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Chapter 7

“Welcome to the Camps”:¹ The Emergence of Palestinian Rap in Lebanon, a New Social and Political Song

Nicolas Puig

Combining the festive and aesthetic dimensions of protest, rap is now blossoming among a category of young Palestinians as a powerful vector channeling political and social messages. Still confidential and sometimes condemned, this form of music represents a special mode of expression related to the new generation, which stands out in the current cultural landscape. Indeed, the emergence of Palestinian rap in Lebanon and in Arab countries generally, raises the question of the appearance of a cultural activity characterized by a sense of strangeness and distinctiveness.² As one of the cultural activities anchored in the city, rap testifies to the urbanity of the individual and constitutes a matrix of neighborhood and refugee camp representations.

Rap represents a channel of subjectification and a forum to denounce daily problems and support the cause. In this respect, rap is preserving an important current of political and nationalist music. However, by weaving a political message indirectly rather than straightforwardly aiming at mass mobilization, this form of music is individualizing the cause. It is also confronting the criticisms of some members of the *tanzimat* (factions of the Palestinian resistance) who are concerned with respecting canonical ways of commitment. Furthermore, by trying to channel an ethic of social transformation, rap music runs the risk of undermining the consensus in the rhetoric of the national struggle by raising pointed question derived from ordinary narratives about the frustrations of everyday life, its difficulties, and routines.

In this regard, the integration of Palestinian rap in its society shapes the content of the music, which varies therefore according to the local context (Lebanese Palestinian refugees in Lebanon,

Palestinians in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank). In order to expand and grow, it uses alternative networks and takes advantage of the Internet and new technologies. This lack of institutionalization gives rap music an unusual freedom. My purpose will be to explore the alternative music scene represented by rap with a focus on Lebanon, although I will also attempt to shed light on the situation in the Palestinian territories. I will develop these issues by focusing on three themes: the relationship between rap and national music; questions of morality, public, and places; and finally, the urban features of this cultural current.

1. “The National Song Is Over, That’s It, Play the Beat”³

Music and Political Narratives

Interest in nationalist and political music has declined with the disappearance of the master narratives of Arab unity and the Palestinian revolution. Huge orchestras celebrating Arab nationalism and the liberation of Palestine grew under the patronage of the resistance and reached their peak in the 1970s with *al-Firqah al-Markaziyyah* (Central Orchestra) which “produced tens of revolutionary songs... made use of folk Palestinian tunes sometimes combined with Western martial rhythms and tempos, but their lyrics were invariably in Palestinian Arabic sung in rural accent.”⁴ This orchestra represented a new form of music produced by a Palestinian Diaspora close to the PLO. Musical pieces were broadcast through “guerrilla radio transmitters in vans that drove around Amman and other areas of Jordan... as well as from the Cairo-based radio station.”⁵ Then the *Sawt al-Thawra* radio station established in Beirut in the early 1970s contributed to the propagation of these songs. In this new pattern of music that we can hear to this day, the solo vocalist is replaced by a chorus.⁶

Other Palestinian organizations were also active in producing music, for example the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), which still has its own orchestra. At the beginning of the Lebanese civil war, ‘Abidu Basha mentioned that a concert was once organized by the DFLP, including the “Coeur Populaire,” conducted by the singer Ahmad Qa’bur, as well as Palestinian folkloric dances produced by the dance company of the DFLP. In the 1980s, political music had not lost all its power yet,

with orchestras like *Baladna* (Our Land), al-^cAshiqin (The Lovers), or the well-known *Sabirin* (The Patient Ones) which were very popular during the first Palestinian *intifada* and which sang the struggle of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.⁸

