaffa’s commercial center, within both the calendar year and spatial parameters of “the first Hebrew city” and its memorial sites.<sup>31</sup>

With this mocking self-reflection vis-à-vis Israeli Jewish culture, Sikseck’s character here resembles the prototypical protagonist in the work of Sayed Kashua, the well-known and often controversial Palestin-

ian Israeli novelist whose stories “represent the Palestinian living among Israel’s Jewish population as a figure of loss: an Arab who has lost his true identity (his Arabness) in the process of becoming or desiring to become an Israeli—in short, an Arab-turned-Jew.”<sup>32</sup> Kashua’s work seasons the depiction of this condition with a healthy measure of humor or parody, which serves to subversively defuse stereotypical views of Arabs and their experience as citizens of the Israeli state. Within *El Yafó*, the complexity of becoming an “Arab-turned-Jew” is often embedded in the production of specific spaces, especially the narrator’s movement through Jaffa and Tel Aviv. For example, while traveling to the movies in Tel Aviv with Nitzan, instead of going with his father to the consecration of a new mosque, the protagonist meets Sayed, a neighbor, on the bus. Sayed greets him with “you too,” acknowledging that both are escaping the obligation to attend the mosque event. An Arab woman with a large purse gets on the bus, and some of the other passengers (including Nitzan) become suspicious. “‘What do you mean suspicious?’ I felt my cheeks reddening. ‘Because she is an Arab, she looks suspicious?’” (55). Eventually forced to empty her bag, whose contents are benign, even embarrassing, the woman gets off the bus, cursing in Arabic. Later, the protagonist leaves the film in the middle, and heads back to Jaffa, where he finds Sayed waiting for him. His father, coming out of the mosque, embraces him; when he tells him that “Nitzan won’t be coming around anymore” (58), his father seems surprised but satisfied. The break with Nitzan, precipitated by the shame he felt on the bus and her inability to understand his experience, is framed by the protagonist’s simultaneous allegiance to, and disaffection from, two separate domains: the one characterized by worship of secular culture (a Coen brothers film), the other by religious orthodoxy (the mosque). In another scene, on his way to Hebrew Book Week, as the bus leaves Jaffa and approaches Tel Aviv via the road along the beach, there is a palpable change in scenery: “Almost instantly the landscape changed to expanses of green grass and wooden benches facing the Tel Aviv sunset. ‘Tel Aviv-Yafó,’ Sayed remarked, and I was sorry I hadn’t brought my notebook” (74). Sayed’s comment points to the differences between the two spaces, and to the hyphen—that seam which both distinguishes and links them. This topographical rendering of what Gil Hochberg terms “the separatist imagination” suggests how the novel’s protagonist manages the terms of a “shared Jewish-Arab imaginary.”<sup>33</sup> As abovementioned, Hebrew fictional

depictions of Tel Aviv and Jaffa often depict the latter from the point of view of a Jewish protagonist in expressly spatial terms—as a zone of difference and danger. In this instance, however, the literal, physical point of departure—the bus moving *from* Jaffa *to* Tel Aviv—frames the experience to highlight not only the unfounded and potentially racist suspicions of his Jewish girlfriend but also the protagonist’s own inability to belong fully in either place.

A synagogue located at the edge of the protagonist’s neighborhood, appearing in several scenes in the novel, offers the opportunity for a delicate rendering of the palimpsestic qualities of place. As the novel opens, the protagonist arrives home in Jaffa from his studies in Jerusalem; a young man selling a book of Hebrew psalms approaches him in the Central Bus Station and asks for a donation to support the renovation of a local synagogue. He identifies the synagogue as a building in his neighborhood, originally a house whose inhabitants left in ’48 (11), and takes a copy for a few coins, experiencing a fleeting moment of anxiety while putting the book in his knapsack: “I felt I was about to enter through a door that I take care to lock, and found it suddenly open” (9). Later, his sister glimpses the book in his bag, and he says he had to read it for class, ashamed at what possession of the text might imply. After “passing” at the bus station as Jewish, his donation marks him as complicit in the perpetuation of a Jewish space that is itself contested, its original owners absent.<sup>34</sup>

The synagogue also features in a childhood memory regarding the neighborhood’s ethnic and religious diversity. One summer evening when he is ten years old, his mother sends him to help some religious Jewish men who need a non-Jew to switch on the lights in the synagogue near the end of the Sabbath. The movement through the synagogue’s interior is dark, stuffy and mysterious. When the lights go on, he notices that plaster on one of the walls had begun to peel, “exposing a light green mosaic, like our house’s external walls” (81). The green mosaic links the synagogue’s interior space to his own home, emblemizing how traces of the past are embedded in unexpected ways in the neighborhood’s built environment. Like the traces of Arabic script, they are discovered surreptitiously, and together they constitute a kind of shadow urban space, indicative of the city’s true past. The degree to which the past must be activated by an agent in the present is reiterated in the book’s narrative arc: that is, readers are first introduced to the synagogue as a potentially

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significant space in the story’s opening pages, and only later, more than midway through the text, do we fully grasp its meaning for the protagonist and the memory of Ajami.

Secrecy also informs the protagonist’s exploration of Jaffa, as he meets covertly with another girlfriend—Sayed’s sister, Sharihan, who becomes engaged to someone else. Walking through the Old City, where they are unlikely to be seen by people they know, he notes how tourists love to take pictures near the reconstructed Ramses gate, and wonders how they can appreciate the reproduction. Sharihan coolly explains: “the real thing doesn’t exist anymore. This ugly reproduction is all there is” (16). The gate symbolizes the official rendering of the past for tourists, not the true history of the place, which would take into account more recent experiences of Palestinians and their displacement. Indeed, it is through his mother that the protagonist most directly encounters the memory of Ajami.<sup>35</sup> One afternoon his mother impulsively takes him to visit the remains of her home in Ajami, and then to the cemetery where her sister is buried:

What remains of my mother’s parents’ house, and most of the surrounding houses, are large piles of sand and metal standing facing the sea, shamefully gazing upon the backs of the new luxury homes built along the beach. “This was my house,” she said, and pointed at a wide, naked patch of earth, at the left edge of which stood a hoop from a crumbling carousel, leaning on its side.

