
Special Issue Review Essay: **The Intelligentsia In Dissent: Palestine, Settler-Colonialism and Academic Unfreedom in the Work of Steven Salaita**

Steven Salaita. Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where It Comes From and What It Means for Politics Today. Pluto Press, 2006. 264 pages. ISBN: 0745325173

---. The Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006. 234 pages. ISBN: 081563109X

---. Arab American Literary Fictions, Cultures, and Politics. Palgrave Macmillian, 2007. 208 pages. ISBN: 1403976201

---. The Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims and the Poverty of Liberal Thought—New Essays. New York: Zed Books, 2008. 168 pages. ISBN: 978-1848132351

---. Israel's Dead Soul. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. 159 pages. ISBN: 9781439906385

---. Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015. 243 pages. ISBN: 9781608465774

---. Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016. 207 pages. ISBN: 9781517901424

To even attempt something approximating a comprehensive review of Steven Salaita's critical publications to date is a daunting prospect for several reasons. The first of these is rather straightforward: isolating and distilling the intellectual currents that define any thinker's work across a cumulative body of texts is never a simple task—that is, when attempted with fair and sympathetic attention. The second is more personal, but no less urgent: any Palestinian academic who foregrounds Palestine in research as well as extramural endeavors knows that the threat of repression is all too palpable. Indeed, as Salaita himself has noted, at times by way of personal example, the academic embargo upon engaging Palestine in its full colonial character is itself an extension of the ongoing settler-colonization Palestinians continue to endure. For the Zionist project, as with other settler-colonial imperatives, is not only to drive an indigenous population off of its homeland, but also to eliminate all of their historical and cultural imprints as part of this larger process of ethnic cleansing. Due to the United States' active support for the Israeli colonial project, American universities, which have also served as strategic sites in the dispossession of North American Natives, become disciplinary spaces seeking to temper faculty and student engagement with Palestinian oppression. There is thus a powerful, if not painful irony in attempting to index the unique insights of an intellectual who has dedicated his life's work to making these connections—to the point that the University acted on its authority to discipline, invoking the flimsiest and consequently one of the most dangerous pretexts as its justification: "civility."

The third reason is that the damage inflicted by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaigns’ so-called “unhiring” of Steven Salaita extends beyond the grave material implications of loss of employment: it also assumes intellectual proportions, thereby raising the stakes for what would otherwise seem a rather mundane undertaking moved by the motor-engine of academic rote and ritual. Indeed, one of the more subtle effects of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s decision to rescind Salaita’s job offer in 2014 due to donor pressure has been to detract from serious academic engagement with his scholarship. While Zionists and Zionist-sympathizers on the “pro-firing” side continued to dig through Tweets and half-read quotes from texts to find evidence of bigotry (or litter Amazon with a flurry of one star reviews), activists and academics who recognized UIUC’s transgressions defended Salaita’s academic freedom and right to free speech. In both instances, the substance of Salaita’s actual work, not just in the sense of lines in a *curriculum vitae*, was eroded as the battle for his livelihood wore on.

To be clear, I do not offer this as a critique of all who defended Salaita. These were commendable and valiant efforts, and an important refusal of the so-called “objectivity” prized by the colonial-corporate University. My point is simply that the effects of UIUC’s actions can also be reflected in the marginalization of Salaita’s critical interventions as a scholar. What follows, then, will be a humble attempt to offset some of this damage through an academic assessment of Salaita’s output to date, with particular emphasis on his contributions to Indigenous Studies (a field, I feel compelled to note, that is not my own, though I hope my own training as a comparativist with a grounding in American/comparative Ethnic studies as well as research interest in Arab America/Palestine will partially compensate for this deficiency).

While I will not spend too much time on Salaita’s first published text, *Anti-Arab Racism in the USA: Where it Comes From and What it Means For Politics Today* (2006), particularly as it does not foreground questions of Indigeneity and settler-colonialism in the systematic ways that would become more pronounced in *The Holy Land in Transit* and onwards, I open with a brief reference to *Anti-Arab Racism* because I believe it establishes what would remain key conventions of Salaita’s output: a blending of intellectual analysis and autobiography; an attempt to combine two seemingly discrete forms, the research article and the personal essay (rather than sacrificing one for the other); consistent attention to “popular” news sources and commentary; and, along with this penultimate point, the refusal to obfuscate quotidian phenomena with academic terminology. We can see this methodology operative in Salaita’s justification for avoiding the use of the term “Orientalism” when analyzing the particular strain of racism plaguing Arabs in the US:

