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MIPSTERZ' VISUAL CONSTRUCTIONS OF COOL: MUSLIM HIPSTERS AND THE SARTORIAL SELF-FASHIONING OF MODEST SUBCULTURES IN TRANSNATIONAL DIGITAL DIASPORAS

Abstract

This article examines the visual culture and fashion aesthetics of "Mipsterz," or Muslim hipsters. Though the term originated amongst a group of friends based in New York in 2012, the neologism has arguably taken on a global life in fashion blogs and social media, with influencers from Turkey to Indonesia connecting transnationally. Many public debates celebrate these young, alternative voices and their projected self-images, while others critique the manner in which the "hipster" label sanitizes, whitewashes, or secularizes Muslim piety. Indeed, these youths' discourse highlights issues of performance, assimilation, normalization, and the dialectical construction of collective identity and individual subjectivity, yielding even greater interdisciplinary questions. Sitting at the theoretical nexus of cultural, fashion, and media studies, this article not only analyzes the ways in which such digital platforms give faith and fashion form but also critiques the aesthetic, photographic, and performative mechanisms through which new sartorial politics are visualized.

خلاصة

تتناول هذه المقالة الثقافة المرئية وجماليات الأزياء لهؤلاء المعروفين بـ"ميبسترز" أو المسلمون صانعي وتُبّاع آخر موضة. على الرغم من أن المصطلح نشأ بين مجموعة من الأصدقاء في نيويورك في عام 2024 ، يمكن القول إن المصطلح الجديد قد اتخذ حياة عالمية في مدونات الموضة ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، مع وجود مؤثرين من تركيا إلى إندونيسيا متصلين عبر الحدود الوطنية. تحتفي العديد من النقاشات العامة بهذه الأصوات الشابة البديلة وصورها الذاتية المنشورة، بينما ينتقد البعض الآخر الطريقة التي تُعقِّم بها تسمية "الهيبستر" التقوى الإسلامية أو تبيّضها أو تعلمنها. في الواقع، يسلط خطاب هؤلاء الشباب الضوء على قضايا الأداء والاستيعاب والتطبيع والبناء الدياالكتيكي للهوية الجماعية والذاتية الفردية، مما ينتج عنه أسئلة جديدة تجمع تخصصات أكاديمية مختلفة. تقع هذه المقالة في الوسط النظري الذي يربط دراسات الثقافة والأزياء والإعلام، ولا تحلل فقط الطرق التي تعطي بها هذه المنصات الرقمية

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شكلا للإيمان والأزياء، بل تنتقد أيضًا الآليات الجمالية والتصويرية والأدائية التي يتم من خلالها تصور السياسات الأزيائية الجديدة.

INTRODUCTION

A diverse group of young Muslim women casually strut or skateboard down back alleys, socialize in public parks, and take selfies against rooftop skylines. With bold sunglasses, contrasting outfits of colorful patterns, hijabs wrapped in a variety of twists and buns, these women are lavishly accessorized all while radiating confidence, pride, style, and conviviality. Their unique fashion sensibilities—skinny jeans, ruffles, voluminous drapery—foreground not only their funky individuality but draw attention to their own ethnic and racial diversity, the immense sociocultural diversity among Muslims. These scenes stem from the 2013 viral video "Somewhere in America #Mipsterz" directed by Habib Yazdi and produced by Abbas Rattani, Sara Aghajanian, and Layla Shaikley, set to the eponymous song "Somewhere in America" by the acclaimed African American rapper Jay-Z.[1] The footage spans the major US metropolitan cities of New York, Los Angeles, Boston, and Washington, DC, and the more rural, Hillsborough, North Carolina, and features a total of twelve women all engaged in different activities, including motorcycling, fencing, skateboarding, rapping, or simply hanging out. In a seemingly direct response to the key question of Lila Abu-Lughod's seminal essay from a decade earlier "Do Muslim women really need saving?,"[2] the message of the video is clear: these women's autonomy is undeniably boundless; their sartorial choices are eclectic; and their lifestyles are active, rich, and creatively expressive.[3] These are not simplistic notions or reductive representations of traditional Muslim women whose lives are tethered to the domestic sphere of the home, nor are these young women's interests controlled by the whims of men (who remain noticeably absent from the video). As Kristin Peterson and Nabil Echchaibi have convincingly illustrated, the Mipsterz' video clip breaks "free of the discourse of victimization and exoticism, helping us understand the complex, multiple frames of reference that define American Muslims' everyday lives."[4] Indeed, the political subtexts of the clip speak to a complex combination of variables: women's agency,

freedom, self-determination, and zeal for a kind of indescribable "cool factor." But it is precisely this elusive aesthetic dimension of "cool" or "coolness," and its sartorial mobilization or activation by young Muslim women, that is the subject of analysis in this article.

Even though this video was filmed long after the wake of 9/11, in the midst of the second term of the Obama presidency, the project seemed to address a broader set of issues that preoccupy Muslim American youth who seek to illustrate the strength of Muslim women and the diversity inherent to Muslim communities.[5] What started as an email LISTSERV curated by Abbas Rattani quickly morphed into a much larger cultural endeavor. In the intervening years since their video's initial release, those involved formed the creative collective Mipsterz, which its members define as "a curated space for an emerging generation of Muslim creatives. We aim to enable and amplify our collective voice in the larger public space through film, music, and illustration."[6] The Mipsterz platform prides itself on promoting mentorship to "diverse folks who share a common connection to a larger tradition" but insists that its content is intended for everyone. Its mission commits to a tripartite set of goals: to enable and empower Muslim artists and creatives to execute their work through collaboration and mentorship; to curate these artists' creative output on social media platforms; and amplify their original content by disseminating works to museums, galleries, media companies, or stores.[7]

By examining the sartorial dimensions and urban aesthetics of these digitally disseminated photographs linked through the #Mipsterz hashtag or @Mipsterz handle, one discovers though that much of their visual language and rhetorical persuasion relies on an elusive "cool" factor or "coolness." As I will demonstrate, the diasporic dimension of these images—namely, that they are produced by a diverse cadre of first-, second-, and third-generation Muslims and converts from a range of ethnicities and nationalities—is a crucial component within the configuration of "cool." Part of the digital aesthetic construction of "Muslim Cool" is grounded in the plural identifications and intersectional subjectivities highlighted through urban lifestyles, global connectivity, etc. This multiplicity echoes Stuart Hall's theoretical notion that diasporic identities are in a constant state of transformation and differentiation; for him, diasporic identity is marked by its heterogeneity.[8] Like Hall's notion of routes and roots, these digital archives are shared and circulated in a deterritorialized manner, despite their linkages to a person of a specific geospatial pin

or temporal moment. This paper argues that digital visual cultures of Muslim hipster aesthetes forge their diasporic identities and gain agency through their complex engagement with performed cosmopolitanism, piety, humor, fashion subcultures, class politics, and neoliberal consumerism. By way of their visual imagery and digital media tactics, these universal Mipsterz underscore their new branding of Muslim modernity, and essentially reimagine what it means to be Muslim, hopeful, future-oriented, transnationally connected, and cool.

