POLLY WITHERS
LSE Middle East Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science

Digital feminisms in Palestinian hip hop

ABSTRACT

*Hip hop is central to the Palestinian 'alternative' (*badila*) music scene. Recently, some rappers in the scene started making feminist tracks and sharing them using video-sharing and social media platforms. In this article, I analyse artists' music videos as well as interviews with musicians to examine what happens when hip hop gets feminist and goes online in the Palestinian context. My argument is twofold. First, I suggest that rappers circulate songs and videos on social media that transgress gender and sexuality norms. Second, however, while these productions do critical identity work in Palestine, they also often iterate liberal 'solutions' to structural asymmetries. I therefore conclude that Palestinian hip hop mediates contradictory feminisms as it travels online. Neither dystopic nor utopian, digital culture makes room for gendered critiques that coexist and compete with depoliticized ideas about liberal personhood and individual agency.*

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, a small but notable number of young, feminist-identifying rappers have assumed prominent roles in Palestine's hip hop scene. Increasingly, they use their songs and digital productions to critique gendered hierarchies and expectations in Palestinian society. Tracks and videos tackle a range of issues, including sexual harassment, hegemonic body norms and restrictive ideas about sexuality and desire. Because there is no formal music industry in Palestine, these young artists are highly reliant on social media

networks such as Twitter, YouTube and Instagram to share content and connect with fans around the globe. Capitalizing on the relational affordances (cf. Willems 2021) that these platforms offer, musicians post videos, circulate lyrics and use hashtags to forge feminist solidarities with proximate and distant others. Such media thus insert what hip hop studies scholars term hip hop feminisms (e.g. Rose 1994; Morgan 1999; Pough 2004; Durham et al. 2012) into online and offline Palestinian publics. The digital, in other words, is intrinsic to the production, circulation and consumption of popular music in the Palestinian context.

However, despite the ascendence of feminist concerns in Palestinian hip hop, commentators on the genre have largely overlooked how music produces and is produced by feminisms and femininities in the Arab world. Instead, researchers overwhelmingly approach hip hop as sites through which Palestinians resist Israeli domination. Clearly, it would be a mistake to suggest that rappers in Palestine do not use music to document Israeli colonial oppressions. As many have noted (e.g. Maria and Shihade 2012; Eqeiq 2010; Maria 2013; McDonald 2013), musicians have mobilized the spoken word to challenge Israel's racializing hegemony since the art form's localization in the late 1990s. Nonetheless, it is equally important to note that, today, some artists, both female and male, also examine their gendered subjectivities alongside their racialized positionalities through popular culture. Furthermore, although a small subset of current research problematizes how rappers negotiate masculinity through music (McDonald 2010, 2020), feminist contributions to digital hip hop in Palestine remain undertheorized. We therefore know much about the men who occupy prominent positions in Palestine's rap-based subcultures, but much less about the female, feminist and/or queer-identifying artists, DJs and fans who also shape this scene.

My contribution in this article is oriented around these silences. Given young artists' widespread use of digital technologies for producing and circulating their work, I am interested in unpacking what happens to Palestinian feminisms when they go online through hip hop. Thus, using the case study of feminist-identifying rap in Palestine, I ask how the internet matters, and why the feminism matters, for the messages that musicians circulate through their songs and music videos.

Overall, I argue that rappers' virtual productions construct and speak through different digital feminisms as they travel online. On the one hand, hip hop artists create intersectional feminist critiques of racialized, gendered and capitalist status quos through hip hop mediums. Crucially, such interventions perform critical political work on white and heteropatriarchal hierarchies when read from their Palestinian localities. On the other hand, however, paying attention to the feminist messages that achieve greatest visibility on the global platforms that distribute the work reveals that liberal feminist sensibilities often swamp these more radical politics. Foregrounding such concerns as gender equality and individual choice-making, such feminisms risk absorption into commodified frames that prohibit critique of structural injustice. When feminism goes online through hip hop, I thus suggest, it is threatened with co-optation to what media theorist Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) terms 'popular' feminism, that is, a consumer-facing 'feminism-lite' focused on spectacular displays of individual women's 'empowerment'. I conclude that the internet represents a contradictory space for Arab hip hop feminisms in the case of Palestine. Paying attention to distinctly digital hip hop cultures is therefore important because it allows us to trace the *multiple* feminisms that circulate

and compete for domination via popular culture (cf. Hall 1998) in Palestine and beyond.

I develop this argument through a series of interlinked stages. First, I outline what I mean by digital feminisms. Here, I combine research from feminist hip hop studies and feminist media studies to establish the potentials and pitfalls of feminist formations in online spaces. Second, I situate the methodological frameworks that underpin the study. Third, I introduce hip hop in Palestine, paying particular attention to its digital production. I emphasize that social media platforms are Janus-faced: they afford Palestinian hip hop artists connective possibilities while further renewing opportunities for Israeli (and other) containments. Fourth, I combine thematic audio-visual analysis of three music videos with data from five qualitative interviews with female rappers and fans to identity three themes that emerge through hip hop on the internet: local/global mixing, liberal agency and popular feminism and body positivity. And, finally, I make the dual case that, first, the digital feminist literature would benefit from more research into the ways that popular music shapes and is shaped by feminisms online and, second, that hip hop studies could expand its narrow US/UK focus by problematizing how feminists make and mobilize digital culture in Palestine and the wider Arab world. Piecing these threads together, then, my overarching contribution to hip hop feminist media studies is that music and popular culture are important – yet often contested and undertheorized – arenas for the formulation, circulation and negotiation of digital feminisms in Palestinian and Arab contexts.

HIP HOP FEMINISM MEETS DIGITAL CULTURE

Since hip hop studies' inception, hip hop feminists have produced fascinating scholarship that identifies and unpacks the nuanced ways that women and girls use music, dance and fashion to challenge white supremacist capitalist patriarchy (e.g. Rose 1994; Morgan 1999; Pough 2004; Lindsey 2014; Durham et al. 2013). Such infamous concepts as Morgan's (1999) hip hop feminism and Pough's (2004) 'bringing wreck' remain highly generative tools for theorizing how Black and Brown women challenge their exclusions from Habermas' patriarchal, classed, heteronormative and racializing public sphere. Without doubt, this rich body of work has done much to aid intersectional feminist analysis of hip hop cultures. Nonetheless, the fact that many of these earlier texts are located in the (loosely defined) 'pre-digital' era means that their writers (understandably) focus on offline practices. It is today therefore necessary to interrogate how technological shifts in global media and communications might (re)shape the feminist politics, solidarities and identities that may also emerge when feminism goes online through music.