We stood facing the ruins for a while, silently staring, and then we went to Ajami’s old Muslim cemetery to visit my mother’s sister.... It was so crowded, that in order to get to my aunt’s grave, we had to step on anonymous graves that were blocking the paths.... My aunt’s grave, which stuck out among the other graves because of its new tombstone, stood beneath stubborn, thorny bushes that grew wild in the cemetery, and entirely covered some of the other graves.... At the other end of the cemetery, which had lost part of its wall during the many demolitions that had taken place in the area, the abandoned graves leaned on the edge of the cliff, leaning down towards the sea, like strange surfboards. The waves nibbled patiently at the earth beneath them and pulled them from their place. (34)

Within the crowded topography of the coast, the ruins of the homes are also a kind of cemetery, a memorial site subject to both the organic

forces of time—"the nibbling waves"—as well as the more intrusive designs of local development.<sup>36</sup> The mother's deictic gesture—the pointing and saying "this was my house"—is a recurring trope within Palestinian oral testimony, commonly found in memory books and other ethnographic material related to pre-State Palestinian life.<sup>37</sup> The sentence juxtaposes the past's potential wholeness with the ruined and fragmented present, a difference further alluded to in a dream about his mother subsequent to the cemetery visit:

In the dream, she waited for me outside the cemetery. I arrived running, and from the expression on her face, I understood that I was late.... Mother turned away from me and began to go down the sandy slope toward the sea. I tried in vain to open the gate; the graves were piled up against the inside like old furniture and blocked the entrance. I began to run down the road after mother, tears in my eyes. The beach was completely empty. The wind smoothed away the sand's surface, so I could only see mother's footsteps, which moved straight towards the water, stopping at the ruined carousel. I climbed onto the rusty metal contraption and started to pull on the wheel. The carousel groaned from the effort but began to turn, at first slowly and then with growing speed. The sea surrounded me from all sides and I got dizzy. A strange pain numbed the soles of my feet. The carousel's twisted metal hoop was bound around my feet like two bracelets. I stopped the carousel's turning and called to mother. The rumbling of the sea drowned me out. (34–35)

Unable to access the cemetery—symbol of an unreachable Palestinian past—the protagonist, too, becomes trapped in the forward "progress" of history: the carousel's cruel turning impedes his mobility like ankle cuffs. Both his mother's story—her footsteps in the sand—as well as his ability to write his own are—literally—drowned and muted by the force of the sea. A potent symbol in Israeli cultural discourse, the sea was historically viewed as a site of rebirth and renewal for the Zionist-Jewish body. The trope's most well-known iteration comes from the opening line of Moshe Shamir's 1949 novel, *With His Own Hands*—"Elik was born of the sea"—a characterization that suggests the emergence of a new cultural type, free of the neuroses of ancestry and history. This very same discourse, suggests

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Sikseck, also wiped out any trace of the Palestinian past; its persistence continues to hamper efforts to recover and narrate this history.

The importance of his mother’s deictic ethnographic marking—“this was my house”—within Sikseck’s coming-of-age memoir suggests the blurring of generic categories that often characterizes the writing of postcolonial memory. Life writing, memory and space coalesce in *El Yāfo* as a dense nexus in which each activity is informed and shaped by the other: indeed, a sensitivity to space characterizes the description of the protagonist’s journal—all margins and binding—the dimensions of which seem to expand as he writes:

The pages were nearly entirely full, and new sentences were now written on the inner binding and in the margins of pages, or hidden in small handwriting between the existing rows. It seems that every time I want to write, it’s as if that old journal suddenly makes more room for me [*mefaneh li lafeta sbetah nosaf*]. (9)

In this image, and in those other scenes where the protagonist writes in his journal while moving through Tel Aviv and Jaffa, the discursive act seems to offer an ever-expanding, liberating space where he can continue to record his calibrated responses to his surroundings and explore his own place within. The journal features in a final powerful image as the protagonist returns to Jerusalem. On the bus, surrounded by sleeping soldiers, he imagines a bomb exploding, and pictures of the ski-masked terrorists scrolling over the evening news. He looks down at the open notebook, noticing that “he had lost control of his pencil meanwhile and it had left deep scratches the length of the page. They crossed through the words and nailed them to the rectangle of paper, closing in on them like bars.” In the row next to him, he overhears two women talking, and “jotted down in his notebook that they spoke a language he could not identify” (131–32). Whatever space afforded him by writing seems to close in on itself; despite the bus’s movement through space, here writing both grounds and traps him. The novel’s subsequent and closing image is almost antithetical to this sensation of entrapment on the bus: as he strides from the bus stop, conscious of “carrying on his back the world documented in long rows of ink and lead in his knapsack,” he experiences a feeling of suspension, as if he would “suddenly lose his grip on the earth and float upwards, above the amazed gazes of the people around him” (136). The

fantastical image seems at once an embrace and an abdication—a recognition of the responsibility inherent in the work of the journal, and a desire to escape the claims of writing and history.

#### THE RUINS OF MEMORY IN JAFFA SLOPE PARK

Jaffa Slope Park does not appear as an expressly marked site within Sikseck's novel, but the effects of gentrification in the city are sporadically noted by the protagonist and recorded in his notebook: passing by Andromeda Hill, an enormous complex of expensive apartments, he remembers how "when the project was about to be built, they said that local residents would be able to pass through it to the beach, even those who were not tenants in the complex. And here a few years have passed since construction ended—the apartments are occupied and it's blockaded in every direction, in denial of all its surroundings" (106).<sup>38</sup> Many expected the landfill-that-was-Ajami to become another high-end real estate development, like Andromeda Hill, but instead it was reconceived as public space. As one Arab resident commented sardonically, "Jaffa got screwed. Ever since they came in, they began destroying houses and erasing places. Manshiyya was gone, and in the 1980s, they stopped destroying. Everything you see here was built recently. And all the [ruins] of Jaffa they dumped in the sea, and after that they woke up, they said, "Why should we destroy? We'll fix it."<sup>39</sup> While the park did become part and parcel of Jaffa's ongoing gentrification, the result was also seen as a victory for Israeli environmentalists and public space advocates over the interests of private developers. Jaffa Slope Park has even generated some international buzz as a kind of example of "best practices" regarding environmentally sound recycling of landfills and otherwise "derelict" landscapes. Given the contested quality of space in Israel, and especially Jaffa's history of upheaval and eviction, this was no mean achievement.<sup>40</sup> Spatial questions have permeated domestic politics in Israel in recent years, and the "tent protests" during the summer of 2011 raised awareness regarding issues such as housing and the use of public space.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Sikseck's poem discussed at the beginning of this essay was first published in August 2012, in an anthology that emerged from the social protest movement.



Fig. 1. Jaffa Slope Park, 2012. View towards the south. Photo by author.

Jaffa Slope Park (figure 1) was designed by the same prominent landscaping team responsible for other major projects along the Tel Aviv coast—including the renovation of the Old Port district in the city’s northern neighborhood and the urban parkway stretching past Sde Dov airport. The design’s express goals were to provide an environmentally sound solution to the existing landfill and reconnect the edge of urban Jaffa to its beaches, thereby creating an outdoor space that would become a focal point for social and leisure activities. A series of ten public meetings took place in Jaffa during 2004 and 2005, drawing on different focus groups, in order to gain public support and tailor the space to the needs of local residents.<sup>42</sup> What eventually emerged resembles, in some sense, other parks in Tel Aviv: on a Saturday afternoon it is filled—just like Yarkon Park in the city’s north—with lots of lycra, bikers taking advantage of the smooth seaside path, and children enjoying nicely maintained, state-of-the-art playgrounds.