Meanwhile, in Lebanon, the devastating civil war and the Israeli invasion of 1982 marked a period of complete blackout, which reduced singers and musicians to silence until the late 1980s. A new professional orchestra *Hanin lil-Ughniyyah al-Filastiniyyah* (Longing for the Palestinian Song) blossomed in 1993. Based in Saida, *Hanin* grew up alongside other groups in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon to preserve the tradition of patriotic and political music. The repertory was composed of political and patrimonial (*turathiyyah*) music and consisted in reviving old songs and adapting a wedding-song repertory to political issues. These songs were discovered through various contacts, such as the Internet, acquisition of imported compact discs from Palestine, the preservation of the work of elderly musicians, and so on. The same year, another orchestra appeared, known as *al-Wa'd* (The Promise), which was close to Hamas and specialized in religious and political music; their two latest works, entitled *Atyaf al-Istishhad* (Presence of Martyrdom), parts 1 and 2, were created in Tripoli.

At present, there are around 20 orchestras playing various kinds of Palestinian music affiliated with different *tanzimat* in Lebanon. The principal cultural actor on the musical scene is *Ittihad al-Fannanin al-Filastiniyyin* (Union of Palestinian Artists), which is affiliated with the PLO (but is dependent *de facto* on Fatah) and based in Saida. A topic that prevails in these songs is the nostalgia for homeland, conceived as rural and pastoral, in accordance with the situation of much of the country at the time of the Nakba of 1948. These songs refer to the rural origin of many refugees as well as to their claim of returning to their land. This cultural production also reveals a patrimonial investment for the purpose of preserving a memory, an investment that can be summarized by the formula of ‘the three Ts’: *turath*, *turab*, *tarab*.⁹ The association of these three terms, which can be translated as: heritage, land (literally, soil, which sometimes represents the peasant’s land), and musical emotion (and the music that leads such an emotion), creates a recurrent canvas in Palestinian musical narratives.¹⁰ This voice, which protests injustice and sings of a land that few people have known, is now fading. In the refugee context, it does not question the implicit policy of good relations with UNRWA or with the national authorities. The latter is now a very sensitive matter in

Lebanon, where a dialogue about Palestinian civil and social rights had been initiated before the war of July 2006, but internal political conflicts and political violence caused its relegation to the back burner.

An Infra-Political Song

Rap has emerged in the context of a certain disillusionment and fatigue concerning the subversive power of political music, associated with a phase of decline in the rhetoric of creativity for the cause.¹¹ By conveying a tradition of social criticism well grasped by a new generation of singers, rap is taking into consideration the “inner” aspects of everyday life. Rappers find in this new style of singing an expressive tool to address living conditions “here and now.” While the majority of orchestras are attached to political organizations (e.g. Fatah, DFLP, and Hamas), which have a major influence on repertoires, rappers are enjoying a certain autonomy with respect to Palestinian cultural institutions and other marketing networks. They are therefore able to express new things.

Consider the following extract from a discussion with members of the rap group Katibeh Khamseh (Fifth Battalion), from Burj al-Barajneh and Harat Hurayk:

Our CD is about camps. Its name is “Welcome to the Camps.” All of it is about camps, the first song, which is the principal one. We will speak about the camp, and afterwards songs speak about UNRWA and associations. Also about schools...

That’s true, we are the first band which speaks about camps. Mostly, others speak about Palestine. We don’t speak about Palestine. Olive, trees, fields... We express something people can’t express, they can’t tell it.

This accounts for the subversive aspect of this music. For example, when it describes the living conditions of Palestinians in Lebanon, the lyrics of one song by singers from ‘Ayn al-Hilweh state:

Blue identity card, my name is refugee
I grew up in discrimination and racism
We have been expelled, we have been defeated, we have lived in shelters
I’m not a terrorist, or a lover, or a fan
I’m looking for a job and they ask me for my identity card
What’s your identity?
My identity is Palestinian.
You abandoned him, you forgot him

You have cheated him.
The cause is larger now
A Palestinian is forbidden
To be expressive
A Palestinian is forbidden
To go on strike
We can't buy
A shop or a house
We can't speak
Or write on the wall.¹²

