activism has been described in chapter 8, and it outlines issues involving the oppressed in sociopolitical context. Chapter 9 highlights the contributions of intellectuals in the ethnic activism in Nepal and chapter 10 describes the Tamang activism. The last chapter concludes with the changing conceptualizations of caste and ethnicity in Nepal.

Most of the authors who have contributed chapters in this book appear to be from the West, with the exception of Lama Tamanag, so I wonder why the native specialists in ethnic studies from India and Sri Lanka have been left out. Even in the developed world where people enjoy more wealth and prosperity, social conflicts are emerging into ethnic forms reflecting the legitimacy of living standards. Therefore it is about time for ethnic peace to be conceptualized and institutionalized by channelling demands and conflicts with the absence of hostility. The world would be a better place to inhabit if the society at large could eliminate ethnic animosities and conflicts, and this book certainly adds to the reference collection on ethnic activism in civil society.

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First published in 1989, Israeli Cinema was a groundbreaking work. Previous publications on the subject were ideologically and analytically limited, whereas Shohat presented, for the first time, a ‘theorized analytical history of Israeli cinema’ (p. 7). Placing Israeli cinema in the context of East/West, her analysis is indebted to the First World/Third World, anti-colonialist and feminist discourse, as well as Said’s critique of Orientalism. Consequently, the central question of the book is the Israeli–Palestinian conflict and its representation over time. Shohat also analyses the representation of Sepharadim (Arab-Jews, or Mizrahim), paying close attention to casting and language. Her overall discussion is embedded within the context of other cinematic productions, the context of literature, arts and media, and within Israeli ideological and historical contexts. In addition to close readings of the films, Shohat often tells illuminating stories of their production and reception. The book instantly became controversial, especially in Israel.

The current edition appears in an entirely different social and academic climate. Historical and cultural developments precipitated a rise of revisionist critical research about Israel, including a post-Zionist perspective. A critical study of Israeli cinema pioneered by Shohat has been continued and enhanced by a number of scholars, including Yosefa Loshitsky, Nurith Gertz, Raz Yosef and Dorit Naaman. A new anthology on Israeli cinema is forthcoming from Texas University Press. Moreover, Israeli cinema itself has changed, becoming more critical and more appealing to international audiences. In short, the new edition of Shohat’s work is timely and useful to scholars and general readers who are more familiar now with Israeli films.

The new edition features additional illustrations and an expanded index, but its main contribution is a fairly extensive postscript, providing a helpful overview of recent trends, while maintaining the original analytical focus on East/West. The writing remains strong: clear, precise and theoretically sophisticated without jargon. The rest of the book stays intact (only chapter titles got an appealing facelift). Shohat opens with an overview of filmmaking in pre-Israel Palestine, itself part and parcel of the Zionist effort. A critical study of Israeli cinema pioneered by Shohat has been continued and enhanced by a number of scholars, including Yosefa Loshitsky, Nurith Gertz, Raz Yosef and Dorit Naaman. A new anthology on Israeli cinema is forthcoming from Texas University Press. Moreover, Israeli cinema itself has changed, becoming more critical and more appealing to international audiences. In short, the new edition of Shohat’s work is timely and useful to scholars and general readers who are more familiar now with Israeli films.

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Not much has changed in the films of the so-called ‘heroic-nationalist genre’ made in the early years of Israeli statehood. The plots still have a didactic allegorical thrust: the main
characters are heroic pioneers, while Arab characters exist only on the periphery, ‘purely in function of the authority and generosity of Israel’ (p. 70). Similarly, Arab-Jews are pushed to the margins of the plots, and their history is subordinated to the European-Jewish memory. The same heroic-Zionist ideological orientation can be seen in films made to celebrate Israel’s 1967 victory, despite their Hollywood-style editing and higher production values.

Shohat’s analysis of the representation of Sepharadim demonstrates the same colonialist biases against them as in policies and media. The particular image of Arab-Jews as ‘primitives’ with hearts of gold is particularly salient in films of the local Bourekas genre (ethnic commercial movies with rich/poor Mizrahi/ Ashkenazi themes). Some of these films, especially by Ashkenazi filmmakers, ‘orientalized the Orient’ even further; others, made by Mizrahi, reflected a more nuanced, progressive vision.

In the 1960s, personal cinema emerged as a counter-response to both the explicit ideology of the heroic-nationalist genre and to the commercial Bourekas productions. The young generation of filmmakers professed stylistic experimentation, as well as themes ‘focused on individual quandaries and “universal” protagonists, as part of an aspiration to create a “quality” cinema, free of all sociopolitical obligation’ (p. 165). But escape from politics was an illusion: these films were localized through an Ashkenazi-educated protagonist, excluding various ‘others’ from their liberal milieu.

In contrast to ‘apolitical’ personal cinema, in the 1980s several films foreground the conflict and become more critical of Israeli policies of the occupation. Shohat calls these films (somewhat ironically) ‘the Palestinian wave’. Although they feature more progressive images of Arabs, their narratives still operate within general assumptions of Zionism. It is not surprising that these films were publicly funded, and critically acclaimed, in Israel. Moreover, they created positive publicity abroad for Israeli liberalism.

In the postscript, Shohat welcomes the emergence of a more polyphonic, hybridized cinema. Recently, Israeli films began featuring other languages and accents (most often Arabic, Russian, English and Amharic), along with the national Hebrew, to include minorities’ voices. Following an upsurge in Mizrahi cultural activism, a number of non-Bourekas movies have localized entirely in Mizrahi spaces, employing all-Mizrahi casts. However, Shohat does not include Israeli-Russian films which are also preoccupied with the East/West divide. As I wrote elsewhere, their immigrant directors (and characters) occupy an ambivalent position in Israeli society, orientalizing Israel, yet marginalized themselves.

In conclusion, Shohat observes that the entire definition of what constitutes Israeli cinema has changed: immigrant filmmakers, or Israelis living abroad, as well as Palestinians inside and outside of Israel are now included. These processes result in the emergence of new revisionist films, with consequences far beyond cinema. Such cinema, whether challenging 1948 history, or a narrative of Aliya (‘ascent’, an ideological term for Jewish immigration to Israel), ‘come to haunt the Zionist meta-narrative, and in the process has redefined the parameters of legitimate history as well as the format of legitimate historiography’ (p. 278).