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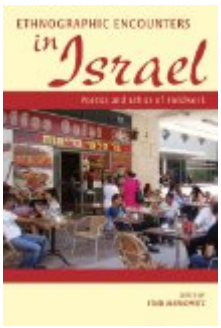

Fran Markowitz, ed.. *Ethnographic Encounters in Israel: Poetics and Ethics of Fieldwork.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. x + 225 pp. $30.00, paper, ISBN 978-0-253-00861-9.

Reviewed by Michal Raucher

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Commissioned by Matthew A. Kraus (University of Cincinnati)

We often see Israel as a country of binaries: religious and secular, Israeli and Palestinian, hawks and doves. Although we know these binaries do not encapsulate the depth of diversity in Israel, or the moral ambiguity that weaves through them, we rarely see scholarship that engages this cultural and ethical diversity. *Ethnographic Encounters in Israel: Poetics and Ethics of Fieldwork*, edited by Fran Markowitz, introduces readers to a variety of ethnographic settings that are not often part of discussions about Israel.

This collection of "edgy ethnographies" highlights the "diverse symbols, nations, languages, ideas, people, politics, and powers" that challenge the dominant binaries in Israeli society (p. 2). We gain a window into a variety of communities in Israel: Christian pilgrim tourists, Messianic Jews, the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem (AHIJ) who are based in Dimona, diverse communities of hip-hop musicians, "Filipina" foreign workers, Ethiopian Jews, Bedouin Arabs, Palestinian Israelis, Jews who lived in the Gaza settlements pre-2005, and Israeli prostitutes. In fact, the only "normative" community and context investigated in this book is found in the last chapter, in which Virginia Dominguez looks back on her field notes from the summer of 1982 to comment on the everyday experiences of Israeli Jews during the first Lebanon war.

The collection divides the essays among three sections. The first section contains essays that reflect on the way images and narratives of belonging in Israel are constantly shifting. Jackie Feldman's account of leading Christian pilgrim tour groups highlights this tension. As an immigrant to Israel, he thought learning about Israel would make him more Israeli, but Feldman found that Israelis still saw him as an Anglo-Saxon tour guide. To Christian pilgrims, however, Feldman was an authentic Israeli Jew. Although not an essay based on any ethnographic fieldwork, Feldman is an accomplished anthropologist and brings a sophisticated analysis to identity politics in Israel.

Tamir Erez's fieldwork as an Israeli Jew researching a Messianic Jewish sect demonstrates how these individual identities are also shaped by larger cultural themes. Struggling for legitimacy in Israeli society, the Messianic Jews were skeptical of Erez's involvement in the group because he represented the Israeli Jewish culture that rejects Messianic Judaism for not maintaining a clear boundary between Christianity and Judaism. And yet, in their attempts to proselytize, Erez was a "prize catch" as an Israeli Jew.

Another contested religious identity is found among the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, who are based in Dimona. John L. Jackson's ethnography of the AHIJ began in New York, but he approached the group in Israel with questions about transnational spiritual communities. Linking themselves to the ancient Hebrew patriarchs, the AHIJ identifies with Judaism in Israel, and yet, like Messianic Jews, they are not generally part of normative Israeli Judaism. Feldman, Jackson, and Erez demonstrate that their ethnographic work put their own identities into focus, but their research also highlights the boundaries and categories that define religious identities in Israel. Far beyond a simplistic example of the political power of the ultra-Orthodox to shape Jewish identity, we see here that Jewish identity is also created in its negation of other groups who claim Jewish identity but do not fit within the borders of normative Judaism in Israel.

The second grouping of ethnographies poses questions about the ethics of the Israeli government, class structures, and racisms. Introducing race relations in Israel through the medium of music, Uri Dorchin argues that hip-hop artists are negotiating identities between self and other, performance and representation. The performance, Dorchin demonstrates, is a negotiation of authenticity between performer and audience. By emphasizing the diversity of hip-hop groups in Israel, Dorchin shows how music performance is also a method of establishing shared and divergent racial identities.

