“Soundtracks of Jerusalem”: YouTube, North African Rappers, and the Fantasies of Resistance

A. Boum

Known derogatively to students as AWACS,¹ a group of idle security officers stood in the corners and alleys leading to different buildings of Cadi Ayyad University Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences in Marrakesh. The students, dressed in Palestinian scarves known as *kufiya*, gathered, walked, and stood in lines celebrating the international Day of Jerusalem (*yawm al-Quds*); they were unfazed by the security guards' watchful gaze.² They sang poems commemorating the Islamic identity of the city, carried Palestinian flags and banners of its symbols, and pasted flyers of the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque over campus walls.

Since independence the Moroccan government has kept a close surveillance on university campuses, which presented political threats to its survival. Political life inside university campuses was managed by the Union Nationale des Étudiants du Maroc (UNEM) through its chapters in cities such as Rabat, Casablanca, Marrakesh, and Fès. Since its establishment in 1956, the activities of UNEM “closely paralleled those of outside political forces opposed to the regime.”³ UNEM sided with leftist secular political forces opposed to the monarchy until the early 1980s when its leadership started to be dominated by students affiliated with Islamic movements. The rise of Islamic political ideologies as a political alternative to less popular Marxist ideas, especially after the fall of the Soviet Union, became obvious through the students' affiliations within the UNEM and its branches in different Moroccan campuses. Despite the fact that all ideological camps, with a few exceptions, within the UNEM support the Palestinian cause including the question of Jerusalem, the Islamic

1 AWACS, which stands for the mobile long range radar surveillance and air defense control, is used by students to refer to security officers on campuses.

2 Al-Quds is the Arabic name of Jerusalem; it is known in Hebrew as Yerushalayim. Throughout the paper I use the word Jerusalem to refer to the city without any ideological connotations.

3 Clement Moore and Arlie Hochschild, “Student Unions in North African Politics,” *Daedalus* 97, no. 1 (1968), 29.

discourse of Palestine began to replace the Marxist revolutionary discourse of independence and the right of self-determination.

On the Day of Jerusalem the majority of Moroccan university campuses are decorated with the red, black, and white colors of the Palestinian flag as a way of expressing the self-identification of Moroccan universities with Palestinian students and joining in their struggle for Jerusalem. Their political manifestations have also served as a critique of the political attitudes of Arab leaders toward the city. Recently, however, UNEM lost a significant part of its political power as a result of decades of internal ideological fights among its Marxist, Leninist, pan-Arab, and Islamic factions. The ideological fights have also weakened the organization and mirror the fractured national political system and fragile political parties that provided leadership for these students.

Nevertheless, the question of Palestine and Jerusalem has remained one of the few issues of agreement within the weakened national student body. As I walked around the covered alleyways, flags, books, leaflets, and songs about Jerusalem and the struggle for Palestinian independence dominated each display stand. I was, however, struck by a number of CDs of the Palestinian rap group DAM on one of the stands. Before I started leafing through a collection of books, brochures, and leaflets, Samir, an undergraduate student, noted:

You can have one. They are free. All thanks to YouTube. If we do not download them and circulate them, nobody will listen to them even though they are available online. You known ... DAM is the best hip hop group to ever sing for Palestine and Jerusalem. I do not like rap music or hip hop but DAM for me is like Mahmoud Darwish. Unlike the fantasy of resistance of these new Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian rappers DAM like Darwish are real voices of resistance. DAM is both online and offline. [North African rappers'] only place of resistance is in the world of YouTube where few people who have the means and time to visit are aware of their existence.⁴

Samir, a member of the banned Justice and Charity Movement, later informed me that online political activism is a form of escapism from reality and that online hip hop is useless without offline political engagement. He argues that North African students and youth have escaped to the Internet instead of challenging regimes of power through direct political participation in and outside university campuses.

4 Samir, engineering student, interviewed in October 2012.

I like what the Internet did to the regimes across the Arab world. It exposed their political lies as well cultural and social hypocrisies. We knew that our internal cuisine smells very bad, but before the Internet very few were bothered by the smell. They were rarely exposed to it. Now we could take our laundry and expose it to the outside world to see. They cannot ignore [it] anymore. But is this enough ... I think it is not ... Without direct, on-street challenge, the Makhzan has nothing to fear, after all how many people have time to surf or [can] afford to be wired to the Internet.⁵

In the last decades, the Internet, and especially YouTube, has served as a setting for Middle Eastern hip hop artists and North African rappers to voice their political, cultural, and social grievances over the question of Jerusalem. YouTube has partially allowed rural and urban North African youth to go beyond the limited spaces allowed by state-regulated media and political parties' newspapers. Youth and hip hop artists appropriate existing media images and historical narratives of Jerusalem, re-contextualize them, and produce new narratives of the city through a syncretic collage⁶ and political pastiche.⁷ By using YouTube, young North African rappers capitalize on the technique of sampling and juxtaposing images, speeches, and historical documentation of Israeli and Arab state media and recycle them into new texts with new meanings. This allows Palestinian and other Arab youth to "float in cyberspace" through a "virtual mobility" that challenges state discourses.⁸ Nevertheless, these musical scripts of resistance against state regimes of power lack practical and real civil and political engagement and the potential of a "threatening" political contestation on the ground.

Unlike previous studies on Palestinian music and songs of resistance,⁹ I focus largely on an emerging generation of North African hip hop artists and their use of cyberspace, and especially YouTube, to express their political definitions and cultural attitudes about Jerusalem and the conflicting narratives of its ownership. I highlight a corpus of North African hip hop songs on YouTube

5 Samir, engineering student, interviewed in October 2012.

6 Katherine Hoffman, *Collage: Critical Views* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1989).

7 Joanna Demers, "Sampling as Lineage in Hip-Hop" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2002).

8 Miriyam Aouragh, "Confined Offline, Traversing Online Palestinian Mobility through the Prism of the Internet," *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011), 391–392.

