The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies

Nina Morgan, Alfred Hornung, Takayuki Tatsumi

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Publication details

Denijal Jegi
Published online on: 18 Apr 2019

How to cite: - Denijal Jegi. 18 Apr 2019, Transnational and intersectional implications of the intifada from: The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies Routledge Accessed on: 09 Sep 2023

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TRANSNATIONAL AND INTERSECTIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE INTIFADA

Denijal Jegić

Introduction

In her essay “Intifada, USA,” poet June Jordan remaps experiences of subaltern populations transnationally (Jordan 1998b). Traveling between the United States and the Levant, Jordan voices empathy with and fear for the survival of the Palestinian people, emotionally placing herself alongside an indigenous girl in colonial Palestine: “What will happen to that little girl, that child of Palestine? What is happening to you and me?” (Jordan 1998b, 7) Jordan identifies Black Americans and other minorities as victims of US-Israeli hegemony, extending the responsibility for the ongoing Palestinian Nakba onto the United States. Besides Jordan’s cosmopolitan idea that politically-motivated extermination should affect all of humanity, the identification with the Palestinian girl is based on the recognition of the interrelatedness and interchangeability of particular moments of subjugation. Jordan concludes by translating Palestinian modes of resistance onto US soil: “I say we need an uprising, an Intifada, USA” (Jordan 1998b, 7). By adding the Arabic word intifada to its English connotation as “uprising,” Jordan offers a transnational framework for a subaltern, counter-hegemonic reaction to the very transnationally intertwined conditions that perpetuate subalternity.

Jordan’s concern for Palestinian lives is based on intersectional analysis and can be viewed within broader tendencies of support for Palestinians emanating from Black American and (other) Third World spaces. The political, economic, and military supremacy and discursive hegemony enjoyed by the United States and Israel has, at least in the global north, more often than not resulted in the rhetorical transformation of settler-colonialism and genocidal atrocities in Palestine into an alleged diplomatic dispute, a military confrontation between a first-world civilization and a terrorist collective, or a clash of civilizations. Departing from dominant Eurocentric traditions, highlighting the interrelatedness of subaltern statuses, drawing on Black feminist theory and currents of Black American practice of solidarity with Palestinians, and informed by the need to academically intervene into the ongoing perpetuation of settler-colonialism and genocide, this essay will engage with the possibilities of intersectionally and transnationally grounded concepts of resistance by elaborating on a transnationalization of the Palestinian intifada as both a viable decolonial and anti-colonial practice and framework of analysis for Transnational American Studies.
Palestinians have long been dehumanized and excluded from dominant Western concepts of humanity. They were rendered, as Judith Butler argues, as ungrievable lives, i.e., “those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone” (Butler 2010, xix). Israel’s continuous perpetuation of the Nakba through settler-colonialism which entails routine instances of expulsion, torture, and killings, is based on ethnocracy (Sand 2009, 307) and is characterized by the very fear of Palestinian existence (Jegić 2018). Palestinian attempts at both violent and peaceful resistance have been brutally oppressed by the Israeli military apparatus. After Israel had placed itself at the center of the so-called “war on terror,” Israeli incursions into the occupied Palestinian territories were, as Derek Gregory outlines, “designed to turn the Palestinian people not only into enemies but into aliens, and in placing them outside the modern, figuratively and physically, they were constructed as….hominès sacri” (Gregory 2004, 187).