On the one hand, many popular debates celebrate these young, alternative voices and their projected self-images, while others critique the manner in which the "hipster" label sanitizes, whitewashes, or secularizes Muslim piety. This article expands on an already rich body of scholarship that brings nuance to these polarized debates on the creative expressions of Muslim youth cultures. The discursive questions these youth raise regarding the dialectical construction of collective identity and individual subjectivity, performance, the fine lines between assimilation and normalization, or the foundations of a global fashion archive have been explored from different, interdisciplinary angles by anthropologists (e.g., Su'ad Abdul Khabeer), fashion historians (e.g., Reina Lewis), and scholars of religion and ethnic studies (e.g., Elizabeth Bucar). This article argues that the Mipsterz hashtag and/or handle represents a specific Muslim sartorial subculture that cuts across notions of faith, secularism, generational transmission, cosmopolitanism, and modernity.[9]

MIPSTERZ: SELF-DEFINING A SUB-*UMMA* AND SUBCULTURE THROUGH INSTAGRAM

Their neologism "Mipsterz" provocatively blends the words "Muslim" and "hipster"[10]—terms that, in and of themselves, evoke unfixed and contested identities. The latter label, "hipster," has complicated roots, historically. In its original conception and emergence, the term "hipster" was born in the 1940s out of white fascination and connoisseurship of Black jazz culture,[11] as well as out of an appropriation of values of dissidence or subversiveness among racialized, oppressed, and marginalized urban American Black communities. A. Robert Lee cites Norman Mailer's essay *The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster*, first published in 1957, as one of the first discursive commentaries on hipsterism—although it has been recognized as problematic and critiqued by eminent writers such as James Baldwin.[12] The propensities for collecting, connoisseurship, and a quest for authenticity are all markers of the mid-twentieth-

century hipster, who, for Bjørn Schiermer, is distinct from millennial hipsterdom, with the only shared trait across these very different hipster generations being snobbery and pretension.[13] American millennial contemporary hipsters, though presenting as open-minded and preservationist in spirit, fixate on what they perceive to be authentic and ironic while contributing to the urban gentrification of formerly working-class or ethnic neighborhoods of cities, working in the bars, coffeeshops, or fashion stores that displaced old tenement buildings or mom-and-pop storefronts. Yet, as Schiermer reminds us, this adds to the negative reputation that hipster culture has acquired in recent years.

Though certainly not a scholarly authority on hipsterdom, the popularly referenced and wiki-edited Urban Dictionary offers variable, hotly debated definitions of a hipster, characterized by qualities of pretension, disingenuousness, penchants for alternative tastes, or a countercultural consumerism. Among the six discrete definitions listed on the site, hipsters are broadly portrayed as rejecting mainstream music, fashions, foods, books, or consumer goods, gravitating instead toward what they deem to be indie, alternative, or authentic ideas or products, which may be, in actuality, ubiquitously consumed, hence negating hipsters' claims of nonconformity.[14] What is perplexing though is that, in spite of their negation, contrarianism, and alternativity, hipsters still do not seem to constitute a coherent, circumscribable subculture since they are not necessarily rebelling against a previous generation (as was the argument of Dick Hebdige in his definition of youth subculture, as a counter to working-class parent culture and hegemonic, mainstream culture).[15] But, in alignment with Hebdige's writings on subculture, hipsters do semiotically signal their otherness and counter-hegemonic being through style.[16] As Hebdige says, "Style in subcultures is . . . gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority,' which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus."[17]

While the plural "Mipsterz" connotes a community of like-minded Muslim youth unified through their different identifications, the term seems to embrace the lifestyle choices and independent creativity of a hipster subculture. According to Abbas Rattani, part of what spurred the video project was a desire for the proliferation of more nuanced representations of diasporic Muslims, unbound and unmarred by the media's stereotypes and reductive understandings of Muslim communities:

> I think one of the inspirations behind Mipsterz and even the video is that Muslim-Americans are being defined by their religion in two ways—one is negative, and one is a definition based on the reaction to news and media. . . . We were just like, we're not really going to contribute to defining ourselves in reaction to somebody else's definition; we don't even really want to legitimize other people's definition.[18]

On the Mipsterz official website, one can see the Mipster subculture's affinities with pop art's irreverently humorous but also commercialist impulses, with commodification and consumerism at the fore. In some products sold on the Mipsterz website, the comic book-like graphics of Roy Lichtenstein are readapted to convey and commercialize the Mipster aesthetic. Mipsterz themselves have created an online bazaar where young Muslim artists can sell their artwork to fellow quirky Mipsterz.

Central to that overt aim of self-definition and self-representation is the role played by photography. This medium is explicitly referenced in the Mipsterz' video montage—via a retro Polaroid camera or smartphone-snapped selfies—and plays a vital role in rebranding the perception of diasporic Muslim youth cultures. With the young women playing around, enjoying their shared camaraderie, and engaging in various creative and physical activities, the "Somewhere in America #Mipsterz" video stands as an experiment in the portraiture and performance of a young and diverse Muslim diaspora.

Numerous social theorists and scientists have documented the fundamental role of digital social media in nurturing the growth of a "virtual *umma*" (or virtual Muslim nation) or a transnational public sphere of Muslims.[19] But what is important to remember is that social media platforms give space for innumerable subpopulations within the *umma*—subgroups within an already vastly diverse population of Muslim believers, with different spiritual dimensions and valences of identification—to not only call attention to their shared religious values and practices but also highlight nuanced differences among their multifarious lifestyle choices and habits. The digital photography of Instagram—a smart phone application that enables amateurs and professionals to circulate their images globally—discursively creates both archives and imagined communities through the formation of these sorts of sub-*umma*s.[20]

Instagram has become a primary avenue through which youth in general, Muslim or not, around the world play with performance or try out their subjectivities, religious and otherwise.[21] Within the world of fashion, Instagram remains "the preferred platform for digital fashionistas."[22] The so-called "Instafamous" "influencers" of Instagram/Twitter[23] connect to their widespread fan bases and growing audiences, engaging in product promotion and self-representation (e.g., @hautehijab, #Mipsterz, etc.), while imagining a new community manifested through these digital social media platforms. The sheer volume and variety of Muslim Instagram celebrities whose primary focus is style is immense and nearly all of them engage in some form or combination of pushing products, promoting modest fashion, and advertising makeup tutorials. What this article examines are those competing self-definitions and self-representations of Mipsterz' style, and their digital, diasporic-minded construction of coolness, or "cool" through fashion aesthetics and the visual world of Instagram.