Orientalism has been remarkably useful as a descriptive critique of phenomena ranging from misconceptions of Arabs to foolhardy foreign policy, and has seen its use (quite justifiably) increase among Arab Americans in the post-9/11 United States. The term, however, is weighted with considerable theoretical and historical baggage, rendering it, at least in some intellectual circles, oblique or ambivalent. Given its layered connotations and the controversies over its denotation, we can sense in its usage the potential for slippage or a rhetorical imprecision born of a correspondingly ambivalent or oblique authorial/oratorical intention. Most important, though, *Orientalism* isn’t entirely appropriate when we consider

the effects of stereotype and bigotry on Arab Americans who, in a much different way than their brethren in the Arab World, need to be located in a particular tradition of which they have been a partial inheritor. That tradition, uniquely American, includes the internment of Japanese Americans during WW II, institutionalized anti-Semitism until the 1960s, and a peculiarly durable xenophobia spanning decades, with, at times, acculturated immigrant groups directing it at newer arrivals. This tradition, of course, has as its partial inspiration a corresponding tradition, that of garrison settlement, slavery, and Messianic fervor, a tradition that has evolved into detectable features of modern Americana that, unlike immigrant histories, do in some ways affect Middle Eastern Arabs. This corresponding tradition has inspired the premillennialist overtones so evident in American foreign policy. (14)

While scholars such as Andrew Rubin, Sarah Gualtieri, and Michael Malek Najjar have revealed how *Orientalism* in fact emerged from Said's early work for the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) documenting the pernicious representations of Arabs in US media, Salaita's point is well taken. Focusing on anti-Arab racism as an outgrowth of Orientalism, while not conceptually inaccurate, may at times detract from engagement with the particularities of American racism and white supremacy, which include "garrison settlement, slavery, and Messianic fervor" (ibid). This "Messianic fervor" would constitute the subject of Salaita's second published text, *The Holy Land in Transit: Colonialism and the Quest for Canaan* (2006).

It is with *The Holy Land in Transit* that we begin to engage the question of Salaita's contribution to Indigenous Studies. As Salaita himself notes when explaining the inspiration behind the text (which began as his dissertation), while there was no shortage of comparisons made between Palestinian and Native American struggles against ethnic cleansing (often by the affected populations themselves, which Salaita claims only encouraged his interest in the topic), a sustained scholarly analysis of such a connection had yet to be formulated, for "Although references to commensurate situations in the Americas and Palestine are often made, nobody has produced a detailed comparative analysis" (14). *The Holy Land in Transit*, then, is intended to serve as a corrective to this deficit.

The book aims to diagnose the "identical discursive methods" (3) informing the settler-colonization of North America and Palestine. Salaita identifies both processes as defined by what he terms "the quest for Canaan" (23), the Biblical narrative of Chosen People claiming a land ordained for them by God. However, in both the religious narratives and their settler repurposing, the land is not empty, as the presence of the Canaanites in the original Exodus story reflects. Salaita draws and elaborates upon the work of Robert Warrior, who parallels Native Americans with the Canaanites in his essay "Canaanites, Cowboys and Indians" (and who also points out that even the original Biblical narrative featured an imperative by Yahweh to exterminate the Canaanites) in arguing that the fate of modern Palestinians is also implicit in Warrior's argument. As Salaita writes:

Modern Natives and Palestinians... can be brought together despite obvious differences because of the specific narratives so deeply

marking their lives, narratives that have spent so much time
traversing the space between the New World and the Holy Land.
(37)

Salaita's careful perusal of American and Israeli colonial narratives shows Palestinians and Native Americans alike variously constructed as Amelkites/Amalek, Canaanites, and "noble savages" (3), as well as references to "Jewish cowboys and Arab Indians" (57). Such constructions are by no means fleeting. Yet they are also not mere comparisons, as the Quest for Canaan is more than just a common feature among otherwise discrepant settler-colonial nationalist ethos—it is a binding thread in a symbiotic, even co-constitutive dynamic, which Salaita illustrates through reference to mimesis:

It should not be insinuated that these instances of colonial discourse simply exist parallel to one another... I think imitation best contextualizes the type of rhetorical interplay with which I am concerned. More than that, however, "mimesis" also connotes a transferal of text from one object onto another; such a transferal appropriately symbolizes the dynamics of the covenant settlers have for centuries carried across the ocean, with each group copying onto foreign land the stories employed in another foreign land... Their mimesis, however, is not merely parallel, but confederated. Zionists drew inspiration from American history in colonizing Palestine, and American history also shaped the outlook of American leaders toward the Near East. (56)