As the Zionist narrative enjoys a discursive hegemony in the Euro-American sphere, Palestinian de-colonial ambitions have oftentimes been framed as illegitimate in media and political discourse. As Palestine/Israel has a crucial role in Western cultural constructions of identity, colonial policies conducted against Palestinians are inherently transnational, as they are implicitly carried out in the name of the West. As Timothy Mitchell and his colleagues conclude, “Washington supports, funds, and arms many forms of injustice in the Middle East. But only in the case of Israel is the injustice disguised and defended as a moral struggle of the West against the rest” (Mitchell et al. 2003, 1). Widely accepted is the religious-nationalist narrative of the Jewish homeland, i.e.: “Zionism is a product of a ‘national liberation movement’ of the Jewish people; the ‘biblical Israelites’ returning (from the late nineteenth century onwards) to ‘redeem the ancient homeland’ and ‘restore Jewish statehood’ after two millennia of absence and exile”; and the Orientalist narrative of Israel’s Western progressiveness, i.e.:

> Israel is an “outpost” of Western culture and European civilization in the Middle East, surrounded by an Islamic ‘Orient’. The mega-narrative of Zionism, repeated ad nauseam in the Western media, describes Israel as a “liberal democracy” and the “only democracy in the Middle East.”

(Masalha 2015, 44)

Such myths have served the US government as justifications to unconditionally support Israel as its ally through which the United States has pursued its economic, geo-political, and religious interest in the Middle East. While capitalist and military flows between Israel and the United States are well documented, Washington’s aggressiveness towards Palestinians simultaneously pleases evangelical radicals, whose visions of “the end times” are embodied in the geographies of historical Palestine. In fact, as the recent relocation of the US embassy to Jerusalem clarified, in its approach to Israel/Palestine, Washington has boycotted international law and standardized extremist interpretations of the Bible as guidelines for its foreign policy.

Even as Israeli politicians and military leaders openly debate practicalities of a comprehensive genocide of the Palestinian population in “genocidal fantasies” (Blumenthal 2015, 119), the United States uses its diplomatic powers to shield Israel from criticism. Washington’s extremist stance on Palestine/Israel has resulted in the United States’ withdrawal from the United Nations Human Rights Council and the UNESCO, with the country finding itself increasingly isolated on the world stage. It is arguably impossible to draw definite boundaries between US and Israeli policies, due to the “Israelization of U.S. foreign policy”
(Beinin 2003, 126), since the US-supported Israeli settlements in Palestine have become sympathetic frontiers synonymous with US-inflected concepts of homeland and nation, and as the international political elite—beyond the United States and including most of the Arab world—has failed the Palestinians as well, it can also be argued that Palestinians are a contemporary colonized people who are subjugated by a transnational hegemonic system. Consequently, Palestine cannot be comprehended through concepts of “post”-colonialism. Indeed, the “post” would discursively erase the visibility of the contemporaneous character of the colonization of Palestine. The analysis of Palestine as an ever-evolving form of colonization is inevitable for both academic discourse and for the formulation of alternative, decolonial, and anti-colonial futures.

Any prospects for a halt to Zionist colonialism has, thus, to be rooted in the efforts of activism, arts, and academia, which have, in the case of Palestine, been the central locations for the articulation of anti-colonial gestures. A peaceful and at times fruitful endeavor has been the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement, which was initiated by the Palestinian civil society in 2005. Inspired by the successful example of the boycott of South Africa during its Apartheid regime, Palestinians called upon international civil society organizations and “people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel” (BDS Movement 2015), until the latter recognizes Palestinian human rights and complies with international law by *inter alia* ending the occupation and dismantling the apartheid wall.

**Palestine and American studies**

It is against this backdrop of the exclusion of Palestinians from human rights that the American Studies Association (ASA) has started to formally engage with the question of Palestine. Amplified by the ASA’s endorsement of the academic boycott of Israel in 2013, which was grounded in a commitment to free speech and in “solidarity with aggrieved peoples in the United States and in the world” (American Studies Association 2013), the mainstream in American Studies has initiated the breaking of what Edward Said has reified as “America’s last taboo,” by recognizing Palestine’s centrality to the definition of hegemonic concepts of the American “self.”