Instagram itself lies at the digital crossroads of class, tastemaking, branding, and affluence. Due to the uneven global accessibility of the internet,[24] and because Instagram in turn is only accessible by means of a smart phone, many scholars have pointed to its preferred usage as a signifier of its cultural capital worth; in Indonesia, for example, hijab-clad women deliberately post on Instagram as both a class-conscious performance of their bourgeois identity and as a platform for electronically mediated Muslim proselytizing (*dakwah*).[25] Cynics might assume that the Instafamous foist their neoliberal, consumerist agendas onto their audiences, and that they are simply serving as the poster children of their sponsors, waiting for their number of shares and likes to spike to hit their capitalist quota so that they too can earn money or be sent free products from their sponsors. One might also conclude that the #Mipsterz hashtag is yet another politically convenient, neoliberal façade as it gives Islam a good face in the US and Europe amidst intensifying racist, anti-immigration public discourses. However, when considering these Instagrammers' core, but very select, audience of like-minded youth, as opposed to the broader public, politicians, or policymakers, Mipsterz' lighthearted, appropriative riff on the colloquialism "hipster" appears to be a far more complex performance of identity politics. Its aesthetic attributes assert alternative, simultaneously tongue-in-cheek and yet earnest iterations of Muslimness *in and through* sartorial performances and personas. Rhetoric of individualism,

freedom of expression, neoliberal choice, and consumerism are all at work in this digital world of social media. On Instagram, these snapshots offer not just another hashtag but a window marketing a desirably cool, hip, urban lifestyle informed by faith. Through Mipsterz' (i.e., both the creative collective and self-declared #Mipsterz/@Mipsterz on social media) deliberate referencing of inner-city life photographically—in graffiti art backdrops, or gritty, urban or architectural locales like city rooftops and skylines, fire escapes, alleys, and sidewalks—one can see the desire to foreground how creativity germinates in metropolitan urban environments, the very sites where cross-cultural interactions, exchanges, negotiations, and transgressions constantly unfold. And yet there is still an effort to simultaneously subvert and rise above class, racial, and ethnic barriers to promulgate the idealistic unity of a transcultural, transnational *umma* through codes of modesty.

MIPSTERZ' SARTORIAL AESTHETIC? FINDING AGENCY IN THE DISCOURSES OF MUSLIM FASHION AND CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

In the wake of its online debut, the "Somewhere in America #Mipsterz" video stirred much public debate with supporters and detractors alike. Sana Saeed, a writer for *The Islamic Monthly* and one of the most vocal opponents of the Mipsterz' video, criticized the clip as a superficial representation of Muslim women devoid of substance. In her retort op-ed piece "Somewhere in America, Muslim Women Are 'Cool,'" she claimed:

> Aesthetically, it's really hip, smooth, fierce, and for all intents and purposes, *cool*.
>
> But that's about it.
>
> The video doesn't really seem to have any purpose aside from showing well-dressed, put together Muslim women in poses perfect for a magazine spread. . . .
>
> . . . Instead of showing what makes each and every one of those women Herself, they're made into this superfluous conformity of an image we, as the audience, consume and ogle at because hey, they're part of the aesthetic of the video. . . .
>
> . . . We're so incredibly obsessed with appearing "normal" or "American" or "Western" by way of what we do

and what we wear that we undercut the actual abnormality of our communities and push essentialist definitions of "normal," "American" and "Western." In that process of searching for the space of normalcy, we *create* "normal" and through that a "good" Muslim. And in all of this, we might lose that which makes us unique: our substance. . . .

 . . . The concept behind this video misses the point that stereotypes, within and outside our community, aren't fought with just well-produced videos that focus on consumptive and repetitive mainstream images (even if with a hijab twist), without any substance.[26]

Saeed's chief concern is that, in its efforts to supposedly break widespread stereotypes and misconceptions about "bad" Muslims, the video, through its aesthetic dimensions focused on fashion and consumption, actually fixes and essentializes notions of "good" Muslims by way of their consumerist buy-in, and ultimately therefore, their assimilationism. For Saeed, the flashiness of their fashion somehow negates their "substance." Kristin Peterson typologizes three distinct fashion styles in the video: a "chic style" that is characterized by effeminate silks, bold fashion jewelry, high heels, and a tendency to conform with mainstream global fashion trends; a "layering style" defined by overlapping drapery and loose-fitting fabrics (Peterson sees this as being a corollary to a layering phenomenon seen in urban hipster subcultures); and finally, an "urban, street style" which utilizes chain necklaces, a darker color palette, as well as leather boots and jackets.[27]

Even the anthropologist Su'ad Abdul Khabeer (whose scholarship on notions of "Muslim Cool" will be discussed later in the article) equates the Mipsterz with consumerism; in her Tumblr blog, she sees this video as an expression of "full frontal consumption and thus can only offer narrow visions of who Muslim women are, even in the attempt to show diversity," though she concedes, "How American is that?"[28] Such pointed comments seem dismissive of the agency of the women participating in the clip, that they are nothing more than Muslim consumers pushing a combinative agenda of capitalist consumption, acceptance, and assimilationism. If, as Abdul Khabeer claims, that "everywhere in America, a Muslim woman's headscarf is not only some sex, swag and consumption, it is also belief and beauty, defiance and struggle, secrets and shame,"[29] is it not delimiting or

unfair to say that the subjectivity of a woman, who in her sartorial modes and lifestyle choices perhaps self-identifies as a so-called Mipster, is consumer-driven and therefore, unsubstantive or meaningless? Why are self-proclaimed Mipsterz slammed by naysayers with the shaming label of consumerism? Does buying into "coolness"—whether in the form of trends, brands, styles—erase or diminish one's personal spiritual truth or undermine one's personal devotional practice?

