it shipped and displayed in their location and many fewer people would have seen it. As an online exhibit, it is free (if you have access to a computer). I have received e-mails from people all over the country who have used it in their classrooms. So, yes, I do think that the digitalization of visual media has made museum exhibits and archives accessible to wider audiences.

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Photo Essay

The “Architectural Cleansing” of Palestine

Ariel Sophia Bardi

Quand l’image est nouvelle, le monde est nouveau.
[When the image is new, the world is new.] —Gaston Bachelard, La poétique de l’espace (1989)

Spurred by European pogroms and galvanized by the growth of modern nationalism, Zionist immigration to Ottoman Palestine began in the 1880s with a wave of Russian settlers who were known, with a whiff of the American Old West, as pioneers, or chalotzim. Cities had maintained consistent Jewish numbers, but rural Palestine, host to an entire constellation of Arab towns and villages, lay virtually undisturbed. Nineteenth-century settlements began to checker the countryside with population blocs, outlining the parameters of a nascent Jewish state. Under British mandatory rule, state-building became a literal endeavor: between 1918 and 1929, some 60 additional compounds were built. Soon, the Jewish minority doubled to about a fifth of the population. Watchtowers surveyed vulnerable borders, now patrolled by a civilian army. Much like the towns that preside, fortresslike, over the contemporary West Bank, prestate settlements annexed lands to Israel’s national imaginary. Buildings waged a shadow war, appropriating territory in anticipation of the state.

By 1948, Israel’s shadow war had come to light. The United Nations’ proposal to partition Palestine, at the end of 1947, led to six months of intense fighting. Snipers threw daily life into a frenzy as explosives decimated whole quarters. Bombs in Tel Aviv, Jaffa, Haifa, and Jerusalem razed urban targets, disfiguring the shared space of the city. In the retaliations that volleyed back and forth, the First Arab—Israeli War began. It was under these conditions that, by late spring, Israeli paramilitary forces pushed for and eventually obtained full control of the state. During and after the war, culturally mixed landscapes were renewed and rebranded, curtailing the transmutation—at times slow, at times very sudden—of Palestine into Israel.

If constructions by early settlers helped to Judaize Palestine with the signs and symbols of a Jewish population on the rise, then the War of 1948 helped to de-Arabize it. Indeed, much like prestate housing projects, demolitions nationalized and majoritized territories in dispute, inflecting the landscape with a distinct new nationhood. Spaces were cleared of their communal heritage and scrubbed of their Palestinian pasts. Farms and family houses were bombed while schools, cafes, urban centers, and political and cultural institutions were leveled, converted, or destroyed. A millennia-old presence was reduced to rubble as Palestine’s built environment became the battlefield for Israel’s Judaization campaign.

Sociologist Sari Hanafi has coined the term spacio-cide to describe the “entire Israeli project since 1948,” which has produced devastating losses while causing relatively few casualties. Argues Hanafi, “In every conflict, belligerents define their enemy and shape their mode of action accordingly. In the Palestinian–Israeli conflict, the Israeli target is the place” (2009, emphasis added). After the onset of war, it was clear that the Jewish state-building project would not succeed through the construction of a national home alone. In 1947 and 1948, Israeli operatives devised a set of military campaigns that would defend the Yishuv, Israel’s prestate community of Jews, against local resistance while they continued to convert Palestinian spaces into the swelling contours of a Jewish state.

Plan Dalet, an amalgam of three former campaigns—Plan B, from 1945; the May 1946 Plan, otherwise known as Plan C; and the Yehoshua Plan, from 1948—began operations in early April 1948. Under “Assignment of Duties,” Dalet states that operations “against enemy population centers” can include “destruction of villages (setting fire to, blowing up, and planting mines in the debris).” In the “event of resistance,” Dalet notes, “the armed force must...
be destroyed and the population must be expelled outside the borders of the state." But "in the absence of resistance, garrison troops will enter the village and take up positions in it or in locations which enable complete tactical control" (Khalidi 2010:24). With its focus on property destruction, Plan D helped author Israel’s “architectural cleansing” campaign, coding the landscape with a visual history of victor and vanquished.

If Israeli paramilitaries sketched a portrait of a de-Arabized, Jewish majority state, then Dalet was the brush
FIGURE 3. Political graffiti in Lifta. “Eyash cavashnu,” it reads, “eyash” being shorthand for Judea and Samaria, itself the biblical name for the Occupied Territories of the West Bank: “We conquered the area of Judea and Samaria.” (Photo courtesy of Ariel Sophia Bardi)

FIGURE 4. A blue-and-white tag—the colors of the Israeli flag—marks a Palestinian ruin as Jewish. The arched doorways were a classic feature of traditional stone homes, while the stones themselves were carved and laid by hand. (Photo courtesy of Ariel Sophia Bardi)

that painted it. Palestinian flights took place under conditions of extreme reluctance and fear amid a landscape of vanishing villages. The Arab League urged Palestinians to stand their ground against attacks, but it was difficult to stand on ground that was so unsound. Some villages, like Khirbat ‘Azzun, near Ra’anana, were deserted by terrified residents, who set out in somber processions toward safer grounds. Others, like the Christian village of Al-Rama, in the Galilee region, were forcibly emptied by troops. Demolitions and depopulations formed twin strategies of erasure: spurred by property attacks, many Palestinians considered their exodus to be a temporary displacement, a lull in the storm of war. But by March 1948, the state had already produced some 50,000 refugees, the majority of whom would never return.

