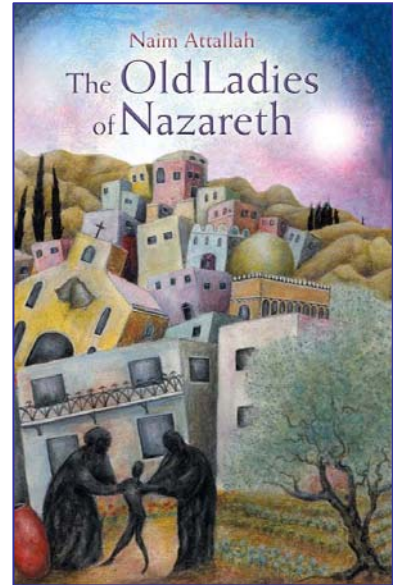


BookBlast PR | Media Release

THE OLD LADIES OF NAZARETH NAIM ATTALLAH

A lyrical tale of powerful simplicity, which reads like a fable, this is “the story of two wonderful old ladies who lived in the Holy Land, in the small town of Nazareth” in the 1940s. Wardeh and Jamileh are sisters – one is a widow, the other a spinster. They live frugally and in tune with the rhythms of nature. Following the Allied victory in Europe, unrest over the founding of a Jewish state in Palestine boils up once more. So Wardeh’s grandson, ‘the boy,’ is sent from Haifa to Nazareth, then considered a haven from the hostilities.



In his poignant and touching portrait, Naim Attallah captures the sisters’ courage and loving kindness, as well as the purity of their existence. He evokes a way of life in a small Palestinian town that is fast becoming a thing of the past.

QUARTET BOOKS 72pp HB
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Naim Attallah, the astute Palestinian-born businessman, publisher and film producer, is known in particular for his flamboyance and love of beauty – be it of women or *objets d’art*. Now he has produced this little jewel of a book out of his magician’s hat. *The Old Ladies of Nazareth* – an appetizer for the sequel, *The Boy in England* – reveals a man who is unpretentious and humane. He is appreciated by many as a man who nurtures and encourages the talents of others.

His is something of a rags-to-riches story. A Catholic, Naim Attallah came to England aged 18 “with a shilling in his pocket.” He had to quit his engineering studies for lack of funds; the Home Office said he could only stay in the country provided he find unskilled work. So he became a steeplejack at a power station which was, “very dangerous and frightening.” He went on to work in the City as a foreign exchange dealer, then a banker.

Although motivated by desire for success and money, he also “wanted to do something creative” believing that “people are more important than profit.” Naim achieved his lifelong ambition of becoming a publisher in 1976 when he took over Quartet Books. The Women’s Press was founded in 1977. He was one of the first publishers to establish a ‘Middle East & Africa’ list. Controversial titles like Tony Clifton & Catherine Leroy’s *God Cried* (about the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, which caused a furore) and Jonathan Dimpleby & Donald McCullin’s *The Palestinians*, or novels by then-unknowns Amin Maalouf, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Naguib Mahfouz and Hanan al-Shaykh, were published alongside Julian Barnes, Dennis Potter, Maeve Binchy, Alethea Hayter, Diana Athill, Elizabeth Wurtzel, Derek Jarman and Philip Mansel.

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