In response to Israel’s violent reaction to the Great Return March and the United States’ complicity, the ASA’s Executive Committee issued a statement on the responsibility of American Studies to Palestine in May 2018. The resolution asserted:

> As U.S. foreign policy has empowered Israeli settler-colonialism, it has enabled the devastation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, in Israel, and in the diaspora. As a field designed to track the U.S. domestically and internationally, American studies must be responsible to the links between U.S. foreign policy and the ongoing colonial practices of the Israeli government. (*American Studies Association 2018*)

In stressing the US-supported colonial structure of Palestine/Israel, the declaration attributes a decolonial obligation to the discipline of American Studies. The long absence of Palestine from American Studies had of course been related to the lack of a discussion of settler-colonialism altogether. As Mullen argued in the Palestinian-themed issue of the *American Quarterly*, silence around Israeli settler-colonialism
was consistent with absence of scholarship on Native American genocide, the US state’s deterritorialization of indigenous peoples in the Pacific, the Southwest, Africa, and elsewhere, recognition of the United States’ own formation as a settler colonial state, and US support for settler colonial regimes in Australia and South Africa.

(American Studies Association 2018, 1077)

However, the transnational extension of the uncontested US empire in a unipolar world order has led to revisions of the aims and methods of American Studies. Amy Kaplan formulated in her 2003 presidential address to the ASA that discourses on empire are significant for “mak[ing] the contours of U.S. power more visible, and thus subject to criticism” (Kaplan 2004, 2). Kaplan deconstructed US claims to the exclusive possession of global hegemony, criticizing that the United States “upholds a doctrine of limited sovereignty for others and thus deems the entire world a potential site of intervention” (Kaplan 2004, 6). Accordingly, “those whose dreams are different are often labeled terrorists who must hate our way of life” (Kaplan 2004, 7).

The recognition of the transnational dimensions of US hegemony has, thus, made a transnational framework for American Studies an imperative, the necessity for which was proclaimed in Shelley Fisher Fishkin’s 2004 presidential address to the ASA. She claimed that

At a time when American foreign policy is marked by nationalism, arrogance, and Manichean oversimplification, the field of American studies is an increasingly important site of knowledge marked by a very different set of assumptions—a place where borders both within and outside the nation are interrogated and studied, rather than reified and reinforced

(Fishkin 2005, 20)

This premise implicitly stresses the connection between scholarship and activism. As Alfred Hornung has argued, the concept of Transnational American Studies “is by definition political” (Hornung 2005, 68). The political component of academia becomes especially magnified in the case of Palestine, as one cannot accurately analyze contemporary U.S. hegemony, the ideology of Zionism, Israeli settler-colonialism, or ethnocracy without formulating a critique of the very colonial and racist practices which continue to shape the structures of the United States.

Transnational perspectives

Long before entering mainstream academia, the decolonization of Palestine has been central to South-South cooperation, Third World articulations, and Black Nationalist ambitions of liberation. Academics, artists, and activists engaging—oftentimes from marginalized positions—with the struggles in Palestine have stressed the obvious interrelatedness and exchangeability of these phenomena, as they have been realized in Palestine and Black America. Long before they were theorized academically, analogies have been used to formulate solidarity and resistance within decolonial and anti-colonial frameworks. For example, June Jordan’s demand for an intifada stems from the conclusion that “a barrel of oil is worth more than any number of Palestinian lives” (Jordan 1998c, 7), pointing to the devaluation of Palestinian life, which is, however, economically and socially linked to the experiences of populations in the broader Middle East and the United States: “Clearly, a barrel of oil is worth more than the safety of the 250,000 young African-American and Mexican-American and Latino and poor white men and women now sweltering on the Arabian desert while
they await God-knows-what horrible and untimely death” (Jordan 1998c, 7). Taking Palestinian-Black analogies as a starting point for the deconstruction of imperial politics and capitalism, Jordan eventually formulates all-encompassing concerns.