9 Moslih Kanaaneh, Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Heather Bursheh, and David McDonald, *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance since 1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

by rappers such as Mouad Belghouat known as 'El Haqed,' Lotfi Belamri nicknamed 'Lotfi Double Kanon,' the Keeb brothers, and Mohammed El Guitoni also named 'Guito'N.' I argue that despite the political beliefs held by many North African hip hop artists and university youth, YouTube allows them to expose the political weakness of Arab governments; North African hip hop YouTube scripts of Jerusalem are carnivals of resistance that fetishize Jerusalem without a real threat to the agency of the Israeli or North African states and their entrenched official discourse about the city. It is a fact that Arab hip hop networks of cyber-resistance have allowed youth to create through YouTube new landscapes of contention over Jerusalem and interpretations of past histories of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Using Frank's concept of hip advertising as resistance, I argue that although rappers contend that they are creating radical countercultural movements, they are in fact caught up in a virtual conformist world dominated by advertisement and consumer capitalism. As part of an emerging youth subculture, Samir and other students contend that Jerusalem hip hop is a harmless form of cultural dissent. There is a feeling of paradox between expressions of resistance on YouTube and the objectives of emerging youth countercultures. In this context, North African hip hop songs about Jerusalem become spectacles in the sense that YouTube turns their presumed discourse of resistance into a context of social disengagement and political alienation. They are distracted from openly and directly engaging reality as they are drawn into the interactive and sometimes self-promotional spectacle of YouTube.¹⁰

Jerusalem in Modern Islamic Politics

Jerusalem is by far the most visible and significant subject of contention not only in Palestinian-Israeli political debates, but also in Jewish and Muslim literary representations: in bank notes,¹¹ poems,¹² songs,¹³ European travel-

10 There are few studies that look at states and the use of social media in the context of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The work of Rebecca Stein and Miriyam Aouragh deserves special mention, see Rebecca Stein, "StateTube: Anthropological Reflections on Social media and the Israeli State," *Anthropological Quarterly* 85, no. 3 (2012): 893–916; Miriyam Aouragh, *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet and Construction of Identity* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011).

11 Michael Bonine, "Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock: Banknotes of Piety, Politics and National Identity," *IBNS Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 27–42.

12 For example, Mahmoud Darwish, "Fil al-Quds."

13 David McDonald, *My Voice is my Weapon: Music, Nationalism and the Poetics of Pales-*

gues,¹⁴ photography,¹⁵ and the literary works of Israeli and Arab scholars.¹⁶ The diverse and often conflicting Jewish and Muslim religious loyalties to Jerusalem have served as the base for attachment to the place and its religious sites. Rashid Khalidi writes,

Most importantly, central though Jerusalem is to the Palestinians and to their self-image, it is also central to the self-image of their Israeli adversaries. For both, it is important today as a space, and historically, over time, as an anchor for modern identity. Yet the Israelis control Jerusalem, and are able to expropriate, excavate, label, and describe antiquities there as they please.¹⁷

This competition and struggle over religious narratives of Jerusalem, its holy sites, and their historical meanings have captured Arab and Muslim populations in and outside Israel/Palestine especially after the 1967 war. In the Arab world, a wider gap began to take shape between states and youth over what members of younger generations see as their uncontested and humiliating

tinian Resistance (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013). Also see Moslih Kanaaneh, Stig-Magnus Thorsén, Heather Bursheh, and David McDonald, *Palestinian Music and Song: Expression and Resistance since 1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013); Joachim Braun, *Music in Ancient Israel/Palestine: Archaeological, Written and Comparative Sources* (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002); Nasser Al-Tae, "Voices of Peace and the Legacy of Reconciliation: Popular Music, Nationalism, and the Quest for Peace in the Middle East," *Popular Music* 21, no. 1 (2002): 41–61.

- 14 Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Jerusalem Travel Literature as Historical Source and the Cultural Phenomenon," in Yehoshua Ben-Arieh and Moshe Davis (eds.), *Jerusalem in the Mind of the Western World, 1800–1948* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 1997), 25–46; Jean-Luc Nardone, *La représentation de Jérusalem et de la terre sainte dans les récits de pèlerins européens au XVI^e siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2007); Marie-Christine Gomez-Geraud, *Le crépuscule du grand voyage: les récits des pèlerins à Jérusalem (1458–1612)* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 1999).
- 15 Emmie Donadio, "Seeing is Believing: Auguste Salzmann and the Photographic Representation of Jerusalem," in Tamar Meyer and Suleiman Mourad (eds.), *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 140–154; Issam Nassar, *Photographing Jerusalem: The Image of the City in Nineteenth Century Photography* (Boulder, CO: East European Monograph, 1997).
- 16 Ahmad Harb, "The Image of Jerusalem in Modern Palestinian Literature: A Preliminary Study," *International Journal for Literary Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008): 2–22; Meyer and Mourad (eds.), *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality*.
- 17 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: the Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 18.

political subjugation to Israeli policies. Mahdi El Mandjra writes that Arab leaders have forsaken the real battle over Jerusalem and instead use it as a "springboard for other ends."¹⁸ While Arab youth take to the street to denounce what they see as the linguistic, religious, and urban "Judaization"¹⁹ of Islamic and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem and show their support for its Palestinian residents, El Mandjra argues that Arab leaders are more concerned with maintaining their traditional power; Arab leaders have succumbed to what he calls "the overpowering force of linguistic terrorism,"²⁰ which negatively reinterprets Islam as a force of destruction and silences Muslim and Christian rights over Jerusalem.²¹