Gabriella Djerrahian also explores race relations in Israel in her ethnography by examing the "different ways in which young Ethiopian (Jewish) Israelis negotiate their racialized status as a socioeconomically marginal Jewish group seeking full participation in Israeli society" (p. 114). As an Armenian from Ethiopia doing research in Israel, Djerrahian straddled the line between insider and outsider in a more complicated way than most ethnographers. This confusion over her own identity reinforces Feldman's earlier assertion that identities shift when placed in different contexts. Djerrahian's finding that the Ethiopian Israelis did not want to challenge Israel's hierarchical racial system but instead just wanted to be part of the "white" Israeli Jewish social class indicates that race and racism in Israel are tied to ethnicity and social status. Not being part of the "white" hegemony means that Ethiopian Israelis are part of the "black" Arab Israeli and Palestinian ethnicity.

Karen Mazuz raises additional challenges facing Israel's multinational population with her analysis of Israelis' use of foreign workers for some of life's most intimate moments. The use of "Filipinas," the generic term for female migrant workers, to care for the Jewish elderly highlights an interesting tension in Israeli society. On the one hand, these migrant workers are involved in the intimate and delicate work of caring for the elderly. Mazuz's descriptions of immigrant laborers sleeping next to the elderly, cleaning their feces, and developing kinship relations indicates that these individuals are not just caregivers but family. On the other hand, their presence in the State of Israel evokes anxiety surrounding their fertility and sexuality, in other words, their ability to create their own families. Migrant workers, Mazuz explains, can be a part of the Israeli family as long as they do not attempt to have a family of their own.

The third and final section in ***Ethnographic Encounters*** shifts the focus more clearly onto the ethnographer. In an essay that could have gone into the previous section, Emily McKee discusses her landscape analysis of two communities in the Negev: Jews and Bedouin Arabs. Although not a far distance from one another, the social, environmental, and political differences are stark and inscribed on the land on which they dwell. McKee demonstrates how dwelling practices "have the power to reinforce or challenge institutionally shaped landscapes" (p. 150). Although for Jews and Bedouin Arabs the social borders are intertwined with the physical landscape, McKee views these borders with fresh eyes and reflects on how she reacted traveling between the two areas frequently.

The last four essays explore how scholars' own identities are intertwined in their research notes and their scholarship. Each of these scholars displays a great deal of vulnerability sharing these essays with readers, and in this way some of them come to identify with their research participants more than they would prefer. Jasmin Habib explores conceptions of "home" and "returning" as she investigates her own diasporic identity when she travels to Israel/Palestine. Hilla Nehushtan questions her academic integrity when her desire to conduct feminist fieldwork conflicts with her hope that her research participant, a prostitute Nehushtan calls "Dana," does not challenge the established power structure between researcher and researched. Although Nehushtan believed she maintained control over their research encounters, she reflects on one evening in which Dana held more power than the researcher. Despite her goal of a feminist ethnography, Nehushtan broke her ties with Dana that night because she was uncomfortable with the shifting power dynamic.

Realizing that one's moral compass is muddied is the topic of both Joyce Dalsheim's and Virginia Dominguez's essays. Dalsheim shares field notes from "Hannah," an anthropology student who conducted research in Gaza settlement communities in 2004. The notes reveal that the researcher was often confused about how to distinguish between morality and immorality in Gaza. On more than one occasion she found herself empathizing or at the very least liking those whom the "intellectual border patrol" of anthropology views as immoral. This terrifies her and leads her to question how to evaluate a group of people who "build ethical communities within broader systems that necessarily result in injustices and structural violence" (p. 180). When colleagues and advisors tell Hannah she is working in a danger zone, it is not because of the gunfire or the immorality of the players. As Dalsheim states, "The confusion *is* the danger" (p. 184). If even in the Gaza strip Hannah cannot distinguish the moral from the immoral because they are too entangled, then in our seemingly more simple and ethically sharp boundaries we are all implicated in immorality because the borders are not as clear as we think. Dalsheim's commentary relates this problem directly to immoral structures in the academy.

In the final essay, Dominguez also relates her ethnography to the judgmental gaze of the current academic climate. After many years of concealing these field notes, Dominguez reveals that her immersion among Israeli Jews during the summer of 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon brought her to the "point of worry," because she found herself identifying with the "aggressor, occupier and military power." Within the "liberal-progressive-leftist circles in which most anthropologists live their everyday professional lives around the world," identifying with those fighting for social justice is expected and commendable, but Dominguez's field notes reveal that she was not identifying with the Palestinians, the group that has become widely recognized within anthropological circles as those in need of social justice (p. 208). Dominguez questions her own objectivity and morality when she defends Israelis' morality

at the conclusion of the summer of 1982 but does not return to her field notes after news surfaced revealing Israel's complicity in the Sabra and Shatila massacres in September of that year. She suggests that her field notes reveal not just her own unethical point of view, which on its own concerns her, but also that Israelis had reached the point of worry, where their ethics were confused as well.

