Arabism in Arab(ic) Rap

Local Languages, Translocal References and Virtual Networks

Tag der Disputation: 13.07.2021

Betreuerin: Prof. Dr. Lale Behzadi

Weiterer Gutachter: Prof. Dr. Andreas Kaplony

Table of Contents

1   Preface

Rap music has accompanied me for most of my life. The earliest rap songs I remember having listened to were some songs on Wu-Tang Clan's 1997 album "Wu-Tang Forever." What first caught my attention were not necessarily the songs' lyrics but its dark atmospheric beats. It is only later, on many occasions when I listen to the same songs again, that I find myself understanding some expressions that I simply did not understand before – like the whole Five Percenter[1] worldview expressed in the songs – or seeing lyrics in a context I couldn't have put them in before. Just like other sorts of literature provide a glimpse into the minds of their authors, listening to rap gives me the possibility to share the experiences of others through lyrics.

When I started learning Arabic, I found in rap music the medium that motivated me to search for the meaning of words and expressions. In 2011, I stumbled upon the song *Rāyis l-blād*[2] by Tunisian rapper El Général, in which he openly criticized the "president of the country" Ben Ali, and which led to the rapper's brief imprisonment during the events of the Tunisian revolution. That was the moment, I realized that rap in Arabic could offer the same conscious sociopolitical critical lyrics I admired in English or French rap. Since then, I have spent most of the last few years working on rap in different registers and dialects of the Arabic language.

During this period, the first time I went abroad for my thesis was a short one-month visit to Beirut in the summer of 2015. There, I spoke briefly with the Syrian–Filipino rapper Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno. I already knew and liked his music and met him by chance when I went to Radio Beirut where I knew there were regular hip hop events. After my return to Germany, we stayed in touch through online social media. When he planned to go to Europe the following year, he contacted me and I referred him to friends in Berlin and Bamberg and helped organize events in Bamberg. This initial contact led to three concerts in Bamberg: one was organized by a local hip hop DJ on 2016-02-17. The second took place on 2016-02-18, was organized mainly by

---

1   The Five Percent Nation, also known as the Nation of Gods and Earths, is an offshoot of the Nation of Islam. In the mid-1990s, many Afro-American rappers were Five Percenters and used references in their songs to, for example, the Five Percenters' numerology.

2   My transcription generally follows the DMG standard, except for names, song titles, etc., which the rappers themselves write differently.

kontakt. Das Kulturprojekt, and supported financially by the department of Arabic Studies at the University of Bamberg. The third event was organized by *kontakt. Das Kulturprojekt,* the association *Betna e.V.* and the working group *AK Orient* and took place on 2017-04-21.[3] Shout-outs go to the many active and committed people who helped host these concerts in Bamberg, as well as those who helped in Munich, Berlin and elsewhere.

---

3 For short reports on these events and photos see the following webpages: "Chyno - Making Music to Feel at Home"; "Chyno im Freiraum 2017."

2   Introduction and Research Questions

المنحى الذي يتخذه الراب العربي لنفسه يجعل صفة "العربي" مقدّمة على صفة "الراب"، لا بأي تعريـف شـمولي مؤدلج لـ العروبة، بل بالإشارة إلى فرادة التقاء مظلة الراب بالمساحة العربيّة النطق والسماع.[4]

– Māzin as-Sayyid aka rapper El Rass

While Arabic has been called the "the new lingua franca of the hip-hop world,"[5] most of the scarce research thus far done on Arabic rap music has concentrated on individual artists[6] – sometimes even obscure ones[7] – or at best on rap music on a city[8] or regional/national scale.[9] When focusing, for example, on language use in hip hop, such a relatively narrow framework might make sense for some "Western" rap cultures which are supposedly more easily defined because they allegedly follow a simple 'country = culture = language' paradigm. Of course, a term like "French rap" might include numerous different meanings – be it rap in French language, rap originating in the "Hexagone," or rap by artists self-identifying as French, etc.[10] When considering rap in Arabic or by Arab rappers, such a narrow perspective is even more questionable given the many countries where Arabic is spoken, the widespread multilingualism in Arab countries, and

---

4   Translation [my own]: "The course that Arabic rap takes for itself prioritizes 'Arabic' over 'rap', not with any comprehensive, ideological definition of Arabism, but with reference to the uniqueness of the meeting between the umbrella of rap and the Arabic space of speech and hearing." Sayyid, "ar-Rāb wa-'n-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī: Bayn al-mawrūṯ al-inqilābī wa-'l-ištibāk."

5   Fernandes, "The Mixtape of the Revolution."

6   See for example: Boumedini and Hadria, "Catégories d'emprunt Dans La Chanson Rap En Algérie. L'exemple Des Groupes: T.O.X, M.B.S et Double Canon"; McDonald, "Carrying Words Like Weapons"; Puig, "La cause du rap : Engagements d'un musicien palestinien au Liban"; Wiedemann, *Der Rapper El Général im Prisma der Identitätsproblematik*; Dallāl, "Al-Hīb Hūb al-'arabī: Ar-Rās Wa-'l-Huwīya al-Ǧadīda."

7   See Almeida's critique of an article by Mark LeVine's on the Moroccan rapper L7a9ed who is relatively unknown in Morocco but was praised by LeVine as a "political rap star" following the rapper's incarceration in 2012. Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 10.

8   See for example: Schwartz, "Accessing Hip-Hop Analyzing Meknassi Rappers' Adoption of Casablancan Features"; Schwartz, "Repping the Streets, Repping the Hometown"; Seilstad, "Hip Hop Culture in a Small Moroccan City."

9   See for example: Moreno Almeida, "Unravelling Distinct Voices in Moroccan Rap"; El Zein, "Resisting 'Resistance'"; Salois, "The Networked Self"; Burkhalter admittedly also briefly hints at the importance of "transnational networks" and "human hubs". Burkhalter, *Local Music Scenes and Globalization: Transnational Platforms in Beirut*, 59–61.

10   For instance, there are otherwise well-compiled and comprehensive studies that deal with French or German rap, but remain almost exclusively within nation-state boundaries. See, for example: Perrier, *Le rap français*; Gaetner, *Hip-hop*; Höllein, Lehnert, and Woitkowski, *Rap - Text - Analyse. Deutschsprachiger Rap seit 2000. 20 Einzeltextanalysen.*

the high number of Arabic speakers in diaspora communities. Most of the research on rap in Arabic and/or by Arab rappers does not adequately take into account the artists' embedding in transnational networks, be they based on a shared feeling of belonging to hip hop culture, or on shared languages, or on a shared history, etc.[11] It is, therefore, important to

> "overcome methodological nationalism as a frame of reference considering that shared cultural spaces [...] are not necessarily associated with geographical proximity."[12]

Hip hop that we can observe in many Arab countries nowadays should be understood as networks or as clusters in bigger networks. Arab rappers and rappers who rap in Arabic can be part of different networks. There already is research that addresses some of these networks. For instance, research has focused on rappers who feel and express themselves as part of the "Global South"[13] or a "Hip Hop Umma" based on shared Islamic faith.[14] However, there is another network that has gained influence since 2011, but has not received the same attention in research: a network formed around the Arabic language and Arab culture.

While the initial enthusiastic articles portraying Arab rappers as key players in any revolutionary movement of the time certainly represent a distorted (Western) view, and it remains doubtful to what extent rap has influenced the course of Arab history, there is no doubt that the "Arab uprisings have changed Arabic hip-hop by greatly raising the profile of Arab rappers across the world and spurring intensive collaboration among them."[15] Around this time, musical projects such as the album *Uknighted* (2012) by the Egyptian rap crew Arabian Knightz or the *Khat Thaleth* EP (2012) by the Syrian-American DJ and producer Munaqresh gathered artists of different nationalities and different places of residence under a renewed umbrella of a common Arab identity:

> When talking about the rebellions in the Arab world, [Munaqresh] quickly turns to the subject of cross-border identity conflicts or the decline of pan-Arabism. Then the 34-year-old straightens his

---

11 See section 5.1.2 for an example (from Almeida's research) of what happens when these networks are ignored.

12 Moreno Almeida, "The Politics of Taqlidi Rap: Reimagining Moroccanness in the Era of Global Flows."

13 See: Johannsen, "Configurations of Space and Identity in Hip Hop."

14 See e.g.: Alim, "A New Research Agenda. Exploring the Transglobal Hip Hop Umma"; Aidi, "'Verily, There Is Only One Hip-Hop Umma': Islam, Cultural Protest and Urban Marginality"; Lohlker, "Hip Hop and Islam: An Exploration into Music, Technology, Religion, and Marginality"; Ashooh, "The Arab Hip Hop Tradition Towards a Hip Hop Ummah Wasat."

15 O'Keefe, "Hip Hop and the Arab Uprisings."

baseball cap and says in broad American English: "We just had to give the dirty laundry a good airing."[16]

This (new) "Arabism," which is the focus of my work, manifests itself in various forms. Its varying manifestations are the reason why I frequently write "Arab(ic)" instead of "Arab" or "Arabic" because – as will become clear later on – some of the connections uniting the community are based on concepts of shared "ethnicity" and shared cultural heritage, whereas others are based on an understanding of a shared language. Individual rappers in the network are not necessarily Arabs by ethnicity. Some rappers who are born and live in Lebanon, for example, are Armenians; some who are born and live in Algeria are Amazighs. Nevertheless, these rappers express themselves artistically in Arabic. We might also find rappers who were born in Arab countries, migrated to Europe, and still rap in Arabic. Through Arabic as a shared language, all these rappers interconnect with each other in what Johannsen calls "the Arabic-speaking hip hop-community as one tribe of the Global Hip Hop Nation."[17] On the other hand, not every rapper in the network I am focusing on necessarily raps in Arabic. Syrian–Filipino rapper Chyno states on his latest album:

> Arab is not the one who sings and speaks in Arabic but the one who protects the Arab culture, the land, the people. [Chyno in "Abed" on his album *Mamluk*, 2021].[18]

For instance, some rappers in Lebanon prefer English or French as their language of artistic expression. It still makes sense to include these rappers in the researched network, as they contribute to local hip hop scenes and use similar topics and/or imagery in their lyrics. Therefore, the Arab(ic) rap scenes which are the object of my study encompass rappers who rap in Arabic, rappers of Arab ethnicity who express themselves in other languages, and rappers who belong to local hip hop scenes in Arab countries.

In these communities, I focus on the role of Arabic language and Arab culture as a unifying element. The question of the role of Arabism in these communities serves as a starting point for exploration, for asking more specific questions on community building mechanisms and group identity construction. I will deal with these questions on three different levels.

---

16 Hagmann, "The Arab Hip-Hop Sampler 'Khat Thaleth.'"
17 Johannsen, "Keepin' It Real," 86.
18 Chyno, *Mamluk*.

First, I will look at networks between artists. Who is collaborating with whom? Which artists in which countries are releasing tracks with each other? Another question in this direction would be: Who is listening to whose music? Are networks of Arab rap artists becoming more independent of their initial influences from the USA and France, and are they replacing these ties with ties to Arab artists in other countries or regions? "Are rap of the Maghreb and rap of the Mashriq part of the same phenomenon?"[19]

Second, I want to focus on language use. Which languages are used? What is the role of Standard Arabic? I want to look not only at the languages of music production, but also at those of music reception. In which languages are fans and music critics discussing Arabic rap music? Are they writing on Arabic rap music in Arabic, in arithmographemics-based scripts like 3arabizi,[20] in English, or in French?

The third aspect I want to deal with is: How do Arab rap artists use intertextual references linking their art to other forms of Arabic literature and culture? Are these links to a shared cultural heritage also used to create links between the artists of today?

To be able to thoroughly investigate questions on networks and languages, I make use of a methodological triangulation because it provides more than one perspective on the research object and better suits a subject matter as complex as culture. In other words,

> 'cultural studies' should be a field of at times intractable complexity and perhaps the first great academic experiment in the attempted formation of a 'non-disciplinary' discipline. No one approach can hope to comprehend the above in one sweep; no one sweep producing some partial understanding can fail to notice what other sweeps might produce. We are condemned to a kind of eclecticism because of the very eclecticism and indissoluble combinations of the dissimilar in the increasingly complex 'real' world around us.[21]

In this case, such an eclecticism leads to the following methodological mix: I have done both ethnographic and netnographic[22] fieldwork, participated in events, helped organize concerts,

---

19 Here an unanswered question from Fischione is taken up. Fischione, "Untranslatability as Resistance," 284.
20 3arabizi is a transliteration of Arabic which is for example used in SMS and chat messages. It "is written in Latin script and uses arithmographemics i.e. numbers as letters to represent Arabic sounds that do not occur in English." See: Bianchi, "3arabizi - When Local Arabic Meets Global English," 89.
21 Willis, "Foreword," xix–xx.
22 Kozinets, *Netnography*.

interviewed artists, actively participated in online social networks, analyzed song and battle rap[23] texts, and used social network analysis to add a quantitative angle. In addition, whenever possible, I let the rappers themselves have their say through direct quotes so as not to speak for them.

This thesis is structured in the following way: First, core theoretical concepts are explained. Ensuing is a brief overview of hip hop culture and Arab(ic) rap. Then, three case studies focusing on different aspects in Arab(ic) rap are presented, before a final summing up.

---

23 A rap battle is a playful rapped exchange of artists who take turns lyrically mocking and insulting each other in front of an audience. For more on the subject of battle rap, see section 5.2 and Wiedemann, "Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling."

3 Theoretical Framework – Fields, Worlds, Networks and Scenes

Researchers on the sociology of music use different concepts. For instance, they talk of *scenes, worlds, networks,* or *fields.* In the next pages, I briefly present the core ideas behind these concepts and explain which aspects I found useful for my own research and for addressing the previously formulated research questions. I hereby follow an eclectic approach to theory including ideas from different theoretical currents, an approach supported even by researchers favoring certain concepts:

> There are considerable overlaps between these conceptions [of 'scenes,' 'fields' and 'music worlds'] and whichever one we opt for, the literature on the others will remain a useful resource.[24]
>
> **– Crossley, McAndrew and Widdop in *Social Networks and Music Worlds***

> Our formulation of the scene concept draws heavily on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) idea of 'field' and Howard Becker's (1982) idea of 'art worlds,' which both make many of the same assumptions we do.[25]
>
> **– Bennett and Peterson in *Music scenes: local, translocal & virtual***

My impression when studying theories on the sociology of music was similar, as I found aspects in different theories compelling.

3.1 Fields

Pierre Bourdieu's *field* theory, with its focus on power structures, is one approach to culture and human interaction in general which I found helpful throughout this project.[26] It provides useful tools for analyzing communities, as well as analyzing the relations and standings of people within them.[27] At its basis is the idea that the social room can be divided into *fields.* People can be part of multiple fields. If a person is part of a field, the person's position in relation to other people depends on the person's *capital* in the field. In different fields, different sorts of capital can exist.

---

24 Crossley, McAndrew, and Widdop, "Introduction," 1.
25 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 3.
26 Cf.: Wiedemann, "Negotiating Languages in an Arab(Ic) Rap Music Fan Community," 159–61. Since the concept of the field proved particularly helpful for this article, you can find a similar summary there.
27 See for example: Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital."

Bourdieu himself differentiated between *economic, social* and *cultural capital.*[28] These three forms of capital can be understood as parallel currencies: in different fields, different forms of capital can exist, and the exchange rates between them can vary according to the field.[29] For example, social capital in the academic field can manifest itself in a high number of well-known co-authors, economic capital in research funding, and cultural capital in the ability to write and speak in a way that is considered appropriate. Those who know how to write and speak and have enough connections can then in turn convert, for example, cultural and social capital into funding, i.e., economic capital. Each specific field, or rather the people in it, create field-internal rules or conventions (which Bourdieu called *doxa*). These rules then have to be followed by the agents in a field in order to maintain or better their position in that field. By internalizing the rules of a field, actors adopt a *habitus* characteristic of the field.

Later researchers have identified other sorts of capital that are relevant for understanding individual fields. These include, for example, erotic capital[30] and intercultural capital.[31] Some would subsume them under cultural capital, but for understanding power dynamics in specific fields, it can make sense to regard them as distinct forms of of their own. Throughout my own research, I found this theory helpful for example for investigating the Arab(ic) online community of rap fans on the Genius platform (see section 5.3). Questioning how capital could be accumulated within the community through interactions led to insights into power structures on Genius.

3.2   Music worlds and networks

3.2.1 Music worlds

While Bourdieu's *field* points at power struggles between agents, Howard S. Becker's *world* focuses on collaboration, on agents helping each other to construct something together. The American sociologist defines *art worlds* as communities of people collaborating to produce art:

---

28 Bourdieu, "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital."

29 In the field of dating and mating, "erotic capital" helps understanding human behavior. Hakim, "Erotic Capital."

30 Hakim, *Honey Money*.

31 Pöllmann, "Intercultural Capital: Toward the Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Empirical Investigation of a Rising Marker of Sociocultural Distinction."

> Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. Members of art worlds coordinate the activities by which work is produced by referring to a body of conventional understandings embodied in common practice and in frequently used artifacts.[32]

In other words, art is created not only by those people called "artists," but also by support personnel working in production or distribution, and by the *art world*'s audience. This conglomerate of people comes together in an *art world* over time, and continual repetition of the same interactions regulates these interactions into conventions. These conventions standardize the cooperation process, making processes faster, and making participants exchangeable as expectations and skills become standardized as well. Conventions also set aesthetic standards which works of art have to live up to, and which disqualify works that deviate too far.[33] Thus, members of an *art world* can rely on conventions that ease art-making within the boundaries that these conventions define. On the other hand, innovative works of art which contradict existing conventions, or for which conventional "how-tos" do not exist, are harder to progress, as numerous participants in an *art world* might have to learn new skills or tastes to avoid the risk of losing their status.[34] Individuals in different locations may adopt the same innovation, unaware that others are doing similarly, and only later find each other and establish contact.[35] This process can, moreover, be complicated by geographical or social communication boundaries which often confine both artistic production and reception to local environments.[36] Very big innovations can even lead to the emergence of new *art worlds*. "Some art worlds begin with the development of a new audience,"[37] and I would argue that this certainly is the case in the *world* of Arab(ic) rap music.

The concept of *music worlds* proved helpful to better understand the position fans, club owners, journalists, hip hop scholars and all the other support personnel of Arab(ic) rap artists play. The *art worlds* innovation theory can also help us to grasp how hip hop culture spread throughout the whole world, even though it took a little while to become fully accepted in its host environments.

---

32 Becker, *Art Worlds*, 34.
33 Becker, 305.
34 Becker, 304–7, 317.
35 Becker, 314.
36 Becker, 321.
37 Becker, 312–13.

3.2.2 Networks

The concept of *music worlds* and its focus on collaboration was built on by researchers like Nick Crossley who center their attention on *networks*. In such relational sociology view, culture exists between people and "belongs to the domain of interaction."[38] Thus, a *music world* develops through continuous interaction between people, through for example, organizing concerts together, writing a track collaboratively, mixing and mastering a rapper's song, and so on. The longer this interaction lasts and/or the more often it takes place, the more likely it is that people acquire the necessary know-how for each of the possible roles in the *music world* – e.g. artist, listener, support personnel.[39] They also form conventions which ease and accelerate their interactions.[40] Such a *music world* can then be seen as clusters of people held together through particular forms of musical interaction.[41] It is therefore important to identify and analyze these forms of musical interaction which are characteristic for a certain *music world*.

Once these characteristic interactions are identified, both actors in such a *music world* and the interactions between them can then be mapped in a network model and analyzed, at least partly, by formal network analysis methods. Such a network model consists of nodes (representing actors) and edges (representing interaction) connecting the nodes to each other. Once a network model of particular aspects of reality has been established, this model can then be interpreted for insights into the reality. Of paramount importance is the presence and absence of edges between nodes. This is both what gives the network its structure on a macro level, and what marks the significance of a single node on a micro level.

In my research, conceptualizing culture as a *network,* subject to network analysis methods, was very useful for analyzing interactions in online social networks like *Twitter, Facebook* and *Genius,* as well as in networks of rappers who *featured* each other, i.e. who recorded songs with each other or who attended the same events.

---

38 Crossley, "Relational Sociology and Culture," 4.

39 Crossley, *Crossley, N*, 5.

40 Crossley sees the concept of convention as differing slightly from Bourdieu's habitus: "[Convention] better captures the relational nature of social structure. Habits (or habitus), even when collective, are localised in individuals. Conventions, by contrast, [...] involve intersubjective agreement. They form between actors. Where habits steer individual behaviours, conventions structure interaction and relations." Crossley, 4.

41 Crossley, 1.

3.3 Music scenes

One proponent for the concept of the *music scene* is Andy Bennett, a professor of cultural sociology. He and Richard A. Peterson describe *music scenes* as

> contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans collectively share their common musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others.[42]

They add that people in a scene unite in order to "collectively create music for their own enjoyment."[43] Thus, *scenes* are often seen as "informal assemblages," characterized by Do-It-Yourself (DIY) culture and "grassroots musical activities."[44] With DIY culture comes autonomy, self-empowerment and independence from neoliberal, market-driven societies.[45] Yet, *scenes* can also become part of the global music industry. More often however, they function independently from it – helped by technological progress which cheapens both production (through relatively cheap or bootlegged software) and (online) distribution.[46]

Since people's involvement in a *scene* varies, and because *scenes* grow and shrink, Bennett and Peterson argue that it would not make sense to differentiate *scenes* from non-*scenes,* nor members from nonmembers. One should instead focus on analyzing "the degree to which a situation exhibits [a scene's] characteristics."[47] Bennett and Peterson distinguish between three different types of *music scenes*: *Local scenes* "clustered around a specific geographic focus," *translocal scenes* that comprise "widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle," and *virtual scenes* "in which people scattered across great physical spaces create the sense of scene via fanzines and, increasingly, through the Internet."[48]

I find this division into the local, the translocal, and the virtual helpful, even though it does not always makes sense to classify a certain scene as either local or translocal or virtual. It is the links and breaking points between the local, the translocal and the virtual which can lead to interesting questions revolving around notions such as identity, home, or authenticity.

---

42 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 1.
43 Bennett and Peterson, 3.
44 Bennett and Peterson, 4–6.
45 Bennett and Guerra, "Rethinking DIY Culture in a Post-Industrial and Global Context," 12.
46 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 4–6.
47 Bennett and Peterson, 12.
48 Bennett and Peterson, 6–7.

3.3.1 Local scenes

> To summarize, we view a local scene to be a focused social activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene.[49]

It is thus not any one cultural artifact that makes a specific scene, but rather the mixture of different elements. According to Bennett and Peterson, a "narrative of the local" is often constructed through appropriation of globalized music and incorporation of local dialects, clothing styles, knowledge, or local struggles against racism, classism, sexism etc.[50] They also explicitly mention hip hop culture as a good example of a local scene which – while seeming to be rather translocal at first glance – is "locally reworked" and, content-wise, deals with topics like race, inequality, oppression, identity and place with varying degrees of locality.[51] It thus undergoes a process of "glocalization"[52] and is adapted to "localized patterns and practices, reinventing hip-hop according to entirely contingent and locally relevant logics."[53] This leads to a variety of expressions of locally authentic hip hop which each feed off differing social environments and aesthetics.[54] Lebanese rapper El Rass sees this process of glocalization with regard to Arab(ic) rap as accomplished, saying that "*on est passé du rap en arabe au rap arabe.*"[55]

Focusing on the locality of a scene might be especially rewarding when working on hip hop culture because of the role authenticity plays in the culture (see section 5.3.2 below). The question of whether a participant is perceived as authentic is always answered against the background of local knowledge, and is hence highly dependent on local circumstances.[56] A specific local hip hop culture is always the "product of locality, that is to say, the particular local circumstances under which hip hop is appropriated."[57] For example, Bennett recounts that, among participants in the Frankfurt hip hop scene, "it was argued that only when local rappers started to write and perform

---

49 Bennett and Peterson, 8.
50 Bennett and Peterson, 7.
51 Bennett and Peterson, 8; Bennett, *Cultures of Popular Music*, 102.
52 See i.e. Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity."
53 Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, 24.
54 Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture*, 150.
55 Nashara, "« Une sorte de fierté est revenue ». Entretien avec le Rappeur El Rass," 7.
56 Bennett, *Popular Music and Youth Culture*, 164.
57 Bennett, 164.

texts in the German language did their songs begin to work as an authentic form of communication with the audience."[58]

While this emancipation process through the use of local languages has been studied extensively in different linguistic environments,[59] there is yet another intriguing approach to hip hop as a local scene: Some artists mention that they see hip hop itself as either a "'deterritorialized' locus of identification"[60] or as "'the local' capable of offering globally dispersed individuals a point of reference and cultural retreat."[61]

> Like the Muslim umma, the Global Hip Hop Nation functions as a worldwide network of 'believers' around the world who have created 'nationhood' through cultural, ideological, and imaginary means.[62]

I will come back to the term, "Hip Hop Nation" below.[63] For the moment, let us zoom in on one of the best examples for this approach to locality: Chyno's first album, *Making music to feel at home*. In this debut album, Chyno, a Beirut-based rapper of Syrian–Filipino roots who has lived, among other places, also in Saudi Arabia and Spain, musically processes feelings of not fitting in, of loneliness, and of how rap music and hip hop culture helped him find a place to feel at home. In an interview, he recounts what attracted him to the culture in the first place:

> **Chyno:** I thought that stuff was really cool. I'd never seen anything like it, so I was into that culture before I even meet [sic!] any Americans. And I didn't have a lot of friends, because I didn't speak Arabic that well. So I went down and met a few friends, but watching "Hip Hop Hooray" by Naughty by Nature, that was the coolest thing for me, all these people dressed up so uniquely and awesomely, and having such a good time at the basketball court, throwing their hands in the air. I thought, "What is this thing that is so communal and awesome? This is so different. I've never seen anything like this. They're all together. They're singing together. It's awesome. Where is this place, and what is this thing?" And from then on I really loved hip hop. Hip hop is the only culture to which I feel assimilated, more than any other place, or any other culture. I am fluent in hip hop, in any language, so I could go to anywhere and break it down with anybody, from when it started until now. I don't feel alienated by my beliefs when it comes to hip hop. But when I'm here, in the

---

58 Bennett, 141.

59 See e.g.: Manabe, "Globalization and Japanese Creativity"; Johnston, "Persian Rap: The Voice of Modern Iran's Youth"; Alim, "Black Culture's Global Impact."