In 1975, during the fourth Islamic Conference of foreign ministers held in Jedda, Saudi Arabia, King Hassan II (1961–1999) called for the establishment of the al-Quds Committee as a separate unit within the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). He became its president until his death in July 1999 when he was replaced by his son Mohammed VI. Twenty years after 1975, the Islamic Fund for Jerusalem (Bayt Mal al-Quds) was established to raise funds for the conservation of the Islamic character of the old city of Jerusalem. The donations have been used mostly to help residents of East Jerusalem and support public institutions including al-Haram al-Sharif and al-Quds University.²² In his political approach to the question of Jerusalem, Hassan II argued that Muslims should demand only Muslim sites such as al-Aqsa Mosque and not the Western Wall.²³ In 1979, in clear opposition to Hassan II's initiative, Ayatollah Khomeini, who had major disagreements with Hassan II over his support and reception of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, called for an annual commemoration of Jerusalem on the last Friday of the

18 Mahdi El Mandjra, *Humiliation à l'ère du mega-impérialisme* (Casablanca: Najah El Jadida, 2003), 83.

19 Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Nadia Abu El Haj, "Translating Truths: Nationalism, the Practice of Archeology and the Remaking of Past and Present in Contemporary Jerusalem," *American Ethnologist* 25, no. 2 (1998): 166–188; Thomas Aowde, "The Moroccan Quarter: A History of the Present," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 7 (Winter 2007): 1–16.

20 El Mandjra, *Humiliation à l'ère du mega-impérialisme*.

21 El Mandjra, *Humiliation à l'ère du mega-impérialisme*, 91. Also see Mahdi El Mandjra, *Al Quds, symbole et mémoire* (Marrakesh: Éditions Walili, 1996).

22 Yitzhak Reiter, *Jerusalem and its Role in Islamic Solidarity* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 139.

23 Moshe Ma'oz, *Muslim Attitudes to Jews and Israel: The Ambivalence of Rejection, Antagonism, Tolerance and Cooperation* (Portland, OR: Sussex Academic Press, 2010), 17.

month of Ramadan.²⁴ The event gained great momentum each year and has been celebrated all over the world, especially in the last decades, in which rallies in support of Palestinians took place worldwide, even in western capitals such London and Washington, DC. These protests denounced Zionism and Israeli policies toward Palestinians in general and Jerusalem in particular.²⁵

Beyond these official political celebrations of and contentions over the status of Jerusalem and its Islamic character, the Arab and Israeli political struggle over control of the historical narrative and memory of Jerusalem has also been fought through songs, poetry, literature, and material culture. Recently, Israeli, Palestinian, and Middle Eastern youth have turned to rap music and hip hop to enact and reinforce their cultural and religious views of the city through sonic forms of resistance. This movement started first on campus universities where the liberation of Palestine and Jerusalem has always been a central point in the political agenda of the various chapters of North African students unions.²⁶ These movements were also connected to the cultural and musical productions of Jerusalem and Palestine; productions that allowed the songs and poems of Nizār Qabbānī,²⁷ Umm Kulthūm, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, Nihād Wadī‘ Ḥaddād (known as Fayrūz), Mahmoud Darwish, Aṣṣala Naṣrī,²⁸ and Julia Boutros²⁹ to dominate the soundscapes of North African university campuses.

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- 24 Christiane Gruber, "Jerusalem in the Visual Propaganda of Post-Revolutionary Iran," in Meyer and Mourad (eds.), *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality*, 168–197. Also see Behrouz Souresafil, *Khomeini and Israel* (England: i Researchers Inc., 1988).
 - 25 It should be noted that following the Six-Day War in June 1967, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel declared Yom Yerushalayim/Jerusalem Day a religious holiday to commemorate the reunification of East and West Jerusalem under Israeli control.
 - 26 Aomar Boum, "Youth, Political Activism and the Festivalization of Hip-Hop Music in Morocco," in Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine (eds.), *Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 161–177.
 - 27 Nizar Qabani, "al-Quds," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uso8NvkaMlg>, accessed 15 April 2015.
 - 28 Aṣṣala Naṣrī, "Ya oula al-qiblatayn," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFz4QPZaXg>, accessed 15 April 2015.
 - 29 Julia Butros, "win al-malayin, al-sha'b al-'arabi win," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdIeSUEuovo>, accessed 15 April 2015.

Jerusalem: Musical and Poetic Battlefields

Even before the June 1967 Six-Day War changed the geographic map of Palestine/Israel and led to Israeli control of East and West Jerusalem, a different battlefield of songs and music between Arab and Jewish composers and singers had already dominated Middle Eastern musical landscapes. Produced during the 1960s, the historical songs of "Yerushalayim shel zahav" [Jerusalem the golden] by Naomi Shemer³⁰ and "Zahrat al-madā'in" [The flower of cities] of Fayrūz reflected the artistic and sonic wars over Jewish and Muslim rights to the sacred city. These songs symbolized the lyrics of contestation and division between Muslim/Arab and Jewish/Israeli parties vying for ownership of the city.

"Yerushalayim shel zahav" was produced in the days leading to the 1967 war. Teddy Kollek, the mayor of West Jerusalem, commissioned Shemer to compose the song quickly, by 14 May, for listeners of the 1967 Israel Song Festival. Three weeks later Israel launched a series of air strikes against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan and took control of all of Jerusalem on 7 June 1967, and the song became part of the national folklore and an anthem of victory. In the eyes of Dan Almagor, "Yerushalayim shel zahav" changed the history of the Middle East:

The song was played constantly on the radio throughout this period (before the 1967 War). Had it not been for the song, it's doubtful that there would have been such readiness to change and conquer the city. This was before Gush Emunim and messianism. This song has extraordinary historic import. Paratroopers at the Western Wall didn't pray. They sang the song.³¹

"Yerushalayim shel zahav" came to symbolize a moment in Israeli memory and collective identity to the extent that it became a state-sponsored song. In fact, in 1968 Uri Avnery, a member of the Knesset, proposed that the song be the national anthem instead of "Hatikvah" [The hope]. Avnery saw "Hatikvah" as a song that did not speak for the Arab and Christian classes of Israel. Avnery stated:

30 "‘Jerusalem of Gold,’ Israel Festival Song, Strikes Gold," *Billboard*, 21 October 1967, 44.