This theorization of the dynamic interchange and mutual composition between the covenantal discourses informing Zionism and "New World"/North American Settlerism lays the groundwork for Salaita's ultimate, provocative contention that the settler-colonization of Palestine would have been unthinkable without North American conquest, as "American settlers filled with religious talk were one step ahead of Arthur James Lord Balfour" (80). The United States and Israel, then, share far more than a strategic relationship defined by aid and the exchange of military and security tactics and technologies. Far from merely a militarized proxy state acting as a forceful representative of the US's geo-imperial designs, Israel is a *partner* to the US in a relationship that transcends the spoils of war profiteering and the tactical dimensions of securing of global hegemony. Salaita's text demonstrates that this relationship also assumes existential proportions: both Israel and the US are militarized settler-states that justify conquest and ethnic cleansing through the trope of the Quest for Canaan, which comes to undergird even the allegedly secular outgrowths of settler-patriotism such as "democracy," "enlightenment," "civility," so on and so forth. For whether or not it assumes explicit religious overtones, only an assumption of pre-ordainment/entitlement to another peoples' land can offset the breakdown of two contradictory accounts of settlement: one of uninhabited, arable land awaiting beleaguered settlers, and another that acknowledges, with extreme reservation, a preceding Indigenous presence (though often of populations who were unaware of how to "develop" the land in question to its full potential). Palestinians and North American Natives have been and remain subjected to variations of these two accounts.

The health and vitality of the modern nation-state thus becomes directly continuous with the completion of Indigenous dispossession and ethnic cleansing, as Indigenous ties are counterposed to a settler teleology of "progress." Despite their differing timelines of ethnic cleansing

(having only declared “independence” in 1948, Israel is presently engaged in a form of garrison settlement that the US has well surpassed), one settler-state’s ability to fully realize its goal of unmitigated expansion and complete Indigenous erasure assumes a prophetic function for the other. This is why interrupting such a process through the demystification of shared ideological investments comes to assume such urgency for Salaita. As he notes,

Forging connections across the shadow lines drawn by imperialist artisans is a healthy way to ensure that occupiers of native lands do not evade their history as conquerors in today’s culture of decontextualization . . . As invaders and occupiers continue the quest for Canaan, it is essential to ensure that Canaan is never found. (80-1)

Divergent timelines in the process of settler-colonialism between the two nation-states might in some ways make Israel seem a more straightforward example of a contemporary settler-colonial project driven by messianic imperatives—especially to scholars and activists who take the completion of the US’s settler project for granted. Various constructions (and even validations) of US settler-colonialism as a past event rather than an ongoing process is a tendency heavily criticized by Salaita, and one that he finds prevalent not only among activists for the Palestinian cause who see no issue with invoking the values championed to justify ethnic cleansing and even genocide in one settler-nation—“colonial values framed in a vocabulary of enlightenment and civility” (3)—to criticize another’s subsidized colonial project, but also the wider American Left, for whom the status of the US as a “post”-colonial nation often seems a given. This is due to the fact that

narratives of conquest have been transformed into national imagination. . . That Natives are still alive in large numbers and struggling in myriad ways to regain stolen land and attain self-determination is even less important. Decontextualization has played an enormous role in the success of American colonial discourse. (51)

Any truly liberation-focused scholar and activist, then, must remain consistent. To criticize settler-colonialism in one nation-state while uncritically undermining Indigenous claims and resistance upon the stolen land of another is the height of hypocrisy.

To my mind, Salaita’s contributions to American Indian/Indigenous studies would already have been guaranteed had his text solely focused on the shared messianic conceits informing the settler-ideologies of the US and Israel. But he makes another significant move in his second chapter, “The Holy Land in Transit”: making the case for Palestinians as Indigenous, a term that denotes “non-Western, agrarian and communal worldviews fitted to specific parcels of land. . . Not only are the Palestinians indigenous to this land [“the Holy Land”], they are by all accounts the Indigenes of this land—whether Muslim, Christian, Druze, or Jew” (42). Salaita also notes that Palestinians themselves would welcome this designation due to its fidelity to their “social systems and geographical location, and because of its political implications,” and that scholars of Palestine in turn have a responsibility to explore the potential of the concept of Indigeneity as well as the intelligibility between Palestinian and North American Native struggles against settler-dispossession as a way of more fully understanding and elaborating Palestinian claims to the Holy Land—even insofar as this entails contending with the implications of a pre-colonial past (ibid). These observations, particularly the emphasis on the “political implications” of

Palestinian Indigeneity, put Salaita in conversation with scholars of Palestine such as Rabab Ibrahim Abdelhadi, who in the essay "Palestinian Resistance and the Indivisibility of Justice" argues that a paradigm of Zionist settler-colonization and Palestinian Indigeneity can revitalize an anti-colonial framework that recognizes present day Israel as occupied Palestinian land in addition to the Occupied Territories, and acknowledges that all Palestinians share an equal stake in and claim to liberation regardless of present location (60).