Black-Palestinian encounters were, in the second half of the twentieth century, instructive in making the transnational dimensions of both groups’ suffering visible. Like the Black Panthers’ agile exchange with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Muhammad Ali’s and Malcom X’s travels to the Middle East, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee’s (SNCC) domestic dissemination of decolonial knowledge on Palestine, open letters bear witness to the heft of Black-Palestinian solidarity. For instance, “An Appeal by Black Americans Against United States Support for the Zionist Government of Israel,” published in The New York Times on November 1, 1970 (Committee of Black Americans 1970), asserts that “the exploitation experienced by Afro-Americans, Native Americans (Indians), Puerto Ricans, and Chicanos (Mexican-Americans) is similar to the exploitation of Palestinian Arabs and Oriental Jews by the Zionist State of Israel,” hence collapsing any notion of isolated coincidences. The writing identifies the “Palestinian Revolution” as “the vanguard of the Arab Revolution” and as “part of the anti-colonial revolution which is going on in places such as Vietnam, Mozambique, Angola, Brazil, Laos, South Africa, and Zimbabwe.” Thus, the letter attributes symbolic significance to Palestinian resistance. It eventually connects Palestinian decolonial aspirations to Black American struggles: “We call for Afro-American solidarity with the Palestinian people’s struggle for national liberation and to regain all of their stolen land.”

In contrast to the seemingly incontestable hegemonic link between the predominantly white US and Israeli political elites, exchange between Palestinians and Black Americans has been made possible through critiques of the nation-state and vision of alternative presents and futures, which were central to both Black nationalism’s and Palestinian nationalism’s traditionally transnational character. This view can be captured through Paul Gilroy’s elaboration on the Black Atlantic, which he defined through the desires “to transcend both the structures of the nation state and the constraints of ethnicity and national particularity,” which have been “relevant to understanding political organizing and cultural criticism” (Gilroy 1993, 19). It is the post-nation state alternative that has captured Palestine as a symbol for decolonial and liberation struggles transnationally. If taken as transnational categories, both “Black” and “Palestinian” destabilize the premises on which the idea of a national(ist) United States and Israel is built.

In discussing the power of whiteness, W.E.B. Du Bois elaborated on the destabilized notion of the Black self that was evident in the double consciousness of being viewed as African and simultaneously actively viewed as not being (white) American. Du Bois saw African Americans as being split between the essential sense of understanding the self and a construction of an identity reflected through the power of the white gaze (Du Bois 1989 [1903], 5). The potential of viewing oneself through the eyes of others is a central point for the analysis of one’s own structurally-imposed difference from the majority population. This double consciousness is another base for the reflection of power relations, which are inherent to the social construct of race, and for the production of knowledge emanating from Black and other subaltern contexts. It can be argued that if double consciousness leads to the recognition of one’s position as a subaltern, it simultaneously provides a framework for the transnational linking to other subaltern populations.

As Palestinian-American author Susan Abulhawa elaborated, Palestinians and Africans are always-already informed about the other’s situation due to their own conditions of suffering. Palestinians would not have to preface their words or prove the righteousness of their
struggle to Africans, who are Palestinians’ “natural allies,” since, as Abulhawa concludes, “there is a kind of liberation that can only come from being a part of the liberation of others” (Abulhawa 2013).

**Intifada as resistance**

Liberation and resistance have often symbolized the continuity of existence in Black and Palestinian contexts, and beyond. What could have come close to a so-called Palestinian revolution were, prior to the BDS movement, the two realizations of the Palestinian Intifada (1987–89; 2000–05). The term itself necessitates clarification. Linguistically, intifada (اِنْتِفَاْادَة in Modern Standard Arabic) is a noun derived from the verb intifāḍa (انتفاضة) which translates to “to shake off,” “to shudder,” “to shiver,” or “to tremble.” As an instance noun, intifada then means “a shaking off.” In a political context, it has been used within and outside the Arabophone world to refer to organized Palestinian anti-colonial attempts to “shake off” the occupation from their everyday life. Hence, the epistemology implied in intifada exceeds the common Western understanding of it as merely an “uprising.” Besides English, intifada has entered several languages as a loan-word to signify Palestinian resistance and/or uprising against Israeli occupation. Etymologically, stemming from Arabic, a Semitic, non-European language native to formerly or currently colonized geographies and cultures in North Africa and Western Asia, the modern usage of the word originates from a subaltern space and implies an anti-colonial history.

