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Author
Marzulla, Lindsay

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Settling Nature: The Conservation Regime in Palestine-Israel. By Irus Braverman. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2023. 344 pages. $116.00 cloth; $29.00 paper; $29.00 e-book.

Irus Braverman, an interdisciplinary scholar and professor at the University of Buffalo, was born in Israel and received a law degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Much of her research focuses on more-than-human relationships, and she has written multiple books on the subject, including *Zooland: The Institution of Captivity* (Stanford University Press, 2013) and *Wild Life: The Institution of Nature* (Stanford University Press, 2015). In *Settling Nature: The Conservation Regime in Palestine-Israel*, she positions herself as an activist and ethnographer with an insider perspective on the topic at hand, drawing from her own experience growing up in Jerusalem as well as her academic experience studying political identities, human geography, and environmental conflict. The book's intended audience includes those who may already be somewhat familiar with settler colonial history, Indigenous sovereignty, and conservation ecology, but not necessarily in the Palestine-Israel region. For scholars, policymakers, and anyone else interested in the dynamics of conservation in contested territories, *Settling Nature* offers crucial insights and a fresh viewpoint on the role of nature in shaping and being shaped by political struggles.

Broadly speaking, *Settling Nature* examines the impacts of settler colonialism on nature in the region and how the enforcement of conservation laws and regulations by the Israeli government has contributed to a loss of sovereignty and dispossession of Palestinian communities. The book is arranged into six chapters, and is structured around a series of case studies compiled from more than seventy interviews that highlight the ways in which conservation policies and practices are embedded within the broader sociopolitical landscape of the region. Photographs, maps, and other graphics are utilized as visual aids throughout the text.

In the opening chapter ("Policing Nature"), Braverman lays the groundwork by contextualizing the historical and political background of conservation in Palestine-Israel. She traces the evolution of territorial control from the State of Israel's establishment in 1948 to the creation of the Israel Nature and Parks Authority (INPA) in 1963, and on to the present day, highlighting how these efforts have often been entangled with colonial and nationalistic agendas. Braverman meticulously documents how conservation policies are utilized to assert territorial claims and how they influence local communities, often exacerbating existing tensions. For example, the State of Israel currently has 530 nature reserves and parks—a massive number considering the area is roughly the same size as New Jersey. However, as Braverman points out, even though much of this land is privately owned by Palestinians, they are often "prohibited from cultivating or accessing their private lands," and "they are typically not

entitled to compensation according to Israeli law" (2). In addition, more than half of the parks and reserves are designated as military training zones.

Subsequent chapters delve into specific case studies, with a focus that shifts from the protection and conservation of land to that of certain animal and plant species—some of whom were no longer present in the region due to habitat fragmentation and destruction, and therefore required reintroduction. According to Braverman's research, the settler state has granted priority to animals associated with the Bible, such as the fallow deer, gazelle, and griffon vulture. Braverman notes that "the project of reintroducing biblical wildlife into the ecosystem in Palestine-Israel aims to reconnect the Jewish people to their homeland. But the reintroduction of extirpated wild animals also does something else, which is much less obvious: it alters the contemporary landscape" (62). Indeed, the latter may be less obvious to many, but readers with backgrounds in conservation biology and ecology will undoubtably be familiar with these types of disruptions. Furthermore, while the Jewish people of Palestine-Israel are allied with these biblical species, Braverman discusses how Palestinians are typically associated with "invasive" or "problematic" domesticated species such as camels, olive trees, and feral dogs.

One of the central themes of Braverman's work is the concept of what she refers to as settler ecologies—the ways in which conservation practices by a settler population are employed to assert political and territorial control. Braverman argues that conservation is not merely an ecological endeavor: like many aspects of a settler state, it is deeply intertwined with questions of power and sovereignty. This theme is particularly evident in her analysis of how nature reserves are used to delimit boundaries and exclude Palestinian communities from certain areas. The control of nature and nonhuman animals that are deemed to be "wild" is an intrinsic part of these settler ecologies.

Another significant contribution of the book is its examination of the environmental justice dimensions of conservation. Braverman highlights the often-overlooked impact of conservation policies on marginalized communities, particularly Palestinians living under occupation. She critiques the inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and burdens and underscores the ways in which conservation practices can reinforce existing inequalities.

Settling Nature is a significant contribution to the field of environmental studies and political geography, filling a gap in the literature that few scholars have tackled. There are several similarities between conservation practices in Palestine-Israel and other governments under settler control, such as the United States and Canada. These have been explored in the literature, but only to a slightly more comprehensive extent. Indeed, the topic remains contentious for many. Braverman concludes the book on a note of what she describes as "active hope" rather than succumbing to cynicism and despair, although by her own admittance it would be easy to do based on the evidence. Looking to the future, she writes, "I hope that we will endorse such more-than-human perspectives that disrupt the power of settling nature and move us toward its unsettling" (267).

Lindsay Marzulla
University of Arizona