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In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists After Darwish (Contemporary Issues in the Middle East)

Najat Rahman
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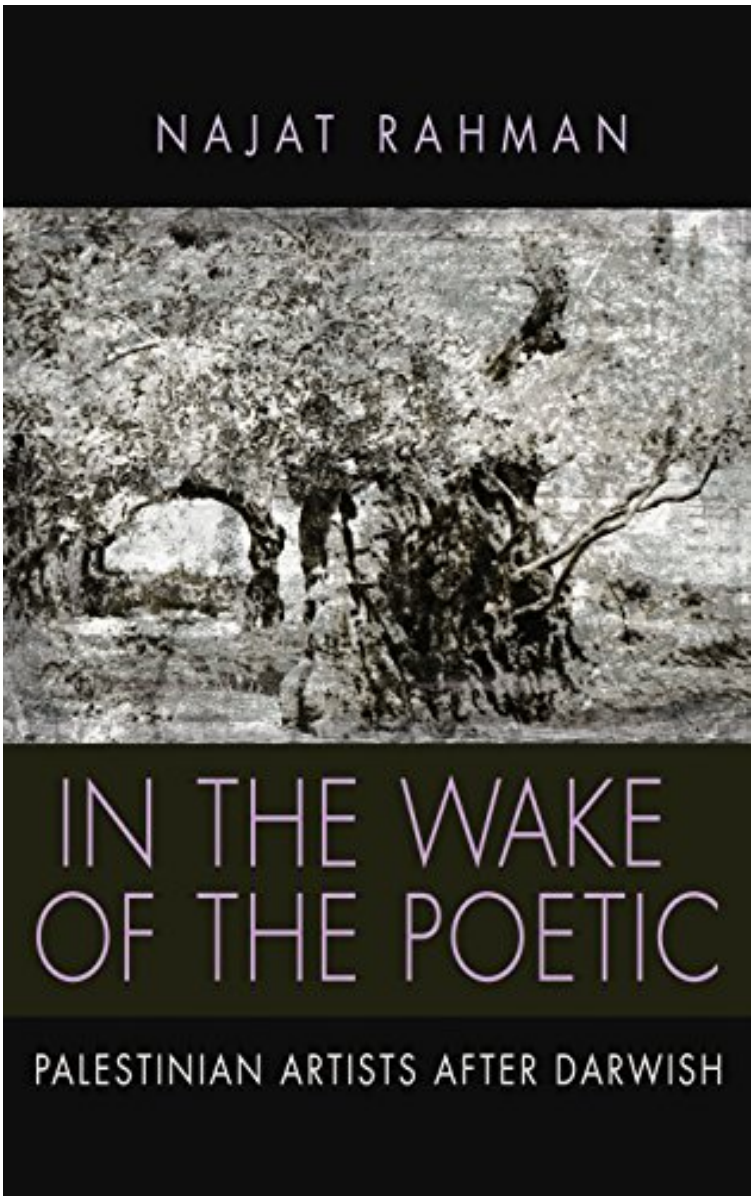

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Heralding a new period of creativity, In the Wake of the Poetic explores the aesthetics and politics of Palestinian cultural expression in the last two decades. As it increasingly gains a significant presence on the international scene, much of Palestinian art owes a debt to Mahmoud Darwish, one of the finest contemporary poets, and to Palestinian writers of his generation. Rahman maps the immense influence of Darwishrsquo;s poetry on a new generation of performance artists, visual artists, spoken-word poets, and musicians. Through an examination of selected works by key artistsmdash;such as Suheir Hammad, Ghassan Zaqtan, Elia Suleiman, Mona Hatoum, Sharif Waked, and othersmdash;Rahman articulates an aesthetic founded on loss, dispersion, dispossession, and transformation. It interrupts dominant regimes, constituting acts of dissension and intervention. It reinscribes belonging and is oriented toward solidarity and future. This innovative wave of experimentation transforms our understanding of the national through the diasporic and the transnational, and offers a profound meditation on identity.

The author beautifully shows how these artists express their belonging to Palestine despite many forces aiming at their erasure and how they have done so in aesthetically accepted ways. (Issa J. Boullata World Literature Today)A fascinating panoramic view of Palestinian artistic production in the past two decades. (Sally Bland Jordan Times)The first substantial study to trace the impact of Arabic poetry on proliferating art forms and to see the connections between them, as though the works produced In the Wake of the Poetic seamlessly come out of the ones before it. (Dina Matar, senior lecturer in Arab media and political communication at SOAS, University of London)An ambitious book and it delivers on its promise, offering close readings of little-known texts and acts of artistic performance, as it contributes powerfully to English language writing on an artistic, cinematic, musical, and poetic scene. . . . It teaches patiently, and with the grace and profundity of a great work of scholarship, a new politics of listening (Jeffrey Sacks, associate professor of Arabic and comparative literature, University of California, Riverside)An intensely insightful reading of diverse transnational forms of Palestinian nationhood in Palestinian artndash;in hip hop, spoken word poetry, film, music, and visual arts. In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists After Darwish is a compelling accomplishment. (Mary N. Layoun, University of Wisconsin, Madison)Offers readers significant insights, while also presenting an uplifting vision of Palestinian art. (Al Jadid)Whereas much of the recent scholarship has focused on Palestinian cinema, this study fills the gap in the literature about the new modes of belonging being expressed in innovative, multiple media that cross generic boundaries. (Arab Studies Quarterly)About the AuthorNajat Rahman is professor of comparative literature at the University of Montreal. She is the author of Literary Disinheritance: The Writing of Home in the Work of Mahmoud Darwish and Assia Djebar.