In ecological terms, however, the space is somewhat paradoxical. For example, urban planners reviewing the site’s environmental impact questioned the use of open green expanses that require enormous amounts of irrigation. Only 18 percent of people interviewed in the park actually used the lawns, probably due to the fact that they have no shade.<sup>43</sup> Even so, park users viewed the grass as an important design element, perhaps because it

reminded them of the large parks in Tel Aviv's northern, wealthier, Jewish neighborhoods. The park is also largely lacking in foliage, which could have provided some shade from the heat, year-round but especially in the long summer months. Apparently, women in the focus groups did not want trees or large areas of foliage due to their concern about threatening or illicit behavior that might be concealed therein. The park is certainly a better alternative to the landfill that preceded it, as well as the high-end construction that has filled adjacent locations. Who could fail to admire this open green space by the sea, which seems appreciated and well utilized by local residents? At the same time, this highly engineered landscape is shaped, ultimately, by the near total "erasure" of any Palestinian presence and the triumph of the Jewish Israeli narrative, in this case, a kind of creeping continuation of Tel Aviv's leisure culture.<sup>44</sup>

In this view, the park emblemizes what W. J. T. Mitchell describes as landscape's typical gestures: "Landscape as a place of amnesia and erasure, a strategic site for burying the past and veiling history with 'natural beauty.'"<sup>45</sup> Like Charles Clore Park to the north, which is built on the ruins of Manshiyya, Jaffa Slope Park buries much of the neighborhood of Ajami and its remains.<sup>46</sup> Mitchell asks us to move beyond understanding landscape as only a static or symbolic space, "as an object to be seen or even as a text to be read," and to consider landscape as a "verb," and to ask "what it does, how it works as a cultural practice."<sup>47</sup> That is, in addition to being an object to behold, and laden with allegorical or symbolic potential, Jaffa Slope Park shapes and is shaped by the figures in its field: "landscape (whether urban or rural, artificial or natural) always greets us as space, as environment, as that within which 'we' (figured as 'the figures' in the landscape field) find—or lose—ourselves."<sup>48</sup> If we think of Jaffa Slope Park as a landscape, an object to be contemplated, an allegorical text to be read, as well as—in Mitchell's terms—a verb, a cultural practice, a space shaping the human figures within it, what would it mean to experience the park as a memory site?

The park does contain some visible, material traces of its past. A low wall frames one of the lookouts and the small plaza is decorated with tiles embedded in the cement (figure 2). These tile fragments also appear in a dirt path tracing the original waterline. They serve as a kind of local ornamentation, and were perhaps manufactured in the Chelouche Factory in the nearby neighborhood of Neve Tzedek. Apparently reclaimed



Fig. 2. Jaffa Slope Park, 2012. Tile fragments in look-out plaza. Photo by author.

from the landfill, and still found in bits along the shoreline, the tiles are remnants from homes in Ajami and Manshiyya that were destroyed and ground into the earth over the years.<sup>49</sup> Each tile represents a home. Though landscape architects who designed the park apparently intended for this spot to indicate something of the site’s history, there is nothing on record to this effect, beyond a short, enigmatic statement contained in the firm’s publicity material related to the site: “Local stones that were found on site were integrated in the design.”<sup>50</sup> The term “recycle” is also used in this material to describe the stones, in keeping with the project’s commitment to environmental best practices. The park contains no plaque regarding the origins of these tiles: but they are, unmistakably, what they are—floor tiles from Arab homes in Ajami.<sup>51</sup> In fact, Palestinians remember the area in precisely these terms. For example, the thread between Ajami, the park’s gentrified present and its recent past as a landfill marks one veteran resident’s fluid narration of how the space has changed: “When the Jews arrived from Europe, they uprooted all the orchards and built prefab housing. There were once palaces in Ajami. Fabulous houses.... And they destroyed them, threw them in the dump (*mizbala*), dumped it all into the sea. Seventy percent was destroyed. Not like it was in 1950. Today they build for height, not like it once was....”<sup>52</sup>

Within this setting—whose history is marked by displacement and upheaval, and whose present seems devoted to erasure and leisure—what would it mean to experience the park as a memory site, as a place where we remember? In Pierre Nora’s influential formulation—*lieux de mémoire*—such sites are inherently paradoxical and often as much about forgetting as they are about remembering.<sup>53</sup> According to Nora, these memory sites are themselves produced by the fluctuating vicissitudes of history: “Indeed, it is this very push and pull that produced *lieux de mémoire*—moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living history has receded.”<sup>54</sup> While this passage does not directly refer to ruins, the material image of shells on the sea of history evokes the process through which ruins emerge, and their power as physical talismans with affective power. The meaning of these vernacular sites may be considered in opposition to the monument’s overt qualities, produced with an intentional eye to provoke a specific memory response. In contrast, “the commemorative function of a ruin is ... usually incidental, or accidental, and subjective. This is matched by the sources of its aesthetic pleasurability – the ‘organic’ asymmetry, rough edges, and irregularity produced by the arbitrary effects of nature are enjoyable because ‘the original intention of the builder has been more or less lost.’”<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the ruins would seem to be a form of “architecture without architects,” valuable for their ability to connote the prestige of the past, without any messy discussions about indigenouness or dispossession.<sup>56</sup> The tiles in Jaffa Slope Park are not directly “sourced” or retrieved from the ruins of Palestinian homes; rather, like Nora’s shells, they have been mediated—“smoothed over”—by the same powerful engine that we observed in Sikseck’s novel, erasing his mother’s footsteps and drowning out his voice.<sup>57</sup>

The workings of memory potentially at play in the park are further complicated by Israeli’s densely built memory landscape. In their important discussion of Israeli memorial sites, anthropologists Don Handelman and Lea Shamgar-Handelman use the notion of “the presence of absence” to describe Israeli memorial culture.<sup>58</sup> They locate all memorials on a spectrum determined by the relation between the site’s formal qualities, on the one hand, and the presence of physical human remains, on the other. Within this schema, Israeli memorial sites become more formalized in inverse relation to the physical presence of human remains—that is,

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the formal *presence* of the memorial increases in relation to the *absence* of remains. For example, military cemeteries contain simple grave-markers with largely formulaic texts and minimal ornamentation: the physical existence of the remains on-site diminishes the need for explanation or representation. A different calculation applies for battleground memorials, where the dead are buried elsewhere: the absence of physical remains in these sites is compensated for by the memorials’ formal qualities, including explanatory texts about the events that occurred at the site. Shoah memorials such as Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, are farthest removed from the military cemeteries. Here, Handelman and Handelman argue, the absence of the victims’ physical remains—which indeed do not exist anywhere—coupled with the enormous geographic remove from the actual killing fields, leads to memorial sites with the densest concentration of ornament and explanation, in the form of elaborate architecture and intensive textual information. In essence, the lack of the murdered victims’ physical remains renders the sign utterly broken, and pure signification takes over.