Historically, the First Intifada began in 1987 with Palestinians protesting the occupation and the effects it entailed on their lives, i.e., the absence of human rights, the expansion of colonial policies, land theft, house demolitions, detentions, and apartheid which Palestinians had to sustain while still required to pay taxes and ask Israel for permits for everyday actions. Thus, the intifada was a reaction, or, “a popular response to these drastic pressures. It was a widespread popular uprising consisting of grassroots mobilization of all sectors of Palestinian society, including women, youth, and the elderly, who engaged in public demonstrations and non-violent civil disobedience” (Allen 2008, 454). The intifada served as a reaffirmation of Palestinian existence, and provoked national unity, for example, through the promotion of national products and strengthening of the local economy. Thus, “simply surviving and staying on the land also became a nationalist value” (Allen 2008, 454). The intifada helped raise awareness of the Palestinian plight worldwide due to media coverage and the impossibility for Israel to conceal its occupation or market it as benevolent.

Following the First Intifada, the PLO was recognized by Israel in 1993 and granted some access to the global political stage. US-brokered negotiations between colonizer and colonized resulted in the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority (PA). While Palestinians were initially given the hope of a so-called peace process, Israel throughout the 1990s intensified its colonial rule and expedited the construction of settlement, while the PA was increasingly seen as a helpful colonial instrument. As a response to the hopelessness and frustration that emanated from these developments, the Second Intifada began in September 2000 and was violently crushed by Israel, which seized the post-9/11 US-led “war on terror” as an opportunity to frame any Palestinian resistance as terrorism. As Mitchell and his colleagues write, “[a] century-long history of dispossession, expulsion, occupation, and resistance was reduced, once again, to a series of Palestinian acts of terror” (Mitchell et al. 2003, 1).

Like the subjugation of Palestinians, Palestinian resistance has always had a transnational character. Particularly given the diasporic nature of the forcibly transnationalized Palestinian people, the transnational dimensions are already inscribed into their visions of liberation. In
the highly unlikely event that the nostalgic idea of the right of return, which was passed by the UN in 1948, would eventually materialize, it would bring (back) a transnational diaspora to a geographically defined area. As Israeli colonialism is ongoing and as Palestinians are still being individually transformed into refugees, the categories of the indigenous inhabitant, the internally displaced and the transnationally exiled are never constant. From being trapped on their own land, Palestinians can rapidly become trapped globally.

As Edward Said argued, the (First) Intifada was characterized by two dynamics, an internal one and an external one “in which the Palestinian exile presence has interacted dialectically with regional and international powers” (“Intifada and Independence” 23). In the spirit of the First Intifada, the Palestinian National Council (PNC) proclaimed the State of Palestine at their “Intifada Meeting” in Algiers, in post-colonial North Africa. The declaration of independence was poetically adapted by poet Mahmoud Darwish, and stood out as a progressive document that, according to Said, “spelled out principles of equality, mutuality, and social justice far in advance of anything in the region” (Said 1989, 35).

The declaration regulated that a Palestinian and an Israeli state should peacefully coexist in a partitioned Palestine. The document is particularly unique in that colonized Palestinians recognize Israel, a state that has been built on their dispossession. This particular moment exemplifies the ongoing phenomenon of the colonized being required to provide for the colonizer’s security and comfort. It is this phenomenon that transplants bases for new instances of the intifada into the present.