In another song, Katibeh Khamseh sings:

You look up at the sky,
Electric wires everywhere
If you don't steal electricity
How can you see?
...
Water, flowing underneath,
Stop flooding
Young people are drowning
In unemployment and inaction.¹³

The lyrics also criticize the instrumentalization of the cause by the non-governmental associations working in the camps:

Ah, Katibeh Khamseh, once again,
This time we're going to burn it
Katibeh Khamseh, this time, it's for the associations
To make them perform well
The associations
They have the money of the nation
The associations
They take away what they give
But people are dying.¹⁴

In September 2007 in al-Baddawi camp, in northern Lebanon, a young member of an association was singing this last song, which had been circulating since it was first recorded in 2006, while he was taking a rest. He was one of the volunteers trying to entertain children of Nahr al-Barid camp displaced in the schools of Baddawi. It seemed that he was ideally placed to appreciate K5 lyrics.

For these bands, clothes may at times display the significance of Palestinian identity, for example t-shirts showing the colors of the Palestinian flag or printed with the image of Hanzala (the personage created by cartoonist Naji al-^cAli), but that is by no

means always the case. The rappers also appropriate the images and symbols of the cause and then mix them with other, more prosaic issues. From a political point of view, a certain syncretism (perhaps a generational trademark) is exhibited in the coexistence of icons such as Yasir ʿArafat and Hanzala, or Malcolm X and Hasan Nasrallah. Similarly, one of the ideas mobilized on the website of a group of Ramallah rappers is that the Palestinian cause is not used as the first motivation for music. Rather, this music is, first of all, an aesthetic quest in the service of social and political criticism. The concept of reform and social transformation is implemented by rap musicians, whatever their origin. Although it is largely innovative, the capacity of Palestinian rap to be built up as a new form of social and political music also depends on expanding its audience, a result it has yet to achieve.

2. Public and Morality

Emergence

Rap appeared in the Levant at the end of the 1990s, especially at points of intersection with western musical culture. In Israel, young Palestinians sang of the apartheid of which they are victims, and in Lebanon rap music was imported by some members of the Diaspora returning to Lebanon. Whether in Israel, the occupied territories, or in Lebanon, satellite television stations later brought out some talent among young Palestinians. Rap music also developed in the West Bank and Gaza where some bands are pursuing a modest career (for example, Khalifa, Ghazoui, RFM, Palestinian Rappers) and where thanks to some limited initiatives (for example, Hodage association for promoting and supporting Middle Eastern artists) writing workshops have been organized.

In Lebanon some teenagers influenced by American rappers seen on satellite television stations began to work on their own rap music. Recently, thanks to the support of non-governmental associations, a few musicians were able to record a compact disc and to create video clips, resulting in the first commercial compact disc of Palestinian rap in March 2008. First limited to ʿAyn al-Hilweh and Burj al-Barajneh camps, rap witnessed limited development in the other camps. In Nahr a-Barid, just before the destruction of the camp in summer 2007, members of al-Karmil, an orchestra supported by the Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PFLP) wrote and recorded a rap song entitled *Hawajiz* (Checkpoints).

The first Palestinian rap group to gain a large following was born in the city of Lydda (al-Ludd) in Israel, where there is still a high density of Palestinian inhabitants. DAM, which is composed of Tamir al-Naffar, his brother Suhayl and Mahmud Jurayri, denounces the living conditions of “second-class” citizens. They achieved great popularity through the video clip of their song *Min al-Irhabi?* (Who Is the Terrorist?) in 2001. Before that, pioneer rap bands in the Arab world had emerged mainly in Algeria in the early 1990s, with MBS (*Le Micro Brise Le Silence*).¹⁵ After listening to the Algerian rap, the Naffar brothers abandoned English lyrics to concentrate on Arabic. Tupac Shakur, the American rapper who died in 1996, has been mentioned by DAM and also by Katibeh Khamseh,¹⁶ as an emblematic figure in rap music, inspiring and encouraging many young Palestinians to explore rap music.