It seems that at the crux of these discussions there is an understanding of the Mipsterz video (and therefore, anyone who uses the Mipsterz handle) as a glossy, corporatized, whitewashed vision of Muslim youth, capable of being stomached and tolerated by the broader public. There also seems to be an unspoken presumption that once Muslim women consume trends, they lose their agency and authenticity. Reina Lewis notes that, until relatively recently, even the term "Muslim fashion" was excluded from a Western-dominated fashion industry because "of two related presumptions: that fashion is a Western experience and that Muslims are not part of the West."[30] For that reason, Lewis holds that Muslim fashion needs to be extricated from the binaries to which it has been bound—namely, the either/or categories of Western/non-Western, mainstream/ethnic, modern/traditional, etc.—and instead reframed within the language of both/and, since one dresses to *belong* and to *differentiate*.[31] Moreover, new Islamic style cultures are witnessing a kind of erasure of national or linguistic specificities, resulting in the "deethnicization of Islam and the revitalization of the umma."[32]

Yet it is this author's contention that Muslim women must be understood as active, agentive participants in multiple fashion systems and clothing values, and are carving new digital and public spaces for their differing, splintering subjectivities. Religious studies scholar Elizabeth Bucar notes that the choices Muslim women make vis-à-vis dress as outward expressions of personal piety are influenced by a host of variables and interlocutors, which/whom these women are shaped by *and* are actively shaping:

> Although pious fashion is never merely the result of religious coercion, neither is it merely the expression of a woman's autonomy, personal taste, or religious identity. Self-appointed experts of women's dress—political leaders, clerics, designers, bloggers—attempt to dictate what counts as appropriate attire

for Muslim women. These experts create impressions, alter perceptions, elicit emotions, make demands, and assert pressures in their efforts to implement particular forms of Muslim dress. They thereby help form the context within which a Muslim woman decides what to wear each and every day.[33]

It is exactly these sorts of expectations of dress and often moralizing external pressures imposed on Muslim women which seem to complicate Saeed's or Abdul Khabeer's judgments of women who may self-identify with Mipsterz' aesthetic or sartorial philosophy as somehow spiritually inauthentic or commercially superficial. Peterson, rooting her analysis of the sartorial aesthetics of the Mipsterz' video on Malcolm Barnard's theories linking fashion semiotics to identity formation, calls attention to the ways in which clothes' meaning is engendered relationally within social bodies and across cultural contexts.[34] And yet in spite of the shortcomings that the video possesses, it seems remiss to moralize about Mipsterz' righteousness or spiritual rectitude given that there are countless women in the world who are sympathetic to, and indeed practitioners of, these varied, hybrid, aesthetic modes of externalizing, projecting, or broadcasting their complex Muslim identity to the world.

We can see this sartorial agency emerge well before the advent of social media. Even before the onset of Instagram in 2010, Muslim lifestyle magazine outlets and hijabi bloggers created online platforms that blended "commerce and commentary" to give rise to "new forms of religious knowledge production and transmission through which . . . new forms of religious authority for women" were in turn developed.[35] Ascia Farraj, a Kuwaiti fashion blogger and Instagrammer, gained prominence through her Instagram feed, @ascia_akf, claiming she was one of the first personal style bloggers to reveal her face. Melanie Elturk, the founder of Haute Hijab, a Chicago-based company that caters to Muslim women selling trendy hijab coverings and modest women's clothing, notes that "a lot of Muslim girls who wore the hijab got tired of being told that they couldn't be stylish or that they had to be frumpy or dowdy."[36] Elturk even voices an uneasiness at how "cool" and widely accepted the hijab has become, given the fact that fashion is defined by being *en vogue* one day and passé the next.[37] Muslim fashionistas, through their selfies and photoshoots posted on Instagram, provide a kind of instruction manual on how the obligations of piety can be compatible, rather than conflicting, with style. Balance shapes a key part to the equation,

especially for Muslim women living in the US; according to Souheila Al-Jadda an editor at *The Islamic Monthly*, American Muslim women need to find that delicate compromise between American and Muslim values, insinuating some degree of incommensurability.[38] Citing Inderpal Grewal's conception of contemporary neoliberal consumerism, Lewis argues that, in capitalizing on consumer's individual choice, neoliberal economic schemes differentiate identities through divergent patterns of consumption.[39]

And yet, in concordance with Saeed's and Abdul Khabeer's concerns, the market has in fact capitalized upon these diverse modes of modest fashion and self-presentation. The digital consumption of visual imagery by hungry Muslim consumers echoes, reinforces, and drives the capitalist consumption of the clothing and fashion industries. In the last few years, luxury and mainstream brands like Dolce & Gabbana, Tommy Hilfiger, Mango, and H&M, or cosmetics companies like Cover Girl shifted their ad campaigns to include hijabi models, with the intent of extending their neoliberal reach to profitable Muslim consumers and constituencies. London Fashion Week in 2017 featured a showcase entitled "Modest Fashion" aimed at Muslim British audiences, and touted its array of "edgy urban wear perfect for warrior princesses."[40] 2017 also marked the year that the Arab Fashion Council opened a regional office in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to promote the investment in "a sustainable fashion infrastructure in the Arab world" to harness the design, manufacturing, and retailing of products marketed to the region.[41] Muslim fashion is a lucrative market that fashion companies wish to tap into; each year, Muslims spend nearly $300 billion dollars on new clothes, shoes, and accessories.[42] An exhibition at the de Young Museum in San Francisco in 2018 traced this recent evolution of styles in the show *Contemporary Muslim Fashions*, demonstrating how major couturiers are beginning to craft modesty fashion lines. Sitting at the theoretical nexus of cultural, fashion, and media studies, this exhibition analyzed the ways in which faith gives fashion form while it also underscored the diversity of ways that these aesthetic dimensions, performative mechanisms, and political stakes take shape through such fashions.

Yet, how are young Muslim women and men both consuming and producing this "coolness" through their own digital agency? The Mipsterz aesthetic speaks to a broader quandary or dialectic of the production and consumption of culture. Just as many Muslim women might employ, intentionally or not, a Mipster sartorial aesthetic of cultural hybridity, eclectic styling, or urban streetwear, expressing

their agency and diversity,[43] it seems that both mainstream and high-end fashion brands likewise pick up on these current trends, copying and reproducing what is *en vogue*: Muslim Cool.