This oscillating dynamic of presence and absence features as an index of memory more broadly—that is, the conjuring in the present of what has been lost. These words are also part of Israeli legal terminology used to describe, in paradoxical fashion, Palestinians who left during the war in ’48 and returned shortly thereafter, but were not allowed to reclaim or live in their homes: they are called “present absentees” and their property was referred to first as “abandoned property” and then as “absentee property.” Like the synagogue in Sikseck’s novel, many of these properties were homes that were subsequently occupied in some fashion by new Jewish immigrants. Yet, as Yfaat Weiss notes in her moving study of the Wadi Salib neighborhood in Haifa, the language here belies the process of substitution and transfer: why insist on (still) calling homes “absentee property,” years after they have been appropriated by the state?<sup>59</sup> The very term continues to insinuate the presence of the (former) absent owners.

What then, is the status, of these unmarked stones in Jaffa Slope Park—tile fragments with no text, no names, embedded in a prominent location within the park? No two are alike and they are, each and every one, a metonymic trace of a home, a piece symbolizing some no longer existing wholeness (figure 3). Their *presence* is minimal and unremarked; the *absence* they refer to unresolved and ongoing. The stones cannot refer



Fig. 3. Tiles in Jaffa Slope Park, 2012. “An apartment to remember?” Photo by author.

to the Nakba or the Palestinian past because the Nakba itself is unstable, and the Palestinian past remains a difficult presence in Israeli history and public discourse. The stones seem to tell no story; like the Arabic alphabet that Sikseck searches for throughout Jaffa, their story must be told by the figure in the landscape—who is shaped by them whether or not she chooses to acknowledge their presence or the absence they refer to. If the tiles are a kind of ruin, they potentially contain the proliferating power of allegory that Walter Benjamin and others have attributed to ruins within the natural landscape.<sup>60</sup> For example, in the context of the American landscape, J. B. Jackson notes “the necessity for ruins”—arguing that ruins point to the impact of history, to both an “interval of neglect” as well as a “golden age.”<sup>61</sup> Unlike, however, the ruins in Sikseck’s novel—the remains of his mother’s house in Ajami and the crumbling cemetery—the tiles’ allegorical potential seems short-circuited by their location within the Israeli leisure park. Like other Palestinian ruins within the Israeli landscape, they have become an aestheticized and decorative element of the public sphere.<sup>62</sup> Many of the villages that were emptied out after ’48 became part of nature reserves and national parks.<sup>63</sup> Within the local context, other ruins of Palestinian life proximate to Ajami have been absorbed into Tel Aviv’s urban fabric. For example, public structures such as the old Jaffa train station

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and the Hassan Bek Mosque are now contained within a parking lot and an outdoor shopping mall, respectively; a private home from Manshiyya, whose remains are located in the Charles Clore Park, has been made into a historical museum commemorating the military conquest of the city.<sup>64</sup> Together with the tile fragments in Jaffa Slope Park, these ruins constitute the still-present, though largely repressed and unrecognized, memory of Palestinian life within Israeli culture.

Indeed, these tiles in Jaffa Slope Park recall—in both tactile and symbolic terms—the small metal emblems embedded in the streets of Berlin and other German cities, which commemorate victims of the Nazi genocide. To be sure, there are important differences between the two—the most significant being the fact that the stumble-stones are part of a state-sponsored commemorative project; placed near the victims’ former residences—a presence marking an absence—they weather the seasons as part of the pedestrian public sphere. Though the stones contain textual detail, explanation is almost unnecessary, given the pervasive awareness of the Shoah in contemporary German society.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, the Shoah and the story of Berlin are not contested histories, at least not to the same degree as that of the Nakba and the Palestinian past, which remain largely hidden or obscured within the Israeli landscape. Despite these differences, however, the tiles and the stumble-stones share features of urban memory practices; that is, they depend upon the texture of the surrounding public sphere and its history for their meaning. The tiles’ pedestrian, vernacular quality makes them “unintentional” kin to what James Young has called a “counter-monument”—those German monuments of the Shoah that are influenced by environmental sculpture and often built flat to the ground, to be walked over or into by observers.<sup>66</sup> Unlike other state-sponsored monuments which serve to glorify the nation and its heroic deeds, the proliferation of counter-monuments comes, in Young’s narrative, to answer difficult questions, such as: “How does a state incorporate its crimes against others into its national memory landscape?”<sup>67</sup> This kind of memory begins not with a prescribed, monumental form, but with an active, and even optional, engagement on the part of viewers. In the face of these unintentional monuments, observers potentially become agents of memory, as it is through their tread upon the earth that memory thrives.

Like Sikseck’s “memory apartment,” the tiles remind us. Their stubborn presence, despite the physical site’s dramatic changes, points

toward an unresolved, traumatic past that awaits the sensitive eye of the pedestrian-observer. This kind of proactive reading of the Israeli landscape for traces of its Palestinian past has begun to emerge in recent years, in part through the example of conceptual and landscape artists like Ronen Eidelman,<sup>68</sup> and the ongoing efforts of activists and groups such as Zochrot, an Israeli nonprofit dedicated to raising awareness about the Nakba in Hebrew. Perhaps even the need for the Nakba Bill suggests the degree to which the term and its meaning have begun to appear. Given the centrality of space within Israeli culture, it is not surprising that a historical reckoning has taken the form of an intensive encounter with the question of *makom* or Place.<sup>69</sup> In Germany, counter-monuments emerged from the *Historikerstreit*; Israel's own historiographic coming-of-age occurred during the 1980s with the work of the New Historians, who questioned the accepted narrative of the 1948 war.<sup>70</sup> Perhaps now, at last, Israel will have its *Denkmal-Arbeit*, work that engages the full strata of often competing memories embedded in a particular place.

Regarding the proliferation of memory work in Germany, Young muses: "the best German memorial to the Fascist era may not be a single memorial at all but simply the never to be resolved debate over which kind of memory to preserve, how to do it, in whose name, and to what end."<sup>71</sup> Compare this to Edward Said's comment regarding the memory of Palestinian space: "Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence, and with the presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality, at least since the Zionist movement began its encroachments on the land."<sup>72</sup> In both instances, it seems, as events recede in history, memory itself, and the struggle over its meaning, becomes the object of memory. In the case of Israel/Palestine, while the geography may be in some ways shared, each group remembers the landscape differently.<sup>73</sup>

#### THE LANGUAGE OF REMEMBERING

There exists no etymological connection between renting and reminding/remembrance, *lehaskir* and *lehazkir*, but perhaps the terms have more in common than mere phonetics: when renting an apartment, money is exchanged for the temporary use of space (ownership is not involved);