Furthermore, Salaita is a scholar interested not only in patterns of oppression, but also methods of resistance. And so, the text contrasts its analysis of the discursive commonalities of both settler-states against the ways in which North American Native (specifically Anishinaabe) and Palestinian authors "write back" against colonial dispossession. Salaita uses the term "reciprocal intercommunalism" to ground this comparative approach to global Indigenous literary resistance, or "counternarratives" (61), as well as to accommodate various moments at which Palestinians and North American Natives invoke one another's liberation struggles as a way of contextualizing their own (21). Salaita's training as a literary scholar offers a pragmatic explanation for his focus on literary forms of resistance, but this focus also illuminates the significance that narratives themselves hold for settler-projects, a significance reflected both in the aforementioned narratives of divine preordainment used as justification for ethnic cleansing as well as colonial attitudes and policies toward *Indigenous* narratives. For:

Ethnic cleansing is the removal of humans in order that narratives will disappear... [necessitating] a blinding of the colonial imagination so colonial history will be removed along with the dispossessed... The narratives and counterhistories produced by the dispossessed therefore assume great significance. (62)

Yet even when an intercommunal dimension is not explicitly elaborated either in Salaita's own critical schematization or in the literary work under scrutiny, *The Holy Land in Transit's* formidable conceptual framing makes it impossible to read any text in isolation. For instance, it becomes difficult to consider Salaita's fourth chapter, "Digging up the Bones of the Past: Colonial and Indigenous Interplay in Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman*" about how the characters in LaDuke's novel "fight to reclaim the bones of their ancestors, which were unearthed and sent to various East Coast museums or forgotten in the rush of modern construction" (85), without understanding desecration of burial sites and even grave robbery as a broader aspect of settler-colonial erasure. Though not mentioned in the chapter, Israel's bulldozing of Palestinian grave sites to construct museums and national parks is an association made possible through Salaita's intercommunal groupings.

The converse is true for chapter five, "The Kahan Commission Report and *A Balcony Over the Fakihani: A Tale of Two Fictions*," which analyzes two different texts related to the Palestinian struggle. Salaita's title suggests that the report authored by the Israeli Kahan Commission regarding the extent of the Israeli Occupation Forces' involvement in the infamous Sabra and Shatila massacres of 1982 is no less "fictional" than a literary work by a Palestinian novelist spanning the same period. Both, that is, are guided by particular strategies of representation, elision, and the attempted cultivation of readerly sympathy, factors that Salaita groups under the determining rubric of "perspective" (113). But only one of these fictions is geared toward exculpating the public image of a colonial government and military.

Media coverage of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, which took place during the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990), constituted a veritable puncturing of the hitherto manicured image of Israel fed to Western, particularly US, news audiences. Unmediated accounts of the IOF's participation in and facilitation of the slaughter of Palestinian civilians by Lebanese Phalangists, often from reporters directly on the ground, precluded a complete denial of Israeli violence. And so, Salaita notes, the authors of the Kahan Commission Report partially admitted responsibility, conceding that violence had been perpetrated, but that it was done in spite of Israel's best interests and intentions. The reception of this strategy in Western outlets was overwhelmingly positive, with sources hailing the report for demonstrating a "new lesson in democracy" (116). Salaita argues that this strategy would have been inconceivable were Palestinian barbarity and inhumanity not taken for granted within these very outlets (117). In a gesture that would be taken up again in a slightly different context in *Israel's Dead Soul* (2011), Salaita here uses the Kahan Commission Report to demonstrate how colonial conceptions of humanity allow for the colonizer to deploy and interpret violence as a means of existential redemption, whereas the Indigenous/colonized are merely passive objects to be acted upon as part of this process of auto-actualization. The colonizer's violence is never taken at face value (either denied outright or explained away through appeals to a greater complexity), whereas the colonized are over-determined with associations of "violence" that precede any direct action and obviate the possibility of exhibiting an untroubled innocence. As with the fourth chapter of *The Holy Land in Transit*, it becomes difficult to read this episode and analysis in isolation, so that the Kahan Commission Report's strategy of absolution-through- (partial) admission takes on a deeper resonance as a larger tendency within the psychology of settler-colonization.

