

historiography. As Sohrabi correctly suggests, the conventions of Iranian historiography have been to see the 19th century as a prelude to the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, thereby chronicling the events of this century either as foreshadows of what was to come or as an age of decadence and decline before the belated arrival of 20th-century transformations. Sohrabi's careful and sensitive accounting of the literary strands found in the genre of travel suggests that Iran's 19th-century history can be understood not simply as "decline," "foreshadow," or "prelude" to modernity but as an age in which early modern forms of Persianate knowledge continued to thrive. Sohrabi's account suggests that it is in fact arbitrary to define the 19th century as the beginning of the "modern" period in Iran, and that—when seen through the prism of travel writing—the 19th century can rather be defined by the endurance of earlier Persianate cultural forms. Sohrabi's *Taken for Wonder* is therefore an elegant and concise work that asks some very large and challenging questions about our very definition of "modernity" and how that definition has come to shape the historiography of Iran. For this and other reasons it is a work that deserves our serious consideration.

JOYCE DALSCHEIM, *Unsettling Gaza: Secular Liberalism, Radical Religion, and the Israeli Settlement Project* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Pp. 240. \$74.00 cloth.

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*Unsettling Gaza* is an extremely welcome addition to the literature on Israel and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Its value lies primarily in two areas. First, of the many works now available on the conflict generally and on Gaza specifically, few offer the kind of ethnographic, sociological, and ideological insights that this one provides into the Israeli settler community who resided in the Strip prior to Israel's 2005 "disengagement." During the year prior to (and following) the Israeli redeployment, Joyce Dalsheim carried out extensive fieldwork in the right-wing settlements of the Gaza Strip and in nearby, liberal/"left-wing" Jewish communities (largely kibbutzim) just outside Gaza's borders in the northwest part of the Negev Desert. The result is a powerful and at times intimate window into the life and thinking of Gaza's Jewish and religiously motivated settler community that is as revealing as it is compelling. Humanizing the "repugnant other" (to borrow from Susan Harding) (p. 16), which Dalsheim succeeds in doing, is never an easy or even welcome task, but it is always vital not only for the awareness and understanding it provides but for the questions it invariably (and, if I may, unsettlingly) raises.

These questions and the answers they compel constitute the book's second, more valuable contribution. Here Dalsheim challenges the facile and binary oppositions commonly used in Israel (and elsewhere) to frame the conflicts between Jewish Israelis (e.g., religious/secular, political right/political left, prosettlement/antisettlement) that have been "conflated to the simple opposition of left-wing secular versus right-wing religious" in Israel's political culture (p. 14), with each group viewing the other as a threat to the State of Israel. The origins of this intercommunal break—what is known among Israelis as the "rift among the people" (p. 14)—have deep historical roots, which were amplified with the 1995 assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a religious settler.

What is most important and striking about Dalsheim's argument is that these seemingly bipolar and conflicting ideologies, identities, and ways of living (and the complexities that characterize them) are actually bound together by profound commonalities that each end of the

Israeli political spectrum works hard to suppress. Hence, the “intense antagonism expressed between these groups is located less in their differences than in a *desire to differentiate*” (p. 5), which is more pronounced among the secular liberal/left. By placing these apparently irreconcilable communities in the same diagnostic framework—seeing each as a reflection of the other—the book argues that it is the effort to subdue their sameness that is the fundamental source of their conflict. In so doing, Dalsheim poses vexing questions about the nature of Israeli settlement and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that go far beyond common categories, conceptual understandings, and, I might add, national boundaries.

What underlies this fiercely held need to conceal convergence? Hagar, a young woman who lived in Gush Katif in Gaza, provides a simple but profound answer. She reasons that the Jewish communities of Gush Katif are no different from any Jewish community inside Israel except in one respect: unlike much of Jewish settlement inside Israel, which often resulted in the expulsion of Palestinians, settlements inside Gaza were built in areas that had never been inhabited by Palestinians, forcing no one to leave. Hagar therefore concludes that if “settling Gush Katif was wrong, then the whole of the Zionist project must be wrong” (p. 81). Hence, argues Dalsheim, if settlements in the Gaza Strip and West Bank “can be seen as a continuation of the settler project in Palestine that led to the establishment of the state of Israel, and if the current settlement project is morally reprehensible, then recognizing continuity and similarities among the populations on both sides of the Green Line might undermine the very moral justification of the nation-state” (p. 81), a belief that is equally unthinkable to the religious settler and secular liberal alike. Dalsheim shows that it is largely this fear, especially on the part of the latter, that propels the vilification of the other and the total rejection of any connection between them. In so doing the settler enterprise is allowed to continue, the liberal can blame the settler with a clear conscience, and, perhaps most importantly, the moral legitimacy of the state (and its establishment) is protected.