Though rap is the music of third-generation Palestinian refugees, it is still not well known even among the youth. Rap in Lebanon belongs to an underground alternative culture, unlike pop music which is broadcast on a pan-Arab level or Lebanese “historical” music (a genre that might include Ziyad Rahbani, Fayruz, Marcel Khalifeh, among others).¹⁷ The music’s limited audience and its local integration reinforce its particularity. Indeed, it is partly via cultural centers or foreign non-governmental associations that young rappers in Lebanon and in other Arab countries receive support and find a forum to present their shows. Sometimes, a band emerges due to the dynamism of a professional DJ, such as, the Moroccan band Fès City Clan. Katibeh Khamseh has also emerged thanks to the intervention of two different cultural entrepreneurs: the first worked as a DJ at weddings inside and outside Palestinian camps in Lebanon, while the second was an actor in one of the Palestinian troupes associated with the Union of Palestinian Artists. These points emerge in the following interview with members of Katibeh Khamseh, conducted by the author (N.P.):

N.P: How did you begin rap?

Amru: First, Nadir began by himself.

Nadir: We entered by ourselves, nobody helped us. We used to buy everything by ourselves, without any assistance. We were searching on radio and television. Where do we find rap? Whoever wants something finds it.

N.P: Did you have a previous idea about what rap was?

Nadir: Yes, of course.

N.P: But how did you get this idea?

‘Amru: At a certain period rap became quite well-known and popular. I mean you know Tupac. It has been a long time since he has been involved in this stuff.

Nadir: We saw what rap was.¹⁸

Morality and Generational Conflict

Although Palestinian rap music remains somewhat clandestine in Palestinian society, it came to be recognized internationally due to some interest in the mass media. The political dimension of this music, which seems for the majority of the audience effective in conveying messages, was largely reexamined and criticized by some moral entrepreneurs. Whether in Gaza, Ramallah or in the camps of Lebanon, such moral entrepreneurs condemn a suspected wave of western corruption and immorality with respect to religious norms. This condemnation has tended to intensify skepticism towards music in general, though this has not prevented a new generation from getting more and more interested in televised competitions among performers. Furthermore, in Gaza, while a category of citizens are fascinated by televised song contests, others are threatening young rappers and even reconsidering the morality of listening to such artist as Umm Kulthum, who “would not have sung if she had know Islam better,” as the director of Gaza’s Hodage association is reported to have said. A shaykh singer and composer of political and religious *anashids* (songs) in the orchestra *al-Wa’d*, pronounced the same judgment on Umm Kulthum during an interview in Baddawi camp in July 2007, without denying her talent. “It is true that she is coming from a family of shaykhs,” he added, and agreed with the principle of recording romantic songs, though he specified “just for married couples.”. For many Palestinian cultural actors, the legitimacy of music depends on its goal and on its places of performance. From this point of view, a music is legitimate only by reference to its destination. I think here of ‘Abdullah in Baddawi camp in north Lebanon, who has not yet succeeded in recording his romantic songs because one of the two home studios in the camp is too expensive and the owner of the second is unwilling to record music that is not directly linked to the cause. However, recording a compact disc and sending it to the musical television station Rotana is still his dream.

The destination of the music is also a contested point when it

comes to rap. During a conversation with ʿAmru, leader of K5 in July 2006, he told me that the band has gained a larger audience in the camps, emphasizing that they have been rapping for more than five years. Although it is true that rap music is circulating among a certain category of young Palestinians, the audience remains a critical issue. The research I conducted among Palestinian musicians gave me the opportunity to appreciate the negative prejudices attached to rap, even when the notion of what rap is is clear in the mind of the interviewee, which is not always the case. Yet, recently K5 managed to take Palestinian rap to social spaces where it is not easily accepted or known, such as the music venues of east Beirut (a mainly Christian part of the city) and to Shatila and Burj al-Barajneh camps. But for many inhabitants of these spaces, and for contrasting reasons (the stigma attached to being Palestinian in east Beirut and the perception of something extraneous to local culture in the camps), it remains something belonging to another world.

