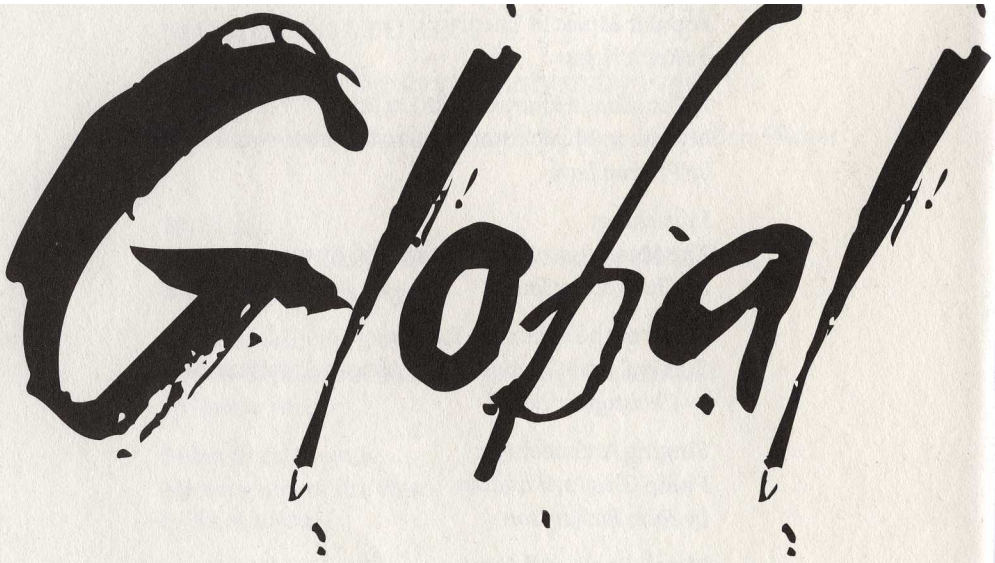

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RAP AND HIP-HOP OUTSIDE THE USA

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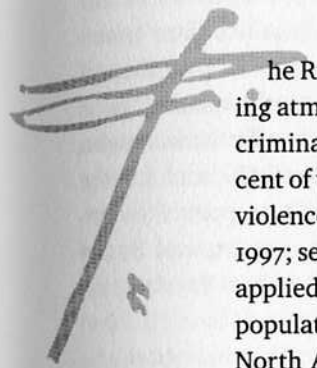
Chapter 2

Islamic Hip-Hop versus Islamophobia

Aki Nawaz, Natacha Atlas, Akhenaton

TED SWEDENBURG



The Runnymede Trust, in a 1997 report, warned of a prevailing atmosphere of "Islamophobia" in England, of growing discrimination against its 1.5 million Muslim population (80 percent of whom are of South Asian origin), and of ongoing racist violence against these so-called immigrants ("Discrimination" 1997; see also Werbner 1997: 232). Islamophobia can be equally applied to conditions in France, where the Muslim immigrant population of perhaps five million, composed primarily of North Africans, likewise faces racist hostility and structural discrimination. Among the recent dramatic instances of Islamophobia are the Rushdie affair in England and the "veil" affairs in France (see Kepel 1997).[1] Meanwhile, in both countries these "immigrants" are, increasingly, second- and third-generation citizen and legal residents who are attempting to construct cultural-political spaces for themselves as ethnicized "Muslims"[2] in Europe, and are actively involved in antiracist movements.

Among the manifold responses of European Muslims to Islamophobia has been hip-hop activism, a subject that has been largely overlooked in the relevant literature. This essay focuses on three of the most prominent figures in European "Islamic" hip-hop: from England, Aki Nawaz, of the group Fun-Da-Mental, and Natacha Atlas, from Transglobal Underground; and from France, Akhenaton, of the group IAM. By now, a considerable literature exists on "Muslims" and anti-immigrant racism in England and France, and the music press has given substantial coverage to the artists under consideration here. But studies of "Muslim" communities have generally paid little attention to popular culture, and accounts of antiracist movements (especially in England) frequently dis-

cuss popular culture but usually neglect "Islam" and "Muslim" communities.[3] The music press, finally, has not seriously examined the "Islamic" tendencies of Fun-Da-Mental, Transglobal Underground, or IAM.[4] I wish here to bring such connections into sharper focus.

AKI NAWAZ: ISLAMIC WARRIOR

Aki Nawaz (born Haq Nawaz Qureishi) was raised in Bradford by Pakistani immigrants who arrived in England in 1964 (his father worked as a bus conductor). Nawaz's first notable musical stint was in 1981–83 as the drummer for the Ur-gothic punk band, Southern Death Cult (which later transmogrified, sans Nawaz, into the Cult). Nawaz's hip-hop band Fun-Da-Mental came onto the scene in 1991, recording for Nation Records, which Nawaz had cofounded with the Afro-Caribbean Katherine Canoville. Nawaz, who adopted the performance names Aki-Stani, Righteous Preacher, and, finally, Propa-Gandhi, was the group's leader and most visible rapper. Fun-Da-Mental made an immediate impact, on the charts, in concert, and in the media, with a hip-hop sound frequently compared to Public Enemy's, an analogy that disguised the group's localized specificity.

Fun-Da-Mental's contributions should be seen, first of all, in light of the group's intervention within the Bradford "Islamic" community, and more broadly, the "Islamic" Asian community in Britain.[5] The 1980s witnessed a contest for leadership within the Bradford community involving the Council for Mosques, Muslim businessmen and professionals, and Muslim city councilors (eleven were elected in 1992). Many of the youth of Muslim background were alienated from the mosques as well as the official community leaders, especially because of the mosques' and leaders' opposition to music, dance, and videos, including bhangra, which had emerged in the 1980s as the pop music of Asian youth in Britain.[6] Fun-Da-Mental's expressions of pride in Islam appealed to Muslim youth who had been raised on British popular culture yet also felt wounded by British Islamophobia and the racist overtones of the Salman Rushdie affair. Fun-Da-Mental was also part of the new wave of early 1990s, post-bhangra Asian dance musics that, Sanjay Sharma suggests, served as "a site for the translation between diasporic Asian, Black and British identification" (Sharma et al. 1996: 40). What was unique about Fun-Da-Mental's Asian dance music was that it inserted Islam into that complicated identity configuration.

Fun-Da-Mental articulates Islamic and ethnic pride through its lyrics, musical mix, and imagery.[7] On "Meera Mazab" (My Religion, in Urdu) Propa-Gandhi raps: "I was born as a Muslim, and I'm still livin' as a Muslim / My spirituality determines reality." This song and others are peppered with

lines from the Qur'an (in Arabic, but the same words are used in Urdu): "Allahu akbar" [God is greatest]; "Subhanallah, ilhamdulillah" [Praise God, thank God]; "Qulu allahu ahad" [Say: He is Allah, the One! (Surah CXII:1)]; and "Allahu samad" [God the eternal (Surah CXI: 2)]. The group also rejects the Western stereotype of Islam as a sexist religion: "You say Islam and its sexism / But you're blind, when it comes to global masochism." In the song "Mother India," recited by the poet Subi Shah, she names famous "strong women" from the Indian subcontinent and Arabia, including Aisha, the Muhammad's wife, and Noor Jahan, the Mogul empress. Among the ingredients Fun-Da-Mental throws into its extremely dense musical mix are the sounds of Qawwali (the Sufi devotional music of India and Pakistan)[8] and Middle Eastern beats. Publicity photos typically show Propa-Gandhi sporting an Islamic star-and-crescent medallion, a logo that also appears on the cover of the CD *Seize the Time*. Finally, Nawaz advocates a certain Islamic orthopraxy, expressing total opposition to alcohol and drug usage (Sweet 1993). It should be stressed that such "Islamic" elements are specifically South Asian (and to some extent, Middle Eastern) and are not found on the recordings of Muslim-affiliated U.S. rap groups.