FASHIONING A THIRD SPACE: MUSLIM COOL

Before visually decoding what exactly constitutes a Mipster or delving into the diasporic politics and digital dissemination of its archetypes on social media, it is important to chart the theoretical landscape and recognize that some of the main characteristics of the Mipster—namely, being piously modest, culturally savvy, and yet hip and cosmopolitan—align with what much interdisciplinary scholarship has dubbed as "Muslim Cool" subculture. Muslim Cool, it seems, is a lifestyle and fashion mechanism deployed to politically mediate between the dominant culture's expectations (e.g., American, European) and the expectations of one's faith group (e.g., Islam). Nadine Naber demonstrates that in the experience of second-generation Arab Americans, there is an effort to practice a politics of cultural authenticity, remaining true to core lifestyle choices of Arab culture, while also assimilating into an American mode of living.[44] The idea of "cool Islam" first appeared in Amel Boubekeur's writings, in which she regards "cool" and competitive lifestyles as defining much of a European Muslim youth's public persona as a way of fighting "public discourses that stigmatize Islam or present it as an archaic religion."[45] One of the ways this new brand of Islam materializes, for Boubekeur, is through outward consumerism. "Cool" in this case is more or less synonymous with consumer culture.

Yet consumption is only one dimension of "Muslim Cool" identity, and patterns of consumption are limited by capital and class divides. In her consideration of Muslim youth in western Europe, Maruta Herding maintains that style is an indispensable part of a subculture, where "the adoption of styles, along with images and ideologies, creates a space where an alternative identity can be constructed that deliberately plays with visible difference and 'Otherness.'"[46] In her study, Herding identifies a number of European Muslim young entrepreneurs (e.g., Ünicité, Styleislam, and Sarah Elenany)[47] who are creating clothing lines that either employ modes of modesty or literally speak to one's religious identity through signs, symbols (e.g., *hilal* [crescent moons]), or religious verbal expressions. But the surge and available range of different ready-to-wear Islamic fashions testify in turn to a broadening range of inclusivity. Non-

veiling Muslim women can make their religion visible through these alternative garments.[48]

In the intervening years, newer scholarship has deepened our understanding of the Muslim Cool subculture, beyond explanations of materialistic spending and patterns of conspicuous consumption. Su'ad Abdul Khabeer's *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion and Hip Hop in the United States* analyzes the ways in which African American culture and racial politics figure heavily into the Muslim-American narrative. Through a methodological engagement with performance ethnography, her work privileges understandings of embodied knowledge, and she contends that "Muslim Cool" is an epistemological frame of mind and an ontological state of being. For Abdul Khabeer, the idea of Muslim Cool is a byproduct of the racial logic of US white supremacy: while the racist hierarchy marginalizes Arab and South Asian Americans, it also "incentivizes the adoption of anti-Blackness."[49] But Muslim Cool is in effect a move toward inclusion, and instead of dodging Blackness, Abdul Khabeer claims its ethos advances the construction of a unified US-based Muslim identity by appropriating Blackness. In particular, she focuses on how elements like hip-hop as an art form "expressed in DJing, emceeing, and graffiti—and as a form of knowledge and cultural production—from ideas and language to fashion and style—is a site of critical contradiction and contestation."[50] Hip-hop for Abdul Khabeer is rife with references to Islam, Muslim identity, along with pro-Black, pan-African solidarities,[51] and its popularity among US Muslim youth testifies to a kind of activism. Globally, we can see the appeal of hip-hop culture and graffiti art to Muslim minority communities throughout the world, with their associations of fighting systemic ethnic prejudice and racial injustice, protesting police brutality, and urban segregation. In grappling with these systemic inequities, Hisham Aidi affirms that young European and American Muslims specifically find historical and moral inspiration from the civil rights movement in the United States, and that politically, much of their polemics pertain to dissatisfaction with US and European foreign policy and interventionism in the Middle East (e.g., "War on Terror" policies).[52] In 2015, the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris staged a visually stunning and politically powerful exhibition curated by Aurélie Clemente-Ruiz and Elodie Bouffard entitled *Hip-Hop: du Bronx aux rues arabes*, the subject of which focused on the prevalence of African American hip-hop culture—music, language, graffiti, dance—in the Arab and North

African communities of the peripheral, suburban neighborhoods and *banlieues* of French cities.

In terms of fashion, Abdul Khabeer classifies two types of sartorial modes of Muslim Cool that young American Muslims symbolically reinvent and politically deploy: the idea of the dandy and the *'hoodjab*, an Afro-diasporic headscarf wrap in which a knot is tied at the base of the neck. Although she did not coin the term herself, the *'hoodjabi* mode of wrapping bears a charged resonance due to its historical associations with slaves and domestic caretakers (mammies) of the nineteenth-century American South, who used such coverings to shield them from the sun and keep their hair clean and braids preserved.[53]

Within the Mipsterz' video, the citation of the 'hood—linked to notions of urban squalor, ghettos, and inner cities—is deliberate and points to the ways that the racialization of space, through segregation and white flight development schemes, mirrors the marginalization of the Black subject. Because of its loaded historicism, the resuscitation of *'hoodjab* stands as a reminder of this legacy of slavery and its injustice.

In these video stills, these women's back alley fire escape poses, elaborately wrapped *'hoodjabs*, or skateboard gliding against graffiti lay claim to this fraught heritage. By aligning themselves with the aesthetic urban framings of graffiti artists like Banksy, Keith Haring, the Egyptian Ganzeer, or the Tunisian el-Seed, many Mipsterz turn to the visual language and freeing metaphor of the street to document the subculture's links to urban life. By marking the street as well as the digital realm, these Mipsterz make a claim to public space while alluding to their existence in the civic margins. In this way, both the *'hoodjab* and the dandy typify the dissenting ethos of Muslim Cool; as a kind of universally understood aesthetic language and choice, Muslim Cool seems to possess defiant political undertones, in its solidarity with Black, African American subjectivities, and its denunciations of social injustice and inequality. Inscribed in these aesthetes' fashion choices are statements of resistance to systemic inequity and the stereotyping of Islam.