The analysis of the destination of rap leads to another point, of which I only became fully aware months later during a recording session. After being challenged by a studio technician regarding the musical capabilities required to sing rap, one of the rappers from the group Katibeh Khamseh responded: "What we are doing now is not something new, we have been working for six years. Art does not look like anything else from everyday life. Art requires much precision and attention, it is not like doing anything else." The mention of artistic capability shows that young musicians exploring esoteric paths are on a constant quest for acknowledgment. In addition to religious and social disparagement, then, the rappers have their artistic practice dismissed as well. There is a certain sympathy towards the rap group expressed by a progressive cultural elite, to which the group's cofounder belongs, whose brother is also an actor and a producer. However, rap is mostly considered an imported form of music that serves to divert and distort the struggle, a kind of counterrevolutionary music form. An informant musician in Baddawi confided to me: "No, I honestly think that this form of music does not help the Palestinian cause. I don't accept it. When I listen to this, it makes me laugh." This opinion is relatively widespread in Palestinian circles, where rap is a cultural form of expression that is still depreciated. The recent appropriation of this musical form by young women in Ramallah has served to intensify this disapproval. Thus, it is not easy to find Palestinian rap in

Lebanon and songs and video clips are spread mainly by personal connections among individuals, taking place through flash drives and burned compact discs.

The deliberations over the status of this music reflect a generational transition that creates a conflict over the norms of Palestinian cultural authenticity. A similar form of debate takes place in Jordan, where, especially at weddings, Palestinian residents of the Jordan Valley regularly practice the *dabkeh*, a dance widespread in the Near East, as well as the musical style that accompanies it. For a few years now, young dancers have been trying to introduce into the *dabkeh* some movements inspired by foreign dances. These styles are known as *rap*, *rap hadid* (iron rap), *break*, *al-harakat* (movements), *qazaz* (mirror), or more generally *al-jackson*. These steps and movements are borrowed from various different western dance icons, including Michael Jackson, and broadcast by many satellite television channels.¹⁹ These variations tend to offend people of an older generation who think that the innovators are undermining *dabkeh* authenticity by integrating exterior elements.

3. Urbanity and Urban Representations

Urban Features

The K5 album, entitled *Ahlan fik bil Mukhaysamat* (Welcome to the Camps) specifically addresses everyday life in the refugee camps. The cover photo of the self-produced album²⁰ represents an urban landscape at night typical of these camps (bare concrete blocks, small windows, cluttered roofs, narrow passages, and so on). In their self-produced clip,²¹ Ayn al-Hilweh rappers alternate some studio scenes with panoramic views of the camp. In parallel to a register of social and political criticism, the most prosaic aspects of life are described, including daily motifs derived from individual relationships, questions of studies and school, the role of non-governmental associations in the camps, migration, problems of health, *etc.* After showing various urban pictures and images, they introduce symbols associated with Palestinian music and culture, a reference to the emblematic group *Sabirin*, the use of traditional Arab musical instruments such as the *nay*, excerpts from poems, and literary references to such works as *Rijal fil-Shams* (*Men in the Sun*), the novel by Ghassan Kanafani. However, they

also include foreign references such as the use of a piece of music from the French film *Amélie*.