Between 400 and 600 villages were sacked during the war, while urban Palestine was almost entirely extinguished. The devastation wrought was breathtaking. As Lila
Abu-Lughod and Ahmad H. Sa’di have put it, “For Palestinians, the 1948 War led indeed to a ‘catastrophe.’ A society disintegrated, a people dispersed . . . communal life was ended violently” (2007:3). The new state built over Palestine’s remains: atop more than 400 Palestinian villages, over 400 Israeli settlements were founded. Though the myth persisted of a barren, sparsely populated region, Palestine was already considerably developed before Jewish immigration. Hundreds of villages extended down the bottom-heavy sliver of land, connecting the clay-colored canyons and deserts of the south to the flat coastal plains and up to the verdant north. Teeming port cities—Acre, Jaffa, Gaza, the
mixed city of Haifa—dotted the coast. In 1948, it was those villages along the Jaffa–Jerusalem road that fell first, then West Jerusalem, Tiberias and the Galilee, Safed, and the central plains. Before 1947, only 1,800 square kilometers of land were under Jewish control, while the partition plan would have allotted Jewish residents an additional 12,200. By the end of Plan Dalet, they held a whopping 20,000 square kilometers, and Jews outnumbered non-Jews by four to one. Suddenly, the new Jewish majority had not just a demographical upper hand but a visual and spatial dominance.

The years of 1947 and 1948 are still seared onto Israel’s landscape: Ilan Pappé has called Plan Dalet a “blueprint” for the “ethnic cleansing” of Palestine, and it is not difficult to account for his choice of words (2007:12). In just two
years, Palestine’s Palestinian population—some 1.3 million people—vanished by half, and architecture played a paramount role in the region’s Judaization. While *ethnic cleansing* remains a perilously political term to assign to the events of the Nakba, the region was nonetheless indisputably cleansed. However, as Šari Hanafi points out, the targets were place based. The “architectural cleansing” of Palestine remapped territories and recoded their legacies, creating new connections based on ancient affiliations while leveling enemy infrastructures. Houses were preemptively demolished as a defense tactic or blown up in retaliatory attacks; villages were stormed and destroyed. The transformation of Palestine into Israel was effected not only by the expulsion of non-Jewish groups but by the steady

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**FIGURE 9.** The artists’ village of Ein Hod, which was spared the fate of most other Palestinian villages when Romanian Dadaist artist Marcel Janco petitioned to have it converted into a Jewish artists’ colony in 1953. Ein Hod’s residents, exiled from village lands during the War of 1948, formed a new village by the name of Ein Houd adjacent to Ein Hod. Ein Hod remains an elite community of Jewish craftspeople and a popular tourist site. (Photo courtesy of Ariel Sophia Bardi)

**FIGURE 10.** A poster advertising an Israeli construction company sits next to an abandoned church in northern Israel. With their flood of departures after 1948, Palestinian Christians fell from almost a quarter of the total population to just under 10 percent. (Photo courtesy of Ariel Sophia Bardi)
FIGURE 11. A home in Malha, an upscale Jewish neighborhood in Jerusalem, was formerly the Palestinian village of Al-Maliha. It was depopulated in April of 1948 and filled, in later years, with Jewish immigrants from the Middle East. The village mosque still stands, closed and unused, but the surrounding buildings have been converted into private homes. (Photo courtesy of Ariel Sophia Bardi)

eradication of their built heritage. Refugees had nothing to return to: decades after Plan Dalet reimagined the Palestinian landscape, a derelict minaret or lone dome is often all that remains of village infrastructures. Some buildings, like the Qaraman family mansion in Haifa, which has been repurposed as a supermarket, have survived in other forms.

All across Israel, ruins still abound. Old Palestinian buildings, with their patina of authenticity, are now covetable properties. Mosques in Ein Hod and Malha have been converted into cafes and private residences. In the Golani spa town of Hamat Gader, built atop the village of Al-Hamma, an old mosque is hidden behind hot pools. In the stone foundations of suburban Israeli homes or in the piles of limestone that dot the highways, 1948 can still be glimpsed, though its residents have long been cleared from the spaces that it so profoundly marked. As Meron Benvenisti has written, “Once the human landscape disappears, the physical space is inevitably transformed” (2000:5). However, in this case it was the transformation of Palestinian physical space that led to the disappearance of Palestine’s human landscape.

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