Meanwhile, inspired by the Palestinian intifada, Black-American calls for resistance on US soil have again spread through online and offline spaces, especially since the summer of 2014, when Palestinians in Gaza and Black Americans and others in Ferguson became victims of state violence. Israel’s war against the population of Gaza coincided with a surge in US police violence against non-white bodies. The Gaza-Ferguson moment has led not only to a re-emergence of Black-Palestinian solidarity in the United States: activists have highlighted the military and capitalist links between the subjugation of Blacks and Palestinians and the obviousness of the confusion of the so-called wars on terror and on drugs which entails an Israeli-sponsored militarization of US police and a transnational exchange of racist practices. Thus, contemporary Black American human rights movements like #BlackLivesMatter and Dream Defenders have since their emergence included the liberation of Palestine as a vision on their agendas. For instance, the 2016 “Vision for Black Lives” manifesto, published by several Black rights groups, accused the United States of being complicit in Israel’s “genocide” against the Palestinians (The Movement for Black Lives 2016). Although there are obvious genocidal components to both Israel’s ongoing policies and Zionist ideology as such, academia has largely failed to engage with the question of genocide in Palestine/Israel (Rashed et al. 2014, 8). Thus, #BlackLivesMatter’s transnational and intersectional outlook, in this case, reveals academic deficits.

The manifesto calls for joint, transnational struggle, and suggests that the concept of intifada has taken on multiple dimensions that can be defined through the Latin preposition trans, meaning “across” or “beyond.” The notion of trans here has to be comprehended foremost but not only as “transnational.” Through an intersectional approach, the intifada as a concept of resistance can be seen as a transcendence of categories, borders, hegemonically-imposed knowledge, society, geography, and historiography. The notion of trans can help describe the ways in which subaltern groups can transcend their subaltern position. Transnational linkages of suffering based on analogies of colonialism, imperialism, and genealogies of racist structure can lead to a transnational intifada, if viewed through an intersectional lens.
Intersectionality

Particular attention needs to be given to intersectionality as a practice, i.e., “a structural, intellectual and political response to the dynamics of violence, white supremacy, patriarchy, state power, capitalist markets, and imperial policies,” as Cornel West has summarized it (West 2016, viii). Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term “intersectionality” in the late 1980s, when she studied the connectedness of discrimination based on race and gender, and showed how women of color are marginalized both as women and as people of color (Crenshaw 1991, 1244). Thus, such women experience racism and sexism simultaneously in ways that cannot be captured through an analysis based solely on one factor.

Crenshaw’s formulation of intersectionality was a necessary intervention into feminist and antiracist discourses that had largely failed to include the experience of non-white, non-heteronormative, non-Christian, and non-Western women. bell hooks defined the “interlocking political systems that are the foundation of our nation’s politics” as “white supremacist capitalist patriarchy,” to which white feminism that viewed women as universalized, has significantly contributed (hooks 2010, 1). Crenshaw noted that “[t]he failure of feminism to interrogate race means that the resistance strategies of feminism will often replicate and reinforce the subordination of people of color, and the failure of antiracism to interrogate patriarchy means that antiracism will frequently reproduce the subordination of women” (Crenshaw 1991, 1252). This would concurrently imply a selective choice of what factor one aims at targeting, which again implies a differentiation of factors into various degrees of importance and consequently creates hierarchies. However, as Audre Lorde insisted, “there is no hierarchy of oppression” (Lorde 2009, 219). Lorde formulated liberation as a necessarily collaborative solution and conceptualized community as always-already defined through the existence of difference (Lorde 2009, 95). Thus, Black feminism was radical in that it necessarily connected activism and academia, as one could not apply an intersectional analysis without critiquing white supremacy or calling for its end everywhere.

Intersectionality is not only an academic project, as “praxis has been a key site of intersectional critique and intervention” since its earliest articulations, as Sumi Cho, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Leslie McCall showed. Their definition of praxis encompasses “a wide range of phenomena” including society- and work-centered movements, legal and policy advocacy seeking gender and racial equality and “state-targeted movements to abolish prisons, immigration restrictions, and military interventions that are nominally neutral with respect to race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality, and nation but are in fact disproportionally harmful to communities of color and to women and gays in those communities” (Cho et al. 2018, 786). Consequently, theory is necessarily informed by practice and should inform practices of organizing.

