"Keeping It Real": Re-diversification of French hip hop through Islam, Gender, and Globalization

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"Keeping It Real": Re-diversification of French hip hop through Islam, Gender, and Globalization

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in French and Francophone Studies from The College of William and Mary

by

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May 4, 2018
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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my great directors, professors Michael Leruth and Nathan Rabalais for pushing me to apply for the McCormack-Reboussin scholarship which allowed me to begin this research. I would also like to thank them for guiding me through the research and writing process of the thesis. It was hard at times, but they were understanding and always gave constructive feedback. I would also like to thank them for pushing me to go further in my analyses in order offer new ideas to the discussion on French hip hop. I will always value our meetings and the help they gave me this year in regards to not only the thesis but also regarding letters of recommendation and general future advice. Thank you for keeping it real with me.

To my friends: I thank you for listening to me ramble about my honors thesis and how long it was. I also thank you all for helping me calm down whenever I thought I would never finish it. You are all wonderful people. I would like to especially thank my friends Maya Cotton, Carley Toney, and Allison Loyola for reading the chapters of my thesis during the week before it was due, despite their extremely busy lives. I would also like to thank Erika Jaimes, Vanessa Adkins, and Carley Toney for coming to support me during my defense. It meant a great deal to me to have you there during the arguably the most stressful part of the whole thesis process. You are all wonderful.

To my professors: I thank you for being accommodating of the fact that I was writing an honors thesis and for letting me come to class late or skip class altogether in order to work on the project. I also apologize for having to miss so much class time over the course of this semester. I loved your classes and I wish I could have spent more time in class.
Preface

I remember hearing French rap music for the first time around my sophomore year of high school. I searched “French rap music” on YouTube and clicked on the first song in the results, Keny Arkana’s “La rage” (“Rage”). The speed at which she delivered her lyrics astonished the 15-year-old me who could barely string together one sentence in French let alone however many bars she rapped in the song. Its rhythm and political overtones were unlike the club anthems I was accustomed to hearing in American rap songs on TV or the radio; they pushed me to think about life and the world around me. A few years later, I discovered PNL, whose crude yet poignant lyrics about poverty in the suburbs of France reinvigorated my interest in the genre, pushing me to seek out more French rap artists. In doing so, I discovered the multilingual aspects of the genre: people using Arabic or various African languages in their songs. This multitude of identities embodied in one artist is what inspired the writing of this thesis.

Researching French hip hop has opened my eyes to the complexities of the genre and the culture behind as well as the social and political contexts that led to its development. It has taught me about the institutions surrounding French hip hop and the combination of action by the people as well as laws that created the environment for French hip hop culture to develop. My research and thesis have helped me develop as a researcher and scholar, pushing me to think outside of the box and to look for new questions to answer.
Introduction: Taking It Back to the Streets of NY

0.1 Origins of Hip Hop (1967-1989)

The result of the ingenuity and resourcefulness of young African-American and Latino residents of the Bronx, hip hop took shape in the early 1970s, in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the end of the Civil Rights Movement.\(^1\) The term “hip hop” originated from Keith Cowboy, a member of Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five.\(^2\) Afrika Bambaataa explained that when asked by a reporter to describe what the rising culture was, he responded, “hip hop” based off of the cadences of Keith Cowboy’s rhymes.\(^3\) These youths played with the record collections of their parents, danced on cardboard boxes, and spray painted graffiti around town.\(^4\) Those three activities represent three of the four core elements of hip hop culture which are rapping, deejaying, graffiti art, and b-boysing (breakdancing\(^5\)). Omar Young defines graffiti as a visual art that comes in two forms, mural painting (bombing) and signatures (tagging).\(^6\) He also writes that bombings emphasize aspects such as vibrant color combinations, depth of field, and artistic composition.\(^7\) Tagging, however, focuses more on the signature of the artist and places a “higher emphasis on the quantity, visibility, and location of the ‘tag’.”\(^8\)

Emceeing or rapping refers to the method by which words are delivered over a beat.

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\(^3\) Ibid.
\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid, 10.
\(^8\) Ibid.
(instrumental) to create music. Raps are usually delivered in a rhyme format and can be either written beforehand or performed as “freestyles” where rappers are expected to deliver lines of poetry spontaneously. Breakdancing comes from the term “break” which refers to the section of a song where only percussion instruments would play. Dancers performed during this part of the song, often showing off complicated movements involving spins, flips, and footwork. Deejaying refers to the process of taking existing music and repurposing it in order to create new musical compositions. Additionally, deejaying is considered to be the central element of hip hop culture, as other forms of hip hop culture, namely breakdancing and rap music, rely heavily on deejaying. DJs united people with instrumentals, leading people to dance, and eventually rap.

Hip hop culture’s roots began to take form in part due to the efforts of Afrika Bambaataa and DJ Kool Herc. During the 1970s, crime and poverty ravaged the Bronx. Many people could not afford to live in their houses so they abandoned them, and many of these vacant abodes provided an ideal location for crimes such as drug dealing, robbery, and murder. Afrika Bambaataa, having grown up involved in gang violence, saw the effects of the gang life on the people around him and decided to change his life and the lives of others. In 1973, Afrika Bambaataa began visiting the parties at which DJ Kool Herc performed, and the latter’s style inspired Afrika Bambaataa to develop his own style of playing break records in the same way DJ Kool Herc had done. That same year, Bambaataa started the Zulu Nation to help steer inner-city youth towards safe alternatives to gang life such as music.

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10 Baker, the History of Rap and Hip Hop, 15.
12 Baker, the History of Rap and Hip Hop, 12.
14 Young, “The Origin of Hip-Hop Culture,” 55
With the permission of Afrika Bambaataa, Kool Herc hosted block parties in the Bronx during the early 1970s. The DJ took inspiration from the music scene in his native Jamaica and brought these influences to America when he and his family immigrated in 1967. He pioneered the “Merry Go Round” technique whereby the DJ lengthens a piece of a song in order to repurpose it. His student, Grandmaster Flash, created what people know as “blending” or “cutting” which allows DJs to mix songs seamlessly into one another. The mastery of these elements led to scratching and sampling, both of which played a large part in the creation of beats for rap instrumentals.

Up until around the late 1970s, DJs remained the focus of hip hop events, but little by little, MCs (masters of ceremonies) began to draw crowds as people enjoyed their witty phrases and, eventually, their battles against other MCs. In 1979, Sugar Hill Gang released “Rapper’s Delight”, one of the first rap songs released commercially. The song, commissioned by Sugar Hill records owner, Sylvia Robinson, became a hit record, selling over two million copies, with some future rappers such as Mary J. Blige among the purchasers. The song’s immense success led record some companies such as Mercury Records and Sugar Hill Records to invest in rap artists, leading to the beginning of the commercialization and promotion of the genre across the United States. In 1980, rapper Kurtis Blow signed with Mercury Records, becoming the first

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17 Baker, the History of Rap and Hip-Hop, 15.
19 Ibid, 7.
20 Ibid, 8.
21 Baker, the History of Rap and Hip-Hop, 22. The MC would usually host the party and deliver a few remarks to liven the atmosphere. A battle is an event in which two MCs hurl phrases at one another in turn, after which the crowd decides who won the exchange.
22 Ibid, 25-26. The word “rap” means “to strike with a sharp blow” and is also slang for “talk” or “converse,” which is where the terms “rap” music and “rappers” come from. In current usage, youths often use the word “rap” to mean “ramble” or “nag” in addition to referencing the music genre. For more information see Baker, 24.
23 Ibid.
rapper to land a recording contract with a major record label.\textsuperscript{25} Despite the success of “Rapper’s Delight,” most major record labels ignored rap music, viewing it as a music without a future.\textsuperscript{26} In 1982, “The Message” by Grandmaster Flash & The Furious Five was released under Sugar Hill Records. This song differed from previous commercial rap songs in that it described the poverty and struggles people in low-income neighborhoods faced whereas other commercial hits such as “Rapper’s Delight” focused on partying.\textsuperscript{27} “The Message” influenced artists such as Schoolly D and Common to rap.\textsuperscript{28} Before becoming the main focus of hip hop culture and attracting the eyes and ears of large record labels, smaller ones such as Jive, Reality, and Profile were able to sign a variety of rap artists such as Whodini or Doug E. Fresh because these companies did not have corporations pressuring them to sign or not sign certain artists.\textsuperscript{29}

Eventually, rapping supplanted the other three dimensions of hip hop culture during what Soren Baker terms the “Golden Era of Rap” which lasted from 1986 to 1989.\textsuperscript{30} The period proved important to American hip hop because it was during this period that many of the varieties of American hip hop that exist currently such as gangsta rap, political rap, and romantic rap rose to prominence, appealing to a variety of people.\textsuperscript{31} During the “Golden Era of Rap,” one could find rap that appealed to hippies, gangsters, political activists, poets, and more.\textsuperscript{32} Baker also notes that rappers’ rhyming capabilities went beyond the simple lyrics of earlier rap songs such as “Rapper’s Delight” by the Sugar Hill Gang or “The Breaks” by Kurtis Blow.\textsuperscript{33} Major artists of this time included Run D.M.C, LL Cool J, and the female rap duo Salt’N Pepa. Run

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, 28.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid, 36-37.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 39.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 39.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 39.
D.M.C rose to superstardom with their 1986 album *Raising Hell* due to the single “Walk This Way,” on which the rock band Aerosmith made an appearance.\(^{34}\) This song blended elements of rap and rock music, and in doing so, united fans of both genres. LL Cool J, which stands for Ladies Love Cool James, became one of American hip hop’s first sex symbols with songs such as “I Need Love.”\(^{35}\) Salt N’ Pepa, whose entire crew (including their DJs) was composed of women, broke down barriers for women in American hip hop.\(^{36}\) They were also among the first rap acts to crossover into mainstream music, which contributed to the widespread acceptance of rap music in the 1990s.\(^{37}\) MC Lyte, another female MC stepped into the hip hop arena, delivering songs on topics such as love, drug use, and women in American hip hop.\(^{38}\) The late 1980s witnessed the rise of highly political artists such as Brand Nubian, X-Clan, and Public Enemy.\(^{39}\)

Around the American “Golden Era of Rap,” French hip hop culture had recently seen the release of its first album, *Paname City Rappin* (1984). However, French hip hop still focused on the other aspects of hip hop culture (breakdancing, graffiti, and deejaying).

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\(^{34}\) Baker, *the History of Rap and Hip-Hop*, 41.

\(^{35}\) Ibid, 42.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, 44-45.

\(^{37}\) Ibid, 45.

\(^{38}\) Ibid 45-46.

\(^{39}\) Ibid, 48.
Contextualizing French Hip hop: Societal Unrest in the 1980s and 90s

Hip hop hit the streets of France at a time the nation was undergoing large changes to its social demographics. French society during the time of hip hop’s arrival in France experienced a great deal of turmoil as a result of clashes between individuals of immigrant background and French people. Following the decolonization of France’s overseas territories in the 1960s, thousands of North and West Africans traveled to France in hopes of starting new lives and giving their children better opportunities than the ones available in their countries of origin. Upon arrival in the 1970s and 1980s, these immigrants, along with French people and immigrants from European countries, were often housed in HLM (Habitation à Loyer Modéré) or moderate-income rent-controlled housing outside of major cities such as Paris or Marseille.\(^1\)

These apartment complexes were made of numerous floors and were situated near where immigrants worked. However, as factory and construction jobs dried up and recession hit in the 1970s, unemployment skyrocketed, especially among the youths of these suburbs, many of whom were French but of West or North African descent.\(^2\) In 1981, the same year France had its first hit rap records, events known as “rodéos” broke out in the suburbs such as Minguettes, Vénissieux, and Grappinière.\(^3\) Youths in these suburbs took to stealing and burning cars in response to the unemployment combined with the racism and social isolation they felt, shocking other people living in the suburbs with them as well as the nation.\(^4\)

Two years later, during the municipal elections of 1983, notably in Marseille and Dreux, far-right nationalist sentiment gained momentum, targeting immigrants as the source of the

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\(^2\) Ibid.


\(^4\) Ibid 19,21.
unemployment and crime France was facing.\textsuperscript{5} For example, the Front National (National Front) candidate, Jean-Pierre Stirbois took the seat of deputy mayor in the city Dreux.\textsuperscript{6} That same year, in response to racially-motivated murders of people of immigrant descent such as Abdendi Guemiah and the shooting of Toumi Djaidja, French youths protested in La marche pour l'égalité et contre le racisme (The March for Equality and Against Racism), more commonly known as La marche des Beurs, in reference to a common slang term for second-generation Franco-Maghrebi youths.\textsuperscript{7} The March sought to bring attention to the murders perpetrated against people of immigrant backgrounds and the overall mistreatment of people of color in France. A split occurred between antiracist organizers and French youths of immigrant descent in the mid-1980s because the movement towards equality was hijacked by actors who did not effectively fight for change. Many young people accused SOS Racisme (SOS Racism), an organization founded in 1984, of being coopted by the establishment and not fighting hard enough for tangible economic, social, and racial justice for the people.\textsuperscript{8}

Initially, SOS Racisme gathered a great deal of support from people of various social classes and media, and its leader, Harlem Désir, was the poster-child for antiracism in France during the latter half of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{9} Eventually, people realized that the leaders of the movement were not necessarily youths who felt the struggle of people in the suburbs of France, but were actually members of the Socialist party or future members of the party, more interested in public

\textsuperscript{5} Jazouli, Les années banlieues, 46.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Jazouli, Les années banlieues, 101.
relations and individual political careers. The movement also lost credibility once it was discovered that it had members of the pro-Israel Union des étudiants juifs en France (The Union of Jewish Students in France), which outraged many of the movement’s Maghrebi supporters. In 1985, SOS Racisme held a national march for equality. That same year, France Plus, a centrist and pro-republican organization led by young people of North African descent and the children of harkis (Algerians who fought for the French during the French-Algerian war) also held a national march. In spite of the followings developed by these two organizations among underprivileged and enraged youths throughout France during the middle and end of the 1980s, unemployment increased and the problems that plagued the suburbs of French cities remained.

During the 1990s, crime increased and many youths formed gangs in the suburbs of cities such as Paris. These youth engaged in crimes ranging from petty robbery to assaults, in large part due to factors such as high unemployment and high rates of underperformance at school. In October of 1990, the residents of the Lyon suburb Vaulx-en-Velin rose in protest against the police following the controversial death of Thomas Claudio, a handicapped man killed during an arrest that did not go as planned. The police officers’ car ended up hitting the motorcycle driven by Claudio’s friend with Claudio in the passenger’s seat. The death led to a standoff between the residents of the suburb and the police, the angered residents accusing the police of far-right sympathies which led them to kill Claudio.

11 Jazouli, Les années banlieues, 104.
12 Ibid, 105.
13 Ibid.
15 Ibid, 141, 146.
16 Ibid, 142.
17 Ibid, 150.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid, 150-151.
In 1992, the mayor of Paris and later president of France, Jacques Chirac, blamed the financial struggles of native French people on immigrant families. He described the immigrants as living in apartments with multiple wives, having a large number of children, and taking up all of the government benefits. Chirac then added that these families were smelly and noisy, further stigmatizing the French suburbs and their inhabitants and reinforcing negative perceptions of immigrants and French people of color. Overall, the 1990s represented a time during which youths in French suburbs struggled to make sense of their situations, searching for ways to express their anger and to avoid failure in society. The sentiments felt by French youths in underprivileged areas contributed to hip hop’s formation in France because it gave these young people a culture to which they could connect and a culture that spoke to their social realities.

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21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
0.3 **Hip hop in France**

With the election of François Mitterrand in 1981, French radio stations unaffiliated with the government like Carbone 14 gained the authorization to broadcast.¹ Among the radio station’s DJs were Phil Barney and Daniel Bigeault, or Dee Nasty, who later became a pioneer of French hip hop.² Phil Barney worked for a company that imported American records for Parisian DJs, who played them in discos. When Barney’s program aired, he imitated American DJs by talking over the introductions to the songs they played.³ Dee Nasty was a DJ who developed his spinning skills by watching American hip hop DJs when he made trips to the United States.⁴ Though rap recordings in French existed in 1979, it was not until 1981 that France received its first rap records available to the public, “Salut, les salauds” (“Hi, bastards”), by Interview, and “Chacun fait c’qui lui plait” (“Each Person Does What Pleases Him”).⁵ The latter was a hit, selling three million copies.⁶ This commercial success contributed to music labels becoming interested in songs that were rapped. During this period in the early 1980s, other tracks such as “Frimeur (savoir faire)” (Show-off [know how]) by Savoir Faire, “Histoire simple (tu peux danser)” (Simple Story [You Can Dance]) by Ligne Directe, and “Stars sur la platine” (“Stars on the Turn Table”) by Stéphane were released.⁷ Paris witnessed the arrival of breakdancing, or *le smurf*, in 1981 when French youths imported the style of dancing from the United States.⁸

² Ibid, 2.
³ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
In 1982, Bernard Zekri and Jean Karakos, two Frenchmen who met in New York in 1980 organized the New York City Rap Tour in Europe, which brought American rap acts to France for a week-long event in November of 1982. The concerts provided French youths the opportunity to see notable American rappers like Afrika Bambaataa, who returned to France in 1984 to establish the French branch of the Zulu Nation with the goal of saving youths from lives of crime.\(^9\) The French branch of the Zulu Nation had its kings and queens, such as Queen Candy, whom Afrika Bambaataa held in high regard.\(^10\) However, the Zulu Nation in France often clashed with French youths on certain aspects of hip hop culture, namely tagging.\(^11\) French youths enjoyed tagging, but when the Zulu Nation arrived in France, its leaders condemned it as vandalism, creating conflict between French youths and the Zulu Nation.\(^12\) Despite clashes between leaders of the Zulu Nation in France and the French youth, the creation of the French branch of the Zulu Nation marked France’s incorporation into a global hip hop community. Hip hop culture began to develop in countries such Germany and Italy in the early 1980s as it did in France, but hip hop culture did not develop in Greece until about 1987.\(^13\)

1984 also marked a turning point for French hip hop culture as it witnessed one of its first rap albums as well as its representation on French television. DJ Dee Nasty released *Paname city rappin’,* an entirely self-produced project that sold around a thousand copies.\(^14\) The album boasted a variety of sounds and was composed of three songs rapped in French, two in English, one instrumental song, and a series of short sequences of Dee Nasty scratching, a deejaying

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\(^11\) Ibid, 80.

\(^12\) Ibid.


\(^14\) Hammou, *Une histoire du rap en France,* 39.
technique where the DJ rubs the record many times in order to create a beat. Though Paname city rapping’ did not do well in sales, radio play helped boost Dee Nasty’s popularity.

In 1984, French hip hop culture enjoyed the creation of the TV show, H.I.P.H.O.P. on TF1. The 14-minute show, hosted by Sidney Duteil, focused on all aspects of hip hop culture in France, with special attention given to breakdancing. Before hosting H.I.P.H.O.P., Sidney hosted the daily radio show Rapper Dapper Snapper on the station Radio 7, affiliated with Radio France, which demonstrated a higher-level of official acceptance of hip hop because Radio France was run by the French government. Occasionally, Sidney rapped on the show, but found it difficult to mold the French language to the same cadences found in English, a problem that pushed some French artists to rap in English in order to mimic the intonations of their American counterparts. Although it did not live a long life on French television, H.I.P.H.O.P. aided performers because dance groups often made appearances on the program by boosting these dance groups’ notoriety. After its initial broadcast on January 15th, 1984, the show took a hiatus in July, returned in September, and finally ended in December of 1984. Despite its short-lived run, the television program valorized and spread awareness of French hip hop culture throughout the country.

In 1986, The Parisian neighborhood of La Chapelle became an important area for budding stars in France’s hip hop scene with its terrain vague (vacant lot) becoming a spot

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15 Fricke and Ahearn, Yes Yes Y’all: The Experience Music Project Oral History of Hip Hop’s First Decade, 63.
18 Hammou, Une histoire du rap en France, 26.
where breakdancers gathered to practice and engage in battles. Nightclubs such as Le Globo or Chez Roger Boîte Funk began to host events featuring local DJs and breakdancers. Two years later, in 1988, the rapper Dee Nasty, alongside rapper Lionel D, created the radio show, Deenastyle, where rappers performed freestyles, improvised raps designed to show off their capability to come up with lyrics on the spot. The show helped rap artists such as MC Solaar, Assassin, Stomy Bugsy, and more develop names and reputations for themselves in French hip hop. Additionally, the show welcomed female rappers such as B-Love and Destinee. Though they worked for no pay at Radio Nova, Dee Nasty and Lionel D had access to 8-track tapes, which allowed the duo to produce Lionel D’s album, *Y’a pas de problème* (There’s No Problem) in 1990. For many rappers, Deenastyle was an essential step for their careers because a spot on the show confirmed one’s talent and allowed one to represent their neighborhood. By the end of the 1980s, artists who would become the stars of the 1990s had already begun to make music and build their names and fan bases.

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22 Garcette and Dupouy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès.*
24 Hammou, *Une histoire du rap en France*, 68.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
0.4 The ‘Golden Age’ of French Hip hop (1990-1999)

The 1990s marked an important period in French hip hop culture because many of the legends of French rap music emerged during this period. The genre became more commercial, on one hand, and more political, on the other. One of the first key events for the establishment of French rap music was the 1990 release of the first French rap compilation album, *Rapattitude*. The album featured songs by many French rappers of the time such as NTM, Assassin, Dee Nasty, Saliha, and Tonton David.¹ A commercial and cultural success, the album confirmed the interest of major labels in French hip hop as it was produced by Label Noir/Virgin.² *Rapattitude* also helped spread French hip hop because retail stores in cities outside of Paris carried the album, which helped it sell 100,000 copies, demonstrating that rap could be profitable.³ The same year, the TV show *Rapline*, hosted by Olivier Cachin, began airing at 11:00 p.m. on Saturday nights on M6, a national, primarily music video-themed television channel.⁴ Though the show did not boast a large viewership, making up one percent of TV viewership at most, it allowed rap fans to discover new American and French rappers. Because the featured artists were given money by the show’s team to make a music video, landing a spot on *Rapline* meant the opportunity to record a music video and to increase exposure for lesser-known artists.⁵

The first hit French rap song, “Bouge de là” (“Get Out of Here”) by Claude M’Barali, more widely known as MC Solaar, made its way into the mainstream in 1990.⁶ The song began as a part of a three-track tape produced by the 21-year-old rapper and DJ Christophe Viguier,

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¹ Ibid. NTM stands for “Nique Ta Mère” or “Fuck Your Mother” in English.
² Ibid.
³ Garcette and Dupuoy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès*.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Hammou, *Une histoire du rap en France*, 78-79.
which listeners heard on Radio Nova before its takeoff into the larger French music scene. 7

Playful and witty, the song by university student Solaar touched a large public and redefined what rap music could be for the French public and for French rappers because of its poetic delivery and non-subversive content, which contributed to its mainstream success. “Following “Bouge de là” came MC Solaar’s first album, *Qui sème le vent récolte le tempo* (*He Who Sows the Wind Harvests the Tempo*), which presented a conspicuously poetic form of rap music. The literary features of the album helped it sell 400,000 copies and spoke not only to rap fans who found it to be authentic, but also to those inexperienced with rap music. 8 MC Solaar’s music was compared to the work of famed French musician Serge Gainsbourg for its witty wordplay and its similarities to *chanson*, popular French song. 9 MC Solaar’s delivery tended to be clearer and more in line with the rules of French prosody, which helped make his music more understandable than that of other rappers. 10 In addition to MC Solaar’s music adding poetic variety to French rap music, its easily digestible nature created a standard to which the larger public began holding other rappers. In effect, MC Solaar became a favorite for the mainstream public that was not necessarily familiar with hip hop music. In the hip hop community, MC Solaar became either the example to follow because of his literary lyrics rooted in French poetry or he embodied selling out for money. 11 MC Solaar was also one of France’s first international acts, performing with celebrated jazz musician Ron Carter on the song “Un ange en danger” (“An Angel in Danger”) in 1994, and three years later IAM collaborated with the famed

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8 Garcette and Dupuy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès*.
American rap group, Wu-Tang Clan on IAM’s 1997 album *L’école du micro d’argent (School of the Silver Mic)*.  

While Paris developed its own hip hop culture, artists from Marseille were crafting their own sound in response to Paris. Key in the development of Marseille’s hip hop scene was the DJ Philippe Subrini who hosted the radio show Prélude (Prelude). The show helped spread word of the hip hop culture in Marseille, though many people did not begin to rap until the late 1980s. Some of the first rap acts to come out of Marseille were IAM (formerly Lively Crew) and Massilia Sound System. IAM is a rap group made of 5 members, Shurik’n (Geoffroy Mussard), Imhotep (Pascal Perez), Kephren (Francois Mendy), Khéops (Eric Mazel), and Akhenaton (Philippe Fragione) whose solo work will be discussed later. The Marseille rap scene did not become well known until the early 1990s with IAM releasing their first album, which helped to build the city as the other capital of French rap music.

In 1991, the group IAM released *De la planète Mars (From the Planet Mars)*, NTM (Joey Starr and Kool Shen) released *Authentik (Authentic)*. The albums by IAM and NTM represented two sides of socially conscious rap. *De la planète Mars*, took on political issues such as colonization with songs such as the “Les tam-tam de l’Afrique,” (“The Tom-Toms of Africa”). This album helped to put bring attention to the rap scene in Marseille because of its success among fans of hip hop. *Authentik* focused on issues such as corruption and the negative

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13 Sandro Piscopo-Reguieg, “IAM, Fonky Family, Keny Arkana.. La grande histoire du rap marseillais,” *Télérama*, October 13, 2013,  
14 Ibid.  
15 “IAM,” Universal Music France, accessed April 21, 2018,  
16 Garcette and Dupuy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès.*  
effects of money on people and the negative perceptions of people from the suburbs. The following year, the group Ministère AMER released their album *Pourquoi tant de haine?* (Why So Much Hate) which sold well in large part because of the song “Brigitte (femme de flic)” (“Brigitte [Cop’s Wife]”) features sexually explicit lyrics about a policeman’s wife that incited complaints by police officers. However, the complaints achieved little because the police officers made their statements more than six months after the song’s release and the song was protected by French law on artistic creation. In 1993, IAM published their album *Ombre est lumière* (*Shadow Is Light*) and NTM published *J’appuie sur la gâchette* (*I’m Squeezing the Trigger*), on which one finds the song “Police,” which denounces French law enforcement.

The 1994 Loi Toubon, named after Minister of Culture Jacques Toubon, stipulated that between the hours of 6:30 a.m. and 10:30 p.m., forty percent of all music played had to be music in French and half of that forty percent had to be new music. The law allowed more French rap to be played because it was new and radio stations were under obligation to play it. In 1995, French rap gained newfound admiration as well as widespread resentment because of politically charged songs criticizing police brutality and corruption in the suburbs of Paris.

French hip hop culture in 1995 reached new heights as rappers won prestigious awards at *Victoires de la musique*, but it also was met with resistance due to the lyrics of songs such as “Sacrifice de poulet” by Ministère AMER (Action, musique, et rap/Bitter Ministry) or “Police”

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Garcette and Dupuy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès*. The same year, Sté Strausz released her debut album “Sté real” The Loi Toubon was put into practice in order to protect the position of the French language from other languages, namely English.
by NTM.23 Following the success of the 1995 film *La Haine* (Hate) which follows three young men from the Paris suburbs as they live a day of their lives, marked by racism and mistreatment by police officers, the French record label Delabel gathered eleven rappers to record an album of songs inspired by the movie.24 Among the artists chosen were Sté Strausz, La Cliqua, Assassin, and Ministère AMER. 25 Ministère AMER titled the song they wrote “Sacrifice de poulet,” which refers to killing a policeman. The word *poulet* literally translates as “chicken,” but in French slang the word also holds the meaning similar to “pig” in English.26 Though the rappers argued that they did not actually call for the killing of policeman, police unions believed otherwise and pressed charges on the rappers for advocating the murders of law enforcement agents and women.27

On Bastille Day, July 14, 1995 in La Seyne-sur-Mer, a “Freedom Concert” was held to rally against the recent election of Jean-Marie Le Chevalier, a National Front politician who campaigned with the intention of cutting programs that helped the immigrants in the area.28 The concert featured artists from diverse musical backgrounds such as MC Solaar, NTM, and Patrick Bruel, as well as Former Socialist Minister of Culture Jack Lang.29 During their performance, NTM called the police officers at the event fascists and exclaimed, “On leur pisse dessus!” (“Piss on them!”).30 The police officers then lodged a complaint against the duo, eventually leading to

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24 Prévos, “Hip-hop, rap, and repression in the United States and France,” 73. 
25 Ibid. 
26 Ibid. 
27 Ibid. 
29 Prévos, “Hip-hop, rap, and repression in the United States and France,” 73. 
their indictment by Toulon judge Claude Boulanger. In 1996, NTM received a sentence of three months of prison and a six-month ban on performing at concerts. The group found the verdict harsh and filed an appeal, which they won, guaranteeing them both their freedom and the ability to perform. These incidents, namely the NTM affair, raised questions about the violence discussed in rap music and whether rappers should be punished for their lyrics and whether or not the rappers actually called for the murders of police officers. While these two French hip hop acts confronted French authorities about their racist actions towards youths in the suburbs, other artists broke barriers for the genre.

The 1995 Victoires de la musique, the French equivalent of the Grammys, featured some of the first hip hop artists to ever win awards, IAM and MC Solaar. At the 1995 Victoires de la musique, IAM took home the award for “group of the year” and MC Solaar was awarded “best male artist,” making him the first rapper to do so. This moment in French hip hop history demonstrated rap’s appeal to people from varied social classes and backgrounds. Furthermore, the fact that the French hip hop community held the winners in high-esteem gave other artists hope for French hip hop’s future.

The late 1990s enjoyed the rise of a variety of artists both more mainstream and more underground. Artists such as Don Gynéco and Alliance Ethnik represented the more mainstream side of French hip hop at the time while Les sages poètes de la rue, Oxmo Puccino, and Arsenik represented the more socially conscious side of French hip hop. Don Gynéco helped popularize French rap with his debut album in 1996, *Première Consultation (First Consultation)*, which

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31 Ibid.
34 Garcette and Dupuoy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès*.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
sold a million copies in large part due to its melodious and pop-like songs. The following year, the critically acclaimed and commercially successful *L’école du micro d’argent* (*The School of the Silver Mic*) by IAM hit the French public with songs that illustrated the musical potential of French rap. Selling 1.6 million copies, the album quickly became a classic French hip hop album because of its critical acclaim and the high lyrical quality of its songs. Eventually, French rap began to become more commercialized as major labels began signing fewer artists of their own as they did in the early 1990s and instead chose to work more with independent labels in order to secure financial gains. For example, a major label would sign a contract with an independent one, giving the major rights to distribute the album, but the independent label would be responsible for discovering the artist and producing their album. This new way of producing music also allowed major labels to sign artists once their ability to sell records was demonstrated, preventing them from having to take risks and potentially losing money. Similar developments occurred in the American hip hop scene with some rappers such as Eazy-E creating their own record companies and signing to independent labels after being rejected by major labels. The focus on money and commercial success would lead to the transformation of the French rap scene into the “rap game,” a term that describes the money-driven side of hip hop, which characterized French rap of the 2000s.

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37 Mehdi Maizi, “Rap français: une exploration en 100 albums,” (Marseille: Le mot et le reste, 2016), 52.
38 Mehdi Maizi, “Rap français: une exploration en 100 albums, 66. Additional albums important to French rap include *Opéra Puccino* by Oxmo Puccino (1998), Fonky Family’s *Si Dieu Vuit*, and more. For more information on key French rap albums, see Mehdi Maizi, *Rap français: une exploration en 100 albums*.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
43 Ibid, 194. The term, “rap game” was popularized by American rappers Jay Z and Nas in their songs “Rap Game/Crack Game” and “Represent,” respectively.
0.5 The French Rap Game (2000-2009)

The 2000s witnessed the eclipsing of many of the socially and politically conscious rappers in favor of more marketable egotrip rappers, though the two types were promoted in relatively equal amounts during the 1990s. A variety used to exist in the French rap scene, but towards the end of the 1990s and into the 2000s, that variety began to disappear because major labels sought to sing artists who could generate revenue, leading to the rise of egotrip rap in the mainstream, and in response, a flourishing underground French rap scene.\(^1\) Egotrip refers to rap songs where the artist flaunts their money, status, or how many women they sleep with. One such artist who took the French rap scene by storm is Booba. Born Elie Yaffa, the half-Senegalese, half-French rapper began his career as a part of the collective Beat 2 Boul before joining Time Bomb, and eventually forming the duo Lunatic with the rapper Yacine Sekkoumi, alias, Ali.\(^2\) His 2004 album, Panthéon (Pantheon), attained a double gold status with its hardcore gangster lyrics about life in the suburbs in Paris.\(^3\) On this album, one finds tracks such as “Tallac” where Booba raps,

\[\text{“J’dépense mes dollars en sapes, me balade en cab’}\
\text{Dépense mes dollars en chatte et renvoie ces connards d’MCs en stage.”}^{4}\]

(“I blow my cash on clothes, ride around in a drop top
Blow my cash on pussy and send these bastard MCs back to the lab.”)

Artists with similar styles during the 2000s include Laouni Mouhid, alias La Fouine, and Karim Zenoud, alias Lacrim. La Fouine made his debuts in French rap during the mid-2000s and Lacrim made his debut in the French rap scene in the late 2000s. In their music, one finds lyrics about a lifestyle filled with drugs, money, sex, and violence.

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1 Garcrete and Dupuoy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès*.
3 Ibid.
Despite the rise of egotrip rap music in France during the 2000s, socially conscious hip hop did not fall entirely by the wayside. The superstar rapper, Mélanie Georgiades, alias Diam’s released her second album *Brut de Femme (Raw Woman)*, which fans received better than her debut *Premier Mandat, (First Term)* which sold around 8,000 copies. Diam’s rapped with underground talent but had mainstream fame. Her songs, both socially conscious and catchy, related to both hip hop purists as well as casual fans of the genre. Additionally, her songs resonated well with women because she discussed issues such as relationships and the status of women in hip hop. For example, her song “Jeune mademoiselle” (“Young lady”) deals with the search for a romantic partner and her song “Petite banlieusarde” (“Little Girl from the Hood”) explores her position as a white woman in French hip hop. Her 2006 album, *Dans ma bulle (In My Bubble)* sold more than 750,000 copies, making her one of the highest selling rap artists of the 2000s. Additionally, artists such as Abd al Malik (Régis Fayette-Mikano) and Keny Arkana made names from themselves largely in the 2000s, though both artists began rapping in the 1990s. Abd al Malik, whose songs examine topics such as Sufism, a mystical sect of Islam, benefitted from media exposure due to his image as a well-spoken, intelligent reformed member of society after escaping a life of delinquency. After her 2006 hit song, “La rage” (“Rage”) which attacks corruption and capitalism, Keny Arkana gained a great deal of popularity, but chose to remain underground in order to remain close to her fans and not the media.

By the end of the decade, major labels began to lose artists to the internet. With the rise of YouTube and other social media platforms, rappers made use of the internet to create fan

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6 Abd al Malik was with NAP (New African Poets) and Keny Arkana was with Etat Majeur.

bases and names for themselves before choosing to sign with a record label, if they chose to sign with one at all. The result was a new wave of artists and sounds that did not have to conform to label requirements.
0.6 **New Directions in French Rap 2009-2018**

The internet allowed the rap entrepreneur to be born. With the rise of internet use, rappers became their own labels in the sense that they created their own buzz, financed their own productions, and set up their own concerts. Additionally, the internet allowed rappers who may not have had a spot in the mainstream to develop their own paths. For example, the rapper Orelsan (Aurélien Cotentin) began his rap career putting music videos on YouTube, promoting his image as an average person from the French countryside in contrast to the stereotypical hardcore man from the suburbs of Paris.\(^1\) He developed his fan base and eventually released his controversial 2009 debut album *Perdu d’avance* (*Lost in Advance*).\(^2\) One track on the album, “Sale pute” (“Dirty Whore”) created a scandal because of its sexist content after the Secretary of State Valérie Létard condemned it, arguing that it promoted violence against women. Another rapper to find success through the internet who may not have done so otherwise is Liza Monet (Alexandra G.) In 2012, her sexually empowering song “My best plan” garnered over 5 million views and represented an aspect of French hip hop unseen since the songs of Roll K. in the 1990s. This track, she reports, allowed her to jumpstart her career as a rapper because it created news about her and her music.\(^3\)

Additional developments in French hip hop because of the internet include new discourses on Islam in French hip hop as well as the rise of Afro Trap. Islam has been discussed in French hip hop since the 1990s. The duo PNL, composed of brothers Ademo (Tarik Andrieu) and N.O.S. (Nabil Andrieu), witnessed a considerable rise in popularity with the release of their 2016 studio album, *Le Monde Chico* (*The World, Kid*) on which the song “Le monde ou rien”

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3. Liza Monet, e-mail message to author, April 11, 2018.
(“The World or Nothing”) is found. The duo’s music, while heavily focused on a life of crime, features references to Islam and conflict between street life and the religion. Due to the success of the “La moula” (“The money”/"The weed"), its artist, MHD (Mohamed Sylla), started his famous Afro Trap series, which combines features of West African musical instrumentation with features of American southern trap music. Though artists have rapped on beats inspired by West African music such as the Franco-Congolese group Bissa na Bisso, MHD has helped to repopularize the practice in recent years. Other artists to include West African instrumentation in recent years are Maître Gims (Gandhi Djuna), Black M (Alpha Diallo), and Booba.

Currently, French rap has reached an unforeseen level of notoriety, beginning in the streets of Paris and spreading throughout France and beyond. In the 1980s, when hip hop came to France, the country was experiencing critical changes to its demographics. Following decolonization in the 1960s and 70s, people from North and West Africa moved to France and resettled there. The children of these immigrants came of age during the 1980s and for many, racism, feelings of exclusion, and unemployment were the norm. These youths caught between French culture and the cultures of their parents sought an identity of their own and a community that would accept them, which hip hop provided. Through breakdancing, deejaying, graffiti art, and rapping French youths found an outlet for their anger and frustration living in France. Rap music allowed young people of color to protest the realities of their lives such as prejudice, police brutality, drug abuse, and poverty. Eventually, as the genre gained more and more mainstream acceptance, the diversity of topics and the messages pushed by hip hop artists began to wane in favor of more hedonistic, egocentric forms of rap music. This shift in the varieties of

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rap represented led to a lack of diversity within the genre itself. However, through an examination of Islam, gender and sexuality, and globalization in more recent examples of French hip hop we notice that artists are pushing the genre to open back up once again to diversity, as it did in the past.

This thesis examines the role of Islam and its different forms in French rap, gender and sexuality in French rap, and attempts at globalization in French rap music. The first chapter focuses on Islam, examining the themes of conversion, inner jihad, stereotyping of Muslims, and the rapper-as-imam found in rap songs performed by Muslim artists in order to prove the religion’s importance in the genre. The second chapter explores gender and sexuality in French rap songs made by female rappers. The subsections of this chapter delve into the themes of combating misogyny, exploring the female sexuality, and de-gendering of the female rapper in order to demonstrate how female rappers are calling French rap into question by critiquing its male-dominated culture. The final chapter discusses globalization and efforts French rap artists are making to globalize their music in order to reach larger publics and to set itself alongside their American counterparts as artists that transcend borders. These artists globalize their music through their stylistic mimicry of American rappers’ cadences, their incorporation of non-French instrumentation in their songs, and their lexical borrowings from various languages spoken worldwide.
Methodology

The thesis takes a case study approach to explore the ideas proposed above in a corpus consisting of 23 songs by thirteen rappers were selected for analysis. The artists featured in the thesis are successful musicians who critically engage with new issues and themes in French rap in an interesting fashion. The analysis relies heavily on close readings of song lyrics as well as consideration of instrumentation and delivery in addition to interviews with the artists, background information about them, and scholarly and journalistic articles about their music and the trends they represent. Instead of analyzing the entirety of each song, a mix of summary and detailed analysis of certain portions of each song is used for the sake of length.