Some contemporary Black feminist scholars have taken up such questions in their work on hip hop, technology, race and gender. In her recently published book on digital Black feminism, for instance, Catherine Knight Steele (2021: 9–10) links feminist media studies literature on digital feminisms with earlier research on hip hop feminism. In definitional terms, hip hop feminism describes women and girls who make and mobilize hip hop for variously defined feminist purposes, while digital feminism more broadly maps women and girls' utilizations of communication technologies for the same purposes. The former thus traces convergences between hip hop and feminist praxis, while the latter points to the ways that women use digital culture to push back on their marginalizations in online and offline spaces.

In her book, Steele argues that Black digital feminism *is* hip hop feminism. She frames each as immanently connected yet historically grounded iterations of Black feminist thought. Paying particular attention to Morgan's (1999) conceptualization of hip hop as feminist 'grey space' – that is, a space with room for contradictions – Steele presents the digital on similarly multifaceted terms. For Steele, digital culture is a contrary arena in which Black feminists struggle against white supremacist capitalist patriarchy amidst competing interests, much like the earlier hip hop feminists. As she explains, in this virtual 'grey' space, participants 'work to reconcile economic and sexual freedom for themselves with community interests that might conflict with their individual needs' (Steele 2021: 10). This understanding of technoculture is thus helpful as it allows us to approach creative feminist activism (either in hip hop or digital formations) as complex and heterogenous rather than coherent or homogenous.

Relatedly, Kyesha Jennings (2020) also uses earlier hip hop feminist theory to unravel how women and girls use digital culture to challenge gendered hierarchies online. Jennings suggests that Black female rappers and their fans constitute 'a digital hip hop feminist sensibility (DHHFS)' (2020: 47) through platformed media. This DHHFS, she continues, allows women to cultivate discontent with dominant gender relations through hip hop. Using a series of empirical examples, she theorizes that hip hop artists create and circulate identities on social media to navigate normative ideas about Black female sexuality. Thus, although Jennings' piece is largely celebratory, like Steele's work it nonetheless opens entrances for thinking about the ways that sonic cultures allow women to challenge white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in their everyday digital contexts. Taken together, then, studies such as these point to important and exciting new directions in hip hop–inflected understandings of contemporary digital feminisms.

However, despite these significant emergent works, internet technologies – and in particular their potentials and pitfalls for feminist struggle – remain relatively undertheorized in hip hop studies writ large. Moreover, in the literature that does deal with digital hip hop feminisms, such as that above, the focus is overwhelmingly on the North American context. Echoing the hip hop feminist theory that came before it, then, contemporary scholarship predominantly charts Black women's experiences of feminist music media in the United States. Given the African American roots of the genre, this bias makes sense. However, it is today banal to highlight that transnational networks of exchange and consumption mean that hip hop is no longer concentrated within a singular community or locality. This otherwise influential literature is thus arguably less productive for problematizing how hip hoppers make and use digital hip hop for virtual feminist purposes in the Global South. Most pressingly for this article is the fact that Arab and Palestinian cases remain marginalized from the conversation. And, as highlighted in the introduction to this piece, even when Palestinian examples are theorized, women, gender and feminisms are subordinated to spectacular, and often masculine, resistance metanarratives (see El-Zein 2017; Withers 2021).

Outside of hip hop studies, digital feminism represents a rapidly growing field of enquiry in feminist media theory. However, whereas popular music scholarship is less forthcoming about feminist movements' usage of internet technologies, gender-oriented communication research pays scant attention to hip hop and popular culture. When music does feature, it is usually through the hyperbolic prisms of individual celebrities such as MIA, Beyoncé or Lady

Gaga. While, of course, informative, these lines of flight make it difficult to uncover the meanings that hip hop media might also assume for 'ordinary' women and girls in their everyday digital lives. Given the established importance of popular culture for the production and mediation of feminism, race, class and gender, this absence is surprising.

Instead, the mushrooming communications work on technologically mediated feminisms largely centralizes how hashtag campaigns (Baer 2016; Mendes et al. 2019; Jackson et al. 2020; Sobande 2020; Dosekun 2022) and/or online blogs (Echchaibi 2013) substantiate digital feminist struggles in the Global North. Scholars advance a variety of perspectives on this subject matter. For some, hashtag campaigns represent new repertoires of feminist intervention (Baer 2016), while others are concerned to trace their potentials and limitations (De Benedictis et al. 2019), including problematizing which actors can and cannot be part of such networks (Jackson and Banaszyzyk 2016). Often, this work employs Nancy Fraser's research to frame hashtags and/or blogs as networked events (Jackson and Banaszczyk 2016) that generate feminist counterpublics. In such alternate publics, as Simidele Dosekun (2022: 5) highlights in her research on gendered hashtagging in Nigeria, different women come together to use digital media technologies to share their typically silenced and suppressed knowledges. Counterpublics are thus heterogenous and outward-looking spaces in which feminists publicize and push back on their variously situated gendered subordinations through communicative affordances. This literature is useful because, while largely silent on women and girls in the Arab world, it nonetheless helps us foreground the digital nature of technologically mediated feminist activism in a way that the existing hip hop canon does not.

In this article, I argue that combining these two schools of thought is productive. Whereas hip hop feminism tells us much about how music constitutes contrary sites of feminist struggle, feminist media studies allows us to foreground the digital contours of such practices. My aim with this piece is thus to intervene in the hip hop studies literature through the feminist media studies concept of digital feminism. If, as the research indicates, communication technologies can constitute hip hop feminisms, I want to trouble *which* feminisms and *what sort* of feminist subjects attain mediated visibility in Palestine's internet-based hip hop ecologies. Critically, then, because Palestinian women and girls are often marginalized in popular music and feminist media studies, the article makes a further contribution to the field by theorizing how digital culture and hip hop mediate gender politics in the Arab world. Joining a small subset of research on women's digital music praxis (Gokberg 2021) and 'new' media activism in the Middle East (Al-Rawi 2020), this article further adds to burgeoning conversations about virtual feminisms in the Global South (Dosekun 2022).

METHODS

This study stems from a longer, mixed-methods ethnography on the gender politics of 'alternative' music in Occupied Palestine. Between 2012 and 2018 (2012, 2014, 2015, 2017–18) I spent 26 months exploring how popular culture features in young people's lives across the geographically distinct but culturally connected cities of Haifa, Ramallah and Jerusalem in Palestine, and Amman (Jordan) and London (United Kingdom) in the diaspora. During fieldwork, I thematically analysed the audio-visual elements of around 50 electro, trance,

hip hop, trap, punk and reggae songs. I also acted as a participant observer in over 200 parties, bars, raves and concerts that scene members frequent. And I further conducted more than 100 qualitative, semi-structured interviews with musicians, DJs, rappers, promoters, fans and audience members. These interviews lasted between one and three hours, were recorded on a dictaphone (when permission was granted) and subsequently encrypted and securely stored. Full ethical permission was obtained prior to each interview; all quotes are printed with informed consent and all names are pseudonymized. This therefore means that I do not attribute direct quotes to any artists I interviewed, although I do use musicians' performing names when discussing the work they have published. I understand that this may make it difficult for the reader to 'match' the content of a song with quoted interview material. However, given the violence of Israeli settler colonialism, the safety of my participants remains paramount.

