in and among the caves and tombs of Petra for over 170 years. Suleiman Farajat, first Director of the Petra Archaeological Park, is concerned with treatment of the local population of approximately 30,000 people in six towns and villages, for whom tourism is the main source of income. He offers resettlement of the Bdul and Amarin at Um Seyhun and Beidha as a case study for other World Heritage sites, arguing that failure to plan for diverse, sustainable and responsible income generation has resulted in a “badly executed, unhealthy and unproductive living environment, the erosion of traditional values and cultural heritage, and social discontent” (163). The cultural space of the Bedu in Petra and Wadi Rum was inscribed by UNESCO in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (originally proclaimed in 2005).

Although the authors focus on the negative impacts of tourism, they do so in the spirit of finding better ways to operate, as the situation is clearly urgent. In his conclusion, Douglas Comer uses the apt metaphor of a juggernaut that is out of control and destructive to summarize the frictions between preservation and profit based on mass tourism at Petra. Drawing on the threads laid out by each of the authors, Comer asks, what is the way forward? He focuses on the essential role of site management and calls on the World Heritage Committee to reform its procedures to restore the purpose of the World Heritage Convention and place a higher priority on preservation than on tourism.

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Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City by ASEEL SAWALHA. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2010. xiii + 176 pp.; notes, index, illustrations, bibliography; clothbound, $55.00.

Reconstructing Beirut: Memory and Space in a Postwar Arab City focuses on the late 1990s and early 2000s period in Beirut. Sawalha, an anthropologist at Fordham University, writes about the social and political ramifications of the rebuilding effort made necessary by the 1975-1991 Lebanese Civil War. She is keenly interested in the discursive role memory and nostalgia played in the emerging political geography of postwar Beirut that is so thoroughly dominated by the huge downtown rebuilding project known as Solidere.

This short book (140 pages) consists of an introduction, six chapters and an afterword that speaks to the post-2005 period that began with the assassination of former Lebanese Prime minister Rafiq al-Hariri. The first chapter begins with a discussion of some of the methodological challenges of working in Beirut for both the general researcher and for Sawalha in particular. Then it presents a general overview of postwar Lebanon and gives some background on the 1975-1991 civil war itself. By explicating the process by which the downtown area, the former no man’s land separating so-called “Muslim” West
from “Christian” East Beirut during the war, was transformed into a “construction site for international investment” in the postwar period, this first chapter sets up the rest of the book (12).

Chapter 2 focuses on the postwar period and the Solidere rebuilding project. The chapter outlines the major fault lines that formed around Solidere through the views of its supporters (many of whom were allies of the assassinated former Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri) and its opponents (intellectuals and professionals and collectives made up of less privileged groups such as those displaced by the war who occupied damaged and abandoned buildings).

Chapter 3 introduces Sawalha’s ethnographic material collected in the Ayn Mreisse neighborhood that lies adjacent to the downtown rebuilding site. She describes the evolving socio-political landscape of the neighborhood with its multi-ethno/religious population and its myriad of political parties. The chapter takes the reader on a temporal and geographical tour of the area that recalls both the wartime period of militia rule and the different ways that the diverse local populations imagine the boundaries of their neighborhood. It concludes with a discussion of landlord/tenant antagonisms resulting from skyrocketing real estate prices that were themselves an effect of the nearby Solidere project on the neighborhood.

Chapter 4 examines four largely non-sectarian collective efforts to defy “exclusion from… newly built spaces by creating long-term alliances, and, sometimes by forming nongovernmental organizations to claim public sites” (87). Here Sawalha continues her exploration of the ways that various actors utilized memory and nostalgia to gain political leverage. This chapter focuses on marginalized groups confronting the powerful supporters of the Solidere project. She introduces us to local fishermen seeking to preserve their access to a small port, a local mosque association’s battle against the opening up of a Hard Rock Café, an informal neighborhood archive/museum that aimed to preserve a sense of the “old” neighborhood and the rededication of a theatre by local artists and intellectuals that sought to “restore cultural memory.”

Chapter 5 looks at the evolution of “ordinary spaces” where Beirutis socialized “around the practice of drinking coffee” (89). Here Sawalha foregrounds the ways that Beirutis collapse together their memories of prewar and wartime Beirut with their postwar experiences. This chapter concentrates on public spaces such as French-style cafes, the seaside boulevard or Corniche, funeral homes, and traditional Arab coffee houses or maqhas. Through an examination of representations of the past and the lived experience of the present, the chapter asks a series of questions about gender, class, and public space and the ways that memory is gendered and classed.

Chapter 6 returns to the question of the war-displaced people from the Ayn Mreisse neighborhood and looks at their “strategies to negotiate for their rights to housing” (132). Solidere and the postwar Lebanese state with which it was intimately entwined endeavored to evacuate the war-displaced from areas near the city center without offering alternative housing. The chapter
outlines the discourses utilized and the types of political maneuvering that the displaced embraced in their campaign for compensation.

Reconstructing Beirut draws on “formal and informal” interviews as well as printed texts of the “empowered” such as newspapers, memoirs, and novels (20). While its central theme, the ways that memory is operationalized in contests over space and power, runs throughout all of the chapters, the book’s theoretical influences will not distract the reader from some very interesting ethnographic material. All the same, there are a few places where one would appreciate a little more theoretical nuance such as in chapter five’s discussion of public-ness, gender and class, and the sixth chapter’s look at the functioning of the Lebanese state. Nevertheless, the book does a number of things well and is most suggestive in its discussion of Lebanon’s sectarian political system. Sawalha uses the battles over space and for compensation for the war displaced to consider the extent to which patron-client relations outweighs sectarian identity in the Lebanese politics and society.

Reconstructing Beirut is well written and is an intimate, honest, and unflinching introduction to Beirut that both the specialist and non-specialist will find readily accessible. The book has much to teach about this city whose troubled contemporary history caused its name to become synonymous with sectarian strife and random political violence.

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Frank Lloyd Wright remains the world’s most famous architect and there is no scarcity of studies chronicling his long career, his many groundbreaking designs, and even his soap opera worthy personal life. The books written on Wright range from the studiously, sometimes obscurely, academic to coffee table tomes light on content and heavy on art shots. Jeffrey Chusid’s Saving Wright is solidly situated in the former category and, while in places gets bogged down in detail, offers an intriguing route for grasping the complexities of architecture, comprehending the realities and challenges of preservation, and sharpening perception of Wright’s genius and shortcomings.

To differing degrees, there is something in the book to stimulate most readers—from Wright and Rudolph Schindler specialists to historians of avant-garde Hollywood to historic site directors to, perhaps most particularly, engineering historians and materials experts. For historians who do not engage regularly with the built environment and material culture, Chusid’s study may be overwhelming, yet it should not be dismissed as a book of value only to practicing preservation professionals. Any historian venturing into the