Islamic community elders in Bradford were unhappy with Fun-Da-Mental's chanting of Qur'anic phrases over dance beats, which is considered *harâm* (forbidden) for orthodox Muslims (Lewis 1994: 180). Moreover, the Bradford Council for Mosques was disturbed by press reports that Aki Nawaz supported Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie, a position that undermined the council's efforts to project a moderate image of the community (Lewis 1994: 181). In fact, the press (especially music publications) had misinterpreted Nawaz, who later clarified that "he oppose[d] any attempt to kill or silence Mr. Rushdie" but understood "why Muslims are upset with the writer" (Stevenson 1994).[9] Other elements in the community were more supportive, as exemplified by this statement from the Urdu-language London daily *Jang* (7 August 1992): "Lyrics praising Islamic scriptures, Asian culture and condemning the West's oppression of them are sung in a newly released cassette single called 'Peace, Love and War.' . . . So if you are confused about your roots and your identity, it might be worthwhile giving this enthusiastic group a try" (quoted in Lewis 1994: 180).

Fun-Da-Mental's Islam is also a critical component of the group's antiracist activity. A 1996 study of British Asian dance music, *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* (Sharma et al. 1996; see especially Kalra et al., Huq, and Hutnyk), underlines the role progressive Asian bands (such as Fun-Da-Mental, Kaliphz, Hustlers HC, Asian Dub Foundation, and, yes, Cornershop) have played in bridging the gap between locally organized self-defense and Asian political

groupings and popular-front, antiracist mobilizations of the white Left, such as the reorganized Anti-Nazi League. These bands also lent significant support to the campaign against the CJA (the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act) of 1994, which allows the banning of raves and any large-scale demonstrations. Asian dance outfits, with Fun-Da-Mental in the lead, have performed and delivered speeches at antiracist benefits and carnivals, at concerts and rallies organized by the Left on anti-imperialist issues, and at leftist party conferences, and have campaigned to keep Asian issues at the forefront of antiracist struggles.

Fun-Da-Mental advocates militancy and self-defense as key elements of the antiracist struggle and mobilizes Islamic imagery to this end, as seen in "Meera Mazab":

> You go for yours cuz I'm in jihad
> Allahu samad . . .
> So I'll be comin' around the mountain
> With my Islamic warriors
> Nubians wid jihad in my mind.

Here Nawaz figures the antiracist fight as a "jihad" and links local struggles to those of "Islamic" freedom fighters elsewhere. The song "Mother India," moreover, mentions in its list of strong women "Leila Khaled, freedom fighter of Palestine" (the infamous airplane hijacker from the secular Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine). Fun-Da-Mental's "Dog Tribe" video, which was banned from daytime television in England, shows Propa-Gandhi donning a black-and-white checkered *kûfîya*, sartorial signifier of the Palestinian struggle, as he joins an antiracist self-defense group. This video imagery, predictably, raised panics in both news and music press about Islamic "fundamentalism" (Hutnyk 1996: 161–63; CARF 1994). In "Meera Mazab" Propa-Gandhi also invokes the 1990 slaughter of seventeen Palestinians at Jerusalem's Haram al-Sharif: "Massacre in the mosque, suicidal frame of mind / Take a look, can't you see, look at Palestine."

I want to emphasize that Fun-Da-Mental invokes Palestine both as a figure of global struggle and because Muslims in England experience Western support for Israel's repressive policies and the pro-Israel media slant as racism against Muslims and Middle Easterners.

Fun-Da-Mental not only inserts Asian and Islamic concerns into the antiracist front, but also works to forge unity between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans. Nation Records, as noted above, is an Asian and black-owned company, and Fun-Da-Mental is an Asian and black band whose core, since 1993, has consisted of Propa-Gandhi and the Afro-Caribbean Dave Watts,

also known as Imp-D. According to Nawaz, "There should be unity between Afro-Caribbeans and Asians because the struggles are exactly the same" (CARF 1994). Although it is often claimed by antiracist campaigners in England that the category "black" includes both Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, Asian observers have noted a marked tendency to trivialize the Asian in "black."[10] This marginalization likewise extends to "Islam," which until recently had scarcely entered the scope of discussions of antiracism in England, whether on the part of activists or within the field of cultural studies. Fun-Da-Mental's novel intercession here is to posit "Islam" as a mode of Afro-Caribbean and Asian commonality by invoking both "South Asian" Islam (discussed above) and the black nationalist Islam (specifically, the Nation of Islam variety) that originated in the U.S.[11] This, I believe, makes sense of Fun-Da-Mental's frequent reference in their lyrics to such Nation of Islam (NOI) leaders as Malcolm X, Elijah Muhammad, and Louis Farrakhan (on "President Propaganda," "Dog Tribe," "Seize the Time," and "Bullet Solution").[12] For example, in "President Propaganda," we hear that "Louis Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam / That's where I got my degree from."

Moreover, Fun-Da-Mental explicitly refers to Nation of Islam (NOI) teachings, which are highly heterodox. For instance, they make reference to the conception of the white "devil" ("grafted" by the evil scientist Yaqub approximately 6,000 years ago, according to NOI teachings): "the devils that worked us out in the sunshine" ("Seize the Time"); "the devil operating through the media" ("Meera Mazab").[13] In "President Progapanda" and "Dollars of Sense," respectively, they also invoke Elijah Muhammad's claim that Islam is the "original religion" of the Asiatic black man and Christianity an inauthentic imposition:

> I'm a soldier in the name of Allah
> So put down the cross and pick up the "X" . . .
> Back in the days of the slave ships
> You had us whipped, raped and lynched
> Took away the Qur'an, you gave us the Bible
>
> Telling me Jesus is calling
> Selling me books of make believe stories
> Where people like me don't seem to have glory . . .
> They're retailing Christianity and feeding you insanity

In addition, Fun-Da-Mental ingeniously weaves samples of well-known soundbites from Farrakhan and especially Malcolm X into its multilayered, state-of-emergency dance mix.[14]

Fun-Da-Mental also attempts to educate white youth and leftists and to incorporate them into the antiracist struggle (see Yellow Peril 1995). When addressing them, Aki Nawaz attempts to "normalize" the Islamic presence in Britain as well to as explain the reasons for "fundamentalist" tendencies among Muslim youth.

> We're living on the edge and that's why there's a massive rise in fanaticism especially amongst Muslims who are joining organizations like the Kalifah. I'm not saying that's wrong, but it's a result of other things that are failing them, they're being led that way because no-one is doing anything about what should be done. Then you get the whiteman going "they're all fanatics" but he has put them in the position of having to be fanatics. (CARF 1994)

> I don't really like fanatics but I can also see that a lot of fundamentalist groups are like freedom fighters and then the people in power come along and paint them with a different and more negative brush. (Yellow Peril 1995)

Fun-Da-Mental also seems to enjoy "shaking up" young whites, as evidenced by Aki's remarks prior to performing at a Sydney concert before a crowd of mainly white indie-rock youths: "[W]e kind of look forward to going up on the stage to hordes of drunk and drugged-out indie kids and almost terrifying the shit out of them. We're like the ultimate coming down pill" (Yellow Peril 1995).