In this article, I focus only on material from feminist-leaning hip hop and rap. My analysis combines two sources of data. First, I use material from a thematic analysis of three hip hop tracks ('Why are you harassing her' by Safaa Hathout, and 'Your body of theirs' and 'When will you get married' by DAM) to critically consider the gendered concerns that rappers express musically. I selected these songs on the grounds that all three critique normative gender relations and/or ideas about sexuality in local and global contexts. Second, and in order to situate such songs in the contexts of those who actually make them, I mobilize interviews with five female rappers to examine the meanings that artists attach to their practices. Conceptually, then, my arguments are based on an intersectional feminist framework (Crenshaw 1989), which I use to critically interrogate the different feminisms that circulate in and through hip hop on the internet in Palestine.

HIP HOP, THE INTERNET AND DIGITAL MUSIC PRODUCTION UNDER OCCUPATION: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In Palestine, hip hop is not a standalone genre. It forms part of what affiliated young adults call the 'alternative' (*badila*) music scene. Forged over the past two decades by a growing community of urban and secular youth, this scene defies rigid categorization. Those connected to it fuse local vernacular traditions with global sounds and styles to produce translocal and transhistorical idioms. Musicians rework hip hop, trip hop, trap, reggae, techno and electronica through Arab beats, melodies, instrumentation and poetry. Hyperlocal, city-centred slang is the lingua franca, and most artists perform in highly specific regional dialects. It would therefore be a mistake to frame hip hop in Palestine as a purely 'new', 'non-local' or 'global' musical practice. As other commentators on Palestinian rap have noted (Eqeiq 2010; Maria and Shihade 2012), hip hop revises older lyrical repertoires through contemporary transnational idioms.

Nonetheless, while sustaining historic continuities with the past, hip hop clearly signifies new directions in Palestinian cultural production. The art form exploded into underground enclaves in the late 1990s, following the (failed) 1993 Oslo Accords and so-called Israel–Palestine peace process. After the agreements (1994–2000), Palestinian society in the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel significantly opened to global media (music, fashion, film, literature), communication technologies (the internet, satellite TV, mobile phones) and consumption practices (internet cafes, shopping malls,

international restaurants, cinemas, bars) (McDonald 2006; Taraki 2008). Such cultural, communicative and consumer shifts had two specific ramifications for Palestinian hip hop. First, satellite television and the internet connected previously isolated rappers-in-waiting to hip hop aesthetics, communities and production software from the wider world. Second, in Palestinian cities like Ramallah, Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Haifa, commercial venues for concerts proliferated, making habitual hip hop gatherings more possible for middle-class patrons (Withers 2021). These transformations augmented translocal opportunities for hip hop scene building for those with the material, discursive and imaginative capitals required for access. Suturing the past to the present, the genre is thus also tied to the advent of global media and communications and the arrival of neo-liberal capitalism in Palestine.

It is therefore important to underscore that the advent of hip hop in Occupied Palestine is intimately linked to the introduction of information and communication (ICT) technologies after Oslo. In several ways, digital technologies provide musicians with opportunities in the Palestinian context. Since 2007, when video-sharing platforms became more accessible (Aouragh 2011), YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and so on successively allowed cultural products, ideas and idioms to move across boundaries that bodies cannot. This is significant because, today, the Israeli state confines Palestinians to four main, non-contiguous geographies: as stateless non-citizens, of whom many are refugees, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank or Gaza (oPt); as third-class, sometimes internally displaced, Palestinians in current-day Israel (who make up around 20–25 per cent of the Israeli polity); as Jerusalemite Palestinians, with precarious, Israeli-issued identity documents, in Israeli-annexed East Jerusalem; or among the *c.* 8 million refugees in the diaspora, whose legal status depends on their host state's policies. In this context, the internet provides those with access the means to connect with people and places in parts of Israel, Palestine and the wider Levant that the settler state marks off-bounds (Aouragh 2011). Perhaps unsurprisingly, then, Palestine's internet penetration levels are regionally high. In the oPt, almost three-quarters of the population are online (ITU 2021).

Given such spatial fragmentation and protracted immobility, new media affords hip hop artists specific musical openings. First, because Israel differently restricts Palestinian mobilities (Tawil-Souri 2011), performance opportunities are inconsistently available to differently located musicians. Those in the West Bank and Gaza, for instance, are prohibited from accessing shows in Israel without difficult-to-obtain Israeli permits. Conversely, because of their Israeli passports, Palestinians in Israel cannot easily travel in the wider Middle East and North African region. Syria and Lebanon, countries with large Palestinian refugee populations, are entirely out of bounds. Digital tools thus offer prospects for collaborating with artists in hard-to-visit geographies. In this optimistic sense, web technologies generate musical proximities with physically distant others.

Second, digital media also enables rappers to connect and communicate with local, regional and global audiences. Music videos – whether bedroom productions or professionally developed – are especially popular tools through which artists from Palestine share their work with fans, chiefly via social media. Third, and relatedly, platforms like Facebook and YouTube further make music visible to potential promoters, record labels or event bookers. Given that, as I noted above, there is no formal music industry in Palestine, social media

opens additional potentials to earn money, travel aboard or even become famous through one's craft. In Israeli-dominated Palestine, the internet is thus an important medium for hip hop artists on geographic, social, economic and aspirational grounds.

However, it is important to avoid romanticizing new media in Palestine or elsewhere. Cyber technologies do not – *cannot* – form neutral spaces beyond the realities of place and (capitalist, racist or patriarchal) power (cf. Terranova 2000; Mejias 2010; Fuchs 2014; Banet-Weiser 2018; Noble 2018; Sobande 2020). As Miriyam Aouragh (2011, 2018) argues, offline geopolitics directly shape the policies and infrastructures of online media in Israel/Palestine. In fact, the post-Oslo explosion of global media and communications further entrenched Israeli controls over daily Palestinian life in Israel and the oPt (Aouragh 2011: 39–74). Historically, Israel has never permitted the development of an independent Palestinian ICT sector. Today, Israeli companies dominate West Bank and Gazan telecommunications, and the Israeli state extends underdeveloped digital infrastructures to the Palestinian areas of Israel (Nashif 2021). Palestinian fibre and telecommunications lines are effectively sutured to Israel's ICT systems.