For the chapter on Islam in French hip hop, I draw much of my analysis from the Qur’an, hadith and scholarly articles dealing with concepts in Islam such as *shahada* and *jihad* in order to explore the evidence of Islam in the songs chosen. I have chosen these sources because the artists, whether directly or indirectly, make references to idea expressed in these texts. Furthermore, they help to frame the artists’ demonstration of their faith in the music. The Qur’an is used because the rappers discussed often refer to events or individuals who are in the Qur’an, making the text important a framework. The hadith chosen help to discover other references made by the rappers discussed that are not found in the Qur’an but rather in the reported sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. I also use sources on Sufism such as the *Kashf al-Mahjūb*, a treatise on Sufi teachings for parts of the chapter because of the five artists studied in the chapter on Islam two are Sufis and others among them reference Sufi teachings, namely the distinction between the greater *jihad* and the lesser *jihad*.

The chapter on gender and sexuality makes use of the *la maman* (the mom)/ *la putain* (the whore) framework explained to me in an interview I conducted with feminist hip hop journalist Eloise Bouton. The framework is also present in the thesis of Anne-Sophie Davy,
whom I reference during the second chapter. This framework is important in helping establish the binary into which women are forced in French hip hop and more importantly it allows me to demonstrate how these artists break from stereotypes pushed onto them in French hip hop. When discussing misogyny in French hip hop, I base my conception of the term on David Gilmore’s conception of misogyny which defines misogyny as a “sexual prejudice that is symbolically exchanged (shared) among men, attaining praxis.” This definition helps to frame the discrimination against women in French hip hop as a practice with values and meaning attached to it. Additional concepts to which I refer in the chapter on gender sexuality are the ideas of “sexual entrepreneurship,” coined by researchers Laura Harvey and Rosalind Gill and “patriarchal bargains” defined by Deniz Kandiyoti. Harvey and Gill define “sexual entrepreneurship” as representative of a new femininity that combines “discourses of sexual freedom for women, intimately entangled with attempts to recuperate this to (male-dominated) consumer capitalism.” “Patriarchal bargains,” Kandiyoti explains, refer to the constraints in which women find themselves. The constraints that bind women, the researcher argues, differ based on the contexts the women are in. She posits that the strategies used by women in patriarchal systems seek to maximize their security while maintaining varying possibilities for either passive or active resistance. These concepts help me frame how French female rappers are working from within hip hop in order to question, challenge, and ultimately change it.

In the third chapter which focuses on globalization in French hip hop, I use James Lull’s three-step framework of appropriation in order to propose a new trend that I argue is occurring in

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9 Ibid.
French hip hop. Lull bases his model of appropriation on three steps, deterritorialization, cultural melding, and reterritorialization.\(^{10}\) The first step, deterritorialization refers to the process of cultural products moving through space or time.\(^{11}\) When a cultural product is moved from one location to another, it is deterritorialized. Once a cultural product moves from its original cultural context to another, it enters the cultural melding phase.\(^{12}\) During the cultural melding phase, the imported cultural product takes on aspects of the new host culture, eventually becoming suited to the new host culture’s needs, tastes, and realities. Reterritorialization defines the completion of the importation and adaptation of an imported cultural product where the product has fully melded with the new host culture and develops a completely new culture of its own, separate from the original culture.\(^{13}\) This product can be defined as glocalized, in that it is a global product that has become localized in a particular region.\(^{14}\)

English translations will accompany the lyrics in the body of the thesis and in the appendices, where each song’s lyrics will be available in its entirety. Though English translations are provided, it is to be noted that rap music is poetry and translating the full meaning of poetry from one language to another is nearly impossible, thus some meanings or rhythmic qualities may be lost in the translations of the songs.


\(^{11}\) Ibid, 239.


\(^{13}\) Ibid, 253.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, 249.
Chapter 1: The Umma on the Mic: Muslim Narratives in French Hip hop

In order to evaluate and demonstrate the importance of Islam in current French hip hop music, we must first understand the role that laïcité, the French ideal of secularism which seeks to completely remove the influence of religion from the public and private spheres of French life, plays in the struggles of Muslims in France. Additionally, we must understand circumstances that led to the revalorization of Islam among French youths in the 1980s, who saw it as a means by which to create an identity of their own, separate from that of their parents, many of whom came to France from former French colonies in the 1960s and 1970s.1 In 1905, in order to prevent the encroachment of religion on the public sphere as had been the case throughout much of France’s history, the government passed a law establishing the separation of church and state. This separation then codified what is known as laïcité, which seeks to prevent any sort of convergence of church and state.2 Laïcité is construed as creating a separation between the public and private spheres, where religion is supposed to remain in the private sphere, obligating people to take this separation into account and to act accordingly. Another law that influenced the lives of Muslim in France is the Jules Ferry law of 1882, named after the French minister of public education Jules Ferry, established that primary school be mandatory, free, and secular demonstrating a separation of church and school.3

With the suspension of the immigration work laws in 1974, many of the men who worked in France faced a difficult choice: stay in France or go back home? For many of these men, the decision was to stay in France and raise their families. Through familial reunification, immigrant

https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/e/9780429964879/chapters/10.4324%2F9780429496325-2 The law would be later referenced in debates on Muslim head coverings in public schools.
men working in France could have their families join them⁴. In 1981, immigrants were granted
the right to form associations after a reform of the 1901 law on associations, which guaranteed
the right for French citizens to create organizations. The reform led to the rise of groups
dedicated towards helping Muslims adjust to life in France.⁵ Following the influx of immigrants
from North and soon after, West Africa throughout the 1970s and 1980s, French children of
immigrant descent felt a malaise as they found themselves ostracized and alienated from French
society despite the fact that, in many cases, they had been born in France and were citizens. The
children of North and West African immigrants who came of age in the 1980s are referred to as
the “Second Generation.”

Foremost among the “Second Generation,” were the Beurs, youths of North African
descent who came of age in the 1980s and sought equality in France. The slang term “Beur”
comes from the French word, Arabe (Arab) but reversed and altered.⁶ The Beurs created a
culture of their own with music groups, after school programs and radio shows.⁷ Radio-Beur
(Beur Radio) allowed young people of North African descent to spread their culture to the
masses and to the older generation of North Africans living in France, allowing them to better
connect to their children.⁸ The radio stations also served to discuss matters related to associations
and initiatives in the community.⁹

⁴ Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, “Seconde génération : le cas français,” in Musulmans de France et d’Europe, eds.
http://books.openedition.org/editionscnrs/2867
⁵ Patrick Haenni, “La France Face à Ses Musulmans: Émeutes, Jihadisme Et Dépolitisation.” Esprit 328, no.10
⁶ Bowen, Can Islam Be French? : Pluralism and Pragmatism in a Secularist State, 21. The term for this altering of
the word is the French word verlan, which consists of inverting the syllables of a word. So, arabe> beara>ber> beur,
ocasionally, users of verlan will drop some sounds of the words they choose to invert.
⁷ Ibid, 21.
⁹ Ibid.
During the summer of 1983 in Les Minguettes, a neighborhood of housing projects of the city of Vénissieux, outside Lyon, police officers shot and gravely wounded Toumi Djaidja, a young man who was president of an association.\(^\text{10}\) After his near-death encounter with the police, Djaidja gathered young French people of various backgrounds, especially Beurs to protest in *La marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme* (The March for Equality and Against Racism) in 1983 which came to be known as *la Marche des Beurs*, the Beur March, whose goal was to denounce the racism suffered by the “Second generation”.\(^\text{11}\)

The march began when Toumi Djadja partnered with father Christian Delorme and around 40 others.\(^\text{12}\) The group left Marseille in October of 1983, travelling throughout France, until they made it to Paris. By the time the group had arrived at the capital, the protesters numbered around 100,000.\(^\text{13}\) The same year of *La marche pour l’égalité et contre le racisme*, the Beur movement split. Some chose to channel the political spirit of their into joining the Socialist party and believed in a colorblind approach to resolving issues of racism while others, frustrated with the lack of results of the political path, chose to turn to the teachings of Islam in order to create an identity and community for themselves.\(^\text{14}\)

In Islam, these youths were allowed to create identities that found support among one another, but also across the world, anchoring themselves in both a newly found French-Muslim identity but also in a global Muslim community. In order to establish and validate their identity, young Muslims in France required places of prayer in order to practice their faith, and by extension, legitimize and anchor it within French society. Many of these youths sought out what

\(^{10}\) Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, “Seconde génération : le cas français,” 6.

\(^{11}\) Ibid.


\(^{13}\) Ibid.

they defined as “true Islam” which would allow them to find an identity separate from that of their parents and non-Muslim French people. Many searched for an understanding of Islam in a way that was not linked to the cultural traditions of any one Muslim country. As Islamic institutions began to form, they approached teaching the religion in a way that responded to living life as Muslims in France. In 1987, Young Muslims founded the Union des Jeunes Musulmans (UJM, Young Muslim’s Union) in order to have religious representation in the fight for religious equality because the Beur movement was largely secular, as its aims were to fight against racism and to bring justice to communities of color throughout France. Two years later in 1989, the destruction of a mosque in a city in Isère caused tensions between Muslims and non-Muslims over Muslims’ right to gather and practice Islam.

Youths took up their spray cans and vandalized the town hall of Charvieu-Chavagneux in response to the destruction of a local mosque. The mayor of the town denounced the young people as terrorists, exacerbating the already tense relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims in Charvieu-Chavagneux. By 1985, the number of prayer rooms in France had risen to 500 from 100 in 1970, in part due to strikes led by Muslim workers in Paris during the 1970s, demonstrating some progress having been made in providing Muslims with spaces to practice their religion. In general, however, during the 1980s, requests put in by Muslims were often rejected when wanting to establish an actual mosque instead of a simple prayer room. Cesari writes that leaders of Islamic associations viewed prayer rooms as toleration of Muslims while

16 Ibid, 24.
17 Ibid, 22.
mosques represented legitimacy of the religion, which is why leaders desired the permission to build mosques.\textsuperscript{21} While the Charvieu-Chavagneux affair stirred up controversy and brought up questions of the integration of and relations with the Muslim community, it would be \textit{l’Affaire du foulard} (The Headscarf Affair) that would push the issue of \textit{laïcité} into mainstream discussion.

In September of 1989, the principal of the Collège Gabriel-Havez in Creil decided to expel three young girls for wearing hijabs in class, launching a nation-wide debate on integration and what constituted \textit{laïcité} in France.\textsuperscript{22} As discussed earlier in the chapter, \textit{laïcité} exists to separate the public from the private spheres regarding religion. For many, the hijab in and of itself did not pose any threats, but it was its wearing in a public school, a location first determined to be \textit{laïque} in 1882 with the Jules Ferry law, that stirred the controversy.\textsuperscript{23} The school claimed that by wearing the hijab, the girls were violating \textit{laïcité} and the neutrality of the public school.\textsuperscript{24}

In France, the school represents the institution where youths learn to be French citizens and understand the ideas of France’s republican system, which in sum, requires adherence to a common set of values that eclipse private and communal ones.\textsuperscript{25} As such, the wearing of the hijab constitutes, in the eyes of some, a violation of that notion because wearing the hijab in a public school would then make schools have to accommodate other religious garments. Despite the focus placed on the hijab, the real question was not of the garment, but of integration, as indicated by representatives of the social group \textit{SOS Racisme} and a poll in November of 1989 that found that 50\% of those polled believed that most immigrants in France could not be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{21} Jocelyne Cesari, “L’islam à domicile,” 82.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Ina Société, “PRINCIPE DE LAICITE,” YouTube Video, 2:25, July 9, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XkNqGESPbYM.
  \item \textsuperscript{24} Bowen, \textit{Why the French don’t like headscarves: Islam, the state, and public space}, 83.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Bowen, \textit{Why the French don’t like headscarves: Islam, the state, and public space}, 11-12
\end{itemize}
integrated.\textsuperscript{26} From 1989 onward, France would witness more and more “affaires du foulard.” Additionally, with 9/11 and the 2004 law on religious signs, tensions between the Muslim community and the rest of French society intensified. On March 15, 2004, the Commission of Reflection on the Application of the Principal of Laïcité in the Republic recommended the passing of a law banning students from wearing “ostensible religious signs” in public schools, meaning that upon entering a public school, one was required to remove any garment that indicated religious affiliation.\textsuperscript{27} The French Parliament then passed the law. For Muslim girls, the law meant that they were obligated to remove their hijabs before they could set foot into school. For many French people, the hijab and other head coverings worn by Muslim women are seen as regressive and threatening to the women’s liberty.\textsuperscript{28} However, the hijab can take on a variety of meanings for the women who wear it. Some Muslim women who wear the hijab view it as a means by which to connect to Islam and wear it out of a feeling of duty to God in the sense that they feel it obligatory to wear as Muslim women.\textsuperscript{29} Other women express that they wear the hijab as a means to gain respect and avoid harassment.\textsuperscript{30} For example, a woman interviewed in Dounia Bouzar and Saïda Kada’s \textit{L’une voilée, l’autre pas} (\textit{One veiled, the Other Not}), explained that by wearing the hijab, her family gave her more freedom to live as she pleased as opposed to the restraints forced on her when she did not wear it.\textsuperscript{31} Some women wear hijab as a symbol of the heritage identity, notably for women who immigrated to France and for whom the hijab is a part of them.\textsuperscript{32} Others may choose to wear it during their adolescence to demonstrate

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid. 85.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 136.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Dounia Bouzar and Saïda Kada, \textit{L’une voilée, l’autre pas} (Paris : Albin Michel, 2003), 25.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Ibid, 51.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Bouzar and Saïda Kada, \textit{L’une voilée, l’autre pas} 51.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Françoise Gaspard and Farhad Khrosrokhavar, \textit{Le foulard et la république} (Paris : La découverte, 1997), 35.
\end{itemize}
their faith and then stop wearing it later, transforming the wearing of the hijab into a rite of passage that transforms the Muslim girl into a woman.\(^{33}\)

The events of 9/11 impacted the lives of French Muslims as they became linked to terrorism. “C’est cette date-là qui a vraiment assassiné la religion musulmane” (“This is date that really killed the Islamic faith.”).\(^{34}\) This quote offered by a stylist in France, encapsulates the attitude of French Muslims following 9/11. Following the Khaled Kelkal terrorist attack six years prior when the young man set off a bomb in a Paris metro station, killing 4 and injuring 40 others, and protests in favor of Palestinians in 2000, 9/11 would solidify the image of the Muslim as the perpetual outsider.\(^{35}\) We see this image perpetuated through the different ways in which Muslims have been separated from French people. For example, many live in the HLM (Habitation à Loyer Modéré), low-rent housing complexes on the outskirts of major cities such as Paris. The distance physical distance from major cities reinforces the societal distance that exists between people who live in the banlieue (suburbs) and outside of it in that narratives of the banlieue often push it as a no-go zone or a place that seems completely removed from mainstream French society, though the banlieue is a part of French society.

Nina, a Muslim woman, explained in an interview how she felt the need to hide her identity and censor herself after 9/11.\(^{36}\) Before the attacks, she reported feeling able to have discussions on a variety topics without people using her religion against her. For example, before 9/11 when asked about the rise of religious extremism in France, she replied that it was a two-fold problem, citing French society as an actor in the “repli identitaire” observed with those

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\(^{33}\) Gaspard and Khrosrokhavar, Le foulard et la république, 37-38.

\(^{34}\) Karim Miské, Emmanuel Blanchard, and Mohammed Joseph, Musulmans de France : de 1904 à nos jours.

\(^{35}\) Ibid.

who became radicalized.\textsuperscript{37} To this answer, the woman was often met with agreement or debate.\textsuperscript{38} However, following the September 11th attacks, people accused her of incorrectly blaming French society for problems faced by people of Maghrebi descent in France.\textsuperscript{39} In her article on being Muslim in a post-9/11 France, Santelli argues there exists an Islam de cœur (Islam of the heart) and an Islam réfléchi (Islam of the mind). The former represents a laicized Islam rooted in tradition as opposed to the latter which describes an Islam rooted in Quranic study.\textsuperscript{40} She goes on to assert that majority of Muslim in France follow the Islam de cœur, and that they live moving back and forth between the French and North-African or West African worlds.\textsuperscript{41} The Islam réfléchi reflects the cultural and ethical branches of Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s schema on the different relationships people have with religion.\textsuperscript{42} Those who practice Santelli’s Islam réfléchi, will often fast for Ramadan, or not eat pork, representing the cultural aspect, but also pray and follow the Qur’an, reflecting the ethical which deals with universal values and individual consciousness.\textsuperscript{43} The prayer and reading of the Qur’an differentiates one who practices Islam de cœur from one who practices Islam réfléchi. The idea of the Islam de cœur and an Islam réfléchi raises once more the question of the existence of an Islam de France, a version of Islam created in France that exists alongside French beliefs, namely laïcité. The idea of an Islam de France (Islam of France) corresponds with Amel Boubekeur’s “cool Islam.”

The concept of “cool Islam” centers on participation in larger, mainstream culture through an Islamic lens, reflecting what John Bowen terms Islam de France because it seeks to

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{37} Ibid
\bibitem{38} Ibid.
\bibitem{39} Ibid.
\bibitem{40} Ibid, 147.
\bibitem{41} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
adapt to the host culture of the country in which diasporic Muslims reside, in this case French culture. Essentially, “cool Islam” consists of adding Islamic features to secular aspects of culture such as Islamic street wear, Islamic soft drinks, or Muslim rap. In line with Santelli’s *Islam de coeur*, “cool Islam” involves re-interpreting adjusting Muslim ideals to fit secular culture. For example, Muslim entrepreneurs may focus on the Prophet Muhammad as a merchant when opening a business, using the life of the Prophet as a model for their way of life.

The idea of entrepreneurship refers to the “competitive” aspect of “cool Islam.” Amel Boubekeur argues that the with “cool Islam,” the religion has found a place in capitalism and that it is a tool with which younger generations of Muslims can integrate and compete economically with non-Muslim brands while still maintaining their roots. “For the consumers, this culture, will also give them a pride to be westernized Muslims in an Islamic and non-polemical way,” asserts the writer who believes that “cool Islam” is the way for youths to blend the two sides of their identities in a post-9/11 world. While cool Islam appears to be a win-win situation for both the Muslims and the societies in which they live, the question of Islamic authenticity is raised. “Cool Islam’s” focus on melding the religious and the secular, raises the question of Islam potentially losing its authenticity. Boubekeur writes in response, “... the new elites will increasingly insert this Islamic reference in a cultural imaginary which is finding ways to get in touch with their

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45 Amel Boubekeur, “Cool and Competitive Muslim Culture in the West,” *ISIM* 16, no. 1 (2005): 1, accessed April 11, 2018, [https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/16999/ISIM_16_Cool_and_Competitive_Muslim_Culture_in_the_West.pdf?sequence=1](https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/16999/ISIM_16_Cool_and_Competitive_Muslim_Culture_in_the_West.pdf?sequence=1).
46 Ibid.
identity as modern Muslims.” For the researcher, the participation of young Muslims in Western society will require them to think more deeply about their faith and lead them to make the effort to integrate it more into their lives. On the same subject, Imam Tariq Oubrou believes that Islam must be reexamined and modified to fit into Western society through analysis of Western religious and secular thinkers, but even if this were to happen, the imam maintains that the core and fundamentals of Islam would remain unchanged. Additionally, if we take into account the words of many young Muslims in France, it appears that being in France allowed them to discover “true Islam” as we discussed earlier, despite having grown up in a Western, secular society.

The inclusion of Islam in French rap contributes to an ongoing discussion about the negotiation of Islam and French Ideals. In French rap, we see the debate play out on a street level, the rapper taking on an imam-like role in presenting a version of Islam that addresses both the struggles relating to identity with French youths and the fear and skepticism associated with the religion as it relates to France’s republican system. The rapper-as-imam idea deals with imparting knowledge to youths in ways that respond to their lives, especially for those who do not attend mosques. Muslim rapper acts as a sort of imam in order to impart wisdom on the religion in a way that responds to the secularized realities of many young Muslims and reach out to those who still seek to pursue their faith, but may not have the means or time to go to the mosque.

These different varieties of Islam discussed (Islam de/en France, Islam de coeur/ réfléchi, and cool and competitive Islam) find themselves in the songs of Muslim rappers, providing a

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48 Boubekeur, “Cool and Competitive Muslim Culture in the West,” 1.
number of possible interpretations of the religion in France. A vehicle for the nuancing and personalizing of the religion, French rap presents images of individuality and personalization in what may come to be known as French or Western Islam in that this variety of Islam would be tailored to laïcité because of its focus on maintaining one’s beliefs in the private sphere. In these images, the rapper presents his or her faith as cultural and mystical. In this chapter, we will examine the importance of Islam in French rap through four different manifestations of the religion, conversion, inner jihad, combatting stereotypes, and Samir Amghar’s concept of the rapper-as-imam in order to demonstrate the importance of Islam in French rap music and how it promotes an Islam in line with French values.50

1.1 Shahada/Conversion in French Muslim rap

Conversion as a theme appears in French hip hop as a rite of passage tale, with artists often describing it as a rebirth or a sign of maturation in the mental and emotional senses. It constitutes an alternate form of the shahada, one of the 5 pillars of Islam—the others being salat (prayer/صلاة), zakat (almsgiving/زكاة), sawm (fasting/صوم), and hajj (pilgrimage/حج). The shahada commonly refers to admitting that God is one’s only god and that Muhammad is the messenger of God. An example of the shahada can be found first in Qur’an 37:35, which discusses the Day of Judgment and the acknowledgement of God. On a linguistic level, the noun shahada (شهادة) comes from the verb šahida (شَهِيدََ), whose definitions include: “to witness”, “to experience personally”, “to testify”, “to bear witness”, “to give testimony”, and more. The definitions of these words emphasize the role of the individual in the conversion process; one must act with intentionality when converting and go beyond simply declaring God as their god. They must feel God’s presence enter their lives. Three rap songs that offer different perspectives on the theme of shahada/conversion are “Gibraltar” by Abd al Malik, “28 décembre 1977” by Kery James, and “Dirigé vers l’est” by Akhenaton of IAM.

1.1.1 Abd al Malik, “Gibraltar”: From the Tabligh to Sufi Islam

Born Regis Fayette-Mikano in 1975, Abd al Malik grew up in the Neuhof suburb of Strasbourg, France. He spent much of his childhood performing delinquent acts, such as pickpocketing. However, he did well in school and in order to keep him from falling into a life

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3 The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, s.v “shahada.”
of crime, Abd al Malik’s mother placed him in private school.  

In his song “Gibraltar”, which follows the Strasbourg rapper’s life before and after conversion through the lens of a black man in search of his identity, we notice a complete transformation of identity as the rapper converts to Sufism from the Tabligh sect of Islam. This song is a reference to the strait of Gibraltar in Spain named after the Moorish ruler, Tariq ibn-Ziyad. Gibraltar comes from the Arabic, Gebal Tarik, meaning Mountain of Tarik. The choice of this title suggests a halfway point between Europe (France) and Morocco where Abd al Malik finds himself. Released in 2006, seven years after his conversion to Sufism, Abd al Malik walks the listeners through his journey.

Before embracing Sufi teachings, the artist belonged to the Tabligh sect of Islam which began in 1880 under the guidance of Muhammad Ismail in Pakistan and has since spread across the world. Followers of this sect of Islam took their first steps in France to spread their message around 1960 and eventually gained the status of a non-profit under the title Foi et Pratique (Faith and Practice) in 1972. From the 1980s, the Tabligh’s followers became younger in age as more of the movement’s followers reached out to youths in the suburbs of cities such as Strasbourg, Lyon, and Marseille where many immigrants and their children reside. The movement stressed the importance of following a strict interpretation of Islam, so followers would sometimes cut themselves off entirely from anything that could separate them from God. For example, they would stop watching television or listening to music, preferring to pray instead. Many youths

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6 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
10 Ibid
joined the Tabligh because it gave them a sense of purpose and acceptance in a society that often discriminated against people of color.\textsuperscript{12} Abd al Malik eventually left the sect because he discovered that it ran counter to what he felt was right. The sect demanded that the rapper quit making music because they considered it to be a sin. “Mon cœur me disait ‘non’,” (“My heart was telling me ‘no’.”) expressed his in an interview when asked why he chose to leave the Tabligh.\textsuperscript{13} For the rapper, music proved to be more important than the sect, so he parted ways with the followers of the Tabligh.\textsuperscript{14}

In the first lines of the song, Malik foreshadows the eventual voyage to Morocco he would make to study Sufism. Sufism is the mystic sect of Islam. The Sufis differ from other Muslim sects in that it focuses heavily on denial of the \textit{nafs} (نفس) or the lower self.\textsuperscript{15} While most Muslims believe in denying the \textit{nafs}, Sufis conceptualize the battle against oneself as the “greater jihad” as opposed to the “lesser jihad,” representing war. Once a Sufi conquers the \textit{nafs}, they may attain ‘\textit{ifran} or gnosis, a state in which God has entered the Sufi’s heart, allowing the Sufi to know God while still on Earth.\textsuperscript{16} Within Sufism, several orders exist, each one instructing its followers to live different lifestyles in order to become close to God.\textsuperscript{17} For example, some orders require that their followers live a life of poverty, whereas others do not.\textsuperscript{18} After the first lines of the song, Abd al Malik continues with the verse, tackling issues that he and others face in France such as that those of loneliness and hate. He raps:

“Il cherche comme un chien sans collier le foyer qu'il n'a en fait jamais eu

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Abd al Malik, interview by C à vous, \textit{C à vous} September 9, 2014, retrieved from YouTube, \url{https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=twbfZmqCh10}.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid, 10.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid, 13.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
Et se dit que peut-être, bientôt, il ne cherchera plus.”¹⁹

(“Like a dog without a collar, he’s looking for the home he never really had
And tells himself that he might stop searching soon.”)

Before his conversion to Sufism, Abd al Malik described himself as a dog without a collar, invoking the image that he was not even a man, and that he did not become one until he accepted the path of Sufism. He confirms this with the following lines, where he raps, “Soudain il se fait derviche tourneur / il danse sur le bar / il danse / il n'a plus peur”²⁰ (“He becomes a whirling dervish / he dances on the bar / he dances / he’s no longer scared”). Here, we see a direct reference to the Melevi Sufi branch of Islam, known for its whirling dervishes, a spinning dance whose origins go back to the 13th century with its creator Jalalu’ddin Rumi, the Sufi poet and mystic.²¹ The act is performed while invoking the name of God and it serves to symbolize dhikr (ذکر), defined as “recolleciton”, “remembrance”, “memory”, or “commemoration”.²² The loss of Abd al Malik’s fear symbolizes his newfound faith as a structure holding him up and allowing him to develop his sensitivity as explained in the following line: “Qui chante, dit enfin ‘je t’aime’ à cette vie / Puis les autres le sentent, le suivent”²³ (“Who sings, finally says, ‘I love you’ to this life / Then others feel it, follow him”).

The conversion gave the man the ability to appreciate life, to love it. Furthermore, since becoming a Sufi, Abd al Malik has gained an aura that makes others follow in the Sufi rapper’s footsteps; he becomes a leader because of his Sufism. Here, Abd al Malik explains to his

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²⁰ Abd al Malik, “Gibraltar,” lines 11-12.
²¹ Shems Friedlander and Nezih Uzel, The Whirling Dervishes Being an Account of the Sufi Order Known as the Mevlevis and Its Founder the Poet and Mystic Mevlana Jalalu'ddin Rumi (Albany: State University of New York, 1992), xix.
²² The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, s.v “dhikr.” Wehr also defines dhikr as “(in Sufism) incessant repetition of certain words or formulas in praise of God, often accompanied by music and dancing”
listeners that with Sufism came power and a peace in his life. The song ends with the summation of Abd al Malik’s conversion in Morocco as he declares that it turned him into a man.

“Un jeune Noir vogue, vogue vers le Maroc tout proche
Vogue vers ce Maroc qui fera de lui un homme
Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, sur le détroit de Gibraltar
Vogue, vogue vers le merveilleux royaume du Maroc”

("A young black man sails, sails towards the ever so close Morocco
Sails towards this Morocco that will make him a man
On the Strait of Gibraltar, on the Strait of Gibraltar
He sails, sails towards the marvelous kingdom of Morocco.”)²⁴

In an interview with newspaper Maroc Aujourd’hui, the rapper explained that during a trip to Morocco he discovered "l’universalité de l’Islam" (“universality of Islam”) which would push him to reflect on his own life and his duty to be a proper Muslim, to promote unity and love, and to follow God.²⁵ He explains that before studying under the Moroccan Sufi scholar Sidi Hamza Al Qadiri Boutchichi, he followed the teachings of the Tabligh sect of Islam and that he only saw a small portion of what he could learn in from practicing Islam.²⁶ During this interview, he references Qur’an 49:13, which reads, "People, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognize one another. In God’s eyes, the most honored of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware.”²⁷ Thus, for Abd al Malik, Islam represents the gathering of people from diverse backgrounds, regardless of religion. Abd al Malik believes that Islam allows people to connect with one another to understand the “other.”

²⁶ Ibid.
1.1.2 Kery James, “28 décembre 1977”: The Transformation of a Gangster into a Muslim

In this song, named after the birthday of Alix Mathurin, known as Kery James, listeners witness a man rise from poverty to material wealth only to be humbled by death and reborn with spiritual wealth. While Abd al Malik’s conversion experience focused on identity and finding his place, Kery James focuses more on being saved from his past and finding a renewed purpose and drive in life. There are no wind or string instruments on the album on which this song is found, *Si c’était à refaire* (If it could be done again), because of a *hadith* Kery James read which forbade the use of such instruments. The first lines of the song are, “28 décembre 77, aux Abymes j’suis né d'une famille plus proche d'être pauvre que d'être fortuné.” (“I was born in Abymes on December 28th of ’77, to a family more poor than rich”). These lyrics frame his conversion experience and bring the listener into the space he is creating. Throughout the first verse, he touches on the factors that led him to a life of crime such as the desire to no longer be poor and the humiliation he felt as a young man in the *banlieue* wearing knock-off sneakers rapping, “Avant je ne portais pas de Nike Air, mais plutôt des Jokers, mon style vestimentaire provoquait des sourires moqueurs” (“Before, I didn’t wear Nike Airs, but rather Jokers, my style led to mocking smiles”). In the second verse he describes a problem familiar to many who grow up in situations of poverty: be in the streets or focus on school. James raps:

“Elle m'avait toujours guetté, mais jusque-là je l'avais feintée 
Et avant que je puisse me rendre compte, elle m’a emporté avec elle 
Est venue l'époque que j’appelle entre rap et business.”

(“The streets always watched me, but I always got away until then

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28 Amghar, “Rap et islam : quand le rappeur devient imam,”85. It should be noted that interdiction of wind instruments in Islam is highly debated, with many sources citing the Qur’an or hadith to argue their points. It should also be noted that many musical traditions rooted in Islam exist and it is likely Kery James read the hadith out of context. That being said, this piece of information is included to represent Kery James’ interpretation of Islam. A *hadith* is a reported saying of the Prophet Muhammad.


31 Ibid, lines 51-53.
And before I knew, the streets already got me
And that’s how the time I call between rap and business started.”

Here James describes the lure of the streets to the listener; often one believes that they can dodge the temptation to participate in illicit activity. However, as his lines explain, staying away from crime can be difficult. He also calls attention to the falsehood that once one begins to rap, one is immediately free from the realities of the banlieue. "Entre rap et business"("between rap and dealing") he terms this period in his life, signaling the crossroads at which he found himself before his conversion to Islam. He then proceeds to list illicit drugs he sold and the money he amassed during the "business" parts of his life, but contrasts this side of his life with the sales he and his group, Mafia K'I Fry were seeing. The plot of his life as a drug dealer thickens as his enemies grow in number, resulting in the artist having to remain constantly armed (“on sort enfouraillé”).32 Kery James eventually meets L.A.S, a friend who would save the rapper from the streets, but at the cost of his friend’s life.33 “L.A.S nous a quitté subitement” (“L.A.S. left us early.”), the rapper informs us, followed by "Qu’Allah le préserve du châtiment" (“May God spare him punishment”), asking that his friend be forgiven for the sins he committed while he was alive.34 Later in the song, Kery James reminds the listeners of the fact that the acts he committed before his conversion have stayed and will always stay with him, regardless of what he does.

“Je t'assure, je garde les traces de mon passé
Tu sais, ces choses qu'on ne pourra pas effacer
Puis j'ai appris l'Islam cette religion honorable
De transmission orale auprès de gens bons et fiables
Elle m'a rendu ma fierté, m'a montré ce qu'était un homme”35

32 Ibid, line 66. “We step out strapped”
34 Kery James, “28 décembre 1977,” lines 77-78.
(“I assure you, I keep the traces of my past
You know, these things you can’t erase
Then I learned about Islam, this honorable religion
Through oral transmission with good, trustworthy people
Islam returned my pride to me and showed me what a man was.”

At this point in the song he is at the point of conversion. Similarly to Abd al Malik, the discovery of Islam helped Kery James mature and learn what was right and returned to him the pride he had lost during his drug-dealing days. He continues to say that his study of Islam aided him in confronting the demons that haunt humans (lust, greed, deceit, etc) in the lines that follow:

“Mes yeux se sont ouverts, mon cœur s'est épanoui
Me fut dévoilé, peu à peu tout ce qui m'a nuit”
Jusqu'à ce que je devienne de ceux qui s'inclinent et se prosternent”36

(“My eyes opened, my heart opened up
Little by little, everything that harmed me was unveiled to me
Until I joined those who bend over and bow down.”)

Kery James explains that through his adoption of Islam, he was able to address the mistakes of his past and turn him into one who orients himself and bows, referencing one of the five pillars in Islam, salat (prayer/صلاة). The line also explains that one must pray in the direction of Mecca. Towards the end of the track, he acknowledges Islam’s role in saving his life and his newfound mission in life:

“Et quand je regarde mon passé, j'ai failli y passer
Si je n'avais eu l'Islam peut-être que je me serais fait repasser
Ou la moitié de ma vie en prison, j'aurais passé
Pour ceux qui y sont passés, ici, j'ai une pensée
Mais combien sont partis sans avoir eu le temps de se préparer ?
Chargés de pêchés et d'injustices à réparer
Avant que la mort, ne me vienne, faut que je répare les miennes
Si je veux récolter du bien, c'est du bien qu'il faut que je sème”37

(“And when I look at my past, I almost went back

If I didn’t have Islam, maybe I would’ve been back in it
Or I would’ve spent half my life in prison
For those who have been there, here, I have a thought
But how many left without having had the time to prepare themselves?
Filled with sins and injustices to repair
Before death comes to me, I have to repair mine
If I want to harvest goodness, then it’s goodness that I must sow.”)

In this passage, James expresses that he would have spent half of his life in prison if not for adopting Islam and he also demonstrates a strong fear of dying with sin and a desire for repentance as evidenced by “chargés de pêchés et d'injustices à réparer.” James then declares his goal, which is to do right by those he wronged and to be a proper follower of God. Kery James’ conversion presents the listener an image of a man trapped by fast money and crime who finds God in time to rescue himself but not those around him, creating a powerful testimony that can resonate with listeners.

1.1.3 Akhenaton, “Dirigé vers l’est”: From Catholicism to Islam
The 1995 album Métèque et Mat by rapper Philippe Fragione, better known as Akhenaton, explores the two sides of his identities as a Franco-Italian and a Muslim. In an interview on the making of this album, Akhenaton expressed that he chose to make this album individually because he wanted it to be received as its own project and not as an IAM album. Akhenaton also used this album as a means to prove to himself that he was capable of producing a solo project. The Marseille rapper explained that the album title represented the arrival and

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38 Ibid, line 122.
39 A play on the words “échec et mat”, French for “checkmate with instead “métèque” which is a slur aimed at immigrants, specifically Italians.
41 Ibid.
the reception of immigrants in France.\textsuperscript{42} To delve deeper into his Italian heritage, Akhenaton went to Naples, Italy, where his family is from, to record the album.\textsuperscript{43}

In terms of his exposure to Islam, he explained in an interview with media outlet Agora Vox France that he developed his knowledge of the religion through the works of Sufi poet Jalalu’ddin Rumi and Sufi scholar Ibn al-’Arabī, again promoting a more mystical image of Islam as opposed to more fundamentalist interpretations of the religion which he criticizes by citing the nature of Arabic.\textsuperscript{44} “La langue arabe est tellement subtile qu’elle a donné lieu à des tas d’interprétations… qui sont diamétralement opposées” (“The Arabic language is so subtle that it has led to many interpretations… that are diametrically opposed [to one another].”), argued the rapper, defending against those who cast Islam as only a religion of oppression and terror.\textsuperscript{45}

In this same interview, he joked that he may have converted because of the oppression Italians faced during Mussolini’s reign and the Catholic Church’s place in said oppression.\textsuperscript{46} A potential explanation for Sufism’s popularity with rappers such as Abd al Malik and Akhenaton is that the branch focuses on individuals and tends to distance its teachings from politics.\textsuperscript{47} Akhenaton explains that he believes Sufism is more open to others and more spiritual than other branches of Islam.\textsuperscript{48} In the song “Dirigé vers l’est (“Facing East”), whose title refers to the direction of prayer in Islam, Akhenaton gives praise to God, highlighting not only His power, but also the power that he has gained as a rapper and a person. His discussion of conversion does not focus as much on his life beforehand as it does the celebration of his conversion experience. In

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. Akhenaton and Éric Mandel, La face b (Paris : Don Quichotte Editions, 2010), 303.
\textsuperscript{44} Akhenaton, “Akhenaton : "Qu'est-ce qu'un musulman bien intégré?”, interview by O. Bailly and I.Pledel, AgoraVoxFrance, 5 May 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uckw0s7gfrQ
\textsuperscript{45} Akhenaton, “Akhenaton : "Qu'est-ce qu'un musulman bien intégré?”, interview by O. Bailly and I. Pledel.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Sedgwick, Sufism: The Essentials, 12.
\textsuperscript{48} Akhenaton, “Akhenaton : "Qu'est-ce qu'un musulman bien intégré?"
the first verse, Akhenaton touches on many topics, notably his development as a man and his newfound consciousness as it relates to the world around him.

“Je me métamorphose, hors de ma chrysalide
En être de chair et de sang, parti d’un embryon
Dans la direction inverse du carrosse de Cendrillon”

(“I transform myself, outside of my chrysalis
As a being of flesh and blood from an embryo
In the opposite direction of Cinderella’s carriage.”)

In these lines, we see Akhenaton describing a rebirth, a betterment of himself. His use of the word “embryon”(“embryo”) demonstrates that he has started from zero, that Islam allowed him to come back into life with a better lens on life, as he describes in the third line where raps about moving in the opposite direction of Cinderella’s carriage. What he means is that while the carriage becomes something simple and ordinary at the end of the night, he continues to advance in his personal and spiritual life as a result being “dirigé vers l’est” (“facing east”). The Cinderella metaphor also implies that the discovery of Islam added a magical element to his life. The religion represents an ascension beyond the ordinary for the rapper. He continues to talk about his new outlook on life as a result of his conversion in the following lines:

“J'ai tant de respect pour la vie, la preuve
Est que je suis réticent à l'idée de dévorer un œuf”

(“I have so much respect for life, the proof
Is that I am reticent at the thought of eating an egg.”)