Fun-Da-Mental's uses of "Islam" are therefore central to its multipronged intervention: Islam instills religioethnic pride among Asian youth, serves as an image of antiracist mobilization, creates links between Asians and Afro-Caribbeans, and shocks and educates white leftists and alternative youth.[15]

NATACHA ATLAS: A HUMAN GAZA STRIP

Although Transglobal Underground (TGU) is not, strictly speaking, a hip-hop group, I include it here because hip-hop is one of its key constituent elements. It has been difficult, in fact, for music critics and the music industry to pin a label on TGU's music. Among the many contenders are ethnodance, global fusion dance-trance,[16] ethnodelic, dub-hop, global groove, world dance fusion, cross-cultural funk, Arab funk, polymorphic trance, ethnic techno, radical global pop, world techno, dub-rave-dance-trance-world, cross-cultural fusion, and so on ("In Town" n.d.; Taylor 1997; Anderson 1997; Wright n.d.; Hesmondhalgh 1995). Most recently, TGU has been marketed in the United States under the category "electronica." TGU's ambiguous position at the borders of "dance" and "world" musics has given rise to criticism, in particular from John Hutnyk, who in a trenchant article titled "Adorno at WOMAD" says of TGU's performance at the 1994 World of Music and Dance (WOMAD) Festival at Reading: "How is it that white British performers can wear Nepalese masks on stage, abstracted from their social and cultural context, without critical comment?" (1997: 109). Hutnyk goes on to criticize the routinization of "global sampling" in the world-music scene as well as the depoliticized "hybridity-talk" that pervades both musical and cultural studies discourses, singling TGU out as an exemplar of such depoliticized yet critically hailed hybridity. As counterexamples of bands that are hybrid and nonessentialist yet politically progressive, Hutnyk cites Fun-Da-Mental and Asian Dub Foundation, which are both directly involved in the antiracist struggle and propagate their politics at events like WOMAD. David Hesmondhalgh (1995) raises similar issues, arguing in particular that TGU's musical sampling practices should not be hailed—as they typically are by music critics—as instances of radical postmodernism and multiculturalism but instead seen as modernist appropriations that produce primitivist, exoticist, and romanticizing significations of the other.

Without disputing that TGU has exoticist and appropriating tendencies, I want to suggest that if one focuses on "Islam," the picture looks somewhat different. I will argue, *contra* Hutnyk and Hesmondhalgh, that TGU and especially the singer Natacha Atlas do articulate a progressive politics, although not in as overtly militant a fashion as Fun-Da-Mental, and that "Islam" plays a critical role in this regard. But first, it is necessary to clarify TGU's image. It is incorrect to describe TGU as white or even predominantly white. The band member Count Dubullah, in response to such claims, notes his own Greek-Albanian background (in England, these ethnic categories are not so clearly coded as "white" as in the United States; moreover, Albanians are Muslim);[17] that Natacha Atlas has "Arabic" roots; and that, in performance, the band expands to include Africans and South Asians (Morrell 1996). Moreover, TGU is not outside the orbit of progressive Asian bands and antiracist activity, for it performs at antiracist festivals on the same bill as the "political" bands.[18] Hutnyk's model "political" band Asian Dub Foundation in fact got its start on the concert circuit by opening for TGU on several dates in late 1994 (Luke n.d.) and has since opened for Natacha Atlas's solo dates.[19] Finally, TGU recorded for Aki Nawaz's Nation Records until 1999 and has shared personnel with Fun-Da-Mental (Count Dubullah and Neil Sparkes have recorded with both groups), and several of its singles have been re-

mixed by Aki Nawaz. For their 2001 album, *Yes Boss Food Corner,* they switched to the Mondo Rhythmica label, but they have continued their association with Nation Records.

I would argue that it would be mistaken therefore to insist on a sharp distinction between "political" Asian dance bands such as Fun-Da-Mental and Asian Dub Foundation and the depoliticized exotic-hybrid-postmodernist musical tendency (world-dance fusion) represented by TGU and Natacha Atlas. Both genres are released by Nation Records, and both Fun-Da-Mental and TGU/Atlas have made a move away from indiscriminate use of the music of the world as the source of samples and toward collaboration with "indigenous" musicians.[20] TGU could be regarded as one side of Aki Nawaz and Nation Records' multifaceted strategy for progressive cultural and political intervention within British popular culture. The trajectory of TGU's work is clearly consistent with Nawaz's broadly conceived antiracist politics, his "punk attitude," and his commitment to "reshuffling the global sound archives" while at the same time "insist[ing] on the primacy of their source material" (Toop 1993: 14).[21]

The TGU singer and solo artist Natacha Atlas is a key figure in such a strategy. She once described herself as a "human Gaza Strip," which one press account acutely glossed as referring to the "complex mélange of influences—both genetic and environmental—that have shaped her both as an individual and as a performer" ("Natacha Atlas" n.d.). Atlas's "genetic influences" are hybrid, to say the least: her father, a Middle Eastern Jew, born in Jerusalem; her grandfather, born in Egypt; a "Jewish and Palestinian mixture a few generations back" (Fruin n.d.); her mother, an English hippie, fan of Pink Floyd, devotee of Gurdjieff (Barbarian 1996; Assayas 1996). Appropriately enough, she grew up in the Moroccan and Jewish districts of Brussels, absorbing musics from both cultures and listening to her father's old Arabic records (Ali 1995:53; Assayas 1996). When her parents divorced, she relocated to England and reportedly became "Northampton's first Arabic rock singer" ("Natacha Atlas" n.d.).[22] At age twenty-four, she went back to Belgium, where she belly-danced professionally in Arab and Turkish clubs and listened carefully to the Arab classical musicians accompanying her. She describes going back to Belgium as a "return to her roots" (Barbarian 1996). By her own account, she does not suffer from an "identity problem," asserting rather that she feels equally at home in more than one culture ("In Town" n.d.).

Atlas's primary Middle Eastern "genetic" background, therefore, is Sephardi (or, to use the more politicized term, Mizrahi). Her identification with Judaism therefore is rooted in the Middle East and is affiliated (even by blood, in some complicated and unspecified way) to Islam. This is not as incongruous as it might appear from a Eurocentric or Ashkenazi perspective, for as Ammiel Alcalay so carefully shows in his *After Jews and Arabs* (1992), "Eastern" Jewry was for centuries intensely integrated into Arabo-Islamic civilization. The title of Atlas's first solo album, *Diaspora* (1997), refers, she says, not just to the "first dispersion of the Jews of Palestine but also those of all the races that have suffered injustice. . . . The uprooted are everywhere. Iraqis, Yugoslavs or Palestinians" (Barbarian 1996). It is noteworthy that all the diasporic peoples she names are Muslim (majority) peoples (assuming that that by "Yugoslavs" Atlas means Bosnian Muslims). One of *Diaspora's* most compelling songs is titled "Laysh Nata'arak" [Why Are We Fighting?]:

> Why are we fighting
> When we're all together? . . .
> Between me and you there is a long history. . . .
> Let's return to peace
> Let's make peace, we are brothers

The song addresses its call for peace to Arabs and Israelis in Arabic (the translation is mine), and therefore the primary Israeli addressees are the majority second-class Mizrahi Jews.[23] Moreover, Atlas sings, "Let's *return* to peace [emphasis added]" *[Yalla nirga' li-al-salâm],* evoking a time, before the creation of Israel, of amicable relations among Arabic-speaking Jews, Muslims, and Christians in the Middle East.

