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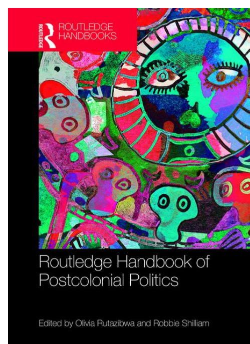

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33

DU BOIS, GHANA AND CAIRO JAZZ

The geo-politics of Malcolm X

Hisham Aidi

I

In the mid-1950s, when W.E.B. Du Bois was barred from foreign travel – accused by the Justice Department of spreading the propaganda of foreign governments – Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt invited the eighty-two-year-old scholar and his wife Shirley Graham to settle in Cairo, offering them a beautiful home on the Nile. Nasser had proclaimed solidarity with the African-American struggle and even began offering scholarships to black students in the South (Nolte 1956). When Du Bois and Graham finally had their passports returned, following a Supreme Court ruling in 1958, they traveled extensively, and though Du Bois did visit Cairo in 1962, he and his wife chose to settle in Ghana, taking on Ghanaian citizenship and working closely with Ghanaian leader Kwame Nkrumah.

But David Graham Du Bois – Shirley's son (W. E. B. Du Bois's stepson) – would settle in Cairo, in 1960, living in the Egyptian capital continuously for a dozen years, and on and off until the mid-nineties. A leftist, journalist and professor of American literature at Cairo University, Du Bois was also a bon vivant and inveterate jazzman (an alumnus of the Oberlin Conservatory of Music). He knew the black activists who spent time in Cairo – Malcolm X, Maya Angelou, Stokely Carmichael – as well as the jazz artists who passed through (Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Sun Ra.) Old-timers still smile about the lavish New Year parties that David threw deep into the 1980s – at 76 Nile Street in Giza, apt#24 – in that grand apartment, where every room had a view of the Nile. The apartment, a gift from Nasser to the Du Boises, was in the famed 'Farid El Atrache building,' named so after the Arab crooner who lived there as well. David Du Bois's end-of-year gatherings always recalled the early sixties, bringing together South African freedom fighters, Albanian Marxists, members of the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, white radicals from New York, with local jazzheads and Egyptian police sergeants.[1]

In 1975, Du Bois published a semi-autobiographical novel, *… And Bid Him Sing*, chronicling life in Cairo from the early 1960s through the 1967 War. This was a hopeful moment, when Cairo was home to several African liberation movements, when Radio Cairo broadcast in Zulu, and when Maya Angelou lived in Egypt, writing for *The Arab Observer*. Told through the eyes of veteran journalist, Bob Jones – a stand-in for Du Bois himself – the novel revolves around the budding Egyptian jazz scene, chronicling the lives of African-Americans who have made Cairo their home: a sundry crew of Marxists, black nationalists, Nation of Islam and Sunni 'Muslims'

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who divide their time between local jazz bars, Al Azhar university, news bureaus and 'café-au-lait women.' Jones goes about his reporting, while trying to create a 'progressive' jazz culture in Cairo, helping newly-arrived expats like Suliman ibn Rashid, a poet who came to study at Al-Azhar, get gigs at local clubs. These exiles are trying to find a place in Nasser's pan-African project, while remaining connected to the struggles back home, keeping a distance from the 'Goddamned [American] embassy,' yet aware that, for all their misgivings, in moments of crisis, they are still viewed as American.

Malcolm X's 1964 sojourn in Cairo is rendered vividly. During the day, 'El Hag Shabbazz' – as Egyptians call him – meets with diplomats and dignitaries at the Organization of African Unity conference. In the evening, the 'brothers' gather in Malcolm's suite at the Shepheard Hotel – to help him type up his speech to the Organization of African Unity, and talk about how to build the Cairo branch of his recently-launched Organization of Afro-American Unity. At one point, finding himself alone with Malcolm X, Bob Jones – a nonbeliever surrounded by converts – asks the civil rights leader the question he's long wanted to ask: Is it necessary to believe in God, or any religion, to be part of the revolution? Malcolm X sips from his glass of lemonade and offers a layered response. 'For me…Islam…has been like a harness, a guide to how I should behave…I needed to be reined in. I needed guidelines…limits beyond which not to go. Islam provides these for me.' He looks up, 'Perhaps everybody doesn't need guidelines imposed from outside, a harness to keep him on the straight and narrow…on the right road.' Then seeing how relieved Jones looks, Malcolm smiles and adds, 'You'd make a good Muslim.'