Akhenaton’s hesitance to devour an egg demonstrates his respect for life in two senses. The first is in the religious sense. Sufi scholar Ibn al-'Arabī argues that one should not eat animal fat and Abd al-Karim al-Jīlī furthers this claim stating that eating animal fat makes one more like

50 Ibid. annotation on this line,”Dans la direction inverse du carrosse de Cendrillon” provided by Guillaume Simonin and Kingofmetropolis of Rap Genius.
an animal. Eating animal fat can “dominate the spiritual principles”, and overtake a Muslim’s piety. Viewed from this perspective, eating an egg would constitute an infraction against Akhenaton’s faith and on the progress he has made as a man who has converted to Islam. We can also interpret this line as signifying that Akhenaton sees himself in this egg as he referred to himself as an embryo a few lines above. Thus, by consuming this egg, Akhenaton would be depriving a being of the opportunity to develop for the better as he did. Following these two phrases, Akhenaton directly addresses his conversion and his adopting of a new identity and name as a result of it.

“C’est rare, mais j’ai eu la chance, je crois
Celle d’être né, d’être appelé deux fois
Abd al Hâkim, l’insecte
Apparaît à une époque où les divisions revendiquent être la 73ème secte”

(“It’s rare, but I was lucky, I think
I was lucky enough to be called twice
Abd al Hakim, insect
Appears in time where divisions claim to be the 73rd sect.”)

Here he rejoices in the fact of being able to convert and says that he was lucky to become Muslim as it helped him understand the world around him. We also see in these lines that he has chosen a new name for himself, Abd al-Hakim, which translates to “servant to the all wise,” referring to one of the 99 names of God. After that line, he humbles himself to God by calling himself an insect. His calling himself an insect may also refer to his not yet having much experience in the Muslim religion as well as the vastness of the religion and its teachings, which he refers to in the following line. He ends the verse by pointing out divisions in Islam and

53 Akhenaton, *Dirigé vers l’est*, lines 11-14.
different sects, which the Qur’an forbids in many parts such as Qur’an 6:159 where it is revealed to the Prophet,

“As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, have nothing to do with them [Prophet]. Their case rests with God: in time He will tell them about their deeds.”

Here, it is warned that Muslims should not divide themselves and create sects as that would create unnecessary problems. As it concerns the 73rd sect, hadith scholar Abu Dawud claimed that Islam was split into 73 sects and of those sects, the 73rd would be chosen by God.  

Akhenaton/Abd al-Hakim highlights the struggle of defining himself within the Muslim landscape, as there are many options from which to choose, and he also expresses a sort of fear as he does not want to be a part of any of the 72 sects that God will not choose. The chorus, which ends the song, encapsulates Akhenaton’s conversion experience as he further promotes his new outlook on life:

"Attendant la venue d'Aïssa  
Abd al-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est."

("Waiting for the coming of Jesus  
Abd al-Hakim’s always looking east.")

Aïssa (‘Issa) is Jesus’ name in Arabic and in Islam he is the penultimate prophet, with Muhammad being that last of the prophets. The invocation of Aïssa instead of Jesus symbolizes Akhenaton’s distancing from Western culture and his embrace of Arab culture, emphasizing his new outlook on life as “dirigé vers l’est” (“facing east”). His return is referenced in several parts of the Qur’an such as Qur’an 3:45-55 where his life, death and return are revealed. In Islam,

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54 The Qur’an 6:159 (Trans. M.A.S Abdel Haleem)  
56 Akhenaton, Dirigé vers l’est, lines 25-26  
Jesus, known as al-maṣīḥ (the messiah) slays al-masīḥ al-dajjāl, or the false messiah and establishes the jizya (tax on non-Muslims/جزية), which are signs of the arrival of the resurrection. Thus, Akhenaton is informing his listeners that he has chosen Islam as his path and will stay on it until the end of days, signaled by Jesus’ return. The second line, which is also the last line of the song, serves to remind the listener that Akhenaton has changed and that he is now Abd al-Hakim, the convert always looking towards Mecca.

Through our exploration of conversion experiences in French hip hop with these three songs, we find artists who express that their lives have been changed for the better because of Islam, which has given them direction. With it, they are able to share their experiences with listeners, both Muslim and non-Muslim presenting the religion in a positive light. However, maintaining the faith can prove difficult for both converts and those who grew up as Muslims. Muslim rappers struggling to abide by the teachings of Islam present the battle to adhere to their faith as an “inner jihad,” referencing the notion of fighting against one’s nafs, or lower self.

1.2  **Inner Jihad**

The word *jihad* (جهاد) means “fight”, “battle”, or “holy war”, from the triliteral root j-h-d which connotes “to struggle” or “to strive”.¹ Words that more concretely express war in Arabic are harb (حرب) or qital (قتال) according to Douglas E. Streusand². *Jihad* is defined as a “holy war” in many *hadith*, but in one, it was reported that the Prophet Muhammad said, “We have returned from the lesser jihad (al-jihad al-asghar) to the greater jihad (al-jihad al-akbar).”³ When asked about what the greater *jihad* was, Muhammad responded that it was the struggle against oneself.⁴ The notion of the greater *jihad* became a core tenant of many Muslims’ philosophies, notably the Sufis.⁵ The greater *jihad* deals with battling temptations and striving to follow the word of God. This imagery of this *jihad* serves to counter the existing notion that jihad is only about waging war against others. The songs “Mowgli” by PNL, “Je combats avec mes démons” by Akhenaton, and “Jihad” by Médine present three stories of individuals engaging in battles against themselves in order to maintain an adherence to Islam.

1.2.1  **PNL, “Mowgli”: The *Banlieue* Full of Sin**

PNL is a Franco-Algerian duo composed of brothers Ademo (Tarik Andrieu) and N.O.S (Nabil Andrieu) from the Tarterets project (referred to as “TZ for Tarterets Zoo” in the duo’s songs) in the Paris suburb of Corbeil-Essonnes, PNL is a group characterized by their elusiveness, reluctance to do interviews, and their somber, realistic music.⁶ To date, the group has perhaps one interview out, in which they do not address Islam, but say that everything there

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¹ *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, s.v. “jihad”
⁴ Ibid.
⁶ Péron and Lamm, “Dans la légende», la fascination PNL.”
is to learn about them is in their music. This song merits our attention because the group has
amassed considerable success and their music has been praised by French hip hop legends such
as Oxmo Puccino who appreciates the realism of their music.⁷ The image of Islam they present is
that of two young men struggling to maintain their faith. The song, “Mowgli” presents a grim
image of the life of Ademo as he walks the listener through the violence and drug dealing present
around him. He invokes God in the song, but seems unable to fully commit himself to his path
because of secular needs. The song begins:

“Je suis de la jungle, appelle-moi Mowgli
J’ai le seum, j’ai pas le semi
J’étais jeune je coupais un demi
Pas d’amis, j’étais comme Rémi”⁸

(“I’m from the jungle, call me Mowgli
I’ve got the goods, I don’t have trash
I was young, I was cutting half grams
No friends, I was like Rémi.”)

Samir Amghar writes that in French Muslim rap, the battle between good and evil for the
Muslim rapper reflects their relationship with society.⁹ From the beginning of this song, Ademo
takes the listener into the physical and mental space of his suburb which he calls a jungle,
emphasizing the lack of humanity around him and also explaining to his listeners his personal
struggle to maintain himself in such circumstances. In the next two lines, the rapper details how
he was young when he began dealing drugs and the loneliness that ensued. A few lines later,
Ademo describes himself as having red eyes (“les yeux rouges dans la ville”) (“red eyes in the
city”), details selling drugs to drug abusers, and then says “comme un démon, t’as vu,”(“Like a
demon, you feel?”) signaling a recognition of the sinful side of his personality. The following

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⁷ Abcdr du Son, “Oxmo et Georgio parlent de PNL,” YouTube Video, 1:34, April 30, 2016,  
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZY4NSVChLIw.
⁹ Samir Amghar, “Rap et islam : quand le rappeur devient imam,” 84.
lines demonstrate a giving in to temptation and sin as we hear of the rapper’s sexual exploits and his navigating through fog, which refers to the smoke from the drugs he is taking and the space around him being morally unclear and foggy. The middle of the verse features a dialogue between Ademo and God.

“Je parle à Dieu j’appuie sur le bouton
J’ai envie de me sentir libre
Aujourd’hui je poserai torse nu.”

(“I talk to God, then I press the button
I wanna feel free
Today I’ll be posted up shirtless.”)

Right after the rapper prays to God, he presses the button, presumably to the elevator where he lives in order to deal drugs. This line presents the listener with an accurate depiction of what life may be like for many who struggle to follow God’s path. Ademo longs to maintain a relationship with God, but the temptation of money and quick success pull him back to the drug trade. He continues to express a desire to feel free so great that he decides to take off his shirt, representing the only manner in which he can achieve this freedom. It is a physical freedom, but the rapper is in search of a spiritual freedom, one that he would find in God. As the song approaches its end, he discusses the emptiness of his refrigerator and tells the listeners to pray for those in Ademo’s situation to be freed from the demons around them and the temptations that distance them from God. The song comes to an end with Ademo admitting the devil’s presence in his life and that he has lost control of himself.

“Avoue qu’y a rien à voir, que l’avenir tu veux pas y penser
Parce qu’ici c’est noir et qu’Iblis nous fait tous danser
Fais pas le thug avec nous
Wallah qu’on te visera pas les genoux
Pas besoin d’être un milliard on s’en fout que tu vois ou pas les jnouns”

11 Ibid, lines 84-88.
(“Admit that there’s nothing to see, that you don’t want to think about the future
Because it’s dark here and Satan makes us all dance
Don’t try to be a thug with us
Wallah, we won’t aim for your knees
No need to be a billionaire, we don’t care if you see the jnouns or not.”)

The song’s conclusion begins with Ademo ordering the listener to admit that the future
remains frightening or even impossible to think about because Satan has taken over their bodies
and minds. Iblis (أبليس) (“devil or Satan” in Arabic) is the angel who did not bow to Adam when
God instructed all of the angels to bow in Qur’an 2:34 of the Qur’an, then in Qur’an 7:12, Satan
(Lucifer) asserts that he is better than Adam and it is for that reason that he did not bow to him,
causing God to banish Satan in verse 18 of that Surah. The notion that Satan is making Ademo
and those around him dance signifies that Satan has not only whispered into Ademo’s heart, but
that he has gained full control of him, forcing him to complete even the most sinister actions. He
ends the song threatening to kill someone as a result of being manipulated by Satan and tells the
listener that it does not matter whether or not they see the jnouns (plural of djinn), which are
invisible beings who control the bodies of humans. Ademo expresses that even if the reader
does not see the jnouns, it matters little because they control him and many who live in desperate
situations. This song explores the battle to remain afloat in the battle against oneself, and in this
case, failing said battle and succumbing to temptation, a phenomenon that we see across all
faiths, including Islam.

1.2.2 Akhenaton, “Je combats avec mes démons”: Fighting against Sin after Conversion
With this song, Akhenaton presents the listener with a brief tale about his childhood,
detailing how even then he understood that there was more to life than what he saw daily and

12 The Qur’an, 2:34, 7:12, 7:18.
13 Tabie Nathan, “The Djinns,” in Integrating Traditional Healing Practices into Counseling and Psychotherapy,
then moves towards his conversion and the struggles of maintaining his faith after converting. The lyrics of this song fit into the ethical category of Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s four-branch framework for examining neo-religious identity.\(^{14}\) The ethical branch deals with universal values and the conscience of the individual and we see this idea play out as Akhenaton details his struggle in his walk with God.\(^{15}\) The first verse explores Akhenaton’s general desire to remain on the straight and narrow as evidenced by lines such as “Et je rentrais à la maison, le chemin était le test” (And when I went back home, the path back was the test) and “Si tu regardes à gauche, tu vivras heureux, si tu penches à droite, tu mourras jeune et miséreux” (“If you look to the left, you’ll live happily, if you lean to the right, you’ll die young and miserable.”). Here a young Akhenaton foreshadows a struggle that he would confront in the context of Islam, where the stakes would be much higher.\(^{16}\) Akhenaton describes the ease with which one can fall into crime, leading to a life of sin, and eventually, an early death. He ends the verse expressing that his battle to obey God is without mercy to the point that he exhibits physical symptoms of this battle, namely sweat. The chorus features a two-way interaction between Akhenaton and his temptations in which he exclaims that he is in combat against these demons, then replies to himself, "donne-moi ton âme"("give me your soul"), demonstrating that he is his own biggest foe. In the second verse, Akhenaton presents the listener with two sides of his struggle, the first being his conversion and newfound outlook on life, followed by his betrayal of the religion, the punishments for it, and the lessons he took from the punishment he received. He raps:

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“Toute mon enfance, ils ont essayé de m'enlever
De m'attirer, sans succès, j'ai résisté
Athée, j'ai mué, pour devenir un être ultra-mystique
Un métèque de confession islamique
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\(^{15}\) Ibid.

Et par la voie du seigneur je peux atteindre des limites”\(^{17}\)

(“My entire childhood, they tried to take me away
To attract me without success, I resisted
Atheist, I molted and became an ultra-mystical being
A wop of the Islamic faith
And on the path of the Lord, I can reach my limits”)

Here, Akhenaton rejoices in the fact that “they”, the demons, unsuccessfully tried to bring him down, which he avoided through conversion, symbolized by his choice of the term “mué”, to shed or to molt. With this word choice, we notice a physicality to his dodging of sin as he had to become so mentally and spiritually different that the change manifested itself in an almost physical manner. A few lines down, the rapper laments and admits his faults as a new convert to Islam.

“Je suis allé en enfer
Pour collusion avec Iblis, complicité dans ses affaires
Le reproche est grave, sans me faire prier
J'ai donné mon amitié à des esprits meurtriers”\(^{18}\)

(“I went to hell
For collusion with Iblis, complicit in his dealings
The blame is serious, without praying
I gave my friendship to murderous spirits.”)

He comes forth admitting to having participated in devilish actions and having befriended murderous spirits without any sort of persuasion. In other words, he chose to sin, creating a contrasting image of the man who resisted the demons before. Akhenaton suggests that hell is on earth, potentially referencing the fall from grace, where Satan tempts Adam and Eve, causing God to banish them to earth, a place marked by sin and temptation.\(^ {19}\) The rapper explains further the gravity of his sin when he reveals that he sinned on the 27th night of Ramadan (“J’ai été puni

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\(^{17}\) Akhenaton, “Je combats avec mes démons,” lines 36-40.
\(^{18}\) Ibid.
\(^{19}\) The Qur’an 2:35-39.
en tant que fidèle décadent pour avoir trahi la 27ème nuit du Ramadan”) (I was punished as a
decadent follower for having betrayed the 27th night of Ramadan), known in the Qur’an as *lailat
al-qadr*, the night that God revealed the Qur’an to Muhammad, a day that carries great
importance for Muslims.20 Akhenaton goes on to assert that he has found a weapon against sin,
which is his ability to recite tales from the Qur’an 18 months after his 1993 conversion.
Additionally, the line “Dieu et moi avons fait un pacte” (“God and I made a deal”) represents
*tawba* (توبة) or repentance. The word translates to “to turn” or “to return”, so in this case
returning towards God’s teachings.21 The concept of the pact made between Akhenaton and God
signifies the reciprocal nature of *tawba*, in which God forgives once one has decided to repent as
Akhenaton has in this line. The artist ends the song by recognizing that this pact is conditional. It
rests on Akhenaton’s ability to maintain his end of it because God can choose whether or not to
forgive him. Additionally, a requirement for being granted God’s forgiveness is that one cannot
repeat the wrongdoing, so Akhenaton must strive in order to stay away from the sins he has
committed.22

21 Mohammed Abu-Nimer and Ilham Nasser, “Forgiveness in the Arab and Islamic Contexts,” *Journal of Religious
22 Ibid.
1.2.3 Médine, “Jihad”: Beyond War

Having discovered Islam as a teenager along with rap and named after one of the holy cities in Islam, Médine Zaouiche (born in 1983), known as Médine, allows his faith to play an important part in his music, with songs such as “Don’t laik,” “Don’t panik” and more.23 A man of stature and a long beard, which could be either an aesthetic choice on his part or a conscious decision to respect the Prophet Muhammad as he wore a long beard, Médine often plays on his image to challenge France to look beyond the surface.24 To this end, he even has a song titled “Code barbe” featuring a play on “black is beautiful” with “barbe is beautiful” (“beard is beautiful”).25 On the subject of Islam in his songs, he explains in an interview, “Je parle, en fait, de la situation des musulmans dans un contexte” (“I talk, in fact, about the situation of Muslims in a context”).26 In this sense, we can understand him as a sort of social commentator for young Muslims. Despite his outward promotion of and forwardness about his faith in his music, Médine disapproves of forcing one’s faith on others declaring, “J’essaie pas d’être exigeant avec mon entourage… si j’ai un mode de vie, c’est un mode de vie pour moi” (“I don’t try to be demanding with my entourage… if I have a way of life, it’s a way of life for me.”), highlighting the individuality of his faith.27

The title track of the album, “Jihad” begins with Médine criticizing war and violence, listing different historical and religious events as evidence. He then counters these lesser *jihads*
by asserting that his *jihad* is of the soul. As mentioned earlier, the idea of *jihad* refers to struggle and was split into two varieties: the greater and lesser *jihad*. The lesser was termed that of war, and the greater of internal conflict with the goal of fulfilling one’s duties as a Muslim. He begins with the story of Cain and Abel, citing it as the first steps of criminals on earth and in doing so, roots his song in Islam. Médine then raps the following lines:

> “Et le règne de l’homme suivit son cours  
> Oubliant son Seigneur celui qui lui fit voir le jour  
> Accumulant les erreurs et les défaites  
> Espérant trouver son coin de paradis par les conquêtes.”

(“And the reign of man followed its course  
Forgetting his God, the one who made him see day  
Accumulating errors and defeats  
Hoping to find his piece of paradise through conquests.”)

The rapper uses war as proof that man has lost his way and seeks paradise through the murder of other human beings, which runs counter to the world he envisions and the Islam he envisions, as evidenced by the second line where he points out that man has forgotten that it was God who allowed him to see the light of day. He continues his list with battles in the Greek tradition of mythology (“Hercule contre centaure, Achille contre Hector”) (“Hercules against centaur, Hercules against Hector”) and then goes on to criticize both Christians and Muslims for the Crusades by including them both (“Musulmans contre croisés, Jérusalem et Poitiers”) (“Muslims against crusaders, Jerusalem and Poitiers”). From here, the rapper comments on how war is ingrained in the memory of man and asks why there exist arms of mass destruction, criticizing human beings for having disobeyed the Great Commandment. Médine raps,

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29 Ibid
31 Ibid, lines 5-6.
“Insoumission, désobéissance au Grand Commandement” (Insub mission, disobedience of the Great Command ment). The Great Commandment appears in both the Bible and in certain hadith. Taken from Sahih Muslim’s first book of hadith, the rule states, “None amongst you believes (truly) until he loves for his brother that which he loves for himself.” This makes murdering one’s neighbor a violation in both Christianity and Islam. 32 Médine continues with a differentiation of the two types of jihad, rapping “Aucun combat exercé de l'intérieur” (No fight fought from the inside). Here, Médine laments how certain individuals choose to attack other instead of seeking inner peace. 33 The song closes with Médine explicitly declaring where his battle takes place and raps:

“Wealth is cultural, my battle is eternal
It’s the one from the inside against my bad side
But for now, the times will stay hard
And to say it in a 100 measures
Jihad!”

He informs the listener that he is constantly at war with the sinful side of himself and that because of the battle’s nature, the times will be difficult for him as he will fight until death.

Finally, the rapper chants “jihad” right after having explained his personal views and what the word means to him, almost as if to leave those last few lines in the listener’s mind as a definition for “jihad.” Médine never uses the word even while touching on events that certain people might

32 Sahih Muslim, The Book of Faith, hadith 72, Sunnah, accessed December 25, 2017, https://sunnah.com/muslim/1. The hadith on this website also offers “for his neighbor” as another possible phrase the Prophet said.

33 Médine, “Jihad,” line 83.

consider to be *jihad*. Instead, he keeps it for the end of the track to draw the listener away from the stereotype of *jihad*, giving the term a positive image.
1.3 Combating Stereotypes

From “bearded” or “submissive” to “fundamentalist” or “jihadist”, stereotypes of the Muslim population are aplenty, and they spill into all parts of society. They place a large wall in front of a community trying to succeed and attain the elusive title of “bien intégré(e)” (“well integrated”) even though many of the Muslims in France are either citizens or have lived in the country for decades. As a result of these stereotypes, Muslims sometimes have to choose between erasing their identities to achieve success and adhering to their identities despite the prejudice that accompanies that decision. The songs “Le faqir,” “Ni violeur ni terroriste,” and “Gemmes” offer different representations of the Muslim and seek to inform non-Muslims about Muslims and the damages done to the Muslim community because of stereotyping.

1.3.1 Abd al Malik, “Le faqir”: The Wandering Sufi

This song, whose title references the Sufi wanderers, presents a counter-stereotype to the Muslim often depicted in media and also plays on the image of the migrant. Rather than directly call out various stereotypes of Muslims, Abd al Malik presents an alternative image of the Muslim, the faqir. In the case of this song, the stereotype being countered is that of the jihadist or fundamentalist with that of the faqir. Derived from the Arabic word faqr (فقر) meaning “poverty”, “need”, “lack”, or “want”, a faqir (فقير) is a poor person or a beggar.¹ In the Sufi tradition, the faqir is an ascetic who chooses a life of poverty, begging for food and money because they see worshiping God as their primary need in life. Abd al Malik starts the song introducing the faqir as an individual at one with not only himself but the world around him as he helps others, demonstrating self-sacrifice.² The rapper continues this image of the faqir’s

¹ The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, s.v. “faqr”
oneness with the world with the line, “Il essuie tous les parterres qu'il foule lui-même, en faisant dire à chacun de ses souffles je t'aime” (“He wipes away flowerbeds he himself tramples on, and making each one say ‘I love you’”). The idea that his breaths say “I love you” to the flowerbeds he tramples runs counter to the idea of the Muslim being a violent individual.

Abd al Malik then highlights the idea of self-sacrifice, rapping, “Il travaille pour ce monde comme s'il allait vivre toujours et pour l'autre, comme s'il allait mourir demain.” (“He works for this world as if he were going to live forever and for the other, as if he were going to die tomorrow”). Here, Abd al Malik offers a humanized image of the Muslim that centers on caring for the world and one’s neighbor. The rapper continues, drawing on the mysticism of Sufism to emphasize that the struggle of a Muslim is to approach God in order to find enlightenment in life. The Sufi’s central mission is to experience godly qualities and to find the Truth, which is when a Sufi enters the unitive state. To enter this state, one must distance oneself from all earthly attachments, leaving room for God alone. Abd al Malik encapsulates this idea when he mentions travelling towards eternal youth. The “eternal youth” of which he speaks can only come in the afterlife and complete detachment from the human world. Thus, in escaping from the real world, the Sufi attains the unitive state and is one with God. In this lyric, Abd al Malik’s reinforces the idea of Islam as a mystical religion, and not a political one. “Le faqir” ends with a description of the Sufi wanderer as one who becomes “hearing, sight, the hand, and the foot.” This line refers to Sufi scholar Sirajudin’s idea that the Sufi is a “complete man” in the sense that the Sufi can take on any form or appearance in life. Idries Shah, a

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3 Abd al Malik, “Le faqir” line 2.
6 Ibid.
specialist on Sufism, writes that Sufis function in many ways in society: as soldiers, mystics, administrators, etc. The Sufi, then, lets the world fashion him or her into what it needs and, as a result, the Sufi then becomes a fashioner of other “complete men”. Abd al Malik puts the faqir in this light to praise his ability to serve the world and to be of benefit to others.

1.3.2 Médine ft. Aboubakr, “Ni violeur ni terroriste”: Fighting against Prejudices

Released on Médine’s album, 11 septembre, récit du 11ème jour (9/11, Story of the 11th Day) and featuring fellow Din Records label mate, Aboubakr, this song addresses stereotypes of Muslims head-on, tackling the media and society. The two artists take on a subject that affects the lives of Muslims in France. Médine’s first line in this song is “La tempête provient de l'Islam et des banlieues” (“The storm’s coming from Islam and the suburbs”), addressing the ideas that many of the problems in France are related to Islam and people in the banlieue. The line also sets the confrontational, serious tone of the song. Two lines down, the rapper begins to list stereotypes about Muslims in France. With anger, he raps:

“Cachés sous leurs voiles, sur les lignes de transport
Leurs barbes sont trop longues interdites d'aéroport
C'est légitime si l'on cède à la psychose
Un immigré trop studieux ça couvre quelque chose
Dans leurs trousseaux, couteaux, cutters et canifs
Des manuels de pilotage dans un cartable explosif.”

(Hidden under their veils, on public transport
Their beards are too long, banned from the airport
It’s legit if we give in to psychosis
An immigrant too studious, that’s hiding something
In their pencil bags, knives, cutters, and pocket knives
Pilot manuals in a backpack set to blow)

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
The fourth line brings up the problematic *controle d’identite*, identity checks carried out by police officers. Often, these searches target young men of either West or North African descent, occasionally ending up becoming violent or in an arrest. One of 67 interviewees (31 of whom were minors) on a Human Rights Watch report on identity checks in France repeated the words of the police officer who searched him and his friend, “An Arab guy and a Black guy on a motorcycle in Paris, that scares us”. This mentality is what Médine combats; he is attacking a way of thinking that exists not only with the people but also with the police, as he seeks to decriminalize the “Other”. The rapper then points his finger at the media, denouncing them and the role they play in the demonization of Muslims in France. Médine asserts:

> “Des lobotomies de la télévision  
> Les médias sont les juges des procès d'intention  
> Fournisseurs d'intox au kilogramme  
> De l'amalgame terrorisme et Islam” \(^{14}\)

> (“Lobotomized people on television  
> The media are the judges of trials of in the court of public opinion  
> Suppliers of intoxication by the kilogram  
> Of the amalgamation of terrorism and Islam.”)

Here, he confronts the Islam-equals-terrorism stereotype peddled by different sources in France such as the *Front National*, whose nationalist anti-immigrant sentiments have gained popularity in recent years. This can be observed in the results of the 2017 French presidential election, where the two finalists at the second round of voting were Emmanuel Macron (*En Marche*) and Marine Le Pen (*Front National*). In the final round of voting, Marine Le Pen of the far-right party Front National won 33.90% of the vote in the second round. Though she did

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12 Human Rights Watch, “‘The Root of Humiliation’: Abusive Identity Checks in France,” *Human Rights Watch*, 2012, 6, [https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/01/26/root-humiliation/abusive-identity-checks-france](https://www.hrw.org/report/2012/01/26/root-humiliation/abusive-identity-checks-france). In the interviews held in this report, many reported being provoked with racial epithets or held unjustly for several hours.

13 Ibid, 10.


16 Ibid.
not win, her “France first” slogan and islamophobic sentiments echoed with French voters, leading her to nearly winning the French presidency.

This section of the verse also raises questions about the status of the Muslim in France, opposing the image of the Muslim who managed to integrate versus the one who did not appear to integrate into French society. Researcher Mathieu Rigouste points out that when news outlets discuss “successful integration”, they focus economic and social status, as if to say one is only integrated if he or she makes a good wage and has a good appearance. On the opposite end, the Muslim who does not make much money and does not fit the status quo or wear “un masque blanc” (“a white mask”) is described as not having succeeded at integrating into French society. The promotion of the successful immigrant image sets up integration as something one can easily choose to do, thus blaming any failures on the person and not a system where people the victims of discrimination. Médine then adds that 9/11 did not only traumatize non-Muslims.

The attacks also hurt Muslims and changed their lives from that day forward. The rapper also acknowledges a misguided form of Islam exists and it is because of this misguided interpretation of Islam that people write Osama bin Laden’s name on walls in support. In the track’s chorus, the artists make strong use of the French word “ni”, meaning “not” to dispel stereotypes about Muslims. In turn, Médine and Aboubakr chant:

“Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni macho, ni proxo, ni terro, ni rigolo, ni bourreau, ni gigolo
   Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni violent, ni racailleux, ni vilain,
   ni orgueilleux, ni violeur, ni crapuleux
Ni violeur ni terroriste, c’est pour les ghettos qui montrent
   l’exemple les banlieues qui s’accrochent à la rampe
Ni violeur ni terroriste, c’est pour les Hommes et les djinns,
   les hijabs et les jeans, Aboubakr et Médine.”

18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
(“Neither rapist nor terrorist, neither chauvinistic nor,
Neither terrorist nor strange, neither torturer, nor gigolo, neither rapist nor terrorists,
Neither violent nor ghetto nor awful
Neither arrogant nor rapist nor heinous
Neither rapist nor terrorist, it’s for the ghettoes that show
The suburbs that hold on to the ramp
Neither rapist nor terrorist, it’s for the men and the \textit{djinn}
The hijabs and the jeans
Aboubakar and Médine.”)

In the chorus above, the two artists refute each stereotype about Muslims as well as emphasize that their song is not only for non-Muslims, but Muslims as well, reminding them to remain resilient in the face of intimidation and prejudice. After the first chorus, Aboubakr shifts the song back to the religion itself and not its followers. The rapper explains, “Je ne combats pas par principe, je ne reconnais la guerre qu'en cas de contrainte,” (“I don’t fight on principal; I only recognize war when it comes to self-control.”) referencing greater jihad which he values more than the lesser, more violent jihad. Médine explains that he only recognizes war when it deals with constraint, referring to resisting temptations. Continuing his explanation of his faith in order to refute the idea that Islam is a religion of violence, Aboubakr raps, ”Mon premier devoir est envers Dieu” (“My first duty is to God.”) to signify his dedication to God and not to men, focusing himself on religion and not society. Aboubakr ends his verse admitting that in his neighborhood, people commit crimes on occasion because of the struggles they endure, but none of them are rapists or terrorists. Following Aboubakr’s verse, the song closes out with the chorus, leaving the listener with the same lines that strongly deny the negative stereotypes about Muslims while trying to uplift Muslims who are hearing the song.

\footnotesize{22 Médine ft. Aboubakr, “Ni violeur ni terroriste,” lines 34-35.
23 Ibid, line 39.}
1.3.3  

Akhenaton ft. Bruizza, “Gemmes”: Attacking Reductions of Muslim Culture

Taken from the album *Sol Invictus*, the song “Gemmes” criticizes the reduction of Arab and Muslim culture to a few clichés and the Israel-Palestine conflict. Shortly after the introduction to the song, Akhenaton makes reference to the *intifada* of 2000, where Palestinians rose up against the Israeli government following a visit on September 28th of that year by Knesset member and influential Israeli politician Ariel Sharon to Haram al-Sharif (the Temple Mount) in Jerusalem.  

The visit outraged Palestinians because Haram al-Sharif contains the Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, which are sacred places to Muslims. The visit led Palestinians to protest the Israeli government the day after Sharon’s visit. Akhenaton raps, “Une pierre d’Gaza, projetée par les gosses philistins d’l’intifada” (“A stone from Gaza, thrown by the Philistine kids of the intifada.”), describing the contrast between the Palestinians who threw stones at the Israelis who, in turn, shot the Palestinians with rubber-coated metal bullets as well as with live ammunition. The rapper then turns his flows from the uprisings in Palestine back to his native France and its perceptions of the Middle East and Arab/Muslim culture. Mocking stereotypes placed on a community to which he now belongs while also humanizing a people whom others depict as dangerous or evil, Akhenaton raps:

“Moi j’appelle c’bled à la vraie religion comme Bilqis à Saaba
Regard dirigé vers l’Est, j’pense à Bagdad et ses âmes
L’Europe s’manifeste mais qu’est-ce qu’ils savent de l’Islam ?
Les clichés d’culture, la maladresse d’Ali Baba

24 *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, s.v. “intifada”  


Les oasis, les femmes voilées et c’putain d’ « ouvre-toi Sésame »
A croire qu’une civilisation s’résume au Kébab, mon amertume met bas.”

(“Me, I’m calling this country to the true religion like Balqis to Sheba
Gaze directed towards the east, I think of Baghdad and its souls
Europe is rising against but what do they know about Islam
Cultural clichés, the awkwardness of Ali Baba
Oases, veiled women, and that fucking ‘open sesame’
To think a civilization is summed up by kebabs, my resentment is up”)

In the first line, the rapper references the conversion of Bilqis to Islam after meeting with
King Solomon in “The Ants”, Qur’an 27. Akhenaton then adds another meaning to his words,
“dirigé vers l’est” (“facing east”), by referring to Iraq with sadness. The phrase “Je pense à
Bagdad et ses âmes” (“I think about Baghdad and its souls”) can yield two meanings in this song.
The first one situates Akhenaton in a position of worship as he admires the numerous Islamic
scholars who studied in or were from Iraq. However, it is the second meaning that drives home
the point of this section of the track. When Akhenaton released Sol Invictus, Iraq was still under
United Nations sanctions because of the Iraqi government’s unwarranted decision to invade
Kuwait in 1990. Due to the harshness of the sanctions, tens of thousands of Iraqis suffered from
malnutrition and disease, of whom many died because of a lack of resources. The souls about
which the rapper thinks are those of the innocent men, women, and children whose lives were
jeopardized because of the Iraqi government and the United States and its allies. Akhenaton
sympathizes with the Iraqis and in choosing to use the word “âmes” (“souls”), he humanizes the

28 Akhenaton, “Gemmes,” lines 21-26. The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, s.v. “Saaba.” Saaba (سبا) is the Arabic name for Sheba
29 The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, s.v. “Bilqis.” Bilqis is the Muslim name for the Queen of Sheba. The Qur’an 27 (Translated by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).
Iraqi people by removing the image of them as being associated with war and terrorism. Instead, he depicts them as individuals with souls that anguish, elevating the pain of the Iraqi people from a physical one to a spiritual one, allowing listeners from different backgrounds to sympathize with these people.

The following four lines address the narrow perception of Muslim culture by French people. The rapper begins his criticism of the Western gaze on the Middle East and Islam by mentioning Ali Baba, a character in *A Thousand and One Nights*, added to the collection of stories by French author Antoine Galland. The author added the tale after having it narrated to him in Arabic, though he eliminated certain elements of the tale. For example, Galland omitted the *table mise* (set table) in the story, which served the purpose of testing the morality of the characters, though he mentioned it in his summary of what he was told. At the *table mise* in the original version, the characters of the story encounter a table with food on it upon entering. Though it appears minor, Galland’s omission of the *table mise* in his translation and his replacement with more descriptions of the treasures within the cave demonstrates a manipulation of the source material and an erasure of an element that held cultural significance. Akhenaton uses Ali Baba to point out the issues of basing one’s knowledge of a culture in a story that was edited and manipulated by someone who was not of said culture. This line also brings up the issue of the French defining what the Muslim is, as seen in journals and media. Edward Said writes that the “Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confirmed” and that it is affixed to Europe, reinforcing the reductionist and exotic nature of the orientalist viewpoint of the East.

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33 Ibid, 162-164.
34 Ibid, 162.
35 Ibid.
Continuing with his criticisms of French orientalist perceptions of Arab/Muslim culture, he adds oases and veiled women to the list of cultural clichés that hurt the perception of the Muslims. First, his mention of “les oasis” conjures the image of the exotic desert and sand which dates as far back as the colonial period. For example, in French films depicting Morocco, directors often painted the country as a free land where the white man could do and live as he pleased. Films made during this period contributed to the cementing of the image of Morocco (and by extension, the other former French colonies of North Africa) as a mystified wonderland subject to the Western Gaze.³⁷ The next image cliché Akhenaton addresses is the veiled woman stereotypically viewed as submissive and oppressed by the overbearing males in her life.³⁸ The veil in the Western conception equals backwardness whereas the unveiling of the Muslim woman represents emancipation and modernity.³⁹ The word “veil” itself connotes being hidden, obscured. We can also see the veil as a divider of space, which leads us to another image we see with the term “veiled woman.” This image is that of the harem and fitna (فتن), imagined in orientalist literature and art as a place of “licentious access to Arab female sexuality.”⁴⁰ This second examination of the veiled woman focuses on one of the alternate meanings of the word hijab. In addition to referring to the Muslim headdress, the word means “screen”, “partition”, and “barrier.”⁴¹ Taking this other definition of hijab into account, we can see Akhenaton is referencing the harem, which represents the female-only spaces in a Muslim household off-limits.

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³⁹ Amira Jarmakani, *Imagining Arab Womanhood the Cultural Mythology of Veils, Harems, and Belly Dancers in the U.S* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 152, EBSCOhost. The use of the word “veil” as opposed to “hijab” or “headscarf” reflects the direct translation of Akhenaton’s lyrics as well as the word used in Jarmakani’s work.
⁴⁰ Ibid, 125.
⁴¹ *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, s.v. “hijab.” - حجاب (حَجَاب) hijāb pl. حجابات ḥijābāt cover, wrap, drape; curtain; woman’s veil; screen, partition, folding screen; barrier, bar; diaphragm (also الحاجز الحجاب al-ḥajāz al-ḥijāb, amulet).
to adult males except those who are closely related to the women in the harem (*maharam*). The word “harem” (حريم) also means “a sacred inviolable place”, “sanctum”, or “sanctuary” which contrasts greatly with the sexualized image of the harem depicted in orientalist works. The sexualization of the harem leads to the sexualization of the women in the harem, which evokes the idea of *fitna*. The word *fitna* (فتنة), derived from the triliteral root f-t-n, refers generally to the ideas of “disorder” or “chaos”. Additional definitions for the word include “charm”, “attractiveness”, and “enchantment”. Although, the second set of definitions does not exclusively describe women, Sarah Weinstein argues that those words are often attributed to Arab woman from both Eastern and Western viewpoints. *Fitna* can also denote a femme fatale, a woman who makes men lose control, linking the female sexuality to disorder and chaos. Akhenaton refutes this hypersexualized image of the Arab woman by challenging this stereotype. Akhenaton addresses both of these images of the woman before proceeding to denounce the idea of kebabs being the end all be all of Muslim culture.

In many French cities, kebabs shops number greatly and in some cases, one can find several kebab shops on the same street. A product of Turkish cuisine, the kebab arrived in France in the 1990s with the arrival of Turkish immigrants to Paris. Cheap and filling, the spiced meat and flatbread sandwich quickly found popularity among French youth and as the numbers of immigrants increased, so did the numbers of kebab shops. Akhenaton expresses disappointment.

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44 Ibid, s.v. “fitna,” & fitna pl. قَتِنَاتِ fitan temptation, trial; charm, charmingness, attractiveness; enchantment, captivation, fascination, enticement, temptation; infatuation; intrigue; sedition, riot, discord, dissension, civil strife

45 Sarah A. Weinstein, “‘All this for a film you haven't seen’: Reflections on Much Loved” (honor’s thesis, Bard College, 2016), 13, https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2016/169/. Weinstein uses Eastern to refer to the Arab world and Western to refer to the Occident.

in the reduction of his culture to a sandwich. With this popularity has appeared opposition to the sandwich and snide references to a “kebabisation” of the French gastronomical landscape. In recent years, right-of-center and far-right voices have stepped up against the perceived threat to French culture that the kebab allegedly represents. One is the mayor of Béziers, Robert Ménard who was elected with the help of the far-right Front National sought to forbid the opening of new kebab restaurants in his city. In the eyes of the prejudiced, the kebab embodies Arab/Turkish culture and its proliferation presents a threat to the French way of life as money and space shift from the hands of les Francais de souche (native French people) into those of immigrants and their children. Akhenaton then praises Arab culture, especially its poetry for its beauty and its strength before finishing the song with a reference to Jesus’ crucifixion and the chorus of the song. With his carefully chosen examples, Akhenaton provides the listener with a variety of stereotypes about Muslims before denouncing each of them, demonstrating the ridiculousness of these stereotypes.