The plaintive title cut from *Diaspora* elaborates on these themes. Atlas sings, in Arabic:

> My heart is wounded, my country . . .
> Without you
> And my life is torture
> And the pain increases

Atlas's Arabic verses alternate with Neil Sparkes's dub poetry, which addresses the English-speaking listener and emphasizes once again the rootedness of Eastern Jews in the Middle East:

> The Kabbala revealed
> Aramaic whispers in Jaffa and Tel Aviv
> Spirits of the desert skies and plains
> For what shall we mourn and grieve
> Mesopotamia and Ur of the Chaldeas
> Descendants of the Sephardim

Trading tolerance and unity
From Baghdad to the Promised Land
Children of Canaan
Daughter of the Maghreb

The song's achingly beautiful atmospherics evoke Atlas's feelings about her own family's "uprooting": "I don't even know how we arrived in Belgium. I feel a great sadness, a feeling of loss" (Barbarian 1996).[24] For Atlas the diaspora is contemporary, a dispersion from the Arabo-Islamic Middle East, where—until the creation of the state of Israel—Sephardi Jews were "at home." This is a Mizrahi, not an Ashkenazi, European Jewish vision of diaspora. As Alcalay (1992: 1) observes:

> The modern myth of the Jew as pariah, outsider and wanderer has, ironically enough, been translated into the postmodern myth of the Jew as "other," an other that collapses into the equation: writing = Jew = Book. By what sleight of hand? . . . Such an exclusive address . . . ultimately obscures the necessity of mapping out a space in which the Jew *was* native, not a stranger but an absolute inhabitant of time and place.

At present Atlas—as a kind of riposte to the postmodern myth?—chooses to divide her time between London and Cairo, not Tel Aviv or Jerusalem.

Atlas voices her orientation toward "Islam" on "Dub Yalil" (from *Diaspora),* where she sings the opening lines of the *idhân,* the Muslim call to prayer, "Allahu akbar, ashhadu an la allah illa Allah" (God is greatest, I witness that there is no god but God), over a dub beat. But Atlas does not *complete* the opening of the call to prayer, whose next phrase is "wa Muhammad rasûl Allah" (and Muhammad is the messenger of God). Instead, she sings, "Allah ana bahibbak" (God, I love you). The fact that she recites the idhân without mentioning the prophet Muhammad, that she *sings* this religious text rather than chants it, that her singing is set to a dub-reggae beat, and that she uses the phrase "God, I love you," all make this a highly heterodox "Islamic" production. Nonetheless, the song testifies to her Islamic affiliations. While growing up, Atlas states, her father used to tell her about Judaism and her mother about Gurdjieff, but she was not interested. Now, she asserts, "I feel myself to be very Muslim, in fact. Sometimes I go to the mosque, last year I did [fasted during] Ramadan" (Assayas 1996).

Islam is also critical to Atlas's understanding of her own and TGU's cultural intervention in Britain. I would argue that, given an overarching atmosphere of Islamo- and Arabophobia and racist violence against immigrants of Muslim origin, Atlas's and TGU's attempts to insert Arabic or

Middle Eastern music into the British public sphere attests to a progressive cultural-political agenda. Atlas has been the key figure in this subversive activity, beginning in 1990 with her work in the world-dance fusion outfit ¡Loca! (on the compilations *Fuse* and *Fuse II),* with Jah Wobble's Invaders of the Heart (for instance, on *Rising above Bedlam),* with TGU, and finally in a solo capacity (while continuing to work with TGU, although only in a production capacity since 1999). She did vocals on Apache Indian's top-20 hit "Arranged Marriage"; the music press asserts, with typical hyperbole, that she was the first woman to sing in Arabic on the television show *Top of the Pops* ("Natacha Atlas" n.d.).[25] Atlas has also worked with Daniel Ash (on *Coming Down,* 1991), and more recently with Indigo Girls on "Come on Now Social." As she has gained visibility, she has tended to use more and more Arabic in her singing, whereas her earlier recordings featured more vocals in Spanish and French (the opening track of her 1999 album *Gedida* [New] is also in French, with other tracks in Arabic and English). Her articulation of Arabic has become clearer as she has gradually gained better control over the language, and her Arabic lyrics are now also more elaborate (Small 1997). According to Atlas, "[N]ow, something more [of Arabic music] is getting through [in Britain]. It's no longer an alien sound" (Ali 1995: 50). If the Arabic sonic presence is now somewhat more normalized in Britain, this is due in no small part to Natacha Atlas's efforts.

Moreover, TGU's other core members have traveled in the Middle East and have seriously studied Arab music, in particular the Eastern modes *(mâqamât)* and melodies (Small 1997; Twomey 1997). First exposed to Arab and Iranian records by Sam Dodson (who performs under the stage name Salman Gita) of Loop Guru (until 1995 a Nation Records labelmate), later they studied with Middle Eastern musicians, including Atlas's Egyptian relative, the *'ud* player and composer Essam Rashad (Small 1997). More recently, they have also collaborated with Middle Eastern musicians, including Essam Rashad (on TGU recordings and *Diaspora)* and the Tunisian artists Walid and Rafiq Rouissi (on *Diaspora).*[26] One TGU member, Alex Kasiek, claims that Arabs, especially those living in the West, are pleased with what the group is doing: "For a lot of Arabic people if you start playing Arabic music they see it as a compliment. The West is contemptuous of their culture, they see [it] being some sort of frightening 'other.' So they [Arabs] tend to find it as a mark of respect" (Small 1997).

As for audiences in the Middle East, Atlas claimed in 1997 that her solo recordings were considered too avant-garde for the mass market, but that she had won acceptance for *Diaspora* among Moroccan youth (Snowden 1997: 33). Since then both Atlas and TGU have had more impact on Middle

Eastern markets. Atlas's 1997 album *Halim* (a tribute to the canonical Egyptian singer 'Abd al-Halîm Hâfiz released in the United States in 1998) has been more successful, due no doubt to the fact that it sounds like a 1960s–1970s style Egyptian-Lebanese pop album, with the addition of some dub and hip-hop beats. In July 1998 Natacha traveled to Beirut to perform her single "Amulet," which has enjoyed some success in the region, on the Lebanese television station LBC.[27] In 1997 the popular Egyptian singer Hakim, interested in expanding his sales beyond the Egyptian market, enlisted TGU's help in remixing a collection of Hakim's greatest hits. Released in Egypt in 1998, the album *(Shakl tânî/Remix)* is a remarkable fusion of Hakim's intense *sha'bî* vocalisms and TGU-style rhythms and deep bass. Although I was unable to obtain sales figures, the Hakim-TGU album seemed to be doing well in Cairo when I visited there in August 1998. *Shakl tânî* is expected to be released in Europe soon. Meanwhile, Slam!, Hakim's record company, assisted Natacha Atlas in the production of *Gedida,* which was released in Europe in February 1999. (It was also released in the Arab world as *Gazouri*, minus a few tracks considered too political or sexy.)[28]

With the non-Arabic-speaking English audience, Atlas considers "Islam" the key to her success. The music press frequently called attention to the exotic "chiffon-draped belly dancing" she did on stage with TGU ("Transglobal Underground" 1996), and she has been criticized in some quarters for reproducing stereotypes of sexualized Middle Eastern women (Hesmondhalgh 1995: 9). But Atlas seems to prefer to stress her performances' spiritual appeal: "I love the profundity of Arabic singing and the formality of it, and the way it seems to touch on the religious. I believe the Muslim call to prayer is the sound of God, that's what ignites me and ignites Westerners who hear it and are moved by it" ("*Diaspora* Finally Available" 1997). Atlas is aware that the kids in the audience "don't know what the fuck I'm singing about, but they have a feeling." When she hits the high notes, she says, their eyes are shut, and "[t]hey look as though they're reaching for Allah. It makes them feel good, spiritual" (Ali 1995: 50).

So whereas Atlas's colleague Aki Nawaz employs "Islam" to shake up white youth, Atlas uses it to bring them into her spiritual world. The two strategies, I would argue, are complementary. The genius of TGU and Natacha Atlas is their sly insertion of subtle attacks on Islamophobia into a complex, multitargeted, "club-friendly" (Wright n.d.), upbeat, and danceable mix that blends hip-hop, techno, Indian film soundtracks, African chants, and dub reggae with Middle Eastern stylings. While I think Hutnyk and Hesmondhalgh raise important criticisms regarding the exoticizing effects of

TGU-Atlas performances and mixes and their appropriations of uncredited samplings, I do not agree that TGU and Atlas simply produce images of unmarked otherness and depoliticized notions of hybridity. Instead, their hybridized music is heavily "Islamicized" and, therefore, politically charged.