The question of God's role in revolution, and who wants or needs God's guidelines, is of course a matter that is still playing out today, furiously, in Egypt and beyond. Yet for the first time since the heady sixties, we're seeing young people beyond America's borders turning towards Malcolm X for guidance – and governments are paying close attention.

II

In May 1999, I was a graduate student running around Cairo looking for a dissertation topic. Seeing I was interested in 'Third World labor movements,' a friend suggested I talk to Gamal al Banna – a liberation theologian, trade unionist and the youngest brother of Hasan al Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. 'He met all the Third World revolutionaries – including Malcolm X,' my friend Patrick had said. And so I went to see Banna at his home office. I remember sitting across from a soft-spoken gentleman, then seventy-nine years old, in a gray Maoist jacket, as he talked about Islamic humanism, the pitfalls of the free market, and why he had never joined the Muslim Brotherhood. A gray cat hopped around the piles of book on and around his desk. After an hour or so, I asked him about Malcolm X. 'He sat in the seat you're sitting in now,' said Banna with a twinkle in his eye. He spoke of Malcolm X's courage, charm, curiosity; he kept referring to him as a youth (*shab*) and lamented that in Egypt only the aged, his cohort, seemed to have heard of this remarkable American.

When I returned to New York, I went to see Manning Marable, Malcolm X's would-be biographer, who was about to launch a multi-media project about the civil rights leader. I mentioned my meeting with Banna, and suggested that there were people – a dozen or so in Egypt alone – but elsewhere (in Sudan, Ghana, Senegal, Tanzania, Algeria, Lebanon, etc.) – who had met or accompanied Malcolm X during his travels, and whom we needed to interview. Professor Marable asked me to compile a list of these individuals, and told me to get in touch with his friend David Du Bois, who in turn directed me to his novel, and told me to look up a 1962 Arabic translation of Langston Hughes's *The First Book of Jazz*.

That was the nineties.

Earlier that decade, rap artists like Public Enemy and Ice Cube were sampling Malcolm X's speeches. The video for Public Enemy's 'Shut 'Em Down' showed Malcolm's face on the dollar bill. Hip-hop would go global in the middle of the 1990s, and with that, all the references to Islam and Malcolm X. America's main musical export would reach distant corners, introducing youth worldwide to African-American history and the black freedom struggle, and to the various types of Islam referenced therein. Today there are thriving hip-hop scenes in São Paulo, Havana, Marseilles, Istanbul and Dar es Salaam. A rich melding took place: marginalized youth now express their politics in distinctly African-American terms, some are embracing Islam, others are launching Black Panther-like movements. Malcolm X's visage today appears in assorted places – murals in Caracas, posters in Parisian banlieues, spray-painted silhouettes in Istanbul's streets – but especially in the Muslim world, and the Muslim enclaves of Europe. Indeed the most well-known European Muslim leader, Tariq Ramadan – a nephew of Gamal al-Banna's – explicitly models himself on Malcolm X.

A Life of Reinvention (2011), Manning Marable's Pulitzer-prize winning biography of Malcolm X, is a heroically-detailed account of Malcolm X's rise from street hustler to ambassador–at-large for the earth's wretched. Marable brightly evokes the sights and sounds of mid-century America – the zoot suits, trolley cars, bebop, Harlem terracotta facades and so on – that backdropped Malcolm's multiple self-inventions. Marable attributes Malcolm's posthumous odyssey from purported demagogue to cultural icon, to Alex Haley's biography, released in late 1965, stating that Malcolm X's 'latter-day metamorphosis from angry Black militant into a multicultural American icon was the product of the extraordinary success of Haley's *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*.' But *A Life of Reinvention* was also intended as a corrective to *The Autobiography*. Marable set out to highlight and explain Haley's role. Malcolm's amanuensis, notes Marable, was a liberal Republican who disliked the Nation of Islam, and who, unbeknownst to Malcolm, left out several statements and chapters, and to use today's parlance, tried to 'deradicalize' the Muslim leader – presenting him as an integrationist and liberal reformer.