1.4 **Rapper as Imam**

The final theme of this chapter will examine the idea of the rapper as an *imam*.¹ Samir Amghar’s conception of the rapper-as-imam positions the rapper as taking the place of the *imam*, the traditional leader of worship in a mosque, in that rappers take the teachings of Islam and make them available to youths who may not attend worship services.² *Imams* often embody not only religious wisdom and piety, but also general leadership characteristics as well as public relations skills since they often procure funds for the mosque.³ Regarding their origin, most *imams* in France and other European countries come from lands outside of Europe. *Imams* study at some sort of Islamic institution in North Africa, Middle East, or in Saudi Arabia where they study the Qur’an, exegesis, hadith, and Islamic law.⁴ In addition to the rapper having the possibility to reach French youths as outlined by Samir Amghar, the rapper acting as an imam also functions as a promoter of French Islam because they use Islam within the context of French society, providing young Muslims the tools they need to navigate their faith, life, and *laïcité*.

### 1.4.1 Kery James, “Chapitre”: Calling Muslims to Change Their Lives

Surrounded by chanting of “there is no God but God” in Arabic which is a part of the *adhan*, the Muslim call to prayer, the song begins with the chorus which features the core themes Kery James explores.⁵ The words chanted are also a part of the *shahada*. The themes on which James focuses are sin and death, which he evokes by referencing the encounter with Isrā’īl, the

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angel of death. In Islam, when one dies, they meet Isrāfīl in one of two forms, either the beautiful one or the hideous one, depending on how the person lived their life. If they lived a just life, he will take a beautiful form, and if not, he will take an ugly one. The rapper positions himself as a messenger in the last line of chorus where he raps, “Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort je te raconte.” (“Chapter about what happens after death, I’ll you about it.”) While he chooses to use “te” (“you” informal) instead of “vous” (“you” formal singular or “you” plural), suggesting that he is addressing a single individual rather than multiple people, Kery James nonetheless establishes a link between himself and the listener, positioning himself as the one who is imparting knowledge on someone else. Following the last line of the chorus, the rapper dives into the lesson he seeks to reveal to the people:

“Sache que, ici on t'enterre mais dans ta tombe tu es conscient
Tant que tu entends le bruit des semelles de tes compagnons
Qui s’éloignent puis viennent à toi deux anges de couleur noir bleu
Mounkar et Nakir, tu seras seul face à eux
Ils te font asseoir et te questionnent de ton vivant.”

(“Know that here we bury you, but you’re awake in your tomb
As long as you hear your friends’ footsteps
Getting away from you and then two black blue angels show up
Mounkar and Nakir, you’ll face them alone
They’ll sit you down and question you about your life.”

In the first line of the above passage, the rapper argues that there exists a separation between the body and the soul, with the latter holding more importance and being more representative of the Muslim. He then reminds the listener that life on Earth continues before referencing the second step of death in the Islamic tradition, which is the encounter with the

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7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Kery James, “Chapitre,” (Savoir et vivre ensemble, Naive, 2004), line 12. Lyrics to this song transcribed by Elsa Fiorenzano, native French speaker.
10 Ibid, lines 13-17.
angels, Mounkar and Nakir. After one dies, they enter *barzakh* (Arabic for “partition”), the space between the physical and the spiritual worlds, and once in *barzakh*, Mounkar and Nasir ask the person three questions about whom the person serves, what religion they follow, and who their prophet is in order to assess their faith. Should he or she answer correctly, the angels will show them paradise; if not, they will reveal a door to hell to the newly deceased or physically punish him or her until the Day of Judgment. Kery James uses this belief to push the listener towards faith and to ask themselves about their relationship with Islam and God lest they be punished. The rapper continues, explaining what both impious and pious Muslims face before describing the events of the resurrection of all before God. Kery James preaches:

“For a day without corruption, injustice, or cheating
All of our acts will be exposed, God knows
Everything, with no doubt, no rock will be left unturned
Our actions will be weighed on a scale
But we won’t be able to do anything for it to tip in our favor”

As he does earlier in the song, Kery emphasizes God’s omnipotence and the consequences of one’s actions as well as the fact one must act in order tip the scales in his or her favor. Concerned with the listener’s fate, he stresses the importance of properly following Islam. The converted rapper then explains how it is possible for one to spend time in hell, but ascend to heaven later.

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13 Ibid, 42. The questions are “Who is your lord?”, “What is your din (religion)?”, and “Who is your prophet?” The answers are, God, Islam, and Muhammad.
14 Ibid.
15 Kery James, “Chapitre,” lines 71-75.
In Islam, seven levels of heaven and hell exist, each one for differing levels of goodness or sinfulness.\(^{16}\) Regarding the levels of hell, only those who find themselves at the lowest level of hell, \(hāwiya\), the level reserved for hypocrites will be able to find release from punishment in heaven. After the people in \(hāwiya\) ascend to heaven, that level of hell will be destroyed. Some accounts reported that Muhammad wept after having discovered that some people in his community would suffer in hell, even if it were for only a short time.\(^{17}\) In addition to providing some sort of relief for any potential sinners, James seeks to highlight the graciousness of God by focusing on the ambiguity of one’s fate and suggesting that it can change, which could inspire hope in the listeners. From this point in the track, the rapper references apostasy, claiming that he or she who leaves the religion and becomes an unbeliever cannot escape from hell for it will be their final resting place.\(^{18}\) After doing so, he discusses the fires of hell, expresses hope that God will help him as well as other Muslims obtain a spot for themselves in heaven, and ends the song asking once more if the listener understands what the afterlife holds. Using his platform to reach Muslims, Kery James outlines the consequences of living an impious life and the rewards of leading a pious life for followers of the Islamic faith.

1.4.2  Ali, “Salaam”: Wishing Peace on All People, Regardless of Faith

Former half of the duo, Lunatic, Yacine Sekkoumi (born in 1975), alias Ali, preaches a message of peace on the final track to his album \(Que la paix soit sur vous\).\(^{19}\) Above his identity as a French person of Moroccan descent, Ali focuses on his identity as a Muslim.\(^{20}\) His name, Ali (ALI), is an acronym for Africain Lié à l’Islam (African Connected to Islam) and he believes his

\(^{16}\) The Qur’an 23:17, 15:43-44, (trans by M.A.S Abdel Haleem).
\(^{17}\) Smith, and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, \textit{The Islamic understanding of death and resurrection}, 85.
\(^{18}\) Kery James, “Chapitre,” line 90.
one true community is the Muslim community.\textsuperscript{21} The song “Salaam” (“Peace”) begins with the phrase “God is peace” in Arabic followed by several lines praising God as well as the beginning of his message to his listeners. Additionally, the “salaam” echoes throughout the background of the song, reinforcing the motif of peace throughout the song. Ali raps,

\begin{quote}
Quand les mots blessent, l'homme perd de sa noblesse  
Régresse ou progresse, nos défauts nous oppressent  
N'agresse personne et que personne ne t'agresse  
La paix est en soi, prie qu'elle ne change pas d'adresse  
Droit comme un alif, nos qualités nous redressent  
On s'améliore : la discipline tient ses promesses  
Ya Salam, tu es mon Dieu, je le professe.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

(“When words hurt, man loses some of his nobility  
Regress or progress, our defects oppress us  
Hurt no one and may no one hurt you  
Peace is in oneself, pray it doesn’t change addresses  
Straight like an alif, our qualities helps us up  
We improve ourselves: discipline keeps its promises  
Ya salam, you are my God, I profess it.”)

In the above passage, Ali warns against insulting others for it causes people to lose their poise and dignity. On the subject of insulting others, Qur’an 49:11 instructs believers to not speak ill of others because “it is bad to be called a mischief-maker after accepting faith.”\textsuperscript{23} In following verses, the Qur’an explains that God divided all men and women into different races and tribes so that they would recognize and understand one another and that insulting someone would therefore prevent people from coming together as God intended.\textsuperscript{24} Ali continues his message by addressing the fact that the issues people face oppress them but he urges his listeners not to hurt others and prays that they not be hurt. The rapper’s next lines refer to the security that

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{23} The Qur’an, 49:11 (trans. M.A.S Abdel Haleem).  
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 49:13.
\end{flushright}
following God brings. Ali uses the Arabic letter *alif*, which resembles a vertical line, as metaphor for the proper Muslim way of life as well as the pride one feels as a result of following the teachings of God, especially if they have strayed from the path. The last line of the passage ends with the rapper announcing the words “tu es mon Dieu, je le professe” (you’re my God, I profess it”), which represents the *shahada*, the acceptance of God as one’s god, which demonstrates to Ali’s listeners that he renews his faith in God as one renews his or her vows.

In the following verse of the song, Ali wishes peace upon the *umma*, the collective body of all Muslims, in their battle against sin and the demons that can push followers of Islam to commit acts that are *haram*, or taboo. He then makes a political comment referring to the idea that some individuals believe that Islam is not a religion of peace. Ali raps,

“Étrange, quand parler de paix dérange
A chacun sa croyance, le corps est limité.”

(Strange, when talking about peace offends
To each their own beliefs, the body is limited)

The rapper does not insult those who insinuate that his religion dangerous; he acknowledges that each person has their own religious beliefs, and as such, expects that others respect his religious beliefs. The artist finishes the verse explaining to his listeners that Satan seeks only to hurt individuals but rejoices in the fact that God brings peace to mankind. Ali’s decision to use “Satan” instead of “Iblis” allows him to preach his word to a wider audience outside of Islam, reinforcing the 18th line of the track where he acknowledges everyone’s right to their own religious beliefs. The final verse of the song reveals Ali praying for those in war-torn countries as well as instructing his listeners to never lose their faith. The song ends with the chorus which encourages Ali’s listeners to promote peace in their daily lives.

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25 *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, s.v. “umma” and “haram”
Through an examination of the themes of conversion, inner *jihad*, fighting stereotypes of Muslims, and the rapper-as-imam, we note a variety of expressions of the Islamic faith. These different expressions appeal to different groups of Muslims depending on where they are in their faith. Additionally, these Muslim rappers act as examples of the religion’s importance in French hip hop. Much like French hip hop acted as the voice of the voiceless, Muslim rap speaks for young Muslims searching for acceptance in French society. Muslim discourses in French rap present Islam as complex and varied. They also serve to dispel the idea that Islam is intolerant, by providing examples of non-fundamentalist Islamic beliefs. For French Muslims, the ideas expressed in the songs give voice to their realities and demonstrates artists navigating their faith in France. However, an argument often made about certain interpretations of Islam is the role of women and their subjugation. While Médine and Akhenaton come to the defense of women in their songs, PNL condemns them and blames them as the source of their sin, while Kery James and Ali do not address them at all. The lack of discourse on gender in Muslim rap reflects the overall male-centered nature of French hip hop, which female rappers seek to overthrow by addressing misogyny, celebrating female sexuality, and breaking gender norms of women in French hip hop.
Chapter 2: Les Meufs Aren’t Playing Games: An Examination of Gender and Sexuality in French Female Hip hop

This chapter will examine three facets of French female hip hop in order to examine how this particular brand of hip hop is contesting hip hop itself, asking about the equality on which the genre prided and still prides itself. This chapter will focus on rap music by women artists that denounces misogyny, embraces femininity and female sexuality, and lastly de-genders or intentionally removes gendered narratives from the raps to distance the artists from the ‘feminist’ box. These themes demonstrate that female rap artists are attempting to protect hip hop from itself in two ways: by reenergizing the genre by tackling issues of oppression and discrimination, while widening the scope of what it means to be a female rapper. The artists whose works we will examine are Casey, Chilla, Diam’s, Liza Monet, and Sianna.

Women have been rapping in French since 1980, the year when famed French musician Annie Cordy released the song, “Et je smurfe” (“And I Breakdance”).\(^1\) The following year, Chagrin d’Amour’s “Chacun fait (c’qui lui plait)” featured a woman rapping on the second half of the song. In 1982, B-Side performed a remix to Fab 5 Freddy’s “change the beat” entirely in French.\(^2\) During the 1980s, ten years after its establishment in New York, the Universal Zulu Nation headed by Afrika Bambaataa arrived in Paris and proved instrumental to the introduction of hip hop culture in France.\(^3\) The Nation sought to promote peace, wisdom, and unity—as well as hip hop culture—among youth living in the suburbs of Paris.\(^4\) During this trip to Paris, Afrika Bambaataa took the opportunity to bestow the title of “king” or “queen” upon certain Parisians,

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\(^1\) Karim Hammou, *Une histoire du rap en France*, 33.


indicating that they well exemplified the Zulu Nation credo. One member granted the title of “queen” was Queen Candy, who founded the Zulu Letter, one of France’s first hip hop magazines. In the periodical, one could find current news and editorials as well as pieces on those active in the budding hip hop movement. The magazine represented another step in the development of hip hop culture in France as it was media source for the culture.

In addition to creating the Zulu Letter, Queen Candy held events where young people gathered for dance battles, competitions in which two individuals or groups of individuals danced competitively against one another in a turn-based fashion. Beginning in 1988, clubs stopped allowing hip hop nights because of fights that broke out among the people in attendance. Alongside the demise of hip hop nights at clubs, the image of the Universal Zulu Nation fell under scrutiny and became associated with gangs and vandalism. In order to curb the damage done to the Zulu reputation, Queen Candy demonstrated her authority in French hip hop culture by requesting that graffiti artists in the Zulu nation stop tagging.

The late 1980s saw the rise of Saliha (Saliha Saïdani) and B-Love, who made an impact on the female French hip hop landscape. Having already performed at the club Chez Roger at the age of 16, Saliha made a name for herself as a no-nonsense rapper worthy of respect. She later spearheaded a generation of female rappers with her track “Enfant du ghetto” (“Child of the

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5 Isabelle Kauffman, "Génération du hip-hop." Danser au défi des assignations, " (PhD dissertation, Université de Nantes, 2007), 41.  
7 Ibid.  
8 Kauffman, "Génération du hip-hop." Danser au défi des assignations, 41.  
9 Ibid.  
“Ghetto”) on the first French rap compilation album, Rapattitude, released in 1990, on which she was the only female rapper. Rapping about the banlieue, she took up an aggressive flow on an otherwise upbeat instrumental, creating a contrast between the song’s content and instrumental sound. Saliha’s style remained midway between softer, more romantic rap music and hardcore, anti-establishment rap. B-Love’s style remained mostly hardcore, with topics on social inequality as well as black identity such as the song “Lucy” on the second Rapattitude compilation album. Though her name circulated through the underground around the same time as Saliha, B-Love did not enjoy much notoriety until her performance on the rap radio show Deenastyle on the station Radio Nova, hosted by rappers Lionel D and Dee Nasty. The Deenastyle aided in the propulsion of the careers of many of French hip hop’s best known artists, such as MC Solaar, Assassin, and Suprême NTM. Although she did not make it onto the first Rapattitude album, her afro-centrist track “Lucy” landed onto the second Rapattitude compilation album. As these two rappers gained more popularity during the “Golden Age” of 1990s, other soon-to-be-famous female rappers such as Diam’s and Keny Arkana appeared in the French rap scene.

The 1990s witnessed the birth of a wide variety of female acts in the French hip hop scene. Before the release of her first album, Sté Real (Stay Real), Sté Strausz (Stéphanie Quinol) established herself as a talented rapper with her song, “Née gangsta” (“Born Gangsta”) which became a street anthem for the “meufs de cité,” girls who lived in the suburbs of major French cities. While working on her first album, Sté connected with rapper Sulee B, who helped craft

16 Ibid, 23.
17 Ibid. “Dynastyle” is the spelling used in this text, but other sources write it as “Deenastyle.” Gaetner, Hip-Hop : Le rap français des années 90, 19.
20 Gaetner, Hip-Hop : Le rap français des années 90, 102.
its sound. Sulee B brought the electronic, funky sound of West Coast American hip hop exemplified by Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre to Sté Strausz’ album.\textsuperscript{21} Sté appeared on two additional rap album compilations and released an album in 2005.\textsuperscript{22} One was \textit{La Haine: Musiques inspirées du film}, a rap compilation based on the plot of the critically-acclaimed film \textit{La Haine}, which explores the lives of three young men as they deal with racism and police brutality, living subsidized housing in a Paris suburb.\textsuperscript{23} One year later, in 1996, Keny Arkana made her appearance in the underground rap scene by co-founding two rap groups, Mars Patrie (Mars Homeland) and Etat Major (Major State).\textsuperscript{24} The following year, the French hip hop scene would meet Cathy Palenne alias Casey (born in 1976), who slowly built her following through collaborations and appearances on rap projects such as the L432 mixtape, rapping the song, “La parole est mienne,” (“The Word Is Mine”) before releasing her first solo project in 2006.\textsuperscript{25} Casey represents a rare case in terms of French rappers in general, especially female rappers as she has maintained a presence in the industry for over a decade in a genre often called a ‘young man’s game.’ The rapper characterizes her style as \textit{hybride} (hybrid) referring to the various influences from her background and interests.\textsuperscript{26}

In the years following Casey’s debut, other rappers such as Lady Laistee (Aline Farran born in 1972) with a style and energy described as “hungry,” Roll. K with hypersexual songs, and Diam’s with well-rounded relatable songs exploring themes such as the search for love or

\textsuperscript{22} Dole and Strausz, \textit{Fly Girls: Histoire(s) du Hip-Hop Féminin en France}, 60.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, 102.
\textsuperscript{26} Casey, “Rencontre avec la rappeuse Casey,” interview by Emmanuelle Carinos and Benoît Dufau, March 24, 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=OsGv1cnImFA.
life in the suburbs of Paris made their debuts on the scene. The 2000s witnessed a sharp rise in the popularity of Diam’s who climbed to the top of French music sale charts with her 2003 album *Brut de femme (Raw Woman)* and later made the only rap album to receive diamond status in France in over a decade, *Dans ma bulle (In My Bubble)* which was released in 2006. Since Diam’s conversion to Islam in 2008 and her decision to step back from the music industry in 2012, French rap has welcomed promising new artists into its midst, such as Shay, Chilla, and Sianna.

In French rap songs, male rappers often portray women as either *la maman* (the mom), or *la putain* (the whore). In many French rap songs, artists often pay homage to their mothers and validate women who resemble their mothers, or they insult women whom they view as sexually promiscuous or easy. The mother is described as having sacrificed much for her children, a role model, and the one to whom the rapper attributes his success. In the idealization of the mother figure, rappers take away any flaws that would make her human. Alongside the *maman* image, argues Anne-Sophie Davy, exists the image of the *épouse irreprochable* (irreproachable wife), which represents a valorization of a woman, but only insofar as she fulfills the role of the

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32 Ibid, 66.
mother, meaning to say that the *épouse irreprochable* archetype represents a simple variant of the *maman*. In addition to male rappers promoting these images of women in their music, female rappers sometimes endorse them as well, under pressure from big music labels. Éloïse Bouton, cofounder of the Madame Rap website, dedicated to women and members of the LGBTQIA community in hip hop, notes that female rappers often find themselves confronted with the decision between losing artistic freedom for financial gain and maintaining artistic freedom at the cost of never attaining large-scale success. Nonetheless, many French female rappers have enjoyed a decent amount of success without necessarily selling out and conforming to female gender stereotypes. One such rapper is Keny Arkana who released an album in June of 2017 and performed at Le Travailleur Alpin, a festival that focuses on mixing the musical and political, featuring debates about communism and its place in France while also hosting artists whose music carries political messages.

The *putain-maman* dichotomy found in French rap music could stem from the real-life gender structures found in the suburbs of France, from which many male rappers come. In certain suburbs of France, some women report feeling constrained by the men in their lives, whether it be their father, brothers, or partners. These constraints on women can often lead to violence acts. For instance, in 2002, Sohane Benziane, a young girl from a housing project in the Paris suburb of Vitry-sur-Seine was burned by Jamal Derrrar, a young man who was humiliated by the former boyfriend of the victim. The brutal killing of the young woman led to the rise of

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33 Casey, “Rencontre avec la rappeuse Casey,” interview by Emmanuelle Carinos and Benoît Dufau.
34 Éloïse Bouton, personal interview.
35 Ibid.
the movement *Ni putes ni soumises* in 2003 (Neither Whores nor Submissive) led by Loubna Meliane and Fadela Amara. Fadela Amara was the former French Secretary of State for Urban Affairs under Nicolas Sarkozy. Fadela Amara, the president of NPNS and a secular Muslim has claimed that the *burqa* represents the oppression of women and that Islamic fundamentalism is crippling the liberty of women in French suburbs. The movement’s goal is to spread awareness about the mistreatment of women and to help women in need. Despite its goals to help women escape from abusive situations and to promote *laïcité* in order to help women, the group received criticism, some from its own members, following Amara’s appointment as a junior minster in a right-of-center government under President Sarkozy. Many people felt that the French right was tokenizing the movement to appear less conservative.

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and many of Benziane’s friend’s lived. Feeling humiliated by Isa and disrespected by Benizaine, Derrar decided to murder the young woman.


2.1 **Addressing Misogyny**

French hip hop has become, in some ways, a reflection of the patriarchal society in which it exists and female rappers have taken up their microphones to fight the genre’s misogyny from within, almost as if to save it from itself. These rappers in this theme confront both hip hop and broader French culture, demanding the equal treatment that both claim to promote. Addressing misogyny in French hip hop allows women rappers to break away from the *maman-putain* binary by calling French rap into question. In a speech by Journalist Eloïse Bouton explains that she discovered feminism through rap and that rap music’s subversive nature lends itself to being feminist, despite the sexism often promoted in French rap music.¹

David Gilmore asserts that misogynists view all women as evil and invariable.² He defines misogyny as “a sexual prejudice that is symbolically exchanged (shared) among men, attaining praxis.”³ He also adds that misogyny takes form in cultural institutions, writings, and rituals.⁴ Lastly, his final point on misogyny states that misogynists view all women as evil and invariable. Given that French rappers do not meet the first requirement of Gilmore’s conception of misogyny because of the *maman* archetype which valorizes the mother, we will focus our definition of misogyny in French rap music using the other two of Gilmore’s criteria, for what we may call “hip hop misogyny.”

In French hip hop, we observe misogyny as a practice in which male rappers engage because it can represent masculinity and play a part in certain male rappers’ assertion of their dominance. In French hip hop, the writing or freestyling of sexist lyrics constitutes the discourse,

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³ Ibid. 9.
⁴ Ibid.
and the trite music videos featuring scantily-clad women dancing in suggestively represents the ritual because of their established position in the genre. Often, rap music videos feature women whose sole purpose is to act as symbols of success and wealth, much in the same way stacks of money or expensive cars do. In some French rap music, women function no differently than references to guns or drugs. They are dehumanized and used to promote a larger-than-life image of the rapper which in turn promotes unattainable standards for men. The idea of sexually conquering and degrading women contributes to the “hard” image of the rapper at the expense of the humanity of women. Countering misogyny thus frees women from male-dominated oppression and men from unrealistic standards of masculinity that require the subjugation of women.

2.1.1 Chilla, "Sale Chienne": An Exposé of the Sexism in French Hip hop.5

A Universal Music France artist and one of the new faces of French female rap, Chilla provides the listener with a sense of the constraint from which she and other female rappers are trying to escape.6 Born Maréva Rana, Chilla grew up in Gex, France playing the violin before going to Annecy to study music and eventually to Lyon, where she began to make rap music.7 In an interview, Chilla revealed that the concept of her song “Sale chienne” (“Dirty bitch”) comes from comments she read online in relation to her performance on the rap radio show Planète Rap (Planet Rap).8 In this same interview, the rapper comments that she did not set out to create a feminist track, explaining the song as what she felt, but acknowledges the difficulties women

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5 Two similar songs are “Si j’étais un homme” by Chilla and “Si j’étais un homme” by Princess Aniès which was released in 2002.
face in real life, citing sexual harassment as an example. Though she identifies as feminist, she prefers to be acknowledged as an artist above all else. The song begins with the rapper addressing the lack of credit given to women in hip hop:

“Je n'serai jamais la reine, chienne, j'aurais beau tarté des milliers d'MCs, Les femmes ne seraient bonnes qu'à la vaisselle, chienne.”

(I’ll never be the queen, bitch, I would have beaten thousands of MCs Women might only be good for doing dishes, bitch)

The rapper reiterates the criticisms of those who insult her but does so in a way that mocks the critics and removes power from their words by repeating with an air of sarcasm to highlight how ridiculous their ideas are. She then criticizes the stereotypical gangster rapper having grown up in a rough neighborhood and ends the chorus of the song with the line “Sur le trajet des critiques, sur les épaules, haute est la tête,” (“On the path of critics, on the shoulders, high is the head”) revealing that her detractors have not bested her. Moving into the first verse, Chilla announces that she does not seek the approval of male hip hop fans and that hip hop is entering a phase of hybridity in terms of style and gender diversity. “Le hip hop hybride entame sa renaissance,” (“Hybrid hip hop is about to be reborn”) asserts Chilla, referring to perhaps a new wave of female MCs entering the rap industry, thus creating a new musical landscape which will further invalidate her critics’ comments as well as push them to the margins of the hip hop community. She adds a caveat to this point, however, in the following line where she highlights misogyny’s omnipresence suggesting that there is still progress to be made.

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11 Ibid, lines 8-9.
12 Ibid.
made before her notion of a gender hybrid hip hop can fully take form. Chilla proceeds to attack clichés placed on femininity itself. In lines 12 and 13 of the song, Chilla raps,

"Quand t'es agressive, t'fais l'pelo
Quand t'es pas sexy, t'fais l'pelo."\textsuperscript{13}

("When you’re aggressive, you’re trying to be a man
When you’re not sexy, you’re trying to be a man.")

The repeated phrase at the end of each line, “tu fais l’pelo” refers to acting like a man in French slang.\textsuperscript{14} Chilla asserts that if aggression is present in a woman and sexiness is not, then her femininity is questioned, referring to the idea that aggression is stereotypically masculine and that passivity is feminine.\textsuperscript{15} In the following two lines, Chilla addresses the issue of the use of female sexuality to attack the woman while the patriarchy remains blameless. Anne-Sophie Davy writes that female sexuality is often considered dangerous to the patriarchy, countering PNL’s conception of the woman which they perceive as \textit{fitna}.\textsuperscript{16} The concept of \textit{fitna} associates women with mischief as it means “chaos”, “disorder,” or a \textit{femme fatale}, as discussed in the previous chapter.\textsuperscript{17} Though Akhenaton and Médine defend women in their songs, PNL condemns them and view the woman’s body and sexuality as leading to chaos. Chilla simplifies and expands this idea by rapping:

"Si tu fais des thunes t'es une salope
Même avec un pull t'es une salope."\textsuperscript{18}

("If you make money, you’re a hoe

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid
\textsuperscript{17} Mernissi, \textit{Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society}, 31. In “Mowgli,” Ademo raps about having sexual encounters with women and forgetting about them afterwards in order to absolve himself of sin.
Even in a sweatshirt, you’re a hoe.”

In this lyric, the rapper goes as far to say that people believe that a woman who makes her own money must be a prostitute, disrupting the natural order because in the eyes of her detractors, she ought to remain in the home. She then shifts her focus to the image of a woman in a hoodie to demonstrate the point to which the female body has become a projection for male fantasies. She chooses the image of a sweatshirt, which does not particularly accentuate the form and then contrasts it with being called a prostitute, creating an image of prejudice and objectification. She finishes the verse:

“T'es pas prê, Suther Kane s’abat sur toi
Les aigles et les pigeons ne se mélangent pas.”

(“You’re not ready, Suther Kane is coming for you
Eagles and pigeons don’t mix.”)

In the first line, she acknowledges her videographer Suther Kane, and then asserts that she is different from others using eagles and pigeons not mixing as a metaphor. The word “pigeon” can mean someone who is naïve or easily tricked. By positioning herself as an eagle, Chilla demonstrates that she is above the naïveté to which her detractors have fell prey. Additionally, the rapper positions herself as the eagle that soars above pigeons that represent other rappers and those in who perpetuate patriarchal oppression.

In the first lines of the second verse, before continuing with her assault of the patriarchy, Chilla praises herself for delivering high quality content in a field dominated by men. She adds,

“Vénus est revenue à l'ordre du jour
La rage en atout, j'suis là c'est du lourd.”

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22 Ibid, lines 41-42.
(“Venus is back, up for discussion
Rage as a trump card, I’m here, and it’s the real deal”)

Her reference to the mythical goddess, Venus, strengthens Chilla not only as a rapper but also as a woman. Venus was the Roman goddess of love, beauty, desire, sex, and more. Her choice of a female goddess whose attributes encompass aspects traditionally seen as feminine displays a desire to create an image revealing that strength and femininity do not exist as opposites; they can and do work together. Here, the artist could also be referencing the Botticelli painting, _The Birth of Venus_, in which the goddess stands nude in the middle of a shell as three people to reach her. In the case of Chilla, those individuals could be fans as well as enemies who seek to tear her down. From here, the rapper decides to cease trying to directly change the minds of those who inspired the song, rapping that she cannot educate “un âne” (“a donkey/ an ass”) with a freestyle.

2.1.2 Diam’s, “Petite Banlieusarde”: Confronting Discrimination in French Rap

Born Mélanie Georgiades (born in 1980), the daughter of a French mother and a Cypriot father, Diam’s grew up in the Paris suburb of Orsay. In 1997, the rapper became part of the group Mafia Trece and was featured on the group’s first album. Diam’s began her solo career in 1999 with the release of her first album _Premier Mandat_. She later became one of France’s most successful rappers, selling over 750,000 copies of her 2006 studio album, _Dans Ma Bulle_. Due to a general disillusionment to fame as well as children to raise and a new faith to follow, Diam’s took a hiatus from the music industry in 2012, four years after her conversion to Islam and three after her 2009 album, _S.O.S._ Similarly to Chilla, Diam’s does not identify with the title,