As media specialists in Palestine highlight, Israel uses this infrastructural imbalance to transform contemporary social media into sites of surveillance. Nashif (2017) and Nazzal (2020) detail how Israeli cybersecurity forces collaborate with platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter to disproportionately monitor, censor and remove Palestinian productions online, especially activists documenting Israeli violations of Palestinian rights and/or satirists using creativity or humour to challenge social norms (cf. Iskander 2019). Importantly, such controls are highly gendered. Israeli military forces habitually target queer, trans or gender-nonconformist Palestinians on the grounds that their intimate data might yield potential blackmail material (Nashif 2017: 2). As in other contexts, then, users who challenge gender or sexuality norms online must have sufficient access to material, economic or social supports in the community to contain such threats (cf. Stokes 2007).

It is not only the Israeli state or digital corporations that practise cybersurveillance. The male-dominated Palestinian Authority (PA), which governs specific areas of the West Bank, also use social media to repress growing internal dissent against their unelected rule. In 2017, for instance, the PA ratified a cybercrime law to supress the freedom of expression online. Since this legislation, Israeli and PA security forces have together arrested over 800 Palestinians for social media posts (Nashif 2017: 3). Palestine's digital media ecology is therefore deeply contradictory, which means that the relationship between hip hop and the internet is especially fraught. On the one hand, digital culture equips musicians with means to build hip hop communities, connect with fans, release songs, albums and music videos, and earn fame or a living through the internet. On the other hand, using web technologies opens Palestinians up to invasive and multi-layered oppressions. The internet in Palestine, in other words, is Janus-faced. Being visible in digitally mediated Palestinian spaces is thus also to be under renewed male, colonial and corporate surveillance (cf. Hong 2006; Megarry 2018). Neither dystopic nor utopian, digital cultures are instead product and producer of geopolitical, patriarchal, capitalist, racist and heteronormative logics as well as tools through which people might navigate such controls.

FINDINGS: MULTIPLE FEMINISMS IN DIGITAL HIP HOP
Global markers, local feminisms

The first themes emerging from my data address the ways that female rappers adapt global hip hop codes to comment on local patriarchies through digital media. A particularly salient example of this is Akka-based Palestinian rapper Safaa Hathout's 2019 single and YouTube music video 'bitharash fiha le' ('Why are you harassing her?'). Reiterating many of the concerns publicized in the #MeToo hashtag movement, which, as above, the feminist media studies literature frames as a globally networked feminist event, the song powerfully challenges the sexual harassment of women and girls in an Arab context. The lyrics fiercely challenge the male gaze, push back on patriarchal regulations of women's bodies and reject misogynistic perceptions of female sexuality, dress and general comportment. In the chorus, for example, Safaa angrily reiterates: 'bitharash fiha le, ashanha labsha mini?' ('Why are you harassing her, because she's wearing a mini skirt?'). Here, then, she mobilizes the intertwined signifiers of a globally hyperfeminized clothing style and the Arab female body to demand women's greater corporeal autonomy in male-dominated, public Palestinian spaces.

The video that Safaa produced to promote her single foregrounds this feminist rebuke. The scene opens with a young woman walking down a street. She is wearing a short black dress. An athletic-looking man observes her from a distance who, when she walks past him, reaches out to grab her wrist. The drums are heavy, the bass strong – this is a quintessential trap beat. Safaa and two female friends roll into focus, driving a black Audi and wearing markers typical of globalized hip hop femininity: denim hotpants, oversized V-necked sports shirts, large jewellery, luminous makeup and fluorescently coloured, uncovered hair (Safaa's is electric blue). All three women are young, slim and conventionally attractive. The filtered drums rattle, followed by a woman's ululation, and Safaa stops the car. The women leap out. Accosting the offending man, they bundle him into their vehicle, gag his mouth and bind his hands and drive him away to an empty workshop. The women chain the man to a chair, and the rest of the video depicts the three of them looming ominously over his body, threatening him with metal batons, hammers and iron wrenches. Safaa spits angry verses about men's double standards in society. Eventually, the man – visibly frightened, vulnerable and weak – escapes the three women and crawls off into the night, chased by a dog.

Coupled with the lyrics, the aesthetic performances in this digital text invert scripts in which men physically and psychologically dominate women. Suturing femininity to stereotypically male symbols – the car, the industrial tools, the dominant posturing – the track signals female agency premised on women's collective anger. The piece thus highlights how Palestinian women and girls might harness transnational hip hop signifiers to galvanize local feminist politics through digital media.

Such concerns often surfaced in my interviews with female rappers. In our discussion, for instance, Amal explained the obstacles she faces when trying to destabilize gendered subjectivity and patriarchal power *alongside* racialized Israeli controls. Amal is a practising Muslim. When we met, she was in her mid-twenties and lived at home with her parents in a Palestinian city in the north of Israel, where she also works as a personal trainer. She said:

My [hip hop] message is my struggle as a Palestinian woman in our community, and as a Palestinian living in Israel. Because I'm a woman, and I feel it. I feel it every day. And as I get older, I feel it more […] I think other rappers, the guys, expect me to talk about being a Palestinian first, more than […] about being a woman. Of course, guys don't like it when I talk about my rights, right? Because they are the one to blame […] Like it's 'Arab woman should be *blah blah blah'*, so they don't like when I talk about [gendered power], but I don't care. It's my rights. I want to talk about […] being an Arab woman […] and how I see them [men] using us, and also the way they look at us, and putting the blame on us, for *everything* [i.e. sexual violence] So, they should stop, and others should stop too. And I will continue talking about it. I know it won't stop, but it hurts – it really hurts.

(7 July 2014)

For Amal, hip hop is a space for critiquing how gendered and racialized structures intersect to negatively shape women's positions in Palestine's rap subcultures as well as society more broadly (cf. Durham et al. 2013). Her comments hone in on how female musicians might remix global hip hop signs to respond to local exclusions and national stereotypes that downgrade feminist concerns in favour of resistance politics. Arguing that male rappers expect women to focus on 'being a Palestinian […] more than […] being a woman', she highlights Arab women's interconnected struggles to confront both gendered and racialized power through music. In other words, she emphasizes gender and liberal (rights-based) feminist politics in equal weight with national interests. In this sense, the 'global' in Palestinian hip hop functions as a malleable tool with which women and girls can launch local discussions about patriarchy in Palestine alongside Israeli settler colonial racism. Her words thus allow us to see how transnationally circulating forms travel to, and are hybridized in, local contexts for situated hip hop feminist purposes (cf. Kraidy 2005; Ong 2011).