Salaita's sixth chapter, "Reimagining the Munificence of an Ass: The Unbounded Worlds of Gerald Vizenor and Emile Habiby," analyzes how the trickster/"tricksterism" (147) figure into the novels *The Trickster of Liberty* by experimental Anishinaabe author Gerald Vizenor and *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist* by Palestinian author Emile Habiby. Both novels, Salaita shows, employ trickster discursive strategies that undermine dominant "biblical narratives of settler-colonialism" (142). Yet both authors' stylistic post-modernism and subsequent dedication to troubling overly-facile borders and boundaries also translates to humorous critiques of hyper-romanticized conceptions of anti-colonial resistance. Salaita carefully lays bare how both texts offer an incisive refutation of forms of Indigenous resistance that unwittingly reinforce the settlers' terms and frames, whether it be tacit acceptance of colonial distortions of Indigeneity in the case of Vizenor's novel (159), or uncritical/reactionary resistance and redeployment of the colonizer's language of "democracy" for Habiby's (164-5).

Salaita's conclusion, "Dreamcatchers on the Last Frontier," is a powerful personal testimony of the author's experience living in Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon in the summer of 2002 and teaching Palestinian students about Native American history, culture, and resistance. While their knowledge is far from complete, Salaita discusses how the Palestinian refugees of Shatila in general possessed an awareness of Native dispossession and suffering that exceeds the average American student's. Such an awareness, Salaita concludes, is certainly informed by their own deprivation as refugees and subjects of ongoing settler colonization. But it is also coupled with a profound reverence. "In the refugee camps," Salaita writes,

Natives are considered to be decorated veterans of resistance, people who understand the horror of displacement and

dispossession... As people who have experienced ethnic cleansing, it is neither unreasonable nor surprising for [Palestinians] to focus on others who have suffered the same fate. (172)

This seems an especially apt conclusion for *The Holy Land in Transit* despite its transcendence of the literary—perhaps even because of it. For if the stakes of reciprocal intercommunalism are as high as Salaita would have his readers believe, then it must have purchase that extends from literary-critical spheres to the quotidian. In addition to references in poems and novels, reciprocal intercommunalism encompasses Palestinians reduced to the bare life of an overcrowded refugee camp, denied the right to travel or return to their homeland and deprived of meaningful employment in the country of relocation (Lebanon), who nevertheless turn to the struggles of Native Americans as reminders of the need for tenacity and the rightfulness of resistance.

2007 also saw the publication of Steven Salaita’s first monograph on Arab American literature, *Arab American Literary Fictions, Cultures, and Politics*. This work is irreducible to a single hermeneutic category of interpretation, and by design: Salaita rejects flatly homogenizing ideas of Arab American “identity” and literary form in favor of plurality, multiplicity, and hybridity—necessary critical signposts in the era of a derealized “War on Terror,” in which reductive dehumanization of Arabs is a crucial component of perpetual imperialist warfare and aggression abroad and justifies domestic surveillance and suspension of civil liberties. While Arab American literature cannot be reduced to one genre or function, part of its import lies in the ability to scramble propagandistic caricatures and racist stereotype.

I will not spend too much more time on *Arab American Literary Fictions* due to my primary concern with Salaita’s interventions into American Indian/Indigenous studies. However, it is worth noting that in addition to early scholars of Arab American history and culture, Salaita cites Native American/Indigenous studies scholars as his primary influences for the type of classifications and analysis he is attempting to perform in this work. Despite the publication of new works on the subject, Arab American Literary Studies remains a developing field—Salaita referred to it as an intellectual “teenager” in his 2011 reprisal of this text, *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader’s Guide* (3-4). That Salaita consciously grounded one of the earliest monographs on the subject within the influence of Native American/Indigenous studies scholars out of an ethics of the need for interethnic awareness and reciprocity is not merely an intriguing piece of literary-historical trivia—it is a testament to the often inherently comparative origins and methodologies of field-formation, and a proud rejection of ethnic solipsism.

Published in 2008, *The Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims, and the Poverty of Liberal Thought* is a collection of essays on topics ranging from “terrorism,” teaching, the life of the mind, and even the TV show *Jackass*. In some ways, *The Uncultured Wars* serves as a continuation of some of the conceptual fixations evidenced in Salaita’s earlier works—for instance, the fascination with contemporary pundit/politico culture and the overlooked character of liberal racism were topics of concern for Salaita stretching all the way back from *Anti-Arab Racism in the U.S.A.* And yet, Salaita’s explicit attempt to engage the essay form in this collection marks somewhat of a departure from his earlier writings, one that anticipates the character of 2015’s *Uncivil Rites*.

“An essay,” Salaita writes in the introduction to the collection,

is eternally versatile: it can do and look like almost anything. An essay can cover any length, from the minimalist to the exhaustive.