In March 2002, a trove of Malcolm X's personal writings – hundreds of pages of letters, photographs, diaries, handwritten drafts of speeches – turned up for sale at an auction house in San Francisco. The Shabazz family would reclaim the material and lend it to the Schomburg public library in Harlem, where it has been on display since 2008. The collection, at least what's available for public viewing, shows Malcolm X as an avid reader and meticulous chronicler, and includes everything from letters to diplomats Richard Holbrooke and Ralph Bunche, to Paris metro ticket-stubs and a marked-up translation of Sartre's *Black Orpheus*. The diaries, in particular, are a delight to read, showing the activist's political evolution, but also a more quotidian side: there is Malcolm crossing Tahrir Square, to go have some lemonade at Groppi's – a still-standing pastry shop – then he's buying pajamas, picking up Vitamin C tablets, (because he's feeling kind of 'woozy,') going to the cinema, and so on.

Marable makes use of this new archive, as well as hundreds of declassified FBI files, to make several arguments. First: as is well-known, Malcolm X was initially opposed to integration and political participation but, in debating integrationists – Bayard Rustin in particular – he would abandon separatism, and come to believe in civic engagement and voting, as tools for a 'bloodless revolution.' Rustin – the liberal integrationist who wrote the famous essay 'From Protest to Politics' – forms a curious moral counterpoint, or shadow, to Malcolm X throughout the book, and his thinking, per Marable's telling, is ultimately vindicated. Towards the end of his life, the 'mature Malcolm' has moved close to Rustin's position, believing that African-Americans could use the electoral system to achieve meaningful change. Marable also met with Gregory Reed, the lawyer who purchased the 'missing chapters' from the Alex Haley estate. (In lieu of these chapters, Haley inserted an epilogue that he wrote.) The unpublished chapters, it turns

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out, discuss political organizing and show that in his final year, Malcolm envisioned a broad-based 'pluralistic united front' that would unite integrationists and civic organizations with black separatists, under the leadership of the Black Muslims. And it is this plan – Malcolm's political organizing – that got him killed. 'Malcolm X, the real Malcolm X, was infinitely more remarkable than the personality presented in *The Autobiography*,' writes Marable, and with his unique potential to unite black integrationists with black nationalists, with support from a range of post-colonial states, he 'had the potential to become much more dangerous to white America than any other single individual had ever been.' Hence, Haley's censorship.

A Life is crucial for understanding Malcolm's life. Marable reveals that Malcolm – during his Detroit Red phase – when he danced and playing drums at jazz bars, under the stage name Jack Carlton (the name a tribute to his late brother Earl Jr, who had performed as Jimmy Carlton). Marable revisits the assassination, noting that by 1964 there was a 'convergence of interests' among the Nation of Islam, the FBI and Bureau of Special Services, all of whom wanted Malcolm silenced. Parsing declassified police records, he shows that the FBI and NYPD – who had planted informants in the NOI, Muslim Mosque Inc. and OAAU – knew of the threats against the Muslim leader, but did not provide security when he spoke at the Audubon that night in February 1965. The assassins were linked to the Nation of Islam mosque in Newark – and the lead suspect, whom Marable names, is still alive and living in New Jersey. Yet given that thousands of FBI and CIA files remain declassified, we still don't know who gave the order, and if the murder was committed by a government informant. Marable also tries to make Malcolm more accessible, showing that the leader made tactical political errors, often felt vulnerable and was 'no saint.' The historian speculates – on admittedly thin evidence – that Malcolm X 'probably' had homosexual encounters during his time as a street hustler, and that he and Betty Shabazz were unfaithful to each other.

Professor Marable expected *A Life* to stir some controversy. Malcolm X's daughters had, after all, worked strenuously to prevent him from accessing their father's papers and diaries, once they got wind of his narrative – and decided to deposit the papers at the Schomburg Library instead of at Columbia. But still, Marable, who died three days before the book's publication, would have been surprised by the furor, and the political, racial and generational fissures that his work exposed. Two books have already been written in response (Herb Boyd's edited volume *By Any Means Necessary Malcolm X: Real, Not Reinvented* and Jared Ball's *The Lie of Reinvention*) and Malcolm's eldest daughter, Ilyasah Shabazz, recently co-published an annotated version of her father's travel diaries, also intended to counter Marable's account.