60 Fielder, "Articulating the Hip-Hop Nation. Rap as Transnational Urban Subculture in the United States and France," 8.

61 Johannsen, "Configurations of Space and Identity in Hip Hop," 189.

62 Alim, *Roc the Mic Right*, 21.

63 See section 4.1.

Middle East, the way I think is a bit alien to some people, and it's the same in the Philippines, and it was the same when I was living in Barcelona, for a while.[64]

3.3.2 Translocal scenes

As we have seen above, Bennett and Peterson claim that hip hop is best understood as local scenes because of these scenes' local reworkings of a seemingly translocal culture. They contrast such local scenes with translocal scenes:

> Often the most self-conscious local music scenes that focus on a particular kind of music are in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places. They interact with each other through the exchange of recordings, bands, fans, and fanzines. These we call translocal scenes because, while they are local, they are also connected with groups of kindred spirits many miles away.[65]

There certainly are some hip hop scenes which feature many translocal characteristics. Bennett and Peterson mention the music festival as a special example of a translocal scene. Such a multiday event is special in that it draws together not necessarily local scenes but scattered individuals. These individuals come together for the duration of the festival. The longer the festival, the more likely it is that the participants can act out their scene-internal expectations and rules with regard to music taste, and also for example, through clothing style, sexual relations, or recreational drug use.[66] Slightly less intensive but still relevant for the building of translocal scenes are concerts and events. For example, the Arab migrant community in European hip hop and migration hot spots like Berlin quite often offer the opportunity to meet with rappers and activists living in other diasporic communities or Arab countries.[67]

3.3.3 Virtual scenes and online tribes

People who are part of a virtual scene often live geographically far from each other. Unlike in translocal scenes, they cannot meet regularly at a shared physical location like a festival, so it is important that they can agree on a virtual meeting place. Hence, all virtual scenes have some

---

64 Thornburgh, "Chyno on Beirut Battle Rap and the Lebanese Revolution."

65 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 8–9.

66 Bennett and Peterson, 9–10.

67 See for example the following events in Berlin: 2020-02-27 a concert at Säälchen by Syrian rapper Bu Kolthoum who lives in Amsterdam and Palestinian rapper Makimakkuk; 2017-07-07 an album launch at ACUD MACHT NEU by Syrian rapper Jundi Majhul featuring Bu Kolthoum, Chyno and Palestinian rapper Stormtrap/Asifeh who is based in Vienna and Ramallah. 2016-12-02 a concert at ACUD MACHT NEU by Palestinian rapper Osloob. 2016-02-24 a concert/round table discussion at Werkstatt der Kulturen by Chyno.

place where they meet via computer-mediated communication.[68] Members connect via their devices, e.g. computers or smartphones, to some sort of service running on another computer/server. These services can be of various natures, ranging from old-school mailing lists, to online forums, to a variety of social networks and messaging apps.

In virtual scenes, sometimes the only tribal identity markers available to prove belonging to a scene is the written word.[69] This renders the quantity and quality of written communication very important.[70] It also opens up recruitment potentially to people all over the whole world – as long as they write (not necessarily speak) the scene's language and script, and are proficient in computer-based communication.[71] Thus, language use both limits and enlarges entrance possibilities, and is afterwards also a way to distinguish oneself from other people in the scene. Just like non-virtual scenes, virtual scenes create forms of capital which are specific to the scene, and conventions regulating communication – which are more or less explicitly explained to new recruits.[72] In virtual scenes, aspects like age, social class, gender etc. might not be as clearly visible as in local scenes but can become apparent between the lines, i.e. through language use.[73]

Virtual scenes are not necessarily "condemned" to stay virtual: in an article on the alt.country virtual music scene which grew out of a Usenet newsgroup,[74] Peterson and Lee note that virtual scenes can become local when people who previously communicated exclusively online meet face-to-face.[75] This is not the only bridge from virtual to local: The alt.country virtual music scene is full of people working in music or as music journalists, and who thus influence developments and tastes more or less directly in their respective local scenes.[76]

---

68 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 10.
69 Peterson and Lee, "Internet-Based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt.Country Music," 194. Of course, there are also virtual scenes in which the participants communicate primarily via photos or videos, e.g. some scenes of so-called social media influencers on e.g. Instagram or YouTube.
70 Peterson and Lee, 194.
71 Peterson and Lee, 192.
72 Bennett and Peterson, "Introducing Music Scenes," 11.
73 Peterson and Lee, "Internet-Based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt.Country Music," 195.
74 Usenet groups date from around 1980 and have since largely disappeared. They are divided into thematic groups, can be moderated or unmoderated, and communicate purely via text content.
75 Peterson and Lee, "Internet-Based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt.Country Music," 196–98.
76 Peterson and Lee, 201.

A concept closely related to virtual scenes is O'Neill's notion of "online tribes": By "online tribes," he understands projects or "social formations which favour grassroots direct democracy, the pleasurable provision of free gifts, and the feeling of proximity to others."[77] The rise of the internet brought with it the possibility of setting up decentralized networks at very low cost.[78] This technology then led to a "'hacker ethic' of sharing and cooperation,"[79] to projects built on anti-authoritarian values like openness, swarm intelligence and peer review.[80] In such an environment, authority is gained through merit.[81] Because of decentralized structures, no single person has significantly more power than others, so authority ends up distributed among different people,[82] and is based on one's reputation.[83]

However, there are a couple of mechanisms which contradict meritocracy, decentrality and distribution of authority. Network analysis has shown that most natural social networks follow power laws. This means that most people in a social network have only a few connections to others, while a minority are very well-connected. These so-called "hubs" have "an anomalously high number of links."[84] Why is that so? When new people enter a social network, they have a higher probability of connecting to already well-connected people than to those who are not so well-connected; a mechanism called "preferential attachment,"[85] or the "Matthew effect."

During my research, I came across two virtual Arab(ic) rap scenes. The first is the community of rap fans on the platform genius.com, dedicated to interpreting rap lyrics and whose language and script use I studied in one of the case studies below (see section 5.3). The second is the community in the Facebook group, "Hip Hop Baladi," in which rappers, hip hop activists and rap fans, mostly in the Levant and Gulf region, but also from diaspora communities and all over the world, come together. I was a member of this group and observed how fellow members discussed music and current events, and also shared memes and videos. In March 2021, the group has over

---

77 O'Neil, "Cyberchiefs. Autonomy and Authority in Online Tribes," 2.
78 O'Neil, 10.
79 O'Neil, 15.
80 O'Neil, 16.
81 O'Neil, 43.
82 O'Neil, 43–46.
83 O'Neil, 48–53.
84 Barabási, *Linked*, 70.
85 Barabási and Albert, "Emergence of Scaling in Random Networks," 1.

16,500 members and, much like the the alt.country music scene mentioned above, helps people to make first contact with each other online before meeting offline or engaging in projects together.

3.3.4 Summary on scenes

I think a differentiation into local, translocal and virtual scenes makes sense as it helps us to ask the right questions: What are a scene's local specificities? For example, how different might the local hip hop scene in Beirut be from its sibling in Amman? What are the local sociopolitical influences and problems leading to differences in artistic output?

However, I cannot see how it could be helpful to forcedly classify hip hop scenes as *either* local *or* translocal *or* virtual. Putting hip hop in any one of these boxes can capture only part of the picture. For example, there are certainly scenes with a thick layer of local paint. This is true, for example, of the rap battles in "The Arena" mentioned below (see chapter 5.2). These battles sport local dialectal expressions, and references to local culture and humor, which are only understandable through familiarity with the scene's codes and local knowledge. However, even these battles – rich with local elements – cannot be fully understood without allowing for their translocal overlay. Yes, we can see them primarily as an expression of local Lebanese hip hop culture. However, even the first battle between Edd Abbas (Lebanon/Ivory Coast) and Dizaster (Lebanon/USA), moderated by Chyno (Syria/Philippines) can also be interpreted as translocal. Not only do the rappers themselves each bring their own life stories with them and onto the stage, but they are also attacked for what they allegedly do not have in common with the audience. Other battles followed suit featuring rappers of Lebanese, Palestinian, Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian descent – using different languages and registers including varieties of both Arabic and English. In addition to that, The Arena is also a virtual scene, as all the battles are recorded, published on YouTube, watched sometimes by hundreds of thousands of viewers,[86] and discussed online in a variety of social networks by people from all over the globe.

---

86 So far (2021-01-03), over eleven videos have reached a view count of more than 100,000 views, with one video soon getting its millionth view. At live events, normally no more than 100–200 viewers show up.

In addition to that, there certainly are virtual scenes with no or very little offline connection between participants. The scene of Rap Genius Arabia[87] could be classified in this way. On the other hand, I cannot think of any local or translocal scene (at least in a hip hop context) without a layer of virtual communication. However, even if we dismiss dividing hip hop into *local, translocal* or *virtual scenes,* it can be helpful to use these categories as starting points when focusing on certain *local, translocal* or *virtual* aspects of a *scene.*

3.4   Summary

While the different concepts vary in their specifics, they share some common ground: firstly, music is an "inter-activity" in which artists produce sounds, and in which audiences listen to these sounds and give meaning to them. Secondly, music is a collective action, the joint product of artists, audiences and support personnel. Thirdly, music creates distinct social spaces.[88]

The different theories on conceptualizations of music each emphasize on different aspects: Bourdieu's *field* theory has its strength for examining power relations. It can explain very well why, in a certain *field,* some people are powerful and others are not, and why the same people's power hierarchy can look completely different in other *fields.*

Becker's concept of the music *world* and Crossley's focus on the *network* are helpful when trying to identify all the different actors who are all somehow involved in constituting a *music world.* These theories' emphasis on collective action, the role of support personnel and the importance of links between people shows that *musicking* is not a solitary action executed by artists but a collective endeavor.

Bennett and Petersons' understanding of the *scene* and particularly their division into *local, translocal* and *virtual scenes* provide fertile ground for many of the questions that this project deals with. Can a *scene* be classified as either *local, translocal* or *virtual?* With whom do participants of a *scene* identify?

---

87   See below in chapter 5.3.
88   Crossley and Bottero, "Social Spaces of Music: Introduction," 2.

Whereas concepts of *field, world, network* and *scene* all helped to build a theoretical foundation and to generate the right questions about my research object, I also found some theories on "popular culture" useful for understanding my own approach, and the approaches of other researchers, to Arab(ic) rap music.

3.5 Intermission: "Popular culture?"

> I have almost as many problems with 'popular' as I have with 'culture.' When you put the two terms together, the difficulties can be pretty horrendous.[89]

This quote by Stuart Hall sums up my own feelings about the term "popular culture." While my main focus in this dissertation is not a theoretical contribution to the understanding of the term "popular culture," I feel it is appropriate to briefly examine the term and concept, as it is through the lens of "popular culture" that rap music is often perceived, and, in the discourse on rap music, some concepts of "popular culture" can be encountered more often than others.

3.5.1 Dichotomy between "high culture" and "popular culture"

Let us start with the fact that rap music and hip hop culture are often perceived as forms of "low culture" in comparison to other cultural artifacts which are read as "high culture." What does it say, when French rapper Kery James samples video footage of French–Armenian singer Charles Aznavour in the video for his song "Sans moi" (2018), in which Aznavour says:

> Les rappeurs et les slameurs écrivent merveilleusement notre langue. [...] On pense toujours que cette jeunesse ne connaît pas la chanson. Au contraire, elle la connaît très très bien mais elle veut s'exprimer d'une manière différente et je trouve qu'il y a une floraison d'auteurs, et compositeurs, et d'interprètes, rappeurs ou slammeurs, qui sont formidables aujourd'hui. Et je dois dire que le leader de tout cela, celui qui émerge en tête, c'est Kery James. Si vous allez l'entendre, écoutez surtout attentivement les paroles, vous allez voir comment c'est bien écrit, et comment c'est beau et comment c'est français.[90]

Aznavour exemplarily describes Kery James as someone whose lyrics are "well-written, beautiful and 'French.'" By doing so, Aznavour, as one of the most prominent figures in classical, established French chanson, invites other listeners to open up the door to "high culture" for Kery James and other rappers. This scene and Kery James' choice to sample it in his video are also evidence of rap not yet having arrived in "high culture". Aznavour's backslapping is at the same

---

89   Hall, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular,'" 227.
90   Track "Sans moi" on James, *J'rap encore.*

time praise and patronization. One might think that such a view on rap music is limited to non-academic discourse. However, Igor Johannsen describes that he had a similar experience in an academic context:

> During a conference on hip hop at the University of Cambridge in 2016, for example, the view was expressed that adherents of hip hop-culture should feel honored that academics see it as an object of study, ennobling hip hop through their time and attention. This argument can only be made regarding cultural forms deemed "popular," or practices of "ordinary" people. It is difficult to imagine that scholars would demand this kind of gratitude, theoretically, from Goethe or Mozart, Elias Khoury or Daniel Barenboim. Consequentially, this perspective carries implicit qualifications regarding different cultural practices, their worth, relevance, or complexity, without ever clarifying that difference in an analytically sound and convincing manner. The conviction that an object of inquiry is elevated and made more relevant by being subject to scholarly scrutiny comes with implicit forms of discrimination that discredit the academic endeavor considerably as it unmasks qualitative assumptions regarding the object as well as the subject of research.[91]

A consequence of such a view on rap music is that a number of researchers write introductory articles on Arabic rap as a "side project," even though rap is unrelated to their main focus. Besides that, there are also a few researchers doing good work on Arab(ic) rap but without sufficient language skills to confidently work with Arabic source material.[92] This shows, on the one hand, that this area is not yet researched thoroughly and that there are not yet many specialists in the field. On the other hand, it could also be read as a low-status topic which only merits treatment as a "side project," and is not worth spending more resources on – or, in the case of poor language handling, that the research community is not big enough to prevent such mistakes through peer review or thinks that rap is not worth learning Arabic for.

There is also an intriguing development in that, today, people with high cultural capital do not limit their cultural consumption to only "high culture." On the contrary, they read, watch and listen to "popular culture." It is no longer the "what" that counts, but the "how." Editors of a newspaper like *Die Zeit* can publish an article raving about gangsta rapper Haftbefehl – as long as

---

91 Johannsen, "'Popular Culture' and the Academy," 103.

92 For example, Almeida – whose work I generally find interesting – interprets an Arabic cartoon: "The man is holding a briefcase fed by a petrol pump that reads at its top 'The goods of the country' (Jirat al blad) [sic!; the original is خيرات البلاد] . [...] At the same time, the man is giving a dummy with the word 'Mawazine' to a crying man who has a sign that says 'Moroccan people' (Al watan al maghrebi [sic!; the original is المواطن المغربي, i.e. 'the Moroccan citizen']." Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 116–17.

they do so in a language that clearly sets the article apart from the language that the rapper himself or most of his fans would use:

> Wer jetzt sagt, das sei doch nur verbaler Götzendienst des kleinen Mannes, der sich mit Popsongs hochträumt in die Chefetage, der fällt auf jene Pädagogenhermeneutik herein, die Künstler soziologisch einhegt und ästhetisch kaltstellt. Was an Haftbefehl fasziniert und verstört, das ist sein Talent. Die sprachliche Verwegenheit lässt sich nicht in Literaturinstituten züchten. 'Zeit ist Geld, Habibi, Tipp-Ex auf Rammstein-Vertrag, und gib mir einfach die Kopie.' Das ist die Gründungsakte des Geschäftslebens, kurzgeschlossen mit der Idee des Palimpsests.[93]

Here, *Die Zeit* journalist Daniel Haas interprets and "translates" the codes Haftbefehl uses and which are, to a large extent, incomprehensible to your average "high culture" enthusiast, into a linguistic register which I surmise to be incomprehensible to many of the hip hop heads blasting Haftbefehl in the streets of Offenbach. By voicing his interpretation in a "high culture" register, Haas excludes others, outside this language register, from debating his interpretation. It could also be seen as an indication that "though the distinction popular/elite remains, the inventories of each culture do change."[94] This could for example mean that Haftbefehl is (unsolicitedly) knighted in feuilletons as a member of "high culture" while other rappers are still looked down upon as representatives of less-sophisticated "low culture."

3.5.2 "Popular culture" as counterculture

The significance of rap, or any "low culture," differs according to whether the justification is personal or academic. The rap lyrics that most attract my personal interest are the so-called "conscious" lyrics which criticize different forms of societal problems — a topos that matches the conceptualization of "popular culture" as "counterculture" or as "rebellion." Construing rap music as an expression of a politically conscious counterculture, critical to political and economic hegemonies, makes it also an attractive research object for research funders. My research might perhaps not have been funded had I not framed my proposal with concepts like "postcolonialism," "class," "race" etc. – all of which help portray rappers as rebels worth supporting through research.

---

93 Haas, "Gib dir Kugel. Der Rapper Haftbefehl ist der deutsche Dichter der Stunde."
94 Shoshan, "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam," 68.

Understanding Arab(ic) Hip Hop as a form of "counterculture" is, however, both blessing and curse. The counterculture view firstly ignores that the "very same cultural techniques are employed by those on the opposite side of the political spectrum,"[95] by rebels but also by conformists and oppressors.[96] Some rappers even use a rebel pose mainly for marketing and economic reasons – a fact often overlooked in research on Arab(ic) rap.[97]

Secondly, on the one hand, reading rap as a voice of the people, for example in the revolutions starting in 2010,[98] makes it easily understandable that even something as "profane" as rap warrants serious research if rap songs are perceived as "mobilizing Pan-Arab hymns of revolution."[99] However, if, for example, Jairo Guerrero Parrado describes rap in the aftermath of the "Arab Spring"[100] as "el grito ahogado de aquellos que luchan por un cambio radical y tangible,"[101] he ignores that not every rap song is a "suppressed cry for radical change" and certainly not everyone demonstrating in 2010/2011 felt represented by rap lyrics.

On the other hand, perceiving rap as an expression of the struggle against political or economic developments reduces rap to merely a vehicle for understanding these political and economic forces, and neglects that rap itself, as a form of literary expression, can be an object of study in its own right.[102] Swedenburg, for instance, argues that Palestinian rap is mostly regarded through the lens of what he calls the "struggle, or resistance, paradigm."[103] He laments that most scholars adhering to this paradigm perceive the Palestinian struggle as so important that they would only work on "serious" and "uncompromised" "high culture" and folklore, leaving aside "irrelevant" and "corrupted" "popular culture".[104] They would look down on "popular culture" and perceive it

---

95 Johannsen, "Configurations of Space and Identity in Hip Hop," 191.

96 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 84.

97 Almeida, 6–7, 100.

98 See for example Qi, "Rap & Revolution"; Gana, "Rapping and Remapping the Tunisian Revolution"; Bohn, "Rapping the Revolution."

99 "revolutionäre Protestlieder wie jene des tunesischen Rappers 'El Général' wurden zu mobilisierenden transarabischen Revolutionshymnen," Mattes, "'Herr Präsident, ihr Volk stirbt!' Protestmusik und politischer Wandel in Nordafrika/Nahost," 1.

100 Guerrero Parrado uses the word "primavera árabe." The article was published in 2012. At the time, the term was probably still acceptable. Guerrero Parrado, "Rap y Revolución En El Mundo Árabe," 455, 467.

101 Guerrero Parrado, 475.

102 Swedenburg, "Palestinian Rap. Against the Struggle Paradigm."

103 Swedenburg, 17.

104 Swedenburg, 17–18.

as being "epiphenomenal, as an *effect* of more fundamental and significant forces – economic, political, military, diplomatic, and so on."[105] Swedenburg then continues to argue that the aesthetics of Palestinian rap, its heterogeneous audiences and polyvalent lyrics also have to be taken into account.[106] While I fully agree with this idea, I find its execution not too convincing. The examples he brings forth in his article all have a political focus, contradicting the point he claims to make. More unfortunate, if Swedenburg was fully convinced of rap's aesthetic value, why did he not just concentrate on it and leave aside the complaints about other scholars' focus? As one can find both politically conscious rap as well as rap made for other purposes, rap can also be approached from other angles. It is feasible to combine a politics-centered angle along with an aesthetics-focused approach. Almeida summarizes these options well:

> [...] rap is not a mere 'tool' of resistance, but a creative expression of hip hop culture chosen by many Moroccans to aesthetically convey personal, local and national histories, to be part of the public sphere, to feed their own egos, to express love or hate, to develop a career in the music industry, to have fun, and also, but not exclusively, to resist dominant political, cultural or economic discourses.[107]

All in all, I have the impression that both a "high culture"/"low culture" and a "popular culture"-as-counterculture viewpoint are grossly overused when talking or writing about rap music and hip hop culture. Both approaches fail to identify characteristics inherent in rap music and hip hop culture which would unambiguously qualify them as one of "high" or "low culture", or as counterculture or hegemonic culture. However, both approaches are used often, and can certainly tell quite a lot about the perspective of those employing these terms.

---

105 Italics in original. Swedenburg, 18; See also: Stein and Swedenburg, "Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in Palestine and Israel," 5.
106 Swedenburg, "Palestinian Rap. Against the Struggle Paradigm," 18–19.
107 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 14.

4 Arab(ic) Rap

Now that the theoretical background is set, let us dive deeper into Arab(ic) rap itself. But how can we best approach it? Because everything is connected to everything, it seems impossible to try to understand any local music scene without listening to and reading about every other music scene and every other form of human cultural expression – an impossible task. Therefore, in order to better understand Arab(ic) rap, I had to limit my geographical focus. I concentrated on the Lebanese and Algerian rap music scenes for the following reasons: The two countries are geographically distant from each other, which makes it less likely to find connections between their rap scenes. However, if connections can be identified, they must be based on something other than mere convenience due to physical proximity. Other reasons for comparing the two countries include Algeria's pioneering role in the history of Arab rap and Lebanon's position as a "melting pot" of various musical influences.[108]

I include, however, research with different regional foci because comparison helps in understanding regional specifics. I also have to add that the material I gathered on rap in Lebanon is more diverse than what I gathered for Algeria: I had the opportunity to stay a total of seven months in Lebanon, could meet and talk with several rappers, could go to concerts and other events, and helped organize a couple of events with a Beirut-based rapper in Germany. In contrast, I was able to make only one, very brief, visit to Algeria. There, I was unbelievably fortunate to get the opportunity to visit the *Centre de Recherche en Anthropologie Sociale et Culturelle* (CRASC) in Oran. At the CRASC, I talked with both Hadj Miliani, one of the most knowledgeable researchers on alternative Algerian music scenes, and to the rapper Fada Vex, aka Malik Bourbia, who is one of the most important and most active figures in the Algerian hip hop community. Aside from my visit to the CRASC and some looking-around in local record stores, my research on Algerian rap music is based mostly on online interactions.