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24 Ibid.
25 Éloïse Bouton, “À la recherche de la nouvelle Diam’s.”
26 Dole and Strausz, _Fly Girls: Histoire(s) du Hip-Hop Féminin en France_, 75.
“feminist” but her songs still carry feminist sentiments and address issues that women face. "Petite banlieusarde” begins with the words of the title, which offer the listener two sides of Diam’s, one being the street-smart *banlieusarde* (person from the suburbs) and the other, petite (small), portraying a more humble image of the rapper. After she pronounces those two words, Diam’s raps:

```plaintext
“Métissée, je reste le cul entre deux chaises
Mais qui suis-je, pour qu'on m'applaudisse ou me déteste ?
Qu'ai-je fait pour qu'on me teste ?
Qu'ai-je fait pour qu'on me blesse ?” 27
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(Mixed, my ass is between a rock and a hard place
But who am I that people applaud or hate me?
What did I do to make people try me?
What did I do to make people hurt me?)

Here, Diam’s touches on her origins as a half French, half Cypriot individual attempting to navigate life stuck between two cultures, never fully belonging to one or the other. The first line of the section could also be taken in the context of being a woman in hip hop. With the number of women in French hip hop low and the hurdles to success plenty, Diam’s could be referencing the struggle to exist as a woman in hip hop despite the long history of women in the genre. The last two lines in the passage speak to harassment against her and other women regarding their abilities to rap and the objectification of women. Diam’s affirms her place in hip hop in the next line, declaring, “Seule, je n'ai que le rap, et personne ne peut m'en vouloir” (“All alone, I only have rap, and no one can come for me about it”) which emphasizes her dedication. Given her strong relationship to the genre, no one can criticize her. 28 For Diam’s, much like other rappers, hip hop symbolizes an escape from not only economic and social turmoil, but also

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28 Diam’s, “Petite Banlieusarde, line 19.
from personal issues. For instance, this song by Diam’s features lines about the rapper’s lost relationship with her father. In her autobiography, Diam’s explained that following the divorce of her parents, her relationship with her father became more and more strained because he left France.  

She then discusses the prejudice she has faced in hip hop. “On m'a jugée sur mon paraître et ma verve,” (They judged me on my appearance and my energy) she raps, revealing the double prejudice she has faced as a white woman in hip hop. People assumed that because of her identity as white woman, she lacked the ability to make it in hip hop.  

She then details the struggle further:

“Autant mes profs que mes potes
"Une petite blanche dans le hip hop ?"
Alors je m'exprime, mais je reste sur la défensive
Depuis que j'ai rencontré l'amour avec du sang plein les gencives.
Alors ouais, je vends des disques, ouais j'ai de la thune !
Mais j'ai cette putain de cicatrice qui me perturbe.”

(“My friends and my teachers (said)
A little white girl in hip hop?
So, I express myself, but I stay on the defensive
Since I met love with blood filled gums
So, yeah, I sell discs, yeah, I make money!
But I have this fucking scar that bothers me.”)

For Diam’s, the battle to prove her worth as a rapper began early on in her life, but even when she attained success, the idea that her rap had less value than that of her male counterparts remained with her. The scar to which Diam’s refers in the last line of the passage echoes the same sentiment expressed by Chilla in her song “Sale chienne”: the idea that regardless of what a female MC does, she will never measure up to male MCs in the eyes of some fans as and fellow rappers. From here, she delivers lines that pay homage to her mother, demonstrate her hunger to

30 Diam’s, “Petite Banlieusarde,” line 36.
31 Ibid, lines 41-46.
rap, and dive into ego-trip. Commending her talents as a *petite banlieusarde* rapper and her status as an artist, Diam’s reminds the listener:

> “Petite banlieusarde, au-delà de la musique J’ai surtout rencontré l’amour du public!”

(“Little girl from the hood, beyond music Above all, I found the love of the public.”)

*Dans Ma Bulle*, the album on which this track is found, transformed Diam’s into a household name for her authentic, self-aware hip hop despite the critiques from detractors. The track ends with Diam’s repeating the phrase “je rappe” (“I rap”) until the beat stops and her vocals fade out, emphasizing the extent to which rap makes up her existence.

On the TV show *Sept à Huit* Diam’s discussed her conversion to Islam, explaining that through her conversion to Islam, she felt loved for the first time.33 “Quand vous avez l’amour de Dieu, vous vous semblez, euh, vous vous sentez comblé,” (“When you have the love of God, you seem, uh, you feel satisfied”) expressed the former rapper.34 Diam’s conversion to Islam filled a hole in her life that her performing as a rapper created.35 She reported feeling that rap had become a chore and that it had ceased to bring her happiness in an interview with BFM TV.36

Through Islam, Diam’s found her purpose in life and when asked about women converting to Islam she responded, “Quand une jeune fille, elle se convertit (à l’Islam), on dit toujours d’elle, soit on l’a endoctrinée, soit c’est son mari qui l’a forcée, comme si j’avais pas d’autonomie intellectuelle…” (“When a young girl converts (to Islam), people always say about her that either

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34 Diam’s, “Diam's voilée dans Sept à Huit - Interview du 30/09/2012,” interview by Thierry Demaizière.
36 Ibid.
she was indoctrinated or her husband forced her, as if I had no intellectual autonomy). She describes her conversion as a choice that empowered her. During her TV interview on TF1’s *Sept à Huit*, Diam’s explained that her conversion to Islam and wearing the veil do not stop her from fighting for women’s rights: “Voilée, je peux me battre pour les femmes,” (“Veiled, I can fight for women”) While some artists like Chilla and Diam’s confront gender discrimination in French hip hop by attacking the words and ideas of those who engage in sexist practices, others choose to weaponize their sexuality, using it as a source of strength.

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37 Diam’s, “Diam’s voilée dans Sept à Huit - Interview du 30/09/2012,” interview by Thierry Demaiziève.

38 Ibid.
2.2 Reappropriation of Female Sexuality

Society often considers female sexuality as a threat to masculinity, and thus it must be policed. It is also described as wild, insatiable, and therefore sinister in nature. For example, in the song “Tchoin” by French rapper Kaaris, the premise of the track is to find tchoins (“hoes” in Ivorian slang).\(^1\) He raps, “La go là, c’est peut-être une fille bien, mais on préfère les tchoins, tchoins, tchoins.” (“That girl over there, she might be a good girl, but we prefer hoes, hoes, hoes”).\(^2\) In French hip hop, we notice often that women who have sexual desires can only act on those desires to the extent that a man benefits from them.\(^3\) At times, female sexuality in rap songs by men is depicted via sexual violence, wherein the man confirms his virility by sexually conquering women. Kaaris and other men like him prefer women they perceive as “easy” in order to sleep with more of them so that they can prove their virility and dominance over women.\(^4\) This treatment of female sexuality in French hip hop has portrayed women as weak, but as we see, there are women who seek to take back their sexuality and define how they see fit, regardless of male perceptions.

2.2.1 Liza Monet, “Yaourt aux Fruits”: Embracing Female Sexuality

Daughter of a Congolese singer, Aurlus Mabélé, Liza Monet, born Alexandra G. in 1989 grew up in Paris singing gospel music during her adolescence before deciding to become a rapper.\(^5\) The self-identified feminist created a scandal in 2012 with her song “My Best Plan”

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\(^3\) Davy, “Le rap au féminin : une quête impossible ?”, 63.

\(^4\) Ibid, p.64

which amassed over 5 million YouTube views. The track details sexual encounters Liza has with men in the same manner that many male rappers brag about being with many women, something French hip hop had not seen since the days of Roll K in the late 1990s whose sensual songs explored the female sexuality. Soon after the song’s release, Monet became the subject of much online harassment, which can still be seen on YouTube comments sections of her more recent interviews. In an OKLM radio interview, when asked why she chose to rap about her sexual encounters, Liza Monet replied, “J'essayais de reproduire un peu ce qu’ils font… j’essayais de reproduire un petit peu ce que faisaient les rappeuses américaines.” (“I was trying to sort of reproduce what men do… I was trying to sort of reproduce what Female American rappers did”). Some American rappers to whom Liza Monet could have been referring are Nicki Minaj, Li’l Kim, or even Trina, all of whom openly display their sexuality in their music. In another interview, Liza Monet expressed that she felt a closeness to Nick Minaj in terms of style because both artists can rap on different types of instrumentals as well as sing, thus it could be that Monet referenced both the subject matter and style of Nicki Minaj in particular.

In this song, the rapper takes on the role of the sexual entrepreneur as she recounts the pleasures she derives from sexual encounters with men in a direct, straightforward manner. Laura Harvey and Rosalind Gill define sexual entrepreneurship as representative of a new femininity that combines “discourses of sexual freedom for women, intimately entangled with

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6 The original video cannot be found, but it has since been re-uploaded by other users.
7 Liza Monet, interview by Éloïse Bouton, Madame Rap.
8 Ibid.
10 Liza Monet, interview by Éloïse Bouton, Madame Rap.
attempts to recuperate this to (male-dominated) consumer capitalism.” In the case of this song, Liza Monet’s outward expression of her sexuality reflects the sexual freedom of which the two researchers speak. The rapper participates in reclaiming her sexuality by deciding what aspects of her sexuality to display and how to display them. The song begins with the chorus of the song, “Yaourt aux fruits” (“Fruit Yogurt”) being chanted several times before the verse starts. In the first verse, Monet raps:

“Je n'comprends pas pourquoi je les traumatise
Boyfriend, girlfriend à moi de choisir
J'arrive dans le bis, déjà petit tissage tu connais
C’est que des barbies qui kiffent la purple monnaie
Ok jolie tat' fort Liza
Tu me vois yaourt de fruits mmmmmh Liza.”

(“I don’t understand why I shock them
Boyfriend, girlfriend, up to me to choose
I jump in the business, already a small weave, you know
It’s only Barbies who like purple money
Ok nice dope tat (tattoo), Liza
You see me, fruit yogurt mmmmm Liza”)

In the first two lines, Liza Monet not only reclaims her sexuality as a woman, she also asserts a bisexual identity in a straightforward manner. The “traumatization” she causes could be the result of her choice to embrace her sexuality as a woman and to use it for her own pleasure. Monet has taken control of her sexuality and uses it for her pleasure, which threatens the patriarchal view of sexuality because the expression of female sexuality would reduce the power men try to exert over women by policing their bodies. However, Liza Monet reappropriates her sexuality and weaponizes it to contest the negative perception of the “nymphomaniac” whose sexuality runs out of control and requires a man to sate it. Furthermore, the phrase “à moi de

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12 Harvey and Gill, “‘Spicing it up: Sexual Entrepreneurs and the Sex Inspectors,’” 52.
choisir” (“up to me to choose.”) emphasizes Liza Monet’s sexual independence. Men do not choose her; instead, she chooses who she wants, whether it be a man or woman.\textsuperscript{14}

In a second passage of the song, Liza Monet directly addresses men in hip hop and how they view women with the use of the phrase “si j’étais un mec” (“if I were a guy.”)

\begin{verbatim}
“Si j’étais un mec j’aurais une big dick
J’aurais baisé toutes les chiennes de Paris
Goûte mon yaourt aux fruits
Qu’est-ce que tu en penses mon ami ?
Mes ex sont mélancoliques
Pas ma faute si j’aime la bite.”\textsuperscript{15}
\end{verbatim}

(“If I were a guy, I’d have a big dick
I would’ve fucked all the bitches in Paris
Taste my fruit yogurt
What do you think, my friend?
My exes are all sad
Not my fault if I like dick.”)

The first two lines demonstrate how the rapper set out to reproduce what men say in rap songs about sex by essentially placing herself in the place of a man rapping about women. From there, she shifts the focus back to herself and her sexuality, explicitly telling the listeners what she likes. Rather than having a sexual proposition made to her, Liza Monet takes the initiative and proposes the encounter to the man. She then brags about her sexual prowess by using her previous relationships as evidence before ending the section by proclaiming her enjoyment of sex and pleasure, positioning it as something that should not be shameful. From this point in the song, Liza Monet continues to describe having sexual encounters with men and closes out the song with the line “girlfriend, boyfriend, à moi de choisir,” (“girlfriend, boyfriend, up to me to choose”) once again making it clear that she controls her body and how it is viewed.

\textsuperscript{14} Liza Monet, “Yaourt aux fruits,” lines 2-7.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, lines 21-26
2.2.2 Diam’s, “Jeune Demoiselle”: Romantic Relationships Are Not Passive

While Liza Monet’s track tackles sexuality as it relates to the actual act, Diam’s “Jeune demoiselle” tackles the issue from the viewpoint of romantic relationships in an attempt to counter the stigma of love being a weakness. Davy argues that given the fact that a strong sense of masculinity which sometimes drifts into hyper-masculinity is prevalent in rap, sexual acts hold more weight that romantic ones. It is often assumed that sexual acts involve pursuit and penetration. In other words, they require action, which is commonly perceived as masculine while passivity is commonly perceived as feminine. However, romantic relationships, Davy notes, put women and men on an equal playing field, which does not correspond to the image of the *caïd* (big shot) because romantic relationships require emotions and the breaking down of barriers, which leave people open to being hurt. In this track by Diam’s, she lists her expectations in a romantic partner, using various musicians and celebrities as references, such as American rapper Jay-Z and French comedian-actor Jamel Debbouze. In the chorus of the song, the rapper chants:

“Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
Un mec fidèle et qui n’a pas peur qu’on l’aime
Donc si t’as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail
Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
Un mec qui rêve de famille et de toucher le ciel.”

(“Young lady looking for an awesome guy
A guy who could give me wings
A loyal guy and one who’s not scared of being loved
So if you fit the bill, leave me your email
Young lady looking for an awesome guy

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A guy who could give me wings
A guy who dreams of having a family and touching the sky.”)

Beginning with the first two lines, we note that the Diam’s is searching for a man who can help her rise to new levels, offering an alternative to searching solely for a man who can satisfy her sexually. The fact that she is the one searching focuses on her agency and presents romantic relationships as active and engaged. In the third line, Diam’s emphasizes that her partner must be beyond the phase of his life where he wishes for nothing more than sexual encounters and emotionless relationships. This line frames love and relationships as large tasks that demand plenty of strength from the individuals. To open oneself up to love means to leave oneself open to damage from a partner, which is what Diam’s expresses here. In framing love as a challenge, Diam’s takes romantic relationships out of the sphere of passivity and into the sphere of activity. She frames love as a high-risk pursuit of self-improvement and maturity, which cannot necessarily be gained through sexual encounters alone. In the last line of the passage, Diam’s uses the notion of family to suggest that she requires stability and commitment in a partner, but uses the phrase “toucher le ciel” (“touch the sky”) to assert that should she find this partner, he will not try to confine her to gender roles, and she will not allow herself to be confined to them.20

For the rest of the song, the rapper continues listing traits of the ideal romantic partner, but in the beginning of the second verse, she raps about how her partner should treat women, reinforcing the idea that she wants a partner and not a master. Diam’s raps, “mon mec a des valeurs et du respect pour ses soeurs,” (“my man’s got values and respect for his sisters.”) making it clear that the treatment of women is values above the overall experience of being in

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20 Diam’s, “Jeune demoiselle,” line 8.
love. She uses the way the potential lover treats his sisters as a gauge for his actual compatibility with her because she seeks to promote romantic relationships as empowering not oppressive. While Diam’s confronts stereotypes about romantic relationships in this song, she also happens to put down other women. Twice in the song, she insults other women, calling them “bitches” and “bimbos,” demonstrating that Diam’s conception of the liberation of the woman does not factor in free-reigning sexuality like Liza Monet’s, hence the derogatory terms she lashes out at these other women. Despite her stance against more open displays of sexuality, Diam’s track presents the view that a woman need not necessarily engage in multiple sexual encounters in order to be in control of her body. She can enjoy liberty as a woman in a traditional monogamous relationship. The song ends with Diam’s playfully requesting that any potential applicants send some photos to an email address she gives out after listing her requirements for a partner. Diam’s requirements demonstrate how she has control of the situation because she will not waver in what she seeks. Additionally, she chooses who to acknowledge, provided they fit her criteria.

In the work of the female rappers considered here, we note that expressing female sexuality does not run counter to calling out misogyny as it presents an alternate viewpoint to dismantling sexism in hip hop culture. Rather, it allows women to reappropriate terms and perceptions used against them by men for their own empowerment. Additionally, it allows women to display their sexuality by discussing their bodies and sexual encounters they have. Addressing misogyny and expressing sexuality represent the steps leading to de-gendering, wherein the female rapper chooses to promote other features of her music such as politics or race relations instead of her femininity. In one way, addressing misogyny and expressing sexuality

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21 Diam’s, “Jeune demoiselle,” line 35.
22 Ibid, lines 13, 66.
represent the steps leading to de-gendering. Addressing misogyny contests and counters issues in the genre. The second step then celebrates the female body, focusing attention on women. De-gendering can be seen as going beyond the other two steps because it does not explicitly deal with issues related to gender and allows the female rapper to make music as a rapper, which would signify equality. However, it is also possible to view de-gendering as the rejection of expressing sexuality in French hip hop. De-gendering allows the female rapper to distance herself from preconceived notions of women.
2.3 **De-gendering in French Female Hip hop**

Unlike in the other themes of misogyny and femininity, which explicitly dealt with issues related to the female experience, the artists to whom we will now turn our attention set their femininity aside, creating a more gender-neutral hip hop. The question becomes, does female hip hop require that artists talk about issues specific to women or feature certain particularities that make the music “feminine?” Bouton argues that trying to define an exclusive female hip hop beyond the definition of “hip hop made by women” would result in the further confinement of French female hip hop. It would also call into question the de-gendered female rapper and her place in the genre. Some artists choose to focus other aspects of society such as politics or race, which intersect with gender, but they do not focus solely on gender. Others choose to create ego-trip rap, which focuses on confident, larger-than-life lyrics over catchy instrumentals. However, discussing topics such as racism or politics does not necessarily de-sex a female rapper. The artists discussed in this section have lyrics that refute the gender binary while discussing other topics such as the ones listed above, which is why they are categorized as engaging in de-gendering.

2.3.1 **Sianna, "Passe-moi la télécommande": Using Egotrip to Combat Gender Norms**

Adopted at eight months from Bamako, Mali by French parents, Anaïs Dwayna (born in 1995) grew up in Beauvais, France. When choosing her rap name, she decided to reverse her first name and add an “n” to it. Signed to the Warner Chappell music label, Sianna represents

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2 It is not because a female rapper discusses topics unrelated to being a woman that she loses her femininity. For example, French female rapper Princess Aniès raps about a variety of issues unrelated to gender.
4 Sianna, interview by Hugo Rivière, *Le rap en France*. 
one of the new faces of female French hip hop along with Chilla and Shay.\(^5\) In the realm of Francophone hip hop, these three artists are among the most recent to make waves in the French hip hop scene. Other female French rappers who have started to gain followings in the past few years are La Go 2 Feu, Moon’a, La Gale, and Pand’or, representing a variety of French female rappers in the French rap scene.\(^6\) Originally, Sianna did not intend to become a rapper, instead she preferred to be a fan of the music and hoped to become a songwriter.\(^7\) She began rapping as a part of the rap group Crack House with fellow rappers Franco and Soldaat Baab until 2013 when the group split and each of them decided to go his own way.\(^8\) Although Sianna acknowledges the existence of “female rap” as distinct from rap in general, which has been historically male-dominated, she does not rap about explicitly feminine topics such as female sexuality.\(^9\) She has also expressed that she would welcome the role of being the spokesperson for female rappers only if she were recognized for her talents as a rapper overall and not because of her touching on topics related to gender.\(^10\)

“Passe-moi la télécommande” (“Pass Me the Remote”) features a strong, confident Sianna promoting herself as a rapper above all, highlighting the status and money she has attained as a female rapper in a genre dominated by men. Sianna begins the song with the chorus, which introduces the idea that she is currently facing much competition to take the title of best rapper. With a fast, hard-hitting flow she then goes into the first verse:

“Les les les négros frisent la folie
Moi au mic j’suis hermaphrodite


\(^7\) Sianna, interview by Hugo Rivière, *Le Rap en France*.

\(^8\) Ibid.


\(^10\) Ibid.
Je sais bien que je te l'ai trop dit mais j'ai que Sagna comme acolyte.”

(“The, the, the niggas are going crazy
Me, on the mic, I’m a hermaphrodite
I know well that I’ve told you too much, but I’ve only got Sagna as an acolyte)

In the first line, she raps that men are approaching insanity because of Sianna’s rap skills. As rappers, they pale in comparison to the young woman and as fans, they awe at her skill. She then adds that she is a hermaphrodite, implying that she embodies both the male and the female and also that she raps from a marginalized position that contests the gender binary in the sense that she is assuming an identity outside traditional views of gender, and asserting its existence in French hip hop. The line could also refer to her ability to reach the masses, thus praising her rapping abilities. Assuming an identity as both man and woman, she can deliver music that touches all people, confirming her belief that she is the top rapper on the French hip hop scene. Sianna continues into the next verse maintaining the same theme of her dominance in hip hop before closing out with the chorus. Though in assuming a gender-neutral position throughout the song, in the third verse she insults a rival of hers using a gendered insult “salope” (“hoe”) to discredit them. Sianna makes use of the maman/putain binary to judge a foe, which reinforces perceptions that she herself escapes by de-gendering and focusing on her skills as a witty rapper. Although thematically repetitive, this song presents to the listener a female rapper whose image speaks to her femininity instead of her lyrics, despite the fact she reinforces negative perceptions of women at one point in the song.

2.3.2 Casey, “Pas à vendre”: An Insider Look on the Gendered Nature of The Rap Industry

Casey has remained in French hip hop over a decade, releasing her first solo album in 2006. Her music explores various themes such as racism, economic inequality, colonization, and police brutality. For example, her album *Tragédie d’une trajectoire* (*Tragedy of a Trajectory*) features tracks such as “Quand les banlieusards sortent” (“When the Hood Comes Out”) which discusses the fear of the banlieus in France and the fear of uprising against the mainstream French establishment. Other songs by Casey such as “Ma haine” (“My Hate”) confront issues of racism and efforts to destroy the self-esteem of the artist because of her racial background. To quote an interviewer on Casey, “on l’écoute pas comme une rappeuse, juste vraiment du rap…” (“You don’t listen to her as a female rapper, just a rapper”) Casey completely embodies the idea of the de-gendered rapper. She describes herself as “femme et homme” (“woman and man”) and “ni femme ni homme” (“neither woman nor man”) to avoid being put into a box and defined as simply a female rapper. In order to separate herself from any gendered conceptions, she chose the rap name “Casey” because of its gender-neutral nature.

Being gender-neutral plays a part in her idea of being *un bordel hybride*, or “hybrid mess,” which signifies existing sloppily between both genders, between French and Martiniquan culture, and between banlieue and mainstream culture.

This theme of the *bordel hybride* shapes the narrative of “Pas à vendre,” (“Not For Sale”) notably how Casey felt confronted with the pressure to sacrifice this hybrid identity she created for herself in favor of a more normative one pushed on her by society. The song immediately

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14 Sianna, interview by Hugo Rivière, *Le Rap en France*.
16 Casey, “Rencontre avec la rappeuse Casey,” interview by Emmanuelle Carinos and Benoît Dufau.
17 Ibid.
addresses the conflict between identity and success as Casey recounts encounters with people she views as stuck in gendered thinking.

“On doit tenir tête et souvent à coups d'pompes
Ceux qui me jugent et très souvent se trompent
Ou me guettent, l'air de dire : "Tu devrais avoir honte!"
Fusillent des yeux la façon dont je m'habille
Me demandent si je suis un garçon ou une fille
Veulent dans les détails, mon poids, ma taille
Et le mode d'emploi de mon plan d'bataille
Quelle importance mes séquelles, fais ta route!”\textsuperscript{18}

(You often have to go up against kicks
The ones who judge me are wrong
Or they stare me down with a “You should be ashamed”
Their eyes shoot at the way I dress
Asking me if I’m a boy or a girl
Wanting in detail, my weight,
And the instructions for my battle plan
My followings aren’t important, make your own path!)

We find the rapper facing a society that refuses to allow her to exist as she desires, which often leads to violence. In the second and third lines, we observe that Casey remains at the edge of what is acceptable in society because she faces prejudice from men and women alike. In the fourth and fifth lines, she explicitly mentions the problem she faces. Casey finds herself confronted by a society that tries to force a feminine identity onto her that she does not desire and actively pushes away. She goes on to detail how when people discover she is a woman, they begin to press her about her personal life and appearance, rather than her skills as a rapper or who she is as a person. The body takes precedence over the mind because that is what record labels try to sell. The rapper ends the verse rejecting all that people project onto her, declaring:

“Je n'suis pas cette bête de foire que l'on dompte
Ou bien même à qui l'on monte sur la tête
Et cette vie propre et nette de michetons aux petites minettes

\textsuperscript{18} Casey, “Pas à vendre,” (Tragédie d'une trajectoire, Doooen Damage, 2006), lines 2-9, \url{https://genius.com/Casey-pas-a-vendre-lyrics}.
Je n’en veux pas, laisse-moi sur ma planète.”\(^{19}\)

(“I’m not a circus freak to tame
Or one you put on your head
And this clean and clear little naïve honey life
I don’t want any of that, leave me on my planet”)

The bordel hybride rapper states that she will not become a toy for the industry to control and instead she will remain an underground rapper and forge her path to success, which she has done, remaining active even now, over a decade later since her debut. In the chorus, she raps that nothing about her is for sale, including her lifestyle, her rap, or her thoughts, promoting her de-gendered hip hop over industry-backed binary gendered hip hop. In the second verse, she recounts meeting an aspiring musician who took his entire look and style from American rappers. She narrates:

“Il se vante d'avoir signé ici pour plusieurs plaques
Et me dit que son disque, cette année dans les Bacs sera le choc
Mais un album pourri plus tard, un soir
Je revois l'ex futur star dans un bar, il veut boire
Me gratte comme un clébard, me dit que chez la major
Son contrat dort dans un tiroir”
Et maintenant il est en loque, il n'a plus d'oseille et sa meuf est en cloque.”\(^{20}\)

(“He brags about signing for a couple plaques
And tells me his album’s gonna do numbers in the stores
But one night and a terrible album later,
I see the ex-future star in a bar, he wants to drink
Scratches me like a mutt, tells me at the label,
His contract sleeps in a drawer
And now he’s in rags, he’s got no cash, and his girl’s knocked up”)

The now ex-rapper sold out to the label only to find himself with a poorly produced album, single, and poor because he chose to put himself into a box instead of forge his own path.

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\(^{19}\) Casey, “Pas à vendre,” lines 13-16. L’internaute offers two definitions for “micheton”: someone who is easily tricked or the client of a prostitute. Minette is defined as “honey (term of endearment),” “pussycat,” and a derogatory term for a “fancy or well-dressed person.” I chose the above definitions because of the lines preceding it, “propre” and “nette” which would signify a clean-cut, fairy-tale like image.

\(^{20}\) Ibid, lines 43-48.
Casey includes this anecdote to explain to the listener what would have happened to her if she had succumbed to label pressures and shed her identity for money. She would have lost everything. The rapper in this anecdote then suggests that he and Casey burn down the label to which he signed and the building from which the radio station Skyrock broadcasts, to which Casey replies, “Fous moi l'camp! Qui t'avais dit d'aller baisser ton froc?” (“Leave me alone! Who told you to go bend over and take it?”).21 Her response demonstrates that she has maintained her integrity and owes nothing to either the rapper who followed industry norms or the entities the rapper seeks to eliminate; she is an independent artist who controls her own fate. At the end of the song, Casey shouts out the name of her crew, Anfalsh, and rejoices in the fact that no one can corrupt and sell to them the false hope of success.22

Through the exploration of critiques of misogyny, female sexuality, and de-gendering, we discover a conflict between the themes. With the themes selected, we notice that the theme of addressing misogyny conflicts with the female sexuality theme because much of the misogyny in French rap music focuses on objectifying women. Given this fact, songs by women embracing their sexuality could be viewed as self-objectification under the guise of female empowerment, particularly in the case of Liza Monet’s “Yaourt aux fruits” because it is possible to argue that she puts her sexuality on display for men to appreciate it instead of appreciating it for herself.23 De-gendering appears to be in conflict with both the assertion of female sexuality and the critique of misogyny in the sense that its purpose is to leave female-specific issues out of rap.

The position of de-gendering is neutral whereas the addressing misogyny and female sexuality

21 Casey, “Pas à vendre,” lines 49-50.
themes confront the patriarchal system within French hip hop. However, addressing misogyny and female sexuality give way to de-gendering because they set the stage for the female rapper to eventually distance herself from gendered discourse in her music.

The themes of misogyny, female sexuality, and de-gendering involve what Deniz Kandiyoti defines as “patriarchal bargains.” These bargains, Kandiyoti explains, refer to the constraints in which women find themselves. The constraints that bind women, the researcher argues, differ based on the contexts the women are in. She posits that the strategies used by women in patriarchal systems seek to maximize their security while maintaining varying possibilities for either passive or active resistance. In French hip hop women, are restrained by perceptions and expectations of them, but they use their skill and knowledge of the genre to force dialogue about the status of French hip hop. French female rappers are engaging in an overthrow of the patriarchal system of the genre by becoming its new voices. This overthrow of the genre is occurring from within as these rappers work from within the confines of French hip hop in order to transform it. The subject matter discussed in the songs of this chapter challenge the status quo, which French rap culture has become because of its embrace of sexism. French female rappers are telling the French hip hop community what hip hop means through their resistance against the hip hop patriarchy.

25 Ibid.  
26 Ibid.
Chapter 3: French Rap on the Map: Globalization and Internationalization in French Rap Music

French rap is undergoing a period of transition where artists are questioning the soundscape of French rap in their music by referring to other cultures in their music, using elements from other music traditions in their songs, adopting flows from non-French rappers, and including words from different languages in their raps. These features result in a three-step process of transglocalization, whereby artists are taking a global product, localizing it, and then re-globalizing it. From its humble beginnings in the streets of New York during the 1970s and 1980s, rap became a phenomenon that reached all parts of the globe, unifying all of its fans under the global culture of hip hop bound by shared views and struggles.

After hip hop culture became immensely popular in the United States, people from other countries began to import hip hop into their own cultural contexts. This process represents the globalization of hip hop, meaning that its ascension from the streets of New York to the four corners of the globe, where it encountered different local contexts. Once people brought hip hop into their countries, they localized, or glocalized, the genre, that is to say, they molded it to their specific cultural contexts without completely abandoning its original characteristics or qualities of universal appeal. What French rappers are doing now goes beyond the two initial steps of globalization and localization because they are pushing French rap onto a global platform, hence the term “transglocalization,” which expresses a going “beyond” (“trans”) the tension between the global and the local, to describe the process. Rap artists who participate in this transglocalization are, on one hand, engaging in a hip hop battle with their American counterparts, and on the other hand, they are protesting the recent rise in nationalist sentiment in France by promoting societal and cultural diversity, uplifting the idea of a multicultural France.
Hip hop’s success abroad is in large part due to its translatability; people import hip hop and adapt it to their social realities. The rejection of certain themes in American hip hop and the incorporation of local themes led to the localization of hip hop worldwide—in other words, to its glocalization.¹ For example, Senegalese rapper Faada Freddy explained in an interview that when rap first came to Senegal, people thought that they needed to carry guns and be violent because those themes were prevalent in American rap.² Eventually, they decided to tackle issues in their community such as poverty and power.³ Thus, while the subject matter differs from American rap, a baseline notion of authenticity remains in that the rappers describe their reality instead of faking lifestyles that are not their own. Despite rap music in different countries having developed a variety of local traits and identities, rap remains a combination of global and local cultures, or “glocal” product of appropriation.

In his book, Media, Communication, and Culture, James Lull outlines three core steps for what he terms “the creation of new cultural territories.”⁴ An analysis of James Lull’s framework as applied to the songs in this chapter will help demonstrate how French rappers are transglocalizing the genre. The first of the three steps in the creation of new cultural landscapes is deterritorialization which refers to the “partial tearing apart of cultural structures, settings, and representations.”⁵ Lull uses the immigration of people from poorer countries into richer ones as his primary example. The deterritorialization witnessed is physical; the people literally uproot themselves and resettle in entirely new contexts. He also notes that deterritorialization can also

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² Ibid, 05.
³ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
be cultural, citing the cultural annihilation slaves underwent upon their forced relocation to the Americas.\(^6\) The second step of Lull’s model is cultural melding. During the cultural melding phase indigenization, transculturation, and hybridization occur.\(^7\) Indigenization refers to when imported cultural forms begin to develop characteristics of the local culture.\(^8\) Transculturation refers to the process by which cultural forms move through time and space, and hybridization is “the fusing of cultural forms often facilitated by the flow of mass-mediated imagery.”\(^9\) The final step in the creation of new cultural territories is reterritorialization, which Lull defines as the “dynamic recasting of cultural territory,” occurs once a cultural product has successfully been embedded into a new cultural context, which is the case for rap music.\(^10\)

In his work, James Lull uses the spread of hip hop from America to every other culture in which it exists as an example for his framework. The deterritorialization occurs once hip hop is introduced into a new environment, leading to indigenization.\(^11\) During the indigenization phase, hip hop takes on features of the local environment such as language, or slang, resulting in transculturation. From this point on, or possible simultaneously, the music hybridizes, gaining more footing in its new society as media outlets develop to support it. Finally, hip hop becomes reterritorialized once a full-fledged culture with its own pioneers, codes, and institutions has formed around it. French hip hop represents a case unconsidered in Lull’s framework, transglocalization. His framework ends at the reterritorialization of a cultural product, meaning when the imported product has successfully molded with the new community, creating a

\(^6\) Lull, Media, Communication, Culture, 240.
\(^7\) Ibid, 241.
\(^8\) Ibid, 286.
\(^9\) Ibid, 242, 286.
\(^10\) Ibid, 290.
\(^11\) Ibid, 244.
glocalized product.\textsuperscript{12} However French rap, a glocalized product, has globalized, resulting in transglocalization.

\textsuperscript{12} Lull, \textit{Media, Communication, Culture}, 249, 253.
3.1 Copying Flows: Mimicry of Cadences and Style in French Hip hop

As rap started to dominate the other aspects of hip hop culture in France, artists moved away from rapping in English and took to rapping in French, using English for certain slang words that rappers incorporated into French (the word “flow”, for example) to promote a more global identity in the sense that French rappers sought to connect to the global culture of hip hop and pay homage to American hip hop as well as demonstrate the subversive nature of hip hop in France by incorporating a non-native French word into the jargon of their new culture.¹ In hip hop culture, artists cherish nothing more than originality or authenticity. “To keep it real” means to live one’s truth as well as to create one’s own image and style. This idea is essential to being a true hip hop artist and to do otherwise constitutes a violation of hip hop doctrine. “Biting”, as it is known, defines the action of copying another artist in any way, shape, or form.² Biting another artist often carries great repercussions for rappers as an accusation of biting can tarnish or even ruin the reputation of an MC. In the earlier years of French rap music, artists often took to rapping in English or borrowing from American artists’ flows, or the rhythmic ways in which a rapper performs a song, in order to make music, despite the vast differences in pronunciation and cadence between English and French.³ Rap journalist and radio show host Mehdi Maizi comments, “A cette époque, rapper en français est soit impensable soit une bizarrerie,” (“Back then, rapping in French either was unthinkable or quite weird.”) demonstrating the rarity of this new hip hop culture taking on the local language.⁴ Given that rapping in English posed a challenge to many and rapping in French had not yet become the norm, early French hip hop

¹ Hassa, “Kiff my Zikmu: Symbolic Dimensions of Arabic, English and Verlan in French Rap Texts,” 57
³ Mehdi Maizi, Rap français: une exploration en 100 albums. (Marseille: Le mot et le reste, 2016), 11.
⁴ Ibid.
culture focused more on the other dimensions of hip hop culture such as graffiti and dance.\(^5\) This section will focus on two instances of biting, one involving the channeling of another artist’s flow on a particular song and the other relating to stylistic mimicry. French rapper La Fouine’s “Litron” copies the flow and intonation of the song “Jumpman” by Canadian rapper Drake and American rapper Future. French rapper Josman’s “Vanille” features trademark ad-libs from American rapper Schoolboy Q as well as an Americanized flow.

3.1.1 **La Fouine, “Litron,” a French response to Drake and Future?**

A rapper with several awards and projects to his credit, including a collaboration with American rapper, The Game, La Fouine has carved out a name for himself in the French hip hop landscape.\(^6\) Born to Moroccan parents, Laouni Mouhid or La Fouine (The Weasel) grew up in subsidized housing in the Paris suburb of Trappes playing instruments such as the piano and guitar from his childhood.\(^7\) At a friend’s house, La Fouine discovered rap around the age of 12, first listening to artists such as NTM.\(^8\) Throughout his teenage years, the artist often found himself in trouble with the law, being sent to prison a number of times for crimes such as theft.\(^9\)

“Litron” features La Fouine as confident as ever as he raps about money, clothes, and drugs among other subjects typical of an ego trip song. Additionally, the artist makes use of other languages and references to fashion houses as well as American trap houses, locations where drug deals occur. La Fouine makes use of the flow in “Jumpman” to link himself to Drake and Future, the rappers on the track. Hailing from Canada, Drake is a rapper who has built a name for

\(^5\) Garcette and Dupouy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès.*
\(^8\) Ibid.
himself on the American hip hop scene with numerous mixtapes and high-selling albums such as *So Far Gone* and *Take Care*. Future, known for his hazy, auto-tuned half-sung half-rapped ballads, is one the rappers who has helped establish Atlanta as a hip hop center in America in recent years. Although La Fouine has faced accusations of biting in the past and is currently accused of copying American rapper Post Malone’s song “Patient,” his influences on “Litron” appear much clearer than on the other songs. Given the striking similarities between the two songs, La Fouine confirms that he copied Drake whereas on the other tracks, he does not reveal his influences.\(^\text{10}\)