Others echoed Amal's understanding of hip hop as a global repertoire for liberal feminist meaning-making in local contexts. For Nesrine, who is also based in an urban Palestinian city in the north of Israel, social media is a space where she can negotiate gendered social controls through hip hop. Nesrine also identifies as Muslim and was in her late twenties when we met. Telling me about the lo-fi rap videos she often shares on digital platforms, she informed me about the backlash her digital embodiments sometimes generate for certain sectors of society. She said:

People always make comments on Facebook about how I look in my videos, [but] my rap, my lyrics, have nothing to do with how I look, they're about politics [… yet] instead of people saying the lyrics are good or bad […] they're talking about how I'm dressing. A woman she – not the guys, it was a woman – she was writing like 'it's a nice song but if she could wear something more to cover her body' […] And there were a lot of guys who were talking about the way I act with my hands – I do the American style thing – but it's body language […] It's a style – I'm performing! I get so angry! This woman who told me I should wear more, I couldn't help myself. I was laughing but then […] I wanted to tell her I can't wear more things, you know? People always look at this stuff. If you wear too much, or not enough.

(19 April 2018)

In this statement, Nesrine comments on the double standards to which she feels male and female rappers are subject in the community. Like Amal, she drills down into the gendered stereotypes that differently shape everyday attitudes to women in hip hop. Interestingly, her comments allude to the notion that her virtual iterations of 'American' or 'western' markers mediate competing visions of the gendered social order. Several researchers have drawn similar conclusions about the meanings hip hop accumulates in Palestine. In an early essay on rap's Palestinian genesis, for example, Sunaina Maira and Magid Shihade (2012) show how popular music sometimes catalyses charged questions about cultural authenticity, national identity and collective resistance in the face of ongoing Israeli settler colonialism and US/UK imperialism. Their article particularly emphasizes that, because Oslo ushered in such significant social, political, economic and technological changes in Palestine, the cultural and consumer forms that emerged afterwards became suspect in some societal sectors. Like Nesrine, these authors conclude that the presence of seemingly 'outside' (and more specifically 'American') cultural modalities, such as rap music, activate polemic debates over nationalism/globalization and tradition/modernity (Maria and Shihade 2012: 2).

Furthermore, and as Nesrine picks up on, gender relations, sexuality and young people are often key flashpoints through which such anxieties materialize (cf. Bayat 2009; Kraidy 2010). Nesrine's words thus allow us to see how competing voices in society mobilize the female body to express shifting ideas about modernity and neo-liberal globalization. For this young woman, access to global hip hop allows her to signify discontent with established gender norms (cf. Isoke 2013). Yet, for other presumably (although here unmarked) older and/or more conservative actors in society, this manifestation of such 'outside' cultural symbols in colonized Palestine represents the loss of cultural 'purity' and the 'triumph' of imperial domination. Here, then, we can see how popular culture gets caught between binary discourses about identity and belonging, with gender serving as a pivot (see also Pratt 2020: 4–12).

Taken together, these various points highlight that the 'global' in Palestinian hip hop is a deeply localized tool. Young women such as Amal and Nesrine, as well as Safaa in her song, adapt the genre's idioms to respond to the gendered national politics that structure their quotidian contexts. By circulating and sharing their work on social media, female rappers construct intersectional digital feminisms that advance different views of Palestinian women's identities, where they are further subject to mediated scrutiny and backlash.

BODIES GENDERED FEMALE: BETWEEN INTERSECTIONAL RUPTURE AND LIBERAL 'BODY POSITIVE' REPAIR

The second theme to emerge from my analysis focuses on the different mediatory lenses that frame women's bodies through digital hip hop. In this section, I will focus on the ways in which decolonial and liberal 'body positive' feminisms circulate and compete for recognition within DAM's song 'jasadikhom' ('Your body of theirs'). The band released the track via social media on International Women's Day (8 March) in 2019. It is a co-written piece, although Maysa Daw (the group's sole female member) is the only artist to rap in the production. Through powerful spoken word verses set against a stripped back, percussive beat, her words call for enhancing women's bodily autonomy and self-esteem in a context heavily shaped by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. Rejecting the male gaze, she rages against *san'a thukuri*

(masculine-made) definitions of female beauty. Narrating the restrictive beauty norms that constitute hegemonic femininity, she seethes:

> 90 chest, 60 waist, 90 hips, 175 height on 50 weight
> These are the measurements of your body
> It should be called your body of theirs
> 'Your' belongs to you, but your body belongs to them
> A free soul in an unfree body
> […]
> How many eyes are on my body?
> How many faces does my body have?
> My body is feminine, my body is Arab, my Arab feminine body
> How many pronouns does my body have?
> There's I and there's you, there's us and there's them
> Them against us and you against I, all against I and I against all.

This verse occurs early on into the track. Here, Maysa's words conjure a potent sense of objectification. They speak to the multifaceted frames that feed normative constructions of the female body in Palestine (and beyond). The lines 'How many eyes are on my body?', 'How many faces does my body have?' and 'How many pronouns does my body have?' are especially evocative. They underscore how white supremacist capitalist patriarchy shapes shifting ideas about Arab femininity. First, Maysa's recitation of her body's measurements (90, 60, 90, 175, 50) trace global hegemonic beauty standards. Here, she invokes the gendered pressures around weight and appearance that are endemic to capitalism's beauty industrial complex. Second, and recalling Chandra Mohanty's (1984) infamous essay 'Under western eyes', her lyrics reference how imperial feminists mobilize Arab women's bodies for (settler) colonial ends. She speaks now to racialized rescue narratives that position Global South women as either oppressed victims of 'traditional culture' or terrorists to be annihilated. Third, and finally, Maysa drills down into local patriarchies in Palestine. Because Israeli settler colonialism is gendered (Alqaisiya 2018), patriarchal national forces often marshal regulatory gender codes in their resistance scripts (Hammami 1990). Like other anti-colonial nationalisms (and nationalisms in general), classic national discourse in Palestine privileges masculine heroism and prioritizes women's roles as wives and heterosexual mothers who birth and raise the nation's sons (Kanaaneh 2002). In this final sense, then, 'jasadikhom' considers how social hierarchies in Palestine discipline women's sexualities. In this first half of this song, then, Maysa establishes an intersectional and distinctly Arab hip hop feminism through this social media music video. Her actions closely resemble the feminist praxis on which earlier hip hop feminists focused.