31 Michal Palti, "Song of Peace and Song of War: From 'Jerusalem of Gold' to 'Darkenu,' Israeli Songs become Symbols, and Teach us about their Times," *Ha'aretz*, 15 April 2002. Available online: <http://www.haaretz.com/culture/books/song-of-peace-song-of-war-1.47653>.

My position then was essentially a protest against “Hatikvah.” I wanted to propose an alternative song that had a chance of being accepted. I still think that “Hatikvah” is appropriate neither for the Hebrew population nor the Arab public in Israel. It is a song about the yearning for Zion, about homesick longing, and it doesn’t deal with life in this country. “Hatikvah” also separates Jews from the rest of the citizens of Israel.³²

Despite this debate about the song and its meanings for different members of Israeli society, it managed to capture the soul of Israelis during the 1960s and express their hope and pride.

“Yerushalayim shel zahav” became a symbol of Jewish identity and hope to such an extent that Steven Spielberg ended his film *Schindler’s List* with the song as survivors of the Holocaust lined up outside the Walls of Jerusalem.³³ Despite this celebration of the song among many sections of Israeli society, many Palestinian citizens of Israel argue that the song is more an artistic expression of Jewish narratives and Zionist ideology than the possibility of a Jewish-Muslim coexistence within the city. Azmi Bishara, the former leader of the Balad Party in the Knesset, contends that the song celebrates a collective “Israeli and Zionist wall” between Jews and Arabs.³⁴ This is a view reflected also in some Palestinian hip hop songs that protest what they see as Israeli musical violence toward Arabs and Israeli artistic silence over the Islamic heritage of the city. Joseph Massad also highlights this Zionist focus of the song and juxtaposes it to Fayrūz’s “Zahrāt al-madā’in.” In her song, Fayrūz stresses the religious and historical diversity of the city:

It is for you that I pray O city of prayer.
It is for you O with beautiful building, O flower of the cities.
O Jerusalem O Jerusalem O Jerusalem O city of the prayer I pray.
Our eyes are set out to you everyday.
They walk through the porticos of the temples.
Embrace the old churches.
And wipe the sadness away from the mosques.

Despite the introductory stanza of “Zahrāt al-madā’in,” which highlights the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic character of the city, Fayrūz and the Raḥbānī

³² Ibid.

³³ Many Israelis objected to this use of the song at the end of the movie and a new music replaced “Jerusalem the Gold” in the Hebrew version of *Schindler’s List*.

³⁴ Lawrence Joffe, “Soundtrack to the State,” *Jewish Quarterly* 195 (2004): 19–24.

brothers (Manṣūr and 'Aṣṣī) emphasized the Christian and Islamic history of the city in their composition of the song.³⁵ If "Yerushalayim shel zahav" symbolized the Jewish claim over the city, Arab listeners adopted "Zahrat al-madā'in"; in the larger sonic battles over Jerusalem, "Zahrat al-madā'in" is still one of the most celebrated songs in the Arab world.

Fayrūz and the Raḥbānīs built on the tradition of Arab nationalist artists and their songs for Jerusalem and Palestine in the 1960s. This tradition began mostly in Egypt with Umm Kulthūm and Muḥammad 'Abd al-Wahhāb. Umm Kulthūm and 'Abd al-Wahhāb sang for an Arab ideological and military fight against Zionism and a "military march" toward Palestine. Their voices reflected the general support of Gamal Abdel Nasser and his anti-Western and anti-Zionist stand. In her songs "Filistīn" and "Rāji'un," Umm Kulthūm sings about the rifle and celebrates an Arab optimism about Nasser's leadership and hope for a recapture of the city. 'Abd al-Wahhāb stresses the urgency of taking over the western part of the city and highlights its Christian and Muslim connections more than its Jewish character. In his famous song on Palestine, 'Abd al-Wahhāb seems to be calling on Nasser to take back Arab lands lost to the Israelis in 1948. He laments the long Israeli occupation; Islamic imageries of jihad dominate the song as 'Abd al-Wahhāb reminds Arabs to take their swords out of their shields in historical references to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyubī's capture of Jerusalem. In addition, these Egyptian songs strongly advocate the urgent need to protect the churches and mosques of the old city. 'Abd al-Wahhāb also sings of Jesus of Nazareth as a martyr crying over the fate of the city as he encounters the Prophet Muḥammad; in this way he indirectly highlights the Jewish-Christian divide over Jesus.

However, with the Palestinian/Arab Nakba of 1967, Umm Kulthūm and 'Abd al-Wahhāb songs were muted in sonic Arab landscapes as Fayrūz's "Zahrat al-madā'in" became an Arab folkloric hit. In Morocco, local songs about Palestine and Jerusalem were largely produced through musical groups that dominated the national scene in the 1970s. These included the Larsad group's song "Anti lana"³⁶ [You belong to us], al-Siham group's song "Fin al-haqiqa"³⁷ [Where is the

35 Joseph Massad, "Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music," in Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg (eds.), *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 175–201. Christopher Stone, "Fayruz, the Rahbani Brothers, Jerusalem, and the Leba-stinian Song," in Meyer and Mourad (eds.), *Jerusalem: Idea and Reality*, 198–204.