It can be prudent or cantankerous, often simultaneously. It can be stunningly revealing or majestically impersonal. It is a fun and rewarding genre, but not an easy one. (2)

Salaita then goes on to observe that the essay has a rich history in Arab American literature, and informs the reader that he will be “concerned in many of these essays with morality,” which in his usage is “coterminous with a committed accountability to comprehensive human wellness” (2). It is difficult to read the forthcoming *Uncivil Rites* as anything but a book of essays similarly committed to a “committed accountability to human wellness,” even as it also explores the personal dimension of Salaita’s struggles with the UIUC administration. Despite the dated status of some of the content of *The Uncultured Wars*, then, its value lies in the way it presaged certain tendencies of Salaita’s later output. Further evidence of this can be found in the essay “The Perils and Profits of Doing Comparative Work,” in which Salaita revisits *The Holy Land in Transit* and remarks that the text’s extensive focus on the shared colonial language of Israel and the US meant that Salaita “ended up privileging the [colonial] agents” (104) rather than resisting Indigenes. Salaita’s most recent work, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* might be read as a corrective of sorts to this dilemma, given the text’s preoccupation with the extant forms of and future possibilities for North American Native and Palestinian resistance.

The aforementioned essay in *The Uncultured Wars* is further notable for clearly elaborating an underlying ethics to Salaita’s comparative methodologies. Salaita writes that he advocate[s] comparative work most avidly around the potential it creates for political collaboration, although intellectual collaboration is highly appealing and indivisible from the political. These categories, in any case, don’t make much sense and only retain their use based on a decidedly politicized, albeit supposedly neutral, Western taxonomical paradigm [under which] the political becomes anything that threatens the status quo. It is for this reason that I deem the political in Indigenous Studies coterminous with useful intellectual work. I don’t want to encourage the retention of binaries, but there is no way to evolve Indigenous studies in an acceptable fashion without threatening the academic status quo... If the emergence of comparative work can link various communities into a common set of ambitions, then it will be one of the rare instances in which scholarship actually performs a vital role in the world and influences more than two dozen people. (111)

While Salaita may not be an outlier in his insistence upon the necessity of linking scholarship to community uplift, or his critique of the charge of “political” scholarship as coded censure for a certain *type* of political work, these concerns are here focalized through the act of comparison. Reading the literatures and struggles of Palestinians (and, at times, Arabs more broadly) alongside and through those of North American Natives becomes more than an interesting intellectual exercise. It is an act infused with the possibility for honing and revitalizing articulations and patterns of resistance. It is, furthermore, an act that must be committed in opposition to “the academic status quo” insofar as that status quo normalizes the confusion of colonial epistemologies with a “neutral” or “apolitical” positioning.

Israel's Dead Soul (2011) shows Salaita returning to and expanding his critiques of the limitations of liberalism and multiculturalism. Specifically, Salaita takes issue with the discourse of multiculturalism's accommodation of Zionism, an accommodation made possible through multiculturalism's avoidance of the systemic causes for deprivation and exclusion. As Salaita reveals, it is by no means an anomaly that Zionism and multiculturalism subtend one another, for “the two phenomena are so readily conflated because they represent the same ersatz righteousness, arising from the same unexamined ubiquity of colonization and structural power imbalance” (4). Multiculturalism's obfuscation of various forms of systemic subjugation through a hollow performance of uncritical representation in turn catalyzes the propagandistic conjoining of Israel and Zionism with Jewish identity, a move that “relies on a host of unsustainable assumptions and dubious colonial mythologies” (9). Such a gesture is dangerous not only because it presumes an identity-based consensus on colonial nationalism that erases vibrant historical and present debates about the rightfulness of Zionism as a solution to anti-Semitism, but also because it erases Palestinians “legally and historically from the physical and emotional spaces of their very constitution as a discrete national community” (ibid). In his second chapter, “Is the Anti-Defamation League a Hate Group,” Salaita demonstrates how the multicultural juxtaposition of Jewish identity and Zionism facilitates the ability of organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to assume the title of a civil rights group while a) being primarily concerned with the unquestioning protection of Israel's image amidst its brutal practice of garrison settlement (44), b) engaging in ethically questionable practices such as working with law enforcement to surveil individuals and organizations (predominately Muslim) it deems “extremist” (54-5) and c) contravening academic freedom by spying on professors it deems insufficiently supportive of the US-backed Zionist colonization of Palestine (58-62).