4.1 The birth of the Hip Hop Nation

> Wake up your mind black people, it's ill
> Superior people use superior skill

---

108 Cf. Wiedemann, "The Local and the Global in Networks of Lebanese and Algerian Rappers," 5.

> We can defeat any congressional bill at will
> The hip-hop nation will fulfill all prophecy in society with inner city philosophy[109]

Hip hop is most often read as a culture based on at least four so-called "elements": rapping, DJing, break(danc)ing and writing (graffiti). Some sources also add other elements like beatboxing, street fashion, producing music or knowledge to this list. It originated in the Bronx, New York in the 1970s and has spread all over the world. Worldview-wise, political and so-called *conscious rap* rap took many of its core ideas from a history of the US Black nationalist movement, the Black power movement of the 1960s, and from Afrocentrist ideas focusing on a shared Black cultural heritage in Africa and especially in ancient Egypt:[110]

> In the late 1970s, while the Nation of Islam reorganized after the death of Elijah Muhammad, the hip hop nation was born largely through the efforts of one of rap music's pioneers, Afrika Bambaataa. Influenced partly by the release of a British feature film on the Zulu tribe of southeastern Africa, Bambaataa summoned into existence the Zulu Nation in New York City's South Bronx in an attempt to bring about peace in a region increasingly prone to gang violence. It wasn't until 1983, when Brother D. came out with 'How We Gonna Make the Black Nation Rise,' that an explicit nationalist message was heard in rap music.[111]

Thus, what is frequently also called the "Hip Hop Nation" seamlessly continues a succession of multiple Black nationalist movements from which many elements were taken up and incorporated into a shared cultural canon. For example, Islam's role in Black Nationalism is represented by The Nation of Islam's mention in many rap songs through quotations of and references to Malcolm X[112] or Louis Farrakhan[113]. Another important movement for understanding the initial years of the Hip Hop Nation is the Nation of Gods and Earths / the Five Percent Nation which is an offspring of the Nation of Islam. Many rappers identify as Five Percenters and use Five Percent imagery in their work. However, other flavors of Islam can also be observed within the Hip Hop Nation: within the US, French and German hip hop communities are many rappers who identify as (Sunni) Muslims.[114] One explanation for the

---

109 KRS-One, *High School Rock*.

110 Decker, "The State of Rap," 53.

111 Decker, 57.

112 See for example "Bring the Noise" on Public Enemy, *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*; "Skit" and "We Will Rise" on Lowkey, *Soundtrack to the Struggle*.

113 See for example "Bring The Noise" or "Don't Believe the Hype" on Public Enemy, *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*; or "Meaning Of The 5%" on Brand Nubian, *In God We Trust*; see also Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter*, 76.

114 See Mohaiemen, "Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip Hop's Hidden History."

appeal of Islam within hip hop culture could be a perception that Islam is "a response to whiteness"[115]:

> Whether rappers self-identified as Muslims or merely appropriated Sunni, Nation of Islam, or Five Percenter discourse, embracing Islam, commonly described in hip hop as 'the black man's religion,' was an opportunity to position oneself in opposition to white Christian American values.[116]

It has to be noted here that "Whiteness" is not (necessarily) linked to skin color. It is rather "whatever white people said it was, and nothing more."[117] People who are White belong to the "unmarked category against which difference is constructed."[118] People belonging to this unmarked White category enjoy certain privileges that non-White people are excluded from.[119] Such an exclusion can manifest in education, housing, employment and many other domains. Such exclusion is demonstrated by Yassin Alsalman, aka Narcy, an Iraqi–Canadian rapper, who begins his song "P.H.A.T.W.A." with a video sequence, in which he and another rapper, Yoshua Scott, who is of darker skin color, go through airport security.

> Scott: "Who do you think they're going to harass more, man, me or you?"
>
> Narcy: "Obviously me, dawg. You know Iraqi is the new Black."[120]

One can summarize that both Islam and hip hop have been sometimes perceived as something Other, and hence appeal to people who self-identify as non-White. Islam is therefore a good fit for rap which – in the words of David Foster Wallace and Mark Costello – is an expression of a marginalized "Other'd nation" within US urban centers, that makes "the pale [...] hurry across the deck."[121] This might be one of many reasons which eased the spread of hip hop culture to countries with a Muslim majority population.

Using the image of a "nation," the hip hop community both mocks nationalist ideas and constructs a pillar of a shared identity. Hence, it should be seen not as a conventional nation-state but rather as a challenge to the oppression of the state it was born in:

---

115 Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter*, 76.
116 Utley, *Rap and Religion*, 4–5.
117 Knight, *Why I Am a Five Percenter*, 36.
118 Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness*, 369.
119 Ignatiev, "Abolish the White Race."
120 Song "P.H.A.T.W.A." on Narcy, *The Narcicyst*.
121 Costello and Wallace, *Signifying Rappers*, 24% [ebook].

> Members of the hip hop nation form an 'imagined community' that is based less on its realization through state formation than on a collective challenge to the consensus logic of U.S. nationalism. The language of nation is appropriated by the hip hop community as a vehicle for contesting the changing discursive and institutional structure of racism in America.[122]

Nowadays, the term "Hip Hop Nation" is used mostly to refer to a "'borderless' composite of hip hop communities worldwide."[123] These hip hop communities are constructed around different identity markers. One imagined community certainly felt by numerous rappers is what Igor Johannsen, in reference to Chilean-French rapper Ana Tijoux's song, "Somos Sur," calls the "Global South."[124] This community can be understood as an "imagined community [...] delineated by a virtual spatiality circumscribed by discourse, narrative and identity rather than geographical or material space,"[125] and which is "politically and socially activist, revolutionary, and highly critical of the powers that are."[126] Besides this shared "Global South" identity, some Arab rap scenes focus on nationality,[127] some on religion,[128] some on ethnicity, some on language. Arab nationalism, for example, can become apparent through patriotic lyrics[129] which are often characterized by a dichotomic patriot–foe understanding.[130] On the other hand, musical innovators redefine national identities by mixing new material with musical heritage, a development which can lead to fusion music styles like that of H-Kayne and Fnaïre in Morocco.[131] The identity markers that are the focus of this research project are Arabic language and Arab culture.

4.2 Rap in Lebanon and Algeria

Fada Vex: Et [l'Algérie] est le premier pays arabo-musulman où le rap a commencé. [...] C'était en '85 avec la chanson, [qui] s'appelle *Ǧaula fi-'l-lail*. Ça veut dire «Balade dans la nuit» qui est

---

122 Decker, "The State of Rap," 54.

123 Alim, "Hip Hop Nation Language," 387.

124 Johannsen, "Configurations of Space and Identity in Hip Hop," 195–96.

125 Johannsen, 190.

126 Johannsen, 183.

127 See for example the work of Almeida on the role of nationality in Moroccan rap: Moreno Almeida, "The Politics of Taqlidi Rap: Reimagining Moroccanness in the Era of Global Flows."

128 See for example: Halila, "Rap and Islamism in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia: Local Idiosyncrasies and Global Reverberations."

129 In Morocco, these patriotic lyrics are critized as "watanounisme", an invented word combining the Arabic "watan" ("nation") and the French suffix "-isme". Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 93.

130 Almeida, 68.

131 Moreno Almeida, "The Politics of Taqlidi Rap: Reimagining Moroccanness in the Era of Global Flows," 121.

interprété par Hamidou. [...] C'est vrai que le rap est diffusé en Algérie. C'est une musique qui est très très écoutée. Il y a beaucoup de rappeurs. Mais ça se passe surtout sur les réseaux sociaux. Sur le terrain, on remarque pas ça beaucoup. [...] il y a vraiment pas de festivals. Il y a pas d'émissions trop spécialisées à la télévision, à la radio. Il y a pas d'articles, il y a pas de magazines. Ça c'est absent.[132]

Among Arab countries, Algeria was the earliest to adopt rap music, with mimetic "mock rap" songs like Hamidou's (Ahmed Takdjout) *Ǧaula fi-'l-lail* ("Journey through the night") or his *Sarwāl lūbiya* ("Bean pants") being released in the mid-1980s.[133] A little later, at the beginning of the 1990s, more seriously committed rap crews emerged, fueled by political unrest in 1988 and the establishment of local radio stations.[134] These first crews – like Intik and Hamma Boys in Algiers, or Deep Voice in Oran – were mostly founded in the big, coastal cities in the North.[135] Nowadays however, rap and hip hop culture are everywhere in Algeria and are even mentioned, at least briefly, in Algerian articles in Arabic about the country's musical heritage.[136] One reason for this quick spread of rap in Algeria could be the music's many similarities to traditional Algerian Raï music, with which it shares the use of "authentic" street language, dialectal expressions, and social critique.[137] However, while rap music seems to be everywhere, it mostly circulates online through social networks as Fada Vex mentioned above.

Whereas early adopters in Algeria were quick to discover rap as a new style of music, pioneers in the Levant took considerably longer. The Beirut-based rapper El Rass (Tripoli) remembers how it was to rap when nobody knew what rap was:

> **El Rass:** quand on faisait du rap en 98–99, on était vraiment des extraterrestres. Ce n'était pas comme maintenant, et puis c'était à Tripoli, pas à Beyrouth. En plus, il y avait encore l'occupation syrienne... Toute la société au Liban, au niveau de la sexualité, de l'apparence, de l'opinion, au niveau de tout... on était dans une autre époque! Je venais de cette perspective-là, et en 2011 quand je me dis "je vais faire du rap," dans ma tête ça restera pour moi et mes potes.[138]

Military and political conflicts and developments like the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990), the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993) or the Syrian occupation of Lebanon (1976–2005) might have

---

132 Bourbia, Interview with Malik Bourbia aka Fada Vex.
133 Miliani, "Culture planétaire et identités frontalières À propos du rap en Algérie," 765.
134 Boumedini, "Conditions politiques et sociales de l'apparition du rap en Algérie."
135 Fada Vex, "Le rap algérien est dans la place!!"
136 Cf.: Ibn Sanūsī, "At-turāṯ al-mūsīqī fi 'l-Ǧaza'ir," 111.
137 Wiedemann, *Code-Switching im algerischen und tunesischen Rap. Eine vergleichende Analyse von Lotfi Double Kanons „Klemi" und Baltis „L'album avant l'albombe"*, 39–40; Morgan and Nickson, "Algeria. Rai. Rocking the Casbah," 18.
138 Nashara, "« Une sorte de fierté est revenue ». Entretien avec le Rappeur El Rass," 2.

delayed the development of a Lebanese hip hop scene.[139] It was not until the early 2000s that rap albums were first published in Lebanon.[140] Although even today, according to rapper Samzz, "the hip hop community in Lebanon is kinda small,"[141] it is not only an underground phenomenon, as rap concerts are publicly advertised and organized in well-known locations and graffiti street art is everywhere in the center of Beirut.

One of the questions I was often confronted with when talking about my research was how far Arab rappers have to deal with censorship, if there are any social, moral or legal red lines they are not supposed to cross, and what happens if they are crossed nonetheless. As always, it depends. It depends very much on place, on time, on other circumstances. In Morocco, Almeida writes that a taboo topic for critique is the monarchy,[142] and, for example the official stance that the Sahara is part of Morocco and not allowed to become independent.[143] On the other hand, she observes that members of the government can be criticized which in turn helps deflect this critique from the monarchy.[144] In Lebanon, Chyno explains that foreign battle rappers in "The Arena" enjoy relative liberty with regard to freedom of speech compared to in their home countries, and even sees the rap battles as a "prerequisite" for politically engaged songs:

> **Chyno:** The beauty about the Arena, the battle rap league over here, is because it's regional, so we bring in these multiple rappers from different regions and their politics is so different than ours. There are a lot of things they can't say, where they're from. So when they come over here, a lot of times they don't even expect that we'll be able to say what we say, because they've never got to say it over there. I don't want to sound like I'm making battle rap bigger than what it actually is in the Middle East, but with what's going on in the revolution right now—people making songs cursing out ministers—I think our battles are a prerequisite for that.[145]

On the one side, Chyno sees relative freedom in Lebanon. While the lyrics to many of his songs are highly political, dealing with topics like identity, migration, (neo-)colonialism, terrorism or war, he artistically, for the most part, stays clear of Lebanese capital-P Politics. Besides his artistic

---

139 Cf. Wiedemann, "Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling," 15.
140 See section 5.3.1.
141 Ajaj, Interview with Samer Ajaj aka Samzz at Radio Beirut.
142 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 103.
143 Almeida, 70–71.
144 Almeida, 106–7.
145 Thornburgh, "Chyno on Beirut Battle Rap and the Lebanese Revolution."

engagement, he also takes his beliefs to the streets. However, he explains that, due to his vulnerable position as a migrant in Lebanon, he, too, feels red lines in this area:

> **Chyno**: One thing, I'm Syrian–Filipino. So at the beginning [of the protests in Lebanon in 2019/20], I was going to the protests a lot. I'm definitely for it. Back in 2015, I was down there all the time. Two weeks ago, I applied for residency to stay in Lebanon, as a Syrian. So I'm staying a little bit away from that protest itself and being vocal online, because the police are actually cracking down on people they consider part of the protest, or revolutionaries, as they would call them.[146]

Always having to balance free speech, critical lyrics, societal taboos and legal censorship can be exhausting. Another issue that artists in general, and Arab(ic) rappers in particular, have to deal with is the business side of their art.

4.3   Business, production and distribution

Producing music can be expensive but rappers have a big advantage over other types of musicians: they do not necessarily need to record anything besides their voice in a studio. This limits studio costs. However, the remaining production costs are still high.[147] Rappers can reduce these costs by making use of globalization and a global assembly line: it is now possible for rappers to record their voices and then send the recordings online to someone – sometimes even on another continent – for production, mixing and mastering.[148] According to Beirut-based rapper Mad Prophet, many such collaborations in the Arab(ic) hip hop community are brokered through online hangouts like the Facebook group "Hip Hop Baladi."[149] Many artists also resort to home studios, pirated software, online and/or illegal distribution and also (rarely) to creating their own independent labels.[150] While production costs can be reduced to a certain degree, for many artists there seem to be bigger problems when it comes to getting paid for one's art:

> **Chyno**: There's no market for it. So, [...] people plateau very quickly. You know. Because they can't find a niche and how to actually generate money with it. People are disillusioned by it as well because in the West it's seen as something to make money from. And they come over here [to Radio Beirut] and they're like, okay, I'm not making money out of it. And I cannot figure out how to make money out of this. [...] Do I have to sell CDs? Do I have to do shows? You know. That's

---

146 Thornburgh.
147 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 151.
148 Puig, "'Composing with,'" 38; Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 152.
149 Bourjaili, Interview with Jeff Bourjaili aka Mad Prophet at Radio Beirut.
150 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 151, 159.

something I had to figure out with time as well, you know. [...] It's not just this, not just that. You know. It's... if you're really taking in that hip hop persona of yours, not your persona, it's more like your character that's fully hip hop. Then you're living really hip hop. Then you would really just want to do it. And then, the more work you put in and the more you network, it's that character of yours which is real, then you're living hip hop. Then you are gonna be the embodiment. You create a niche for yourself and a market that doesn't exist and people are gonna go to you. You know, because you are known as that person. Because you are that embodiment of that. [...] And sooner or later, the chickens will come home to roost. You know, after you put in the work. And usually people feel they plateau really early when it's really... You need to work harder.[151]

Once produced, music has to reach its listeners and customers. One way is through the traditional selling of CDs. While staying in Beirut, I purchased a couple of albums at stores in Hamra, at the bookshop of the Beirut Art Center, or at concerts. Their prices were comparable to CD prices in Germany, ranging from ten to 15 US dollars[152]. In comparison, the very few CDs I picked up in shops in Algeria were very cheap, both in quality and in price – however this might not be a representative sample as I was there only very briefly. However, it seems to be clear that, just like average living costs, prices for non-pirated original albums vary considerably from country to country. At least in some regions, traditional CD sales have only a very marginal economic viability. Potential costumers are either not willing or not able to pay higher CD prices. In Morocco, international record stores like Virgin Megastore or FNAC sell locally produced CDs at prices which hardly cover production costs and are significantly lower than those of imported international CDs (15 versus 200 dirhams).[153] On the one hand, lower prices make music more affordable. On the other hand, they prevent artists from making a living from their work. As in all parts of the world, music is also pirated both through hard copies and through online platforms – an effect which can be observed even more clearly in countries with generally lower incomes and relatively higher prices for music.[154]

Another way to distribute one's music is via online streaming platforms. This might not boost an artist's symbolic capital, given that anyone can publish music online.[155] However, through online distribution, artists can potentially reach all users of an uncensored web, circumventing

---

151 Shorbaji, Interview with Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno at Radio Beirut.
152 In Lebanon, US dollars are used besides Lebanese pounds/lira for many transactions.
153 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 153, 159.
154 Almeida, 158.
155 Almeida, 161.

limitations of local distribution models.[156] Online distribution can provide access to a global market of listeners to Arab(ic) rap music. Many artists use multiple platforms, whether for different purposes or simply to reach a wider audience: streaming platforms like *YouTube* for videos, as well as *Spotify* and *Soundcloud* for audio-only content. Some use music stores like *iTunes* or *Amazon*;[157] some the online store *Bandcamp* which specializes in independent music; a few use *Anghami*, an audio streaming provider focused solely on Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) content. These streaming platforms monetize the artists' work either through advertisements, on a pay-per-download basis or through paying subscribers. Other online platforms like *Facebook, Instagram* or *Twitter* are used to market new album releases, upcoming concerts or other products. Local Arab(ic) rap music scenes profit to varying degrees from online streaming platforms. While the YouTube channels of some exceptional Moroccan artists like Dizzy Dros' or Don Bigg's each have over 100 million views (in June 2020), most Arab rappers in other countries hardly reach 100 thousand views. Still, many artists cannot make a living by selling CDs and distributing their music online, so resort to more creative ways to live off their art, as Beirut-based rapper Samzz illustrates:

> **Samzz**: Like, there was this guy I worked with. I was a shadow writer. A ghostwriter. I wrote a track for him. He said, he wanted a track for a club. It doesn't have to mean anything and he'll pay me for it. [...] I got $250 out of it. That's the most I made out of my music so far. And you know, you have to pay a lot for studio equipment and mixing and mastering and all that. [...] And he, I'm not gonna say his name [chuckles], but he is talentless.[158]

Apparently, Samzz and many other rappers cannot earn a lot through their own art. Samzz hence resorted to taking on a ghostwriting job, writing lyrics which did not "mean anything" for a "talentless" club music artist. Other artists I talked with have a day job. Some, for example, work in the restaurant trade. There are also rappers who make money from selling merchandise such as t-shirts – Almeida mentions the Moroccan rappers Mobydick, Dizzy DROS and Shayfeen as examples.[159] In Lebanon, the twins Omar and Mohamed Kabbani (Ashekman) are now no longer primarily known for rapping but rather for their street art, part of which is done as commissioned

---

156 Almeida, 160.
157 Almeida, 153–54.
158 Ajaj, Interview with Samer Ajaj aka Samzz at Radio Beirut.
159 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 162.

work, and partly for their street wear brand. Depending on the country and city, live events can also play a big role in an artists' finances.

4.4   Live performances / venues / festivals

Venues are important for the building of community. Because venues are known for particular forms of culture, similar people go there, meet similar people there, and also adapt by adjusting to their peers. In chapter 5.1.1, hip hop events in Beirut are analyzed in depth, so here I will give a brief overview over events in Algeria, in Morocco and the Arab(ic) diasporas.

In Algeria, rap is an underground phenomenon that takes place mainly online rather than at events. There is one remarkable rapper in Algeria, Lotfi Double Kanon, whom one could call *"l'arbre qui cache le forêt."* He has published numerous albums, gets media coverage, and even gets invited to televised roundtables and discussions, and can live off his art. Apart from him, no Algerian rapper has financially "made it" to a degree that allows living comfortably and being economically independent from other sources of income. Almost all Algerian rappers are ignored, in fact, by the local media and the wealthy. There is thus a lack of production means which, in turn, influences the art itself.

By contrast, Almeida writes that, in Morocco, almost all live rap music happens during the festival season.[160] These festivals are mostly open-air and free of charge.[161] They are free of charge because, since 1999 – when Mohammed VI became king – they have been mostly sponsored by the *Maḫzan*, i.e. the entourage of the king,[162] in an attempt to benefit from rap's appeal to the youth and to push back Islamism and heavy metal ("satanism"), both of which are seen as too radical.[163] The *Maḫzan* uses festivals also as a space for "controlled opposition"[164] where people feel they can breathe – an effect called *tanaffus*.[165] There is only one major independent music festival, L'Boulevard, without direct ties to the state. However, even L'Boulevard accepted funding from the *Maḫzan* in 2009, because they were unable to obtain other funding from either public or

---

160 Almeida, 115.
161 Almeida, 114.
162 Almeida, 35.
163 Almeida, 22.
164 Almeida, 114.
165 Cooke, *Dissident Syria*, 72.

private sources.[166] By controlling the festival scene and influencing which artists get on the stage – who tend to be the same famous ones every year, together with a few no-names[167] – the *Maḫzan* applies a "divide and rule tactic."[168] Artists dependent on the state certainly think twice before criticizing it too directly.

However, Arab(ic) hip hop events do not take place only in Arab countries. Due to unrest, civil war, international war, the unresolved and so-called "Arab–Israeli" conflict, economic pressure, and social pressure, many Arab rappers have migrated to Europe (and other regions). There, they interact with the local hip hop scene and become part of it. They also mesh with migrant (Arab) communities, and stay in contact with the network they built up previously. For example, I had the chance to attend a concert in Berlin at ACUD MACHT NEU on 2017-07-07 featuring, among others, Jundi Majhul, Chyno, Stormtrap/Asifeh and Bu Kolthoum. The venue frequently invites Arab artists, has also hosted, for example, Osloob, Okydoky (both 2016-12-02) and Hello Psychaleppo (2019-06-08), and thus offers networking opportunities.

4.5 State and foreign funds and influence

As mentioned before, some states fund certain events and certain rappers. But it is not only the rappers' home countries that fund their art: foreign funding bodies play an important role for the cultural scene in the MENA region. The Institut Français, the Instituto Cervantes, US embassies and the Goethe Institut, among others, sponsor the development of certain cultural currents in these countries. Such funding is, on the one hand, a rare source of income for certain artists. On the other hand, one should ask in how far these artists and the rap genre as a whole were thus co-opted into "a state tool for diplomacy to satisfy other countries' agendas."[169] The USA, for example, has used hip hop to "improve its image abroad" and has been sending "hip-hop envoys" to the MENA region since 2005 to perform and hold workshops.[170]

---

166 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 36, 146.
167 Almeida, 90.
168 Almeida, 115.
169 Almeida, 38.
170 Aidi, "The Grand (Hip-Hop) Chessboard: Race, Rap and Raison d'État," 28.

How this kind of foreign funding both nurtures artists and also changes the topics that they address was worked out in Leonie Thal's study of the role of the Goethe Institut in Egypt. She finds that artists whose work uses words and topics like "revolution," "gender," or "education" are funded significantly more often regardless of their works' artistic values. She adds that there are more-or-less closed circles of artists who have the necessary cultural and social capital to become noticed and also, oftentimes, repeatedly funded – because previous funding is a positive criterion in the selection process – whereas other artists with comparable artistic output remain overlooked.[171]

Similar processes can be found both in and beyond the MENA region: in Morocco, rapper Dizzy DROS could perform for example at the Instituto Cervantes in Casablanca.[172] There, in addition to foreign institutions, the Moroccan Ministry of Culture does fund independent musicians. However, those with a high degree of social capital and market success are favored in the application process over newcomers or musicians from outside the Rabat–Casablanca area.[173] In France, state authorities concentrate their support for Muslim rap artists on those deemed "good role models for integration". This puts these artists into a quandary – take state money at the risk of losing credibility, or stay unfunded and keep street support.[174]

During my stay in Beirut, I attended a four-day festival, "La Folle Journée Street Art!" (2016-09-28–2016-10-01), which featured all of the four hip hop core elements – rapping, breaking, spraying and DJing – and was organized and funded by the Institut français. I was told by colleagues at the Orient Institut to have a closer look at their own past conference, Inverted Worlds (2012-10-04–08), which included academic presentations and discussions on hip hop, and also a graffiti installation and a rap concert. However, funding and influence come not only from institutions: individuals also play a role. As mentioned above, my connection to Chyno helped the rapper to perform several concerts in Germany. Likewise, my colleagues Igor Johannsen and Hanna AlTaher at Marburg University organized concerts in Marburg (MC Amin and the Arabian Knightz, 2015-10-12) and Berlin (Chyno, 2016-02-04). While researching for my bachelor's thesis,

---

171 Thal, *Transformation & Partnerschaft?*, 54.
172 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 153–54.
173 Almeida, 149–50.
174 Aidi, "The Grand (Hip-Hop) Chessboard: Race, Rap and Raison d'État," 35.

I also attended two events featuring the Tunisian rapper, El Général. One of these events was a strange combination of round-table discussion and a rap concert with a seated audience, most of them educated and bourgeois – a good example of the oddities foreign funding and research can produce.

4.6   Summary

Before moving on to the case studies, let me briefly summarize some of the points made in this chapter. Hip hop originated in New York City in the 1970s. It incorporated, among other influences, thoughts of Black nationalists and Afro-American Muslims. Since then, hip hop culture has spread all over the world. Algeria was one of the early adopters, Lebanon took well over a decade longer to establish its own scene. While events play a big role in building communities, some regions simply do not support live events, whereas, in others, both indoor and outdoor concerts can be organized. Because of limited airtime on radio and television – and, in the case of Lebanon, also because of a saturated market for alternative music – rappers use international online networks to distribute their art. Still, only a few Arab(ic) rappers and hip hop activists in the MENA region can live off their art (e.g. the Algerian Lotfi Double Kanon or the Ashekman brothers in Lebanon); many have a day job. In this precarious financial situation, both domestic and foreign funding bodies sponsor events and album productions which, on the one hand, financially enables the scene, and, on the other hand, affects its artistic direction and creates dependencies. This historic and socioeconomic overview of Arab(ic) rap music's background prepares us to better understand its scenes and environment today.