36 Larsad, "Anti Lana," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECmMTv2coXI>.

37 Essiham, "Fin al-Haqiqa," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3KPRbr3MSk>, accessed 15 April 2015.

truth], Jil Jilala's song "Ya 'Arabi ya Muslim" [O Arab O Muslim],³⁸ and Nass El-Ghiwane's "al-Quds."³⁹ The musical narratives of these songs were dominated by the themes of pan-Arabism and the Islamic dimension of the city, as well as the Christian character and history of the city.⁴⁰ Zionism was critiqued as a danger to Christian and Muslim symbols of the city. The pan-Arab and Islamic dimensions of these songs guaranteed their circulation on Morocco's public radio and television channels as well as their distribution on cassette tapes without government censorship. These groups echoed the messages of Fayrūz and Egyptian singers.

Online Sharing, Contestation, and Hip Hop Artists

In her work on the use of the Internet in Palestinian camps and the state of Palestinian cybercultural networks and activity, Laleh Khalili contends that the "Internet's ability to undermine the sovereignty of nation-states and forge new political and national identities is underutilized."⁴¹ Cyberspace has allowed Arab youth and Palestinian refugees to stay tuned to what happens daily in Jerusalem and other Palestinian communities inside the West Bank and Gaza.⁴² In her work on Palestinian Internet usage, Aouragh uses what she calls Palestinian online mobility to describe Palestinian utilization of Internet technology in reaction to Israel's offline military checkpoints.⁴³ The de-territorialized and decentralized Internet space theoretically empowers many Palestinian and Middle Eastern communities to engage in new social, cultural, and political discussions through open access websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and allows dissenting communities to bypass a state's technical obstacles to unlimited sharing of video online. For example, for many Mid-

38 Jil Jilala, "Ya 'arbi ya muslim," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITQF6Ahoyik>, accessed 15 April 2015.

39 Nass El Ghiwane, "Ya Qods," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWTqcMzJCno>, accessed 15 April 2015.

40 Mohamed Dernouny and Boujemâa Zoulef, "La naissance d'un chant protestataire: le groupe marocain Nass El Ghiwane," *Peuples Méditerranéens* 12 (July–September 1980): 3–31.

41 Laleh Khalili, "Virtual Nation: Palestinian Cyberculture in Lebanese Camps," in Stein and Swedenburg (eds.), *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 144.

42 Miriyam Aouragh, "Confined Offline, Traversing Online Palestinian Mobility through the Prism of the Internet," *Mobilities* 6, no. 3 (2011): 375–397.

43 Ibid., 377.

dle Eastern youth, the usefulness of YouTube is its "simple, integrated interface within which users could upload, publish, and view streaming videos without high levels of technical knowledge ... YouTube set no limits on the number of videos users could upload, offered basic community functions such as the opportunity to link to other users as friends."⁴⁴ For North African youth YouTube provides a new platform for data sharing as users provide information to which a large and diverse audience have open daily access with few or no restrictions. YouTube is therefore a challenge to traditional state media because of its capacity as a broadcast medium, archival storage, and a social network.⁴⁵

Technologically savvy young North Africans have been empowered by YouTube to produce their own news and dispatch it to millions of viewers. On many occasions, the traditional state ministries of information of North African countries have been challenged by these emerging voices of dissidence and they have, at times, been humiliated by the counter hegemonic discourse and political strategies of these new dissidents. For instance on 8 July 2007, Mounir Agueznay a young Moroccan from Targuist, a poor town from the northern province of al-Hoceima, was dubbed "Targuist Sniper" when he used his camera to capture instances of gendarmerie bribery.⁴⁶ Targuist Sniper is an example of a generation of young citizen journalists motivated to embarrass the symbols of the authoritarian state in virtual landscapes by providing evidence, in this case, of how widespread bribery is among the security services. Despite the relative freedom of expression that the Internet grants these rebels, the state occasionally intervenes to discipline potential trailblazers who could be ordinary citizens, journalists, and rappers.

The songs of Mouad Belghouat, aka "El Haqed," have translated the grievances of Moroccan youth and especially the February 20 Movement. Since 2011 El Haqed has been arrested three times by the Moroccan police over songs critical of the monarchy, the state police, and state symbols. For instance, the prosecution claimed that the rapper broke the law by insulting state figures in a video posted on YouTube titled "Klab al-dawla" [State dogs], which features an assemblage of photos of the king and his advisors.⁴⁷ The song was produced

44 Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 1.

45 Ibid.; Jonathan Zittrain, *The Future of the Internet and How to Stop it* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).

46 Al-Qarra TV, Le "Sniper de Targuist" révèle son identité, YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IMy7iay4xw>, accessed 15 April 2015.

47 El Haqed, "Klab al-dawla," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EAYz7R5xmvk>, accessed 15 April 2015.

in 2008 and performed by El Haqed on multiple occasions and places before he was arrested. El Haqed refused to be silenced by these legal cases and imprisonment and continued to draw attention to his songs on the national and international level. Describing his music as “prison rap” (*rap mhabsi*), he noted in an opinion published in Al-Jazeera titled “My journey to rap, politics and prison”:

[Prison rap] expresses reality and sings about freedom, breaking down the borders and chains. We need to understand the power of prison rap in the context of most rappers being little more than marionettes, wholesale puppets of power. You can count the number of truly political rappers on one hand. And yet, the small number makes our music that much more powerful. The intellectual and cultural prison only made our music more powerful. The state still doesn't get that.⁴⁸

In this context of dual struggle over social media, Middle Eastern youth including hip hop artists managed to attract attention in the saturated public spheres of the Internet by gaining visibility through online discussions of issues such as education, political representation, migration, drugs, and unemployment, among other topics. Equally important, rappers have managed to circumvent the laws and restrictive platforms of communication and journalism in North African states.⁴⁹ However, at times, these states have outmaneuvered these rebellious youth by coopting some rappers and through the “balkanization” of revolutionary rap and hip hop rebel youth. For example, if we map rappers' politics in Morocco we can identify a number of artists who became close to political parties or state agencies while creating a false consciousness of state contestation. As the majority of hip hop singers rap for the state in state-organized and funded festivals such as Mawazine,⁵⁰ the few who dared to cross the imposed sacred limits and redlines risk ending up in prison for insulting state officials. In Tunisia, the rapper Alaa Yacoubi (alias “Weld El 15”) also faced a similar legal case after producing a song “Boulicia kleb” [Police are dogs] in

48 El Haqed, “My Journey to rap, politics and prison.” Al Jazeera, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2014/10/my-journey-rap-politics-prison-201410671050228296.html>, accessed 15 April 2015.