The narrative of the urban marginalization of the camp, which until recently has not been widespread in the mass media, finds in rap music a channel to denounce stigmatization and urban segregation. This convergence between cultural production and narrative emphasizes the urban aspect of this music and implicitly expresses the reality of the camp as a place in search of urban and social normalization. The rappers' language refers to an urban culture that is based in the camps and in the surrounding urban districts closely related to the camps, since many Palestinians also live there. The following extract combines references to resistance with an urban description of the camp and its daily life:

We saw the roofs of the camps
We saw them bowing down
Because my country's flags
Are fluttering over them
The largest cause takes shape
In the narrowest alleyway
Pigeons in the sky
A child calls out to them
Most people are deprived
And godforsaken
A man has a fight
With his wife,
Then he makes up with her
Mothers pray for their children
That they may have life
A young man studies
To satisfy his mother
An artist draws the map
Of his country and its land
A young woman and her lover
He hides her in the ruins
A young man turns the music
All the way up
And turns it off at prayer time
Young people lost and confused
If their country is insulted
They'll turn things upside down
An old woman gathers cats
And offers them a home
An old man tells his grandson
Stories of his country
He smiles at the memory
Then his eyes fill up with tears

Beautiful houses
Without colors to cover them
There is only one warm sun
And Palestine keeps it strong
Palestine keeps it strong
Welcome, brother, to the camps!²²

Rap is providing “local” identifications, and bands often insist on their urban affiliation. This form of music is anchored in territories in which the neighborhood represents a major source of identification for the modern youth of Arab cities, of which it has been said that they constitute the origin of “a kind of local nationality” (Algerian sociologist Kamel Rarrbo, as quoted by Miliani).²³ One among many expressions of the phenomenon of “subjectivization” and generational recognition, the ascendancy of rap among a category of Arab youth is arising from the possibilities of identification it provides on different levels, one such level being their everyday territories. By multiplying references to local issues (dedications to certain places and individuals) in an international musical form, rap music provides a way of reinterpreting localism. It also balances the national (the lost land relocalized through cultural production) and manifests a sense of belonging to cities, neighborhoods, and camps. It provides a way of thinking about the social space of the camp in terms of the universal figure of the ghetto. This phenomenon goes along with an ethic of territorial authenticity for the rapper who has to live in the society that he is defending in his music.

Matrix of Social Criticism

Young musicians use rap as a matrix of social criticism that tries to promote a vision of social reform. In the first instance, it stakes a specific position in the artistic field by depreciating show business and denouncing sentimental Arab songs as insipid. This criticism of Arab pop music is shared among many Lebanese young people, as demonstrated by the following excerpt from an interview conducted by Thomas Bukhalter with the rapper Omarz:

Arab youth is just so much into this commercial Arab bullshit music, it's just bullshit, rubbish, that makes the person just dumber and dumber the more he listens to it. And they want it, the fourth estate, that's the media. Just look at Western music... Since rock and roll and jazz, the music went through at least fifty evolutions. You've got happy hardcore now! And German techno! But Arab music is still caught up in that fucking bullshit 'I love you and you love me,' and

‘the wind is whispering your name’ and all that bullshit... If we had a new Umm Kulthum I would be the happiest man today. But you have singers like [expletive] Haifa Wehbe man, and George Wassouf.²⁴

But the main critique found in rap music concerns the governance of the camp, its internationalization, the clientelism existing in Palestinian non-governmental associations, and political and social institutions. Yasin from the group *I-Voces* in Burj al-Barajneh emphasizes this point, affirming that, in his view, rap is a form of political involvement. The following excerpt from Katibeh Khamseh highlights this point:

Even women have created associations of thieves
My sisters steal my money
Behind my back
I am calling for resistance
And the knife in my back
Is telling me to shut up
I am calling out for help
Tool warehouses
Summer activities
Foreign aid
Humanity’s demons run kindergartens
Forced to send your children, mother what can you say?
Palestine is the cause and youth is the aim
Crows on the shoulder, thousands of marathons
Money, aid, madness, nobody knows
Mike, John, Jeff, foreign attractions
Activities in front of their eyes, again, money is stolen
But Palestine is the cause, and everything is collected
So that our nation is bare, bare²⁵

The integration of Palestinian political and social issues into the music is taking place in a cultural domain that is imported and appropriated, providing young people in the camps and the surroundings with some patterns of identification (a musical form, gesture, style, clothes, and so on). It also provides them with an environment in which to practice their critical skills with respect to various cultural, social, and political issues. Meanwhile, the rap band represents an entity of socialization, subjectification, and self expression, which confers some meaning upon everyday activities and tries to attach a positive connotation and value to the refugee situation.