5   The Case Studies

This project centers on three case studies, employing different methodological approaches. In this chapter, I will introduce these case studies, explain my choice for each of them, present some material which did not find a place in the published articles, and summarize what the articles add to my PhD project. The case studies each highlight different aspects within a broader scope. Seen together, these three different angles allow for a wider perspective than each one alone could have aimed for.

5.1   Social network analysis – interaction quantified

„The Local and the Global in Networks of Lebanese and Algerian Rappers". *Open Library of Humanities* vol. 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–40. https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.419.

I begin this article by asking how to best approach Arab(ic) hip hop culture. Can we speak of one global Hip Hop Nation or rather of regional, national or local hip hop cultures? To tackle this question, I applied a relational sociology approach to culture, as manifested in interactions between Lebanese and Algerian rappers. Such an approach assumes that "[c]ulture arises within and through interaction and belongs to the domain of interaction."[175] In other words, if people interact with each other, conventions form to ease these interactions, and these conventions form a culture. Turned around: if we identify core interactions, we see which actors are connected to which other actors, giving us a network describing interactivity within the culture.

I analyzed two forms of interactions: featurings, i.e. artistic collaborations, and Twitter followings. Both of these forms of interactions are very easily observable. They are binary on/off interactions: there either is a track on which artist A features artist B, or there is not. Artist A either follows artist B on Twitter, or she does not. It is therefore trivial to visualize these interactions in networks in which artists are nodes and the interactions are edges.[176]

---

175 Crossley, "Relational Sociology and Culture," 4.

176 Other interactions may be less suited to network analysis. For example, intertextual references are often up to interpretation; it is not always clear whether they exist or not. Particularly difficult are cases where some interactions are stronger than others; consider, for example, connections in a friendship network. In these cases, the edges would have to be weighted. This would make it more complicated to interpret the interactions in a visualized network.

The different networks of interaction between rappers in different Arab countries show

1) that rappers are interconnected with each other through, for example, their songs and through social media,

2) that rappers form different clusters: rappers in the whole Levant are interconnected with each other while Algerian rappers seem to be less connected to rappers in neighboring countries,

3) that rappers in Algeria and Lebanon follow US rappers on social media, while French rappers were surprisingly underrepresented in both of these Twitter networks.

There are some aspects worth adding: networks based on one sort of interaction only say as much as that specific kind of interaction can reveal. For example, the absence of a Twitter following does not preclude a following on another social media platform, nor close personal ties that make a social media connection unnecessary. Followings also do not indicate what following "policy" the rappers use: do they follow everyone they find remotely interesting, or are they more selective in their followings? Because of this, an analysis of who follows whom has its limitations. Some of them might, however, be alleviated by interpreting only the overall structure of the network, and not its individual actors.

Featurings, on the other hand, are a harder currency. One of my article's findings was that there are a few rap crews who stand out as network hubs, and bring together many artists through featurings. Some crews feature a high number of other artists, like the Algerian crews T.O.X. (218 featurings), Bled'Art Family (155) and La Zone-K (84), or the Lebanese crew Fareeq el Atrash (84).

The networks show that (some) people, common projects – in this case the songs – as well as social media and communication channels in general can connect people and thus lay the groundwork for the forming of culture.

5.1.1 Events as catalysts for culture

Besides intertextuality, musical collaboration and social media connections, there are other important factors bringing people together. For example, places can unite people and help

creating culture. In his analysis of the early UK punk movement, Nick Crossley identified venues, work places and gigs as keys to the making of a culture.[177]

> Gigs and venues draw music fans together. They function as mechanisms of network formation: foci. But they more effectively generate a network when audiences self-select according to taste and outlook.[178]

In other words, a venue is known for a certain style of music. So people who like this style of music go there and find people who think alike. Now, can what Crossley observed for punk in the UK, also be true for rap music? Literature on hip hop culture has already marked the significant influence that place contributes to the art form:

> Rap artists draw inspiration from their regional affiliations as well as from a keen sense of what I call the *extreme local* [italics in original], upon which they base their constructions of spatial imagery.[179]

This spatial imagery can manifest itself in lyrics, in clothes, in gestures, in language use. Instead of interpreting the expressions of such a spatial imagery, I will instead go directly to the source of the imagery, visiting some of the places that rappers and the hip hop crowd frequent in Beirut. The most prominent example of a rap venue in the whole of Lebanon is Radio Beirut. Radio Beirut is a bar in the Mar Mikhail area, hosting concerts and regular "open mic" sessions. When I was in Beirut, these open mic sessions were moderated by Jeff Bourjaili, who goes by the stage name Mad Prophet. He and Chyno describe the impact the open mic sessions at Radio Beirut have:

> **Mad Prophet**: The scene has grown a lot. I feel like this show helped out. Basically because it's built a platform for underground artists or artists who just wanna practice, you know, people that just wanna listen to this type of stuff, that are into this type of music. You know? Recently other places have been doing the same concept but not as good as ours.[180]

> **Chyno**: The scene is small. It's fucking tiny. You know, I mean a lot of people do hip hop but the scene is tiny. When we're talking about the scene, it's also about interactivity with each other, you know, connectivity with each other. We have that. As a platform where people are getting nurtured within it, we're still just starting. It's only here in Radio Beirut, we have Open Mics. You know, it's such a rare thing. So, a lot of rappers who are coming here on a regular basis are improving drastically. You know, that's like four, five people.[181]

---

177 Crossley, "Pretty Connected The Social Network of the Early UK Punk Movement," 98.
178 Crossley, 99.
179 Forman, *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*, xvii.
180 Bourjaili, Interview with Jeff Bourjaili aka Mad Prophet at Radio Beirut.
181 Shorbaji, Interview with Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno at Radio Beirut.

The open mic session, being regular – every Wednesday, at the time of the interview – is a reliable meeting place and meeting time for everyone interested in rap music and hip hop culture. When I was in Beirut, I regularly went to Radio Beirut for the open mic session, met there a couple of times with Chyno, went to a concert by El Rass, and interviewed Edd Abbas, Chyno, Mad Prophet and Samzz at the bar. However, Radio Beirut is not the only place for rap events. During my stay in Beirut, I went to several concerts and other hip hop-related events at other locations. Wherever I went, I had the impression that, even though Beirut is not a small city, I repeatedly recognized the same people. However, I was not sure if this was just an impression, nor whether this impression could be confirmed by hard data.

So, in order to get a better idea of how the hip hop crowd meets and forms in Beirut, I took a closer look at 13 hip hop events that took place in Beirut in 2015/2016 and were publicly advertised on Facebook. These events range from concerts of artists like Chyno, El Rass, Qarar or Omar Offendum, to a concert/book launch party of Bu Nasser Touffar, to festivals with multiple concerts or other events like the international music festival Beirut & Beyond or the Journée Street Art. All of these events were advertised on Facebook. This platform has (or at least had, at the time) a strange feature allowing people to sign up for events that have already taken place. Everyone claiming to take part in an event could then export the list of attendees. So I signed up for these 13 events and exported their guest lists including everyone with a participation status of either "accepted" or "tentative."

Event	Number of attendees	Event	Number of attendees
Beirut Bandits [2015-07-15]	153	Qarar [2016-08-18]	125
Ard al-Samak [2016-01-15]	736	Chyno [2016-09-24]	607
Cipher Madness [2016-04-05]	95	Journée Street Art [2016-09-28]	912
Omar Offendum [2016-05-11]	191	BuNasir Book Launch [2016-12-08]	613
Chyno & El Rass [2016-06-25]	186	Beirut & Beyond [2016-12-08]	1,282
Idarat al-Tawa77osh [2016-08-05]	459	Sha3beh [2016-12-30]	152
Tamareen [2016-08-10]	100		

Of course, one must keep in mind that confirming attendance at an event on social media and actually showing up to the event are two different pairs of shoes. I did also not differentiate

between those people claiming they would *perhaps* go to the event, i.e. with a participation status of "tentative," and those claiming they *definitely* would go, i.e. with a participation status of "accepted." It would only have made sense to differentiate between these two groups given the probabilities of actual attendance for each group. However, these counts can still give us a useful information on the size of the hip hop crowd in Beirut, on the importance of events for bringing people together, and on the importance of hubs in the network.

The only events with around 1,000 attendees on Facebook were the two festivals Beirut & Beyond and Journée Street Art, confirming that both the hip hop scene in Beirut and its events are quite small. The Beirut & Beyond festival featured several rap acts but was not limited to hip hop music. The Journée Street Art held at the Institut Français featured graffiti exhibitions, a documentary screening, a b-boy ("breakdance") battle, a round-table discussion and a "Five Elements Party" at Radio Beirut. Because of their varied program, diverse lineup of artists, and longer duration, festivals like these can attract a bigger and more diverse audience than a more typical hip hop concert. Events like these festivals can attract new people to hip hop culture who showed no prior interest. On the other hand, the attendee lists for the other events, and especially for the smaller ones, are probably more representative of the hardcore hip hop crowd.

Besides an impression of event size, additional insight can be achieved by focusing on the individual accounts. To do so, I built a two-mode-network out of the data (figure 1). A two-mode-network is a network in which the nodes represent two sorts of actor. In this case, we represent events and attendees as node types. Attendees are not directly connected to each other in this network, but they are indirectly connected through events.
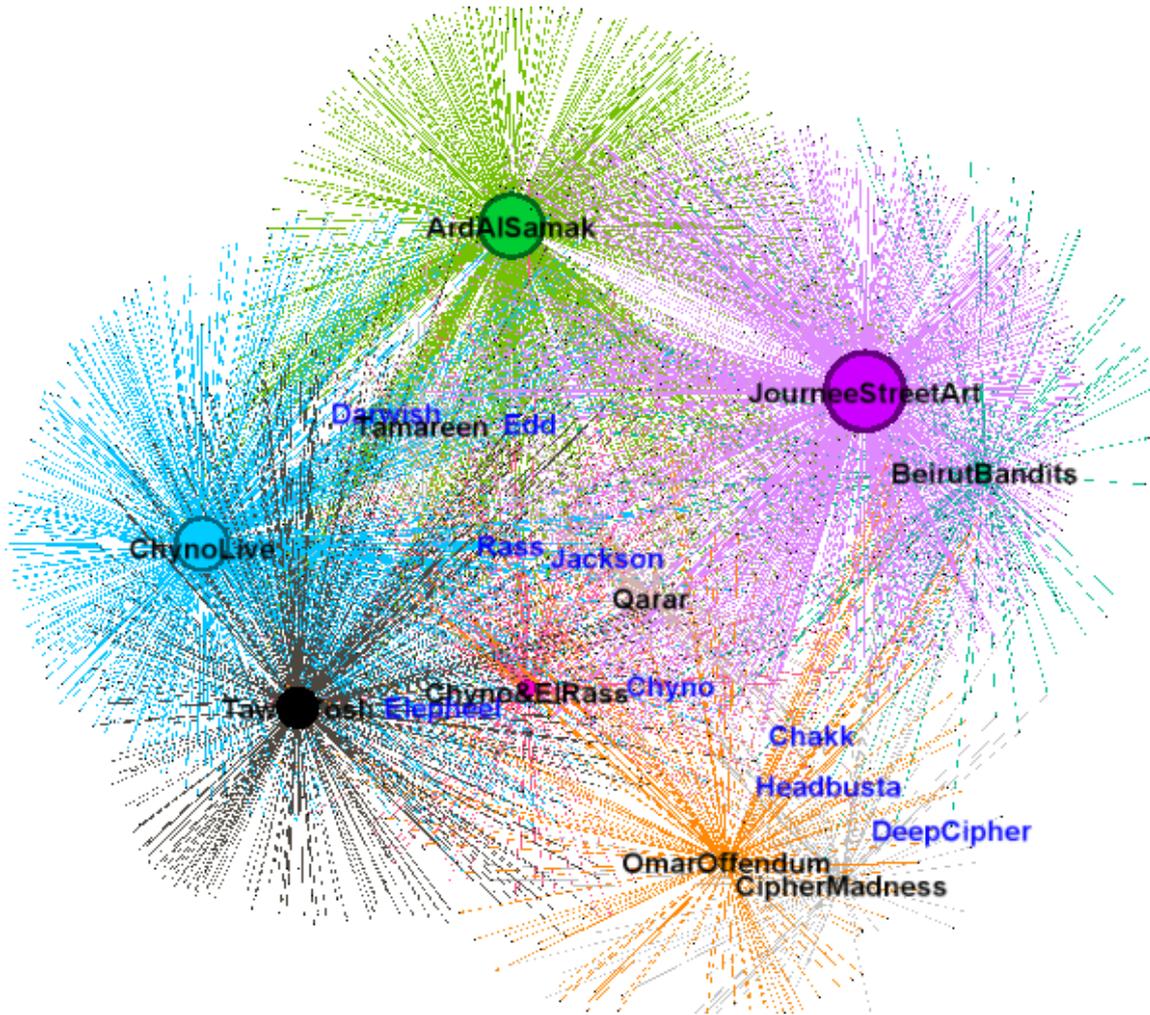
Figure 1: Two-mode-network of hip hop events taking place in 2016 and their Facebook attendees. Black = events. Blue = hip hop artists, rappers

Accounts of people going to ≥ 10 events	4
Accounts of people going to < 10 and ≥ 5 events	43
Accounts of people going to 3 or 4 events	236
Accounts of people going to 2 events	511
Accounts of people going to 1 event	3,515
Total number of distinct accounts	4,309

Some of the attendees went to more events than others. In network theory terms, their nodes have a higher degree, i.e. more connections. Among a total of 4,309 distinct people, only four claimed to attend at least ten of the 13 events, and 283 claimed attending at least three events. So

we have a relatively small hard core of people claiming to attend multiple events, while a vast majority of people, 3,515 of them, claimed to attend one event. This hard-data approach confirms my own impression and the impressions of people in the field:

> **Anthony Semaan:**[182] [...] we live in a bubble. Beirut is a bubble that's so small and in that bubble there's even more bubbles. So when you're trying to speak about music, you're catering to 20,000 people, and in those 20,000 people, we're all fighting each other to get 500 people for this show, and 1,000 people for that show.[183]

> **Samzz**: In one night you make $50. $100 tops. If you look at the turnout, it's 30 people out of Beirut city, 30 people! You know, those are the constant regulars. They always come to our shows. They support us, they know hip hop, they support hip hop. [...] Before, I'm talking three, four years ago when hip hop was still you know, poppin,' that's when we used to make money out of it. Like I played shows at Live Beirut? 1,200 people.[184]

Among this small group of regulars going to a bigger number of events, one finds a handful of well-known artists and hip hop activists. Two of these, Chyno and Edd Abbas, both members of Fareeq el Atrash, stand out not only in this network, but also as hubs (strongly connected to other artists) in the network of featurings. People like these are among the cornerstones of their community. People always seem to run into them, they are the ones initiating projects that bring people together, and others get sent to them if opportunities for projects open up.

Names on Facebook and stagenames	Degree in the event network
Nasser Shorbaji (aka Chyno)	10
Hani Al Sawah (aka Al Darwish)	6
Jackson Allers	6
Theios Johnny Cephalospastis (aka Headbusta)	6
Chakk JnoodBeirut	5
Mazen El Sayed (aka El Rass)	5
Omar Al Fil (aka Elepheel)	5
Sarhad Bekarian (aka Deep Cipher)	4
Edd Abbas	3

---

182 Semaan is one of the founders of Beirut Jam Sessions, a music management agency.
183 "You Are What You Sing: Music and Identity. Discussion."
184 Ajaj, Interview with Samer Ajaj aka Samzz at Radio Beirut.

One example of a project which was kickstarted through such a network was the The Arena battle rap series, on which I will focus more in the next chapter. Omar Kabbani remembers how he brokered the meeting of Dizaster and Edd Abbas which led to the first of the battles:

> **Omar Kabbani:** He [Dizaster] came, he told me, we went and ate falafel at Barbar [laughs]. He ate shawarma, I ate falafel, he told me "I wanna do something for the scene. What do you think?" I told him, I think, the most active MC right now, two years ago, was Edd. He just did something. "Do you have his number?" I gave him his number, and I spoke to Edd, "Edd, guess who I have with me in the car?," I told him, "Dizaster." He said, "Who, Dizaster?" He knows him but he was not expecting… they spoke together and it was really like… it was really cool.[185]

When Omar Kabbani mentions that he went to the "most active MC," he provides a textbook example of a network effect: People who are already well-known and well connected are more likely to get new connections than those who are less well connected, an effect called "preferential attachment"[186] which amplifies the differences between strongly and weakly connected people.

5.1.2 Why not to ignore networks

As we have seen, there are many different forms of interaction in the network of Arab(ic) rap. In addition to the local networks described, border-crossing international networks warrant examination. Arab rappers listen to, for example, US-American and French rap. Some works cannot be fully understood in the context of the artist's country alone; the extent of how misleading it is to ignore international linkages is exemplified in Almeida's interpretation of the song "A la Marocaine" by H-Kayne featuring Ridfabuleux, released in 2011:

> While the song resorts to a number of strategies to remember the nation, it surprisingly does it in French, the language of the colonizer. Although the Constitution does not mention French as an official language, it has remained as the language of the elites and is rarely used by other than the French-educated urban privileged. French thus has a limited capacity to reach Moroccan youth, particularly the lower socio-economic classes, and thus limited means to relate to this youth. The aim of recreating the nation is therefore curtailed by the use of a foreign language with, however, a socio-economic significance. The inconsistency between the language in "A la Marocaine" and the message comes across as a lack of socio-economic awareness, devaluing its power as a song of unity.[187]

---

185 Kabbani, Interview with Omar Kabbani of Ashekman.

186 "The probability that [a new node] will choose a given node is proportional to the number of links the chosen node has. That is, given the choice between two nodes, one with twice as many links as the other, it is twice as likely that the new node will connect to the more connected node." Barabási, *Linked*, 86.

187 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 77.

Almeida's interpretation of French as "the language of the elites" and a "foreign language" neglects Moroccan hip hop culture's ties to, and embedding in, a global hip hop culture. By using the title, "A la Marocaine," H-Kayne and Ridfabuleux reference the French rapper Soprano's smash hit, "A la bien," released in 2007. In "A la bien," Soprano raps about many small details that describe his generation living in Marseille. By rapping in French and by using a similar title which rhymes with the original,[188] H-Kayne and Ridfabuleux draw a connection to Soprano's song. This connection invokes pride in one's roots and local anchorage, as was displayed in "A la bien." By placing their song in contrast to Soprano's, H-Kayne and Ridfabuleux also amplify its patriotism. It is as if they were saying, "You do it the French way, 'à la bien,' but this is how we do it, 'à la Marocaine.'" Choosing to rap in French also transports this message to a French audience. The lyrics' intertextuality, however, gets lost when focusing narrowly on local surroundings.

5.1.3 Summary

Analyzing culture through a network perspective can yield many interesting results. In the article on "The Local and the Global in Networks of Lebanese and Algerian Rappers", I focused on whether artists' interaction clusterings vary by geographic location. In other words, I worked on the question of whether artists tend to interact more with each other if they are geographically nearer to each other. While Algeria's rappers seem only weakly connected to other Arab(ic) artists via either artistic collaborations or Twitter followings, the Levant, in contrast, seems strongly interconnected.

There are also other aspects which would merit further analysis and which would also be suitable for a quantitative network analysis focused on Arabism in Arab(ic) rap. For this purpose, other parts of the *music worlds* could also be analyzed: for art is produced not only by those people conventionally labeled 'artists,' but also by 'support personnel' like producers, managers, CD sellers, etc.[189] As mentioned, a closer look at interaction in other social media networks like Facebook or at online distribution platforms like Soundcloud or Bandcamp might reveal even more networks and actors in these networks that altogether shape Arab(ic) rap.

---

188 "Marocaine" rhymes with "bien" in the local Marseillais dialect.
189 For the role of support personnel in art worlds see: Becker, "Art As Collective Action"; Becker, *Art Worlds*.

Of course, a methodological approach like the one employed in this part of the project comes with certain particularities, potentials and limits: network analysis is inherently quantitative. Therefore, it is excellent for validating hypotheses based on feelings and impressions, to test if something is true in the face of hard data or not. These validated hypotheses can then be complemented by qualitative methods. Therefore, the other two case studies I conducted abandoned this wide quantitative angle and zoomed in on some select aspects which I consider important. One of these aspects, I analyzed within the framework of my PhD project are the different language registers Arab(ic) rappers use to create identity and community. To do this, I took a closer look at Arab(ic) battle rap and the languages of battle rappers.

5.2 Sociolinguistic demarcations in battle rap

„Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling". *Occhialì – Rivista sul Mediterraneo Islamico* vol. 4 (2019): 13–28. https://doi.org/10.20378/irbo-54191.

Especially – but not only – in battle rap culture, rappers meet in ciphers,[190]

> "where language ideologies and identities are shaped, fashioned and vigorously contested, and where languages themselves are flexed, created, and sometimes (often intentionally) bent up beyond all recognition."[191]

In the article "Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling" I focused on "The Arena," a Lebanese series of organized rap battles. I analyzed which languages and language registers battle rappers use and which effects their language choices have: some battle rappers use Standard Arabic and elaborate rhyming patterns to demonstrate their good command of the Arabic language, and their stylistic and rhetorical prowess. Others use dialect, street language, swear words and humor to accentuate their authenticity and closeness to the people. Muhandas gives two perspectives on whether to use 'high' or 'low' language:

> **Muhandas**: A lot of Lebanese rappers and even the respected ones, when they hear you talking in *fuṣḥā*, they'll be like "What the fuck are you doing? Yo, this language, we don't use it anymore. Why are you doing this? Why don't you speak in dialect that you are part of?"[192]

> **Muhandas**: *Fuṣḥā*, I think, is the common point and the Lebanese dialect is a shitty language to be honest, because the dictionary is so small. There are things if you want to say in Lebanese dialect,

---

190 For more on "ciphering" in (Egyptian) Arabic, see: Mangialardi, "Deciphering Egyptian Rap Ciphers."
191 Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook, *Global Linguistic Flows*, 2.
192 Safieddine, Interview with Najib Safieddine aka Muhandas.

you just can't. You have to use the *fuṣḥā* word. [...] What I'm doing is using the mother language instead of using the dialect. First because it's rhythmic, its musical, and this is a language that poets 2,000 years ago were using.[193] This is what made it so easy, I mean this language has been used for so many years, in the context of poetry, so we can learn from them. [...] You use the tool that makes you capable of doing more, so instead of holding a hand gun, I hold a big ass machine gun, because it makes me do more.[194]

Besides working on language choices, I also explored how rappers draw connections between their art and different poetic traditions ranging from ancient Arabic poetry to local *zaǧal* and hip hop culture. Each link that rappers emphasize frames their art, drawing from a particular literary canon and telling a story about how the art is supposed to be read. Such a literary canon is a means to create a shared identity, an "imagined community."[195] One example would be El Rass' reference to the pre-Islamic *muʿallaqāt* poems, in whose tradition he apparently sees his own art:

«اخترت أن أسمّي موسيقاي (تعليقاً). وفي هذا إشارة إلى عملية التعليق في اللغة العربية، كما تشير إلى ذلك كلمة عربية تأتي من الجذر نفسه، (معلّقات)، التي هي جسم الشعر الجاهلي والتي تم اختيارها وتعليقها بالحبر الذهبي على جدران الكعبة في مكّة المكرمة» [...] يأتي تعليق الراس ليعقد الصلة بين الهيب الهوب العربي والنتاج الشعري العربي من الشعر الجاهلي إلى الشعر الحديث.[196]

– Māzin as-Sayyid aka El Rass, quoted by Dallāl

While I concentrated mainly on Lebanese rappers in the article, one can also find other rappers drawing parallels between battle rap and other forms of Arabic poetry. Two noteworthy examples follow in the next pages. Thereafter a couple of notes follow which deal with language registers and gender related topics in battle rap, and with reactions they provoked when I presented the research in this article.

5.2.1 Algeria – DRP Rap Cup, Ǧarīr and al-Farazdaq

One example of a direct connection between battle rap and other forms of Arabic poetry can be observed in the Algerian rap battle tournament, *DRP Rap Cup*. *DRP Rap Cup* is produced by the

---

193 If Muhandas is indeed referring to Arabic poetry here, he is mistaken by several centuries. Imru' al-Qais' poems, which are counted among the earliest works of Arabic poetry, date from the 6th century.

194 Safieddine, Interview with Najib Safieddine aka Muhandas.

195 Penier, "BAME Authors, the Literary Establishment and the Publishing Industry in the UK."

196 Translation [my own]: "'I chose to name my music taʿlīq (comment). This refers to the process of commenting in the Arabic language, as indicated by an Arabic word that comes from the same root, muʿallaqāt, which is the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry and which was chosen and hung in golden ink on the walls of the Kaaba in Mecca.' [...] El Rass' taʿlīq comes to make the link between Arab hip-hop and Arab poetic production from pre-Islamic poetry to modern poetry." Cf.: Dallāl, "Al-Hīb Hūb al-ʿarabī: Ar-Rās Wa-'l-Huwīya al-Ǧādīda."

rapper Systeman aka Saci Nassim and his record label, Dark Road Prod. All the episodes are published online, on YouTube.