In the second half of the song, however, her focus changes. Here, Maysa charts her (real or fictitious) journey away from body hatred and back to redemptive self-love. With rising anger, she raps:

> It took me time to learn how to be in love with my body
> […]
> Standing in front of the mirror, I took off my social glasses because they are masculine-made
> I want to see my imperfections through my own eyes
> Don't stare, these breasts are mine, don't touch, these hips are mine

Hold your comments, this armpit hair is only mine
Control your facial expressions, these few extra kilos are mine
The cellulite is mine, these stretch marks and marks from giving birth
are only mine
The grey hair, warts, freckles, thighs, the pimples, all these are mine.

Moving from intersectional critique of the ways that gender, race and class intersect in the beauty industrial complex, what we have here is instead a liberal politics of individual affirmation. Now, Maysa uses body-positive discourse to promote personal resilience and self-acceptance despite structural pressures. Her words shift between recognizing that women's individual self-esteem suffers under patriarchy and locating the responsibility for change in women alone. If women could only love their bodies (if they could take off their 'masculine-made glasses'), the song seems to conclude, they would apparently feel better. Such therapeutic self-help talk thus absolves the systems that encourage women to hate their bodies. Instead, Maysa's anger is redirected at herself for failing to recognize that beauty norms are made up by white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. We can therefore identify and unpack multiple feminisms in this hip hop text. On the one hand, proto-decolonial, intersectional gender politics underpin aspects of this song. On the other, popular feminist referents about empowerment, confidence and individual capacity circulate and compete for recognition.

LIBERAL AGENCY AND POPULAR FEMINISM

Liberal assumptions about agency also underpin other feminist-leaning tracks that have emerged in the Palestinian hip hop scene. DAM's 2019 track 'emta njawzak yamma?' ('When will you get married?') offers a solid entrance point into this topic. As a sonic and digital text, the track playfully interrogates generational expectations about (heterosexual) matrimony. Musically more electro-pop-rap than the group's usual hard-hitting Arabic rap, it combines bouncy *shami* (Levantine) wedding synths with a catchy chorus and hip hop lyricism. The lyrics contrast familial demands to wed with the notion that most people are unhappily married. Littered throughout is the omnipotent voice of a chastising parent, coupled with a youthful sense of unpreparedness for adult life. The hook, for instance, repeatedly invokes 'when will you get married?' and 'when will you find stability?', which are immediately contrasted with the idea of being broke ('And the bank keeps calling […] No mortgage, and still struggling') (DAM's translation).

DAM's official music video for the track further pokes fun at marriage norms. The camera shifts between two scenes: a wedding party and a car scrapheap, where the four band members are primarily located. One section is especially interesting. It showcases Maysa seated at a table wearing a white bridal gown. She is being prepared for what, given the dress, we can assume is her wedding ceremony. Several women, clad in *Handmaid's Tale*-esque red robes with heads cut out of the frame, attempt to hang jewellery from her small body. As the women fuss over Maysa, she wrenches her arms free, pulls off the lavish jewels and, adopting a masculine rap persona, snarls: 'balaqe shariki baed ma alaqe halie, wa halean bisahah al-eazubia, sabah al-zahriat al-markhia' ('I will find my partner after I find myself / And in the meantime, cheers to singledom and the chilled mornings'). This, then, is a song that enacts and mediates youthful desires to live a wilful life unburdened by other's projections.

Read from its Palestinian and Arab contexts, this digital document employs creativity and play to deconstruct authority. Through humour, it imagines a place where Arab youth set the rules (cf. Elsayed 2016; Elsayed and Zidani 2020; Zidani 2020). Mediating comedy through hip hop thus allows young Palestinians to insert gender-nonconformist discourses into society in a manner that might slip under the radar of the authoritarian eye, which is especially important given Palestine's heavily securitized media environment.

Emotions, however, are also boundary-drawing projects: they cultivate literacies that include and exclude (Zidani 2020). To understand the joke, the viewer must already ascribe to the view that marriage curtails individual freedoms. Put differently, reading matrimony as sites and sources of parody are available only to those who already have the various economic, educational and 'progressive' capitals to opt out such of such norms. As this hip hop text circulates through social media, it thus draws classed lines of inclusion and exclusion through humour. In this song, such borders are approximated on how far the observer supports modernist ideas of liberal personhood. While critiquing local gendered expectations in Palestine, such texts further reinforce familiar transnational gender scripts oriented around equality, individuality, autonomy and empowerment.

My point here is not to diminish the significance of these hip hop practices. Clearly, DAM perform critical and creative identity work through their gender-nonconformist performances in this song and others. I want instead to avoid stretching these music productions too far. In other words, what is less clear in the celebratory hip hop feminist literature is how music might empower *and* disempower differently situated women in Palestine (cf. Isoke 2013). And yet, by focusing on subjects who are autonomous and supposedly empowered to make choices about the future, the songs I have charted thus far include some (liberal) feminist subjects while excluding others. In this final sense, then, these hip hop performances enunciate what Global North media scholar Sarah Banet-Weiser (2018) titles 'popular' feminism, that is, a 'feminism-lite' narrated around individual confidence and capacity-building rather than structural transformation.

Here, it becomes crucial to underscore that these gendered debates take place through hip hop performances on profit-driven online media platforms. As is now widely established, digital technologies network users into global events, sociopolitical movements and political economic developments regardless of location. The increased visibility of feminist hip hop in the case of Palestine can therefore also be theorized as part of global #MeToo moments. As Banet-Weiser (2018) argues, #MeToo both popularized and commodified feminism in global mass-mediated culture. While #MeToo made feminism more visible across online and offline spheres, it further allowed capitalist corporations to marketize, and thus depoliticize, historic ideas about women's liberation. As such, Banet-Weiser shows, when feminism becomes 'popular' in socially and commercially mediated spaces, it shifts from a *politics* to an *economics* of visibility (2018: 21–31). In this marketized media ecology, feminist media producers, products and consumers fight for the most 'likes', retweets, followers or views. Here, then, it is the being seen, rather than the political project of cleaving out greater spheres of visibility, that *is* the feminism, *is* the politics.

Young rappers were often deftly aware of the instrumental and differentiated capitals their digital feminist personas are afforded in Banet-Weiser's gendered economy of visibility. Beesan, who when we met in June 2014 lived

in Jaffa and was just 20 years old, told me about the music opportunities she receives from 'abroad'. Beesan is middle-class, young, slim and conventionally attractive. She said:

> [Being a Palestinian woman] makes it sometimes harder for me to be a Palestinian musician, here in Palestine, and easier abroad […] being a *female* musician is one of the reasons that I have so many opportunities from abroad, because as stupid as it may sound, the media is like [adopting a sarcastic voice] 'Oh my god! Look she's not wearing a hijab, and she's performing with guys on stage!'

