

Time & Remains – of Palestine

Photographs by James Morris
Introduction by Raja Shehadeh
192 pages (95 color illustrations), 30 x 24 cm
Kehrer Verlag, 2016, € 39.90



Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo,
Thus, in your mind.

With this extract from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, Raja Shehadeh begins his introduction to an outstanding collection of photographs by James Morris in which he explores the remains of the Palestinian homeland and juxtaposes images of the fabric of conflict in the built landscape of the contemporary West Bank. The work originated from a walk through a forest in Israel where the photographer came across the unexplained crumbling walls of seemingly ancient structures that an official plaque declared as "an oasis, a recreation area, a place of water, of hope, of peace, of vision." Morris' inspiration for the book stemmed from the stark discord between this declaration and a film he saw online in which elderly Israeli Palestinian citizens recalled how as children they had lived in this area, remembering their village that now lies in ruins – its homes, terraces, fields, and water spring. These men had been expelled during the *Nakba* of 1948, their village flattened, their right of return refused; a forest had been planted, and its imported pines were slowly obscuring the world of the inhabitants of this village, "cleansing" the traces of their former presence. Raja Shehadeh – whose family was forced out of Jaffa in the weeks leading up to the *Nakba*, at which time the cultural and commercial bridge to the sea with a history of over 5,000 years was reduced from 80,000 to 3,665 inhabitants – relates that Ben Gurion, in the newly formed state, assembled

archeologists, historians, geographers, and cartographers to rename the country. "Just as we do not recognize the Arab's political proprietorship of the land, so we also do not recognize their spiritual proprietorship and their names."

Part II is entitled "When the Time Comes," in reference to a statement issued after the massacre in Deir Yassin perpetrated by the Irgun and Stern, the Jewish forces that fought in 1948: "We will maintain the graves and remaining property and return it to the owners when the time comes." As a number of photographs show, some graves have been left standing. Yet as Shehadeh comments, the return of property has yet to happen. Morris documents the fabric of conflict and occupation in the contemporary West Bank that has been zoned into areas A, B, and C, fenced in and divided by concrete walls, checkpoints, and roadblocks, and increasingly diminished by expanding settlements. His images document the contemporary landscape of the resulting labyrinth and consider the possibilities of a would-be "Palestine," witnessing the parallel worlds of parted peoples. In contemplating the enduring notion of "Palestine," the book seeks not just to chronicle history, architecture, and landscape but also to comprehend, in part, that which evolved and reverberates still. The images, being largely void of their inhabitants, add to the haunting impression they leave with the observer.