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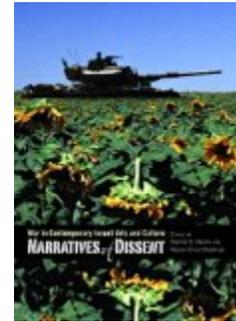
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ranan Omer-Sherman Rachel S. Harris, eds. *Narratives of Dissent: War in Contemporary Israeli Arts and Culture*. Wayne State University Press, 2013. 384 pp. \$39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8143-3803-2.

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Published on H-Judaic (August, 2013)

Commissioned by Jason Kalman



At Six, After the War

Narratives of Dissent is a rich and wide-ranging collection, which provides anglophone readers a window into contemporary Israeli society. The essays in the volume discuss and analyze numerous representations of what functions as one of Israel's most unifying and yet dividing forces: war.

The collection opens with a very helpful introduction by Ranan Omer-Sherman, followed by nineteen essays in three sections. The first section, titled "Private and Public Spaces of Commemoration and Mourning," is the most eclectic of the three, offering essays on popular music, painting, and even craft. Two articles deal with the interesting connection between war and popular music, though each takes a different approach. Galeet Dardashti investigates the reception of Middle Eastern and Arab culture in Israel amid the Second Intifada, and analyzes the collaborations between Palestinian Israelis and Israeli Jews during those intense years. Danny Kaplan's essay records the results of an ethnographic study of popular music on Israeli radio during times of emergency. The two studies' conclusions regarding the power of music highlight the differences in their objects of study. While Kaplan, who deals with internal Jewish discourse, finds that radio programming had a powerful role in arousing public solidarity, Dardashti's article shows that, when it comes to interacting with the "other," the situation is much more challenging. During the ultranationalist period of the Second Intifada, musical collaborations between Palestinian Israelis and Israeli Jews did not nec-

essarily result in a real change of heart for their audiences, and did not create feelings of solidarity between the two groups. Another article that touches on the relation between music and war is Michael Feige's essay on a unique monument for what is known in Israel as the "Helicopter Disaster." Feige highlights the importance of a song based on a poem written by one of the soldiers who fell in the 1997 helicopter accident, and discusses how the song as well as the monument reflect a shift in commemoration methods in contemporary Israel. Two other articles offer original perspectives on the question of war and its representations, one by discussing an old-fashioned craft, and the other by analyzing an emerging trend. In the first, Noa Roei discusses Jewish New Year greeting cards and their role in shaping national pride following the Six-Day War. In the second, Liav Sade-Beck deals with the contemporary culture of online mourning. Both articles introduce the reader to uniquely Israeli methods of dealing with war and its aftermath. Finally, Tal Ben Zvi offers a sensitive analysis of the paintings of Asad Azi. Ben Zvi finds that these paintings, which are based on photographs from Azi's family albums, constitute the core of what she calls his "soldiering."

The essays in the second section are focused on representations of war and its consequences in poetry and prose. Several of the articles discuss the work of specific writers. Ester Raizen's essay delicately deals with the theme of failed motherhood in the poetry of Raya Harnik, whose son fell in the battle of the Beaufort in 1982. In a

thought-provoking essay on Dahlia Ravikovitch's protest poetry, Ilana Szobel shows that this poetry's main purpose is to unveil the mechanism of evil in its political and social contexts. Shiri Goren provides a rare opportunity for English-speakers to learn about the work of the Israeli author Gabriela Avigur-Rotem. Specifically, Goren discusses two novels by the author and shows how they represent the harsh consequences that violence in the public sphere inflicts upon the private realm. Philip Metres's essay on Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* (1976) and David Grossman's *The Smile of the Lamb* (1982) provides another opportunity for a new perspective on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a perspective that is strikingly different from what American media normally offer.

The other essays in this section offer a more thematic look at poetry and prose related to war and dissent. In her intriguing article on Israeli literature related to the Lebanon War and the Intifada, Glenda Abramson offers a broader look at a topic many of the other articles deal with. In this respect, I think that Abramson's article would have been even more effective had it opened the section. Ester Fuchs carefully analyzes different feminist trends in Israeli scholarship on war and illuminates the differences and similarities between them. Adam Rovner provides an overview of how the apocalypse has figured in Israeli fiction since the 1970s. Unlike most of the other articles in this section, Rovner focuses on works that have appeared in translation, in order to show the psychological significance that their depictions of "The End" have had for anglophone readers. Such readers will be in much less familiar territory with a new trend in Israeli poetry, which is introduced here by Adriana X. Jacobs. Jacobs explains and analyzes the phenomena of anthologies of protest poetry that appear in Internet editions. These anthologies are normally produced as ad hoc responses to specific events, and as such they can be considered a special form of writing that demands special research and distinct methods of evaluation.

The third section deals with cinematic and dramatic works, and opens with a detailed and helpful article by Dan Urian on representations of war in Israeli drama and theater. Rachel S. Harris offers surprising analysis of the emergence of a new wave in Israeli cinema as a response to the First Gulf War. Harris shows that these films use

the traditional structure of the romance and the heightened domestic tensions of the Gulf War as a plot device for exposing the female experience of the war.

Three subsequent articles address questions of masculinity and manhood in Israeli cinema: Yael Munk's article describes the cinematic shifts in the image of the IDF soldier; Yaron Peleg discusses the representations of men's "friendship" or bond (*re'ut*) in Ron Leshem's 2005 novel *Beaufort* (the Hebrew title is *Im yesh gan eden*) and its cinematic adaptation; and Philip Hollander deals with the role of militarism and manhood in Israeli society, as represented in *Beaufort* and *Waltz with Bashir* (2008). All three articles focus on the new Israeli trend of Lebanon War films, but, surprisingly, each illuminates different aspects of this genre. Together, they offer a panoramic view of the changes in the Israeli "culture of war."

The above characterization is also true for the entire collection. Despite the occasional repetition and overlap of a few themes, the book as a whole gives a very good sense of the topic, and covers it in a deep and nuanced way. The collection also successfully tackles a few other obstacles. An intrinsic challenge for this kind of project is that it needs to find a way to balance the universal aspects of the topic and its particular manifestations in a specific culture. This problem is solved, at least partly, by the editors' decision to look beyond canonical writers and artists and deal with new and sometimes less familiar voices, and to address developing trends and ideas. In this respect, this collection offers far more than a typical college textbook, as it gives a very nuanced picture of the topic. My only criticism in this regard is that it would have been helpful if the essays related to similar topics had appeared next to each other. It seems as if there was a deliberate attempt to hide thematic overlaps by separating them, but this separation may lead readers to overlook important similarities and differences that are illuminated by the variety of perspectives.

The third and perhaps most challenging obstacle stems from the fact that the topic of this collection is highly contentious in Israeli discourse. That the writers and editors manage to transcend politically controversial discourse and discuss the issue from a very neutral perspective is a good indication of the professional merits of their achievement.

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Citation: Neta Stahl. Review of Rachel S. Harris, Ranan Omer-Sherman, eds., *Narratives of Dissent: War in Contemporary Israeli Arts and Culture*. H-Judaic, H-Net Reviews. August, 2013.

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