Here, she highlights how easily her body is absorbed into liberal-modernizing popular feminist discourse about gendered capacity in transnational contexts. As she states, the fact that she does not wear a hijab and performs 'alternative' music allows corporatized media to present her as the poster child for feminized liberal globalization (cf. Switzer 2013). Put differently, Beesan's words recall Anita Harris' (2003) work on the 'can-do' versus 'at-risk' girl. In Banet-Weiser's (2018: 28) economy of visibility, 'can-do' subjects circulate as empowered and entrepreneurial agents of (neo-liberal) change. Their 'at-risk' others, however, are seen as more susceptible to poverty, early pregnancy and having fewer life choices. Historically, feminist media scholars have overwhelming theorized 'can-do' girls based on racialized geographies: such 'empowered', confident subjects are white and located in the Global North, while their 'downtrodden others' are Black or Brown and in the Global South. Here, however, we see how this geographic boundary shrinks. As Beesan emphasizes, she has 'more opportunities from abroad' because her embodied presence can be easily slotted into 'can-do' subject positions in the economy of visibility. It is, in other words, Beesan's secular, cosmopolitan and middle-class capitals that allow global media to push her 'empowered' image.

However, it is not simply the case that homogenous imperial 'western' feminisms annihilate unitary 'authentic regional' gender relations. Instead, paying attention to intersections between class and gender in popular cultures in Palestine allows us to trace how women in the Global South also shape transnational media worlds (cf. Dosekun 2020: 14–17) through feminist-focused hip hop. As rappers advance local critiques of unfair gendered expectations, they at the same time participate in migratory, popular feminist sensibilities based on ideas about middle-class and individual empowerment. Neither resistant nor compliant, digital feminisms in Palestinian hip hop thus simultaneously contest and cooperate with different power relations as they travel through local and transnational socially mediated networks.

CONCLUSIONS

During the past decade, some rappers in Palestine started producing hip hop media that engages contemporary ideas about feminism. Because there is no formal music industry in Palestine, and Israel fragments Palestinian topographies, digital technologies offer musicians critical – yet conflicted – resources for generating their critiques. This article argued that the relationship between the internet and hip hop in Palestine highlights two things. First, social media provides rappers with means for creating and sharing analyses of gender norms above and below colonial borders. Through rap, musicians play with generational and patriarchal marriage codes and challenge disciplinary ideas

about the female body. Second, however, while these productions 'do' critical identity work in Palestine, as digital objects in transnational flows, they are open to capture by capital. Socially mediated productions often reiterate post-#MeToo popular feminist ideals of bodily autonomy, confidence and individual capacity. As such, while hip hop might challenge local gender relations in digital networks in Palestine, it further reinforces liberal ideas about agency and personhood in wider contexts. I thus suggest that the internet is a contradictory space for young rappers. Neither dystopic nor utopian, in Palestine the web makes room for gendered critiques that are nonetheless tamed and spectacularized by depoliticized liberal feminist frames. I therefore conclude that popular music constitutes a dialectic struggle between the 'undoing' and the 'redoing' of feminism in Palestine and beyond. Tracing the gender politics that circulate through Palestinian hip hop allows us to grasp the multiple feminisms that travel simultaneously through popular music audio-visual texts.

The article therefore makes two contributions to feminist hip hop media studies. First, there has, to date, been no systematic examination of how popular music shapes and is shaped by digital feminisms in Palestine or the Middle East and North African region. By thinking about the complex ways in which communication technologies interact with pre-existing gender dynamics, the article therefore makes an important empirical and epistemological contribution to the field. Second, and more broadly, the article further demonstrates the importance of music and popular culture for feminist politics. Thus, whereas feminist communications scholarship routinely overlooks how music shapes feminisms around the globe, I highlighted the centrality of such resources for feminist struggle. Moving forwards, the research presented here aims to generate further lines of feminist enquiry focused on the relationship between contemporary feminist formations, gendered subjectivities, popular culture and the digital in Palestine, the Middle East and beyond.

FUNDING

REFERENCES

Alqaisiya, Walaa (2018), 'Decolonial queering: The politics of being queer in Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 47:3, pp. 29–44.

Al-Rawi, Ahmed (2020), *Women's Activism and New Media in the Arab World*, New York: SUNY Press.

Aouragh, Miriyam (2011), *Palestine Online: Transnationalism, the Internet, and the Construction of Identity*, London: I. B. Tauris.

Aouragh, Miriyam (2018), 'Palestine online: Occupation and liberation in the digital age', in G. Meikle (ed.), *Routledge Companion to Media and Activism*, London: Routledge, pp. 223–32.

Baer, Hester (2016), 'Redoing feminisms: Digital activism, body politics, and neoliberalism', *Feminist Media Studies*, 16:1, pp. 17–34.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah (2018), *Empowered: Popular Feminism and Popular Misogyny*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.

Bayat, Asef (2009), *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Changed the Middle East*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989), 'Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A Black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and anti-racist police', *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1:8, pp. 139–67.

De Benedictis, Sara, Orgad, Shani and Rottenberg, Catherine (2019), '#MeToo, popular feminism and the news: A content analysis of UK newspaper coverage', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22:5&6, pp. 718–38.

Dosekun, Simidele (2020), *Spectacular Femininity*, Urbana, Chicago and Springfield, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Dosekun, Simidele (2022), 'The problems and intersectional politics of "#BeingFemaleNigeria"', *Feminist Media Studies*, pp. 1–17.

Durham, Aisha, Cooper, Brittney C. and Morris, Susana M. (2013), 'The stage hip-hop feminism built: A new directions essay', *Signs*, 38:3, pp. 721–37.

Echchaibi, Nabil (2013), 'Muslimah media watch: Media activism and Muslim choreographies of social change', *Journalism*, 14:7, pp. 852–67.

Elsayed, Yomna (2016), 'Laughing through change: Subversive humor in online videos of Arab youth', *International Journal of Communication*, 10, pp. 5102–22.

Elsayed, Yomna and Zidani, Sulafa (2020), 'Reimagining the Arab Spring: From imagination to creativity', in H. Jenkins, G. Peter-Lazaro and S. Shresthova (eds), *Popular Culture and the Civic Imagination: Case Studies of Creative Social Change*, New York: New York University Press, pp. 162–72.

El-Zein, Raya (2017), '"Resisting resistance": On political feelings in Arabic rap concerts', in T. Sabry and L. Ftouni (eds), *Arab Subcultures*, London: I. B. Tauris, pp. 152–76.

Eqeiq, Amal (2010), 'Louder than the blue ID: Palestinian hip-hop in Israel', in R. Kanaaneh and I. Nusair (eds), *Displaced at Home: Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel*, New York: SUNY Press, pp. 53–74.

