

**HISHAM D. AIDI, *Rebel Music: Race, Empire, and the New Muslim Youth Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2014). Pp. 430. \$16.95 paper, \$29.95 cloth, \$12.99 e-book. ISBN 9780375424908.**

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Hisham Aidi's new book is a highly compelling discussion of new Muslim youth cultures that engages with key questions of imperialism and transnational solidarity, race and racism, history and memory. This work offers a timely and incisive analysis of the ways in which globalized forms of music are emerging from and producing various forms of community and collective protest, based on the premise that "today music is the realm where Muslim diaspora consciousness and identity politics are most poignantly being debated and expressed" (xxvi). Using examples of cultural production such as hip-hop, *gnawa*, jazz, and punk that span the Americas, Europe, and North Africa, Aidi suggests that these cultural movements embody "an alternative idea of modernity and cosmopolitanism, as well as a different relationship to the West," drawing on an archive of African American Islam (xxiii).

Focusing on cultural flows and political conversations linking Muslim youth on both sides of the Atlantic, Aidi argues that European and American Muslim youth are engaged in a "search for a nonracist utopia," or an "audiotopia," inspired by histories of Black internationalism and civil rights struggles in North America as well as anticolonial movements in the Third World (xiii). This evolving Muslim internationalism—what could be described as a Muslim Atlantic—has emerged in a highly fraught terrain, for Muslim youth today are in the crosshairs of the planetary War on Terror and counterterrorism policies of the US as well as European states. The book grapples with important questions about the ways in which the US, France, and the UK are increasingly invested in not just intervening in, but also managing and promoting, certain forms of Muslim youth

cultural expression, as they produce and regulate “moderate” or “radical” Muslim identities. Aidi addresses the tensions that these forms of cultural diplomacy have produced within Muslim youth subcultures in the US and Europe, and also the impact of Islamist movements in North America and Europe.

While there have been many works published recently that address topics such as Muslim and Arab youth politics in the diaspora, transnational Muslim and Arab hip-hop, and Afro-Arab/Muslim alliances, what is valuable about this book is that it discusses Muslim youth cultures in relation to the “Great Game of the twenty-first century,” or state projects of militarization, securitization, and surveillance, as well as to the influence of right-wing Islamist movements (xx). Aidi does not shy away from examining the conservative forces within Muslim youth cultures and the tussle between Salafists, of various stripes, and progressive or leftist Muslims, as well as the often contradictory convergences and divergences among these formations. I think this is crucial, for Aidi goes beyond an idealized portrait of Muslim cultural politics in the diaspora that simply seeks to validate the experiences of youth who have to face Islamophobia and racism, as some liberal scholarship has done, presenting instead a critical, nuanced portrait of a complex terrain.

The book takes readers on a global tour that begins in Brazil, which is a wonderful way of decentering the United States and North America in the existing discussion of transnational Muslim youth cultures. Aidi provides a fascinating account of Orientalized and Islamophilic representations of Arabs and Muslims, that are often deeply gendered (via “the trope of the Moorish brown girl”), in Brazilian popular culture, such as telenovelas and carnival performances, connecting them to larger debates about Brazilian nationalism and challenges to dominant North American views of Islam as well as US policies in the War on Terror (p. 23). Aidi historicizes Afro-Brazilian hip-hop and Black Muslim consciousness in favelas and urban areas in relation to discussions of racial democracy in Brazil as well as of slave revolts and Islamic Spain, providing a window into some of the key issues in the book.