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within sites of memory, there also exists an exchange, or substitution, of sorts—the physical *presence* of the memorial site marking the *absence* of the remembered loved ones. The word play also reminds us of how the language of the Hebrew map tried to efface or completely erase traces of Palestinian life, how *Yafa* became *Yafó*.<sup>74</sup> Ultimately, Hebrew texts by Palestinian Israeli authors such as Sikseck, are a bothersome presence; like the stumble-stones in Jaffa Slope Park, they insert themselves in persistent fashion within Israeli public discourse, struggling to become legible, to be visible, to tell their own story. The novel and Jaffa Slope Park’s embedded tiles both build upon and dismantle essential traits of Israeli memory culture; in their appropriation of familiar features of Israeli Jewish culture, and the memory discourse pervasive therein, they potentially contribute to the development of what Michael Rothberg has termed “multidirectional memory.” Rothberg calls for an end to the self-defeating, “zero-sum logic” of competing memory claims; instead, he proposes an “entangled” vision of memory, arguing, “political conflict entails understanding the interlacing of memories in the force field of public space.”<sup>75</sup> This essay has attempted to read the competing claims of Israeli and Palestinian memory in similar terms, drawing on the work of a writer whose own life story straddles both worlds, and a public site containing layers of contested history.

In a recent article called “Rethinking the Nakba,” the Lebanese novelist Elias Khoury, author of perhaps the most important literary account of the Nakba (*Gates of the Sun*), begins his discussion of the term by drawing on Hebrew literature. He fills out his reading of 1948 with Benjamin Tammuz and S. Yizhar, but also through Kanafani, Emile Habibi and Anton Shammas, before turning to the work of the New Historians. In Khoury’s view, the Nakba “is still happening now, in this moment.”<sup>76</sup> The weaving together of Israeli and Palestinian sources to describe these events—both in the past and “in this moment”—suggests the degree to which memory is inevitably “marked by transcultural borrowing, exchange, and adaptation.”<sup>77</sup> Testimony to this effect is also found in the recently published *Once Upon a Land*, a Hebrew-Arabic guidebook featuring walks through the ruins of Palestinian villages and urban neighborhoods. In her afterward to the book, commenting on the “strangeness” of the Arabic translations, Amal Ikaik notes that the Arabic reader will surely understand that she is learning about “the Hebrew memory of the Nakba. This memory meets the text from a different place. It may walk in the footsteps of the Nakba,

but on another path. It reflects the fact that another consciousness is involved in the writing of the Nakba.”<sup>78</sup> Like Siksek’s speculative carving of “P-a-l-e-s-t-i-n-e” in Hebrew, this delicate formulation contains an enormously powerful admission: the events of 1948 must be remembered and commemorated by all those involved. And it is only through this sensitive and multidimensional framing—across language, memory and space—that we may glimpse a way forward.

#### NOTES

Comments on this essay by two anonymous readers helped strengthen and refine its arguments, and I am indebted to their thoughtful engagement with my work. Vered Karti Shemtov provided sensitive feedback on an earlier draft. Portions were also presented at conferences sponsored by Brown, Stanford and the National Association of Professors of Hebrew, and I am grateful to those hosts and audiences for their encouragement and critique.

1. The poem appears in Yossi Granovsky, Yonatan Kunda and Roman Vater, eds., *Sfat Yafa* (Jaffa’s language) (Jerusalem: Carmel, 2009), 158. (My translation.)

2. Ayman Siksek, “Dirah le hazkir” (An apartment to remember), in *Shiron ha-mahapekhab: Shirat ha-ohelim* (The revolution song-book: Tents poetry) (Tel Aviv: Daka-Maayan-Etgar-Erev-rav-Gerila, August 2011), 11. (Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.)

3. In an interview, Siksek relates the following: “Not long after Mahmoud Darwish died, I was talking with a friend of mine from a village in Galilee.... I think we spoke about longing for people. He quoted a verse from a poem and asked if I knew it. I didn’t. It was a Darwish poem and I was terribly ashamed. It wasn’t some godforsaken Jordanian poet—it was Darwish! If he had quoted Leah Goldberg, I would have identified it for sure.” Doron Halutz, “Language Is My Anchor,” April 11, 2010, in the online English edition of *Ha’aretz*, <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/language-is-my-anchor-1.284042> (accessed August 15, 2014).

4. For recent English-language studies devoted to analyzing this relationship, see Hannan Hever, “Mapping Literary Space: Territory and Violence in Israeli Literature,” in Laurence J. Silberstein, ed., *Mapping Jewish Identities* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); Yigal Schwartz, “‘Human Engineering’ and Shaping Space in the New Hebrew Culture,” *Jewish Social Studies* 11, no. 2 (Spring–Summer 2005): 92–114; and Barbara Mann, *A Place in History: Mod-*

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*ernism, Tel Aviv and the Creation of Jewish Urban Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

5. I translate it here as “to remember” and not “to remind” for fluidity in the title. The grammatical difference is significant: is the apartment the object of, or the subject-agent driving, memory? In either case, the reader is enjoined to introduce the presence of memory into the topography of Jaffa, looking through the renovated landscape to the ruins beneath, beyond the economic success of new developments, to the trauma of dispossession, which enabled it. The apartment becomes a site of memory, a quotidian place that nonetheless bears meaningful traces of its historical past.

6. See Daniel Monterescu, “The Bridled Bride of Palestine: Orientalism, Zionism, and the Troubled Urban Imagination,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 16, no. 6 (2009): 643–77.

7. The image is inspired by Anton Shammas, “Kitsch 22: On the Problems of the Relations between Majority and Minority Cultures in Israel,” *Tikkun* 2, no. 4 (Sept.–Oct. 1987): 26; and Hannan Hever, “Hebrew in an Israeli Arab Hand: Six Miniatures on Anton Shammas’s *Arabesques*,” *Cultural Critique* 7 (Autumn 1987): 47–76. See also Rachel Feldhay Brenner, “‘Hidden Transcripts’ Made Public: Israeli Arab Fiction and Its Reception,” *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 85–108.

8. There are currently about 20,000 Palestinian Arabs living in Jaffa, comprising approximately one-third of the city’s population, about 4% of the greater Tel Aviv metropolitan area. For an account of the meaning and effects of “urban renewal” in this context see Mark LeVine, “The New-Old Jaffa: Locating the Urban, the Public, and the Modern in Tel Aviv’s Arab Neighborhood,” in LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv and the Struggle for Palestine, 1880–1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 215–48.

9. There is still a Sikseck Mosque in Jaffa, near the flea market.

10. See Norma Musi, “Siyur be-Manshiyya kefi she-siparti le-biti” (A walk in Almanshiyya as related to my daughter), in Tomar Gardi, Noga Kadman and Umar al-Ghubari, eds., *Omrin yesmah eretz: Madrikh siyurim* (Once upon a land: Guidebook) (in Hebrew and Arabic) (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Sedek and Pardes-Zochrot, 2012). For an English-language review of this important book that focuses on sites in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, see <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/twilight-zone/arab-villages-bulldozed-from-our-memory-1.461986> (accessed August 15, 2014).