Aside from Dominguez, Djerrahian, Habib, and Dalsheim, most of these essays consider the moral and political complexities of Israel and conducting fieldwork in Israel while barely touching the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Although discussions of race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, and historical and cultural narrative could have tied back to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, most scholars in this collection remained focused on the goal of showing different parts of Israeli society. While some might find this fact a detriment to the collection, I think it is a testament to its virtue and a reason why this book would be of interest to scholars of Israel, the Middle East, Judaism, and religion. The lives and themes discussed in the diverse essays in this volume permeate various parts of Israeli life, and to view everything through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is itself a kind of hegemony. Recent attempts by academic societies to boycott collaboration with Israeli academic institutions or prevent the flow of research coming out of Israel work against the important goal of expanding knowledge, and complicating pictures that are widely oversimplified. These boycott movements against academic institutions only reinforce the idea that there is but one minority group in Israel. Like every country, Israel is filled with hypocrisy; moral complexity; inequalities; and ethnic, religious, economic, and social divides. The appearance of moral simplicity has kept ethnographers, such as all of those who contributed to this collection, from sharing the various levels of moral ambiguity that is not only within Israeli society but also part and parcel of ethnographic fieldwork in Israel.

Although the diversity of research participants and questions is a virtue for this collection, the lack of clarity in terms of what the authors mean by "ethics" in fieldwork is problematic. Some, like Erez and Nehushtan, raise ethical challenges regarding their fieldwork methods. Erez is intentionally vague with the Messianic Jews about his religious intentions, and Nehushtan abandons the research project when she feels vulnerable, assuming incorrectly that only the research participant should be vulnerable. Others, like Mazuz and Djerrahian, emphasize Israel's ethics (or lack thereof) as discovered through fieldwork. Their essays point out moral failings in Israel's actions toward migrant workers and Ethiopian immigrants, respectively. Last, Dalsheim and Dominguez question the ethics of the academe when it comes to scholarship on Israel. Although each approach is valuable and laudable, the volume lacks a coherent analysis of what each of these approaches suggests is ethically at stake.

Seeing as this collection is also aimed toward ethnographers, I would have also liked to know why these scholars think ethnographic fieldwork in Israel is any different from fieldwork in other countries. The authors do not succeed in making the case that Israel is in some way unique in ethnographic challenges. The essays demonstrate that the give and take of fieldwork often illuminates how scholars are implicated in the messiness of everyday life, and how the daily life of research cannot be distinguished from national, religious, and ethnic controversies. Markowitz states that her intention is to focus on the practice of ethnography in Israel as full of "tension, fits and starts, back talk and reassessments, flip flops in power relations, and the unexpected turns that intimacy takes" (p. 17). But this reality of ethnography does not apply solely to Israel. In fact, four of the essays cite Susan Friend Harding's work about fundamentalist Christians in America be-

cause Harding engages many of the same questions.[1] Markowitz writes that reflecting on these ethnographic encounters serves as a reminder that they were "working in an upsetting country with unsettling, rarely certain, and always immanent situations in which diverse nations, languages, ideas, people, politics, and powers are always rubbing up against each other" (p. 2).

Israel, unfortunately, is not unique in maintaining these challenges and this diversity, and ethnographic encounters in any setting raise similar questions and concerns. It seems the authors assume that we have all come to think about Israel in the binaries I mentioned earlier. If so, when will anthropology come to see Israel through the Zionist dream of "normalization?" Israel is a country like any other, filled with a multitude of morally problematic realities, one no more pressing than the other. The authors in this collection have thoroughly demonstrated that there is no shortage of ethical questions in Israel, and that questions of identity, religious affiliation, and ethnicity pervade multiple arenas in Israel. In this way, their work contributes to breaking down the hegemony of scholarship on Israel, demonstrating the diversity within Israeli society and justifying increased scholarship on Israeli culture.

Note

[1]. Susan Friend Harding, "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 1 (1987): 140-166; and *The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).