Approaches that are intersectional and characterized by the notion of “trans-” offer necessary interventions into the study of not only political currents, but also of literary and cultural products. Aesthetics emanating from subaltern and transnational spaces, as expressed for example by June Jordan, cannot be grasped comprehensively without an intersectional approach and a focus on the proclamations of resistance and revolutionary visions.

Intersectional analysis and transcending concepts of nation, ethnicity, and religion constitute the very structure to Jordan’s poetry and prose. When Jordan moves geographically between Lebanon, Somalia, and Bosnia within the same paragraph in her essay “Islam and the USA” (Jordan 1998c, 52), she stresses the inherent transnational amplification of particular instances of imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy. Similarly, in her writings about Lebanon, the author herself identifies with the country based on individual and collective
experiences of racism: “And Lebanon is on the wrong side, just like me, Lebanon is not white” (Jordan 1998a, 140). The formulations of solidarity are tied to deconstructions of political and economic hegemony. Jordan’s writings merge emotional self-reflection with historical facts, statistics and quotes, with the author’s intention to perform a counter-hegemonic narrative. In “Apologies to All the People in Lebanon,” for example, Jordan’s discussion of U.S. sponsorship of Israeli violence leads her to conclude that every U.S. tax-payer, including herself, is involuntarily complicit in the killings of Palestinians and Lebanese:

Yes, I did know it was the money I earned as a poet that / paid / for the bombs and the planes and the tanks / that they used to massacre your family. (Jordan 1998a, 382)

The artist can then not be distinguished from the activist, especially if artists write from marginalized positions and identify as individuals who are women, Palestinian, Black, Muslim, LGBT+, or immigrants. The poetry of Palestinian-American poet Suheir Hammad and the rap of Palestinian hip-hop group DAM are further examples for autobiographic, activist narratives. These artists use African-originated modes of expression, including oral tradition and spoken word in order to remap their individual struggles on transnational scales. Alfred Hornung defines auto/biographies as “involved in literary, cultural, psychological, legal, or political processes of mediation in which the autobiographer becomes a mediator in intercultural, interethnic, and interracial affairs” (Hornung 2010, xii). Thus, he adds, “the conception of auto/biography as mediation also refers to the bridging of different cultures, especially between the East and the West” (Hornung 2010, xii). The mediation beyond categories of culture, ethnicity, and race is constitutive of the autobiographic narration of artists who transcend discursive limitations and offer dialogue to other groups deemed subaltern.

In the performance “Mike Check,” Hammad uses an encounter with a white American Homeland Security officer to discuss the history of U.S. apartheid and the Indigenous American genocide (Def Poetry 2011). In the rap “Mali Huriye—I Don’t Have Freedom,” DAM deconstruct the US-Israeli alliance with a Palestinian-Indian American analogy, claiming that the United States is “[c]leaning the Middle East of its Indians / Hitting us then blaming us.” Disseminating knowledge that was produced from within subaltern contexts, such literary products oftentimes result in the artist-activist’s demands for a revolution in forms of a trans-intifada.

The extension of decolonial discourses necessitates an engagement with political and economic currents and with the state of human rights informed by intersectional practice and transnational outlook, as it has been applied by these artist-activists. As the ASA’s Executive Committee outlined in its latest statement on the oppression of Palestinians, “[b]ecoming informed and sharing knowledge … while insufficient alone to halt state-enacted or state-sanctioned violence, are necessary to defunctioning the regimes that rationalize and use such violence” (American Studies Association 2018). It is imperative that any notion of knowledge includes subaltern and Third World knowledge. In order to de-function violent hegemony, and to highlight gestures towards resistance and liberation, Transnational American Studies needs to further engage with these phenomena through the inevitable combination of intersectional and transnational approaches.
Denijal Jegić

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