11. Umar al-Ghubari, ed., *Zokhrot et shekbunat al-Ajami be-Yafa* (Remembering Jaffa’s al-Ajami neighborhood) (in Hebrew and Arabic) (Tel Aviv: Zochrot), 2007, 2.

12. Haim Hazan and Daniel Monterescu, *Ir bein arbayim: Le’umiyut mizdak-enet be-Yafa* (A town at sundown: Aging nationalism in Jaffa) (Tel Aviv: Van Leer

Jerusalem Institute and Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2011), 99; Widad Andrus, another current resident, also uses this term to describe the area determined in a military order from August 20, 1948: “My father didn’t agree to go to the ghetto” (119).

13. Salim Tamari, “Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City,” in Tamari, *Mountain against the Sea: Essays on Palestinian Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 56–70; reprinted in Daniel Monterescu and Dan Rabinowitz, eds., *Mixed Towns, Trapped Communities: Historical Narratives, Spatial Dynamics, Gender Relations and Cultural Encounters in Palestinian-Israeli Towns* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 35–50, where the editors’ introduction uses Pierre Nora’s term to describe Tamari’s project (22). For more on differing views of Jaffa as a Palestinian site of memory, see Salim Tamari and Rema Hammami, “Virtual Return to Jaffa,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 4 (Summer 1998): 65–79.

14. See the implied critique of Tamari and Hammami in the extended interview with the Andrus sisters in Jaffa, in Hazan and Monterescu, *Ir bein arbayim*, esp. 130–31.

15. This scholarship builds on the theoretical insights of “the spatial turn,” including the work of Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, Homi Bhaba and Edward Soja. Central examples include Tamar Berger, *Dionysus ba-senter* (Dionysus at Dizengoff Center) (1998); Sharon Rotbard, *Ir levanah, ir sheborah* (White city, black city) (Tel Aviv: Babel, 2005); LeVine, *Overthrowing Geography*; Deborah Bernstein, *Nashim ba-shulayim: Migdar u-le’umiyut be-Tel Aviv ha-mandatorit* (Women in the margins: Gender and nationalism in Mandate Tel Aviv) (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2008); and Tammy Razi, *Yaldei ha-hefker: He-hatzer ha-ahorit shel Tel Aviv ha-mandatorit* (Forsaken children: The backyard of Mandate Tel Aviv) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2009). For reviews of these trends see Yehouda Shenhav, “Merhav, adamah, bayit: Al hitnarmaluto shel ‘siah hadash” (Space, land, home: On the normalization of a “new discourse”), *Te’oriyah u-Vikoret*, no. 16 (Spring 2000): 3–13; Michael Feige, “The Names of the Place: New Historiography in Tamar Berger’s *Dionysus at the Center*,” *Israel Studies Forum* 19, no. 2 (2004): 54–74; and Barbara Mann, “Tel Aviv after 100: Notes Toward a New Cultural History,” *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 2 (Winter 2010): 93–110.

16. *El Yafò* represents just one aspect of Palestinian cultural memory within Israeli society. Other recent cultural forms in Jaffa seek to both represent the city as well as critique this very possibility. Films such as Scandar Copti and Yaron Shani’s *Ajami* (2009) and the documentary work of Kamal Aljafari (see n. 39 below), literary anthologies from the activist publishing collective *Mitan*, and the multilingual performances and recordings of the hip-hop group System Ali, troll the jagged boundaries between gentle nostalgia, postmodern avant-garde and brutal realism. I offer an analysis of these Jaffa poets and the emergence of their

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poetic social activism in my “One Big Tent?: Home and the Depiction of Space in Recent Israeli Poetry” (forthcoming).

17. Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 21. I will return to Rothberg’s productive analytical frame in the conclusion of this essay.

18. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 7.

19. For an analysis of Israeli Jewish “co-memory” of the Nakba as a self-reflective act, see Ronit Lentin, *Co-Memory and Melancholia: Israelis Memorializing the Palestinian Nakba* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); on the potential for appropriation see especially 144–49.

20. For English-language summaries and discussion of the Nakba Bill see the websites of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (<http://www.acri.org.il/en/2012/08/02/update-anti-democratic-legislation-initiatives>) and Adalah: The Legal Center for Minority Arab Rights in Israel (<http://adalah.org/eng/Articles/1188/Adalah-and-ACRI:-Israeli-High-Court-Ignored-the-by>).

21. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, “In the Wake of the Memoir Boom,” in Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 128.

22. Clearly the fact that the novel is written in Hebrew is key to my analysis. Analysis of Palestinian fiction in Arabic would necessitate a different contextual frame (e.g. Arabic fiction produced in other locations) and raise different questions and conclusions. See, for example, Barbara McKean Parmenter, *Giving Voice to Stones: Place and Identity in Palestinian Literature* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), for a short but informative study of Arabic fiction by Palestinians across the Middle East. For recent work on Palestinian Israeli fiction in Arabic, see Mahmud Ghanayim, “A Dream of Severance: Crisis of Identity in Palestinian Fiction in Israel,” in Meir Litvak, ed., *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 193–216; and Manar H. Makhoul, “The Forces of Presence and Absence: Aspects of Palestinian Identity Transformation in Israel between 1967 and 1987,” *Journal of Levantine Studies* 2, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 135–59.

23. The poem was originally published in Salman Masalha, *Ehad mi-kan* (In place) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004).

24. Ayman Sikseck, *El Yāfo* (To Jaffa) (Tel Aviv: Miskal-Yediot-Chemed, 2010), 25. (Further references will be given parenthetically within the text.)

25. For a discussion of this theme see also Hannan Hever’s brief epilogue, “Lahrot be-ivrit et f-a-l-a-s-t-i-n” (To engrave P-a-l-e-s-t-i-n-e in Hebrew), in *ibid.*, 137–42.

26. It seems likely that the protagonist converses with his own family in Arabic, though he cannot understand the Arabic of visiting guests (11).

27. “An interview with Ayman Sikseck: ‘In a Sense, I’m Homeless,’” May 26, 2010, available at Goethe-Institut, <http://109.68.50.141/uun/bdu/en6042978.htm> (accessed October 8, 2014).

28. The proximity between the linguistic terms offers an opportunity to consider the ambivalence of colonial mimicry—on the relative parity between the two discursive domains contained within the “shared Jewish-Arab imaginary,” see Homi Bhaba, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” *October* 28 (Spring 1984): 125–33.

29. The short story, published in Arabic in 1958, relates the expulsion of a Palestinian family from Jaffa through the eyes of the young son. They travel through Acre, and upon reaching Sidon in Lebanon, the uncle storms into the home of a Jewish family, yelling “Go to Palestine!” See Ghassan Kanafani, *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories*, trans. Hilary Kilpatrick (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 75–80.