DANDIFIED DIASPORAS, SARTORIAL TRANSCENDENCE

Apart from the historical links between African American hip-hop culture and Islam, the subtexts of hip-hop—its musical poetry of speaking truth to power, calling out injustice, and empowering the disenfranchised—resonate with multiethnic Muslim diasporas,

especially given the rise of Far Right, white supremacist agendas. Some of the greatest interventions that inform my analysis on the rise of the Mipster stem from scholarship in African American studies, in particular theorizations that highlight the links between dandyism and diasporic identity. In tackling the intersectional impossibilities of a W. E. B. Du Bois-inspired "double consciousness" — the fraught condition in which being both Black and American necessitates a kind of schizophrenic existence — these latter texts highlight how sartorial style is the performative, material means through which African Americans liberate themselves from perpetual subjugation, indignities, and primitivization. The Black male dandy, for Monica Miller and Shantrelle Lewis, deploys witticisms and uses finely tailored suits to transcend his marginalized societal status and invisibility.[54] Far more than being simply a snappy dresser, a dandy is often defined by their hyperbolic, self-consciously performative self-presentation (e.g., Oscar Wilde, Baudelaire, etc.).[55]

For Miller, the Harlem Renaissance and the emergence of the New Negro marked a key historical moment in the agency of dandyism as a sartorial style. Rather than seeing Black dandyism as purely aspirational or imitative of white, Western dandified style, Miller takes the Black dandyism to be dialogically informed and challenged through mechanisms of appropriation, translation, and interpretation.[56] Yet even in spite of these liberatory or subversive implications, Miller contends that dandyism served as a means towards respectability and thus conformity.[57] The bow-tie dandyism and pious respectability of the members of the Nation of Islam, such as Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, or Elijah Muhammad, could be interpreted as sartorial conduits to resistance and redemption.[58]

Self-declared Mipsterz, I contend, use social media to flaunt their twisty hijab knots, chromatic turbans and garb, trendy glasses, bright sneakers, or clean-cut menswear as a means to eclectically define their own fraught relations to and unique subjectivities within the multiethnic diasporic Muslim communities in which they reside, and navigate the simplistic binaries and representations imposed upon them by non-Muslim majorities with whom they interact on a day-to-day basis. Dapper Mipster dandies suit up in an array of sartorial garb from finely tailored sportscoats or slim-fitting bomber jackets to velveteen slippers and crisply pressed cotton thobes. By and large, these Mipsterz live in the US, Canada, or Europe, and aesthetically curate their selfies to speak to their individuality, mobility, urbanity, and sociability as well as to their intellectual pursuits or commitments

to social justice. The Mipster aesthete employs digital platforms to advocate for nuanced, plural understandings of Muslim identities.

A few examples illustrate the combination of advocacy, transgressive style, and politically minded fashion that these Instagrammers advocate. Islamic lifestyle Instagrammers and YouTubers employ their photographs and instructional videos to subvert dominant stereotypes and binaries.[59] By applying Birgit Meyer's concept of aesthetic formations and Jacques Rancière's relation of political power to the (in)accessibility of aesthetic or sensual experiences, Peterson asserts that Islamic lifestyle fashionistas empower certain subjectivities and connect with communities through fashion's aestheticism and embodiment.[60] Peterson compares Dina Torkia, an Egyptian-British woman, and Amena Khan, an Indian-British woman, both of whom gained popularity through their YouTube makeup and hijab tutorials and Instagram feeds, eventually forming businesses from their popular rise. Khan and Torkia emphasize that striving for beauty need not come at the expense of a faith-centered lifestyle. For other Instagrammers, a more overtly political stance is conveyed through fashion choices and a more explicit expression of political leanings and loyalties. Hoda Katebi, an American Iranian Instafamous poster/influencer who also runs the blog *Joojoo azad* (or "Free Bird"), advocates for ethical fashion and consumption, all while promoting awareness about Islam and highlighting the detriments of US foreign policy through both her Instagram profile and her blog. Leah Vernon, an African American Instagrammer from Detroit now based in New York City, uses her fashion-forward platform of campaign to protest bullying and body-shaming. In all cases, coolness is conveyed not just through vibrant turbans or quirky spectacles but fundamentally in promoting equality, social justice, the virtues of being a proud, Black, fat-positive Muslim.

CONCLUSION

What Instagram and many social media outlets now hold are digital archives of a subculture that is employing the tools of fashion, humor, creativity, and wit to reengage the broader public with what it means to be young, Muslim, and confident in the world. The deliberate appropriation of and political alignment with hip-hop culture and aesthetics—including its associations with inner city urban life, vibrant streets, and struggles for social justice—signify the Mipsterz movement's efforts to highlight the shared solidarity between Muslim communities and African American communities when it comes to

systemic racism, injustice, and social stigmatization. Though this paper centers on the Muslim American experience, the Mipsterz digital archive is a testament to a new diasporic identity that is not tied by a single ethnic creed, but rather a diasporic identity that is cool because of its fundamentally multiethnic, cosmopolitan character, unified by religious devotion and sartorial performativity.

NOTES

[1] "Somewhere in America #Mipsterz," directed by Habib Yazdi, produced by Abbas Rattani, Sara Aghajanian, and Layla Shaikley, 17 November 2013, video, https://vimeo.com/79645532.

[2] Lila Abu-Lughod, "Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others," *American Anthropologist* 104, no. 3 (September 2002): 783–90. This video also seems to be in dialogue with an entire body of debates about the compatibility of the veil and modernity.

[3] Layla Shaikley, "The Surprising Lessons of the 'Muslim Hipsters' Backlash," *The Atlantic*, 13 March 2014, https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2014/03/the-surprising-lessons-of-the-muslim-hipsters-backlash/284298/.

[4] Kristin M. Peterson and Nabil Echchaibi, "Mipsterz: Hip, American, and Muslim," in *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, eds. Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017), 146.

[5] See also E. Kavakci and C. R. Kraeplin, "Religious Beings in Fashionable Bodies: The Online Identity Construction of Hijabi Social Media Personalities," *Media, Culture & Society* 39, no. 6 (2017): 850–68.

[6] See the non-profit website: "About Us," Mipsterz, accessed 25 June 2020, https://www.mipsterz.com/about.

[7] "About Us."

[8] Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. J. Rutherford (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 235.

[9] Reina Lewis, *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 4.

> This is a subculture in which religiosity figures as one among other mutually constitutive terms of social differentiation alongside class, ethnicity, and gender; a subculture that defines itself in relation to distinction from the social and cultural norms of both a dominant or mainstream (and often hostile) non-Muslim majority and parental

> cultures of religion and ethnicity that are themselves socially and
> politically minoritized; a subculture in which creative practices of
> bricolage appropriate and transform commodities from multiple
> intersecting fashion systems including mainstream, "ethnic," and
> new niche modest commercial cultures; and a subculture in which
> style and values transmit "up" from daughters to mothers as well as
> across spatial divisions between neighborhoods and nations. (Lewis,
> 4)

[10] Linton Weeks, "The Hipsterfication of America," NPR, 17 November 2011, https://www.npr.org/2011/11/16/142387490/the-hipsterfication-of-america. Weeks explains the then widely accepted definition of hipsters as "a subculture of men and women typically in their 20s and 30s who value independent thinking, counter-culture, progressive politics, an appreciation of art and indie-rock, creativity, intelligence, and witty banter." Urban Dictionary, s.v. "hipster," accessed 25 June 2020, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Hipster, quoted in Weeks, "The Hipsterfication of America."