49 Mark LeVine has looked at some of the issues involving the creation of a new musical hybridity, see “The New Hybridities of Arab Musical Intifadas,” *Jadaliyya* (2011). Also see Mark LeVine, *Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2008).

50 Aomar Boum, “Festivalizing Descent in Morocco,” *Middle East Report* 263 (2012): 22–25.

which he denounced police brutality. In the meantime, North African states are looking for ways to manage, control, and police the Internet and thereby muzzle the growing opposition of a large population of unemployed and disenfranchised youth.

While Moroccan youth lead North Africa in terms of Internet use and connectivity, North Africa's youth are increasingly connected to social media and virtual worlds and spend more of their time in cybercafés or connected to personal computers than socializing with their peers. The Moroccan hip hop group H-Kayne captures this phenomenon in their album "Jil jdid" [New generation], which highlights the overuse and addiction of Moroccan and North African youth to cyberspace. The YouTube video shows a teenager transported into the emergency room after spending a sleepless night chatting and surfing the net.⁵¹ The song emphasizes issues that arise from cyber marriage and dating, pornography, and musical piracy:

New Generation
 Addicted to the Web and the dot com
 New generation
 Oh Generation: what's up with you?
 New generation
 Addicted to Youth of the web and the dot com
 Slash chat rooms Slash MSN
 +++
 Do you have webcam
 Generation Bill Gates
 Generation Addicted to Facebook
 Culture of MSN
 Generation of WIFI, YouTube and nice cars
 +++
 Generation computer and plasma TV
 Our parents are perplexed
 Hooked youth to the computer
 No need for hard labor
 Help us find a job
 We are tired of being unemployed
 +++

51 H-Kayne, "Jil Jdid," YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yaMov67_r24, accessed 15 April 2015.

Everyone is standing idle in neighborhoods
 Living in the world of the Internet
 Because reality is virtual
 I rather stay in cybercafé
 Than stay idle in neighborhood streets.

This song highlights the extent to which cybercafés and personal computers have replaced cafés or neighborhood corners as places of social and political interactions. Before cybercafés dominated the streets of North African cities, neighborhoods (singular *lhouma* and *zanqa*) served as spaces where unemployed youth contested the failures of states to improve their economic and social conditions and spent their idle time leaning against neighborhood walls or watching television in cafés.⁵²

In this shifting cultural environment where cyber-connectivity has changed social relations, youth have found refuge in the virtual world where they decry the attitude of Arab governments toward the Palestinian issue. Studies of North African attitudes toward the Palestinian question have generally ignored political discourse about Palestine in music. Jerusalem has been at the center of this musical tradition of political activism. Widely circulated, Nass al-Ghiwane, Jil-Jilala, and Essiham produced and performed many songs on *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) in which they highlight a sense of religious conflict and resistance. These songs emphasize the same sense of sadness that the Lebanese singer Fayrüz demonstrated in her famous song about Jerusalem “Zahrat al-madā’in.” Unlike Fayrüz, however, these popular groups stressed the Islamic dimension of Jerusalem and ignored its Christian and Jewish aspects. Their focus was on the lost peace and the danger of Zionism as a colonial movement. However, despite their despair, the songs always end with a sense of hope. For instance Essiham’s “al-Quds” ends as follows:

We came back to you, al-Quds
 In an Islamic march
 The old days will come back

52 Boum, “Youth, Political Activism and the Festivalization,” in Maddy-Weitzman and Zisenwine (eds.), *Contemporary Morocco*. For rap songs that reflect this culture of neighborhoods see, Moroccan rapper Don Bigg’s “Wald zanqa,” YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdP4zvUkkKk>; Moroccan rap group H-Kayne’s “F-L’Houma” YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMVIYJHdvLo>; and Moroccan rapper’s Muslim’s “Harb lhwam,” YouTube video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_ZH-VRMMsI.

And you will be free and Arab
Jerusalem is for us God
The house is for us God
We will pray in Jerusalem

In the late 1990s, young North African artists turned to hip hop to produce songs that highlighted the economic situation in Gaza and the West Bank, Palestinian political disunity, and Islamic yearning for Jerusalem. These songs were indirectly yet strongly connected to the political musical productions of Nass al-Ghiwane, Jil-Jilala, and Essiham, to the extent that Moroccan rappers reproduced phrases from their songs in their hip hop lyrics. Rappers from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco linked Palestinian political struggles in Gaza and the West Bank to Jerusalem. The Algerian Lotfi Belmri alias "Lotfi Double Canon,"⁵³ the Tunisian Mohamed El Guitoni alias "Guito'n," the Tunisian Hamada Ben Amor alias "El Général,"⁵⁴ the Moroccan "Keeb Brothers" (Abdelkrim and Ilyas Kib),⁵⁵ the Moroccan Mouad Belghouat alias "El Haqed,"⁵⁶ and the Moroccan al-Imbrator⁵⁷ produced songs that describe the popular political views of young North Africans on the subject of Jerusalem. For instance, in his song "Hnaya lawlin" [We are first], El Haqed mocks the official political discourse on Jerusalem and Palestine:

We are first
We recognized the independence of America
Meanwhile nobody recognized us
Now they recognized Israel
Even as the President of Bayt Mal al-Quds
Is Amir al-Mu'minin [a reference to King Mohammed VI]
Think hard and try to understand
In contradictions we have a record of achievements

53 Lotfi Double Kanon, "Palestine," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DxcQzwGannk>, accessed 15 April 2015.