Another striking feature of the “incommensurable discourses” (p. 164) among Israelis is the near total absence of Palestinians in manner or voice. Palestinians in Gaza (and more generally) are resolutely diminished if not altogether removed from the antagonistic debate between right and left, their presence known but only marginally felt—a stunning feature of settler life, which is powerfully and even poignantly described. When Gaza’s settlers do acknowledge Palestinians, they are seen as hapless primitives or menacing intruders. Yet, as Dalsheim leads us to understand, often implicitly, this attitude is probably not that dissimilar from how Palestinians are fundamentally understood among secular Jewish liberals inside Israel, another reason impelling the liberal’s defamation of the repugnant other, thereby concealing the continuities between many, if not most, Israelis who have, in their own way, settled on Palestinian lands.

*Unsettling Gaza* is almost relentless in the way it disturbs hegemonic representations which order Israeli “socio-religious-political” (p. 151) life by examining, for example: the desire among religiously motivated nationalists to improve relations with secular Jews; the opposition to Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from Gaza among those Israelis who reject the settler enterprise; the presence of the Mizrahim—Jews from the Arab world—among the settler population; and the determination of a settler rabbi to find common cause among Israeli Jews and Palestinian Muslims based on shared faith. This effort to disturb and unsettle concludes the book with a provocative discussion of liberalism and religiosity that goes beyond the Israeli context.

My main critique concerns the use of terminology—for example, right-wing, radical right-wing, liberal, left-wing, fundamentalist, extremist—that requires more precise definition and explanation. Terms are sometimes used interchangeably and conflated in ways that do not elucidate meaning. The text is also repetitive at times and would have benefited from more careful editing. However, these criticisms in no way detract from the book’s importance and

analytical rigor. There should be no doubt that *Unsettling Gaza* is a significant contribution to our understanding of this painful, tortured conflict and perhaps, as the reader will discover, to its hoped-for resolution.

ASHER SUSSER, *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*, Middle East Studies (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2011). Pp. 312. \$85.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper, \$27.99 e-book.

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In *Israel, Jordan, and Palestine: The Two-State Imperative*, Asher Susser bundles the debate over a one-state versus a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict into a neat package that expertly and conveniently covers the topic within one volume. His project is a response to both the failure of the Oslo peace process to produce two coexisting independent states, Israel and Palestine, and the resultant popularity among some Palestinian advocates of a one-state solution. With his use of the word “imperative,” Susser signals his conviction that the two-state solution is still viable and, indeed, essential. The reader is well served with a detailed index, lengthy bibliography, discursive endnotes, and clear maps. The work’s many strengths include Susser’s frequent return to a rich collection of Arabic, Hebrew, and English language primary sources, as well as his engaging prose and occasional dry wit.

The book is logically organized, both by chapter and by subdivisions within chapters. Susser carefully defines terms and establishes historical context and the narratives of the main protagonists at the outset. Successive chapters then trace Israeli, Jordanian, and Palestinian discourse about the two-state solution and the emergence of the one-state alternative. Here Susser takes issue with arguments favoring the latter in published works by Ali Abunimah, Tony Judt, and Virginia Tilley. The heart of the volume is the final chapter and conclusion, in which the author makes a resounding case for the resurrection of the two-state solution, or at least for interim unilateral steps that will preserve it as the best eventual, if distant, end to the conflict.

Ironically, after years of vigorous lobbying by Palestinians, the governments and popular majorities of the United States and Israel were finally won over to the wisdom of the two-state solution, just as some Palestinians were giving up on it in favor of a single, binational state. The one-state solution posits that Arabs and Jews should live as equal individuals, with one vote for one person, in a single state west of the Jordan river. Susser perceives in this solution either a utopian vision of a “post-nationalist era” that does not actually exist anywhere on the globe or a gilded approach to the unmaking of Israel as a Jewish state. In the first case, he argues that ethnocultural nationalism is still thriving around the world and that it is naive to believe that Palestinians and Israelis would be the first to forgo an ethnocultural-based statehood when that is still the yardstick by which most peoples measure self-determination. Susser marvels that the same scholars who are quick to explain why Palestinians and Jordanians cannot coalesce in a Jordan-is-Palestine state earnestly insist that Israeli Jews and Palestinians can do just that in Palestine/Israel. But Susser is more concerned with the second rationale, which he sees as driven by anti-Israel activists who know that the overwhelmingly Arab demography of any binational state would precipitate the collapse of the Jewish nation-state and the rapid reduction of the Jewish population to minority status. If one-state proponents truly aspire to peace in Palestine, he