
Many and varied books about Jerusalem and “The Holy Land” have been published over the past century. The vast majority of those I have had the luxury of sampling have contributed to our knowledge of the history, archeology, art/architecture, politics, theological or foreign policy implications, or even literary resonances of this storied region and its multiple constituencies. Most have focused, in short, on actual real estate, structures, and struggles. [For examples, see my “Jerusalem Deconstructed: The Architecture of an Islamic Holy City,” 4:4 (2000): 556–63.] A small but important and little appreciated handful, however, have studied an intriguing and perhaps unexpected aspect of the subject: the broader reach of Jerusalem’s mythological and spiritual tentacles. One could call this wider topic the projection, reception, and re-articulation of the “idea” of Jerusalem and the Land beyond their actual geographical confines. Two noteworthy explorations of this area are Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); and Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Indiana University Press, 2002), which has a chapter with many good photos of the spectacular 12 acre reconstruction of major sites in the Old City at the 1904 Saint Louis World’s Fair. (Wharton lists the second, but not the first, in her bibliography.)

What Vogel and Long do almost exclusively for the more recent American context, Wharton does for the broader “western” world, including prominent examples from European sites as well as some American variations not covered by these two scholars. Vogel, for instance, tends to focus almost exclusively on larger, three-dimensional appropriations via the “re-creation” of the Holy City and its sacred environs, reflecting on the implications of this for the perception of America’s ever-ambiguous relationship to the “Holy Land.” In addition, Long also includes a wider range of visual data, including a host of two-dimensional aids by which Americans might be symbolically transported to the sacred soil. Several important methodological features distinguish Wharton’s work in this context; for she in effect explores highly nuanced implications of the visual data by positing a spectrum of four different processes that characterize the varied relationships between the actual Jerusalem and/or Holy Land and its
various Euro-American metamorphoses. These processes are replication, reproduction, fabrication, and spectacularization, and she places all four modes against the backdrop of fragmentation—the tendency to select individual features of the Holy Sites as if they could be plucked intact from their ancient contextual matrices.

Wharton includes a wide variety of examples of selective appropriation of both smaller-scale iconographic and larger-scale iconic symbols of Jerusalem. For example, she cites the symbolic linkage that has often been presumed between several European “temple churches” (supposedly Templar-related) and the Holy Sepulcher, merely on the strength of the churches' inclusion of a circular structure redolent of the dome over the aedicule of the Resurrection. This relationship between inspiration and “copy” she calls replication.

Like replication, fabrication, Wharton explains, “is a unique construction. However, while a replica has a clear relation to a prototype, fabrication either has no referent or its relationship is problematic,” and can include a smidge of “prevarication”—perhaps just shy of what Big Daddy in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof called the “faint odor of mendacity.” As an example, her chapter “Fabricated Jerusalem” describes how a Franciscan “sacred mountain” complex dating to fifteenth-seventeenth-century Italy takes considerable liberties with the spatial arrangement and selection of “events” from the end of Christ’s life in order to present the faithful with a vision consonant with Counter-Reformation theological concerns. By contrast, Wharton argues that while a reproduction of Jerusalem (by whatever means—photography, maps, etc.) may “look more like” the original than a replication, the resulting surrogate typically lacks the “spirit” of the original that a replica seeks to embody.

Wharton’s chapter on “Spectacularized Jerusalem: Imperialism, Globalization, and the Holy Land as Theme Park” examines large-scale reproductions of Jerusalem. These may be extensive reconstructions, including full-size detailed versions of landmarks like the Holy Sepulcher and the Dome of the Rock, such as Vogel and Long describe in considerable detail—the kind of thing one still finds at “bible theme parks” and used to find at World’s Fairs. Wharton, however, approaches Jerusalem the spectacle from a very different angle, including such spectacular purposes as, for example, Mel Gibson’s use of a “copy” of Jerusalem as the stage for the violent spectacle of The Passion of the Christ. She underscores the irony that many of the details and overall arrangement of spectacularized Jerusalems derive not from direct observation of the prototype itself, but from