[11] Bjørn Schiermer, "Late-Modern Hipsters: New Tendencies in Popular Culture," *Acta Sociologica* 57, no. 2 (May 2014): 169.

[12] A. Robert Lee, "Beat Origins and Circuits, 1940s–1960s," in *The Beats: Authorships, Legacies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 23. In one salient passage, Lee cites Mailer's pronouncement that "in such places as Greenwich Village, a ménage-à-trois was completed—the bohemian and the juvenile delinquent came face-to-face with the Negro, and the hipster was a fact in American life." Originally cited from Norman Mailer, *The White Negro* (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1967), 3.

[13] Schiermer, "Late-Modern Hipsters," 169–70.

[14] Urban Dictionary, s.v. "hipster."

[15] Schiermer, "Late-Modern Hipsters," 170.

> No hipster has written proudly about his culture proper. . . . The
> hipster has no *cause*; hipster culture possesses no manifestos (but an
> enormous number of manifestos against it); it has no instituted
> leaders; it has no clear borders; it is more inclusive and less uniform
> than the traditional subculture; it does not promote drug-use; it does
> not battle the police or the authorities; it does not market itself
> discursively as a distinct alternative or rebellious lifestyle—thus,
> finally, it does not try to settle issues with the previous generation. In
> short, hipster culture is no 'real' subculture. (Schiermer, 170)

See also Anne Beezer, "Dick Hebdige, Subculture: The Meaning of Style," in *Reading into Cultural Studies*, eds. Martin Barker and Beezer (London: Routledge, 1992), 104–21.

[16] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 17. "The challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued

directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed (and, as we shall see, 'magically resolved') at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs" (Hebdige, 17).

17 Hebdige, *Subculture*, 18.

18 Amarra Ghani, "Muslim 'Hipsters' Turn a Joke into a Serious Conversation," NPR, 28 December 2013, https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/12/28/250786141/muslim-hipsters-turn-a-joke-into-a-serious-conversation.

19 See Stefano Allievi, "Islam in the Public Space: Social Networks, Media and Neo-Communities," in *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities and Across Europe*, eds. Stefano Allievi and Jørgen S. Nielsen (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1–27; Stine Eckert and Kalyani Chadha, "Muslim Bloggers in Germany: An Emerging Counterpublic," *Media, Culture & Society* 35, no. 8 (2013): 926–42.

20 Steve Crist and Megan Shoemaker, eds., *The Instagram Book: Inside the Online Photography Revolution* (Los Angeles: Ammo Books, 2014), 2–3.

21 Thomas Frissen, Elke Ichau, Kristof Boghe, and Leen d'Haenens, "#Muslims? Instagram, Visual Culture, and the Mediatization of Muslim Religiosity: Explorative Analysis of Visual and Semantic Content on Instagram," in *European Muslims and New Media*, eds. M. Kayikci and Leen d'Haenens (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017).

22 Laura Camerlengo, "'My Muslim-ness': Fashion, Faith, and Social Media," in *Contemporary Muslim Fashions*, eds. Jill D'Alessandro and Reina Lewis (San Francisco, CA: Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco; Munich: DelMonico Books/Prestel, 2018).

23 See B. E. Duffy and E. Hund, "'Having It All' on Social Media: Entrepreneurial Femininity and Self-Branding Among Fashion Bloggers," *Social Media + Society* 1, no. 2 (2015): 1–11; Tim Highfield and Tama Leaver, "Instagrammatics and Digital Methods: Studying Visual Social Media, from Selfies to GIFs to Memes and Emoji," *Communication Research and Practice* 2, no. 1 (2016): 47–62; A. E. Marwick, "Instafame: Luxury Selfies in the Attention Economy," *Public Culture* 27, no. 1 (2015): 137–60.

24 Lewis, *Muslim Fashion*, 6.

25 Emma Baulch and Alila Pramiyanti, "Hijabers on Instagram: Using Visual Social Media to Construct the Ideal Muslim Woman," *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 4 (October–December 2018): 1–15. Baulch and Pramiyanti define *dakwah* as "the call, invitation or challenge to Islam." The authors speak about women's agency through Instagram:

> They are certainly agents in the molding of Islamic pop culture, possessing not only consumer power as individuals but also the ability to generate new publics, involving the production, circulation, and consumption of images by women and for women. These women ride high on the myth of social media's epochal

> transformative power, using their cell phones and social media affordances to produce themselves, sparking dialogues across distant sites among female strangers commonly engaged in crafting the ideal look of the modern Muslimah. Moreover, by claiming the circulation of their images on Instagram as a form of dakwah, the hijabers impinge on forms of religious knowledge and authority formerly reserved for men. (Baulch and Pramiyanti, 2)

They also note that "hijabers are at pains to construct the hijaber habitus as a distinctly middle class one, to which only those with advanced consumer power may belong. Such efforts work to link women's power exclusively to their identities as consumers, and validate the idea that the ideal woman is a consuming woman." (Baulch and Pramiyanti, 2)

[26] Sana Saeed, "Somewhere in America, Muslim Women Are 'Cool,'" *The Islamic Monthly*, 2 December 2013, https://www.theislamicmonthly.com/somewhere-in-america-muslim-women-are-cool/.

[27] Kristin M. Peterson, "Cultural Expressions and Criticisms in the US Mipsterz Fashion Video," *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques* 49, no. 1 (2018): 79–97.

[28] Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, "All I Know to Be Is a Soldier, For My Culture," 1 December 2013, https://drsuad.tumblr.com/post/68745089632/somewhere-in-america-somewhere-in-america-there.

[29] Abdul Khabeer, "All I Know to Be Is a Soldier."

[30] Baulch and Pramiyanti, "Hijabers on Instagram," 12.

[31] Lewis, *Muslim Fashion*, 13.

[32] Reina Lewis, "Marketing Muslim Lifestyle: A New Media Genre," *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 6, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 70; Lewis, *Muslim Fashion*, 25.

[33] Elizabeth Bucar, *Pious Fashion: How Muslim Women Dress* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 12–13.

[34] Peterson, "Cultural Expressions." In her text, Peterson cites Malcolm Barnard: "Fashion, clothing and dress are signifying practices, they are ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions or relative power." Barnard, *Fashion as Communication* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), 38, quoted in Peterson, "Cultural Expressions," 82.

[35] Lewis, *Muslim Fashion*, 25.

[36] Hannah Seligson, "A Makeover for the Hijab, via Instagram," *The New York Times*, 15 August 2014.