The official trailer for the broadcasts[197] begins with stereotypical scenes showing rock and sand deserts, horse and camel riders, and an oasis with old clay buildings. A male narrator tells how a "war of words" (ḥarb kalamiyya) took place in pre-Islamic times (ǧāhiliyya) and in which two poets (zūǧ šuʿarāʾ) were facing each other. A cartoon now fades in, showing desert sand, a tent, some carpets, a camel and a palm tree. This scenery then becomes the background for a prominent example of poetic duels; that between al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr. The two poets are brought to life as cartoon characters, and two lines of their works are quoted:

> Al-Farazdaq: إنَّ الذي سَمَكَ السّماءَ بَنى لَنَا بَيْتاً، دَعَائِمُهُ أَعَزُّ وَأَطْوَلُ
> "He who raised the heavens built for us a house with pillars stronger and longer"[198]
> Ǧarīr: خزى الذي سمكَ السماءَ مجاشعاً وَبَنى بِناءكَ في الحَضِيضِ الأسْفَلِ
> "He who raised the sky shamed Mujashiʿ and set your tent in filthy lowness"[199]

All of what is said is musically underlined by drums. After this introduction a modern beat is added, the cartoon characters of al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr fade away, and are replaced by cartoon versions of US-American rappers Tupac Shakur and Notorious B.I.G. These pictures are followed by fast-changing photographs of other well-known US-American rappers like Rakim, Method Man and Nas.

Then, DRP Rap Cup is announced as the "first professional battle in the Arab world" (أول باتل محـترف في العـالم العـربي). Before the actual episode begins, the DRP Rap Cup logo is briefly displayed. It comprises a blue circle with a golden crown on top. In the middle of the circle, white letters read "DRP RAP CUP." Around these letters, the words "PEACE, LOVE, UNITY, RESPECT" are written. Each of these words is separated from its neighbor by a microphone. The terms can be associated with the Universal Zulu Nation, a pioneering hip hop organization founded in the 1970s by Afrika Bambaata which promotes hip hop on a global level.[200]

---

197 DRP Art & Communication, *DRP RAP CUP ▶ Bande Annonce 2 #DrpRapCup*.
198 Wormhoudt, *The Naqaith of Jarir and al Farazdaq Translated from the Text of Anthony Ashley Bevan*, 25.
199 Wormhoudt, 29, transcription unchanged.
200 "Zulu Beliefs."

By transitioning from al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr to Tupac and Biggie, the makers of DRP Rap Cup construe today's battle rappers as direct successors of ancient Arabic poets. It can be assumed that the audience of DRP Rap Cup is familiar with al-Farazdaq (d. ~730) and Ǧarīr (d. ~728). In these poets' time, most well-known poets served a patron of high societal standing,[201] and received protection in exchange for loyalty and poetic praise.[202] By competing against other poets in front of an audience, they could both endanger and reinforce their reputation.[203] In these competitions, two elements resembling rappers' *boasts* and *disses* can be identified: *faḫr* (self-praise) and *hiǧāʾ* (slander).[204] The origin of these competitions lies in pre-Islamic times, when poets encouraged their tribes' warriors through the "magical effect" of their words.[205] To display their own and their tribe's *ʿirḍ* (honor) and *ʿizza* (power) as horsemen and warriors, poets emphasized courage, generosity, hospitality and wealth and described their people's good equipment.[206] Bedouin poets also boasted by depicting their lovers, weapons, camels and horses.[207]

Though some of the poets' virtues, attributes and possessions differ from those which rappers emphasized on, one can easily identify common features between battle rap and poetic battling in the time of al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr. In both cultures, the artists boast of their deeds and riches, praise their own people and *diss* opposing poets and their opponents' entourage.

> **Chyno:** That's the essence of hip hop. It's impressing your peers. You go up, you do a cipher, you're trying to do the best you can do. You go to a battle rap. You wanna win. That's essentially the competitiveness of hip hop.[208]

However, not all rappers like to draw such a parallel with the ancient tradition. One of the members of the jury at DRP Rap Cup, the Oran-based rapper Fada Vex, rejects it:

> **Fada Vex:** C'est deux contextes complètement différents. [...] Ce qui était dans *al-ʿaṣr al-ǧāhīlī*, il y avait toujours derrière ou une connotation politique [...] ou des connotations tribales. *Yaʿnī kān hunāka marǧaʿ siyāsī au qabīlī. Yaʿnī anā udāfiʿ ʿan qabīlatī. Anā aḥsan šāʿir au anā udāfiʿ ʿan amīrin mā au ʿan ḫalīfatin mā au ʿan...* Par contre dans le rap, dans le rap, c'est vraiment s'imposer soi-

---

201 Heine, *Märchen, Miniaturen, Minarette*, 56.

202 Heine, 53.

203 Kilpatrick, "Abū L-Faraǧ's Profiles of Poets. A 4th/10th Century Essay at the History and Sociology of Arabic Literature," 112; Beeston et al., *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, 410.

204 Ashtiany, *ʿAbbasid belles-lettres*, 279.

205 Toelle and Zakharia, *À la découverte de la littérature arabe du VIème siècle à nos jours*, 90.

206 Toelle and Zakharia, 91.

207 Jacobi, *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaṣīde*, 66.

208 Shorbaji, Interview with Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno at Radio Beirut.

même [...] et il y a tout un background qui est derrière. Il y a la culture hip-hop. Il y a ce qu'on a écouté. Il y a ce qu'on a regardé à la télé, ce qu'on a comme culture de film, comme culture musicale, comme lecture, [...] ça veut dire dans le rap, il suffit pas d'être poète seulement. [...] Poète, c'est au départ. Mais après, il y a plein de skills qui vient se greffer.[209]

According to Fada Vex, rap battling promotes individuality and has to be understood as part of hip hop culture, whereas ancient Arabic poetic battling has to be understood in its tribal and political context.

5.2.2 Egypt – Ahmed Mekky: "Ar-Rap aṣluh ʿarabī"

Another prominent Arab rapper who relates ancient Arab poetic battles and Arabic rap battles is the Egyptian rapper, Ahmed Mekky.[210] In 2012, he preluded his album "Aslo 3arabi" with verses by the poets al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr and an Arabic founding myth of hip hop culture:

[Ahmed Mekky:]

شبه الجزيرة العربية هو أول مكان في العالم بدأت فيه المبارزات الكلامية. اثنين شعراء بتحدو بعض قدام الناس في السوق. كل واحد برتجل قصيدة بهجو فيها خصمه. و اللي كان بيبهر الناس برائعة شعراء دول و سرعة البديهة و الملكة في استخدام اللغة. حتى أن ربنا سبحانه و تعالى لما نزل عليهم معجزة نزل القرآن الكريم عشان فيها إعجاز لغوي. و لما قرأه قالوا إن الكلام دا استحاله يكون في إنسان كتبه. دا منزل مالرب و طور العرب الشعر أكثر و أكثر لدرجة أنهم أنشأوا العلم اسمه علم العروض. و هو تقسيم الشعر إلى بحور حسب إيقاع الكلام [...] و لي ألّف دا الخليل بن أحمد الفراهيدي لما كان ماشي في سوق الحدادين. و سمع إقاعات طرق السيوف و الحديد ابتكر موضوع الإقاع في الكلام دا. الأفكار دي وصلت إفريقيا عن طريق التجارة و الأفارقة بطبيعة ثقافتهم فيها الإقاع و الطبل. فقالوا الشعر عالإقاع و الموسيقى. لما كولومبوس اكتشف أمريكا أخذوا بعضها كثير من الأفارقة معهم كعبيد. و كانوا بيحكو مشاكلهم و مشاكل الشارع و حياة عالإقاع و الفن دا بدأ يظهر و سموه راب و انتسب لأمريكا بص هو في الحقيقة أصله عربي.[211]

---

209 Translation [my own]: "These are two completely different contexts. [...] In pre-Islamic times, there was always a political or tribal connotation to it. That means, there was a political or tribal reference to it, i.e. I defend my tribe; I'm the best poet. Or I defend some emir or caliph or... By contrast, in rap, it's really standing up for oneself, and there is a whole background to it. There's hip hop culture. There's what you have listened to. There's what you have watched on TV, what you have as movie culture, as music culture, as reading [...] That means that in rap, it is not enough to be only a poet. [...] Poet, that's at the beginning. Afterwards, there are many skills that come along." Bourbia, Interview with Malik Bourbia aka Fada Vex.

210 Besides Mekky, other Egyptian rappers like "The Arabian Knightz" also see this connection. Cf. Mangialardi, "Deciphering Egyptian Rap Ciphers," 78–79.

211 Translation [my own]: "The Arabian Peninsula is the first place in the world where word contests began. Two poets confront each other in front of the people in the marketplace. Each one improvises a qaṣīda in which he mocks his opponent and which blinds the people with the magnificence of these poets, with the speed of improvisation and with the talent in the use of language. Even our Lord – praised and exalted be he – when he sent down to them a miracle, he sent down the Qurʾān al-karīm, because in it is a linguistic miracle. And when

Mekky claims rap has Arabic roots (*aṣl*). According to him, these roots are the lyrical competitions (*mubārazāt kalāmīya*) which were held between Arabic poets way back in the 8th century and even before. This tradition of lyrical competitions reached Africa where it mixed with African rhythm and drums (*'l-īqā' u-'ṭ-ṭabl*). When African slaves were brought to the USA, they told their problems to the rhythm, an art they would later called "rap."

Several aspects are worth pointing out here: The narrator boasts of the Arabian Peninsula as the supposed global origin of word contests. As markers of a poet's skill, he mentions speed of improvisation and linguistic talent. He goes so far as to draw a connection between poetic dueling and the *Qur'ān* by alluding to the theory of *I'ğāz al-Qur'an*. The latter was developed by the Mu'tazila school of thought around the 10th century, and claims that it is impossible for any human to create something as linguistically perfect as the *Qur'ān*. Thus, Mekky points out that battle rap and its valuing of rhetorical proficiency is not only rooted in Arabic literature but also in Islamic religious traditions. Mekky thus creates a founding myth that caters to the many who speak of strong ties between Islam and hip hop culture, ties that many researchers have written on.[212]

5.2.3 Notes on feedback, language and gender

When I presented my research on battle rap, the feedback I received was quite diverse. Two aspects particularly stuck out: language and gender. I was surprised by how much critique focused not on the methodological and theoretical grounding of my research project, but rather

they read it, they said that it was impossible for there to be a person who wrote it, and that it was sent down from God; and the Arabs developed poetry further and further to the point that they created a science called metrics. And this is the division of poetry into meters according to the rhythm of the words. [...] And the one who wrote this is al-Ḫalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, as he was walking the Sūq al-Ḥaddādīn, and when he heard the rhythms of the knocking of swords and iron, he created the subject of metrics. Via trade routes, these ideas reached Africa and the Africans, in whose culture rhythm and drumming is to be found. And the Africans recited poetry to rhythm and music. And when Columbus discovered America, many Africans were taken there as slaves. And they told their problems and the problems of the street and of life to the rhythm. And this art began to show itself and they called it 'rap' and they trace its origin back to America but in reality its roots are Arabic."

212 See for example: Amghar, "Rap et islam : quand le rappeur devient imam"; Cheney, "Representin' God: Rap, Religion and the Politics of a Culture"; Fuess, "'The War of First Names'. Music and Islam in France"; Gansinger, *Radical Religious Thought in Black Popular Music. Five Percenters and Bobo Shanti in Rap and Reggae*; Khabeer, "Rep That Islam1"; Mohaiemen, "Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip Hop's Hidden History"; Salhi, "Hip-Hop Bismillah: Subcultural Worship of Allah in Western Europe"; Sayyid, "ar-Rāb wa-'n-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī: Bayn al-mawrūṯ al-inqilābī wa-'l-ištibāk."

on the research object itself, that is the content of the battle rap lyrics. These lyrics were described by some of my fellow researchers as "vulgar," "not comparable quality-wise to other forms of Arabic poetry," "misogynist," "void of meaningful content," "sloppy language mixtures," and so on. Some other colleagues were on the other hand fascinated by the "witty wordplay" and "skillful code-switching" or by the rappers' skills at improvisation and engaging the audience. Both the negative and positive receptions to battle rap have something in common: neither focus on the research itself; both focus on the research object. Both reactions are triggered by something which they found in this research area but not in others.

This something is the rappers' apparent "disrespect" for academia's and White society's standard codes of communication. This "standard" can manifest in allowing only certain language registers, specific grammar, a limited and select set of swearwords, code-switching to accepted second languages/registers, and content-wise limitations in topics and opinions. The specifics of what is accepted as "standard" however, can vary greatly from time to time and place to place. Alim very poignantly explains the social construction of "standard":

> Standard simply means that this is the language variety that those in authority have constructed as the variety needed to gain access to resources.[213]

El Rass explains by way of example what such a "standard" might mean in an Arabo-Islamic context. He identifies tendencies of "monopolized linguistic authority" that are attacked by rappers who "penetrate this monopoly" by "appropriating the entire Islamic textual heritage":

> هي نفسها السلطة اللغويّة التي تسعى المنظومة الحاكمة إلى احتكارها [...] أي اختراق لهذا الاحتكار هـو تهديـد لشبكة المفاهيم التي تستند عليها هذه المنظومة لضبط الوعي الجماعي وتأطيره [...] من هنا أيضاً، تأتي رغبـة لدى الـراب العربي في إعـادة تملّك كامـل المـوروث النصـي الإسـلامي الـذي تحـول بذاتـه، على أسـاس التأويـل السلطوي الفوقي، إلى احتكار بيد المنظومة الحاكمة.[214]

Any linguistic authority that is cornered might feel challenged and lash out. Perhaps academics, especially in the humanities, depend on precise and skillful language use. During their studies

---

213 Alim, *Roc the Mic Right*, 67.

214 Translation [my own]: It is the linguistic authority itself that the ruling system seeks to monopolize [...] Any penetration of this monopoly is a threat to the network of concepts on which this system is based in order to control and shape the collective consciousness. [...] From here also comes the desire of Arabic rap to appropriate the entire Islamic textual heritage, which has transformed itself, on the basis of superior authoritarian interpretation, into a monopoly in the hands of the ruling system. Sayyid, "ar-Rāb wa-'n-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī: Bayn al-mawrūṯ al-inqilābī wa-'l-ištibāk."

they have to learn how to formulate arguments, they have to learn which authors they have to read or at least quote and they have to internalize a certain standard in language register and writing style to be accepted in their field. Thus, as people who are conscious of language use, they are perhaps either attracted by artists questioning linguistic norms, or feel endangered by the artists' display of language mastery which differs so much from their own. It shows that there are other ways of playing the linguistic field which do not conform to the rules these academics have internalized themselves:

> Hip Hop artists *been* knowin that they language is "advanced." [Rapper] KRS[215] is reversing 'standard' notions of correctness and appropriateness, realizing that the HHN [Hip Hop Nation] has distinct values and aesthetics that differ from the majority culture (although simultaneously and implicitly reproducing values of 'correctness').[216]

Besides language, the other aspect I was frequently confronted with when talking about my PhD project, was the role of women in Arab(ic) hip hop communities. One can find notable female rappers in these communities like the Moroccan Soultana, the Lebanese Malikah or the Palestinian Shadia Mansour. Quantity-wise, however, female rappers, and indeed non-cis-males more generally, do not play a big role.[217] Other researchers have also noticed that a) female rappers are scarce in the MENA region, and b) the few existing tracks by female rappers get disproportionately high attention outside of the MENA region.[218] The data I collected for studying collaboration networks suggest that female rappers constitute less than 5% of all rap artists. In order to focus on my primary research questions, I did not further investigate the reasons of this domination of cis-males in Arab(ic) rap. However, one can assume that some of the gender-related characteristics of hip hop communities on a global scale, also apply in Arab(ic) rap.

Gender roles in hip hop are often binary to the extreme, and highly patriarchal. Judith Grant argues that what she calls the "hypermasculinity" of male rappers can be interpreted as "a

---

215 KRS-One, born 1965, is a Bronx-raised rap pioneer.

216 [sic!] Alim, *Roc the Mic Right*, 14.

217 O'Keefe's "project to document every single significant female MC in Arabic hip-hop" from around 2014 lists fewer than 100 female rappers from across the MENA region and counts as "significant" anyone for whom he finds an online source. Cf.: O'Keefe, "Female Rappers."

218 Almeida mentions the Moroccan rappers Soultana and Tendresse who until 2013 had both produced one single which was noticed internationally. Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 16–17.

response to powerlessness enacted in the context of a preexisting gender structure."[219] Powerlessness is experienced by many young Arab males: political oppression, (civil) war, unemployment, and corruption, but also the lack of socially accepted ways of having sex before marriage can all lead to feelings of being marginalized and "emasculated." In this situation, rapping can help construct a "tough, resistant, masculine image."[220] This hypermasculine act helps, on the one hand, to solidify patriarchy, but could also be seen as a parody attacking it.[221] It certainly inspires more males to rap than females, which leads to male rappers dominating the field quantitatively. On the other hand, Almeida's research in Morocco has led her to notice that sexualized women are almost completely absent in MENA rap, which she believes stems from rap in the region being

> more concerned with the everyday lives of urban youth, tackling social inequities and political corruption, but also with presenting a creative and aesthetic value that does not revolve merely around sexualized women[222]

I would agree in that, if we take a look at rap and pop music videos in the MENA region, it is certainly the pop music videos which put a bigger focus on sexualizing women.[223] However, the hypermasculine posture which complements the picture can clearly also be found in rap lyrics and hip hop culture – although there are notable exceptions to the rule.[224] One of the areas in hip hop culture, in which it plays a crucial part, is battle rap. Battle rap seems very much male-dominated, with male attendance rates at battle rap events in the USA as high as 80%.[225] In The Arena, the male quota seems comparable. Concerning the lyrics, it does not take long to find sexist and misogynist verses:

---

219 Grant, "Bring the Noise: Hypermasculanity in Heavy Metal and Rap," 24.
220 Greenberg, "'The King of the Streets'. Hip-Hop and the Reclaiming of Masculinity in Jerusalem's Shuʿafat Refugee Camp," 3.
221 Grant, "Bring the Noise: Hypermasculanity in Heavy Metal and Rap," 24.
222 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 104.
223 See for example: Armbrust, "What Would Sayyid Qutb Say? Some Reflections on Video Clips."
224 See, for example, "Jasadik-hom," a spoken-word performance by the Palestinian rap group DAM that attacks intersectional discrimination against Arab women in Israel with lines like "aḫaḏa-lī waqt ataʿallam aʿšaq ǧasadī, ǧasadī al-unṯawī al-ʿarabī." ("It took me time to learn how to be in love with my body, my feminine Arab body.") Cf: DAM, *Ben haana wa maana*.
225 Mavima, "Bigger By the Dozens: The Prevalence of Afro-Based Tradition in Battle Rap," 99.

		English	Arabic
1	**Muhandas** vs A-Kob	I am a *Sayyid* from the household and the blood lineage of the Imam you consider a hero I expected you to be elated, like a gay guy kissed by another male	أنا سيد من أهل البيت وسلالة دم الإمام اللي انت شايفو بطل كنت بتوقع إنك تنبسط متل شي شاذ جنسيا بايسو عايسو ذكر
2	**Dizaster** vs Edd Abbas	After we are done here, I'm going to go to a restaurant and eat Eddy's Mommy No, no, I am not being disrespectful I said I'm going to a restaurant to eat a plate of Edamame You've never eaten Edamame?	بس بعد ما نخلص من هون رح روح عالمحل وافقع واحد بإديز مامي لا لا انتبهو ما عم قلل من احترامي انتبهو عم قول بدي روح عل محل وافقع صحن إيديمامي مش آكلين منو هيدا الإيديمامي
3	**Muhandas** vs A-Kob	Your girlfriend, I am gonna use linguistic violence against, And her screams might reach Nasawiya[226] But then, my organ will enter her mouth reaching from her throat to her kidneys	صديقتك بدي عنفها لغويا فيمكن يوصل الصراخ لنسوية بس ساعتها رح يفوت عضوي بتما ليوصل من حلقا لكلاويها
4	**A-Kob** vs Muhanda	I will hang you like laundry with tongs and bang you Please don't get me wrong, look how happy he became when I said I'd bang him	أنا رح انشرك متل الغسيل وعلقك عملقط وأقرطك بليز ما تفهمني غلط، ليك بس قلتلو أقرطك شو انبسط
5	**A-Kob** vs Muhandas	I have been playing the game for long, Najib When I was spitting rhymes, you were spitting on it and ejaculating on your hand He is still shy, he calls it a stick; You will always be Layla[227] and I the wolf	انا صارلي باللعبة من زمان يا نجيب وقت ما كنت بزق قافيات، وانت تبزق عليه عايدك تجيب بعدو بيستحي بسمي قضيب، انت رح تضلك ليلى وأنا دايما الديب

Example [1] combines the topics of religion and gender: Muhandas begins with a religious reference saying he is of Prophet Muḥammad's and Imam Hussein's lineage and, as such, worthy of his opponent's admiration because the latter is a Shīʿite. He then traverses to say that his opponent should be "elated like a gay guy kissed by another male," complementing his status boasts with denigration of both his opponent and homosexuals. The remaining examples represent a couple of themes which recur often in the battles I examined: Rappers boast of hypersexuality which is embodied in a verbal display of impressive sexual organs [example 3], sexual conquests [2] and sexual dominance [4]. One notices that this dominance is expressed through penetration whereby the dominating part asserts his masculinity regardless of whether the dominated part is a woman [2] or a man [4]. This view of masculinity is frequent in many cultures and also in Western Asia and North Africa.[228] It is also frequent in hip hop culture:

---

226 A Beirut-based feminist collective. See https://www.nasawiya.org/.
227 The Arabic version of Little Red Riding Hood.
228 Dunne, "Power and Sexuality in the Middle East."

> Gangsta rap [...] frequently makes use of same-sex encounters – particularly when the sexual encounter is the result of the physical subduing of one or more male partners – as a reification of the physical subduing of one or more male partners – as a reification of heterosexual masculine prowess. In this context, a man who has to "suck" another's penis or "bend over" for anal penetration is emasculated, because rap rhetoric portrays this act as one of sexual submission; the man whose body is the receptacle for penetration is imagined as the "woman," while the man who enacts the penetration anally or orally has his normative masculinity consolidated and affirmed.[229]

Facing the hypersexual ego is the opposing rapper who is dissed as emasculated [4]. Sometimes, rappers also do not directly attack their opponents but use female proxies [2, 3]. By bragging of having sex with their opponents' wives, lovers or relatives, rappers demonstrate both their own superior (hyper)masculinity and their opponents' lacking masculinity. Besides a line by Edd Abbas in which he criticizes Dizaster of "acting all manly,"[230] I found no other instances of Lebanese battle rappers questioning hypermasculinity. It can be assumed that it is a common pattern in male-dominated oral battling cultures as similar concepts of "manliness" can be found both in the Dozens and in the work of al-Farazdaq and Ǧarīr,[231] as well as in US-American battle rap.[232]

What can we make of this? Hypersexual stereotypes are common in hip hop culture and especially in battle rap. In battle rap, gender roles provide a very fruitful field for hypermasculine boasts. Just like in hip hop culture in general, a shared view of manhood can help boost a feeling of belonging through discrimination of everyone not adhering to these stererotypes. As individual observers, we can be disgusted by sexism and misogyny in hip hop culture and else/everywhere. As researchers, we can study gender roles and stereotypes in battle rap. As engaged intellectuals, we can choose to focus on them and criticize both them and the system that leads to them. While I could have written yet another study dealing with sexism in rap lyrics,[233] I think it is more important to address unanswered questions about community building in Arab(ic) rap scenes.

---

229 Barnes, *Cultural Conundrums*, 132.
230 Wiedemann, "Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling," 22, 23.
231 Jorgensen, "Jarīr and Al-Farazdaq's Naqa'id Performance as Social Commentary."
232 Mavima, "Bigger By the Dozens: The Prevalence of Afro-Based Tradition in Battle Rap," 97.
233 See among others Grant, "Bring the Noise: Hypermasculanity in Heavy Metal and Rap"; Greenberg, "'The King of the Streets'. Hip-Hop and the Reclaiming of Masculinity in Jerusalem's Shuʿafat Refugee Camp"; Porter, *Rap and the Eroticizing of Black Youth*; Binder, "Homophobic Hip-Hop Music and Its Effect on Attitudes Toward Homosexuality"; Cobb and Boettcher, "Ambivalent Sexism and Misogynistic Rap Music."

5.2.4 Summary

In the battle rap scenes studied here, community is built through a range of different tools. While rappers of course connect to their audience through their clothing and call-and-response performance elements, their most important skill is their language mastery. Battle rappers create group coherence through language choice and intertextuality.

