

## Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

**GRACE FEUERVERGER, *Oasis of Dreams: Teaching and Learning Peace in a Jewish-Palestinian Village in Israel*. New York and London: Routledge Falmer. 2001, xxi + 218 p., Index, \$29.95 paper.**

This book is an inspiring and hopeful story about the village and the two schools of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam (a bilingual name that means "Oasis of Peace" in Hebrew and Arabic). The village is an experiment, 30 years in the making, intended as a cooperative community for Jewish and Palestinian people to live together. The village is located 30 kilometres or possibly 30

miles (Feuerverger is inconsistent on this point) west of Jerusalem. It is home to 40 families and several single individuals, with another 300 families on a waiting list, hoping to move to the community. In all respects, the village attempts to be fully bilingual, bicultural, and binational. Jewish, Moslem, and Christian (Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox) religions are respected and practised in the community.

All students of all faiths attend school together, where their languages and religions are part of the school curriculum. In the midst of the violence and conflict that have characterized Jewish-Palestinian relations for years, this village is an anomaly, a site of relatively peaceful coexistence. In the graphic words of one Grade 6 student in the book, Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam is an "oasis of peace in a desert of war."

There is much that could be written about this village, its founders, and the current residents that would be of interest to the general population and scholars from a wide range of disciplines. Feuerverger concentrates her focus on language learning within the village schools: the elementary school and the special School for Peace program associated with the secondary school. Language is more than a form of communication. It is an essential aspect of culture and it provides the means for individuals to come to know the world. By emphasizing language learning, particularly language learning for children, Feuerverger is able to introduce broader discussions about peace, community, cultural identity, personal respect, and moral engagement.

The book is drawn from Feuerverger's experiences, interviews, and observations as she travelled back and forth to Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam over a period of 9 years. Feuerverger draws upon the qualitative

research traditions of ethnography, narrative inquiry, case study, autobiography, and portraiture as she attempts to present a reflexive and multi-voiced account of schooling and inter-cultural relations in Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam. Interview excerpts, photographs, journal entries, and thick descriptions substantiate Feuerverger's interpretations. In the book, she engages with such topics as insider/outsider positioning, border crossing, longing and belonging, otherness, difference, and the in-between; all topics that have received considerable attention in feminist and postmodernist scholarship. Feuerverger weaves in an extensive body of research and theory through multiple citations, frequent quotations, and detailed notes. The densely referenced writing style that permeates the book may be somewhat arduous at times, but the passages that portray the voices of students, parents, teachers, and other community members are articulate and thought provoking. The book really hits its stride when

Feuerverger allows the research participants to tell their stories in their own voices, thus demonstrating the real strength of narrative inquiry. Other touching passages come from Feuerverger's own journals, where she explores her identity as a child of Jewish Holocaust survivors and how that identity informed the research.

The breadth of scholarship represented here will attract readers from a variety of backgrounds and interests: political, methodological, sociological, or pedagogical. Based on the quality of the research and the importance of the topic, it is not surprising that the book received a

Book Recognition Award from Division B: Curriculum Studies of the American Educational Research Association. For any reader who has ever wondered whether there is hope for a resolution to the Jewish-Palestinian conflict (and who hasn't in the present climate?), this is a must read. There is hope. Feuerverger describes moments of peace and dreams for a better world. Despite numerous challenges and the complex emotions associated with those challenges, the villagers of Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam provide promising role models.

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