[37] Seligson, "A Makeover for the Hijab."

[38] Ibid.

[39] Lewis, *Muslim Fashion*, 25.

[40] "Don't Say Sexy: Islam's Changing Fashions," *Economist*, 20 April 2017, 46.

[41] "Arab Fashion Council Opens Office in Riyadh," *Travel & Leisure Close-Up*, 20 December 2017.

[42] "Don't Say Sexy."

[43] Peterson, "Cultural Expressions."

> The mipsterz fashion style illustrates some of the values and meanings behind the mipsterz cultural identity. Being a mipsterz is about hybridity, living within multiple social locations as Muslim women, as fashionable and hip American women and often as ethnic minorities within the US. Being a mipsterz is about experimenting with styles and incorporating different aspects of one's background to create a new blended style. Being a mipsterz is about using colors, patterns and styles to express pride in one's culture and identity. Being a mipsterz is about wearing flowing clothing that allows one to be active and stylish. Being a mipsterz is about rejecting corporate labels in favor of creating an expression of one's unique personality. (86)

[44] Nadine Naber, *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 11–12.

[45] Amel Boubekeur, "Post-Islamist Culture: A New Form of Mobilization?" *History of Religions* 47, no. 1 (August 2007): 79; on European Muslim youth's public persona, see Boubekeur, "Cool and Competitive: Muslim Culture in the West," *ISIM Review* 16 (Autumn 2005): 12–13.

[46] Maruta Herding, *Inventing the Muslim Cool: Islamic Youth Culture in Western Europe* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2013), 31. Here Herding cites Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (New York; London: Routledge, 1979). According to Herding, Birmingham's Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has always been at the forefront of subcultural analysis. Youth from working class backgrounds were thought to light the spark of youth subcultures that differentiated themselves by style. She also highlights the research presented in Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain* (New York; London: Routledge, 1975).

[47] Reina Lewis, "Uncovering Modesty: Dejabis and the Dewigies Expanding the Parameters of the Modest Fashion Blogosphere," *Fashion Theory* 19, no. 2 (2015): 243–70.

[48] Herding, *Inventing the Muslim Cool,* 108–9.

> The term 'Islamic fashion' evokes images of hijabs, chadors and particularly female garments. Elaborate headscarf styles and other female attire is indeed found in Europe's young Islamic fashion, but this area is far from being limited to the ladies—on the contrary: it

> seems that male youths almost envied their female peers for being able to show their religion by their appearance and looked for a sartorial equivalent. Islamic streetwear is the male response. . . . Islamic streetwear can be combined with a headscarf, but it also provides the opportunity for any non-veiling Muslim, male or female, to make their religion visible. . . . There are many reasons to wear Islamic fashion: piety, politics, and pride among others. The "coolness factor" is another crucial one that underlines the feasibility of a cool Islam, both by fitting into juvenile cultures of the social environment and by openly identifying with Islam despite its widely negative image: the coolness of being the "underdog." In the process, the consumer of Islamic fashion also becomes an actor on the state of the street, the bus, the school or the workplace. (Herding, 108–9)

[49] Su'ad Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool: Race, Religion and Hip Hop in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), 15.

[50] Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool*, 7.

[51] Ibid.*,* 21. She cites the music of Tupac Shakur, Queen Latifah, and Lauryn Hill.

[52] Hisham D. Aidi, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), xiv–xv.

[53] Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool,* 121.

[54] Shantrelle Lewis, *Dandy Lion: The Black Dandy and Street Style* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2017), 12–13. Lewis offers a cogent perspective on the idea of the Black dandy:

> The Black dandy is a trickster figure, a dapper agitator. Similar to the masquerading practices of West Africa, where individuals are transformed into otherworldly beings, the Black dandy embodies the idea that when a body is encased within a "suit," the masked or "suited" individual exceeds ordinary human expectations. The dandy is deliberate in his use of the Black body to express not only his individualism, but also his relationship to his own community and to mainstream culture, challenging negative perceptions of what he is capable of doing or being. . . . He confronts, amazes, and confounds his audiences, both real and imagined. . . . By appropriating the outward and highly specific signs of class, culture, wealth, education, and status, the dandy cleverly manipulates clothing and attitude to make his own statement. (Lewis, 12–13)

See also Monica Miller, *Slaves to Fashion: Black Dandyism and the Styling of the Black Diasporic Identity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 6–7.

> Dandyism is an interpretation and materialization of the complexity of this cosmopolitanism. I read black dandyism and the politics of performativity as an index of the formation of this blackness — as a sign of the conceptualization of early Afro-diasporic identity, as part

> of a negotiation of the transition from slavery to freedom in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. . . . I show how the dandy manifests an evolving series of debates about racial formation, class mobility, gender assignment, sexuality and nationalism. The black dandy's deployment of sartorial style—especially the self-consciousness of his display—is of signal importance to assessing the figure's intervention in studies of identity construction. (Miller, 6–7)

55 Miller, *Slaves to Fashion,* 10.

> Fashion theorists often identify the dandy's allure as emanating from the fact that the figure is both constructed and performative—a dandy is a kind of embodied, animated sign system that deconstructs given and normative categories of identity (elite, white, masculine, heterosexual, patriotic) and reperforms them in a manner more in keeping with his often avant-garde visions of society and self. (Miller, 10)

56 Ibid., 16.

57 Ibid., 16.

58 Abdul Khabeer, *Muslim Cool,* 166–67.

> Men in the NOI, in the past and today, are distinguished in Black communities for being impeccably dressed, and they have come to be known by the refrain "Suited and Booted!" Whether featuring the uniform of the Fruit of Islam or tailored suits with bow ties and well-shined boots, the arresting image of NOI men has had a profound impact on the sartorial landscape in U.S. Black American communities. Accordingly, "suited and booted" describes not only what men in the NOI wear but also the meaning made from their clothes. In his research with former members of the NOI, anthropologist Zain Abdullah's interlocutors recalled being attracted to the Nation because of how its men dressed, in "suits" and "shining boots," projecting an aura of being "clean," "intelligent," and "doing something." . . . To be suited and booted is to oppose White authority by taking recourse to respectability, which continues to be attractive to U.S. Black communities that understand the role of clothes in the presumption of Black inferiority and the perpetuation of racial inequality. (Abdul Khabeer, 166–67)

59 Kristin M. Peterson, "Beyond Fashion Tips and Hijab Tutorials: The Aesthetic Style of Islamic Lifestyle Videos," *Film Criticism* 40, no. 2 (June 2016): 2.

60 Peterson, "Beyond Fashion Tips," 4.