

Reviewed by Matthew Abraham

In *Israel's Dead Soul*, Steven Salaita skillfully examines the many lamentations over the state of Israel's soul, exploring what these lamentations reveal about the integrity of intellectual debates about the Israel-Palestine conflict. Adding to Salaita's already impressive list of books (*Anti-Arab Racism in the U.S.A.*, *Holy Land in Transit*, and *Uncultured Wars*), *Israel's Dead Soul* exposes the problematic tendency among Israel's liberal defenders to justify Israeli military adventurism by anguishing over Israel's supposed existential predicament.

By tracking how the discourse of Zionism has effectively inserted itself into the spaces of "multicultural conviviality" within American universities, Salaita demonstrates how Israeli ethnonationalism presents itself as celebrating the revival of Jewish culture in the wake of the Holocaust. This productive conflation of Israeli nationalism and Judaism enables the insertion of Zionism into the multicultural agenda within U.S. mainstream institutions.

In the first chapter, Salaita shows how the conceptual vagueness of multiculturalism's key terms ("diversity" and "tolerance") is easily co-opted by Israel's apologists for the purpose of celebrating Israel as a thriving liberal democracy, while simultaneously effacing the uglier side of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. This normalization of Israeli violence against the Palestinians as consistent with the defense of Jewish people and culture approaches perverse levels within supposed multicultural spaces. Salaita argues that Israel should be kicked out of the camp of multiculturalism for the sake of maintaining multiculturalism's intellectual integrity.

In the second chapter of the book, entitled "Is the ADL a Hate Group?," Salaita deftly argues that the Anti-Defamation League easily meets the definition of a hate group based on several of the ADL's own criteria. In a careful

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MULTICULTURALISM**

Israel's Dead Soul, by Steven Salaita. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011. xi + 142 pages. Notes to p. 155. Bibliography to p. 159. \$64.50 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

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side-by-comparison of the ADL's definitions and actions, Salaita shows that the ADL is a hate group if one applies the ADL's own definitions as to what constitutes "hate."

In the third chapter, Salaita conducts a deft analysis of how liberal intellectuals such as Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson sidestep substantive issues about Israeli settler-colonial violence and its effects on the Palestinians in their public statements about the conflict. By posturing as concerned intellectuals who refuse to assign blame—simply viewing the conflict as being propelled by narcissism, mythologies, and entrenched myths within Israeli and Palestinian cultures—West and Dyson remain within the responsible mainstream. As Salaita indicates, this tendency among liberal intellectuals to avoid assigning blame in the conflict absolves Israel of direct culpability, while also completely avoiding the gross imbalance of power between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the fourth chapter, entitled "Sexuality, Violence, and Modernity in Israel," Salaita explores how Israel's apologists have used the treatment of homosexuals in Palestinian society as a discursive target through which to promote Israel's multicultural outlook. This attempt to associate Palestinian Arabs with homophobia, and to associate Israeli society with diversity and tolerance toward alternative lifestyles, works to hide the mistreatment of gays within Israel and to marginalize the efforts of gays working toward Palestinian liberation.

In the fifth and final chapter of the book, Salaita carefully examines several recent films, including Steven Spielberg's *Munich*, Ari Sandel's *West Bank Story*, and Ari Folman's *Waltz with Bashir*, concluding that all three erase Palestinian agency in the course of focusing on the soul searching of their main characters, who serve in the Israeli military. Whether amplifying the deaths of Israeli Olympic athletes at the 1972 Olympic games, or commiserating with the mental pain of IDF soldiers who stood by while Phalangist strong men carried out the 1982 massacres at Sabra and Shatila, these films work through the main characters' PTSD flashbacks and pangs of guilt, without

directly confronting the historical effects of Israel's ethnic cleansing and occupation and its continuing annexation of Palestinian land through illegal settlement building. As Salaita points out, "One can learn much about Zionism by watching the movies that explore its internal conflicts" (p. 138).

Israel's Dead Soul is an important and original contribution to the existing literature on intellectual debates about the U.S.-Israel-Palestine conflict.