



I Saw Ramallah

By Mourid Barghouti

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I Saw Ramallah By Mourid Barghouti

WINNER OF THE NAGUIB MAHFOUZ MEDAL FOR LITERATURE

A fierce and moving work and an unparalleled rendering of the human aspects of the Palestinian predicament.

Barred from his homeland after 1967's Six-Day War, the poet Mourid Barghouti spent thirty years in exile—shuttling among the world's cities, yet secure in none of them; separated from his family for years at a time; never certain whether he was a visitor, a refugee, a citizen, or a guest. As he returns home for the first time since the Israeli occupation, Barghouti crosses a wooden bridge over the Jordan River into Ramallah and is unable to recognize the city of his youth. Sifting through memories of the old Palestine as they come up against what he now encounters in this mere "idea of Palestine," he discovers what it means to be deprived not only of a homeland but of "the habitual place and status of a person." A tour de force of memory and reflection, lamentation and resilience, *I Saw Ramallah* is a deeply humane book, essential to any balanced understanding of today's Middle East.

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I Saw Ramallah By Mourid Barghouti Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

You can never go home again. That's the message in this impressionistic memoir by a Palestinian poet returning to the West Bank after 30 years of exile. Barghouti was in Cairo at the university when Israel won the Six-Day War and didn't return home until 1996, when the now-defunct Oslo Accords allowed him to go back. As one might expect, his return to see his birthplace and his family is fraught with problems, as he attempts to reconnect with relatives and friends. The people living in Ramallah and its physical geography have changed in ways that make Barghouti feel as displaced at home as he does abroad. The changes he blames partly on the weakness of his own people, but mostly on the Israelis. The truth of Palestinian faults "does not absolve the enemy of his original crime...." Indeed, the anger he feels at Israelis on both the left and the right helps explain why the Oslo peace process failed and why peace seems as elusive as ever. But this is as much a personal journey as a political one. Using a poet's eye for detail and language (the book is beautifully translated), Barghouti, who now lives in Cairo, intersperses the story of his homecoming with his history of journeys across the Arab world. "The displaced person becomes a stranger to his memories and so he tries to cling to them." His deft mind and words show how, for many Palestinians, politics have swallowed up the personal.

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From [Booklist](#)

Poet Barghouti puts a personal face on the plight of displaced Palestinians in this account that is as much politically tinged lament as memoir. Thirty years--and nine volumes of verse--after being deported from his home in Cairo, he was permitted to return to the home of his youth on the West Bank in 1997. "Displacement is like death," he states. "One thinks it happens only to other people." Yet he describes himself as just one of four million displaced Palestinians who have no airline, police, TV, or government. Several months after the Six Days War, when his son was just five months old, Barghouti was taken for "preventative deportation" and separated from his family for most of the next 17 years before being allowed back in Egypt. He targets Anwar Sadat, responsible for the deportation that deprived him of having other children, and various Israeli leaders, who headed the occupation he calls a crime. Interspersed vignettes portraying the author's life are often charming but sometimes confusing in terms of chronology and emphasis--only at midbook is his deportation detailed, and even then it's not fully explained--and repetition dulls the message. Still, this relentless account, first published in 1997 in the Arab world, reflects the acuity and sensitivity of a poet (with an occasional verse included) and provides an underrepresented point of view. *Michele Leber*

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Review

"The most eloquent statement in English of what it is like to be a Palestinian today. . . . No other book so well explains the background to recent events in Palestine/Israel." —*The Times Literary Supplement*

"An important literary event. . . . One of the finest existential accounts of Palestinian displacement that we now have." —Edward W. Said, from the Foreword

"Forceful, lyrical, evocative. . . . A wonderful read." —*The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*

"Stirring. . . . Poignant. . . . Compelling. . . . **I Saw Ramallah** is a magnificent addition to world literature. It is picturesque and lifelike. Its evocative images touch, move, and inspire." —*Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*

“Marvelous. . . . A beautifully constructed and moving memoir.” –*Al-Ahram Weekly*

“An honest and lyrical account from the Palestinian Diaspora. . . . This book describes in detail the damage done to the Palestinian people in the most beautiful prose. . . . Because of his frankness and calm tone, Barghouti has ensured that this life story will stay with the reader a long time after all the shouting and politicking stops.” –*Cairo Times*

“A rare memoir. . . . Humane and eloquent.” –*In These Times*

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Connie Simpson:

Have you spare time to get a day? What do you do when you have a lot more or little spare time? Sure, you can choose the suitable activity regarding spend your time. Any person spent their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open or read a book titled I Saw Ramallah? Maybe it is for being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time together with your favorite's book, you can wiser than before. Do you agree with its opinion or you have different opinion?

Peggy Elmore:

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Thomas Moss:

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Brenda Cornell:

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