Chapter five, “The Heart of Darkness Redux, Again” returns to the issues Salaita explored in his analysis of the Kahan Commission report in *The Holy Land in Transit*. This time, however, he engages in film analysis to situate the notion of violence against the colonized being displaced through performances of redemption as a defining trope of colonial modernity. Salaita analyzes three films: *West Bank Story* (directed by Ari Sandel and written by Kim Ray and Sandel), *Munich* (directed by Steven Spielberg and written by Tony Kushner and Eric Roth) and *Waltz With Bashir* (written and directed by Ari Folman). Though stylistically rather divergent, Salaita argues, all three are connected in the denial of complexity to Palestinian characters and the use of violence against Palestinians as a mere backdrop for the staged anguish of the colonial psyche. This is “the Heart of Darkness Redux,” the returns of a phenomenon first exposed by Chinua Achebe and here repurposed by Salaita to accommodate the Palestinians as colonial subjects: the colonized exist only as passive and disposable catalysts of the colonizer's painful journey towards greater self-awareness—even, dare we say, “enlightenment.”

To return to the issue of irony raised in the introductory paragraph, there is a rather staggering quality to realizing how attentive Salaita was to all of these matters well before UIUC's rescinding of a tenure-track position for his political Tweets. Then again, a more generous reading might substitute irony for prescience in this instance, as the preceding paradigm of academic “neutrality” makes it possible to read such actions as praxis meeting theory—as the standard workings of the already-named “status quo.” This is, in any case, the attitude with which we are confronted in *Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom*. A systemic contention with how academe is implicated and complicit in the violence attendant

colonial modernity precludes individualization of regulatory disciplining. Thus, while Salaita does not shy away from exploring the personal impact of UIUC's unethical conduct, he also refuses to exceptionalize his case, opting instead to tell "an autobiographical story that is anything but personal" (4).

In fact, in a move that is reminiscent of his earlier texts, Salaita not only refuses to exceptionalize his case, but seeks to transform it through the act of writing into a narrative with galvanizing potential for academic and extramural modes of dissent:

If I could convey a single point about the experience of being fired and ending up a news story, it would be that oppressive institutions can never subdue the agility of mind and spirit. Humans can be disciplined, but humanity comprises a tremendous antidisciplinary force. (ibid)

True to this paean to human steadfastness against structural coercion, *Uncivil Rites* moves across a range of topics, refusing to be limited to a despairing obsessiveness about the circumstances of Salaita's firing by UIUC (though such a move would obviously be warranted, given the circumstances). Naturally, Palestine features rather prominently: the first essay, "Tweet Tweet," is both a frank refutation of criticisms (including those of UIUC administration and donors) of Salaita's Twitter use and an exploration of the comprehensive nature of Israeli colonial violence and racism. In a Fanonian move, Salaita grapples with the question of Israeli violence by insisting upon the need to acknowledge the colonial paradigm structuring Israeli/Palestinian relations:

...skirmishes and clashes exist within a paradigm of colonization... I wouldn't argue that all Palestinian resistance is ethical or prudent, but it's important to remember that it's the violence (and often nonviolence) of the colonized party. Moral and legal frameworks underlie this reality. Israel, on the other hand, is the colonial power. As such, its mere presence is an act of violence. (17)

As with Salaita's earlier analysis of the Kahan Commission Report, "violence" here becomes rearticulated as a systematic (and systematizing) force of colonial subjugation rather than the *a priori* condition of the colonized. The second piece, "Palestine, (un)Naturally," engages the spatial and geographic dimensions of settler-colonization. The piece begins with a consideration of Palestine as religious synecdoche rather than inhabited place. Salaita notes that this confusion of categories is precisely what facilitates the process of ethnic cleansing, for "Settlement and myth are symbiotic" (19). Following this, the essay moves to a broader consideration of how the curation of settler-colonies necessitates the reinvention of characteristic environments and topographies. Salaita uses Los Angeles as an example. While not indigenous to the city, palm trees were imported by settlers who "wanted to brand the region" (ibid). Many of these early settlers were "Spaniards with a religious mandate," so palm trees were selected due to their association with "the Holy Land" (20).

Settler "place" is thus made through the de-familiarization of Indigenous place. And as settlement gathers momentum and support, space itself is weaponized: "Though it doesn't physically disappear, Palestine is forever shrinking" (ibid). However, Salaita dialectically situates the land as both an instrument of colonial erasure as well as resistance. As he notes,

"animals remain. Olive trees still age for centuries. Perhaps *this* is the natural history of Palestine: the unbelievable endurance of its flora and fauna... and the persistence of its Indigenous despite the captivity of occupied space" (26, emphasis in original).