Because this book is so vast in its range of topics, geographic areas, and historical moments (and is 400 pages long), I discuss three themes that are important contributions to the study of Middle East migration. First, the book provides a transnational analysis of the US “ghetto” and the European banlieue, demonstrating how European Muslim youth in countries such as France, Denmark, and the

Netherlands are directing their gaze to African American Islam and turning their ears to the sounds of hip-hop, jazz, and reggae. Aidi moves between urban centers and peripheries in the Americas and Europe and former colonies in North Africa, illuminating how music has been key to the circulation of protest cultures between the US, France, Morocco, and Algeria, including during the Arab uprisings. For example, a chapter on *gnawa* music, associated with Moroccan Sufis and the legacy of formerly enslaved West Africans, discusses how young anti-imperialist and pan-Africanist artists from the Maghreb and the European diaspora have posed a challenge to Islamism and also to the cultural, class, and racial hierarchies of Arab states, through their recreation of Sufi and Berber cultural traditions. Yet Aidi also points out that the radicalism of *gnawa* reggae coexists with attempts by European states to deploy *gnawa* as a symbol of multicultural diversity and to encourage “social cohesion” by promoting Sufi Islam (141–42).

Second, Aidi discusses the shift to a more orthodox version of Islam among youth in the diaspora, partly due to the spread of Salafism and Saudi Arabia’s policies in shaping Islam; this has made Muslim youth culture a charged site with conservative Muslim youth, including former rappers, denouncing the “hip-hopization” of their culture (xxi). The children of Muslim immigrants in the diaspora have in some cases been receptive to the Salafist promotion of the notion of a “return to a ‘pure Islam’ . . . denouncing the practices of ‘folk Islam,’” including Sufism (49). Aidi places these contestations over music in the context of a larger generational shift that has occurred in Muslim diasporas since the 1990s, when second-generation Muslim youth came of age and began “building organizations, pushing for rights, and triggering very public debates (especially in France and Britain) about integration and Islam,” as was also the case among Muslim youth in the US after September 11, 2001 (48).

At the same time, the US and UK have tried to “direct Muslim youth culture” and used the “Sufi solution” to divert youth from “extremism” and “jihadi Salafism” by promoting and funding Sufi or “moderate” Muslim clerics (47). While there has already been much writing on state policies regulating Islam in the War on Terror, Aidi highlights the ways in which Western states, as well as Arab and Muslim states, have been involved in cultural diplomacy programs that pivot on youth music and culture, echoing US cultural propaganda programs involving jazz artists during the Cold War. The US has used hip-hop to “rebrand America’s image” and “to promote democracy”

overseas (221), which is of course ironic given the domestic criminalization of urban youth of color and stigmatization of hip-hop. Yet in order to promote the image of successfully integrated and assimilated Muslim Americans, in contrast to presumably disaffected and “radicalized” Muslim youth in Europe, the US has organized global tours of hip-hop artists as well as counterterrorism programs through US embassies. These projects have provoked tensions between the US and European states, such as France, and have also fostered fissures within Muslim communities, with increased distrust and suspicion of artists or institutions that are backed by the state. The debate over hip-hop, Aidi observes, stands in for a much larger debate about “race, immigration, and national identity” (207). The figure of Malcolm X is also embroiled in these charged discussions, with some radical Muslim youth and activists in Europe drawing on legacies of Black Power to organize antiracist campaigns for decolonization, challenging Western imperialism and racism against North Africans and Muslims, and in solidarity with Palestinians. These “new race movements,” as Aidi calls them, trouble dominant narratives in Europe about Muslim integration, Muslim-Jewish relations, and the Palestine-Israel “conflict,” and are also part of the “ongoing debates about national identity and memory in North Africa” related to colonization, the history of Jewish North Africans, and Zionism (329–30).

The book is a tour de force, in many ways, and is written in a very engaging, nontheoretical language that makes it accessible to academic as well as nonacademic audiences. Its structure is not very cohesive, however, as the discussion meanders somewhat so the reader often encounters the same topics in different chapters. Perhaps this is intended to create the effect of a musical work that riffs on key themes at different moments, although it can feel slightly dizzying in written form. Yet the book is highly lucid and critical, and offers an important transnational approach to pressing debates in Middle East migration studies that will be of interest to scholars and the general public alike.