AKHENATON: 100 PERCENT MÉTÈQUE

Akhenaton, the rapper and chief spokesperson for the Marseilles rap group IAM, was born Philippe Fragione, the son of immigrants from the region of Calabria in southern Italy who settled in Marseilles. When IAM burst onto the French rap scene[29] with its 1991 release . . . *de la planète Mars* (. . . From the Planet Mars), one of its most notable features was what André Prévos dubs its "pharaohism." Four of the group's six members go by ancient Egyptian names (Imhotep, DJ Kheops, Divin Kephren, and of course Akhenaton), and IAM's lyrics are full of references to ancient Egyptian civilization. Prévos argues astutely that pharaohism permits IAM to assert connections to the contemporary Arab world in an indirect, coded way: "The concept [of pharaohism] underlines Arabic origins while bypassing negative representations of North African countries gripped by Islamic fundamentalism and economic uncertainties" (1996: 721).[30] The jacket of IAM's second CD, *Ombre est lumière* (Shadow Is Light) even asserts that in ancient times, Egypt was connected to Marseilles, but the continents subsequently drifted apart. I would take issue, however, with Prévos's claim that IAM's pharaohism is an original development that demonstrates French rap's growing independence from U.S. hip-hop hegemony (Prévos 1996: 719, 721–722). According to Akhenaton, the name IAM (standing for Imperial Asiatic Men)[31] was chosen after he read the Senegalese writer Cheikh Anta Diop, one of Afrocentrism's leading theorists, who spurred Akhenaton's preexisting interest in the Asiatic Middle East as the origin of the monotheistic religions and in Egypt as the (black) cradle of civilization. "Egyptianism," in fact, is a long-standing theme of Afrocentric thought, dating back to the nineteenth century (see Gilroy 1993: 60, 208–9). I would argue that the real ingenuity of IAM's pharoahism is that it gives Egyptianist Afrocentricity a Mediterranean inflection, asserting a kind of "black Mediterranean."

And more precisely, a black *Islamic* Mediterranean. From IAM's inception, Akhenaton's fascination for ancient Egypt and the Middle East was largely religiously motivated; he consciously took his stage name from the first *monotheistic* pharaoh. Although Akhenaton only formally converted to Islam in 1993, IAM was already making positive references to Islam on . . . *de la planète Mars* in 1991:

Allahu akbar, protect us from absolute darkness
Like King Raz said to whom I say salaam [peace, an Islamic greeting]
Ulemas [Islamic learned men] we are, souls of Islam.
("Red, Black and Green")

According to Akhenaton, the process by which he arrived at Islam was a lengthy one. His mother used to read the Bible to him as a child, stressing its "Oriental" dimensions (Jorif 1995: 25). Almost all his friends in polyglot Marseilles are Muslims; their celebrations of Ramadan made him want to learn more about the religion. He found in Islam an attitude that was very rational and scientific, but most importantly, mystical (Péguillan 1995). It is Islam's mystical dimension that Akhenaton finds most appealing, that he stresses in interviews (Cachin 1995: 22; Robert 1995: 26; Dufresne 1991: 151), and that emerges most clearly from the lyrics of IAM and Akhenaton's solo work.[32] While clearly Akhenaton's mystical tendency is, in part, a product of personal predilection, it is significant that, given an atmosphere of intense hostility on the part of the French toward immigrants who, even more than in Britain, are figured chiefly as "Muslim," he chooses to espouse a spiritual as opposed to a political Islam. In interviews, he underlines that his Islam makes a separation between religion and politics—in unstated opposition, for instance, to the FIS, the Islamist political opposition in Algeria. In the track "J'aurai pu croire" ("I Could Have Believed," on *Ombre est lumière*), IAM takes both Saddam Hussein and Iran's ayatollahs to task for their hypocritical politicization of religion:

Saddam you don't make me believe in you
When you pray in front of cameras
Do you at least know that to display [your portrait] everywhere
Is forbidden by our holy book the Qur'an?
And you blaspheme and blaspheme and blaspheme

Akhenaton emphasizes that the Islam he espouses is tolerant and characterized by a mystical beauty, and that he is neither a "fundamentalist" (*intégriste*) nor a provocateur (Péguillan 1995). At a time when right-wing extremists such as Jean-Marie Le Pen and his followers are railing about the threat of an "Islamic invasion" and winning local elections, when FIS "terror" cells have been operating inside France, and when the mainstream press frequently depicts rap music itself as incendiary (exemplified in the harsh actions taken against hip-hop groups such as NTM; Prévos 1997), it is little wonder that Akhenaton publicly advocates a transcendental and nonconfrontational brand of Islam.

But while he stresses its spirituality, Akhenaton's Islam is in fact neither quietist nor apolitical. Promoting "Islam" in fact is part of IAM's general effort to widen the space of tolerance for Arabo-Islamic culture in France, through its lyrical subject matter, its deployment of Arabic words and expressions, and its musical mixes, splattered with Middle Eastern rhythms and samples of Arabic songs.[33] For Akhenaton/Philippe Fragione, moreover, Islam represents a reconnection to his Italian roots, a return that he invests with an antiracist inflection. Here again Akhenaton demonstrates his creativity in putting forward a vision of a pan-Mediterranean black Islamic culture, a position that resonates with the reality of polyethnic Marseilles.[34]

In interviews that appeared around the release of his solo album, *Métèque et mat,* released in 1995, Akhenaton discussed his conversion to Islam and its relation to his Italian heritage. Although it is little known, he says, Sicily was an Islamic state in the tenth century, and southern Italians have Arab blood, although they have forgotten this fact (Cachin 1995: 21; Jorif 1995: 25).[35] The barbarian Lombards invaded from the north, carried out an inquisition and massacres against the Muslims, and forcibly converted them to Christianity (Jorif 1995: 25). (Akhenaton here both refigures Gramsci's "Southern Question" as an "Arab-Islamic Question" and reverses hegemonic Italian notions regarding northern Italian "superiority," expressed most recently by the Northern League.)[36] He goes on to assert that one still sees churches in the south that were originally mosques. He also claims that some Muslim sects in Italy practiced *taqiya* (dissimulation), and that therefore some (secret) Muslim groups still exist in Sicily today (Jorif 1995: 25).[37] Commenting on how his solo album investigates his Italian roots, Akhenaton asserts: "I realized that on the one hand, like all humanity, our cradle was African, on the other hand that the Arab race was present and influential in our blood and our customs. . . . *Métèque et mat* is that: the idea that my roots as an Italian from the south are in symbiosis with two others" (Robert 1995: 24). The cover of *Métèque et mat* offers a brilliant visualization of Akhenaton's efforts to yoke together these various cultural strands (African, Italian, and Arabo-Islamic). A sepia-toned photograph shows a middle-aged Italian seated behind a chessboard whose king piece is an Egyptian pharaoh. The design that surrounds the name, Akhenaton, is Islamic, and the courtyard of the house that spreads out behind the chess player appears both Italian and Arab. The title of the CD, moreover, is a brilliant, multilayered pun. *Métèque et mat* rhymes with *echec et mat*, the expression for "checkmate." *Métèque* means "wog," and so the literal translation of the title is "Wog-mate." Furthermore, the word *mat* comes from the Arabic *mât*, meaning "to die," and, contrary to normal French rules but following the word's Arabic origins, the