54 El General & Guito'n, "Direction Palestine," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cim701wEXnc>, accessed 15 April 2015.

55 Keeb brothers, "Gaza Holocaust," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UaGO6RjBio>, accessed 15 April 2015.

56 El Haqed, "hnaya huma lawlin," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqnAu7tQDgc>, accessed 15 April 2015.

57 Al-imbrator, "For Palestine," YouTube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cks2AoU5qTY>, accessed 15 April 2015.

In these lines, El Haqed underscores the negative feelings that young North Africans express toward the way Arab governments have handled the issue of Jerusalem. Similar rap lyrics highlight the failure of post-independence North African leaders to regain ownership of Jerusalem and protect its Islamic heritage.

The “Fantasy of Resistance” and North African Rappers

In many songs, North African rappers claim that, unlike Arab leaders, their rap lyrics represent a critical way to engage what they call “Israel’s occupation of Muslim lands,” even as Arab leaders abandon their “religious obligation to Jerusalem.” Jerusalem is usually mentioned either implicitly or explicitly by these artists who echo the central place of the holy city in the political beliefs of North African youth. Jerusalem is not only celebrated through references to Fayrūz, Julia Boutros, but also Qur’anic verses and other Islamic historical events, particularly Jerusalem’s capture by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyubī. Lyrics are largely framed around Islamic interpretive registers in which Jews and Muslims are thought to be fighting a religious war over historical rights and memories sacred to Jerusalem. In his song on Palestine, Lotfi Double Kanon begins with a quote from an unnamed Islamic orator speaking about the importance of Jerusalem. The quote reads:

Jerusalem’s future is clear
 Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine, Arab, Muslims, Sky, and the earth
 We will not acknowledge Jewish occupiers
 On the sacred land
 They should be expelled
 Resistance will not be defeated

After this sample, the rapper proceeds to narrate a historical story of an existential conflict between Jews and Muslims that starts with the Balfour Declaration and continues in the present where:

Jews are fighting Islam
 +++
 Jerusalem in their hands
 Muslims are silent
 +++
 Do not waste your time

The Qur'an has already said it
Jews won't be happy until we follow their religion

+++

Jews are gaining time
To continue their settlement
From the eastern bank to the western one
They wish to take this land by force

+++

Al-Aqsa mosque the first qibla
Where the Prophet prayed with the prophets behind him
Now Jews have encircled it with wires
They love to own it
The only left is the Wailing Wall
Palestinians are still waiting for Arabs
To take the swords of Salah al-Din
We invade them as he did
What is taken with force is gained through force

One of the dominant features of North African hip hop productions about Jerusalem is the use of musical and image borrowing, or the use of samples. Sampling allows the rappers to politically legitimize and historically frame their voices through the inclusion of Islamic references and other historical events. The Islamic dimension of the lyrics is supported by a set of appropriated images using the technique of political mashups, which usually involves putting together different sources and material to create a new political narrative.⁵⁸ Like African American rap lyrics, North African hip hop songs of Jerusalem are full of "history, political critique, innuendo, sarcasm and wit."⁵⁹ YouTube permits these rappers to add another dimension of sampling to their songs through the incorporation of pre-recorded sounds as well as images in the sonic narrative of the artistic product. In the *Conquest of Cool*, Frank argues:

[T]aking for granted that youth signifiers are appropriated, produced, and even invented by the entertainment industry, recent writers argue that resistance arises from the ways in which these signifiers are consumed by the young, used in ways that are divergent or contradictory to their

58 Bingchun Meng, "From Steamed Bun to Grass Mud Horse: E Gao as Alternative Political Discourse on the Chinese Internet," *Global Media and Communication* 7, no. 1 (2011): 33–51.

59 Joanna Demers, "Sampling the 1970s in Hip-hop," *Popular Music* 22, no. 1 (2003), 41.

manufacturer's oppressive intent. Whatever form prefabricated youth cultures are given by their mass-culture originators ultimately doesn't matter: they are quickly taken apart and reassembled by alienated young people in startling novel subcultures. As with the counterculture, it is *transgression* itself, the never-ending race to violate norms, that is the key to resistance.⁶⁰

In the relative absence of social and political spaces where North African youth can express their opinions as members of the public sphere without fear of prison, YouTube provides a venue for these artists to express themselves through digital remixing,⁶¹ music videos, and reused footage⁶² with limited state censorship. At the center of youth's contestation is the artistic appropriation of images and sounds taken from their original context and transformed—repurposed and denatured—with the aim of parodying the initial story and message. For example, the voices of Shimon Perez or Arab leaders are included in the context of a Palestinian child calling for economic help or mourning a dead relative. This remixing of past and present texts and images transforms the meanings of original texts and allows the young rapper to exercise a counter symbolic violence through the radical modification of the text. Accordingly, the “reciprocal archive that is YouTube, in which every video uploaded can be downloaded for a remix, has resulted in a remarkable number of videos which often, though not always, engage in a critical dialog with mainstream media.”⁶³ Through collage, remixing, and mashups, North African hip hop artists produce a new text that theoretically challenges both Arab leaders and Israeli politicians. However, this contestation remains largely an online form of erasure and has yet to lead to any radical transformation of the offline narrative.

Equally important, North African hip hop artists rely on overdubbing to mute Israeli soundtracks and doctor their voices to create a new dialogue and therefore reinstate an Islamic memory of Jerusalem online. Through this approach, these artists participate in a cultural resistance that transforms mov-

60 Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 17.