The song opens with the chorus where La Fouine speeds through the beat with a rapid flow as he self-aggrandizes over his capacity to gain money by any means necessary. At this point in the song, his flow follows the general prosody of French, which does not have word-level stress, meaning that individual words do not differ based on the placement of stress. Instead, French has sentence-level stress, where the last syllable of the last word of a sentence is fully stressed. When people utter single words in French, the stress generally falls on the last pronounced syllable, as marked by the underlined part of the word (ex: *diner*).\(^\text{11}\) English possesses both word-level stress and sentence-level stress, meaning that both individual words within sentences as well as the final syllables in sentences are stressed.\(^\text{12}\) For example, we may consider the two following phrases:

\begin{quote}
Je vais à la piscine (I’m going to the pool)
I’m going to record a record.
\end{quote}

\(^{10}\) La Fouine was recently accused of biting American rapper Post Malone’s “Patient” on his song “Ennemis.” La Fouine has also been accused of copying Soulja Boy among other artists.


\(^{12}\) Ibid.
In the French sentence, all of the syllables remained equal except for the final syllable of the last word, whereas in the English one, the amount of stress changed based on the word. In the chorus and first verse of the song, La Fouine does not stress syllables on individual words but on the final syllable of a phrase. In the first line of the chorus, La Fouine raps: “Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets” (Rough you up for some money, we don’t shoot at calves), where at the end of each clause he stresses the final syllable. His choice to do so establishes the song in a French linguistic context because after this point the rapper adds features of other cultures.

After the second chorus of the song, La Fouine takes on Drake and Future’s flow, his way of rapping from the song “Jumpman” demonstrating what James Lull describes as deterritorialization, a term that refers to the removal of cultural signs from specific places and times, which then leads to transculturation: the moving of cultural products through space and time. In the case of “Litron”, the use of Drake’s flow removes it from its original context. “Jumpman” released in September of 2015, two years before “Litron.” With millions of streams and purchases, “Jumpman” received platinum certification from the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), given to songs with at a million units sold. The second verse begins:

“Détail, détail, détail, c’est pas pour moi, moi j’parle en gros Charbonne, charbonne heureux, quand les tits-peu signent en pro.”

14 Lull. Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach., 239, 242
(“Detail, detail, detail, it’s not for me, me I speak whole picture
Work, work, happy when the young ones go pro.”)

In the lines above, the underlined portions of words signify where La Fouine puts the most stress. Normally, the stress would be on the second syllables of those words (détail, charbonne, heureux). However, since he is borrowing from English, he stresses the first ones instead. In both “Litron” and “Jumpman,” the rappers’ emphasis on the first syllables of each word creates a bouncing cadence. For Drake and Future, that manner of rapping comes more naturally as it is based in their native language of English. However, La Fouine must make the effort to go against the general pattern of French in order to incorporate the duo’s style into his own music. Another feature of “Jumpman” that La Fouine copies is the pair’s tendency to end lines with a rising intonation. For example, from lines 49-52, La Fouine raps:

“T’as des appart' que quand tu joues au Monopoly
J’ai pris le flow tah Jumpman, on sait nique ta mère aussi
Dépense, dépense, dépense ma belle, ne m’dis pas le prix
On passe la nuit debout quand l’gouvernement s’assoupt.”  

(“You’ve got apartments when you play Monopoly
I took the flow to “Jumpman,” we know, fuck your mother, too
Spend, spend, spend my beautiful, don’t tell me the price
We spend the night standing while the government nods off.”)

In the lyrics above, the italicized portions mark where La Fouine raises the pitch of his voice. In “Jumpman”, Drake begins to shift the pitch of his voice at the end of lines 12 and 13 of the song and Future adopts the technique throughout his entire verse. The Trappes rapper’s choice to do so further demonstrates the influence of American rappers on his music as he adds another feature of “Jumpman” into his own song, taking the original material and blending it with his own style.

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In order to maintain his authenticity as a rapper while still positioning himself on global platform, La Fouine’s placement of the chorus between each verse signals his local French identity, while verses two and three represent the rapper trying to mold the “Jumpman” flow into a tool for himself to elevate to a global level, meaning that he is using it to build recognition for himself by people who do not live in France in order to rival his American counterparts. Additionally, La Fouine insults his detractors, rapping, “J’ai pris le flow tah Jumpman, on sait nique ta mère aussi (I took the flow from Jumpman, we know, fuck your mother, too),” which demonstrates his awareness of his actions. La Fouine’s acknowledgement of his biting also signals his status as rapper in the sense that for him to globalize his music and develop his fan base, he must take from other rappers, whereas other rappers are not copying him to boost their success. The straightforward recognition of his source reveals that La Fouine is starting the indigenization process with this flow because he applies it to French it instead of rapping in English, although he uses two English words, “front row” and “[United] States.” Lull writes that indigenization describes the process of imported cultural products taking on local features. In the case of “Jumpman” flow, La Fouine attaches his native language, French, to an English-based manner of rapping. The attachment of the French language to the American flow thus represents the beginnings of the merging of the two products.

The frustration that the rapper feels demonstrates that the flow has not fully made its way into local French rap scene as people still view it as appropriated from American hip hop and from English. La Fouine’s “Litron” remains in a space where the song has adapted American rap features into a French context, but these have not become French due to the strong connection to

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20 Ibid, lines 31, 38.
21 Lull, Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach, 244.
“Jumpman” and the artists who created it, similar to Josman’s song “Vanille”, on which the rapper takes inspiration from Top Dawg Entertainment’s (TDE) Schoolboy Q.

3.1.2 Josman, “Vanille”: Impersonation of Schoolboy Q’s Style

Raised in Vierzon, France, José Nzengo, or Josman discovered hip hop through his sister who enjoyed different genres of music and around the age of 14, the young man decided to try his hand at rapping. Eventually, he made a name for himself at open mics and rap battles at End of the Weak, a freestyle rap tournament held in multiple countries across the world such as France, The Philippines, and South Africa. The rapper released his first project, Echecs Positifs (Positive Failures) in 2015, followed by Matrix in 2016, and finally, his most recent project, 000$, which he put out in 2017. On the song “Vanille” (Vanilla) from 000$, the artist copies the overall style of American rapper Schoolboy Q, unlike La Fouine, who focused on a single song. His choice to take on Schoolboy Q’s style pushes him beyond the borders of France as the song almost constantly references the American rapper and it allows Josman to engage in dialogue about what French rap is.

Incorporating styles of American rappers into his own music is not unique to this Josman song. The fifth track on 000$, “High Life” mimics the style of Houston rapper Travis Scott with his signature shriek-like “yeah” ad-libs and faded auto-tuned crooning. Although he does not outright state his influences on the song “Vanille”, the artist revealed that he borrowed from Schoolboy Q in an interview: “... et je pense que c’est effectivement plus proche de Schoolboy


24 Josman, “High life,” 2017, track 5 on 000$, online mixtape.
justement, notamment pour les « yah, yah »,” joked the rapper (“… and I think that it’s actually more similar to Schoolboy, mostly for the ‘yah, yah’”).25 In the song, the two prominent features of Schoolboy Q’s music that Josman uses are his ad-libs and the nasality he often adds to his voice when rapping.

Five lines into Josman’s record, the listener hears “yeah” after the word xaalis, which means “money” in Wolof.26 The decision to have a word in another language before referencing the Schoolboy Q demonstrates transculturation in that Josman is importing two languages into his French, which elevates the song from its local status to a more global one.27 In many of Schoolboy Q’s songs such as “Man of The Year,” “Hands on The Wheel,” or “Collard Greens,” one can find his trademark ad-lib, “yeah,” which many rappers say, but Schoolboy Q differentiates himself from other rappers in the distinctive ways in which he shouts the ad-lib. Schoolboy Q’s voice takes on a slight nasal slant and he often trails off the “yeah” with vocal fry, which describes the sound created by slow vibrations of only one end of the vocal folds, creating a creaky or croaking sound.28 In Josman’s reproduction of Schoolboy Q, the same features are present, almost as if he sampled the rapper. After hearing the ad-lib for the first time, it fades into the background of the track, becoming integrated into the beat, and the listener hears it from time to time during Josman’s verses. The fact that the song becomes marked by another rapper’s characteristics links the track to American hip hop, which demonstrates a diversity in Josman’s music because he does not look exclusively to French rap for inspiration. Additionally, Josman puts himself in a position to prove his skill by using Schoolboy Q’s style. In adopting it,

he proves that he can adapt to different flows and switch through them mid-song, reinforcing his strength as a rapper. The listener understands that the song’s core is French given that Josman primarily uses French in this song, with the occasional dip into other languages. However, those uses of other languages remain episodic whereas the Schoolboy Q reference is recurring, reminding the listener that the product to which they are listening has adopted features that are not French, thus placing the song in a transglocal space that is no longer exclusively French.

The chorus of “Vanille” strengthens the appeal to a more global identity as it not only features the pitched “yeah” ad-libs, it also features Josman applying Schoolboy Q’s vocal style in the actual lines of the song. Josman’s appropriation of Schoolboy Q’s style allows him to rival Schoolboy Q, present his own listeners with innovation in French rap delivery, and to diversify the characteristics of French rap. In lines 9-12 of the record, Josman stresses the first syllable of the last word, in the same way La Fouine did when he took on the flow from “Jumpman.”

Josman cries out:

“En attendant le soleil me sourit, la nuit m’fait la gueule (yeah, yeah, yeah)  
J’aime une femme, une mère et c’est la seule (yeah, yeah, yeah)  
T’inquiète pas, je sais quelle est ma famille (yeah, yeah, yeah)  
Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah).”

(“While waiting, the sun smiles at me, the night sulks at me,  
I love a woman, my mom, and she’s the only one,  
Don’t worry, I know who my family is  
The world smells like shit, but tastes like vanilla.”)

In addition to the words with underlined portions being pronounced in a way that more closely resembles English, Josman shouts them with a nasal voice and vocal fry, further channeling Schoolboy Q’s style and flaunting this transculturation and has fused it with his own sound. He does this to link himself to the popular American music label, to add prestige to his

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music, and to contest rap norms in French hip hop by introducing new sounds and styles to the genre. Currently, TDE music has a reputation of releasing high quality music, namely because of Kendrick Lamar, but also in part because of Schoolboy Q and other artists on the label. Copying Schoolboy Q instead of Kendrick Lamar demonstrates nuance on part of Josman because it is apparent that he is familiar with the artists on the label besides the main one. After the first chorus, the song continues with the second and third verses, each one followed by a chorus. The song ends with Josman repeating “yeah” three times in the voice he uses for the verses of the song. The song finishes with the chorus and Josman’s words reinforce that he pushed his song beyond the cultural context of French rap through his strong use of outside influences.

The use of these specific rappers’ flows points to deliberate efforts to move outside of France by channeling artists from abroad despite France having its own rap culture. French artists took flows from American rappers when rap first hit France because they did not have anything of their own and appropriated flows and adapted them to the phonetics of the French language. To copy flows of American rappers now is to seek to valorize French rap to the non-French listener because American rap still remains the point of reference for rap music worldwide. The rappers chosen to imitate by Josman and La Fouine have not yet attained legend status in hip hop and can be seen as their peers because both Josman and La Fouine are relatively close in age to those they mimic, which furthers the idea that the two used the Americans’ style to elevate themselves to the levels of those they copied. Additionally, the French rappers allowed the American rappers’ styles to dominate while keeping their styles in the background in order project that they are appealing to listeners of American hip hop, which is global. They are also embracing other cultures in their music, pushing narratives of diversity in French society through rap music.
3.2 Reproductions of non-French Instrumentation in French Hip hop Beats

A manner in which French rappers use features of other cultures in their songs to promote an identity beyond French borders is through their use of instrumentals, which often take on sounds similar to those in non-French musical traditions. In my experience with hip hop culture, many listeners of hip hop, especially contemporary hip hop, argue that the beat counts for at least half of a song’s value and for many detractors of modern hip hop the beat unfortunately holds all of a song’s value. The instrumental of a track is its core and more importantly, the core of the genre. Before the focus shifted to rapping, instrumentals played a large role in forming hip hop culture because people hesitated to rap and preferred to dance, to do graffiti, or to deejay.\(^1\) The instrumentals unified youths at parties and allowed the milieu to form. In France, as a part of the annual festival, Paris Hip-Hop, an instrumental tournament is held in which producers create beats on the spot. As the center of French hip hop, for Paris to continue to hold events dedicated to the creation of instrumentals reinforces the role of the beat in French rap music. A song’s core lies in its beat, which creates an atmosphere that can help the artist project a certain image of himself. In the songs, “A Kele Nta” by MHD and “Bené” by PNL, the instrumentals serve as a method by which the artists appeal to musical traditions outside of France in order to shift their music from a local level to a global one.

3.2.1 MHD’s A Kele Nta: Afro Trap’s Theme Song?

Poster child for the Afro Trap movement, Parisian rapper MHD, born Mohamed Sylla (born in 1994), has taken French airwaves by storm with his Afro Trap series, now a list of ten songs that fuse elements of West African music alongside features of trap music, a subgenre of hip hop characterized by its liberal use of hi-hats and the Roland TR-808 machine, commonly

\(^1\) Garcette and Dupuoy, *La story du rap français: 30 ans de succès.*
referred to as “808s” and for having an ominous atmosphere. Trap music lyrics often explore topics such as drug dealing and gang violence. Growing up, MHD, the son of a Senegalese mother and Guinean father, listened mainly to West African artists such as Espoir de Coronthie and Takana Zion and did not listen to much French rap apart from Dosseh. In an interview, MHD remarked that he took inspiration from American trap music and from West African music and that his success in touring America and Africa validated his music and the genre he is trying to establish.

In the young superstar’s song “A Kele Nta,” (“Only Choose Her”), the song features an instrumental that sounds West African in origin. However, upon closer examination, it becomes clear that the instruments used in this song are Western, such as the guitar, and are electronic. The resulting effect is an instrumental that borrows from West African music but does not entirely use its style. In “A Kele Nta,” the producers, Dany Synthe and DSK on the Beat chose to manipulate the sounds of a guitar in order to make it resemble a kora, a 21-string plucked harp-lute originating from what is modern day Guinea-Bissau. The two producers are familiar with

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3 MHD has a 10 part song series called “Afro Trap.” “Afro Trap pt.10” was the most recent to release.


West African music and have produced similar tracks for other artists such as Maître Gims and Damso who have songs featuring similar instrumentals as “A Kele Nta.”

MHD’s public is able to recognize this track as potentially coming from West Africa likely because of West African music’s presence in France. Musicians such as Toumani Diabaté and Ali Farka Touré have known large-scale success in both their home country of Mali but also worldwide. What Roderic Knight terms “Mande music,” refers to the music made with the influences of the Mande people. Such influences include using traditional instruments such as the kora or balafon. Mande music draws heavily from the stylings of the jali, who functions as a historian and a musician of the Mande people. Mande music began gaining popularity in the 1970s, and became extremely well known in Paris in the 1980s in part due to artists such as Salif Keïta and Mory Kanté. In restaurants and jukeboxes at many places in the city, one could hear Mande music being performed. Due to Mande music’s presence in French society, people listening to MHD’s record would probably recognize the sound as coming from West Africa, even if they do not necessarily hear that a guitar is playing instead of a kora.

The instrumentation used in the song points to electronic production as it lacks the human features that would be found on a song made with a kora. Due to its structure having a large number of strings placed close to one another, it would prove a difficult task to pluck the different strings on a kora without slightly hitting surrounding strings, regardless of one’s intentions. Even with masters such as Toumani Diabaté, the sounds of unintentionally hitting strings are present, but on MHD’s song, they are not. The result becomes a song that flirts with

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8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
West African traditions through synthesized Western instruments. However, the West African-inspired instrumentation on “A Kele Nta” has not hampered MHD’s success in any way. In fact, the rapper often receives praises for representing West Africa in his music and the youths in the West African countries in which he recently toured enjoyed receiving the Parisian rapper and his hybridized instrumentals. Through the use of Western instruments to echo a West African sound, MHD’s song demonstrates a hybridized sound that reflects MHD’s identity and link between the two worlds in which he finds himself. Using such a beat allows MHD to promote an overseas connection without alienating listeners in France or abroad who may be unfamiliar with the references he is making in his music.

3.2.2 PNL, Bené: Trips to Latin America and West Africa

PNL or Peace n Lovés (lové is a slang term meaning “money”), composed of brothers Tarik and Nabil Andrieu, grew up in the subsidized housing sector of Les Tarterêts (nicknamed “Tarterêts Zoo”) in the Paris suburb of Corbeil-Essones. The two began their careers as solo artists, making songs that resembled the socially conscious rap of the 1990s with slow, somber beats and lyrics describing the struggles of life in poverty. Upon the formation of the group, their sound turned towards the hard-hitting beats of drill music and the hazy, autotune laden sounds of cloud rap. Using elements of other cultures in their art is not unusual for the group, which often shoots music videos in locations all around the world. Their breakout song “Le Monde ou Rien” (“The World or Nothing”) takes place in the dangerous neighborhood of Scampia in Naples, Italy reinforcing the lyrics of the song which explore drug dealing as a means to survive in an area abandoned by local government. With “Bené,” the duo deterritorializes the song by incorporating sounds from different music traditions reproduced by electronic instruments.

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12 Péron and Lamm, “Dans La Légende», La fascination PNL.”
The instrumental of the album version begins with an electronic guitar sound, which listeners observe given that all of the notes are played perfectly and at a speed that human performers cannot achieve. It then leads to drum sounds that resemble those heard in reggaeton. Reggaeton came into existence as the result of the fusion of Jamaican music beats, from which reggaeton derives its signature drum pattern and Panamanian Spanish music.\textsuperscript{13} The use of a reggaeton beat serves to deterritorialize the song in order to make it appeal to audiences outside of France and promotes French rap as diverse and inclusive of other cultures, running counter to narratives that suggest France should become more closed off. Additionally, reggaeton’s origins as a music born of diasporic cultures reinforces the global identity the group aims to project. In 2017, the reggaeton song, “Despacito” by Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee attained a diamond rating (35 million streams and downloads, with one download equaling 150 streams) according to the Syndicat National de l’édition Phonographique (National Syndicate of Sound Publishing), demonstrating at least a minimal familiarity with that sound. Those who streamed the song heard Spanish lyrics and a similar beat to the one found on PNL’s “Bené.”\textsuperscript{14} In the music video version of “Bené,” the song features an introduction during which electronic guitar sounds reminiscent of Spanish guitar music overlay notes made to resemble sounds of the kora. The addition of the extra sounds and the decision to overlay them reflects a blending of cultural traditions which gives the song its global character. The fact that French artists have created this track based in hip hop, which is global, alongside reggaeton, kora music, and Spanish music globalizes the song and where it can reach more people despite the language barrier of French. Through making use of these sounds, the duo manages to appeal to an audience outside of their


native France much like American artists do, albeit without necessarily mimicking external musical traditions. Additionally, PNL challenges the sound of French rap for both listeners of the genre and not, dismantling notions about what French rap is.
3.3 **Lexical borrowings in French Hip hop**

Code-switching in French rap music serves as an integral part of the art form as artists use it to denote ethnic or regional pride by valorizing their heritage languages. The act of code-switching in French rap allows artists to subvert French linguistic ideologies about the language, which heavily promote standard French and disregard any version of French that deviates from the standard set by the Académie française (French Academy).\(^1\) Due to France’s diverse population and the high number of rappers being of foreign origin, much of the code-switching observed in French rap involves Arabic, specifically Darija, which refers to the local varieties of Arabic spoken in Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria.\(^2\) Another language into which French rappers switch is English, often borrowing from AAVE (African-American Vernacular English) as it is the linguistic basis of rap music and may be observed in the French terms for “beat,” “flow,” or “dj” which are the same as the English terms.\(^3\)

In recent years, languages such as Lingala, Spanish, and Japanese have joined the list of languages from which French rappers draw, widening the scope of code-switching in their music. Some rappers even choose to forego French altogether, preferring instead to rap in English or other languages.\(^4\) In addition to promoting their individual identities, code-switching in rap music allows artists to globalize their music by representing various linguistic communities who hear themselves reflected and represented in these French rap songs. The songs “Sapés Comme Jamais” (“As Well-Dressed as Ever”) by Maître Gims and “La Moula”

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\(^1\) French rap acts such as the Fabolous Trobadors rapped in Occitan and had songs celebrating non-standard French accents.

\(^2\) Hassa, “Kiff My Zikmu: Symbolic dimensions of Arabic, English and Verlan in French rap texts,” 49.

\(^3\) Ibid, 56.

\(^4\) Recent French rappers to rap songs entirely in English are Rilès from Rouen and Lean Chihiro from Paris.
(“The Money/The Weed”) by MHD demonstrate artists using language as a means to globalize their music.

3.3.1 Maître Gims ft. Niska, "Sapés Comme Jamais": Congolization of French Rap?

A rapper of Congolese origin, Maître Gims, born Gandhi Djuna, has carved out a name for himself in French hip hop, delivering hit songs such “Tout Donner” and “Loin.” His 2015 album, Mon coeur avait raison (My Heart Was Right), features songs in which he mixes Lingala into raps alongside French and other languages. Like Maître Gims, the rapper Niska also embraces his Congolese heritage in his raps, as well as American trap culture. The two artists are contributing to what some journalists and French hip hop fans are calling a congolization of French rap given that artists such as these two as well as Gradur and Tito Prince draw on their Congolese roots in their music. Listening to the song, one hears primarily a mix of Lingala, English and French, which serves to distance the song from its French provenance by allowing these different languages throughout the record.

The song begins with and get its title from the idea of “la sape,” a way of life among a small demographic of Congolese men centered on dressing oneself in formal attire, often wearing lavish suits in vibrant colors. The men who participate in this lifestyle are called sapeurs (“dressers”) and those who live near the sapeurs often salute and praise their style. When Niska pronounces “jamais” (“never”) in the introduction, he pronounces it with a slight accent, indicating that the song’s context does not lie in France. It pushes the song beyond its

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6 Niska, “Niska, le rappeur franco-congolais aux 400 millions de vues,” interview by France 24, France 24, September 19, 2017. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=toZOzXS88GM.
9 Ibid.
limits in France in order to connect with audiences outside of the country and to compete against American rap songs for global recognition. After this first instance of using language to de-territorialize the song, to remove it from France, Maître Gims uses a simplified form of a Japanese word to refer to himself and in doing so demonstrates a deterritorialization of Japanese culture. The resulting mix of the two languages is a hybridization of the two cultures because the rapper has taken elements of two cultures and fused them together. Hybridization takes place in the second step of James Lull’s framework on appropriation and focuses on the fusion of the imported product and the local product, which are Japanese and French.10 The artist raps:

“Ça va faire six ans qu'on met des combos
Je manie les mélos, Waraoui, Warano
Tu te demandes si c'est pas un complot.”11

(“It’s about to be six years we’ve been making hits
I control melodies, Waraoui, Warano
You’re wondering if this isn’t a scheme”)

The reference comes from the second line, where Maître Gims raps “Waraoui, Warano.” One of his nicknames is Meugi, which is verlan for his rap moniker.12 After placing his name in verlan, fans took to adding -wara to it, to create Meugiwara, a gallicized version of the Japanese word mugiwara (麦わら), which translates to “straw.” The word refers to a character from the Japanese book series titled One Piece, of which the rapper is a fan and whose main character is named Mugiwara no Luffy (Straw Hat Luffy, lit. Straw’s Luffy), from which Maître Gims takes “warano.”13 The use of “warano” symbolizes an import of Japanese culture and it transformation

12 Verlan is a French slang based in the reversal of the first and subsequent syllables in words, thus “merci” becomes “cimer.”
within a French context as the word comes from a language foreign to France but Maître Gims appropriates it and then uses it to demonstrate his identity as a global artist. Additionally, by including another language into French and transglocalizing the song, Maître Gims is pushing a version of French to listeners that deviates from the linguistic ideologies held about French. This version of French can be viewed as promoting linguistic diversity in France. He appropriates Japanese manga culture by referencing one of the most successful series in order to reach its fan base which spans the globe and to align himself with them in order to attract more listeners.

The second verse of the song features Stanislas Dinga Pinto, alias Niska opening with a line in Lingala to reinforce his ties to West Africa and to assert his diasporic identity as the son of Congolese parents.¹⁴ Niska reinforces the Congolese side of his personality through his declaration, “J’suis Congolais, tu vois [ce que] j’veux dire?” (“I’m Congolese, you see what I mean?”). ¹⁵ Though he did not grow up in the Republic of the Congo, he uses this verse to illustrate an affiliation with the country and its people.¹⁶ He then connects himself to America, specifically its hip hop culture. At the end of his verse, “bando na bando” rings out in the background of the song.¹⁷ The word “bando” describes an environment where an individual deals drugs. The term appears frequently in Southern US hip hop, and groups such as Migos often refer to the “bando” in their songs. Between the words “bando”, Niska places the preposition “na” which is Lingala for “to,” “towards,” or “down.”¹⁸ Together, the phrase translates to “from bando to bando.” Through the inclusion of both English and Lingala in a single utterance, the

¹⁵ Maître Gims, Niska “Sapés comme jamais,” interview by France 24.
¹⁶ Niska, “Niska, le rappeur franco-congolais aux 400 millions de vues,” interview by France 24.
¹⁷ Maître Gims, Niska, Sapés comme jamais, line 50.
rapper blends these two aspects of himself, borrowing from the America and Africa to highlight a global identity that encompasses these two influences.

The song ends with Maître Gims listing different locations followed by “God Bless” in the background, signaling not only a connection to world through English but also a religious one because Maître Gims is touching a Christian demographic. Additionally, he is celebrating these countries and the people who reside there or who come to France and add to the multicultural landscape of France. He could also be looking towards these countries as future leaders in a post-colonization world. He sings,

“Kinshasa na Brazza (God bless) 
Libreville, Abidjan (God bless) 
Yaoundé na Douala (God bless) 
Bamako na Dakar (God bless).”\(^{19}\)

In the above lines, Maître Gims calls out these cities in Africa in order to connect to the people of those countries and to recognize them in hopes of drawing them to his music because he aims to rival American rap music, which requires a large fan base. He also aims to uplift these countries and show solidarity with them, in a time where African countries are being condemned as the source of societal problems in Europe. The choice of cities stands out because they are not cities on may think to call out when appealing to different parts of the globe. The choice to make reference to lesser known cities outside of France demonstrates the rapper’s familiarity with various cultures in Francophone Africa. “Sapés comme jamais,” through the varying languages used in the song, promotes a more global, and less Anglo-centric identity as the rappers embrace different countries and cultures in their art in order to attract more listeners and prove their skills as rappers.

\(^{19}\) Maître Gims, Niska, “Sapés comme jamais,” lines 64-67.
3.3.2 MHD, "La moula": The Birth of a Wave

MHD loads his first entry of the Afro Trap series with many instances of lexical borrowings, drawing from English, Soninke, and Spanish. The rapper introduces English in very first lines to describe his financial pursuits. “Je me lève à 6 heures du mat pour avoir des billets green et purple,” (“I get up at 6 in the morning to get green and purple bills.”) chants the rapper. The use of English here links the language to financial success as MHD uses it to describe the type of money he is making rather than other aspects of the image that creates for the viewers in this line. The next instance of lexical borrowing observed in the first verse occurs in the thirteenth line of the song where the rapper borrows from Spanish, although incorrectly, with the phrase “loca vida” (“life crazy” in Spanish) instead of “vida loca” (“crazy life”) and then once again from English with the insertion of the word “easy” instead of its French equivalent “facile.” These small placements of words from other languages create breaks in the lines in which the listener hears them, causing pause and inciting the listener to wonder about the origins of these words if they are not familiar with them.

Samira Hassa writes that the use of English specifically in French rap music allows the artist to connect with the with larger global hip hop community given that English is hip hop’s mother tongue and the language in which many cultures received hip hop when it came to their countries. Following the first verse, the rapper moves into the chorus where the word “moula” can be heard about a dozen times. “Moula” refers to the English “moolah” meaning “money.” Naming his song after the English word and repeating it many times throughout the chorus demonstrates an attempt to deterritorialize the track by building a connection with the global hip hop community.

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hop community as Hassa mentions. However, since MHD is surrounding this and the other English words in the song with French, he is promoting the idea of French rap as global rap because he embeds English within his French.

Within the first few lines of the second verse, MHD acknowledges various ethnic groups in Senegal. He raps, “Négro me voilà pour mes soninkés, diakhankés, mes poulars et les dioulas,” (“Nigga, I’m out here for my Soninkes my Djkhankes, my Pulaars, and my Dioulas.”) in order to show solidarity with his parents’ home back in Senegal, to connect with the people of those backgrounds in and out of France, and to announce the code switching into Soninke. 22 From lines 34-36, MHD includes words in Soninke as he disparages his opponents. Though the Parisian rapper does not borrow heavily from this language, his use of these words coupled with the recognition of the Soninke, Diakhanke, Pulaars and the Dioula connect MHD to the Mande people and their cultures. MHD’s choice of words in this song reinforces the idea behind the concept of afro-trap, the blending of West African and American cultures to create a genre that transcends the regions from which MHD took inspiration.

Through these French rappers’ use of stylistic mimicry, instrumental selection, and lexical borrowing, they test the sonic and social boundaries of French rap. When French rappers borrow flows from American artists, they not only reproduce the sound of American rap music, they also exhibit a desire to attain the same level of recognition as their American peers as well as the flexibility of French rap music and its ability to take on features of different languages. In La Fouine’s “Litron,” he manipulates the intonation of the French language to the cadences of English to compete with Drake and Future and manages to do so with energy and charisma. La Fouine highlighting a pride in what he is doing for himself and the genre he represents, although

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he breaks a rule of hip hop to do so. We have also seen how the instrumentals reflect the idea that in French rap, one can find traces of their traditional music fused with the sounds and rhythms of hip hop, representing the spread and interaction of cultures as a result of globalization, among other factors. Despite the fact that neither the “A Kele Nta” nor the “Bené” instrumental use the actual instruments from the styles the artists are imitating, they manage to create a sound that appears foreign to a French audience. Finally, lexical borrowing represents a globalization of French in the sense that the words used in these songs represent many countries, languages, and cultures. Incorporating these languages into French rap allows artists to connect to different groups of people and to subvert notions of French linguistic purity. These features serve to deterritorialize these songs, pushing them outside of the borders of France. However, instead of reterritorialization, where these features would become engrained in French rap and subsequently become French hip hop, the goal of the artists studied is to continue Lull’s process after hybridization, by transglocalizing French rap music. Beyond seeking to transform their art into global music by creating links to a variety of languages and music, lexical borrowings in French hip hop serve to subvert and transform the French language into reflecting the diversity that exists in France, despite the linguistic hegemony that is often imposed on French speakers. Furthermore, by promoting these versions of French with non-French lexical borrowings to a global audience, the artists are asserting that the French they use is valid, thus showing support to the various linguistic communities referenced.

These attempts to transglocalize French rap music respond to a need for French rap artists to gain the same cultural relevance held by their American counterparts as well as to question French rap as it is currently. The actions performed by the artists studied represent efforts to engage in a battle with American rap music. French artists are seeking the title of “global rap”
and to do they are using different flows, deterritorialized instrumentation, and lexical borrowing to stand against the rap music power house that is America. Additionally, in adopting aspects of different cultures into their own raps, French rappers are creating links between French rap and other genres of music which could eventually translate into streams or sales and ultimately, a greater recognition of French rap on a global scale. Within France, as nationalist sentiments have risen in recent years, the transglocalization occurring with French rap music serves to highlight France’s diversity and its multiculturalism by including world communities in songs, tackling prejudiced narratives seeking to expel aspects of multiculturalism from France.
Conclusion: Where’s French Hip Hop At?

From its humble beginnings in the streets of the Bronx in the late 1960s and early 1970s, hip hop blossomed into a culture with its own rules, vocabulary, institutions, and leaders. In the early 1980s, as more and more MCs began to take the mic and utter more than a few words over a DJ’s beat, hip hop became rapper-centered and the other three dimensions (deejaying, graffiti, and breakdancing) of hip hop culture fell into the shadows. Around the time that American rappers began to release their first rhymes, the emerging hip hop culture made its way to the streets of Paris. With individuals such as Phil Barney and Dee Nasty importing music, dance steps, and graffiti techniques, hip hop culture took root in France, capturing an entire generation of youths who sought an escape from the malaise felt in the suburbs of Paris. The first hit record in France featuring rap as the method of delivering the lyrics came out in 1981. Three years later, French hip hop culture would welcome French hip hop pioneer Dee Nasty’s *Paname city rappin’* as its first French rap album. Though it did not sell well commercially, its impact on the French hip hop community would demonstrate that French artists could produce their own rap music, in their own language. That same year, French hip hop reached television with the 14-minute show H.I.P.H.O.P., which celebrated breakdancers. However, its cancellation proved an important step in the development of French rap. When the show stopped airing, many of the b-boys and b-girls who watched the program took to the studio to lay down raps.

Four years later in 1988, the radio show Deenastyle marked the beginnings of the careers of the many rappers whom French rap fans consider to be pioneers or legends. On this show, hosted by Dee Nasty, acts such as IAM, NTM, and MC Solaar performed freestyles to validate their talents not only to themselves, but also to the French hip hop community at large. By the end of the 1980s, many of the rappers who dominated the 1990s had already made themselves known and had begun to work on their breakout albums. In 1990, French rap’s first compilation
album, *Rapattitude* hit the streets of France. The album symbolized French rap establishing itself as a genre as it provided a survey of the active rappers at the moment. The following year, in 1991, MC Solaar broke the stereotype of the hardened street rapper with his tongue-in-cheek song, “Bouge de là.” With the rise of the hardcore French rap groups NTM and Assassin in 1992, French rap had split into two camps: one that crossed demographic groups and reached a large public and another that consisted of music deemed too political by many.

These camps benefitted from relatively equal exposure until the late 1990s, when the more socially conscious, political French rap began to fall into the shadow of more radio-friendly songs. Despite the decline of political rap, artists with a social conscience such as IAM still maintained a large amount of success. Their 1997 album *L'école du micro d'argent* sold immensely well and quickly became a classic French rap album. The 2000s witnessed the rise of more gangsta rap acts such as Booba, but also one of the biggest French hip hop stars ever, Diam’s, who successfully reached both the classic hip hop crowd and the more casual fans. Towards the end of the 2000s, artists such as Orelsan, Nekfeu, Jul, PNL and others began making waves in the French hip hop landscape with songs and mixtapes released on the internet, proving that a traditional label cosign was no longer necessary to have success in French hip hop.

Due to the promotion of more egocentric, hedonism-driven rap music, the genre has reached a place where it could no longer serve its original function as the voice of diverse community. In addition, French rap music’s homogenization has resulted in a closed-mindedness towards rappers who challenge the status quo. In response to the rigid structure of current French rap, rappers who engage with Islam, feminism and sexuality, and the globalization of culture challenge the genre to open up once more. These rappers use their songs to reflect the diversity
from which French rap originally drew and open up the discussion for future movements in French hip hop to take place.

In the first chapter, we observed different manifestations of Islam in the songs of a variety of Muslim rappers. From the converts Akhenaton and Kery James to the devout followers Medine and Ali, Islam’s role in French rap in French music explains the outlooks and realities of the performing artists and their fans, many of whom live the experiences with Islam discussed in the chapter. Furthermore, their music challenges stereotyped perceptions of Islam where the religion is demonized and treated as a menace to French society. Instead, this rapper demonstrate that Islam can, and does, exist alongside French values. The followings that these Muslim rappers boast provide examples for young Muslims on how people manage to integrate these two identities in the realm of hip hop. For example, Kery James’ outlook on Islam may appeal to a more traditional, scripture-focused demographic as it focuses more on Islamic doctrine and his songs refer to the Qur’an as well as hadith whereas PNL’s presentation of Islam focuses on the religion as a moral guide. The rapper-as-imam concept represents an engagement with Islam that is suited to the needs of French Muslims as the rappers examined discuss the realities of French Muslims, providing the music with an authenticity that allows people to relate to its contents. This relatability and the fact that the rappers are French Muslims reflect the idea of an Islam de France, an Islam constructed by French people, tailored for people living in France. Using rap as a tool of religious expression demonstrates a return to hip hop’s original roots as a music of protest because it represents a combination of Muslim and French identities, which challenges the idea of secularism and the notion that Islam and Frenchness cannot be compatible.

The second chapter explored various topics found in French rap songs made by women. Given that French rap is product of its society, the sexism that one finds in society has seeped