Language plays a crucial role in battle rap. Rappers choose one or more languages or registers for their lyrics. Their language choice is influenced by the intended target group, by social conventions like diglossia, and by properties inherent in languages (e.g. morphology). Rappers show that they know their audience well by speaking a language they understand, a language they expect and which fits the context, but at the same time an original language which surprises the audience through wordplays etc. This language and the fact that both rappers and audience value it highly creates a strong bond between rappers and audience.

On a deeper level, battle rappers use intertextuality in a shared canon of works in these shared languages. Rappers have to be deeply embedded in their community to be able to divine exactly what their audience already knows. A too-obvious intertextual link, and equally a link too complicated, would fail as a stylistic device. A surprising but still understandable intertextual cross-reference, however, emphasizes the connection between rappers and their audience. Rappers are therefore not completely free in their choice of intertextual crosslinks. Differently interpreted, the choice of intertextual links determines which kind of audience will connect with the rapper. Rappers have seemingly infinite possibilities of intertextual links to draw from, and the ones they choose give their lyrics an individual flavor which might connect to some audiences while repelling others. In the examples focused on here and in my article, rappers used intertextual crosslinks to emphasize their connection to global pop culture, to a canon of classical Arabic poetry, and to local poetic traditions. By doing so, the rappers place their work in one or another tradition and go as far as choosing or even producing their own versions of a hip hop founding myth.

5.3 Negotiating belonging through language

It is not only the artists' language use which is interesting, but also the language used by their listeners, by the music's consumers. It is not only the artists who shape language ideologies and identities, but also the fans. While my research thus far has been focused on either artists or their songs, now I want to look at reception. El Zein, who did fieldwork on attending concerts, wrote that:

> "[T]he vast majority of listener engagement with Arabic hip hop and the MCs and producers who make it is not during live events but mediated through technology. Sound Cloud, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter are the primary sites for hosting and disseminating this material. Bandcamp, Indiepush, and Reverbnation, are less frequently used networks. This means that the primary mode of interaction between rappers and their listeners are comments on tracks and the virtual affectivity of 'likes,' 'shares,' and so on."[234]

When I talked face-to-face to rappers in Beirut, Oran and elsewhere, they confirmed that many of the interactions within Arab(ic) hip hop culture(s) take place online. Therefore, investigating these online interactions within the communities seemed promising. What makes the platform Genius (genius.com) – on which I concentrated on in the article – special is that it focuses on song lyrics and much of its data is openly available to non-registered observers. Thus, research on communities at Genius is not obstructed by too many ethical obstacles, and it is reproducible.

Genius is a platform on which fans can upload lyrics of (rap) songs and then annotate and comment on them line by line. While it is a commercial platform financed through advertisement, all of its content is created by a community of volunteers for the community of rap fans all over the world. When looking at transcriptions of rap lyrics, one has to keep in mind that rap songs are a form of oral poetry: the written texts omit some essential dimensions. Users transcribe the lyrics and annotate them line by line, but do not necessarily take into account the performative aspects, nor music video production, nor vocal skills. Thus, a flattening of the artistic product takes place. During this flattening process, spoken language has to be transferred

---

234 El Zein, "Performing El Rap El ʿArabi 2005-2015: Feeling Politics amid Neoliberal Incursions in Ramallah, Amman, and Beirut," 419.

into written language. Decisions have to be made about the degree of precision of the transcription, and about the use of different scripts.

My research on RG Arabia, the Arab(ic) community on Genius, which is mostly based in the Maghreb, established that some characteristics of everyday language use are reproduced on the platform: fans use the same languages they use in other domains also for interpreting rap lyrics, a range of registers of Arabic and French. Both a diglossic and digraphic separation of language and script use domains was observable, i.e. the use of languages and scripts differed according to the function the languages and scripts had to fulfill (transcription of lyrics / comment / explanation / …). Within this rich corpus, I focused especially on power struggles with regard to language and script use. Apparently, the *field* had been dominated for a while by Algerian Genius users who favored the use of *fuṣḥā* and Arabic script for supra-regional comprehensibility. When conventions changed and the community adapted new policy, Moroccan users, who favored the use of dialect and arithmographemes-based 3aransiya, became more active and powerful. (What is called 3aransiya is the same arithmographemic script as 3arabizi, albeit with a French rather than English base language.)[235] In addition to this, when analyzing Genius, I could also notice that, even nowadays, Genius (among many platforms) has not implemented support for right-to-left (RTL) languages in a way that truly equals its support for left-to-right (LTR) languages – a fact which complicates writing in RTL-languages and seems highly discriminatory.

It wasn't until I had been active in the Genius community for several years that I read an article by Fischione whose basic statements ran counter to some of my observations. She examines how the use of "weapons offered by language (vernaculars, figures of speech, citations, wordplay and so on)"[236] lead to an "untranslatability"[237] of Levantine rap and to an ever-shrinking "audience of

---

235 The term "3aransiya" was first used by Zaidane to describe Moroccan–French code-switching, and now also stands for "e-darija," i.e. Moroccan Arabic written in Latin script. See: Zaidane, "Emprunt et mélange: Produits d'une situation de contact de langues au Maroc"; Caubet, "New Elaborate Written Forms in Darija : Blogging, Posting and Slamming in Morocco," 389; Pennisi, "Written Dārija," 133.

236 Fischione, "Untranslatability as Resistance," 299.

237 Ironically, Fischione either proves that she is sloppy in her quoting, or that this "untranslatability" of Arabic (rap) might be more her personal problem. She builds her entire argument around the following English translation (supposedly by Dallāl himself) of an alleged part of Dallāl's article "Al-ḥīb ḥūb al-'arabī: ar-Rās wa-'l-huwīya al-ǧādīda": "[i]f poetry is the language of nonexchangeability, then it is also the language of the untranslatable …. Arabic speakers recognize how words and whole verses are made up of the same letters reshuffled …. The breaking up of words into letters and the reshuffling of the latter to extend new meaning renders the verses

insiders"[238], which is "layered in concentric circles, each with a deeper comprehension of the complexity of the text"[239]. In general, I agree with this last aspect. However, I would draw different conclusions from rappers' display of linguistic weaponry. Fischione leaves aside important aspects like musicality or performance, which in themselves make rap songs accessible to an additional audience. In contrast to Fischione, Dallāl, whom she quotes, points out the significance of these very points:

<div dir="rtl">

ومن خلال التركيز على أداء الهيب الهوب العربي، نلاحظ أن الإثنين معاً، المجال الأدبي والمجال الموسيقيّ، أو المجال المكتوب والمجال المسموع، يستمتعان بالأهمية المطلوبة، فالمرء لا يستطيع أن يفصل بلاغة الكلمات عن نبض الموسيقى وذبذباتها.[240]

</div>

Moreover, Fischione ignores the fact that the use of linguistic "weapons" does not mean that the songs become completely incomprehensible and inexplicable, or that they lose their appeal to audiences able and willing to decipher Arabic lyrics.[241] On the contrary. As my own fieldwork on the lyrics platform Genius has shown time and again, it is precisely the seemingly hard-to-decode messages that not only do not put off a certain audience, but actually attract them.

Lyrics platforms like Genius merit a closer look by future researchers. They should, for example, focus on how artists influence language on the platform. (Verified) artists interact in a variety of ways with the other members of RG Arabia. Interaction is already under way in the transcription stage, since some of the lyrics are put online by the artists themselves, or are copied from the artists' websites or YouTube channels etc. by other people. Another sort of interaction is annotation and commentary to lyrics written by their respective creators. Rappers thus influence

---

untranslatable and non-exchangeable as they affirm the materiality of language itself. This materiality ensures that poetry remains resistive." However, Dallāl speaks of many things in his aforementioned article, but nowhere of problems of translatability. Fischione's allegedly translated multi-line block quote in English is not found in Arabic in Dallāl's original article. Cf. Fischione, "Untranslatability as Resistance"; Dallāl, "Al-Hīb Hūb al-ʿarabī: Ar-Rās Wa-ʾl-Huwīya al-Ǧadīda."

238 Fischione, "Untranslatability as Resistance," 299.

239 Fischione, 295.

240 Translation [my own]: "By focusing on the performance of Arabic hip hop, we notice that the two together, the literary field and the musical field, or the written field and the audio field, enjoy the required importance, as one cannot separate the rhetoric of words from the pulse and vibrations of music." Dallāl, "Al-Hīb Hūb al-ʿarabī: Ar-Rās Wa-ʾl-Huwīya al-Ǧadīda."

241 Ben Moussa, who studies Moroccan rap, describes how YouTube users debate whether Moroccan song lyrics should be translated from Moroccan into what he calls "literary Arabic." While some users apparently believe that it is necessary to translate Moroccan Arabic for other Arabs, none of them consider the lyrics untranslatable. Cf: Ben Moussa, "Rap It up, Share It Up," 1060.

the interpretation of their own works, keeping the author alive long after his death through publication.[242] The artists' annotations are not editable by other users, who can only comment on them. This conserves the artists' style of writing, their grammatical and orthographic variations, their choice of language and script. Even if RG Arabia were completely streamlined on the fan-side through linguistic rules established and enforced by the community, the artist-produced content still could not be changed.

5.3.1 Scripts on rap album covers in Algeria and Lebanon

The article focused on the languages and scripts of the rap fan community on the Genius platform. Of course, rappers themselves also make choices of language and script. They all take notes or write down lyrics. Some publish their lyrics online on some website, or as subtitles to their music videos. However, as their art is primarily oral, there are not too many instances which show rappers' script choices. The few examples include rap album covers, which can be read as the exclusive work of self-publishing rappers or as the joint work of rappers and their publishers. On those, we normally find the name/s) of the artist(s), the album title and sometimes additional written information or metadata.

To develop a more precise understanding of which scripts are preferred in rap communities, I sampled 145 Algerian albums[243] and 46 Lebanese albums[244], all published before 2017, and tabulated the scripts used on their front covers (see section 7.2 in appendix), as visualized in the following graphs that compare the use of Latin script, Arabic script and 3arabizi/3ransiya on the front covers of rap albums in Algeria and Lebanon. Even though the underlying lists of rap albums might not be 100% complete, I consider them representative of the field and estimate that at most very few works of note are not included.

---

242 See Barthes, "La mort de l'auteur."

243 Information on Algerian rap albums is based on a list provided by users of the online platform genius.com. "Rap Genius Arabia – Dz Rap Albums." For more information see the annex.

244 Information on Lebanese rap albums had to be collected from different online sources. It was all assembled and added to the Genius-platform for further work. "Rap Genius Arabia – Lebanese Rap Albums / Albūmāt Ar-Rāb al-Lubnānī."
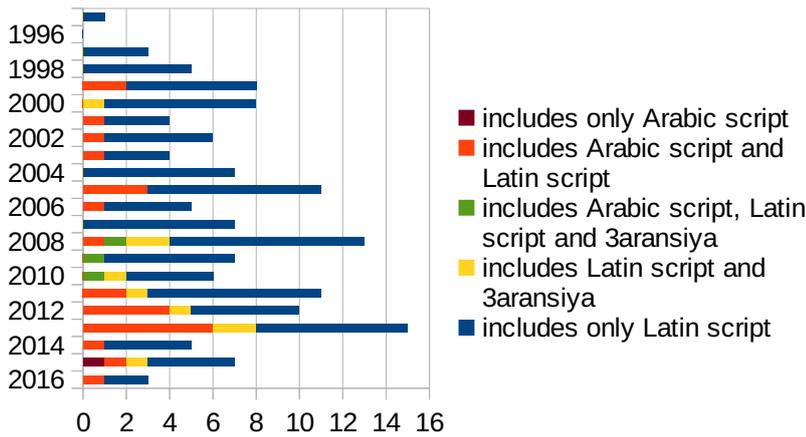
Figure 2: Script use on Algerian rap album covers 1996–2016

The number of Algerian rap albums is not very high – 145 in toto – and one can observe that annual publication rates seem not to have grown much over the last 20 years, staying below 20 albums per year. With one exception in 2015, all of the album front covers include Latin script. Whereas the first publications featured only Latin script on their front cover, 3aransiya has become more popular since 2008. There is also one album cover which includes 3arabizi; it appeared as early as 2000. From 2011 to 2013, one can notice a rise in the use of Arabic script on the front covers of CD publications.
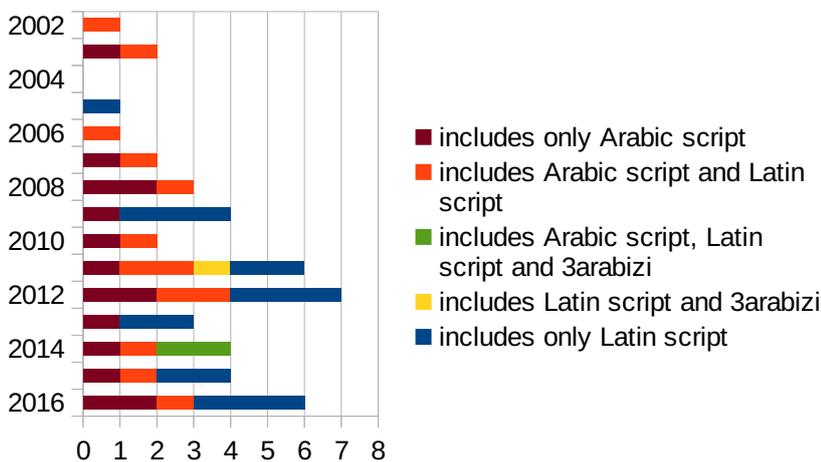
Figure 3: Script use on Lebanese rap album covers 2002-2016

The corresponding graph for Lebanese rap albums describes a total of 46 albums. The overall number of albums per year stagnates at fewer than ten. More than 25% of all albums feature only Arabic script. Over 50% feature either only Arabic script or Arabic script and Latin script. Only

three albums include 3arabizi on their front covers. The first observable case of 3arabizi use is in 2011.

Which conclusions can be drawn from comparing these two graphs?

1. In Algeria, album output started much earlier than in Lebanon and the Algerian rap scene's album output is significantly bigger than the Lebanese one. Algeria's total output is more than three times Lebanon's.[245] This ratio confirms what local rappers say, as when, in 2015, the Lebanese rapper Mad Prophet said that "Ici, c'est encore le début, il doit y avoir 30 rappeurs au maximum."[246]

2. 3arabizi and 3aransiya are not used very often on album covers in either Algeria or Lebanon, and are almost entirely absent before 2008. Arabic script, however, is much more extensively used on Lebanese rap covers than on Algerian ones.

This contrast in script use is also expressed by rapper El Rass, who sees a return to writing in Arabic:

> **El Rass**: Avant les révolutions, c'était mal vu par la communauté arabe des utilisateurs de Facebook et d'autres réseaux sociaux d'écrire en arabe, c'était ringard, c'était caduc. Après les révolutions, c'est devenu complètement le contraire. Je pense qu'il y a une sorte de fierté qui est revenue, une sorte de sentiment collectif de possibilités.[247]

When El Rass recounts that writing in Arabic was perceived as "nerdy" and "outdated," such classifications are always closely linked to concepts of authenticity, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

5.3.2 Notes on authenticity and (stage) names

In battle rap, the audience decides their winner. They take into account different criteria which different individuals weight differently. For some, technicalities like rhyming patterns, flow, or choice of words might be important. Others might value humor and punchlines, political content, a good stage presence, etc. However, there is one aspect underlying everything else: authenticity. A rapper lacking authenticity can be technically brilliant, humorous, and engaged, yet unable to

---

245 However, Algeria's total population (about 45 million) is also many times larger than Lebanon's (about 7 million).
246 al Ahmar, "Mad Prophet rappeur d'impact."
247 Nashara, "« Une sorte de fierté est revenue ». Entretien avec le Rappeur El Rass," 3.

connect to the audience. In contrast, a rapper perceived as authentic but is technically not brilliant might still come across as "more hip hop" than others, and hence might well win a battle. Now, what is hip hop authenticity? Different rappers, hip hop activists, journalists, researchers, etc. have used different words to describe this phenomenon: Some speak of realness,[248] some of street cred(ibility),[249] some of authenticity.[250] All mean the same hard-to-grasp feature.

For Alastair Pennycook, realness, while a globally accepted value, is always locally expressed. In his words, "global real talk [...] is better understood as a global ideology that is always pulled into local ways of being."[251] He explains that many hip hop artists pursue local realness by turning to local themes – otherwise they would risk "at the very least, mockery."[252] Pennycook gives examples of verses in which rappers mock other rappers for their "pretence at gangsterhood, and the imitation of all that is American."[253] While Pennycook sees a clear gap between the local and the global with regard to themes, he warns of a simplistic bipolar opposition of local languages against English as the supposed global language. He points out that, in some contexts, English can be regarded as a local language,[254] and emphasizes the role that the "local configuration of culture, language and politics" plays in language choice.[255] A similar concept of authenticity is often voiced during glocalization processes. For example, Naji Baz, the organizer of the annual Byblos International Music Festival, said, on a podium discussion:

> **Naji Baz:** For the moment, 90% of what I hear, I can instantly acknowledge what they were hearing. So that is a bad sign. Cloning! [...] Very few original talents. And this is what it takes to succeed, in the digital age: [...] You need to find yourself an identity because as you know we come from a country with multiple identities, or you can call it fractured identities. So this debate of singing in Arabic or French or English is anything but new to it. That's the essence of everything. Me personally, I don't see the need in 2017 for Lebanese bands singing in English. [...] Because audiences around the world would always prefer the original to the photocopy and for whoever thinks that it's a constraint or a commercial suicide to sing in Arabic today, I think that Mashrou' Leila has proven everybody wrong. It is because they sing in Arabic that Mashrou' Leila is

248 Pennycook, "Language, Localization, and the Real"; Nashed, "Egyptian Rappers."
249 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 108.
250 Kahf, "Arabic Hip-Hop: Claims of Authenticity and Identity of a New Genre"; Shannahan and Hussain, "Rap on 'l'Avenue'; Islam, Aesthetics, Authenticity and Masculinities in the Tunisian Rap Scene"; Rooney, "Activism and Authenticity. Palestinian and Related Hip-Hop in an International Frame."
251 Pennycook, "Language, Localization, and the Real," 112.
252 Pennycook, 106.
253 Pennycook, 106.
254 Pennycook, 107.
255 Pennycook, 108.

Mashrou' Leila. If Mashrou' Leila was singing the same stuff in English, it would be one band among others. So this question of identity is crucial.[256]

As Baz observes, artists considered authentic are also the ones who create or find niches which make them stick out and become economically successful artists. He also points to the importance of language for one's identity and authenticity. While Pennycook emphasizes the tension between local and global as a basis for anything "authentic," Almeida interprets street credibility using field theory:

> Following Bourdieu, street credibility is the amount of cultural capital bestowed by the audience and peers to the rapper in order for him or her to be legitimated.[257]

Three aspects she mentioned can be emphasized: First, street credibility legitimizes a rapper; without it, there is no rapper. Secondly, street credibility cannot be "taken" by the artist, but only "given" by others. And street credibility is a measure of cultural capital – rappers have to know "local politics, society, economy, arts and so forth"[258] in order to have street credibility. For Almeida, this also explains why a gangsta-attitude and violent crime might be locally authentic and therefore a way to get street-credibility in some parts of the US, whereas in Morocco, she could not find any rappers involved in any gangsta-like acts of violence.[259] My impression of most Arab rappers is similar. I've hardly come across anyone self-describing as a gangsta rapper or anyone I would label that way and would surmise that gangsta rap does not play a huge role in Arab(ic) rap.

US-American gangsta rap can, however, be attractive to anyone sharing comparable experiences of violence, crime, drugs and discrimination. The precarious living conditions in refugee camps are just such an environment, in which Ela Greenberg – who worked in the *Šuʿafāṭ* refugee Camp in Jerusalem – sees the "hyper masculine" act of gangsta rappers as especially inspiring.[260] In Lebanon, the rapper Samzz made a comparable observation: He mentioned that kids in Ḍaḥīya who wanted to be rappers connected to the "thug life" in (US) hip hop because, in Ḍaḥīya, they

---

256 "You Are What You Sing: Music and Identity. Discussion."
257 Almeida, *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*, 108.
258 Almeida, 108.
259 Almeida, 108.
260 Greenberg, "'The King of the Streets'. Hip-Hop and the Reclaiming of Masculinity in Jerusalem's Shuʿafat Refugee Camp."

"see guns everywhere on the streets, [...] see drugs everywhere on the streets."[261] However, according to him, most of them would not stick with hip hop:

> Those kids don't last. [...] "Alright, I'ma try to be a rapper." Then, after that phase is done, 80% of them quit. [...] And now, they're trying to keep up, with all the technicalities of hip hop, the rapping, with the people who've been doing this for years. They kind of fall back behind. And they don't really get recognition even if they're doing their own thing.[262]

Samzz describes how these newcomers with a gangsta-rapper background struggle to fit into an already established group of rappers. Maybe, in this case, authenticity proved not to be enough for Ḍaḥīya's gangsta rappers. However, maybe Beirut's established group of rappers, who consist mostly of young, educated, middle-class men, was not very supportive toward the newcomers.

Another important take on the concept of authenticity in hip hop is what Tricia Rose calls a "pretense of no pretense," which leads, for example, to the assumption of artists creating "rhymed autobiographies" and to them wearing the same clothes on stage and off stage.[263] I came across similar thoughts when interviewing the rappers Muhandas and Chyno who both mentioned the role of a "hip hop character" or "hip hop persona":

> **Chyno**: If you're really taking in that hip hop persona of yours, not your persona, it's more like your character that's fully hip hop. Then you're living really hip hop. Then you would really just want to do it. And then, the more work you put in and the more you network, it's that character of yours which is real, then you're living hip hop. Then you are gonna be the embodiment. You create a niche for yourself and a market that doesn't exist and people are gonna go to you. You know, because you are known as that person. Because you are that embodiment of that.[264]

> **Muhandas**: I am a person whose hip hop character reflects his actual persona as a human being in society [...] I don't have this character that I have in hip hop and this character that I have somewhere else. Definitely the pseudonym that I have in hip hop represents something else and I don't use my actual name in hip hop, I use another name. So there is some type of separate character. But, you know the base of this character is the same base, is Najib, the guy who lives in society and the guy who lives in his family and between his friends.[265]

Chyno's description of "taking in that hip hop persona" is one of metamorphosis: "the more work you put in and the more you network, it's that character of yours which is real." Thus, Chyno describes "that hip hop persona" as at first being different from "your persona," but which

---

261 Ajaj, Interview with Samer Ajaj aka Samzz at Radio Beirut.
262 Ajaj.
263 Rose, *The Hip Hop Wars*, 38.
264 Shorbaji, Interview with Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno at Radio Beirut.
265 Safieddine, Interview with Najib Safieddine aka Muhandas.

changes through "working" and "networking." He sees and points out the influence of interaction. If one truly embodies and becomes this new hip hop persona, one is not only "living hip hop" but can also "create a niche [...] and a market." Muhandas, on the other hand, sees his "hip hop character" as a reflection of his "actual persona" and emphasizes a common "base" beneath both characters. He also sees the importance of interaction through his social network and through his name, "Najib." He mentions the importance of using a pseudonym which "represents something else," and elaborates further:

> **Muhandas**: People know me as "Menace," as in my old name but recently there's this name I am using, it's called "Muhandas," so my new stuff is gonna be under this different character called Muhandas [...] the name that I was using ["Menace"] was given to me by friends. [...] Back then I was an angry person who [...] believed that capitalism should be destroyed and we should all be angry communists. [chuckles] But now I don't really think like this anymore. So Menace, it's not really something representing me anymore. [...] Muhandas, I believe does. [...] Muhandas is "the engineered," not the engineer, the subject, as in the "engineered one." And the reason behind picking this name is because I reached a certain conclusion that we as human beings are engineered for a certain end point. And I tried to find this endpoint through my music, that's it. And this end point is really a pain in the ass because I can't see it so far and it's gonna take so much time but I feel like music is a very good platform for me to find this endpoint. So I decided to go with that name. And plus I'm a big fan of Mahatma Gandhi and his actual name is Mohandas and Gandhi represented a very disgusting struggle between peace and violence which is something I believe manifests in our everyday life, especially in this country, so I felt like it was a suitable name that represents me more but I am not satisfied with it of course. I think there will come a time when I'm always gonna change my hip hop character I think that's a good thing to do [...] I think when you do music, you're doing art. And art is something that cannot stay constant or static. It's a very changing platform, it's like a sea, it's really interesting when you think about the sea, it represents to us a lot of calmness and, we look at the sea and we feel inner peace. But surprisingly if you think of it rationally, the sea is the most moving object you can lay your eyes on because it's constantly moving, and colliding and there's so much violence and action and it always represents something different. And art is the same, you know, it calms us down, but it's a very crazy world, where so many unorthodox ideas just clash with each other and staying under one name means that you're stuck in one point in this vast ocean that you can be anywhere. So changing your name means that you are excelling in music and music is meaning something different to you every day, and motion is very key, in everything, especially in music.[266]

Najib Safieddine chooses his stage names very carefully. As long as he saw himself as an "angry communist," he felt comfortable with the name "Menace," given to him by his friends. When he no longer identified with the name, he chose "Muhandas" as his new stage name. He explains the name as meaning "the engineered," representing his quest for the meaning of life and as similar

---

266 Safieddine.

to the name of Gandhi, whom he identifies with. He also reflects on the problems, change and development for a stage character. He comes to the conclusion that art is always changing, so his stage name has to change, too, in order not to get "stuck in one point."