"t" is pronounced (the English "checkmate" carries the same Arabic etymology).[38]

Akhenaton clearly regards Islam as a kind of potential but occulted cultural bridge linking Italian communities, the products of earlier waves of immigration to France, to Maghrebi-Islamic communities, the more recent arrivals. When he converted to Islam, Akhenaton says, his own family was very tolerant, and he realized then that Catholicism and Islam are closely related religions. Besides common cultural roots, Italians and Arabs share similar experiences as immigrants, as Akhenaton emphasizes in interviews and on his solo CD. Both are métèques or "wogs," in the view of dominant French culture. Both groups have suffered from racism, and many métèques responded by attempting to integrate so quickly into French life that they forgot their own culture (Péguillan 1995). In "L'Americano," Akhenaton notes the assimilationist tendency among Italian immigrants and pokes fun at the "types aux origine truquées" (guys with "doctored" origins), immigrants who changed their last names from Malano to the Frenchified Malan (Cachin 1995: 21), just as some assimilated Arabs changed their names from Boubaker to Bob. As a result of such cultural losses—hence the nostalgia-drenched sepia of the CD cover and container insert—Italians have forgotten their traditions. Arabs meanwhile have become so Frenchified that those living in state-funded high-rise apartment blocks (the dreaded HLMs) do not know their own neighbors (Cachin 1995: 22). "Car mat est le métèque / Fascinés par le mirage des idéaux de modernité" (For checkmated [dead] is the métèque / Fascinated by the mirage of modernity's ideals), raps Akhenaton on "Métèques et mat." People of the "south" (African, Arab, or Italian), Akhenaton asserts, are losing their characteristic hospitality and assuming a posture of aggressiveness. When the south loses its culture, Akhenaton warns, it becomes vulnerable to Americanization (FLX 1995: 57). The métèques, therefore, need to reinvent community life and to develop a sense of personal responsibility (Cachin 1995: 22). But such a common effort can succeed only if Italians remember why they immigrated to France: to escape fascism and repression. "I'm one of those whom Hitler called the niggers of Europe" (Je suis un de ceux qu'Hitler nommait nègres de l'Europe), he chants on "Métèque et mat." Akhenaton is "pissed off" that Italians have been involved in racist murders and that many Italians are voting for Le Pen, forgetting their own past sufferings (Cachin 1995: 21; Péguillan 1995).

Akhenaton asserts that IAM is antipolitical, in the sense of wanting nothing to do with the state: "On ne me traitera pas de soumis à ce putain d'état" (They won't call me submissive to this whore of a state; from "Non soumis à l'état," on . . . *de la planète Mars).* But he goes on to say that the group is political only insofar as it actively opposes Le Pen and his National Front's racist politics. IAM, whose members are variously of Madagascaran, Senegalese, Algerian, Spanish, and Italian background, plus one white French "native," advocates a multiethnic antiracism, one that reflects the diverse nature of Marseilles and the *banlieues,* the suburban zones of the immigrants and lower class in France.[39] Although the French banlieues are multiethnic, they are heavily racialized in official discourse. And the symbol of all that is "other" in France is, most centrally, the young, "immigrant" Arab Muslim, the *zonard* of the banlieue (see Bazin 1995: 116).[40] Unlike in the United States, where racial and ethnic difference is structured around a black-white polarity, in France the principal opposition is between white native and immigrant Arab other. Since the main thrust of racism in France is anti-Arab and anti-Islamic, IAM's successful insertion of Islam and Middle Eastern music into the space of popular culture (as with Fun-Da-Mental and Transglobal Underground) is ultimately political. IAM is also critical of "global" racism. The track "Tam tam de l'Afrique" (. . . *de la planète Mars),* for instance, decries the West's enslavement of Africans. In interviews, IAM has also disparaged the West's war against Iraq, stressing that the conflict originated from disputed boundaries drawn by the colonial powers, and in the track "J'aurai pu croire," they blast U.S. conduct in the 1991 Gulf War: "They intervened in Kuwait for oil and money / The rights of man have nothing to claim for the country of the Klan." "Le soldat" (from *Ombre est lumière)* exposes the horrors of war from the point of view of a soldier, no doubt referring to the Gulf War, to which France contributed troops. In "J'aurai pu croire," IAM takes Israel to task for its repression of Palestinians, mentioning, among other examples, the 1982 massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon, and states: "But bullets against pebbles, cannons against stones / Border raids, I can't shut up / The child David has become Goliath." As in Britain, Muslims in France experience such instances of Western imperialism in the Middle East as racism. It should be noted as well that the anti-Arab hysteria that erupted in France during the 1991 Gulf War, in which anti-Saddam fever intersected with deep-seated antagonism toward domestic Arabs, was a particularly horrible experience for Maghrebis in France (see Gross et al. 1996: 146–47; Ben Jelloun 1991).

IAM's 1997 album *L'école du micro d'argent* (The School of the Silver Microphone) represents a more political move on the part of the group. Full of vignettes on daily life in urban France, *L'école* presents a much darker view than 1994's *Ombre est lumière,* which contained its share of danceable and humorous numbers. The shift was prompted by the increasing influence in the south of Le Pen's fascistic Front National (FN), as exemplified by the

1995 murder of Ibrahim Ali, a Comoran teenager who belonged to BVice, a hip-hop group close to IAM, by an FN activist, and by the election of FN mayors in several urban centers in the south (Davet 1997). It was IAM's "sound architect," Imhotep (né Pascal Perez), who was most instrumental in pushing the group in a more overtly political direction. Imhotep/Pascal was born in Algiers in 1960 to a *pied-noir* family of Spanish origin who were close to the Arabs and despised by the rightist Colón terrorist organization, the OAS, and who supported the Left when they moved to France in the wake of Algerian independence. According to Imhotep, *L'école du micro d'argent* represented an effort to rekindle the spirit of revolt in France, against the FN and against racist immigration laws, as well as to educate the youth. In particular, IAM is working to encourage young people to vote so as to turn back the FN electoral tide. IAM also participated in a counterdemonstration organized on the occasion of Le Pen's visit to Marseilles (de Monicault 1997) and contributed to the rap single "11'30" contre les lois racistes (Eleven Minutes Thirty seconds against Racist Laws), produced at the initiative of Madj (of rap group Assasin) and in collaboration with the grassroots antiracist organization MIB (Mouvement de l'Immigration et des Banlieues). The single, aimed at raising the consciousness of youth regarding racist immigration laws, had netted 500,000 francs for MIB by October 1997 ("Rap: Les producteurs . . ." 1997; Fara C. 1997).