into the genre. However, the sexism found in French rap music violates what hip hop is supposed to stand for: equality and the subversion of societal norms. Female rap points out this hypocrisy and combats it from different angles. For example, the songs dealing with misogyny such as Chilla’s “Sale chienne” (Dirty Bitch) outwardly denounced the mistreatment of women in hip hop and society by exposing the mindset of misogynists. While such songs focused on the words of the male oppressors in hip hop and in society in general, tracks such as “Yaourt aux fruits” celebrated the female body and promoted sexual encounters in which women sought out their own pleasure. The two aforementioned themes, denouncing misogyny and the valorization of female sexuality, dismantle the common depictions of women found in French rap music. Often, male rappers categorize women either as la putain (the whore) or la maman (the mom), a binary stereotype which either demonizes or idealizes women by reducing them to ideas that erase the nuances of who they are as complex human beings. This sexist binary promoted by French rappers also reinforces the perception that la maman is inherently moral because she is rendered asexual while la putain is inherently immoral because of her sexuality. As we noted in PNL’s “Mowgli,” women represent temptation and chaos and play a large role in the duo’s inner jihad. For them, women who take control of their sexuality could be seen as causing fitna, or disorder, according to some interpretations of female sexuality by certain Islamic scholars such as Jāmi’ at-Tirmidhī. Countering these stereotypes of women allows French female rappers to assert their identity and to carve out their own space in French rap culture. Furthermore, the question of “de-gendering” asked whether or not women rappers needed to highlight their femininity and also led to a discussion on what French “female rap” is. Casey’s “Pas à vendre” (“Not for Sale”) reveals the trials and tribulations that the “hybrid” rapper—in between the feminine and the masculine, the French and the Martiniquan culture, and the banlieue and mainstream French culture—
underwent as she discovered an industry that attempted to force a feminine identity onto her even though she sought to set her identity as a woman aside. Casey resisted but her tale illustrates that the French rap industry still maintains conceptions about what images French female rappers should project as well as what fans may expect from them. The songs and themes of this chapter criticized the homogeneity of French rap music and called for a return to France’s hip hop roots as an outlet for diverse voices in French communities, which these themes demonstrate.

In the chapter on globalization, the different methods by which French rappers transglocalize (reglobalize a glocalized product) their music highlighted efforts to push the recognition of French rap music beyond France and to put it in competition with its American counterpart. French rap, much like rap music in other countries, began as an imitation of American rap, but quickly became adapted to the needs and realities of the French national and local context. Almost three decades after its arrival in France from the United States, rap music has developed into its own form of French culture, with legends, codes, and a thriving success in France and neighboring Francophone countries. However, on a global scale, French rap trails behind American rap in terms of its international reputation and influence in large part due to a language barrier, but also because of a lack of exposure. In response, French artists rap on instrumentals that take inspiration from non-French musical genres in order to create connections with listeners from a wide range of backgrounds, which would draw them towards French hip hop and increase the genre’s appeal. For example, MHD’s Afro Trap blends American southern trap music with the sounds of West African music, which allows him to create a sound that appeals to two different demographics because he produces sounds that are familiar to these groups. Overall, we concluded that the languages, instrumentals, and flows the French artists studied chose to incorporate into their songs deterritorialized the tracks, making them more
accessible worldwide. With the genre gaining fans through the internet, artists’ efforts to attract and hold these fans is of great importance if French rappers seek to fully break into the realm of global hip hop, as American artists have. Transglocalization in French reflects diversity in French hip hop returning because artists are drawing from multiple genres and languages to enrich the genre with a variety of sounds.

The chapters and themes explored in the thesis point to a division in French rap music. Artists are returning French hip hop to its roots by questioning French hip hop culture itself and seeking to re-diversify the genre. Their songs counter the uniformity of mainstream French hip hop music through the topics discussed or the manners in which they discuss them. For example, the artists in the first chapter address religion and bring it into a larger discussion which contests the emphasis placed on secularism in French society. In the second chapter on gender and sexuality in French hip hop, we examined how female rappers are becoming the new voices in hip hop and are contesting sexism in the genre by offering a variety of female voices on different subjects relating to the female experience such as misogyny, sexuality, and gender norms. This may in turn lead to potentially greater openness related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the genre. Although the subject matter of MHD’s music does not differ greatly from that of his peers, his incorporation of West African instrumentation and lexical borrowings separates him from other rappers and promotes the idea of French hip hop becoming more global. In confronting French hip hop about its own issues of diversity, the focus on Islam, gender, and globalization opens up a space for new questions to be asked of/in French hip hop. The three chapters also open up the discussion on what hip hop is to stand for in French society. If French hip hop is to remain a music of the oppressed in French society, then it must revolt against the
norms of French society as it once did in order to give voices to diverse populations and to respond to new cultural developments in French society.

Overall, French rap is opening back up in terms of diversity, as newer rappers such as PNL, MHD, and Chilla continue narratives pushed in the earlier stages of French hip hop. The arguments by the French rappers discussed in the thesis are putting French rap in a place to reflect the communities it represents as well as open up doors for communities who are not well-represented, such as the LGBTQIA community. Additionally, by breaking up the homogeneity of current French rap, the genre will be able to better compete with the rap cultures of other countries, which is important now given the recent rise of rappers from other Francophone countries in France and the rise of rap from other countries in the world. For example, Belgium has come out with the controversial yet successful rapper Damso and the heavily-American influenced Hamza, both of whom have made giant strides in France. Damso’s 2017 album *Ipséité* went platinum twice and Hamza’s album *1994* was quite popular among rap fans. The Switzerland rap scene is taking off in France, boasting acts such as Makala and Dimeh, who are rising from the underground Swiss rap scene into the larger French rap scene. Outside of Europe, artists from Korean, Japan, and China are slowly creeping onto the playlists of young Americans and into concert line-ups. With these new developments in hip hop around the globe, French hip hop has its work cut out in terms of competition, but I believe it will rise up to the challenge. Searching on YouTube now compared to when I was younger, I find more and more people interested in French rap music and what it has to offer in comparison to American rap music. Reaction and discovery videos of French rap (among other national varieties of rap) have become fairly popular in recent years, helping French artists touch a larger public. For French
artists to keep these international publics as well as their French ones, the genre must continue to promote more and more diverse viewpoints of hip hop as it has been doing recently.
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Appendix A: Chapter 1 Lyrics

Conversion

Abd al Malik, “Gibraltar”

[Verse 1]
1. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui pleure, un rêve qui prendra vie, une fois passé Gibraltar
2. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui se demande
3. Si l'histoire le retiendra comme celui qui portait le nom de cette montagne
4. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui meurt sa vie bête de gangsta rappeur mais
5. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune homme qui va naître, qui va être celui que les tours empêchaient d'être
6. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui boit
7. Dans ce bar où les espoirs se bousculent, une simple canette de Fanta
8. Il cherche comme un chien sans collier le foyer qu'il n'a en fait jamais eu
9. Et se dit que peut-être, bientôt, il ne cherchera plus
10. Et ça rit autour de lui, et ça pleure au fond de lui
11. Faut rien dire et tout est dit, et soudain
12. Soudain il se fait derviche tourneur
13. Il danse sur le bar, il danse, il n'a plus peur
14. Enfin il hurle comme un fakir, de la vie devient disciple
15. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar y a un jeune Noir qui prend vie
16. Qui chante, dit enfin « je t'aime » à cette vie
17. Puis les autres le sentent, le suivent
18. Ils veulent être or puisqu'ils sont cuivre
19. Comme ce soleil qui danse, ils veulent se gorger d'étoiles
20. Et déchirer à leur tour cette peur qui les voile

[Verse 2]
21. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui n'est plus esclave
22. Qui crie comme les Braves, même la mort n'est plus entrave
23. Il appelle au courage celles et ceux qui n'ont plus confiance
24. Il dit : « ramons tous à la même cadence »
25. Dans le bar, y a un pianiste et le piano est sur les genoux
26. Le jeune Noir tape des mains, hurle comme un fou
27. Fallait qu'elle sorte cette haine sourde qui le tenait en laisse
28. Qui le démontait pièce par pièce
29. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, y a un jeune Noir qui enfin voit
30. La lune le pointer du doigt et le soleil le prendre dans ses bras
31. Maintenant il pleure de joie, souffle et se rassoit
32. Désormais l'amour seul, sur lui a des droits
33. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, un jeune Noir prend ses valises
34. Sort du piano bar et change ses quelques devises
35. Encore gros d’émotion il regarde derrière lui et embarque sur le bateau
36. Il n’est pas réellement tard, le soleil est encore haut
37. Du détroit de Gibraltar, un jeune Noir vogue, vogue vers le Maroc tout proche
38. Vogue vers ce Maroc qui fera de lui un homme
39. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, sur le détroit de Gibraltar
40. Vogue, vogue vers le merveilleux royaume du Maroc
41. Sur le détroit de Gibraltar, vogue, vogue vers le merveilleux royaume du Maroc

Kery James, “28 décembre 1977”

[Verse 1]
1. 28 décembre 77, aux Abymes j’suis né
2. D'une famille plus proche d'être pauvre que d'être fortunée
3. Mes parents sont originaires d'Haïti
4. Terre indépendante que mon cœur a choisi pour pays
5. La plupart de mon enfance, je l'ai passé auprès de ma mère
6. Je peux pas ne pas mentionner qu'elle surmonta beaucoup de galères
7. Et elle continue à ramer, trimer, jusqu'à cette heure
8. Sur une main je peux compter le nombre de fois que je les vu en pleurs
9. On nous fit venir en France au prix de nombreux sacrifices
10. Pensant que la France était terre de réussite
11. Octobre 85, dans ce pays j'atterrissais
12. Le temps était gris et j'ignorais ce qui m'attendait
13. Souvent les parents ont pour leurs gosses de l'ambition
14. Ainsi ma sœur et moi on s'est retrouvé en pension
15. Loin... de ma mère, tu le sais, enfance amère
16. Loin d'es enfants, pour une mère, vie amère
17. Éloignés d'elle, le temps qu'elle construise ses repères
18. Jusqu'à ce qu'elle nous récupère
19. Puis on a quitté la pension pour venir vivre à Orly
20. Et ce que j'ai vu ce jour-là, a sûrement changé ma vie
21. Dans un pavillon ma mère louait une seule pièce
22. Qu'un rideau séparait 30 mètres carré au plus
23. Dans ce truc-là on était 5, vivant dans la promiscuité
24. Ouvrir un frigidaire vide, me demande pas si je sais ce que c'est
25. Mais maman ne nous a jamais laissé crever de faim
26. Maman a toujours subvenu à nos besoins
27. Pour notre bonheur, elle a sacrifié le sien
28. Étonnant ce que l'on peut faire par amour pour des gosses
29. Avant je ne portais pas de Nike Air, mais plutôt des Jokers
30. Mon style vestimentaire, provoquait des sourires moqueurs
31. Ce qui développa en moi, très vite la rage de vaincre
32. La rage d'exister, l'envie de réussir
33. Influencé par les Orcas, Little Jay et Manu Key
34. Avec Teddy et Harry, Idéal J on a formé
35. À l’âge de 14 ans est sorti notre 1er disque
36. Alors j'ai espéré pouvoir vivre de la musique
37. Mais mon rap était trop sincère, trop dur, trop franc
38. Conséquence succès d'estime, mais trop choquant pour votre France

[Bridge]
39. Idéal J, Teddy, Harry plus tard le DJ Medhi, Boubakar
40. Le rap, je suis tombé dedans y a bien longtemps
41. Je t'explique en 2, 3 temps dix ans c’est donc toute une période de ma vie
42. Et ici, j’ai une pensée pour ceux qui ont partagé beaucoup de ces moments avec moi
43. Housni, Samir, Titi, Yézi, Jason, Manu Key, Saïdou, Karim, Yohan, Mokobé,

[Verse 2]
45. Puis l’école contre la rue, peu à peu j’ai échangé
46. Sont arrivés les premiers joints
47. Du lycée, j’ai pris congé
48. J’étais de ces gosses qui auraient pu réussir
49. Mais légèrement trop féroce pour que le système puisse me contenir
50. Issu des blocs de béton, la rue m’attendait au tournant
51. Elle m’avait toujours guetté, mais jusque-là je l’avais feintée
52. Et avant que je puisse me rendre compte, elle m’a emporté avec elle
53. Est venu l’époque que j’appelle entre rap et business
54. Entre rap et business, mes potes et moi, grosse équipe
55. Veux-tu que je te raconte la suite ?
56. Skunk, popo et shit, transactions illicites
57. Sur le terrain on prend des risques
58. On prétend devenir millionnaires sans jamais rien donner au fisc
59. Sans même s’en rendre compte on s’enfonce dans la violence
60. Le plus souvent sous défoncé, tout ce qui bouge, on te le défonce
61. Une embrouille, on bouge à 10
62. À côté ça vend des disques, jusqu’à croire réellement que
63. Tu peux pas test Mafia d’Afrique
64. Les ennemis se multiplient, jusqu’à ce qu’on puisse plus les compter
65. Vu que la vie n’est pas un film
66. Le K’1 Fry sort enfouraillé
67. On le sait et on sent, on le sait et on sent que ça part en boulette
68. Ça parle de se ranger mais qu’après avoir pris des pépètes
69. C’est ce que j’appelle la rue et ses illusions
70. Derrière lesquelles se cachent la mort ou la prison
71. La prison mes potes y rentrent, y sortent, reviennent
72. Et moi j’échappe à leur justice de justesse
73. C'est dans la rue, que j'ai appris à connaître L.A.S
74. Et su que derrière tout dur, se cache un peu de faiblesses
75. Aujourd'hui t'es avec un pote et vous vous charriez
76. Mais t'attend pas à ce que la mort t'envoie un courrier
77. L.A.S, nous a quitté subitement
78. Qu'Allah le préserve du châtiment
79. Dans ce bas-monde, les actes et pas de comptes
80. Mais dans l'au-delà les comptes et pas d'actes
81. Je me suis réellement senti en danger
82. J'ai su que je risquais de me noyer, si jamais je plongeais
83. Les vagues de la violence, tôt ou tard m'auraient submergé
84. Victime de mon insolence, de la rue je suis un naufragé
85. Et j'ai nagé, alourdi d'un fardeau de mes regrets chargé
86. Et même à ce jour ne croit pas que j'ai émergé
87. Je t'assure, je garde les traces de mon passé
88. Tu sais, ces choses qu'on ne pourra pas effacer
89. Puis j'ai appris l'Islam cette religion honorable
90. De transmission orale auprès de gens bons et fiables
91. Elle m'a rendu ma fierté, m'a montré ce qu'était qu'un homme
92. Et comment affronter les démons qui nous talonnent
93. J'ai embrassé le chemin droit et délaissé les slaloms
94. Ceux qui m'ont éduqué, je remercie, j'passe le salam
95. À tous les musulmans de France, de l'occident à l'Orient
96. Ceux qui ce bas-monde voudrait quitter en souriant
97. Mais yeux se sont ouverts, mon cœur s'est épanoui
98. Me fut dévoilé, peu à peu tout ce qui m'a nuit
99. Jusqu'à ce que je devienne de ceux qui s'inclinent et se prosternent
100. Voudraient aimer pour leurs frères ce qu'ils aiment pour eux-mêmes
101. J'ai une vie et j'en connais le sens je ne pars plus dans tous les sens
102. Ne soit pas étonné si au rap conscient je donne naissance
103. À la précipitation, je préfère aujourd'hui la patience
104. Aux paroles inutiles, la sauvegarde du silence
105. À l'intolérance et au racisme l'indulgence
106. Et à l'ignorance j'aimerai rétorquer par la science
107. Ce bas-monde, terre de semence que plus tard tu récoltes
108. Le jour où l'âme te quitte, subitement que la mort t'emporte
109. Sois intelligent et sèmes-y ce qui t'es utile
110. Ceci est l'enseignement de l'Islam et il hisse l'âme
111. Loin de tout extrémisme, la voie de droiture
112. L'unique voie à suivre et si le système te sature
113. L'Islam ramène l'amour, rassemble les gens de tous les pays
114. De toutes les origines, toute les cultures, toutes les ethnies
115. Y'a pas que des riches et des pauvres, y a des gens mauvais ou biens
116. J'ai réappris à vivre, compris les causes de notre déclin
117. Et quand je regarde mon passé, j'ai failli y passer
118. Si je n'avais eu l'Islam peut-être que je me serais fait repassé
119. Ou la moitié de ma vie en prison, j'aurais passé
120. Pour ceux qui y sont passés, ici, j'ai une pensée
121. Mais combien sont partis sans avoir eu le temps de se préparer ?
122. Chargés de pêchés et d'injustices à réparer
123. Avant que la mort ne me vienne, faut que je répare les miennes
124. Si je veux récolter du bien, c'est du bien qu'il faut que je sème
125. Un jour je partirai, et serai enveloppé d'un linceul
126. Au mieux de mes vêtements dans un modeste cercueil
127. Et lorsque je serai mort, et que cette chanson tu te remémore
128. Sûrement quelques larmes viendront humecter ta mémoire
129. Maintenant tu sais d'où je viens, qui je suis et où je vais
130. Et pourquoi mes textes de sagesse sont imprégnés
131. D'une famille plus proche d'être pauvre que d'être fortunée
132. 28 décembre 77, aux Abymes j'suis né
133. Et à une date que j'ignore un jour je partirai
134. On naît, on vit, on meurt, mais ce que l'on ignore, c'est comment
135. Et à une date que j’ignore un jour je partirai
136. Certains ont dit l’exemple de l’être humain sur
137. Terre est tel un commerçant,
138. Il a pour capital sa vie, pour bénéfices ses bonnes œuvres
139. Et pour pertes ses mauvaises actions, 28 décembre 77, j’suis né et un jour j’partirai
140. Si c’était à refaire assurément j’ferais autrement
141. Mais les choses sont telles qu’elles sont
142. Et ce ne sera jamais autrement
143. L.A.S…

Akhenaton, "Dirigé vers l'est"

[Verse 1]

1. Sacralisé par mes écrits, soufflant à l'Est l'Alizée
2. Cérébral fait baliser, car mon arme est légalisée
3. Les mots, flottent dans l'atmosphère, je joue
4. Avec leur sens, et les hisse à la lumière hors du flou
5. Avec la même science que les bâtisseurs des pyramides
6. Je me métamorphose, hors de ma chrysalide
7. En être de chair et de sang, parti d'un embryon
8. Dans la direction inverse du carrosse de Cendrillon
9. J'ai tant de respect pour la vie, la preuve
10. Est que je suis réticent à l'idée de dévorer un œuf
11. C'est rare, mais j'ai eu la chance, je crois
12. Celle d'être né, d'être appelé deux fois
13. Abd-El-Hâkim, l'insecte
14. Apparaît à une époque où les divisions revendiquent être la 73ème secte
15. Où les traditions sont soulignées, la communauté est vouée
16. Au néant, aux grands malaises de l'exégèse
17. S'écroulant doucement comme le temple d'Éphèse
18. Messager de l'ombre, car en latin Lucifer
19. Signifie "celui qui apporte la lumière"
20. Avec un rythme et la précision du lynx
21. Je te conterai l'histoire de la chenille qui devient un sphinx
22. Priant pour que l'ignorance jamais ne reste
23. "Abd-El-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"
[Refrain x3]
24. Que les pouvoirs de Dieu se manifestent
25. "Abd-El-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"
26. Attendant la venue d'Aïssa
27. "Abd-El-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"
[Verse 2]
28. 361 degrés de pouvoir
29. La force gravitationnelle unique pour me mouvoir
30. La rotation du cercle autour d'un axe
31. Créée des forces émanant du cœur vers les extérieurs
32. Ce sont les pouvoirs du Créateur Divin
33. Je pourrais en parler des heures, ça ne servirait à rien
34. Seul le troisième œil admire
35. La rotation autour du centre s'accomplir
36. J'ai donc créé une rime pour chaque degré
37. Comme un esprit en escalier qui tend à s'élever
38. Puis dédié, mon encre, mon temps, mes vœux
39. Et 361 phrases pour Dieu
40. La loi dictée par la majorité bout
41. Un fou est-il fou ou sommes-nous tous fous ?
42. C'est dans la perspective d'une profonde analyse
43. Que je fonde mes recherches sur la base de catalyses
44. Les peuples de l'égo sont des châteaux de Legos
45. Et peu importe s'il ne reste que des mégots
46. Car j'identifier les motivations, puis j'érige
47. Ma philosophie de l'observation des vestiges
48. Et la matière qui compose la chair est dérisoire
49. Plus importante pour l'homme est la mémoire il faut croire
50. Que les témoignages de mes pères me guident
51. Sans fin comme un objet propulsé dans le vide
52. La balance naîtra la faveur d'une éclipse
53. Signe avant-coureur et habit de l'Apocalypse
54. L'Aurore ne viendra pas ont dit mes ancêtres
55. "Abd-El-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"

[Refrain]

56. Que les pouvoirs de Dieu se manifestent
57. "Abd-El-Hâkim a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"
58. Attendant la venue d'Aïssa
59. "Abd-El-Hâkiem a toujours le regard dirigé vers l'Est"

Inner Jihad

PNL, "Mowgli"

[Verse 1]

1. Je suis de la jungle, appelle-moi Mowgli
2. J'ai le seum, j'ai pas le semi
3. J'étais jeune je coupais un demi
4. Pas d'ami j'étais comme Rémi
5. Dans le 94 ou bien à Beriz
6. Dans mon zoo tu connais la pata-tate
7. Je bois la haine dans le carré VIP
8. Viens tester que j'te haga-ga-ga-gar
9. Une légende dans ton tier-quar
10. On vend, on te crosse, on te tire dessus
11. T'es mon ennemi, des barres
12. Je t'incendie, je t'éteins, j'te pisse dessus
13. Les yeux rouges dans la ville
14. Je rhabat, je rhabat tous les junkies
15. Comme un démon t'as vu
16. Je te schlass et je repars comme Chucky
17. Ce soir avec une brune
18. Je la ken je l'oublie et je pète une blonde
19. Ouais je navigue dans la brume
20. Sa mère la pute je suis pire qu'une bombe
21. Je me fais pêter, D4
22. D5, D2, je connais le bâtiment
23. Au fait suce-moi sale chien
24. J'bé-tom, bats les couilles de ton châtiment
25. T'façon on va prendre perpète
26. C'est ça de ne pas être un mouton
27. Le week-end je fais pas la fête
28. Je parle à Dieu j'appuie sur le bouton
29. J'ai envie de me sentir libre
30. Aujourd'hui je poserai torse nu
31. La rage comme en Palestine
32. Et vu qu'les plus forts mangent le plus
33. Je sors le gala gala
34. Beleck connard on t'ca-ca-casse
35. Oungawawawawa
36. Pèse la fonce dans la ca-ca-cave
37. Igo aucun orgasme
38. À part chez toutes ces tasses' qui bougent
39. À l'âge de jouer à fifa
40. J'm'en sortais en coupant des douze
41. Jure pas la vie de ta mère
42. Tu crois m'aimer ? Laisse faire le temps
43. La vie, un goût amer
44. Je la sucre avec une paire de gants
45. Je dis à papa pas le choix
46. T'façon peut-être qu'on nous a maudit
47. Je viens faire le spectacle bah quoi ?
48. Je leur chante ma haine et ils applaudissent
49. Igo je vise tellement le but
50. Depuis tout petit je suis un campeur
51. J'attends toujours la passe
52. Et je souris comme Christophe Lambert
53. J'répète à ces beurettes
54. Que la street ne fait pas de Thomas
55. J'ai fait le million de barrettes
56. Million de vues j'connais pas connard
57. J'sors pas le cross volé
58. D'où t'as vu que ça faisait du biff ?
59. Au bon-char tu connais
60. Je la vends pour nourrir la mif
61. Hardcore depuis le départ
62. C'est pas le vocodeur qui me rend plus tendre
63. J'roule un pilon très tard
64. Seul, le vent qui balaye ma cendre
65. Bah quoi tu croyais quoi ?
66. Que j'rappèrè, que j'ferai "Lalala ? "
67. Je t'encule je suis pas gangsta
68. Je laisse ça à ces la-la-lâches
69. Appelle-moi AD khey
70. Made in TZ, gros je veux ma paye
71. Igo wallah c'est laid
72. Comme une michto qui t'michto la teille
73. Igo sort les chicos ici on te ramène rien à ton bec hein
74. À la fin comme Rico ça s'encule pour avoir le chèque hein
75. Dans le frigo c'est sec hein
76. Marlich le dessert au p’tit frère
77. Tes MCs hashtag fake hein
78. Tu prieras pour qu'on nous libère
79. Gros le rap ça me plait pas
80. Je le fais parce qu'y a peut-être un billet
81. Un charbon comme un autre, tu manges, tu tires et t'es oublié
82. Igo j'te raconte la hess en cellule, un stick dans de la Gauloise
83. La crise j't'encule à sec comme j't'encule si tu me dois une ardoise
84. Avoue qu'y a rien à voir, qu'avenir tu veux pas y penser
85. Parce qu'ici c'est noir et qu'Iblis nous fait tous danser
86. Fais pas le thug avec nous
87. Wallah qu'on te visera pas les genoux
88. Pas besoin d'être un milliard on s'en fout que tu vois ou pas les jnouns

[Outro x2]

89. Igo, je sors mon cul du rrain-té
90. Je suis pas un rappeur, sans vocodeur je suis claqué
91. Je fume une niaks' avant de sé-po
92. Mmmm liasse de té-co
Akhenaton, "Je combats avec mes démons"

[Intro]
Maître Corbeau, sur un arbre perché
Tenait en son bec un fromage
Maître Renard, par l'odeur alléché
Lui tint à peu près ce langage :
"Hé ! Bonjour, Monsieur du Corbeau...

[Verse 1]
1. Le dénommé Satan veut que l'on tombe dans le panneau
2. Mais je combats le démon comme le Seigneur des Anneaux
3. Enfant déjà mon esprit était en scission
4. Un jour, il s'est dressé pour lutter contre mes visions
5. Un soir, je rentrais de l'école, il y eut un déclic
6. Au fond de ma personne s'éveilla un être mystique
7. Je faisais des paris stupides avec moi-même
8. Qu'importait le thème, il fallait que je mène
9. A bien la mission, déchiré tel un tissu
10. Comme si mon existence dépendait de son issue
11. Si tu regardes à gauche, tu vivras heureux
12. Si tu penches à droite, tu mourras jeune et miséreux
13. Et je rentrais à la maison, le chemin était le test
14. 20 minutes durant le visage tourné vers l'est
15. Et quand je me couchais après le bonsoir de ma mère
16. J'essayais de voyager jusqu'au fond de l'univers
17. Je les ai vues de mes yeux, les planètes, les galaxies
18. Sans jamais joindre la limite, je m'assoupissais puis
19. Je me dis aujourd'hui que c'est bizarre
20. Qu'à cinq ans et demi on réalise que l'univers est infini
21. Tous les matins le réveil était le même
22. Brutal, je rêvais de voler au-dessus des plaines
23. Et dans les airs à mon plus haut point mes ailes se coupaient
24. Sur une table mon corps s'écrasait
25. Le mythe d'Icare n'est pas loin, signe divin
26. Je n'en sais rien mais Il est maître du destin
27. Moi, seul sur mon rocher je transpire
28. Dans ma lutte sans merci pour mieux lui obéir

[Refrain x2]
29. Je combats avec mes démons
30. "Donne-moi ton âme"
31. Je combats avec mes démons
32. "Donne-moi ton âme"
33. Enfant déjà, mon esprit était en scission

[Bridge]

34. Je combats avec mes démons...
35. "Donne-moi ton âme"

[Verse 2]

36. Toute mon enfance, ils ont essayé de m'enlever
37. De m'attirer, sans succès, j'ai résisté
38. Athée, j'ai mué, pour devenir un être ultra-mystique
39. Un métèque de confession islamique
40. Et par la voie du seigneur je peux atteindre des limites
41. Que jamais je n'aurais espéré joindre si vite
42. L'abstraction, de la solidité des barrières
43. Transformer une pièce aux dimensions d'un univers
44. C'est pourquoi je fus capable de m'enfermer dans ma chambre
45. Des heures et d'en faire le royaume des Ombres
46. Laconique car l'excès mène au scandale
47. Un spartiate traversant le désert du silence en sandales
48. Je suis allé en enfer
49. Pour collusion avec Iblis, complicité dans ses affaires
50. Le reproche est grave, sans me faire prier
51. J'ai donné mon amitié à des esprits meurtriers
52. J'en suis revenu en ayant appris deux choses:
53. L'enfer est sur terre, le blanc, le noir ne sont pas roses!
54. Dans ces cas, la part de raison est infime ainsi
55. J'ai très bien compris tous les mécanismes du crime
56. J'ai été puni en tant que fidèle décadent
57. Pour avoir trahi la 27ème nuit du Ramadan
58. Mais j'ai une arme contre ça
59. La capacité que j'avais de réciter des fables à 18 mois
60. Dieu et moi avons fait un pacte
61. Et chaque fois que le don qu'il m'a fait est sali par mes actes
62. Il m'envoie brûler en enfer pour les jours où j'ai trahi
63. Que ceci soit pour la vie écrit et accompli

[Refrain x2]

64. Je combats avec mes démons
65. "Donne-moi ton âme"
66. Je combats avec mes démons
67. "Donne-moi ton âme"
68. Enfant déjà, mon esprit était en scission
Médine, "Jihad"

[Verse 1]

1. Quelques milliards d'années pour un retour en arrière
2. Écrivain arriéré depuis que l'homme est sur terre
3. Il était une fois un morceau de chair
4. Qui pour conquérir le monde, petit homme partit en guerre
5. D'un geste habile Abel devint victime
6. Par le meurtre de son frère, Qâbil instaure le crime
7. Ce furent les premiers pas sur terre des criminels
8. Trahison fraternelle, une femme au centre des querelles
9. Et le règne de l'homme suivit son cours
10. Oubliant son Seigneur celui qui lui fit voir le jour
11. Accumulant les erreurs et les défaites
12. Espérant trouver son coin de paradis par les conquêtes
13. Alors petit homme sortit son épée
14. De son fourreau et commença à découper
15. Toutes les têtes qui se dressaient devant lui
16. Les mauvais comme les gentils, les colosses comme les petits
17. Préhistoire, antiquité, Moyen-âge et Renaissance
18. Une histoire sans équité obtient la rage à la naissance
19. Avertissement de la part des messagers
20. À qui on tourne le dos et qui nous laissent présager
21. Une guerre avant une autre et un mort après l'autre
22. Un empire, un continent et une rafle contre une autre
23. Récit imaginaire, mythologie du minotaure
24. Hercule contre Centaure, Achille contre Hector
25. Et comme les responsables n'y sont qu'à moitié
26. Musulmans contre croisés, Jérusalem et Poitiers
27. David contre Goliath et Moussa contre Pharaon
28. Tous devront rendre compte quand sonnera le clairon
29. Et l'existence aura pris fin
30. Puis renaîtra de sa poussière de défunt
31. Un jugement qui se déroule sans injustice
32. Regroupant l'humanité les dos chargés de bêtises
33. Mais bien avant petit homme aura pris le temps
34. De combattre son frère et de verser le sang
35. D'innocents, de coupables présumés
36. D'instaurer un bordel pas possible en résumé
37. César, Attila, Alexandre le grand
38. Gengis Khan, Napoléon et Guillaume le Conquérant
39. Le pouvoir ne fait que changer de prénom
40. Les méthodes restent les mêmes, de successions en successions
41. Couronné par le peuple autoproclamé
42. Le bourreau par la victime se voit acclamé
43. Réclamer le prix d'une liberté promise
44. En espérant un jour regagner la terre promise
45. Moujahidin, Samouraï ou prétorien
46. Mercenaire et légionnaire, soldat de plomb qui ne craint rien
47. Général, caporal, sous-officier
48. Depuis le fond de nos entrailles à la guerre nous sommes initiés
49. Et si le monde d'aujourd'hui a changé
50. Qu'on nous explique les génocides et leur sens caché
51. Qu'on nous explique les conflits qui se prolongent
52. Le 21ème siècle est bien parti dans son allonge
53. Explique les bouteilles de gaz l'invention des chambres à gaz
54. Les furtifs hélicoptères qui coupent les ailes de Pégase
55. Le crime est dans nos têtes enfoui dans nos mémoires
56. Il suffit d'un rien pour que le monde replonge dans le noir
57. Guerre offensive, défensive, guerre mondiale
58. Guerre des nerfs, nucléaire, guerre coloniale
59. Guerre des étoiles, guerre du feu, guerre diplomatique
60. Guerre des mondes et guerre bactériologique
61. Guerre froide et guerre de résistance
62. Guerre civile, guerre de 100 ans, guerre d'indépendance
63. Croix de guerre, chemin de croix et croix de fer
64. Crime de guerre, cri d'enfer auxquels je crois dur comme fer
65. L'important c'est de participer
66. Moi j'crois bien n'avoir jamais joué à la paix
67. Une marguerite sur nos fusils à pompe
68. On déteste les armes mais les fabrique en grand nombre
69. C'est l'industrie de l'armement
70. Une manière comme une autre de se faire de l'argent
71. Ak-47 et pistolet mitrailleur
72. Kalachnikov et missiles Stingers
73. Missiles, roquettes, al Samoud et Tomahawk
74. Des armes de destruction massive qui nous choquent
75. Uniquement quand elles appartiennent aux autres
76. Après l'enquête en fin de compte ce sont les nôtres
77. Et recommence depuis le commencement
78. Insoumission, désobéissance au Grand Commandement
79. On abandonne notre poste de vertu
80. Moralité d'acier un vêtement dévêtu
81. Aucune pudeur, aucune remise en question
82. Aucun regret, aucune larme, aucune demande de pardon
83. Aucun combat exercé de l'intérieur
84. Aucune leçon tirée de toutes les erreurs antérieures
85. On naît, on vit, on meurt entre deux on s'entretue
86. On se pardonne, on se trahit le cycle se perpétue
87. On se délivre, on se libère pour finalement
88. Enchaîner par rendosser d'autres chaînes machinalement
89. Et moi je chante contre vents et marées
90. Écoute ma chronologie pour les contrecarrer
91. Ceux qui choisissent la solution militaire
92. N'ont-ils pas vu qu'elle nous dessert beaucoup plus qu'elle nous sert?
93. Reçois mes références, mon listing, ma rédaction
94. Reçois mon bilan historique et ses acteurs sans rédemption
95. Étudier reste la seule solution
96. Pour les blancs, les noirs, les gens issus de l'immigration
97. Ma richesse est culturelle, mon combat est éternel
98. C'est celui de l'intérieur contre mon mauvais moi-même
99. Mais pour le moment les temps resteront durs
100. Et pour le dire une centaine de mesures
101. Jihad !

Combatting Stereotypes

Abd al Malik, "Le faqir"

[Verse 1]

1. Il balaie d'un revers de main le néant d'une vie en invoquant son propre vide ;
2. Il essuie tous les parterres qu'il foule lui-même, en faisant dire à chacun de ses souffles je t'aime ;
3. Il réécure, récuse le fait d'être lui, car s'il est ivre il est sobre aussi ;
4. Le faqir
5. Il travaille pour ce monde comme s'il allait vivre toujours et pour l'autre, comme s'il allait mourir demain ;
6. Il corrige les défauts enfouis au tréfonds de lui-même et se détourne du voile des mystères
7. Il chemine sur cette voie qui discrimine, qui détermine, celle qui était déjà là avant même qu'il ne se détermine ;
8. Le faqir
9. Il médite, ferme les paupières sur l'œil de chair et scrute avec l'œil du cœur ;
10. Il réfléchit sur tout ce qui image, réfléchit sa propre image ;
11. Il "Euréka", il s'écrit de toi toi, Ô messager de celui qui voit ;

12. Le faqir
13. Il observe la beauté en toute chose, en toute chose ;
14. Il est d'abord ébloui par cet astre qui illumine les nuits, puis ;
15. Il regarde, fixe ce soleil qui ne se couche pas, parce que tout change, rien ne change ;
16. Le faqir
17. Il se lève, marche dans l'éternelle jeunesse ;
18. Il voyage dans la vie comme l'étranger qui traverse la ville ;
19. Il ne s'arrête nulle-part parce que chez lui est tellement de ce monde ;
20. Le faqir
21. Il ne se réjouit pas d'une bonne œuvre qu'il aurait accompli ;
22. Il se réjouit de sa bonne action comme une faveur qu'on lui aurait accordée ;
23. Il se réjouit d'être l'humble, d'être le simple ;
24. Le faqir
25. Il ne reproche et ne fait de reproche qu'à lui-même ;
26. Il ne s'accroche qu'à ceux qui ont le bien, le bon et la beauté comme proche ;
27. Il s'approche, se rapproche par la force de l'amour ;
28. Le faqir
29. Il est aimé et devient l'ouïe, le regard, la main et le pied ;
30. Il est dans tout ce qui émane de son cœur exaucé ;
31. Il est protégé par ce qu'il y a de plus élevé ;
32. Le... le faqir ... le faqir

[Outro]
Médine and Aboubakr, "Ni violeur ni terroriste"

[Verse 1 : Médine]
1. La tempête provient de l'Islam et des banlieues
2. Des marginaux installés sur la terre du milieu
3. Cachés sous leurs voiles, sur les lignes de transport
4. Leurs barbes sont trop longues interdites d'aéroport
5. C'est légitime si l'on cède à la psychose
6. Un immigré trop studieux ça couvre quelque chose
7. Dans leurs trousses, couteaux, cutters et canifs
8. Des manuels de pilotage dans un cartable explosif
9. Des lobotomes de la télévision
10. Les médias sont les juges des procès d'intention
11. Fournisseurs d'intox au kilogramme
12. De l'amalgame terrorisme et Islam
13. Dans mon ghetto, on a peur de l'avion
14. Et les femmes impressionnent beaucoup plus que Cendrillon
15. Et c'est juste par manque de culture
16. Qu'Oussama Ben Laden est écrit sur les murs
17. 11 septembre, voilà une date à retenir
18. Comme celle qui secoua une partie de notre avenir
19. Et quand la violence gratuite est un commerce
20. « Ni violeur ni terroriste » un slogan qui bouleverse

[Refrain]
21. Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni macho, ni proxo, ni terro, ni rigolo, ni bourreau, ni gigolo
22. Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni violent, ni racailleux, ni vilain, ni orgueilleux, ni violeur, ni crapuleux
23. Ni violeur ni terroriste, c'est pour les ghettos qui montrent l'exemple les banlieues qui s'accrochent à la rampe
24. Ni violeur ni terroriste, c'est pour les hommes et les djinns, les hijabs et les jeans,
   Aboubakr et Médine

[Verse 2 : Aboubakr]
25. Si nos âmes s'arment c'est pour le combat après la mort
26. A ce qu'il paraît on sent la poudre
27. Vous combattez l'Islam lorsqu'elle est de manière apparente
28. Il y a un temps pour la paix « salaam », un temps pour la guerre « harb »
29. Je ne combats pas par principe, je ne reconnais la guerre qu'en cas de contrainte,
   emprunte le même chantier
30. On est entier sur le même sentier, mais on ne pisse pas dans les mêmes latrines
31. Des heures de présence pas au service de tes lois
32. Mon premier devoir est envers Dieu, vu que ta loi n'est qu'un interdit
34. Pour nous, mecs de tess, on presse bas les compresses
35. Je suis cette averse qui perce qui te blesse, transperce ces herbes, renverse ces caisses,
bouleverse ta presse, je presse sans cesse. Encaisse ce coup de press' ! Dans ce tié-quar,
c'est la tess
36. Les vrais les khokhones comme Alvares, ceux qui ne stressent pas devant les CRS
37. Des brins provocateurs mais pas de violeur, une longue liste mais pas de terroriste
38. Ferme ta bouche dans nos blocks il n'y a pas de Dutroux, pas de Sharon et encore moins
de Bush entre Khèl et arbouche
[Refrain x2]
39. Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni macho, ni proxo, ni terro, ni rigolo, ni bourreau, ni gigolo
40. Ni violeur ni terroriste, ni violent, ni racailleux, ni vilain, ni orgueilleux, ni violeur, ni
crapuleux
41. Ni violeur ni terroriste, c'est pour les ghettos qui montrent l'exemple les banlieues qui
s'accrochent à la rampe
42. Ni violeur ni terroriste, c'est pour les Hommes et les djinns, les hijabs et les jeans,
Aboubakr et Médine

Akhenaton and Bruizza "Gemmes"

[Refrain - Bruizza / Akhenaton]

1. Make um respect the gem encore
2. Verbal wizedtry like merlin thats raw
3. Mental I make try cristal clear no flaw
4. Smoke and mirror niggas can't see me and that's all
5. Comme on yo !
6. En secret on taille des gemmes, partenaires, encore
7. Des nerfs on jette leurs gemmes, par terre, hardcore
8. C'qui compte c'est l'son que j'aime, parfaire assis sur mon siège
9. On taille des gemmes, on taille des gemmes, partenaire

[Verse 1 – Akhenaton]

10. J'suis apparu un jour, tel une comète déchirant l'ionosphère
11. Un style singulier, caractère d'un MC d'la stratosphère
12. Atypique dans l' paysage musical, espèce en voie d'apparition
13. Chacune de mes apparitions fut drastique
14. Que dis-je radicale, 84 électro-beat dans l'walkman
15. J'feature dans les cauchemars de l'industrie comme Darkman
16. Une pierre d'Gaza, projetée par les gosses philistins d l'intifada
17. Une main tendue vers ses proches et qui n'en retire nada
18. Dans mes terres, Déméter est morte, et les tours rongent les éthers
19. Jour après jour, la vision d' lendemain demeure un mystère
20. Blindage austère pourtant plein d'pères s'voient rentrer là-bas
21. Moi j'appelle c'bled à la vraie religion comme Balqis à Saaba
22. Regard dirigé vers l'Est, j'pense à Bagdad et ses âmes
23. L'Europe s'manifeste mais qu'est-ce qu'ils savent de l'Islam ?
24. Les clichés d'culture, la maladresse d'Ali Baba
25. Les oasis, les femmes voilées et c'putain d' « ouvre-toi Sésame »
26. À croire qu'une civilisation s'résume au Kébab, mon amertume met bas
27. Et ces drames sont contés en ces phrases, on nous refuse les débats
28. Tel un joailler, j'tailles ces gemmes en mon lab’
29. T’sais chaque homme à son heure de gloire, donc voilà venu mon laps
30. J'rime pour le sable qui a porté les mots d'ces poètes arabes
31. À mon cœur de glace, comme une flamme dans un pays boréal
32. Où est ma place aujourd'hui dans cet univers paradoxal ?
33. Comme la vue d'nos rues l'hiver
34. Et mon escouade paranormale s'emploie
35. À écrire des rimes extras qui sortent hors de l'ordinaire
36. Attachées à ma vie, un livre, parcours extra-curriculaire
37. De choses simples se crée l'complex e, comme une mosaïque
38. Diverses arabesques, et l'histoire transportée dans ces fresques

[Refrain - Bruizza / Akhenaton]

39. Make um respect the gem encore
40. Verbal wizedtry like merlin thats raw
41. Mental I make try cristal clear no flaw
42. Smoke and mirror niggas can't see me and that's all
43. Comme on yo !
44. En secret on taille des gemmes, partenaires, encore
45. Des nerfs on jette leurs gemmes, par terre, hardcore
46. C'qui compte c'est l'son que j'aime, parfaire assis sur mon siège
47. On taille des gemmes, on taille des gemmes, partenaire

[Couplet 2 – Akhenaton]

48. Donne-moi une bonne raison d'renoncer à mon mic et mon sabre
49. Animé d'une verve, égale à celle du départ, non ce n'est pas le Moët
50. Que je saubre, mais enfin tu m'connais pas depuis
51. J'l'ai déjà dit avant, mais quand j'ai commencé p'tit y avait pas d'bruit
52. J'ai prêché dans les coins perdus, appelé le ciel à mon secours
53. Des signes sont venus me montrant ainsi qu'c'n'était point perdu
54. 1000 illusions plus tard m'vela dans les rames et gares
55. Prisonnier hagard d'un esprit étroit, mais à travers
56. Des pages, j'compris qu'1 n'est pas 3
57. Soleil noir, et Aïssa lui-même tourne le dos à la croix
58. Armé d'un spray d'krylon gerbant ma rage sur les façades crades
59. Cherchant dans la reconnaissance, l'alcôve où s'loge ma foi
60. Sauvé d'justesse par une méthode musicale, j'ime poste là
61. Et observe le bal, translucide comme Hallowman
62. Si c'est rude des fois, d'être un joaillier sur phonographe
63. J' souhaite, que ce soit une gemme, qu mon stylo grave
64. Ne pas finir muré vivant, dans un sordide enfer carcéral
65. Ou à l'angle d'une rue, étroite, chuter le cœur truffé d' ferraille
66. Ma zique s' joue le soir, poussée à fond d' cale dans les halls noirs
67. Où l' regard fixé au plafond et l' dos collé au plumard
68. Quand nos rêves s' évadent, mon âme s' évase
69. J' vois les étoiles et myriades
70. Si proches que j' peux en sertir mes bagues
71. Campagne massive gars, microphonique Iliade
72. Y a pas d' pression, pas d' gaz, pas d' cris, pas d' fusillade
73. Ici c' est Hip Hop land, où seuls les MC valables restent debout
74. Où l' habileté à rimer le sens et l' flow font un tout
75. Atelé à mon cahier dans mon atelier, mon encre une fraise
76. On taille des gemmes et pas les partenaires

[Refrain - Bruizza / Akhenaton]

77. Make um respect the gem encore
78. Verbal wizedtry like merlin thats raw
79. Mental I make try cristal clear no flaw
80. Smoke and mirror niggas can't see me and that's all
81. Comme on yo!
82. En secret on taille des gemmes, partenaires, encore
83. Des nerfs on jette leurs gemmes, par terre, hardcore
84. C' qui compte c'est l' son que j' aime, parfaire assis sur mon siège
85. On taille des gemmes, on taille des gemmes, partenaire

Rapper-as-imam songs

Kery James, "Chapitre"

[Intro]

[Verse 1]
1. Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort
2. Sache que la mort c'est la sortie de l'âme du corps
3. L'ange (Azraël) l'ôte de son enveloppe corporelle
4. Le corps ne répond plus mais l'âme, elle, est éternelle
5. Pour elle pas 36 chemins mais 2 issues
6. L'enfer ou le paradis qu'importe d'où t'es issu
7. Qu'importe ton origine ton rang social ou ta couleur
8. Ton nombre de diplôme la mort passe te prendre à l'heure
Beaucoup sont aveuglés par ce bas monde
Courent après l'argent et commettent des actes immondes
Mais viendra un jour où ils auront à rendre des comptes
Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort j'te raconte
Sache que, ici on t'enterre mais dans ta tombe tu es conscient
Tant que tu entends le bruit des semelles de tes compagnons
Qui s'éloignent puis viennent à toi deux anges de couleur noir bleu
Mounkar et Nakir, tu seras seul face à eux
Ils te font asseoir et te questionnent de ton vivant
Invoquent Dieu afin que tes réponses soient les bonnes
Que Ses anges ne te frappent pas avec cette masse de fer
Avec laquelle ils réduiraient une montagne en poussière
Car de cette masse de fer il nous est rapporté
Qu'ensemble les djinns, les hommes ne peuvent pas la porter
Certains immanquablement seront châtiés
Sache que tu es juste et qu’ils l’auront mérité
Le châtiment de la tombe est une réalité
Persévérons sur la piété si nous pouvons l’éviter
Imagine-toi dans un cercueil étroit
Conscient qu’à cet instant les gros crimes te profitent pas

Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort
La resurrection, reconstitution des corps
Sache que sur toutes choses Dieu (Allah) est tout puissant
Et que de nos tombes aura lieu la résurrection
Dieu nous ressuscitera quand viendra le jour
Dernier ce jour très long qui dure 50000 années
De la résurrection jusqu'à l'établissement
Dans le paradis ou l'enfer, de la totalité des gens
Du 1er au dernier nous seront rassemblés
Sur une terre blanche couleur argent qu'on appelle la terre changée
Ni montagne ni grotte ni trou ni vallées
En clair ce jour-là, nul ne pourra se cacher
(Adam aalleyhi salam) sera là
Et le dernier des hommes sera également là
À environ un mille le soleil rapproché
Et certains vont suer jusqu'à se noyer
Quand seront installés les pieux sur des montures
À l'ombre du trône résultat de leur droiture
Ensemble, animaux, djinns et hommes réunis
48. Pour un jour sans corruption, injustice, ni tricherie
49. Chacun de nos actes nous sera exposé Dieu sait
50. Toute chose, sans aucun doute, rien ne sera laissé de coté
51. Nos actions seront pesées sur une balance
52. Mais nous ne pourrons plus œuvrer afin qu'elle penche dans le bon sens
53. Rappelons-nous qu’après la mort ce qui est fait est fait
54. N’oublions pas qu’inversionement, ce qui est manqué est manqué
55. Dieu a fait de ce bas monde la demeure des actions
56. Et il a fait de l’au-delà une demeure pour la rétribution
57. Mon frère nous croyons fermement en l’existence de l’enfer
58. Il est actuallement ancré en deçà de la 7ème terre
59. Sache que le feu le plus puissant de cette terre
60. Ne représente actuallement qu’un 70ème du feu de l’enfer
61. Les gens, les gens de l’enfer sont tous de grande taille
62. De la taille du haut de la montagne
63. L’eau bouillante qu’ils boivent déchire leurs entrailles
64. Châtiment face auquel personne n’est de taille
65. Pour certains ça ne s’arrête pas, cela dure éternellement
66. Que Dieu nous préserve de l’état de ces gens
67. Et qu’il fasse que nous soyons de ceux qui traversent le pont
68. Que nous buvions d’une boisson de la main, on aurait dû, prophète
69. Beaucoup sont aveuglés par ce bas monde
70. Courrent après l’argent et commettent des actes immondes
71. Mais viendra un jour où ils auront à rendre des comptes
72. Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort rends toi des comptes
73. Chapitre de ce qui advient après la mort rends toi des comptes
74. Rends-toi des comptes x 10

Ali, "Salaam"

[Verse1]

1. Allah houwa Salaam, de Lui vient la paix suprême
2. Il est infini et supprime les extrêmes, sublime
3. Qu'à jamais, de mon cœur, la haine disparaissait
4. La main peut gifler, je préfère qu'elle caresse
5. Quand les mots blessent, l'homme perd de sa noblesse
6. Régresse ou progresse, nos défauts nous oppressent
7. N'agresse personne et que personne ne t'agresse
8. La paix est en soi, prie qu'elle ne change pas d'adresse
9. Droit comme un alif, nos qualités nous redressent
10. On s'améliore : la discipline tient ses promesses
11. Ya Salam, tu es mon Dieu, je le professe

[Refrain]

12. (Salaam… Salaam… Salaam)
13. Océan de paix, pas de vague à l'âme
14. Mon corps vogue dans le calme évitant le drame
15. Paix aux hommes, paix aux enfants, paix aux femmes
16. Se passant la paix, se passant le salaam (x3)

[Couplet 2]

17. Salaam à tous les partisans des prophètes et des anges
18. Avançant à l'opposé de ceux que les démons démangent
19. Étrange, quand parler de paix dérange
20. A chacun sa croyance, le corps est limité
21. L'esprit continue sa croissance, l'ascension
22. La vie est sacrée : pour le savoir il faut de l'attention
23. L'éveil s'atteint par l'état de sérénité
24. Loin du Paradis, Satan ne fait que parasiter
25. Par le doute et la peur, veut nous paralyser
26. Paranoïa, sentiment d'insécurité
27. Ya Salaam c'est de toi que vient la tranquillité

[Refrain]

28. (Salaam… Salaam… Salaam)
29. Océan de paix, pas de vague à l'âme
30. Mon corps vogue dans le calme évitant le drame
31. Paix aux hommes, paix aux enfants, paix aux femmes
32. Se passant la paix, se passant le Salaam (x3)

[Verse 3]

33. Salaam sur la terre, partout dans l'univers
34. Priant pour les opprimés et ceux qui n'ont vécu que la guerre
35. Pas de justice, pas de paix, car les deux vont de pair
36. La foi : ne la perd pas, les gens qu'elle éclaire
37. Jamais ne désespère, bravant les épreuves à en devenir expert
38. Inspire expire, inspire expire, inspire expire
39. Ce qui ne tue pas fortifie le mental, massif
40. Être pacifié ne m'a pas rendu passif

[Refrain]

41. (Salaam… Salaam… Salaam)
42. Océan de paix, pas de vague à l'âme
43. Mon corps vogue dans le calme évitant le drame
44. Paix aux hommes, paix aux enfants, paix aux femmes
45. Se passant la paix, se passant le Salaam (x3)
Appendix B: Chapter 2 Lyrics

Addressing Misogyny

Chilla, "Sale chienne"

[Refrain]
1. J'aurais beau rapper la peine
2. Résister à la haine
3. Je n'aurais jamais la reine, chienne
4. J'aurais beau tarter des milliers d'MCs, les femmes ne seraient bonnes qu'à la vaisselle, chienne
5. Le passé difficile, ferme ta gueule si tu n'viens pas de la tess', chienne
6. Sur le trajet des critiques, sur les épaules, haute est la tête

[Verse 1]
7. Pas dans l'attente de votre reconnaissance
8. Le hip-hop hybride entame sa renaissance
9. La misogynie sans cesse omniprésente
10. Sur les réseaux pas d'limites c'est exaspérant
11. Quand t'es agressive, t'fais l'pelo
12. Quand t'es pas sexy, t'fais l'pelo
13. Si tu fais des thunes t'es une salope
14. Même avec un pull t'es une salope
15. Traumatisées seront les ondes
16. L'heure du combat arrive, sonne le gong
17. La p'tite est validée par tous les oncles
18. J'suis pas là pour m'faire apprécier des cons, ouais
19. Tu seras témoin des dégâts
20. T'es pas prêt, Suther Kane s’abat sur toi
21. Les aigles et les pigeons n'se mélangent pas
22. J'ai tout c'que tu n'as pas donc :

[Bridge]
23. J'suis cette sale chienne
24. Celle qui n'a rien demandé
25. Celle qui n'a pas quémandé
26. Celle qui vient te démanger
27. Celle qui t'a bien dérangé

[Refrain]
28. J'aurais beau rapper la peine
29. Résister à la haine
30. Je n'serais jamais la reine, chienne
31. J'aurais beau tarter des milliers d'MCs, les femmes ne seraient bonnes qu'à la vaisselle, chienne
32. Le passé difficile, ferme ta gueule si tu n'viens pas de la tess', chienne
33. Sur le trajet des critiques, sur les épaules, haute est la tête

[Verse 2]

34. J'suis celle qui te fout le seum
35. Celle qui débarque au milieu de milliers d'keums
36. Tu n'apprécies pas, tu commentes "T'es cheum"
37. Derrière ton écran, déboussolé t'es seul
38. Ouais, j'vais niquer tous vos tabous
39. Aussi épicée qu'une sauce andaloue
40. Vénus est revenue à l'ordre du jour
41. La rage en atout, j'suis là c'est du lourd
42. J'suis celle que tu n'attendais pas
43. Celle qui ne t'inspire pas
44. J'suis celle que t'insultes
45. J'te fais la bise man
46. J'n'éduquerai pas un âne avec un freestyle
47. Ouais, même si je rappais, dansais, chantais, parlais anglais pour certains je n'serais jamais qu'une chienne
48. J'devrais rester à la maison pour tâches ménagères enchaînée à des chaînes, chienne

[Bridge]

49. Celle qui n'a rien demandé
50. Celle qui n'a pas quémandé
51. Celle qui vient te démanger
52. Celle qui t'a bien dérangé
53. Sale chienne, sale chienne
54. Sale chienne, ouh ouh ouh ah
55. Sale chienne
56. Sale chienne, wouh, wouh

[Refrain]

57. J'aurais beau rapper la peine
58. Résister à la haine
59. Je n'serais jamais la reine, chienne
60. J'aurais beau tarter des milliers d'MCs, les femmes ne seraient bonnes qu'à la vaisselle, chienne
61. Le passé difficile, ferme ta gueule si tu n'viens pas de la tess', chienne
62. Sur le trajet des critiques, sur les épaules, haute est la tête
Diam’s, "Petite banlieusarde”

[Verse 1]

1. Petite banlieusarde, j'ai fait du rap pour me libérer du mal
2. J'aurai pu finir à la MAF le cœur criblé de balles
3. J'ai pris la plume pour qu'elle m'éloigne de la mort
4. Pour que ma mère n'aille pas à la morgue pleurer sur mon sort
5. Je suis dure, mais sincère, moi j'étais seule et sans frère
6. Fallait être sûre, fallait assurer sans père !
7. Petite banlieusarde, je reste fascinée par les armes
8. Fascinée par Man et Ginger et Sam
9. Moi c'est mon monde, et je ne suis pas un cas à part
10. Je m'accapare le droit de rêver de baraque et de barres
11. Je rêve d'être née quelque part, en fait, merde ! Je me perds
12. Métissée, je reste le cul entre deux chaises
13. Mais qui suis-je, pour qu'on m'applaudisse ou me déteste ?
14. Qu'ai-je fait pour qu'on me teste ? Qu'ai-je fait pour qu'on me blesse ?
15. Seule, je n'ai que le rap, et personne ne peut m'en vouloir
16. D'avoir apprécié la gloire, ne serait-ce que pour un soir
17. Ex- Petite fille invisible
18. Accroupie dans un coin de la cuisine l'oreille dévorée par la rime
19. Je la voulais ma vie de rêve
20. Loin de la vie de merde de ma mère pleurant sous les rappels du système !
21. Entre le shit, les guns et les flics
22. J'ai préféré le titre, le sun et les chiffres mais bien sûr j'ai fini seule
23. Seule avec ma plume, rêvant d'une vie plus qu'alléchante
24. Allez, chante ta putain de peine, et que les gens la ressentent !
25. Car les gens me ressemblent dans le fond, les gens saignent
26. Je le sais, dans le fond les gens s'aiment
27. Y'a du mal être dans l'air
28. On m'a prise pour une merde, on m'a jugée sur mon paraître et ma verve
29. Mais derrière mes fautes de grammaire, y'avait de la rage
30. Messieurs, Mesdames, je vous le jure, j'avais des tubes dans mon cartable !
31. J'ai vite compris qu'on me prenait pour une conne
32. Autant mes profs que mes potes : "Une petite blanche dans le hip-hop ?"
33. Alors je m'exprime, mais je reste sur la défensive
34. Depuis que j'ai rencontré l'amour avec du sang plein les gencives
35. Alors ouais, je vends des disques, ouais j'ai de la thune !
36. Mais j'ai cette putain de cicatrice qui me perturbe
37. Rien à foutre d'être une star, d'attendre que le temps passe
38. Elles s'éteignent les stars, un jour ou l'autre, on les remplace !
39. Moi je veux du long terme
40. Soyons clairs : toutes ces putains de disques d'or ne me rendront pas mon père
41. Mais je les aime, toutes ces unes de magazines
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42. Car pour une fois dans sa vie, ma mère est fière de sa gamine !
43. Ma mère, je t'aime à en mourir mais je sais pas lui dire
44. Alors je lui dédie des titres sur mes disques
45. Je sais pas me blotti dans ses bras
46. J'aimerai, mais j'y arrive pas, c'est trop rare et ça se fait pas
47. M'man, tu sais, aujourd'hui je ne suis pas guérie
48. Malgré ces rimes, elle est à toi ma Victoire de la Musique
49. M'man, t'as porté le monde sur tes épaules pour ta môme
50. Repose-toi, je m'occupe de ton trône
51. A toutes ces mères qui en bavent jour après jour
52. Une petite banlieusarde vous adresse tout son amour
53. Méditerranéenne, sans la famille ? C'est plus la même
54. Chez nous, c'est beau comme on s'aime et le respect, c'est dans les gènes !
55. Je reste jeune et insouciante, je joue avec la vie
56. J'aime la nicotine, et j'aime Paris la nuit
57. Ouais, il y a les kébabs, les troquets et les bois
58. De l'autre côté, y'a les armes, la coke et les femmes
59. Moi, j'ai pas besoin d'amphêt' ni de ta poudre dans le zen
60. Je reste de celles qui restent saines
61. Que je le veuille ou non, j'suis qu'une petite banlieusarde
62. Ça s'entend quand je parle, ça se devine quand je me sape !
63. Mais je suis fière de pouvoir régler l'addition
64. Et étonnée de voir ma tête à la télé, chez Ardisson !
65. Je reste une môme, moi !
66. Je ne rêvais que de freestyles, de déchirer le mic, mais pas de me voir dans le journal !
67. Nan, je voulais monter sur scène parce que j'aimais le show
68. Parce que j'aimais les Hoyos (Hoyoyoyo)
69. Adolescente, je n'avais que ma chambre pour rêver d'avoir la chance
70. Que les gens, un jour, me chantent !
71. Je rappais vite, je rappais grave, je rappais fort
72. Et puis après, c'était le speed pour ne pas rater les transports !
73. RER B, zone 5: Orsay-ville
74. Bus 03, direction "Carrefour-Les Ulis"
75. Durant des années, je n'ai fait que des allers-retours
76. Crois-moi t'es très loin du mouv' quand t'habites à Mondétour !
77. Je ne regrette rien, je n'avais pas ma place aux Beaux-Arts
78. Et puis, je n'aurai pas eu la chance de rencontrer BlackMozart !
79. J'oublie rien de tous ces featurings que j'ai faits
80. De toutes ces rimes que j'ai suées, de tous ces rifs que j'ai tués
81. D'ailleurs pas même le succès n'a freiné mes ardeurs
82. J'ai toujours kiffé être invitée par des rappeurs
83. Avec ou sans disque de platine en fonction du feeling
84. Je serai toujours active sur mixtapes et compils'
85. Parce que j'ai le rap dans le sang, le rap m'a bercé
86. Le rap m'a percé au plus profond de moi, tu le ressens ?
87. Moi j'ai que ça, j'ai pas le Bac, j'ai qu'un niveau troisième
88. Mais malgré mes échecs scolaires, ma nouvelle vie est une croisière
89. Et dire que je rêvais juste de passer sur les ondes;
90. Dix ans après, j'ai presque fait le tour du monde !
91. Ma vie c'est du partage, des souvenirs et du voyage
92. C'est des barres de rires mais aussi parfois des dérapages !
93. C'est l'Algérie, le Maroc, la Tunisie, le Sénégal
94. La Suisse, la Belgique, le Canada, la Guyane
95. C'est la Guadeloupe, la Martinique, le Gabon et l'Allemagne
96. La Réunion, la Corse, l'Italie, le Portugal !
97. C'est l'Espagne et toutes ces villes de province françaises
98. Qui m'ont accueilli les bras ouverts pour me voir en concert !
99. Petite banlieusarde, loin des strass, tout près de l'impasse
100. Sans le rap, j'aurai sûrement fini buvant la tasse !
101. Aujourd'hui j'hallucine, je file de ville en ville
102. DJ Dimé aux platines, et la tournée nous enivre
103. Ma vie, c'est mon rap et mon rap c'est un message
104. Mon rap c'est un respect, c'est un posca, et puis un lettrage
105. Mon rap c'est du piano, c'est des notes, blanches et noires
106. C'est des tonnes et des tonnes et des tonnes d'encre noire !
107. Mon rap, c'est ma raison de vivre, c'est ma raison de dire au monde
108. Que quand on veut, on y arrive malgré les zones d'ombres
109. Et j'suis contente quand un jeune s'en sort
110. Qu'il montre l'exemple dans le biz', les études ou le sport !
111. Génération 80, on n'a pas fini de parler
112. Nan, vous marrez pas, on n'a pas fini de brasser !
113. C'est pas facile de s'adapter à toutes ces évolutions
114. Nos revendications ne passeront pas sans révolution
115. Pour preuve: Tous nos gimmicks se pointent en tête des hits
116. Détrônent la variété et ramènent même du chiffre aux maisons de disques !
117. Petite banlieusarde, au-delà de la musique
118. J'ai surtout rencontré l'amour du public !
119. Aujourd'hui, je lui dois tout ce que je viens de vous décrire
120. Mes moments fous, mes voyages et tout ce que j'ai au fond des tripes !
121. Mon public, à l'heure qu'il est, me ronge, et m'obsède;
122. J'ai peur de retomber dans l'ombre, de pas faire d'autre scène !
123. J'ai peur que ma plume ne plaise plus
124. De n'être qu'une artiste de plus qu'on renverra à la rue !
125. J'ai peur d'avoir rêvé de carrière, et d'avoir échoué
126. D'avoir à regarder en arrière, et de me dire "Mais qu'ai-je fait ?"
127. On est le 13 septembre, il est sept heures du mat'
128. Et j'ai mon texte sous les yeux
129. Après tout ce temps, j'avais besoin de vider mon sac
130. Et tout d'un coup, je me sens mieux
131. Quoiqu'il arrive, je garderai que le meilleur de tout ça
132. Peu importe l'avenir
133. C'est tout ce que je sais faire, moi
134. Je rappe, je rappe, je rappe, je rappe x8
135. Je rappe, je rappe, je rappe
136. C'est tout ce que je sais faire, moi, je rappe

Reappropriation of Female Sexuality

Liza Monet, "Yaourt aux fruits"

[Refrain]
1. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
2. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
3. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits

[Verse 1]
4. Je n'comprends pas pourquoi je les traumatise
5. Boyfriend, girlfriend à moi de choisir
6. J'arrive dans le biz, déjà petit tissage tu connais
7. C'est que des barbies qui kiffent la purple monnaie
8. Ok jolie tat' fort Liza
9. Tu me vois yaourt de fruits mmmmh Liza
10. Bon venons au fait j'suis toujours classe c'est la vie
11. Et j'aime plaire. Et bah non moi je suis pas refaite
12. Mais toi je t'aime si t'es métisse aux yeux clairs
13. Sauf si t'as une petite bite tu m'fais de la peine
14. A cause de ça tu peux m'mettre en colère
15. Si tu me connais tu déclames la trepère
16. Et que j'irai pas pleurer auprès de ma mère
17. Trop de mec pète un câble et se croient au sommet
18. Le ter-ter voilà ton sommet
19. Ta gueule Liza t'as trop une grand gueule
20. Excusez-moi si j'me ? c'est que je me sens seul
21. Si j’étais un mec j’aurais une bite dick
22. J’aurais baisé toutes les chiennes de Paris
23. Goûte mon yaourt aux fruits
24. Qu’est-ce que tu en penses mon ami ?
25. Mes ex sont mélancoliques
26. Pas ma faute si j’aime la bite
27. J’mé pavane à Miami
28. Pour mettre la douille tu seras mon g
29. Pour te dire des trucs vrais je serais ton guide
30. On m’a trop souvent dit Liza t'as pas la magie
31. Nique ton père j’aime trop la vie
32. Vas-y va gouter mon yaourt aux fruits

[Refrain]
33. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
34. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
35. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
36. Je comprends pas pourquoi je les traumatise
37. Boyfriend, girlfriend à moi de choisir

[Refrain]
38. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
39. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
40. Yaourt aux fruits [x3] Yaourt aux fruits, fruits
41. Je comprends pas pourquoi je les traumatisme
42. Boyfriend, girlfriend à moi de choisir [x2]

[Verse 2]
43. Vilaine laisse-le-moi
44. Ton mec kiffe me prendre en levrette
45. Son yaourt aux fruits a bien dépassé sa braguette
46. Hein, négresse j’ai mal mais c’est bon
47. Putain j’suis chaude j’ai trop la dalle, je suis un bonbon
48. Bon, venons au fait je suis arrogante c’est ma vie et j’aime plaire
49. Et bah non moi chuis pas refaite
50. Imagine-moi à poil sur ta kékette
51. Sauf si t’as une petite bite le spectacle s’arrête
52. Me prendrai pas la tête pour un mec
53. Goûte mon ananas sur ta banquette
54. Grâce à moi ta meuf dira que tu progresses
55. Mec joue , le rôle , pi-lote , hôtesse de l’air
56. Ra-mène mes jambes en l’air
57. Regarde tu deviens raide
58. Prends mon yaourt, Prends mon yaourt dans ta face [x2]
59. J’reçois de l’amour quand je passe
60. J’tape dans l’oeil
61. Tu veux me bouffer la chatte
62. Pas de problème tu peux te la sale
63. J’marche chez toi les gens m’éclairent
64. Bouge mes hanches de gauche à droite
65. Tu veux savoir quel goût j’ai ?
66. Yaourt au fruit ca-ra-mel
67. Con-Tracte , asiatique , black girl bad bitch
Diam’s, "Jeune Demoiselle "

[Refrain]
1. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
2. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
3. Un mec fidèle et qui n'a pas peur qu'on l'aime
4. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail
5. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
6. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
7. Un mec qui rêve de famille et de toucher le ciel
8. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Verse 1]
9. Dans mes rêves mon mec à moi à la voix de Musiq Soulchild
10. Il a du charme et du style à la Beckham
11. Il a la classe et le feeling tout droit sorti d'un film
12. Le charisme de Jay-Z et le sourire de Brad Pitt
13. Mon mec à moi n'aime pas les bimbos
14. Nan il aime les formes de J-Lo, il a le torse de D'Angelo
15. Dans mes rêves mon mec me fait rire comme Jamel
16. Et me fait la cour sur du Cabrel

[Pre-chorus]
17. Pom pom pom pom
18. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmmène
19. Pom pom pom pom
20. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'aime et me rend belle
21. Pom pom pom pom
22. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmène
23. Pom pom pom pom
24. Si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Refrain]

25. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
26. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
27. Un mec fidèle et qui n'a pas peur qu'on l'aime
28. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail
29. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
30. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
31. Un mec qui rêve de famille et de toucher le ciel
32. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Verse 2]

33. Dans mes rêves mon mec me parle tout bas
34. Quand il m'écrit des lettres il a la plume de Booba
35. Mon mec a des valeurs et du respect pour ses sœurs
36. Il a du coeur et quand il danse, mon mec c'est Usher (Pom pom pom pom pom)
37. Un peu barge dans sa tête à la Dave Chapelle
38. Il m'appelle tout le temps car il m'aime
39. Mon mec regarde Scarface, les Affranchis
40. Casino mais aussi Friends, Lost et les Sopranos
41. Mon mec est clean mais au-delà du style
42. Mon mec c'est une encyclopédie car il se cultive
43. Bah ouais mon mec est top entre l'intello et le beau gosse
44. Et peu m'importe qu'il se balade en Porsche

[Pre-chorus]

45. Pom pom pom pom pom pom
46. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmène
47. Pom pom pom pom
48. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'aime et me rend belle
49. Pom pom pom pom
50. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmène
51. Pom pom pom pom
52. Si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Refrain]

53. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
54. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
55. Un mec fidèle et qui n'a pas peur qu'on l'aime
56. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail
57. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
58. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
59. Un mec qui rêve de famille et de toucher le ciel
60. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Verse 3]

61. Dans mes rêves mon mec à la carrière d'Eminem
62. Il a des airs de minet quand il m'emmène en week-end
63. Mon mec fait mal au crâne, il a le calme de Zidane
64. Et le regard de Method Man
65. Mon mec c'est Hitch il insiste
66. Mon mec sait prendre des risques et ne regarde pas les bitch
67. Non mon mec connaît les femmes et sait bien qu'on est chiante
68. Qu'on gueule tout le temps pour savoir quand il rentre
69. Mon mec est bon ouais mon mec est complet
70. Ec est complet
71. Mon mec c'est un peu de mon ex mélangé à mon père
72. Dans la vie mon mec est digne à la Mohamed Ali
73. Et ses potes me font rire à la Eric et Ramzy

[Pre-chorus]

74. Pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom pom
75. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmène
76. Pom pom pom pom
77. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'aime et me rend belle
78. Pom pom pom pom
79. Dans mes rêves mon mec m'enlève et m'emmène
80. Pom pom pom pom pom
81. Si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Refrain]

82. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
83. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
84. Un mec fidèle et qui n'a pas peur qu'on l'aime
85. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail
86. Jeune demoiselle recherche un mec mortel
87. Un mec qui pourrait me donner des ailes
88. Un mec qui rêve de famille et de toucher le ciel
89. Donc si t'as les critères babe laisse-moi ton e-mail

[Outro]

90. Hein je t'ai pas trouvé sur la planète
91. J'te trouverais peut-être sur Internet qui sait
92. Diam's victime de l'an 2000
93. Tous les moyens sont bons pour trouver l'homme de sa vie
94. PS: l'adresse e-mail c'est jeunedemoisellerecherche@hotmail.fr
95. Si vous pouvez joindre deux photos
96. Parce que une on sait que c'est d'la triche
97. Y’a des matins comme ça, tu te lèves
98. Tu te poses pleine de questions sur la vie
99. Tu te demandes pourquoi tu continues à te battre
100. Tu essayes d’être le moins malheureux que possible mais en fait,
101. Y’a tout qui te déroute, ta mère, elle va pas bien
102. Ton père, tu sais même pas où il est
103. Tu demandes de l’aide à dieu, puis t’attends que ça aille mieux
104. Mais, en vrai, je lâche prise
105. Moi, je sais que tous ces matins-la, franchement,
106. la seule chose qui me tient debout
107. Mais c’est une pensée pour toi

De-gendering

Sianna, "Passe-moi la télécommande "

[Refrain]

1. Yo négro c'est comment ?
2. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
3. Vas-vas-vas-vas y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante
4. Yo négro c'est comment ?
5. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
6. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante

[Verse 1]

7. Yo négro c'est comment ?
8. J'viens leur montrer que j'fais la différence
9. J'me fous de ce que vous sortez tant que moi mon biff il rentre
10. J'me dois de faire du lourd et respecter mon ego
11. J'arrive en soirée solo et j'repars aux bras de ton négro
12. Le beat j'le monopolise, crois pas que je joue au monopoly
13. J'viens refaire ton anatomie, gros vas-y appelle la police
14. Très peu de rappeurs, beaucoup de choristes
15. Les jeunes maintenant pensent plus qu'au biff
16. On sait pas qui sont les fautistes mais on sait qui sont les grossistes
17. Les les négros ont la colique, à deux doigts de devenir alcoolique
18. De mourir à bord d'un bolide
19. Moi j'ai que mon rap comme brolic
20. Les les les négros frisent la folie
21. Moi au mic j'suis hermaphrodite
22. Je sais bien que j'te l'ai trop dit mais j'ai que Sagna comme acolyte

[Refrain]
23. Yo négro c'est comment ?
24. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
25. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante
26. Yo négro c'est comment ?
27. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
28. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante

[Verse 2]
29. J'prends place derrière le micro, j'viens leur montrer qu'on sait kicker
30. Tu prononces souvent mon blaze, perso j'sais même pas qui t'es
31. J'viens me faire un nom dans le peu-ra, effacer les autres
32. T'es qu'une baltringue, c'est jamais toi c'est toujours les autres
33. Toi t'es dans le passé, moi mon avenir est tracé
34. Donc me racontes pas ce que t'as fait, quand j'prends le cro-mi tu restes assis
35. Le rap m'a lassé, là j'suis en train de me faire masser
36. Je rappe et puis je t'entends tousser donc gros rends toi à la pharmacie
37. Qualité, lourdeur, mon rap c'est du deux en un
38. Les rappeurs bluffent comme un manchot qui dit : "J'viens prendre les choses en mains"
39. Le savoir est une arme, t'as le cerveau dans les douilles
40. J'ai su que le Diable avait des cornes donc j'ai pris le taureau par les couilles
41. J'vois que tu patientes mais est-ce que tu sais ce qu'il t'attend ?
42. Tu cours après l'argent, moi j'garde mon souffle pour ves-qui Satan
43. Je m'occupe même pas de vous, j'écoute même pas vos propos
44. Grandes gueules petits bras, vous êtes des fucking crocos
45. Négro qu'est ce qui t'arrive ? Tu fais le fou on ramène Sarif
46. Et après on ramène la miff et tu verras qu'on fait la diff
47. On viendra le jour de ton anniv, ouais t'inquiète on sait où t'habites
48. Les amateurs de rap m'admirent pour percer faudra que tu t'agites

[Refrain]
49. Yo négro c'est comment ?
50. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
51. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante
52. Yo négro c'est comment ?
53. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
54. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante

[Verse 3]
55. J'n'ai qu'une parole, malgré mes nombreux textes
56. Toi t'es qu'une salope, normal que t'aies de nombreux ex
57. Jusqu'à pas d'heure on rappe en bas du tie-qu
58. Question d'honneur gros même si tu connais pas tu check
59. Ouais c'est comment ? Où sont passés les kickers
60. Y'a que Dieu pour me guider, toi j'te suis même pas sur twitter
61. Fuck ton monde virtuel, nous on rappe vraiment
62. Nous nous nous on rappe sans gêne, y'a que toi qui trouve ça gênant

[Refrain]

63. Yo négro c'est comment ?
64. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
65. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante
66. Yo négro c'est comment ?
67. Passe-moi vite la télécommande
68. Vas-vas-vas-vas-y commande j'vois que la concurrence est collante

Casey, "Pas à vendre"

[Verse 1]
1. Il faut que j'te raconte comment chaque fois j'affronte
2. On doit tenir tête et souvent à coups d'honneur
3. Ceux qui me jugent et très souvent se trompent
4. Ou me guettent, l'air de dire: "Tu devrais avoir honte!"
5. Fusillent des yeux la façon dont je m'habille
6. Me demandent si je suis un garçon ou une fille
7. Veulent dans les détails, mon poids, ma taille
8. Et le mode d'emploi de mon plan d'honneur
9. Quelle importance mes séquelles, fais ta route!
10. C'que tu penses n'influence pas ma manière d'être
11. Et tous les mécontents peuvent aller se faire foutre
12. Car je ne rends des comptes qu'à celle qui m'a vu naître
13. Je n'suis pas cette bête de foire que l'on dompte
14. Ou bien même à qui l'on monte sur la tête
15. Et cette vie propre et nette de michetons aux petites minettes
16. Je n'en veux pas, laisse-moi sur ma planète

[Refrain x2]

17. Mon mode de vie n'est pas à vendre
18. Mon rap n'est pas à vendre
19. C'que j pense ou dis n'est pas à vendre
20. Si tu crois qu'ça va changer, tu peux attendre

[Couplet 2]

21. Je me rappelle encore cette époque
22. RER B bondé, je sortais de mon bloc
23. Marchais, avec dans les oreilles du pe-ra ou du rock
24. Dans ces longs couloirs Gare du Nord où tu suffoques
25. Correspondance: Belles adresses et coins classes
26. Moi, mon sac à dos, mes locks, mes Adidas
27. A l'évidence, ma seule présence c'est de l'audace
28. Parmi ces petits cons friqués et grands blondasses
29. Puis j'arrive enfin dans ce label
30. Pour lequel j'ai mis un couplet sur une compil
31. Tu sais, en général si ces connards m'appellent
32. C'est qu'ils n'ont eu personne d'autre au bout du fil
33. Bref, je signe leurs deux trois pap'rasses et me casse
34. Avec, dans la poche le montant d'ma séance
35. Te monte pas d'films, y'a pas d'quoi quitter la crasse
36. Juste rinçer mes potes d'Anfalsh dans une ambiance
37. Et en sortant, devines qui je croise!!
38. Le dernier rappeur à la mode qui me toise, tout naze
39. Ce guignol qui tape des poses avec sa gueule et son blaze sur un T-Shirt rose
40. Et cet espèce de macaque qui calque les cains-ri, flambe et fait le coq
41. Il se vante d'avoir signé ici pour plusieurs plaques
42. Et me dit que son disque, cette année dans les Bacs sera le choc
43. Mais un album pourri plus tard, un soir
44. Je revois l'ex futur star dans un bar, il veut boire
45. Et me dit que son disque, cette année dans les Bacs sera le choc
46. Et maintenant il est en loque, il n'a plus d'oseille et sa meuf est en cloque
47. Il me dit qu'on devrait aller brûler son label et Skyrock
48. Fous-moi l'camp!! Qui t'avais dit d'aller baisser ton froc?

[Refrain x2]
49. Mon mode de vie n'est pas à vendre
50. Mon rap n'est pas à vendre
51. C'que j'pense ou dis n'est pas à vendre
52. Si tu crois qu'ça va changer, tu peux attendre

[Couplet 2]
53. Quoi? Moi? M'assagir?
54. Obéir aux lois d'l'argent sans réagir?
55. Produire du son pour pisseuses et ménagères
56. Apparemment tu ignores à qui tu as affaire!!
57. Or et Saphyr ne pourront pas suffire à racheter tout c'que j'ai souffert
58. Et je préfère fuir le confort et kiffer mon atmosphère
59. Plutôt qu'de m'aisser passer les fers, OK!!

[Refrain x2]
60. Mon mode de vie n'est pas à vendre
61. Mon rap n'est pas à vendre
62. C'que j'pense ou dis n'est pas à vendre  
63. Si tu crois qu'ça va changer, tu peux attendre  
[Outro]  
64. Han!! Mon mode de vie n'est pas à vendre  
65. Casey, Anfalsh, les intraîtables, les incorruptibles, les redoutables  
66. Han!! Prends ça dans ta gueule!!
Appendix C: Chapter 3 Lyrics

Mimicry of Cadences and Intonation
La Fouine, "Litron"

[Refrain]
1. Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
2. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
3. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
4. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)
5. Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
6. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
7. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
8. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)

[Verse 1]
9. Hmm, défilé Versace, Madame j'vais prendre celle-ci
10. J'suis assis à côté de Kanye et sa pute me suce aussi
11. Il m'offre une nouvelle paire d'Yeezy et j'danse la kizomba, la kizomba
12. J'ouvre des bouteilles de champagne, j'pense au salaire qu'ils n'ont pas, non qu'ils n'ont pas
13. J'suis dans mon new penthouse, vue sur Key Largo, ouais Key Largo
14. Négro, donne-moi mon dû ou on te tire dessus comme à Chicago
15. Ta chienne m'envoie un texto, donc je lui envoie un D.M
16. Elle m'a sué dans ma Merco, et j'l'ai fourée dans ta BM
17. Un million point dans mon bando, t'as pas de quoi t'acheter du pento
18. Givenchy, Dior et Chanel, j'sais pas pé-cho lequel, j'crois que j'vais tous les prendre, gros
19. Un million point dans mon bando, toi t'as perdu ton ticket resto
20. Givenchy, Dior et Chanel, j'sais pé-cho lequel, j'crois que j'vais tous les prendre, gros

[Refrain]
21. Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
22. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
23. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
24. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)
25. Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
26. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
27. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
28. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)

[Verse 2]
29. Détail, détail, détail, c'pas pour moi, moi j'parle en gros
30. Charbonne, charbonne, heureux, quand les tits-peu signent en pro
31. Mes Valentinos sur le parquet posés au Front Row
32. Avec leurs frigos vides, non j'crois qu'ces rappeurs en font trop
33. Sucer, sucer, sucer, 'savent que sucer la relève
34. Ils peura-peura-peura avec du me-sper sur les lèvres
35. Si t'es en chien khoya, ouais parle sur moi ça te fera un buzz
36. Pour moi une Mercedes c'est comme une voiture tamponneuse
37. Confonds pas avec ces putes, ils ont la carte américaine
38. Appart' aux States, mais j'ai la carte nationale marocaine
39. Parquet, parquet, parquet, comment t'évites les longs peines
40. Normal qu'tu t'mettes à table, regarde les casseroles que tu traînes

[Refrain]

41. Te rafaler pour la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
42. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
43. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
44. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)
45. Te rafaler pour de la monnaie, on ne tire pas sur les mollets
46. Regardez l'heure sur ma Rolly, deux kilos d'pure dans le colis
47. Khaliss, litron, Khaliss, litron
48. Khaliss, litron (Paw, paw, paw)

[Verse 3]

49. T'as des appart' que quand tu joues au Monopoly
50. J'ai pris le flow tah Jumpman, on sait nique ta mère aussi
51. Dépense, dépense, dépense ma belle, ne m'dis pas le prix
52. On passe la nuit debout quand l'gouvernement s'assoupit
53. Marqué par la vie, kho j'ai l'flow tah Mississippi
54. Si t'as poucave tes khos, viens pas faire ta baltringue ici
55. C'est vrai khoya la frappe est molle mais nous on s'endurcit
56. BS, BS, BS, Banlieue Sale, Makaveli

[Outro]

57. BS, BS, BS, Banlieue Sale, Makaveli
58. BS, BS, BS, Banlieue Sale, Makaveli
59. BS, BS, BS, Banlieue Sale, Makaveli
60. BS, BS, BS, Banlieue Sale, Makaveli
Josman, "Vanille"

[Verse 1]
1. Ils veulent qu'on soit comme des moutons, qu'on obéisse deux par deux
2. Mais fuck un berger, l'Homme ne peut être guidé que par Dieu
3. Fuck le sheitan, fuck un banquier, fuck un putain d'Président
4. Qui n'veut pas le bien du pays duquel je suis résident
5. Donc j'suis hésitant, car légal ou pas, tout l'monde cherche le khalis, yeah
6. Pas l'choix dans société capitaliste
7. Tu sais poto, la vie c'est loin des contes fée-riques
8. Comment peut-on être aussi pauvre d'esprit dans un pays riche ?

[Refrain]
9. En attendant le soleil me sourit, la nuit m'fait la gueule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
10. J'aime une femme, une mère et c'est la seule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
11. T'inquiète pas, je sais quelle est ma famille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
12. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
13. Le silence parle beaucoup, ferme ta gueule pour le bien d'autrui (yeah, yeah, yeah)
14. J'arrive plus à pioncer, le silence fait trop d'bruit (yeah, yeah, yeah)
15. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
16. Mais tout l'monde aime la vanille, tout l'monde aime la vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)

[Verse 2]
17. Dis-moi comment tu veux construire une relation de qualité
18. Quand personne veut d'la solidité, tout l'monde veut d'la quantité
19. Pas d'identité, pas non plus de personnalité
20. Ils veulent tous en devenir une à tout prix même sans qualité
21. Même sans qualification, à cause de l'éducation
22. Génération rien pour l'honneur, tout pour la réputation
23. Donc j'me remets en question, j'fais face à mes accusations
24. J'envoie des cœurs en emojis, ça diminue mes pulsations

[Refrain]
25. En attendant le soleil me sourit, la nuit m'fait la gueule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
26. J'aime une femme, une mère et c'est la seule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
27. T'inquiète pas, je sais quelle est ma famille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
28. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
29. Le silence parle beaucoup, ferme ta gueule pour le bien d'autrui (yeah, yeah, yeah)
30. J'arrive plus à pioncer, le silence fait trop d'bruit (yeah, yeah, yeah)
31. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
32. Mais tout l'monde aime la vanille, tout l'monde aime la vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)

[Verse 3]
33. Tout l'monde a l'air content, on est là, on accepte et on consent
34. Non, j'suis pas parfait, j'suis pas tout blanc, au moins j'suis conscient
35. Tu sais que le ciel soit gris ou bleu, la vie n'est pas rose
36. Plongés dans le noir, des reufs voient rouge derrière les barreaux
37. Putain, ça rend paro, vie d'ma mère, c'est pas drôle
38. La vanille a un goût amer, la vie perd son arôme
39. Donc tous les jours, on baraque, dans la cage, j'me dis "nique sa mère"
40. J'leur en veux à la mort, l'enfer est à la mode

[Refrain]
41. Le soleil me sourit, la nuit m'fait la gueule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
42. J'aime une femme, une mère et c'est la seule (yeah, yeah, yeah)
43. T'inquiète pas, je sais quelle est ma famille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
44. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
45. Le silence parle beaucoup, ferme ta gueule pour le bien d'autrui (yeah, yeah, yeah)
46. J'arrive plus à pioncer, le silence fait trop d'bruit (yeah, yeah, yeah)
47. Le monde pue la merde, mais il a un goût de vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)
48. Mais tout l'monde aime la vanille, tout l'monde aime la vanille (yeah, yeah, yeah)

**Lexical Borrowing**

Maître Gims and Niska, "Sapés comme jamais."

[Intro : Niska]
1. Sapés comme jamais, sapés comme jamais de jamais
2. Sapés comme jamais, jamais
3. Sapés comme jamais, sapés comme jamais de jamais
4. Sapés comme jamais, jamais

[Verse 1 : Maître Gims]
5. On casse ta porte, c'est la Gestapo
6. J'veais t'retrouver, Meugui Columbo
7. Ça veut vendre des tonnes à la Gustavo
8. Un café sans sucre, j'en ai pleins sur l'dos
9. Hé ouais, ma puce, la thune rend beau
10. Ça va faire six ans qu'on met des combos
11. Je manie les mélos, Waraoui, Warano
12. Tu te demandes si c'est pas un complot

[Bridge : Maître Gims]
13. Haut les mains, haut les mains
14. Sauf les mecs sapés en Balmain
15. Balmain, Balmain
16. Sarouel façon Aladdin
17. Haut les mains, haut les mains
18. Sauf les mecs sapés en Balmain
19. Balmain, Balmain
20. Sarouel façon Aladdin
[Pre-chorus : Maître Gims]

21. Passe avant minuit (Passe avant minuit)
22. Je vais t'faire vivre un dream (Je vais t'faire vivre un dream)
23. Avance sur la piste, les yeux sont rivés sur toi
24. Les habits qui brillent tels Les Mille Et Une Nuits
25. Paris est vraiment ma-ma-ma-magique
[Refrain : Maitre Gims]

26. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
27. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
28. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
29. Sapés comme jamais
30. Loulou' et 'Boutin (bando)
31. Loulou' et 'Boutin ('Boutin na 'Boutin)
32. Coco na Chanel (Coco)
33. Coco na Chanel (Coco Chanel)
[Verse 2 : Niska]

34. Niama na ngwaku des ngwaku
35. J'contrôlle la ne-zo, apprécie mon parcours
36. Handek à ta go, sale petit coquin, t'es cocu
37. Quand elle m'a vu, elle t'a plaqué
38. Ferregamo, peau de croco sur la chaussure
39. J'suis Congolais, tu vois j'veux dire ?
40. Hein hein, Norbatisé
41. Maître Gims m'a convoitisé
42. Charlie Delta localisé
43. Les mbilas sont focalisés
44. Sapés comme jaja, jamais
45. Dorénavant, j'fais des jaloux
46. J'avoue, je vis que pour la victoire, imbécile
47. La concurrence à ma vessie
48. Loubou', Zano' et Hermès
49. Louis, vide ton sac, j'veux la recette
50. (Bando na bando)
[Pre-chorus : Maître Gims]

51. Passe avant minuit (Passe avant minuit)
52. Je vais t'faire vivre un dream (Je vais t'faire vivre un dream)
53. Avance sur la piste, les yeux sont rivés sur toi
54. Les habits qui brillent tels Les Mille Et Une Nuits
55. Paris est vraiment ma-ma-ma-ma-magique

[Refrain : Maître Gims]

56. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
57. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
58. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
59. Sapés comme jamais
60. Loulou' et 'Boutin (bando)
61. Loulou' et 'Boutin ('Boutin na 'Boutin)
62. Coco na Chanel (Coco)
63. Coco na Chanel (Coco Chanel)

[Outro : Maître Gims]

64. Kinshasa na Brazza (God bless)
65. Libreville, Abidjan (God bless)
66. Yaoundé na Douala (God bless)
67. Bamako na Dakar (God bless)
68. Dany Synthé oh (God bless)
69. Bedjik na Darcy hé (God bless)
70. Bilou na Dem-dem (God bless)
71. Djuna Djanana hé (God bless)

[Refrain : Maître Gims]

72. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
73. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
74. Sapés comme jamais (jamais)
75. Sapés comme jamais
76. Loulou' et 'Boutin (bando)
77. Loulou' et 'Boutin ('Boutin na 'Boutin)
78. Coco na Chanel (Coco)
79. Coco na Chanel (Coco Chanel)

MHD, "La moula"

[Verse 1]
1. J'me lève à 6 heures du mat' pour avoir des billets green et purple
2. On passe du marron à la white, change de couleur à la Kartel
3. Autant d' services à mon actif que Federer, Monfils ou Novac
4. Hey, la recette du jour est coffrée sous mon parka
5. J'attends pas qu'on m'fasse la passe pour marquer des buts, dans ton équipe, toi, y'a que des geushs et des putes
6. Des négros bannis, des suceurs de bites, j'suis pas bricoleur, j'ai les vices de la rue
7. Djanka m'a dit "Cafu, chie des classiques", la hagra, ça paie que si j'prends ton liquide
8. C'est toi contre moi, ramène pas ton équipe, j'ai boycotté la salle pour me prendre un fusil
9. Loca Vida tout est easy la peufra du Maroc, calibre chromé
10. Passe un coup de fil si y'a un souci, enfoiré
11. Soudé comme Yaya et Kolo, toujours sur le rainté comme Gerrard
12. Les autorités ne savent pas que j'ai une arme de guerre coffrée sous mon calbar
13. Cité Rouge Jaurès c'est 150, passez sous l'porche pour un gros 50
14. Waro dis-leur que ces bâtards vont parler de Glock, bâtard, qu'ils pourront pas m'descendre
15. J'fais les choses carré, j'arrondis mes fins d'mois
16. J'vais quitter l'hexagone, si j'fais du béné, c'pas pour payer les impôts

[Refrain]

17. Qui veut d'la moula ? Négro, ça fume que la moula
18. Mais qui veut d'la moula ? Mes négros ne fument que la moula, enfoiré
19. Qui veut d'la moula ? Négro, ça fume que la moula
20. Mais qui veut d'la moula ? Mes négros ne fument que la moula, enfoiré
21. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
22. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
23. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
24. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé

[Couplet 2]

25. Qui veut d'la moula ? Enfile ta paire de TN, rase ton crane comme Aboulaye
26. Négro me voilà pour mes soninkés, diakhankés, mes poulars et les dioulas
27. J't'ai promis un feat mais j'ai menti, j'ai dit qu't'étais bon mais t'es pourri
28. Frérot, t'atteins même pas les 300 vues sur YouTube même si tu fais ton feat avec Jay-Z
29. Paris c'est miné de tout-par, CR Jaurès 150 tu nous connais
30. Fuck la 313, fuck la RHA, fuck la 807, nique la mère aux collègues
31. J'vais mon oseille j'vis ma vavie, j'perds des potos car la confiance ça va vite
32. Salam, j'compte sur personne sauf la famille, j'me méfie mais bon on n'est jamais à l'abri
33. Demande à Byro ou à samou, fais pas ta balance si t'as pas d'sous
34. Tous les week-ends location paire de Zanotti, dans ton frigo y'a qu'du beurre et du bourrou
35. La concurrence est boutou, j'vole la vedette forcément y'a des jaloux
36. Leur flow, il est trop djamourou, aucune dégaine comme Kata sur un boutou
37. Ça kick de la Rouge jusqu'à Jaurès, Stalingrad, Bu-ti, c'est Cambrai
38. Baki dis-leur que ces bâtards ne pourront jamais faire de l'ombre à la lumière
39. Le quartier va signer chez Nikon, service de moula en photo
40. 1.9 réseaux, sur le polo, j'ai déjà commencé autant terminer le boulot

[Refrain]
46. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
47. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
48. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
49. Qui veut d'la moula ? Négro, ça fume que la moula
50. Mais qui veut d'la moula ? Mes négros ne fument que la moula, enfoiré
51. Qui veut d'la moula ? Négro, ça fume que la moula
52. Mais qui veut d'la moula ? Mes négros ne fument que la moula, enfoiré
53. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
54. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
55. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé
56. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé

[Outro]

57. T'as fumé ma moula, t'as toussé x8