30. For the presence of Bialik in writing by Palestinian authors, see Michael Gluzman, “The Politics of Intertextuality in Anton Shammas’s *Arabesques*,” *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3, no. 3 (2004): 319–36; and Lital Levy, *Poetic Trespass: Writing between Hebrew and Arabic in Israel/Palestine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 95 and n. 112.

31. For a discussion of the cemetery as a memorial site, see Barbara Mann, “Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny: Reading the Old Cemetery in Tel Aviv,” *Representations*, no. 69 (March 2000): 63–95.

32. Gil Hochberg, “To Be or Not to Be An Israeli Arab: Sayed Kashua and the Prospect of Minority Speech Acts,” *Comparative Literature* 62, no. 1 (2010): 72. In addition to several novels, Kashua is the author of a weekly column in the national paper *Ha’aretz*, and the screenwriter of a popular television program, *Avodah aravit* (Arab work), a situation comedy drawing expressly on the lives of Arab Israelis.

33. Deborah Starr, Review of Gil Hochberg, *In Spite of Partition: The Limits of the Separatist Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), *Comparative Literature Studies* 48, no. 1 (2011): 121.

34. See my discussion of “absentee property” below.

35. The passage brings to mind other Hebrew literary texts featuring a mother-son relationship that is itself embedded in an ambivalent memory of the city’s early landscapes. See the discussion of S. Yizhar, Benjamin Tammuz and Haim Gouri in Mann, *A Place in History*, 198–205.

36. The forces of gentrification linking the topography of Ajami, the cemetery and Jaffa Slope Park are also operative in the memory of Jaffa resident Sami Abu

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Shehah: “I remember the lifeguard telling us: ‘Children, don’t swim in the garbage area! There are dangerous things, there are oils, metals, glass. Go more to the south, to the cemetery area.’ But because of the neglect of the cemetery area—the Islamic cemetery is right by the beach—the cemetery was getting washed out because the wall was not renovated. It was scarier to swim there because we were swimming with bones.” Cited in Jo Roberts, *Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel’s Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), 187.

37. For an extended analysis, see Susan Slymowics’s study of Ein Houd/Ein Hod, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). On the recurring image of a man “pictured in the act of pointing to a place on the ground, at something not in the picture,” see the discussion on 10–14.

38. See Daniel Montereescu, “To Buy or Not to Be: Trespassing the Gated Community,” *Public Culture* 21, no. 2 (2009): 403–30, for a detailed analysis of the history of Jaffa gentrification, and especially the Andromeda Hill project.

39. Born in 1927 in a village near Jaffa, Ismail Abu-Shakhaada has lived in the city since 1948. Hazan and Montereescu, *Ir bein arbayim*, 101.

40. See Daniel Montereescu, “The ‘Housing Intifada’ and Its Aftermath: Ethno-Gentrification and the Politics of Communal Existence in Jaffa,” *Anthropology News* (Dec. 2008): 21. The park figures as a marker of contested space in Kamal Aljafari’s evocative film *Port of Memory* (2009). Aljafari juxtaposes tableaux of his extended family fighting eviction from their Ajami home, and images of crumbling, neglected architecture, with panoramic scenes of the park-in-the-making—its still barren expanse stretching like an enormous scab over the landfill by the beach, in which portions of destroyed buildings may be glimpsed. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for bringing Aljafari’s moving work to my attention.

41. So-called because they started when protesters pitched tents in main streets, first in Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv and then in other cities, demanding “social justice.” Discussion of Palestinian claims was often absent from the social protest as a whole, with the important and visible exception of Tent #1948. For a description of Tent #1948’s goals and social media presence see their Facebook page.

42. For one account see <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/jaffa-seaside-dump-to-become-a-park-1.170993> (accessed August 15, 2014).

43. Tali Hatuka and Hadas Saaroni, “The Need for Advocating Regional Human Comfort Design Codes for Public Spaces: A Case Study of a Mediterranean Urban Park,” *Landscape Research* 39, no. 4 (2014): 287–304 (published online October 2, 2012, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01426397.2012.720249>).

44. Cf. the controversy over Jerusalem’s Museum of Tolerance, whose construction was halted after the remains of a Muslim cemetery were discovered on

site. See Saree Makdissi, "The Architecture of Erasure," *Critical Inquiry* 36, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 519–59.

45. W. J. T. Mitchell, "Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (Winter 2000): 195.

46. For Manshiyya, see Rotbard, *Ir levanah, ir sheborah*

47. W. J. T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (1994; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 1.

48. *Ibid.*, 2.

49. On the park's landscape architecture, and a related discussion of the tiles' meaning, see Naama Meishar, "In Search of Meta-Landscape Architecture: The Ethical Experience and Jaffa Slope Park's Design," *Journal of Landscape Architecture* 7, no. 2 (2012): 40–45.

50. See [www.bm-landscape.co.il/files/Editor/jaffa%20landfill%20park.doc](http://www.bm-landscape.co.il/files/Editor/jaffa%20landfill%20park.doc) (accessed August 15, 2014). I am grateful to Aliza Braudo of Braudo-Maoz Landscape Architects, the firm responsible for the park's design, who shared materials relating to the site as well as reflections on her experience there. According to Braudo, who worked at the site on a weekly basis for nearly five years, the tiles became a part of the landfill and were discovered along the beach during the process of leveling the site. Incorporating them into the park was a way of saying something about the site's past—especially for those who knew nothing of its previous incarnations. She used the term *shikhvatiyut* (layered-ness) to describe the physical thickness that was indicative of the place's past. Phone interview with Aliza Braudo, January 17, 2013.

51. According to Braudo (*ibid.*), there were supposed to be signs, in Hebrew, Arabic and English, with this kind of information, at each of the park's five entrances; they were part of a wider project of new signs for Jaffa. And here things seemed to become somewhat mundane, having to do with lack of funds, finding the right graphic designer, and other bureaucratic delays.

52. Hazan and Montereescu, *Ir bein arbayim*, 126.

53. For a reading of Nora in relation to the production of memory in Tel Aviv's public sphere, see Mann, "Modernism and the Zionist Uncanny." For a gentle critique of Nora's project as "fundamentally tied to the idea of national memory," see Huyssen, "Memory Sites in an Expanded Field," in his *Present Pasts*, 96–97. The term's elastic use is also evident in scholarly treatment of the Nakba itself as a site of memory; see Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakba as a Component of Palestinian Identity," *Israel Studies* 7, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 175–98.

54. Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*," *Representations*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 12.

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55. Naomi Stead, “The Value of Ruins: Allegories of Destruction in Benjamin and Speer,” *Form/Work: An Interdisciplinary Journal of the Built Environment*, no. 6 (Oct. 2003): 59–60, including a citation of Paul Zucker, “Ruins—An Aesthetic Hybrid,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 20, no. 2 (Winter 1961): 119.