Finally, I want to mention IAM's connections to U.S. hip-hop, and especially U.S. "Islamic" rappers. Although Akhenaton's Islamic orientation is mystical and not political, he is well versed in the teachings of black Muslims. He was influenced in this regard partly by his mother, whom Ahkenaton describes as having a rather "revolutionary" tendency and as someone who read Angela Davis. As a teenager, Akhenaton spent summers visiting relatives in the United States, where he read the works of leading African Americans such as Marcus Garvey, Malcolm X, Huey Newton, and Elijah Muhammad. Having been exposed to Nation of Islam teachings, he is critical of what he calls the "home-made" religions of the United States (Dufresne 1991: 151), which he distinguishes from the more "authentic" Islam practiced in France. Other IAM members of the group equally understand the gap between the Islam of black North Americans and the Islam of French Maghrebis and Africans. According to Imhotep, a Muslim in Marseilles would find black Muslim discourse "bonkers." IAM's dancer and sometime rapper Algerian Malek Sultan discusses the Five Percent Nation of Islam, whose members style themselves Gods,[41] noting that the celebrated U.S. rapper Rakim is a member. Malek Sultan regards their beliefs as a "sacrilege" (*profanation*) (Dufresne 1991: 151). Yet while IAM marks the distinction between the local, more "orthodox" Islam and the black nationalist Islam of the United States, it is nonetheless heavily influenced by U.S. "Islamic" rap styles. Of the three groups under consideration here, IAM is the most prototypically hip-hop, and its musical style is the closest to U.S. rap—although, as Akhenaton is careful to note, IAM's sound is slower, uses Oriental music and rhythms, and so on (Dufresne 1991: 15). Asked in 1995 by the music magazine *L'affiche* to list his ten favorite albums (Cachin 1995: 22), Akhenaton's choices were all U.S. rap releases. Five of his favorites were by artists who belong to the Five Percent Nation (Raekwon, Eric B and Rakim, Wu-Tang Clan, Nas, and Mobb Deep); a sixth was by A Tribe Called Quest, two of whose members are orthodox (Sunni) Muslims. Akhenaton has elsewhere expressed his admiration for Raekwon of the Wu-Tang Clan (FLX 1995: 54). Moreover, the U.S. rap group Sunz of Man, who belong to the Wu-Tang "family" and are also Five Percenters, guest on "La Saga," a cut from *L'école du micro d'argent,* throwing in some recognizably "Islamic" raps:

> 'Bout to take it to another chamber
> From Medina to Marseille . . .
> Never ate ham, never gave a damn
> Television tells lies to your vision
> So, beware of the trick-nology set off to fool the mind

Medina, in Five Percent argot, stands for Brooklyn. Not eating ham is a reference to Five Percent and Nation of Islam injunctions against the consumption of pork, a ban shared by orthodox Muslims. Describing television as something that "tells lies to your vision" is typical Five Percent wordplay; "trick-nology" is a Nation of Islam term for deceitful "white" teachings. The IAM album on which "La Saga" appears, moreover, can be seen as a kind of artistic tribute, or analogue at least, to the influential vision of the Wu-Tang Clan, Five Percent rappers whose work is heavily invested with samples from karate films and references to the ideology of Oriental martial arts and who call their native Staten Island "Shaolin." The cover of *L'école du micro d'argent* features armored Chinese warriors, and raps on the album feature numerous references to martial arts, Taoist philosophy (IAM's other lead rapper, Shurik'N Chang-ti, is a Taoist), and even to Shaolin.

Although IAM's second release, *Ombre est lumière,* was, in Tony Mitchell's judgment, "in many ways the unacknowledged masterpiece of Francophone rap" (1996: 41), it seems to have had no impact on the U.S. market, and therefore the group's subsequent release, *L'école du micro d'argent,* is almost impossible to obtain in the USA. IAM's collaboration with Sunz of Man and the group's links to other Five Percent rappers, especially the Wu-Tang Clan,

have therefore gone virtually unnoticed in the USA. Nonetheless, they bear testimony to a kind of "transglobal Islamic underground" of cultural flows and affinities that exist despite deep-seated differences over the nature of "Islam."

CONCLUSION

I want to conclude by arguing for the importance of paying close attention to popular cultural manifestations of "Islam" in Europe, given the ethnic, political, and cultural importance of "Islam" to youth of Islamic background in Britain and France. While we should by no means ignore Islam's religious appeal to this youth, we also must situate that appeal in relation to ethnic, political, and cultural factors, which in many instances may carry more weight than the religious. Through such a focus, we will also expand our understanding of the extremely heterogeneous nature of "Islam" in Europe and shift attention away from a single-minded focus on issues (such as the veil, female genital mutilation, *hallal* diets [of meat from ritual Islamic slaughter], etc.) that often have contributed to stereotyping rather than to an understanding of Muslims. Cultural and political interventions such as those of Aki Nawaz, Natacha Atlas, and Akhenaton are likely to continue to be of critical importance for young Muslims as part of larger efforts to create new spaces for multifaceted Islamic identities and as weapons in the battles against racist violence and Islamophobic discrimination. There are similar manifestations elsewhere in Europe: for instance, a 1995 Turkish-German compilation called *Cartel,* which included Karakan, Erci C, and another high-profile German rap group called Da Crime Posse, composed of two Turkish immigrants, plus a German and a Cuban, who have injected Turkish music styles into rap and have addressed anti-Turkish racism (Robins and Morley 1996; Soysal 1997: 521, 527; Elflein 1998).[42] And 1996 saw the release of the French rapper Yazid's album *Je suis l'arabe* (I Am the Arab), a militant assertion of Arab issues and Arab identity. On "Je suis l'arabe," Yazid raps:

> I'm the Arab, stopping oppression is my mission. . . .
> The country of secularism doesn't tolerate Islam
> Unemployment ravages, they talk of immigration
> And when the banlieue burns, they talk of integration

On another cut, "Islam," Yazid defends and explains his religion. He asserts both his ethnic and his religious identity much more forcefully than has been seen before in French rap.

We have not witnessed the emergence of such popular cultural phenomena in the USA, where "Islamic" hip-hop has chiefly been a black nationalist

articulation and where Muslims have not been "ethnicized." But perhaps a portent of the future is a new figure in New York City's "illbient" (dark ambient, instrumental hip-hop) DJ scene, a young Egyptian women named Mutamassik ("tenacious" in Arabic).[43] Mutamassik has recorded remixes that drop in samples from Egyptian pop for the 1996 Arto Lindsay releases *Mundo Civilizado* and *Hyper Civilizado* and has performed on the same bill as South Asian DJs. Illbient Islam, anyone?

NOTES

Thanks to David McMurray for supplying hard-to-locate French articles on French rap and specifically Akhenaton/IAM; to Joan Gross for French translation advice; to Mike Woost for first turning me on to Fun-Da-Mental; to Tony Mitchell for alerting me to *Dis-Orienting Rhythms* and for furnishing the Hesmondhalgh article and hard-to-find music; to Saba Mahmood and Kamran Asdar Ali for help with Urdu; to John Peel, whose BBC World Service radio program alerted me to the existence of Natacha Atlas and Transglobal Underground when I lived in Cairo; to Nirvana Tannoukhi for assistance with Natacha Atlas's Arabic; and to Beatrice Nibigi for help in transcribing IAM's lyrics. All translations of lyrics, quotations, etc., are by the author.

1. A spectacular example of Islamophobia, well remembered by Arab residents of France but hardly recalled outside those circles, was recently brought to public view by the Papon affair. It is by now well known that Maurice Papon was accused of responsibility for the deportation of 1,560 Jews to Germany's death camps between 1942 and 1944, when he was in charge of Jewish affairs in Bordeaux. During Papon's trial it also emerged that he had served as the Paris police chief at the time of police murders of 200 (and possibly more) Algerians in Paris during protests on 17 October 1961. Scandalously, Papon's involvement in the 1961 massacre has received little coverage in the United States (but see Singer 1997; *Guardian Weekly,* 2 November 1997, 5; Einaudi 1997). Interestingly, Didier Daeninckx's crime novel *Murder in Memoriam* (1991) called attention to these connections (deportation of Jews, massacre of Arabs) in the Papon affair when first published in France in 1984. Good sources on the 1961 massacre are Aïchoune 1991; Ben Jelloun 1984; Cockburn 1991; Einaudi 1991; and Hargreaves 1989.

2. I employ quotes around "Muslim" and "Islam" to call attention to the fact that these are not natural, homogenous categories, but rather social constructions of heterogeneous and processual phenomena.

