

Book Review: *Inter/Nationalism - Decolonizing Native America and Palestine* by Steven Salaita

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On Transnational Solidarities

In *Inter/Nationalism: Decolonizing Native America and Palestine*, Steven Salaita considers the transnational nature of colonial practice and proposes “Inter/Nationalism” as a theoretical framework distinct from “internationalism”, the former relating to “action and dialogue across borders both natural and geopolitical” (xiv) and the latter the unified global order. He argues that Zionism and dispossession of Native Americans are not dissimilar and in fact results from the same colonial logic of ‘manifest destiny’ or the “new Canaan” which continues to be the terrain on which genocidal ‘wars’ are fought. Thus, colonialism is not in the past, it is an ongoing and present process which is exemplified by Israeli Zionism. This paper reflects on one of the central questions framing Salaita’s analysis, that is, what it would mean to be in solidarity and to call for an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestine from a space that is similarly colonized and where one might be complicit in such colonization.

In keeping with the Fanonian conceptualization of decolonization that necessitates physical resistance, Salaita further argues for an unsettling of U.S history and hegemony which he sees as the tasks of academics, particularly those doing Native American and Palestinian studies. His argument finds support from scholars who have advocated for intersectional analyses that visibilize relations of power that are occluded when violence and various forms of dispossession are interrogated or narrated in their singularity. Unsettling the hegemony thus requires tracing

and articulation of Israeli and native American dispossession as rooted in the same colonial logic - which also opens possibilities for solidarity in decolonial efforts. Throughout his analysis, Salaita shows how and why single frame analyses have worked to preserve the status quo. When people are able to see themselves in others, to see their oppression as linked, it is more likely to spur them to action. Salaita understands that the neoliberal university is cognizant of this and part of the political agenda is an insistence on keeping fields separate, such that, for example, the complicity of the U.S vis-a-vis military and political alliances is foreclosed.

Solidarity and decolonization, in Salaita's framework, becomes possible by amplifying these connections/relations but also by raising awareness about how the structure of the university itself needs to be circumscribed to a sort of 'colonial unknowing' (to invoke Vimalassery et. al 2016 and 2017). The author argues that academics have an ethical responsibility to bring structural analysis to bear on what is purposefully circulated as discrete processes of colonization and occupation in America and Palestine respectively. The author's analysis is necessarily interdisciplinary and follows in the tradition of many ethnic studies scholars who have painstakingly mapped intersections of race, gender, sexuality, age, class, and nation to projects of empire that rationalized racial slavery, different forms of colonialism and imperialism. In a way similar to how the 'success' of black liberatory movements are seen as operating in tandem with solidarities for equality and equity for other minorities including women and girls, queer and trans folk, poor and people living with disabilities - whose marginalization is tied to capitalism, Salaita suggests that by recognizing the root of Israeli Zionism as a colonial imperative in "collusion" with the U.S. the need for solidarity becomes more obvious.

In reading this book, I was tempted to question the evidence presented by Salaita in his articulation of Inter/Nationalism. Salaita relies on the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, Native poetry that invokes Palestine as a theme or symbol; speeches of U.S. President Andrew Jackson and early Zionist thinker Ze'ev Jabotinsky as well as his personal experiences within academe - particularly the rescinding of an offer to work in a prominent U.S. University due to pro-Palestine tweets. I wondered the extent to which he had 'proven' how the U.S. is implicated in the possession of the "New Canaan" but then wondered if Salaita was being deliberate about resisting colonial epistemologies that required such proof for arguments to be considered rigorous. Whether he was deliberate, Salaita's methodology, particularly his interpretations of the sites of analysis offers a useful way to read "evidence" which is undoubtedly and inherently shaped by power- at the level of the archive and social and traditional media.

Overall, the book weaved a number of sites and theoretical framework into a convincing argument for the necessity of, if not placing indigenous studies in conversation with Palestinian studies- seeing them as belonging to the same field of Indigenous Studies. It is an important contribution to theorizing and practicing global resistance and decolonization and crosses the fields of U.S. and American Studies (which he sees as distinct) and Palestinian studies.