Rap is bringing out new voices denouncing the Palestinian situation in Lebanon, breaking the taboo of the Palestinian-Lebanese relationship in cultural production. The song *Filastini*

Mamnu^c (Palestinian Forbidden), mentioned above, suggests that alongside the difficulty of leading a normal life with a minimum of rights, there are impediments to individual self-revelation. Music provides an opportunity for doing so, a way to overcome stigmatization and essentialism, as well as a way to determine oneself. In this manner, doing rap, which cuts across moral and cultural boundaries and creates original self-identifications, corresponds to a withdrawal of the collective political and social affiliation built around unchanging and rigid symbols in order to bring out the complex alchemy of the self.

4. Chorus

Rap is an urban phenomenon, which is also characterized by the importance of language through the flow that refers to scansion and places. It constitutes part of what is dubbed “young music” (*jeunes musiques*), which is defined as “a specific expression of modernity... shedding light on a process revealing a non-stabilized situation, in movement, and recreating its existence permanently in accordance with many convergences.”²⁶ This pertains to many globalized musics whose meanings and performances are reinterpreted in different processes of friction with local issues. Palestinian rap in Lebanon is a determinate musical form that is evolving with its own characteristics and its specific style, in terms of clothing, gesture and some key points: beat, pulsation, flow, lyrics, loop, specific harmony and rhythm, free style (improvisation), and so on. The codes and vocal capacities (such as human beat boxing which is a human imitation of a rhythmic instrument) are integrated by rappers during an apprenticeship built up by observing clips and listening to music. Finally, this new language constitutes a new mode of expression concentrating on everyday life and familiar environments, especially camps. It is a language of denunciation as well as of bare description, not devoid of poetry. Rap speech is integrated in its urban element; it is the expression of a specific urbanity appearing in a new temporality. Time must be told in order to be interpreted: temporality requires the indirect speech of narration. This precept from Paul Ricoeur in *Temps et Récit*²⁷ finds a dramatic illustration in patrimonial activities held by Palestinians in Lebanon, whether or not they are sponsored by non-governmental associations and political organizations. One can understand the necessity of narrative not

only to preserve the memory of the traumatic collective experience of exile but also for the lost land, conjuring it up in many ways, direct or indirect. However, life is creeping in everywhere and the music is a form of expression that helps individuals to escape the role of keeper of identities and to redefine their identities according to current objectives. Rap music expresses the pulse of the moment. It is a contemporary narrative, neither nostalgic, nor romantic, nor purely nationalist. It is an emanation of an urban youth asserting itself, here and now, for many historical and particularly current reasons, as angry.

Discography:

Ahlan fik bil-Mukhayyat, Katibeh Khamseh, Incognito, 2008.

Hawiyyeh Zarqa, self-produced musical clip, rappers from ‘Ayn al-Hilweh, 2006.

Min Irhabi, DAM, 2001.

I-Voice, musical extracts, 2008, <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendID=151543245>.

Hawajiz, ‘Abdullah Wahbeh, 2007, <http://ya-ashrafe-nnas.blogspot.com/2007/08/what-journalism-cannot-see.html#links>.

Notes

1. *Ahlan fik bil-Mukhayyat* is the title of a song and an album by the rap band Katibeh Khamseh (K5). A version of this article appeared in French in Nicolas Puig and Franck Mermier eds., *Itinéraires Esthétiques et Scènes Culturelles au Proche-Orient*, Beyrouth: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2007.