3. The major exception is John Hutnyk.

4. One finds a similar avoidance of "Islam" in the coverage of U.S. rap; see Swedenburg 1996.

5. On Muslims in Bradford, see Lewis 1994.

6. On bhangra, see Banerji and Baumann 1990; Huq 1997.

7. I refer here chiefly to the group's first album release in the United States, *Seize the Time* (1995).

8. An amazing tribute to the most famous Qawwali singer, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, appeared in 1997. *Star Rise* is a collection of remixes of the work of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan by key figures in the Asian dance scene, including Aki Nawaz, Fun-Da-Mental, Asian Dub Foundation, and Talvin Singh.

9. Lewis (1994: 181) repeats uncritically the press accounts of what Aki Nawaz is purported to have said regarding Rushdie.

10. An example of this marginalization within cultural theory is *Black British Cultural Studies: A Reader* (Baker et al. 1996). The selection of authors (Stuart Hall, Paul Gilroy, Kobena Mercer, Rachel Carby, and others) and subject matter produces a distinctly Afro-Caribbean version of British blackness. Only Dick Hebdige (1996: 139) touches on Asian popular culture (Indi pop and bhangra); the only Asian author is Homi Bhabha, but his essay, "The Other Question," scarcely touches on "Asian" issues. For a critique of Paul Gilroy in this regard, see Hutnyk 1997: 127.

11. Although the Nation of Islam is reportedly active in the Afro-Caribbean community in Britain, it appears to have made few converts. I have been unable to track down any information on this subject.

12. I believe that an analytical focus on "Islam" begins to make sense of what Sharma et al. (1996: 53–54) describe as the confusing eclecticism of Fun-Da-Mental's politics.

13. It should also be noted that Fun-Da-Mental gives the rap expression "G" a South Asian inflection. Although "G" is often thought to mean "Gangsta" in hip-hop dialect, it originated as a form of greeting used between members of the Five Percent Nation of Islam, standing for "God." Fun-Da-Mental uses the expression "Ji" (which sounds exactly like "G") as an Urdu (or Hindi) term of address to denote respect between friends or lovers. (For instance, "Ah . . . people say I've gone and lost my mind 'cause I'm not afraid to die 'gee'"; from "Dog Tribe.")

14. While I do not consider Fun-Da-Mental's invocation of NOI ideology unproblematic, it should be understood as motivated in part by the group's punk provocateurism, in part by an effort to forge a kind of unity between Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians in England.

15. More recently, Fun-Da-Mental's scope of activity has extended to Pakistan; see "Interview with Aki" 1997.

16. Natacha Atlas offers this label in Twomey n.d.

17. The Count's ingenious stage name, combining "dub" and "allah," no doubt refers to his Albanian roots. Hesmondhalgh notes that the name "draws upon Caribbean [musicians'] parodies of British aristocratic titles, such as Prince Buster and Prince Far-I" (1995: 10), to which I would add that inasmuch as "Count Dubullah" sounds like "Count Dracula," the name also evokes exotic Eastern Europe.

18. TGU performed at the antiracism festival at Finsbury Park in July 1996, along with the "political" bands Fun-Da-Mental, Chumbawamba, Kaliphz, Credit to the Nation, and Asian Dub Foundation. Posting to <http://www.uk.music.rave> by Andrew Cowper (acowper@dvcorp.co.uk), "Re: Finsbury Park" 19 July 1996.

19. For instance, in Paris, January 1996. Newsgroup posting (found through Deja News) by Serge.Boue@p1.f310.n320.z2.fidonet.org, "Concert de janvier," 25 January 1996.

20. Hesmondhalgh shows how the issue of sampling vs. collaboration with live musicians was a point of tension and struggle inside the Nation group and a factor in the departure of Loop Guru from the label (1995: 13).

21. In the course of an interview in which the issue of Aki Nawaz's media visibility came up, Atlas remarked, "He's a good speaker, actually" (Fruin n.d.). Given that Nawaz's media interventions are always political, her statement should be understand as an expression of support for his positions.

22. Since Atlas began to stress her "Arab" roots only later in her career, I doubt that she stressed her Arab side in her punk rock phase.

23. On the position of "Eastern" Jews in Israel, see Swirski 1989.

24. It should also be noted that TGU has played at WOMAD in Israel, and also in Taba and Eilat. *The Rough Guide to Rock,* probably referring to the Israel gigs, states, "As Transglobal Underground's turbulent gigs in the Middle East confirmed, cross-cultural musical references invite political debate" (Wright n.d.). I have been unable to uncover more details on TGU's experiences in Israel.

25. Atlas's singing style on "Arranged Marriage" (on Apache Indian's CD *No Reservations)* sounds more "South Asian" than "Middle Eastern," and I cannot detect the use of any words that sound Arabic. In fact, her vocalizations serve the purpose of providing this reggae song with its South Asian ambience (see Taylor [1997: 159–65], who curiously never mentions Atlas in his detailed analysis of the song).

26. Hesmondhalgh notes that employing live musicians is much more expensive than using samples, and that this has compelled the "independent" Nation label to make marketing agreements with larger recording companies (1995: 13).

27. During a visit to Amman, Jordan, in summer 1997, I came across a locally produced cassette collection that included Atlas's single "Amulet" (the song is called "Maarifnash" on *Halim).* I was told that the collection was an example of "Eastern-Western" *(sharbî-gharbî)* music.

28. For an online video of Natacha Atlas dancing in concert, see *<http://www.paleo.ch/audio.video.html#23>*.

29. See Cannon 1997 and Prévos 1993, 1995, and 1996 for overviews of the French rap scene.

30. I noted the general and somewhat surprising absence of "Arab" themes in French rap in a study originally done in 1992; see Gross et al. 1996: 143–44. Prévos's argument helps make sense of this nonappearance and of the fact that "Arab" is a kind of "absent presence" in the work of IAM.

31. IAM also stands for (1) "I am" [in English]; (2) Invasion Arrivant de Mars; and (3) Indépendantistes Autonomes Marseillais (see Dufresne 1991: 149 and Bazin 1995: 256–57 for an exegesis).

32. An example of IAM's mystical side, which makes no overt reference to Islam, is "Cosmos," on *Ombre est lumière.*

33. On the massive Arab presence in French popular culture, see McMurray 1997.

34. It should be pointed out, although the point cannot be developed here, that a sizable proportion of blacks in France are Muslims from West Africa, and so such appeals to Islam can be a way of asserting links between Arabs and blacks.

35. The Muslim conquest of Sicily lasted from 827 to 902 A.D.; Muslim rule in Sicily lasted until the Norman conquests (1061–1091); and the last Muslims were expelled from the island in 1246; see Ahmad 1975.

36. In fact, it was the German emperor Frederick II who eliminated the Muslims from Sicily (Ahmad 1975: 82–87). Akhenaton is correct, however, to see the Islamic influence in Italy as "civilizing."

37. Akhenaton's attempts to uncover and expose the Arab roots of southern Italy recall similar efforts by the Spanish novelist Juan Goytisolo and the music group El Lebrijano, who seek to bring to light Spain's Arab (Andalusian) origins.

38. Thanks to Joan Gross for help with teasing out these meanings.

39. A good sense of Marseilles's polyethnic atmosphere can be gained from the *policiers* (detective novels) of Jean-Claude Izzo; see, e.g., Izzo 1995.

40. On the banlieues, see Aïchoune 1991; Jazouli 1992; and Hargreaves 1995. See also Mathieu Kassovitz's powerful 1995 film *La haine* (Hate), now readily available in the United States on video.

41. On the Five Percent Nation in U.S. rap, see Swedenburg 1996.

42. Thanks to Resat Kesaba for telling me about *Cartel* and to Martin Stokes for alerting me to the Robins and Morley article.

43. The music press insists on translating *mutamassik* as "fanatic," which is unfortunate, but perhaps this is DJ Mutamassik's own translation, her effort to refigure "Islamic fanaticism."

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