In keeping with the methodology informing Salaita's previous works, *Uncivil Rites* exhibits a comparative approach to Indigenous struggles, extrapolating upon Indigeneity and settler-colonialism by way of alternating reference to an American Indigenous context as well as Palestine. Chapter sixteen, "The Chief Features of Civility," takes UIUC's "retired" mascot, Chief Illiniwek, as the subject of an extended meditation upon settler distortions of Indigenous identity. These distortions provide the underlying logic for a pageantry of racist symbolism, a slew of arbitrary signifiers cobbled together that reflect nothing "authentic" save for the narcissism of all indignant about the Chief's "retirement." As Salaita explains, the issue is precisely that non-Native indignation is prioritized over Native arbitration in representational authenticity: "[Chief Illiniwek] is meant to honor Natives, but in reality his function is to reaffirm the emotional desires of whiteness" (138). It is not Native realities, but the psychic investments of power and privilege that become the determining factors of representation, for "Mascotry is an issue of the settler's psychology" (141).

Salaita also constructs the mascot as the embodiment of "civility." The rationale for his termination, under Salaita's analysis, civility is revealed to be a cosmetic emphasis on respectability that invisibilizes the institutional racism that thrives on campuses such as UIUC, and stigmatizes the attempt to name this and related patterns of oppression and exclusion common to the experiences of society's variously subaltern populations. Civility, Salaita cautions us, is not harmless politeness, but power, power that marshals "the unnamed violence of bureaucracy and tradition" (145). As it becomes so normalized into the very workings of tradition, exposing this violence is "necessarily uncivil" (ibid). The Chief is thus the perfect representative of civility because, just as Natives are afforded no say in matters of authenticity, civility is the etiquette surrounding the ability to establish convention at the direct expense of the marginalized.

The fifth chapter of Salaita's most recent text, *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, reexamines the issue of his firing by UIUC through a colonial lens. Specifically, Salaita argues that the paternalism at play in the administration's refusal to consider the American Indian Studies department's support for his appointment reflects the devaluing of American Indian/Indigenous studies departments and scholars, a devaluation that is inseparable from the larger denial of Native sovereignty and agency (137). This chapter also considers the relevance of American Indian/Indigenous studies to Palestine studies and Palestine solidarity activism (which Salaita willfully conflates out of a refusal to relegate "scholarship" and "activism" to neatly separate spheres of activity). Ultimately, Salaita maintains that Palestine work, whether scholarly, activist, or a blend of the two, must systematically take up American Indian/Indigenous studies in order to craft a truly comprehensive vocabulary and program for decolonization (136-7).

The text is in many ways both a return to and departure from the insights of *The Holy Land in Transit*. For instance, Salaita's neologism, "inter/nationalism," is intended as a partial corrective to the phrase "reciprocal intercommunalism" that he had previously used to capture the mutuality

of reference and invocation informing Palestinian and North American Native elaborations of struggle. As he explains, while the former term rightly emphasized “reciprocity,” it did “not expressly underscore the nation” (xvi). As I understand it, Salaita’s repurposed phrase is politically multivalent. On the one hand, it is intended to preserve the idea of a mutual legibility and referentiality between Native/Palestinian struggles. However, it also builds on the pronouncements of scholars such as Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard and Penelope Kelsey in simultaneously capturing and evoking the possibilities for global solidarity *and* work with, among, and between Native peoples and nations for sovereignty and restitution upon the stolen land of settler-nations. Salaita engages this latter possibility through considerations of how the 2005 Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) can be more explicitly attuned to North American Native struggles. Salaita argues that BDS in fact already implies North American as well as Palestinian decolonization due to the fact that it “undermines American state power in addition to the militant colonialism of its Israeli client” (28). BDS thus already performs inter/national work. A comprehensive ethics of decolonization would develop this potential even further, so that the practice of BDS can entail both an insistence of Palestinian freedom as well as “an articulation of Native sovereignty” (ibid).

UIUC may have hoped its actions would end Steven Salaita’s scholarly career, but *Uncivil Rites* and *Inter/Nationalism* prove this to be far from true. The spirit and intent of both works suggest that Salaita, who has already made great innovations in American Indian/Indigenous studies through the comparative establishment of Palestinian Indigeneity and deconstruction of the religious tropes animating US and Israeli settler-colonization (not to mention being one of the sharpest social critics presently writing about the university as a site of colonial/capitalist normativity), is far from finished. The intellectual richness and political ethics that inform Salaita’s texts up to this point make the prospect of continued output truly enticing. Whatever form these future works may take, however, I hope they remain “uncivil.”

Omar Zahzah, University of California, Los Angeles

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