2. Hadj Miliani, *Sociétaires de l'Émotion, Etudes sur les Musiques et les Chants d'Algérie d'Hier et d'Aujourd'hui*, Oran: Éditions Dar el Gharb, 2005, p.75.

3. This is a quotation from the K5 song, *Ahlan fik bil-mukhayyat*: “khilsat al-aghani al-wataniyyeh, khalas diqqu al-beat.”

4. Joseph Massad, “Liberating Songs: Palestine Put to Music,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* vol. 32 no. 3 (2003), pp.21-38, at p.31.

5. Ibid.

6. This patriotic style of music is different from an important current of political songs by singers and divas (Umm Kulthum, Fayruz, Muhammad Abdul-Wahab, Marcel Khalifeh, Shaykh Imam, and others) which were prominent in the 1960s and 1970s.

7. ‘Abidu Basha, *Mawt Mudir Masrah: Dhakirat al-Ughniyah al-*

Siyasiyyah, Beirut: Dar al-Adab, 2005.

8. Massad, "Liberating Songs," p.34.

9. Even though in Arabic the "t" of *tarab* is emphatic.

10. Nicolas Puig, "Shi Filastini, Quelque Chose de Palestinien. Musiques et Musiciens Palestiniens au Liban: Territoires, Scénographies et Identités," in *Tumultes, Entre Résistance et Domination: Figures Libres ou Mouvements Imposés* 27 (2006), pp.109-135.

11. That said, a few musicians, such as Baha' Hassan, had begun the work of modernizing Palestinian songs to fit them to current times.

12. Forbidden Palestinian (Filastini Mamnu'), taken from *Hawiyyeh Zarqa, Ayn al-Héloué*, self-produced musical clip, 2006.

13. Katibeh Khamseh, *Ahlan fik bil-Mukhayyat*, 2008.

14. Katibeh Khamseh, *Jam'iyyat*, 2008.

15. Hadj Miliani, *Sociétaires de l'Émotion*, p.76

16. Composed of five permanent musicians, three of whom live in the camp and the others live in the adjacent neighborhood of Harat Hurayk.

17. According to Thomas Bukhalter: "These rappers, rock, death-metal, jazz, electro-acoustic musicians, free improvisers, Arabic singers, oud-, qanoun- and riqq-players choose local and global sounds, rhythms, forms and noise to express their connection to their surroundings and to the world. Within the context of Lebanon, these artists can be considered as "alternative" or "subcultural" in relation to the dominant "commercial" pan-Arab pop scene that is constantly reproduced by satellite TV stations." Thomas Bukhalter, "Mapping Out the Sound Memory of Beirut: A Survey of the Music of a War Generation," in *Itinéraires Esthétiques et Scènes Culturelles au Proche-Orient*, eds. Nicolas Puig and Franck Mermier, Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2007.

18. Excerpt from interview with the author, Shatila, July 2006. Recently, 'Amru confided to me that, some years before, he had saved some compact discs among which there were some records of Tupac Shakur, whom he did not know at the time. It was only later on that he discovered the American rapper.

19. MauroVan Aken, "La Mémoire et l'Oubli du Rituel, Marginalité et Dabkeh chez les Palestiniens en Zone Rurale de Jordanie," in Nadine Picaudou (ed.), *Territoires Palestiniens de Mémoire*, Paris: Karthala, Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2006, pp.313-339, p.330.

20. This album is now commercially sold at the music store CD-thèque in Beirut, with a new sound, a different cover, and few new songs.

21. K5 and singers from Sidon benefit from the support of a non-governmental association to realize these projects.

22. Katibeh Khamseh, *Ahlan fik bil-Mukhayyat*, 2008.

23. Hadj Miliani, *Sociétaires de l'Émotion*, p.89.

24. Thomas Bukhalter, "Mapping Out the Sound Memory," p.110

25. Katibeh Khamseh, *Jam'iyyat*, 2008.