61 Eli Horwatt, “A Taxonomy of Digital Video Remixing: Contemporary Found Footage Practice on the Internet,” in Iain Robert Smith (ed.), *Cultural Borrowings: Appropriation, Rewriting, Transformation*, 76–91 (Scope: An Online Journal of Film and Television Studies, 2009).

62 Sérgio Dias Barnco, “Music Videos and Reused Footage,” in Smith, *Cultural Borrowings*, 111–121.

63 Eli Horwatt, “A Taxonomy of Digital Video Remixing,” in Smith, *Cultural Borrowings*, 76.

ing images and footage "into a malleable databank ... of archival interventions [which] reveal and subvert historical engineering by appropriating the very weapons of ideological control, revising them to reflect the traumatic and repressive realities of their creation."⁶⁴ The semiotic manipulation of the image or the sound enables the rapper to participate in an "online" urban transformation of Jerusalem critical of the "offline" Israeli Judaization of its Islamic sites. In response to what the rapper sees as the "Israeli theft of Palestinian land," rap lyrics are largely based on a similar concept of violence and countercultural resistance, which consciously take official texts and denature them as a way to mock their narrative and void it of any historical legitimacy.

However, while North African hip hop YouTubers claim that their postings incarnate real social relations, Guy Debord would argue that they are phony moments of dissent as well as a refutation of social life itself. Youth escape into YouTube platforms gives them the "semiotic privilege"⁶⁵ to critique the state and its approach to Jerusalem. Al Imbrator, a young rapper from Casablanca, reflects this feeling in a song titled "For Palestine"; it was made in 2009:

For Palestine tears fall
 In the middle of destruction, siege and poverty
 Night is long and life is bitter
 They killed Arafat, Cheikh Yassine and Mohammed al-Dora
 Still free, still with strong will
 Still see children holding rocks and do not fear death
 Martyr here, bombing there and People shout "Allah Akbar"
 ++++
 Arabs for their interests forsaken you
 If you see us quiet it is not our fault
 Our rulers have forgotten Islam
 As long as night lasts, the light of dawn will rise.⁶⁶

Despite the rappers' belief that their lyrics are means of resistance and Islamic dissent, many university students argue that their online dissent is a fantasy activism, which "may do more harm than good by focusing attention away from

64 Ibid., 86.

65 Hal Foster, *Recordings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1985), 173.

66 Al-imbrator13, "shoufa b3ida/For Palestine." Online: <http://al-imbrator13.skyrock.com>, accessed 15 April 2015.

the hard work of actually engaging in 'real-life' politics."⁶⁷ In this context, hip hop songs could be deceptive forms of contestation and Debordian spectacles.⁶⁸

Largely based on cultural jamming, which stitches pieces from existing pictures and videos and makes a collage of still and moving images as well as music, the Jerusalem hip hop YouTube video is a virtual form of countercultural memory whose objective is to challenge the official Israeli ownership of Jerusalem and its sites. By relying on mashups and cultural jamming, North African rappers are victims of Slavoj Žižek's plague of virtual fantasies,⁶⁹ where the fantasy is a "mirage, it is not hiding something, it is freestanding, self-sufficient, and certain in its presence ... Fantasy is that which bridges a subject and the lost object which the subject is constituted by, his primordial cut. The subject, a linguistically produced subject, is entirely 'phantasmatic.'"⁷⁰ Apart from the violence that rappers exercise on official state images, texts, and sounds of Palestine and Jerusalem, their dissent rarely undermines offline official discourse and political positions about Jerusalem; therefore, it is limited in its potential to produce change. In their desire to challenge hegemonic discourses of Jerusalem and "liberate" the holy sites of the city through their songs, these rappers ironically and unconsciously reproduce the system and maintain youth conformity and obedience to state political structures. Like hip counterculture in the 1960s, the Jerusalem North African hip hop YouTube video could potentially drive a new youth culture of online escapism just like hip consumerism drove the wheels of capitalist consumption in the United States.

Conclusions

In the last decade, hip hop has emerged as a cultural youth movement throughout North African societies. Young artists have used it to express their views about social, political, and economic issues in their respective societies. They have also utilized YouTube musical videos of their songs to denounce broader Islamic and Arab issues, including the position of Israel and that of Arab gov-

67 Sandra Smeltzer and Douglas Keddy, "Won't You Be My (Political) Friend? The Changing Face(boo) of Socio-Political Contestation in Malaysia," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 30, nos. 3–4 (2010), 428.

68 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983).

69 Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London: Verso, 1997).

70 Mickey Vallee, "The Media Contingencies of Generation Mashup: A Žižekian Critique," *Popular Music and Society* 36, no. 1 (2013): 76–97.

ernments toward the question of Jerusalem. Their rap lyrics are a Debordian *détournement* of the official state discourse; they deconstruct its underlying and uncontested official truth through parody and satire. Through mashups and critical lyrics North African rappers have been able to gain virtual independence and fame as fans continue to comment on their songs and YouTube video postings. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that these songs and their producers on YouTube and other forms of social media will transform the political discourse on Jerusalem. Computer literacy and accessibility in North Africa is still limited despite growing access to cybercafés and ownership of personal computers. Most rappers also speak to a specific category of the population and do not have an influence on a large number of users.

Rappers are not only well-informed of the realities of Middle Eastern politics, but they are also aware of its historical details and complexities. However, the use of mashups as forms of contestation of official discourses of Jerusalem do not explain the historical dynamics of the conflict, the future of the city, and the possibilities at the disposal of its Jewish, Muslim, and Christian contestants. Accordingly, North African rap songs of Jerusalem are cultural spectacles that reinforce past historical events and present political realities. They engage in a re-editing of sounds and images and bricolage of new texts of parody and mockery usually forgotten once we turn off our computer and watch televised news reports about the daily realities of urban and economic violence by Palestinians and Israelis in the sacred city of Jerusalem.

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