Fuchs, Christian (2014), *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*, Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Gokhberg, Jessica (2021), '"Anyone can be pussy riot": Exploring the possibilities of transnational digital feminisms', *Feminist Formations*, 33:3, pp. 94–115.

Hall, Stuart ([1994] 1998), 'Notes on deconstructing "the popular"', in J. Storey (ed.), *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, London: Routledge, pp. 455–66.

Hammami, Rema (1990), 'Women, the hijab and the intifada', Middle East Report, May, https://merip.org/1990/05/women-the-hijab-and-the-intifada/. Accessed 20 October 2021.

Harris, Anita (2003), *Future Girl*, New York: Routledge.

Hong, Grace K. (2006), *The Ruptures of American Capital*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

ICT (2021), 'Palestinian territory (West Bank and Gaza) broadband and telecommunications reports', Internet World Stats, https://www.internetworldstats.com/middle.htm#ps. Accessed 2 October 2021.

Iskander, Adel (2019), 'Egyptian youth's digital dissent', *Journal of Democracy*, 30:3, pp. 154–64.

Isoke, Zenzele (2013), 'Women, hip hop, and cultural resistance in Dubai', *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 15:4, pp. 316–37.

Jackson, Sarah J., Bailey, Moya and Foucault, Brooke (2020), *#HashtagActivism: Networks of Race and Gender Justice*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jackson, Sarah and Banaszyczyck, Sonia (2016), 'Digital standpoints: Debating gendered violence and racial exclusions in the feminist counterpublic', *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 40:4, pp. 391–407.

Jennings, Kyesha (2020), 'City girls, hot girls and the re-imagining of Black women in hip hop and digital spaces', *Global Hip Hop Studies*, 1:1, pp. 47–70.

Kanaaneh, Rhoda (2002), *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel*, Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Kraidy, Marwan (2005), *Hybridity*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Kraidy, Marwan (2010), *Reality Television and Arab Politics*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lindsey, Treva (2014), 'Let me blow your mind: Hip hop feminist futures in theory and praxis', *Urban Education*, 50:1, pp. 52–77.

Maria, Sunaina (2013), *Jil Oslo*, Washington, DC: Tadween Publishing.

Maria, Sunaina and Shihade, Magid (2012), 'Hip hop from '48 Palestinians: Youth, music, and the present absent', *Social Text*, 30:3, pp. 1–26.

McDonald, David (2006), 'Performing Palestine', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 25, pp. 5–18.

McDonald, David (2010), 'Geographies of the body: Music, violence and manhood in Palestine', *Ethnomusicology Forum*, 19:2, pp. 191–214.

McDonald, David (2013), *My Voice is my Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*, Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.

McDonald, David (2020), 'Junction 48: Hip-hop activism, gendered violence, and vulnerability in Palestine', *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, 32:1, pp. 26–43.

Mendes, Kaitlyn, Ringrose, Jessica and Keller, Jessalyn (2019), *Digital Feminist Activism: Girls and Women Fight Back Against Rape Culture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Megarry, Jessica (2018), 'Under the watchful eyes of men: Theorising the implications of male surveillance practices for feminist activism on social media', *Feminist Media Studies*, 18:6, pp. 1070–85.

Mejias, Ulises A. (2010), 'The limits of networks as models for organizing the social', *New Media and Society*, 12:4, pp. 603–17.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade (1984), 'Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses', *boundary 2*, 12:3&13:1, pp. 333–58.

Morgan, Joan (1999), *When Chickenheads Come Home to Roost: A Hip Hop Feminist Breaks It Down*, New York: Simon and Shuster.

Nashif, Nawal (2017), 'Surveillance of Palestinians and the fight for digital rights', *Al-Shabaka*, 23 October, https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/surveillance-palestinians-fight-digital-rights/. Accessed 1 November 2021.

Nashif, Nawal (2021), 'Israel's digital apartheid is silencing Palestinians', *Open Democracy*, 20 May, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/north-africa-west-asia/israels-digital-apartheid-is-silencing-palestinians/. Accessed 1 October 2021.

Nazzal, Amal (2020), 'YouTube's violation of Palestinian digital rights', *Al-Shabaka*, 27 December, https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/youtubes-viola-tion-of-palestinian-digital-rights-what-needs-to-be-done/. Accessed 1 October 2021.

Noble, Sofiya (2018), *Algorithms of Oppression*, New York: New York University Press.

Ong, Aihwa (2011), 'Introduction: Worlding cities, or the art of being global', in A. Roy and A. Ong (eds), *Worlding Cities*, London: Blackwell, pp. 1–26.

Pough, Gwendolyn D. (2004), *Check It while I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.

Pratt, Nicola (2020), *Embodying Geopolitics: Generations of Women's Activism in Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon*, Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Rose, Tricia (1994), *Black Noise*, Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.

Sobande, Francesca (2020), *The Digital Lives of Black Women in Britain*, Cham: Palgrave.

Steele, Catherine (2021), *Digital Black Feminism*, New York: New York University Press.

Stokes, Carla E. (2007), 'Representin' in cyberspace: Sexual scripts, self-definition, and hip hop culture in Black adolescent girls' home pages', *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, 9:2, pp. 169–84.

Switzer, Heather (2013), '(Post)feminist development fables: The girl effect and the production of sexual subjects', *Feminist Theory*, 14:3, pp. 345–60.

Taraki, Lisa (2008), 'Enclave micropolis: The paradoxical case of Ramallah/Al-Bireh', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 37:4, pp. 6–20.

Tawil-Souri, Helga (2011), 'Colored identity: The politics and materiality of ID cards in Palestine/Israel', *Social Text*, 29:2, pp. 67–97.

Terranova, Tiziana (2000), 'Free labour: Producing culture in the digital economy', *Social Text*, 18:2, pp. 33–58.

Willems, Wendy (2021), 'Beyond platform-centrism and digital universalism: The relational affordances of mobile social publics', *Information, Communication and Society*, 24:12, pp. 1677–93.

Withers, Polly (2021), 'Ramallah ravers and Haifa hipsters: Gender, class, and nation in Palestinian popular culture', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 48:1, pp. 94–113.

Zidani, Sulafa (2020), 'Not Arabi or Ajnabi: Arab youth and reorientating humor', *International Journal of Communication*, 14:20, pp. 3202–19.

SUGGESTED CITATION

CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Polly Withers is a Leverhulme early career fellow at the LSE Middle East Centre, where she researches issues related to gender and feminism in global media and communications and popular culture in Palestine, the Middle East and beyond.

Contact: LSE Middle East Centre, The London School of Economics and Political Science, PAN 10.01C, Pankhurst House, Clement's Inn, London, WC2A 2AZ, UK.
E-mail: p.withers@lse.ac.uk

ⓘ https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5892-3305