56. The idea of a “non-pedigreed architecture”—referring to a variety of premodern buildings that were otherwise known as “vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural”—was proposed by Bernard Rudofsky in connection with an influential exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in *Architecture without Architects* (New York: Doubleday/Museum of Modern Art, 1964), 1.

57. According to Braudo, the tiles had been there so long, subject to the waves, that they were smooth like river stones. Phone interview with Aliza Braudo, January 17, 2013.

58. Don Handelman and Lea Shamgar-Handelman, “The Presence of Absence: The Memorialism of National Death in Israel,” in Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu, eds., *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience* (Syracuse: SUNY Press, 1997), 85–128. This idea is a powerful trope in Palestinian writing. See the works cited in n. 22 above and also Mahmoud Darwish, *In the Presence of Absence*, trans. Sinan Antoon (2006; Brooklyn, NY: Archipelago Books, 2011). I am grateful to Lital Levy for suggesting this text to me.

59. See Yfaat Weiss, *A Confiscated Memory: Wadi Salib and Haifa’s Lost Heritage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), esp. 77–85, for a discussion of these terms in relation to the prewar largely Muslim neighborhood in Haifa that was later populated by Moroccan Jewish immigrants.

60. Benjamin’s suggestive claim that “allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things” has generated an abundance of critical material analyzing the affective force of ruins for both natural landscapes and built spaces. Benjamin’s view of the consonance between allegory and ruin points to a process that strips myth—an agent of political gain—of its symbolic value, defusing the simultaneity of myth by exposing the processes of history. For discussions that have illuminated my own understanding of ruins in this context, see Stead, “The Value of Ruins”; and Svetlana Boym, “Ruinophilia: Appreciation of Ruins” (2008), <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/r/ruinophilia/ruinophilia-appreciation-of-ruins-svetlana-boym.html> (accessed August 15, 2014).

61. J. B. Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins: And Other Topics* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980).

62. We may note the broader meaning of landscaping in the public sphere such as the use of native flora along the Trans-Israel Highway (Route 6) to mark a local, pastoral landscape that ignores the nearby reality of Palestinian urban development. My thinking about Israeli landscape architecture has been greatly enriched

by Yael Bar-Maor's "Landscape (Architecture) and Power in Israel/Palestine," a presentation at the Working Group on Landscape, Literature and Identity in Israeli and Palestinian Culture, Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, June 7, 2012, the ensuing discussion of her work at the Institute, and email communication with the author.

63. See Noga Kadman, *Be-tzidei ha-derekh u-ve-shulei ha-toda'ab: Dehikat ha-kfarim ha-araviyim she-hitroкну be-1948 me-ha-siah ha-yisre'eli* (Erased from space and consciousness: Depopulated Palestinian villages in the Israeli-Zionist discourse) (Tel Aviv: November Books, 2008), esp. 50–68.

64. See the discussion of Manshiyya as a site of "unthought" ruins, in Musi, "A Walk in Almanshiyya," 176–77. For a history of the mosque and its gradual emergence as a site of community organizing and resistance, see Noam Luz, "The Politics of Sacred Places: Palestinian Identity, Collective Memory, and Resistance in the Hassan Bek Mosque Conflict," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008): 1036–52.

65. The stones began in 1996 as a project by the Cologne artist Gunter Demnig. The first stones were placed in Berlin, without the city's permission. *Stolpersteine* are now an authorized part of the urban landscape in over 600 European towns and cities, and are often included in school curriculum. See <http://www.stolpersteine.eu/en/> (accessed August 15, 2014).

66. James Young, "The Counter-Monument: Memory against Itself in Germany Today," *Critical Inquiry* 18, no. 2 (Winter 1992): 267–96. For the important distinction between deliberate and unintentional monuments, see Alois Riegl's 1903 essay, "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin," trans. Kurt W. Forster and Diane Ghirardo, *Oppositions* 25 (Fall 1982): 21–56. Riegl's distinctions allow observers to assign affective meaning to a physical site—such as a ruin—regardless of its original meaning or purpose.

67. Young, "The Counter-Monument," 270.

68. See the site-specific installation "An Awakening of the Ghost of Manshiyya" (November 2007), a commemorative project marking the neighborhood of Manshiyya, supported by the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality, <http://subtopia.blogspot.com/2007/11/tracking-border-ghosts-with-ronen.html> and <http://www.digitalartlab.org.il/ArchiveVideo.asp?id=186> (accessed October 1, 2014). See also the important early example of Michael Druks's *Yad le-Manshiyya* (Memorial to Manshiyya) (1965), a ready-made assemblage utilizing tile fragments, along with metal and wood pieces of other domestic objects found along the shoreline of Manshiyya. The work is bound by an arched frame, and resembles a stained-glass window, through which the viewer glimpses the cracked wreckage of the past. The use of the term "yad" (memorial monument) evokes other Israeli memorial sites, especially Yad Vashem, and places the ruins of Manshiyya on par with other

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Israeli sites of memory, such as Yad Mordechai (a kibbutz named in memory of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising hero Mordechai Anielewicz), Yad la-Shiryon at Latrun (commemorating a battle on the road to Jerusalem during 1948) and Yad la-Banim (a national voluntary organization dedicated to the memory of Israeli war dead).

69. Of the many works, see the seminal essay, Zali Gurevitch and Gideon Aran, “Al ha-makom (antropologiyah yisre’elit)” (On place [Israeli anthropology]), *Alpayim*, no. 4 (1991): 9–44; for an abbreviated English version, see Gurevitch, “The Double Site of Israel,” in Ben-Ari and Bilu, eds., *Grasping Land*, 203–16; and Barbara Mann, *Space and Place in Jewish Studies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

70. See Anita Shapira, “Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate over the New Historians,” *History & Memory* 7, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1995): 9–40; and Laurence J. Silberstein, “Postzionism: The Academic Debates,” in Silberstein, *The Postzionism Debates: Knowledge and Power in Israeli Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 89–126.

71. Young, “The Counter-Monument,” 270.

72. Edward Said, “Memory, Invention and Space,” in Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, Roger Heacock and Khaled Nashef, eds., *The Landscape of Palestine: Equivocal Poetry* (Birzeit: Birzeit University Press, 1999), 12.

73. While the traditional nation-state may seem a thing of the past, collective memory still plays an important role in the repertoire of emergent transnational cultures. See, for example, Tanja Zimmerman, ed., *Balkan Memories: Media Constructions of National and Transnational Histories* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012).

74. Miron Benvenisti, “The Hebrew Map,” in Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscapes: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

75. Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory*, 313.

76. Elias Khoury, “Rethinking the Nakba,” *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 2 (Winter 2012): 259.

77. Michael Rothberg, “From Gaza to Warsaw: Mapping Multidirectional Memory,” *Criticism* 53, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 524.

78. Amal Ikaik, “Al ‘omrim yeshnah erez’: Lo sof davar” (On “Once Upon a Land”: Not an afterword), in *Omrin yeshnah erez*, 508.