Stage names are very common in rap music: in many other art forms, for example classical music, artists are not expected to have a stage persona resembling their offstage persona. They are, however, known under one name only – in all of their different social environments. In hip hop culture, by contrast, where authenticity – albeit staged – is valued highly, most artists go by a hip hop name that they or their peers choose. They might thus be known under different names in different social environments. A self-chosen name might even feel more "real" than a birth name. As Muhandas explained, changes to one's chosen name are often accompanied by an artistic change. That said, few rappers change their stage names during their career. Among the well-known examples are US-rapper Dante Terrell Smith who went by "Mos Def" and nowadays goes by the completely different "Yasiin Bey"; Iraqi–Canadian rapper Yassin Alsalman is now known as "Narcy," a modification of his previous name, "The Narcicyst." Several rappers in the Wu-Tang Clan collective also have multiple stage names; for example RZA / Bobby Digital / The RZArector, GZA / The Genius, Raekwon / Lex Diamonds, U-God / Golden Arms, to name a few.

Summing up, being perceived as authentic is very important in hip hop, sometimes even to the degree of blurring the line between the artist's person and persona. Authenticity is given and credited by other people, and it depends on local environments. Hence, locally flavored language is a key factor for creating authenticity.

5.3.3 Summary

Rappers, fans and basically everyone in Arab(ic) hip hop scenes can use more than one Arabic language register (varying from very formal and/or classical *fuṣḥā*, to different Arabic dialects and sociolects) or even more than one language (Arabic, French, English, ...). Those who are literate, more often than not, can use more than one writing system, including Arabic, Latin script and different versions of 3arabizi or 3aransiya. There is hence a plethora of possibilities for building group identity through shared linguistic choices. Rappers choose their language(s) of expression with regard to their message and their audience. They also consciously choose their stage names

and decide which scripts to use for their album covers. All aspects of their output have to match the rapper's "hip hop persona" and be in character. It has to be considered *real*. Just as rappers think carefully about their linguistic expression or intuitively express themselves in a way deemed authentic, fans face similar choices. They may choose Arabic language and Arabic script or Arabic language and 3aransiya for transcribing song lyrics. They might interpret these lyrics in the same dialect the rapper is using, or opt for the more broadly understandable Modern Standard Arabic. They might talk about the lyrics in English or another non-Arabic language. All of these choices depend on whom they consider to be their peer group, on who they hope to gain respect and recognition from, on which languages and scripts they themselves are proficient in, and on power dynamics in the field.

6   Summary

This dissertation and the three referenced case studies describe a kaleidoscopic picture painted by Arab(ic) rap's local, translocal and virtual scenes. It is a very colorful picture in which differently hued dots connect with each other: rappers, producers, fans and so-called support personnel, and also journalists and researchers. Some of these dots are drawn in clusters based on a shared understanding of how authentic Arab(ic) rap should express itself. Varying shades of interpretation are observable in, for example, how artists collaborate, languages deemed authentic, scripts considered appropriate for online communication, scripts for transcribing lyrics, and of texts judged canonical.

- **Artistic collaboration:** While some rappers like the Algerian Fada Vex closely follow developments in Arab(ic) rap all over the MENA region and abroad, the majority have a clear regional focus. The Levant is very well interconnected through artistic collaborations like featurings, through online social media communication, linguistically, and through joint live events. For example, the battle rap series The Arena hosted Lebanese, Palestinian, Jordanian and Syrian rappers. The Maghreb's rap scene is artistically very diverse ranging from the partially state-sponsored Moroccan scene with a strong festival culture and professionally made videos, over Tunisia with a quite diverse alternative music scene in general, to Algeria with a very vibrant but mostly underground scene.

- **Language**: Arab rappers rap in a multitude of languages. They use different varieties of Arabic, English, French, Armenian and many other languages. Their interpretation of language use is highly context-dependent. For example, battle rappers in Lebanon portray the use of *fuṣḥā* either as proof of linguistic proficiency, or as something artificial and inauthentic. Each approach creates different communities of in- and outsiders. Many also mix languages and switch from one to the other, whereby they either reproduce their environment's everyday language or employ code-switches to linguistically add an individual flavor to their lyrics. Similarly, on the reception side of Arab(ic) rap music, one

can find both "Panarabists" who use *fuṣḥā* to explain dialectal Arabic rap lyrics to other Arabic-speakers, and also those who stick with dialect for authenticity.

- **Scripts**: In addition to language choice, script choice is also a field in which identity politics are fought out, as can be observed on the lyrics-interpretation platform, Genius. Technology also plays a role, as some technological environments still do not offer full support for right-to-left languages – a fact that advances the spread of arithmographeme-based scripts like 3rabizi or 3aransiya.

- **Canonical texts**: Some rappers create their own Arab(ic) hip hop founding myth tracing, for example, the roots of battle rap back to other sorts of poetic jousts, be it those of Ǧarīr and al-Farazdaq or Lebanese *zaǧal.* Some of these references with a Pan-Arab appeal are employed in a wide range of Arab countries. Others, like *zaǧal,* are only locally observable. These references show the diverse impacts of different musical influences: some rappers and fans listen to a wide spectrum of international rappers. Muhandas, for instance, said he had listened to German old school rapper Samy Deluxe, to Britons Rhyme Asylum or US-American Jedi Mind Tricks among many others. Nonetheless, what made him rap in Arabic was discovering the Palestinians Ramallah Underground.[267] Several rappers have stated that they came to do rap in Arabic because they were inspired by people doing what they wanted to do. However, the majority of Arab(ic) rappers cite the US-American rap scene as by far the most influential one. I had initially expected French rappers to be an important influence – because of wide-spread language proficiency in French in the Maghreb and – albeit to a lesser degree – in the Mashriq. Throughout my research on Twitter followings and after having conducted interviews with rappers, however, I had to adjust this assumption, as the French influence seems, at least in the Mashriq, not very important.

---

[267] "And what made me do Arabic hip hop was actually Asifeh from Ramallah Underground and Boykutt. I heard them and I was like look at these people, if these people were rapping in English and they used to, they used to rap in English, we wouldn't connect with them that much, but they used the simple Arabic language and they just got me, and I felt like getting to people that way as well." Safieddine.

Arab(ic) rap is not a single-layered sketch, but rather a multi-layered palimpsest. Scratches beneath the surface layer of rappers, one sees different primers: there is an economic primer that varies from country to country, from city to city, which either provides a firm base layer which helps rappers for example through state-funded festivals (urban Morocco) and private sponsors (e.g. RedBull in Beirut) or a slippery base layer where both state and private funds are lacking (e.g. Algeria). There is also a layer in which different shades of free speech and censorship either stimulate the spread of rap music, or hinder it.

Throughout the research project, it was helpful to concentrate on particular areas of this picture in order to more fully grasp, for instance, the roles rappers assign to different languages and scripts. However, it is all too easy to get lost in the scene's multitude of fascinating minutiae. It would be easy to perceive all of it as just one Arab(ic) rap scene with regional tints. This is a view staged by rappers themselves in order to build community, and also by journalists or researchers who essentialize and orientalize Arab(ic) rap. Taking a couple of steps back, however, reveals that this picture of Arab(ic) rap music does not fill its frame. It is actually just a vignette of the Global Hip Hop Nation picture – to which it is connected through intertextuality and artistic collaboration – and that, in turn, is but one vignette of the greater picture of human cultural expression. Many Arab(ic) rappers emphasized being part of the Global Hip Hop Nation. They "make music to feel at home" in this border-crossing, worldwide community. Some enjoy having international ties to hip hop heads all over the world. Others connect primarily to their local community, but use the language of hip hop to speak to them. Whatever the primary focus of identification, the rappers' ties to either a global or a local community – or both – manifest themselves in concerts, in communication, in online social networks or in artistic collaborations.

Besides the difficulty of describing a picture overwhelmingly full of details, it is also not so easy to describe a picture that many painters are working on at the same time. For instance, in the last couple of years, a new wave of migrants added a new layer to an already existent vivid Arab(ic) rap and hip hop scene in European metropolitan areas which merits its own research, which could focus on, for example, interactions (like the ones depicted in section 5.1) between established Arabo-European rappers and their new peers.

While this picture of Arab(ic) rap is painted by Arab(ic) rappers and Arabic-speaking people in the scene, it is a picture which is academically interpreted almost exclusively in languages other than Arabic. While there are some notable journalistic projects like Saudi hip hop activist Big Hass' podcast "Buckle Up," in which he interviews rappers in either English or Arabic, and social media discourse in, for example, the "Hip Hop Baladi" group on Facebook or the "RG Arabia" community on Genius, there is very little research in Arabic on Arab(ic) hip hop culture in general, and on Arab(ic) rap music in particular. Even some of the rare articles written by people from within the field of Arab(ic) rap itself – such as by Palestinian Basel Abbas in the music collective Ramallah Underground, or by Algerian rapper Fada Vex – are written in English or French.[268] The research field would certainly profit both from having more participants in the academic discourse in Arabic on Arab(ic) rap music, and from having more ears who can listen to and process Arabic songs. Nevertheless, I hope to have contributed to a relatively new field of research, to have helped answer some of the field's questions, and to have stimulated new ones.

---

268 Abbas, "An Analysis of Arabic Hip-Hop"; Fada Vex, "Le rap algérien est dans la place!!"

7 Appendix

7.1 Remarks on choice of publication

I chose to write a publication-based dissertation instead of a monographic one for several reasons:

- **Interdisciplinary approach:** I employed theoretical concepts and methods from different disciplines, e.g. social network analysis, cultural studies, sociolinguistics, ethnography. Dividing my text into several shorter texts permits each to have its own thematic focus, theoretical and methodological framework.

- **Quality control:** publishing self-contained articles allows them to be evaluated and reviewed by specialists in each field in addition to the evaluation of the entire project by my supervisors.

- **Timeliness**: Arab(ic) rap music is a relatively new field of research. Some noteworthy research has already been published. The sooner other scholars have access to new research material, the better the field can develop.

While I could have aimed to publish my articles in a variety of journals, one of the guiding principles for my choice was open access publication. Now that I am in the information/library field, different publication models have become even more vital in my eyes. Open access publishing is the only way to ensure that everyone (with access to the internet) has unlimited, unfettered and legal access to research output. This is of particular importance in a discipline like Arabic Studies, where Orientalist traditions of speaking about the "Other" without letting this "Other" participate in a dialog still play a role. All articles in this dissertation were published in journals that are open access and do not charge article processing fees. They are either funded by university bodies – University of Bamberg and Università della Calabria – or, in the case of the Open Library of Humanities, by an international library consortium.

As I worked on the Arab(ic) community on genius.com, I contributed many transcriptions and interpretations of song lyrics to the platform. I still like genius.com for its scope and its functionality (besides some technical issues with RTL-languages), but I disapprove of its commercial nature and its advertisement/data-based business model. Therefore, I would have preferred to contribute my working time and knowledge to a truly open and non-commercial project, had there been a comparable one.

7.2   Scripts on rap album front covers

7.2.1 List of scripts on Algerian rap album covers

Below is a list of Algerian artists, their albums, and the scripts they use on the front cover of their albums. The list was compiled using data available on http://genius.com/Rap-genius-arabia-dz-rap-albums-lyrics. The data was collected on 2016-10-23. Incomplete data (e.g. missing album, missing year, missing cover) were not included.

1 = yes, positive

0 = no, negative

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
Intik	GRI	1995	0	1	0
Hamma	L'Algérie, le conte de Fées	1997	0	1	0
Double Kanon	Kamikaz	1997	0	1	0
MBS	Ouled El Bahaja	1997	0	1	0
Hood Killer	Fi men jet?	1998	0	1	0
Hood Killer	Kartia	1998	0	1	0
Double Kanon	Kanibal	1998	0	1	0
MBS	El Aouama	1998	0	1	0
TOX	Mechi Bessah	1998	0	1	0
Constat Rap	Adra	1999	0	1	0
Game Over	Chômeur	1999	0	1	0
Hamma	Rana N'moutou Bechouia	1999	0	1	0
Double Kanon	Kondamné	1999	0	1	0
K2C	K d'Inconscience	1999	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	La Kamora Vol. 1	1999	0	1	0
V.A.	Algerap – الجزائراپ Le Micro Brise le Silence – المكرو	1999	1	1	0
MBS	يبريزي السكات	1999	1	1	0
Rafik Ganja	Mafioso	1999	?	?	?
AMH	ilmiilmek	2000	0	1	0
Armada	Gatta3 E'trig	2000	0	1	1
V.A.	Wahrap	2000	0	1	0
Intik	Intik	2000	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	La Kamora Vol. 2	2000	0	1	0
Rafik Ganja	Trafik	2000	0	1	0
TOX	Ghir Hak	2000	0	1	0
Waheb Double Kanon	Solitaire	2000	0	1	0
Intik	La Victoire	2001	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Breakdance	2001	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Fonklore	2001	0	1	0
MBS	Wellew	2001	1	1	0
V.A.	Annaba Hip Hop Conexion	2002	0	1	0
L'N. Fect	Tèj El Mahtèj	2002	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Bad Boy	2002	0	1	0

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
Mehdi Rapace	Suicide	2002	0	1	0
Waheb Double Kanon	Kamikaz 2	2002	0	1	0
Rabah Donquishoot	Galouli	2002	1	1	0
Cobra Noir	On a commencé le combat	2002	?	?	?
Rafik Ganja	Tlata	2002	?	?	?
Lotfi Double Kanon	Virus	2003	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Dangereux	2003	0	1	0
Soldatesk	Champ de Bataille	2003	0	1	0
Hamma	Guerre Civile – الحرب الأهلية	2003	1	1	0
Azzou	23 bikoura	2003	?	?	?
Game Over	Face to Face	2004	0	1	0
Fada Vex	El Facteur	2004	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Kobay	2004	0	1	0
Naili	Le Peuple Orphelin	2004	0	1	0
Nadjib & La Familia	Lirique de Ouf	2004	0	1	0
Rabah Donquishoot	Rabah Président	2004	0	1	0
Rafik Ganja	Win Rani	2004	0	1	0
Farid Kalamity	Rançon	2005	0	1	0
Karim El Gang	Fach'hado	2005	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Remix 2005	2005	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Koupable	2005	0	1	0
MLBR	Revanche	2005	0	1	0
Systeman	Rebelle	2005	0	1	0
TOX	La Mix-Tape	2005	0	1	0
Zaaf Recordz	Sous Pression	2005	0	1	0
Intik	De L'Autre Côté	2005	1	1	0
Mamooth	Côté Noor... Côté Noir	2005	1	1	0
MBS – المكرو يبريزي السكات	Maquis Bla Sleh	2005	1	1	0
FFA	Chkoune Kan Igoul	2006	0	1	0
Karim El Gang & Smain	Mayna	2006	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Kamizole	2006	0	1	0
Raouf Adear	Alger!A Street	2006	0	1	0
Youss	نروح	2006	1	1	0
Fugi	2round	2007	0	1	0
Game Over	Game Show	2007	0	1	0
Karim El Gang & Smain	Avertissement	2007	0	1	0
Mafia Underground	Mafia Underground	2007	0	1	0
Oxymore	Reportage	2007	0	1	0
Raouf Adear	Moussika Zenka 1	2007	0	1	0
TOX & Def-One	Rap Performance	2007	0	1	0
35 Crew	Première brique	2008	0	1	0
DJ Mourad	Hip Hop Guérilla Vol 2, Pt 2	2008	0	1	1
Azzou	Carnaval Fi Dachra	2008	0	1	0
Freekence	Premier chapitre	2008	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Kauchemar	2008	0	1	0
Raouf Adear	Moussika Zenka 2	2008	0	1	0
Reality	Reality Fel Maydane	2008	0	1	0
Sofiane Hamma	Rahoum Jaou	2008	0	1	0
TOX & Nailklan	al Mou3ahada (Le Pacte)	2008	0	1	1
Youss	Ezzawalia	2008	0	1	0

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
Zaaf Recordz	Street Game	2008	0	1	0
Rabah Donquishoot	Dernier Cri – آخر عيطة	2008	1	1	0
	This Is a War – 7arb l'ekléme – حرب				
Systeman	لكلام	2008	1	1	1
Ice-M	Cosa Nostra	2008	?	?	?
FaouziAttentat	La réplique	2008	?	?	?
JMB	Bladi	2008	?	?	?
Darkman	Old School Party	2009	0	1	0
Fada Vex	El Azma Mixtape	2009	0	1	0
FaouziAttentat	La Mixtape	2009	0	1	0
Karim El Gang	Guantanamo	2009	0	1	0
Lotfi Double Kanon	Klemi	2009	0	1	0
Raouf Adear	Mout Wagef	2009	0	1	0
M'trig L'trig – مطريق لطريق	l'seen el3ikyan – لسان العقيان	2009	1	1	1
Chakir Eminem	Chakir	2009	?	?	?
Fada Vex	Ramz El Mektoub	2010	0	1	0
Lax	DzTape	2010	0	1	1
Lotfi Double Kanon	Remix 2010	2010	0	1	0
South Crew	Yed El Ma7na	2010	0	1	0
La Zone-K	Djrou7 Bla Dmou3 – جروح بلا دموع	2010	1	1	1
Fugi	Best Of	2011	0	1	0
Azpak	Pavillon35	2011	0	1	0
Dirty 16	The Dirty Mentality	2011	0	1	0
FaouziAttentat	La réplique vol. 2	2011	0	1	0
Freekence	En Noir et Blanc	2011	0	1	0
Naili	Déjà 10 ans	2011	0	1	0
Raouf BKL	Mazal	2011	0	1	0
Systeman	Al Madrassa Al Kadima	2011	0	1	0
Xenos	madrassat el 7ayat	2011	0	1	1
Banis	الشريط الموسيقي	2011	1	1	0
	L'Empire des Rêves – الإمبراطورية				
Naili	للأحلام	2011	1	1	0
Banis	Banis au pays des merveilles	2012	0	1	0
Icosium	Chapitre 1	2012	0	1	0
Frekence 13	Etat d'urgence	2012	0	1	0
MC Mo	Risselti	2012	0	1	1
Rafale-A	El Basma	2012	0	1	0
TBM	Emchi We Rassek Fesma	2012	0	1	0
Africa Jungle	Ched Rohek – شد روحك	2012	1	1	0
Fada Vex	الهدرة قليلة	2012	1	1	0
Lax	Street Rafale – ستريت رافال	2012	1	1	0
	The Education & the Respect – التربية				
Taaryk TK	و القدر	2012	1	1	0
Bad-ID	El Mou9adima	2013	0	1	1
Azzou	Samurai	2013	0	1	0
Cloz	Hémorragie	2013	0	1	0
El Hass	Si Punchline	2013	0	1	0
Flenn	Darba S'hiha	2013	0	1	0
L'N. Fect	Prix Nobel Ta3 Zbel	2013	0	1	1
Lotfi Double Kanon	Katastrophe Chapitre 1	2013	0	1	0

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
MC Majhoul	Couloir Noir	2013	0	1	0
TOX	Zaxologie	2013	0	1	0
فلان	Alcat'Rap	2013	1	1	0
Face to Face	الجريمة	2013	1	1	0
Fada Vex	The Black Session	2013	1	1	0
الحراز	صوت الواقع	2013	1	1	0
Kahlouche – الكحلوش	Raplaisir	2013	1	1	0
Spook	El Kelma Lekma – الكلمة لكمة	2013	1	1	0
Bad-ID	2031 Freestyle Serie	2014	0	1	0
Icosium	Bled-Art	2014	0	1	0
El Hass	Bounya	2014	0	1	0
Rafik Ganja	Rasta Compil 2013-2014	2014	0	1	0
Lax	Feat F Trigue – فيت فالطريق	2014	1	1	0
Cloz	Zedna fel Jazayer	2015	0	1	0
Cloz	Zon9a Arte	2015	0	1	1
Bled'Art Family	Air Algérie	2015	0	1	0
Ill-Yes	Yes Lookan	2015	0	1	0
Raouf Adear	Moussika Zenka 4, Part 1	2015	0	1	0
رفيك	خمسة	2015	1	0	0
Tfقaf (Armory de la Rime)	10 Tonnes	2015	1	1	0
Blidian Thugz	Neptune Mixtape	2016	0	1	0
Ill-Yes	Yes Stage Lakher	2016	0	1	0
Fada Vex	Mixtape حبر على ورق	2016	1	1	0

7.2.2 List of scripts on Lebanese rap album covers

Following is a list of Algerian artists, their albums, and the scripts they use on the front cover of their albums. The list was created using data available on http://genius.com/Rap-genius-arabia-dz-rap-albums-lyrics. The data was collected up to 2016-10-25. Incomplete data (e.g. missing album, missing year, missing cover) were not considered.

1 = yes, positive

0 = no, negative

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
Clotaire K	Lebanese	2002	1	1	0
Clotaire K	Beirut	2003	0	1	0
Rayess Bek	عم بحكي بالسكوت	2003	1	1	0
Rayess Bek	Nuit Gravement à la Santé	2005	0	1	0
Aksser	Aksser	2006	1	1	0
DJ Lethal Skillz	New World Disorder	2008	1	1	0
كتيبه 5	أهلا فيك بالمخيمات	2008	1	0	0
Fareeq el Atrash	Pre-Album	2009	1	0	0
Eslam Jawaad	The Mammoth Tusk	2009	0	1	0
Beirutus	Beirutus	2009	0	0	1

Album Artist	Album	Year	Arabic Script	Latin Script	3arabizi
Vico	Judgement Day	2009	0	1	0
ظفار	صحاب الأرض	2010	1	0	0
Rayess Bek	Khartech Aa Zamann – L'Homme de Gauche	2010	1	1	0
Rayess Bek	Hip Hop Republic	2011	1	1	0
Bill Amaliyeh	Iza Ma Ejit Jarbou3a	2011	1	0	0
Zeinedin	Min Beirut	2011	1	1	0
Yaseen	Stateless	2011	0	1	1
Big A	Lebanon Don	2011	0	1	0
Vico	Creative Control 1.0	2011	0	1	0
من وراء العدسة	من ورا العدسه	2012	1	1	0
الراس و مونما	كشف المحجوب	2012	1	1	0
DJ Lethal Skillz	Karmageddon	2012	0	1	0
كتيبه 5 تقدم أسلوب	ف/صل	2012	1	0	0
Vico	Relentless	2012	0	1	0
Edd Abbas	المتراكم	2012	1	0	0
Hamorabi	Ashurya	2012	0	1	0
Edd Abbas	Edd Abbas	2013	1	0	0
Edd Abbas & Lipos & Elepheel	Tripnol	2013	0	1	0
N1yah	my name is n1yah	2013	0	1	0
الراس	آدم, دروين و البطريق	2014	1	0	0
Hamorabi	Malkuʔ 12	2014	1	1	0
بيل أملية و فلان الفلاني	مسك Tape	2014	1	1	1
Jnood Beirut	Ta7iyeh	2014	1	1	1
Hamorabi	Mahdishtar	2015	1	1	0
Chyno	Making Music to Feel at Home	2015	0	1	0
E-Hash	Manteq A'waj	2015	0	1	0
من وراء العدسة	طائرة الروح	2015	1	0	0
Kalash	Haida Ana	2016	0	1	0
El Rass & Al Nather	Idarat Al Tawahosh	2016	1	0	0
Hamorabi & Saligo	777	2016	0	1	0
Jnood Beirut	Compilation	2016	0	1	0
DJ Goadman	Funky Fikon	2016	1	1	0
الدرويش	أرض السمك	2016	1	0	0

7.3   Bibliography

Abbas, Basel. "An Analysis of Arabic Hip-Hop." Dissertation. London, 2005. https://profheitnerracemediaculture.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/arabic-hip-hop-see-palestinian-chapter.pdf.

Ahmar, Boutros al. "Mad Prophet rappeur d'impact." agenda culturel, August 31, 2015. http://www.agendaculturel.com/Musique_Mad_Prophet_rappeur_d_impact.

Aidi, Hishaam D. "'Verily, There Is Only One Hip-Hop Umma': Islam, Cultural Protest and Urban Marginality." *Journal of the Research Group on Socialism and Democracy* 18, no. 2 (2011). http://sdonline.org/36/verily-there-is-only-one-hip-hop-umma-islam-cultural-protest-and-urban-marginality/.

Aidi, Hisham D. "The Grand (Hip-Hop) Chessboard: Race, Rap and Raison d'État." *Middle East Report* 260 (2011): 25–39.

Ajaj, Samer. [Unpublished] interview with Samer Ajaj aka Samzz at Radio Beirut, November 11, 2016.

Alim, H. Samy. "A New Research Agenda. Exploring the Transglobal Hip Hop Umma." In *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop*, edited by Miriam Cooke and Bruce B. Lawrence, 264–74. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

———, ed. "Black Culture's Global Impact." *Black Arts Quarterly* Vol. 7, no. Issue 1 (2002): 36.

———. "Hip Hop Nation Language." In *Language in the USA*, edited by Edward Finegan and John R. Rickford, 387–409. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

———. *Roc the Mic Right: The Language of Hip Hop Culture*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2006. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203006733.

Alim, H. Samy, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook, eds. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Almeida, Cristina. *Rap Beyond Resistance - Staging Power in Contemporary Morocco*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Al-munǧid fī l-luġa wa l-aʿlām. 41st ed. Beirut: Dār al-mašriq, 2005.

Amghar, Samir. "Rap et islam : quand le rappeur devient imam." *Hommes et migrations* N° 1243, no. Mai-June (2003): 78–86.

Armbrust, Walter. "What Would Sayyid Qutb Say? Some Reflections on Video Clips." In *Culture Wars: The Arabic Music Video Controversy*, edited by Walter Armbrust, 18–29. Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005.

Ashooh, Griff. "The Arab Hip Hop Tradition Towards a Hip Hop Ummah Wasat." College of William & Mary, 2013.

Ashtiany, Julia. ʿ*Abbasid belles-lettres*. The Cambridge history of Arabic literature. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1990.

Barabási, Albert-László. *Linked*. New York: Plume, 2003.

Barabási, Albert-László, and Réka Albert. "Emergence of Scaling in Random Networks." *Science* 286, no. 5439 (October 15, 1999): 509–12. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.286.5439.509.

Barnes, Natasha. *Cultural Conundrums: Gender, Race, Nation, and the Making of Caribbean Cultural Politics*. University of Michigan Press, 2010.

Barthes, Roland. "La mort de l'auteur." In *Le Bruissement de la langue*, 61–67. Paris: Seuil, 1984.

Becker, Howard S. "Art As Collective Action." *American Sociological Review* 39, no. 6 (1974): 767–76. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094151.

———. *Art Worlds: Updated and Expanded 25th Anniversary Edition*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Beeston, A. F. L., T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant, and G. R. Smith, eds. *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Ben Moussa, Mohamed. "Rap It up, Share It up: Identity Politics of Youth 'Social' Movement in Moroccan Online Rap Music." *New Media & Society* 21, no. 5 (May 2019): 1043–64. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818821356.

Bennett, Andrew. *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity and Place*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000.

Bennett, Andy. *Cultures of Popular Music*. Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001.

Bennett, Andy, and Paula Guerra. "Rethinking DIY Culture in a Post-Industrial and Global Context." In *DIY Cultures and Underground Music Scenes*, edited by Andy Bennett and Paula Guerra, 1st edition., 7–18. Abingdon, Oxon ; New York: Routledge, 2018.

Bennett, Andy, and Richard A. Peterson. "Introducing Music Scenes." In *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal & Virtual*, 1–16. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Bianchi, Robert Michael. "3arabizi - When Local Arabic Meets Global English." *Acta Linguistica Asiatica* 2, no. 1 (May 22, 2012): 89–100. https://doi.org/10.4312/ala.2.1.89-100.

Binder, Kevin. "Homophobic Hip-Hop Music and Its Effect on Attitudes Toward Homosexuality." University of Michigan, 2013. http://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/98862.

Bohn, Lauren E. "Rapping the Revolution." *Foreign Policy Blogs* (blog), July 22, 2011. http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/07/22/rapping_the_revolution.

Boumedini, Belkacem. "Conditions politiques et sociales de l'apparition du rap en Algérie." Presented at the Rap: Musique de Jeunes, April 17, 2007. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sAJz94p1xE.

Boumedini, Belkacem, and Nebia Dadoua Hadria. "Catégories d'emprunt Dans La Chanson Rap En Algérie. L'exemple Des Groupes: T.O.X, M.B.S et Double Canon." *Synergies. Algérie* n° 8 (2009): 139–47.

Bourbia, Malik. Interview with Malik Bourbia aka Fada Vex, October 11, 2016.

Bourdieu, Pierre. "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital." Translated by Reinhard Kreckel. *Soziale Welt*, no. Sonderband 2. "Soziale Ungleichheiten" (1983): 183–98.

———. "The Forms of Capital." In *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J. Richardson, translated by Richard Nice, 241–58. New York: Greenwood, 1983.

Bourjaili, Jeff. [Unpublished] interview with Jeff Bourjaili aka Mad Prophet at Radio Beirut, October 26, 2016.

Brand Nubian. *In God We Trust*. Elektra, 1992. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=In_God_We_Trust_(Brand_Nubian_album)&oldid=882689292.

Burkhalter, Thomas. *Local Music Scenes and Globalization: Transnational Platforms in Beirut*. Routledge Studies in Ethnomusicology 3. London: Routledge, 2013.

Caubet, Dominique. "New Elaborate Written Forms in Darija : Blogging, Posting and Slamming in Morocco." In *The Routledge Handbook of Arabic Linguistics*, edited by Elabbas Benmamoun and Reem Bassiouney, 387–406. Routledge, 2017.

Cheney, Charise. "Representin' God: Rap, Religion and the Politics of a Culture." *The North Star: A Journal of African America n Religious History* Volume 3, no. Number 1 (1999). https://www.princeton.edu/~jweisenf/northstar/volume3/cheney.pdf.

Chyno. *Mamluk*. Warner Music, 2021.

kontakt. Das Kulturprojekt. "Chyno - Making Music to Feel at Home," February 18, 2016. https://kontakt-bamberg.de/galerien/chyno-making-music-feel-home.

kontakt. Das Kulturprojekt. "Chyno im Freiraum 2017," April 22, 2017. https://kontakt-bamberg.de/galerien/chyno-im-freiraum-2017.

Cobb, Michael D., and William A. Boettcher. "Ambivalent Sexism and Misogynistic Rap Music: Does Exposure to Eminem Increase Sexism? 1." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 37, no. 12 (2007): 3025–42.

Cooke, Miriam. *Dissident Syria: Making Oppositional Arts Official*. Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 2007.

Costello, Mark, and David Foster Wallace. *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present*. New York: Ecco Press, 1990.

Crossley, Nick. *Connecting Sounds: The Social Life of Music*. Manchester University Press, 2019.

———. "Pretty Connected The Social Network of the Early UK Punk Movement." *Theory, Culture & Society* 25, no. 6 (November 1, 2008): 89–116. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276408095546.

———. "Relational Sociology and Culture: A Preliminary Framework." *International Review of Sociology* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 65–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/03906701.2014.997965.

Crossley, Nick, and Wendy Bottero. "Social Spaces of Music: Introduction." *Cultural Sociology*, September 22, 2014, 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975514546236.

Crossley, Nick, Siobhan McAndrew, and Paul Widdop. "Introduction." In *Social Networks and Music Worlds*, 1–13. New York: Taylor & Francis, 2014.

Dallāl, Ziyād. "Al-Hīb Hūb al-ʿarabī: Ar-Rās Wa-ʾl-Huwīya al-Ġādīda." *Bidāyāt* 12, no. Ṣayf–Ḫarīf (2015). https://bidayatmag.com/node/661.

DAM. *Ben haana wa maana*. Cooking Vinyl, 2019.

Decker, Jeffrey Louis. "The State of Rap: Time and Place in Hip Hop Nationalism." *Social Text*, no. 34 (1993): 53. https://doi.org/10.2307/466354.

DRP Art & Communication. *DRP RAP CUP ▶ Bande Annonce 2 #DrpRapCup*, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYn_swoA5So.

Dunne, Bruce. "Power and Sexuality in the Middle East." *Middle East Report* 206 (1998): 8–11.

El Zein, Rayya. "Resisting 'resistance': On Political Feeling in Arabic Rap Concerts." *Arab Subcultures: Transformations in Theory and Practice*, 2017, 87–112.

El Zein, Rayya S. "Performing El Rap El ʿArabi 2005-2015: Feeling Politics amid Neoliberal Incursions in Ramallah, Amman, and Beirut." City University of New York, 2016. https://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/1402/.

Fada Vex. "Le rap algérien est dans la place!!" *Mononoke. zine punk hardcore*, no. Issue 2 (2004): 6.

Fernandes, Sujatha. "The Mixtape of the Revolution." *The New York Times*, January 29, 2012, sec. Opinion. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/30/opinion/the-mixtape-of-the-revolution.html.

Fielder, Adrian. "Articulating the Hip-Hop Nation. Rap as Transnational Urban Subculture in the United States and France." *DisClosure: A Journal of Social Theory* 8 (1999): 5–31. https://doi.org/10.13023/disclosure.08.02.

Fischione, Fernanda. "Untranslatability as Resistance: The Case of Levantine Arabic Rap in the Aftermath of the 2011 Uprisings." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 12, no. 3 (December 5, 2019): 282–302. https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-01203004.

Forman, Murray. *The 'Hood Comes First: Race, Space, and Place in Rap and Hip-Hop*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2002.

Fuess, Albrecht. "'The War of First Names'. Music and Islam in France." In *Recontextualizing Resistance*, edited by Loubna Youssef and Emily Golson, 312–25. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017.

Gaetner, Thomas. *Hip-hop: le rap français des années 1990*. Paris: Fetjaine, 2012.

Gana, Nouri. "Rapping and Remapping the Tunisian Revolution." In *Resistance in Contemporary Middle Eastern Cultures: Literature, Cinema and Music*, edited by Karima Laachir and Saeed Talajooy, 207–25. Routledge, 2012.

Gansinger, Martin A. M. *Radical Religious Thought in Black Popular Music. Five Percenters and Bobo Shanti in Rap and Reggae*. Hamburg: Anchor Academic Publishing, 2017.

Grant, Judith. "Bring the Noise: Hypermasculanity in Heavy Metal and Rap." *Journal of Social Philosophy* 27 (1996): 5–31.

Greenberg, Ela. "'The King of the Streets'. Hip-Hop and the Reclaiming of Masculinity in Jerusalem's Shuʿafat Refugee Camp." In *That's the Joint!*, 370–81. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Guerrero Parrado, Jairo. "Rap y Revolución En El Mundo Árabe: Transcripción y Traducción de Tres Canciones de Rap Árabe." *Al-Andalus Magreb* 19 (2012): 455–77.

Haas, Daniel. "Gib dir Kugel. Der Rapper Haftbefehl ist der deutsche Dichter der Stunde." *Die Zeit*, 2014, 49 edition. https://www.zeit.de/2014/49/haftbefehl-csu-wahlkampf-plakat.

Hagmann, Jannis. "The Arab Hip-Hop Sampler 'Khat Thaleth': Looking for a Third Way." Qantara.de, January 24, 2013. https://en.qantara.de/node/2523.

Hakim, Catherine. "Erotic Capital." *European Sociological Review* 26, no. 5 (October 1, 2010): 499–518. https://doi.org/10.1093/esr/jcq014.

———. *Honey Money*. London: Allen Lane, 2011.

Halila, Souad. "Rap and Islamism in Post-Revolutionary Tunisia: Local Idiosyncrasies and Global Reverberations." In *Islamism and Cultural Expression in the Arab World*, edited by Abir Hamdar and Lindsey Moore, 222–38. Durham Modern Middle East and Islamic World Series. New York: Routledge, 2017.

Hall, Stuart. "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular.'" In *People's History and Socialist Theory*, edited by Raphael Samuel, 227–40. Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 1981.

Heine, Peter. *Märchen, Miniaturen, Minarette. Eine Kulturgeschichte der islamischen Welt*. Auflage: 1. Darmstadt: Primus, 2011.

Höllein, Dagobert, Nils Lehnert, and Felix Woitkowski, eds. *Rap - Text - Analyse. Deutschsprachiger Rap seit 2000. 20 Einzeltextanalysen. Rap - Text - Analyse*. Bielefeld: transcript-Verlag, 2020.

Ibn Sanūsī, Kamāl. "At-turāṯ al-mūsīqī fī 'l-Ǧazaʾir." *Āfāq li-l-ʿulūm* 2, no. 1 (2017): 111–17.

Ignatiev, Noel. "Abolish the White Race." *Race Traitor* No. 1 (1993). http://racetraitor.org/abolish.html.

Jacobi, Renate. *Studien zur Poetik der altarabischen Qaṣīde*. Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur / Orientalische Kommission: Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission ; 24. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971.

James, Kery. *J'rap encore*. Universal Music Group, 2018.

Johannsen, Igor. "Configurations of Space and Identity in Hip Hop: Performing 'Global South.'" *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 6, no. 2 (2019): 183–205. https://doi.org/10.34718/TBFS-V626.

———. "Keepin' It Real: Arabic Rap and the Re-Creation of Hip Hop's Founding Myth." *Middle East - Topics & Arguments* 7 (January 27, 2017): 85–93. https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2017.7.6329.

———. "'Popular Culture' and the Academy." *Middle East - Topics & Arguments* 7 (January 27, 2017): 100–105. https://doi.org/10.17192/meta.2017.7.6379.

Johnston, Sholeh. "Persian Rap: The Voice of Modern Iran's Youth." *Journal of Persianate Studies* 1, no. 1 (2008): 102–19. https://doi.org/10.1163/187471608784772760.

Jorgensen, Cory Alan. "Jarīr and Al-Farazdaq's Naqa'id Performance as Social Commentary," December 2012. https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/19607.

Kabbani, Omar. Interview with Omar Kabbani of Ashekman, November 30, 2016.

Kahf, Usama. "Arabic Hip-Hop: Claims of Authenticity and Identity of a New Genre." In *That's the Joint!*, 116–33. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Khabeer, Suad Abdul. "Rep That Islam: The Rhyme and Reason of American Islamic Hip Hop." *The Muslim World* 97, no. 1 (January 1, 2007): 125–41. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2007.00162.x.

Kilpatrick, Hilary. "Abū L-Faraǧ's Profiles of Poets. A 4th/10th Century Essay at the History and Sociology of Arabic Literature." *Arabica* 44 (1997): 95–128.

Knight, Michael Muhammad. *Why I Am a Five Percenter*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2011.

Kozinets, Robert V. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009.

KRS-One. *High School Rock*. High School High. Atlantic Records & Big Beat Records, 1996.

Lipsitz, George. *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*. Rev. and Expanded ed. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.

Lohlker, Rüdiger. "Hip Hop and Islam: An Exploration into Music, Technology, Religion, and Marginality." *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 104 (2014): 115–35.

Lowkey. *Soundtrack to the Struggle*. Mesopotamia Music, 2011.

Manabe, Noriko. "Globalization and Japanese Creativity: Adaptations of Japanese Language to Rap." *Ethnomusicology* 50, no. 1 (2006): 1–36.

Mangialardi, Nicholas. "Deciphering Egyptian Rap Ciphers." *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 12, no. 1 (March 29, 2019): 68–87. https://doi.org/10.1163/18739865-01201004.

Mattes, Hanspeter. "'Herr Präsident, ihr Volk stirbt!' Protestmusik und politischer Wandel in Nordafrika/Nahost." *GIGA Focus Nahost*, September 2012, 1–8.

Mavima, Shingi. "Bigger By the Dozens: The Prevalence of Afro-Based Tradition in Battle Rap." *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 86–105.

McDonald, David A. "Carrying Words Like Weapons: Hip-Hop and the Poetics of Palestinian Identities in Israel." *Min-Ad: Israeli Studies in Musicology Online* 7, no. 2 (2009): 116–30.

Meisami, Julie Scott. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature. Vol. 2. K-Z*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. London: Routledge, 1998.

Miliani, Hadj. "Culture planétaire et identités frontalières À propos du rap en Algérie." *Cahiers d'études africaines* n° 168, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 763–76.

Mohaiemen, Naeem. "Fear of a Muslim Planet: Hip Hop's Hidden History." In *Sound Unbound*, 313–36. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2008.

Moreno Almeida, Cristina. "The Politics of Taqlidi Rap: Reimagining Moroccanness in the Era of Global Flows." *The Journal of North African Studies* 21, no. 1 (2015): 116–31.

———. "Unravelling Distinct Voices in Moroccan Rap: Evading Control, Weaving Solidarities, and Building New Spaces for Self-Expression." *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 25, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): 319–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/13696815.2013.820130.

Morgan, Andy, and Chris Nickson. "Algeria. Rai. Rocking the Casbah." In *The Rough Guide to World Music: Africa & Middle East*, edited by Simon Broughton, Mark Ellingham, and Jon Lusk, 5–21. London: Rough Guides, 2006.

Narcy. *The Narcicyst*. Paranoid Arab Boy Music, 2009.

Nashara, Olivia. "« Une sorte de fierté est revenue ». Entretien avec le Rappeur El Rass," 2015. http://www.bboykonsian.com/attachment/593771/.

Nashed, Mat. "Egyptian Rappers: Keeping It Real." Qantara.de - Dialogue with the Islamic World, December 6, 2017. https://en.qantara.de/content/egyptian-rappers-keeping-it-real.

O'Keefe, Jean. "Hip Hop and the Arab Uprisings." openDemocracy, February 24, 2012. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/hip-hop-and-arab-uprisings/.

———. "Revolutionary Arab Rap: Female Rappers." Blog. *Revolutionary Arab Rap* (blog). Accessed March 19, 2021. https://revolutionaryarabrap.blogspot.com/p/female-rappers.html.

O'Neil, Mathieu. "Cyberchiefs. Autonomy and Authority in Online Tribes," 2009. https://works.bepress.com/mathieu_oneil/7/.

Penier, Izabella. "BAME Authors, the Literary Establishment and the Publishing Industry in the UK." Billet. *OpenCulture* (blog), February 15, 2019. https://oc.hypotheses.org/2078.

Pennisi, Rosa. "Written Dārija: 'māšī mə'qūl təktəb-ha bi-ḥurūf al-luġa al-'arabiyya!' It Is not Logical to Write It with the Arabic Letters! : Media Reception of the Zakoura Dictionary Project." *Annali di Ca' Foscari. Serie orientale*, no. 56 (June 30, 2020): 129–54. https://doi.org/10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2020/56/005.

Pennycook, Alastair. "Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity." *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 6, no. 2 (June 11, 2007): 101–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348450701341246.

Perrier, Jean-Claude. *Le rap français: dix ans après : anthologie*. Paris: Table ronde, 2010.

Peterson, Richard A., and Steve S. Lee. "Internet-Based Virtual Music Scenes: The Case of P2 in Alt.Country Music." In *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal & Virtual*, edited by Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, 187–204. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004.

Pöllmann, Andreas. "Intercultural Capital: Toward the Conceptualization, Operationalization, and Empirical Investigation of a Rising Marker of Sociocultural Distinction." *SAGE Open*, 2013, 7. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244013486117.

Porter, Michael. *Rap and the Eroticizing of Black Youth*. Chicago, Illinois: African American Images, 2006.

Public Enemy. *It Takes A Nation Of Millions To Hold Us Back*. Audio CD. Def Jam Records, Columbia Records, 1988.

Puig, Nicolas. "Composer depuis la marge. Sampling et références sonores dans l'œuvre d'un palestinien au Liban." *Volume !* 14:1, no. 2 (December 12, 2017): 37–49.

———. "La cause du rap : Engagements d'un musicien palestinien au Liban." *Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie. Anciennement Cahiers de musiques traditionnelles*, no. 25 (December 31, 2012): 93–109.

Qi, Justin. "Rap & Revolution." *Harvard International Review* 40, no. 2 (2019): 22–23. https://doi.org/10.2307/26617404.

Genius. "Rap Genius Arabia – Dz Rap Albums," 2016. http://genius.com/Rap-genius-arabia-dz-rap-albums-lyrics.

Genius. "Rap Genius Arabia – Lebanese Rap Albums / Albūmāt Ar-Rāb al-Lubnānī," 2016. http://genius.com/Rap-genius-arabia-lebanese-rap-albums-lyrics.

Robertson, Roland. "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity." In *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson, 25–44. London: SAGE, 1995.

Rooney, Caroline. "Activism and Authenticity. Palestinian and Related Hip-Hop in an International Frame." In *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*, edited by Thomas Burkhalter, Kay Dickinson, and Benjamin J Harbert, 209–28. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 2013.

Rose, Tricia. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip Hop--and Why It Matters*. Basic Books, 2008.

Safieddine, Najib. Interview with Najib Safieddine aka Muhandas, November 22, 2016.

Salhi, Kamal, ed. "Hip-Hop Bismillah: Subcultural Worship of Allah in Western Europe." In *Music, Culture and Identity in the Muslim World. Performance, Politics and Piety*, 230–60. New York: Routledge, 2014.

Salois, Kendra Renee. "The Networked Self: Hip Hop Musicking and Muslim Identities in Neoliberal Morocco." ProQuest, Ann Arbor MI, 2015. http://search.proquest.com/docview/1526501779.

Sayyid, Māzin as-. "ar-Rāb wa-'n-naṣṣ al-Qur'ānī: Bayn al-mawrūt̲ al-inqilābī wa-'l-ištibāk." Maʿāzif, August 4, 2014. https://ma3azef.com/الراب-والنص-القرآني-بين-الموروث-الانق/.

Schwartz, Sarah. "Accessing Hip-Hop Analyzing Meknassi Rappers' Adoption of Casablancan Features." Aix-Marseille University, 2017.

———. "Repping the Streets, Repping the Hometown: A Sociophonetic Analysis of Dialectal Variation in the Moroccan Hip Hop Community." Master's thesis, University of Texas, 2017.

Seilstad, Brian. "Hip Hop Culture in a Small Moroccan City." *Journal of Hip Hop Studies* 2, no. 1 (2015): 65–98.

Shannahan, Dervla Sara, and Qurra Hussain. "Rap on 'l'Avenue'; Islam, Aesthetics, Authenticity and Masculinities in the Tunisian Rap Scene." *Contemporary Islam* 5, no. 1 (April 2011): 37–58. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-010-0134-7.

Shorbaji, Nasser. Interview with Nasser Shorbaji aka Chyno at Radio Beirut, December 5, 2016.

Shoshan, Boaz. "High Culture and Popular Culture in Medieval Islam." *Studia Islamica*, no. 73 (1991): 67–107. https://doi.org/10.2307/1595956.

Stein, Rebecca L., and Ted Swedenburg. "Popular Culture, Relational History, and the Question of Power in Palestine and Israel." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 33, no. 4 (2004): 5–20.

Swedenburg, Ted. "Palestinian Rap. Against the Struggle Paradigm." In *Popular Culture in the Middle East and North Africa: A Postcolonial Outlook*, edited by Walid El Hamamsy and Mounira Soliman, 17–32. Routledge, 2013.

Thal, Leonie. *Transformation & Partnerschaft?: Strukturen, Logiken und Effekte auswärtiger Kulturförderung in Ägypten*. Münchner ethnographische Schriften 28. München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2018.

Thornburgh, Nathan. "Chyno on Beirut Battle Rap and the Lebanese Revolution." Roads & Kingdoms, January 27, 2020. https://roadsandkingdoms.com/2020/chyno-beirut-battle-rap/.

Toelle, Heidi, and Katia Zakharia. *À la découverte de la littérature arabe du VIème siècle à nos jours*. Flammarion, 2009.

Utley, Ebony A. *Rap and Religion. Understanding the Gangsta's God*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger, 2012.

Wiedemann, Felix. *Code-Switching im algerischen und tunesischen Rap. Eine vergleichende Analyse von Lotfi Double Kanons „Klemi" und Baltis „L'album avant l'albombe"*. Bamberger Orientstudien 6. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press, 2015. http://nbn-resolving.de/urn/resolver.pl?urn:nbn:de:bvb:473-opus4-267222.

———. *Der Rapper El Général im Prisma der Identitätsproblematik*. Auflage: 1. Leipzig: bookra, 2014. http://menadoc.bibliothek.uni-halle.de/urn/urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:5-91912.

———. "Negotiating Languages in an Arab(Ic) Rap Music Fan Community." In *Approaches to Arabic Popular Culture*, edited by Peter Konerding, Felix Wiedemann, and Lale Behzadi, 137–86. Bamberg: Bamberg University Press, 2021.

———. "Remixing Battle Rap and Arabic Poetic Battling." *Occhialì – Rivista sul Mediterraneo islamico* 4 (2019): 13–28. https://doi.org/10.20378/irbo-54191.

———. "The Local and the Global in Networks of Lebanese and Algerian Rappers." *Open Library of Humanities* 5, no. 1 (April 5, 2019): 26, 1–40. https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.419.

Willis, Paul. "Foreword." In *Cultural Studies: Theory And Practice*, by Chris Barker, xix–xxii. London: Sage Publications, 2011.

Wormhoudt, Arthur, trans. *The Naqaith of Jarir and al Farazdaq Translated from the Text of Anthony Ashley Bevan*. An Arab Translation Series 7. Oskaloosa, Iowa: William Penn College, 1974.

"You Are What You Sing: Music and Identity. Discussion." Dar El Nimer for Arts & Culture, 2016.

Zaidane, Karima. "Emprunt et mélange: Produits d'une situation de contact de langues au Maroc." Thèse de doctorat, Université Paris III - Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1980.

Universal Zulu Nation. "Zulu Beliefs." Accessed September 28, 2016. http://www.zulunation.com/zulu-beliefs/.