The responses to *A Life* have been revealing. The book was well-received by the mainstream media, praised by critics as a corrective not only to Haley's autobiography, but also to Spike Lee's film, which presented Malcolm 'sentimentally' (Remnick 2011). But the book was roundly criticized by the black press, for stating that Malcolm at the end of his life had abandoned revolution for the ballot box, and become an integrationist or social democrat. Marable's aim was to expose how Haley had tried to moderate and mainstream Malcolm, and yet he (Marable) had done the same, superimposing his politics onto his subject. Marable's claims that Malcolm X was a 'misogynist,' dissembled about his past, made insensitive remarks about whites and Jews also caused a flap, threatening to eclipse the larger questions raised by the book. And the fact that – of all the books published on Malcolm X – the 'white media' raved over *A Life* was proof that the mainstream wanted a Malcolm cut down to size (and that Marable had done the leader a disservice.) Amiri Baraka, a close friend of Marable, said the historian had 'slandered' Malcolm.

A *Life* was well-received by scholars and activists who knew Marable as a giant in the field of Black Studies, and understood what he was trying to do, devoting years of his life, as his health faltered, to reconstructing Malcolm's story. So what exactly was he trying to do?

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Marable once observed that since the mid-nineteenth century, three visions have characterized African-American political thought: the school of racial separatism, the school of integrationism, and the school of radical democracy, the latter being grounded in anti-imperialism and internationalism. These currents surge and recede, depending on political-economic circumstances (Marable 2005, 209). Marable himself came of age when that third school, of progressive black internationalism, was ascendant, when African-American politics was enriched with an engagement with the world, when black expat communities emerged in Africa, Asia and Europe. This was also the era when peoples struggling for independence abroad, found inspiration in the black freedom movement, and saw African-Americans as America's conscience, a vanguard of sorts. Having lived in East Africa as a young man, part of the expat communities of Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, and having written a dissertation about Kenya, Marable situated himself solidly within this tradition of transnational solidarity and Third World socialism. And like others of that generation (think Harry Belafonte's recent spats with Jay Z), he was dismayed by the decline of the black left, of this internationalist spirit, and the lack of interest in black history among youth today.

'How can the authentic history of black people be brought to life?' Marable (2006, 21) asks in his penultimate book, *Living Black History*. One answer: Malcolm X. Marable knew that Malcolm still commands respect across Black America, and if anyone could awaken an interest in black history and reignite black internationalism – not so as to move to Kenya, but to have a progressive engagement with the world's languages and cultures – it would be Malcolm and his riveting story. *A Life* has not resurrected Malcolm – the way Lee's film did, but the Malcolm X narrative – and Marable's book – have had a jolting effect among youth beyond America's border. One important prediction that Marable made and, which is spot-on, is that Malcolm's legacy will increasingly be shaped by Islam.

III

'I have difficulty praying. My big toe is not used to it,' Malcolm told his diary on April 20, 1964 shortly after arriving in Mecca. Having recently left the Nation of Islam with their practices, he was still acclimating to sitting on his knees during prayer. Despite the pain, the following day he embarks on the journey to Mount Arafat, part of the hajj pilgrimage, joining 'hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, all colors, buses, car, camel, donkey & foot.' Mecca, he writes, is surrounded by the:

> cruelest looking mts [mountains] I've ever seen. They seem to be made of the waste material from a blast furnace. No vegetation on them at all. The houses are old & modern. Some sections of the city are no different than when the Prophet Abraham was here over 4000 [years ago] – other sections look like a Miami suburb.

Wandering among the pilgrims, he describes the rituals, the seven stones cast at the devil, the circumambulating of the *kaaba*, and observes, 'This would be an anthropologist's paradise.'

Malcolm X is a powerful optic through which to understand America's post-war ascendance and expansion into the Middle East. His is the perspective of a ghetto-dweller who has transcended the borders drawn around him. '[A]s though I had stepped out of prison,' he writes, when he travels abroad. The diaries – several notebooks of single-spaced handwriting – show an anthropologist's eye. Malcolm comments on the landscape, the politics,

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cultural and religious differences, with humorous asides. When a friend arrives late, he quips, 'Arab time!!' At one point, he observes, 'The worst most dangerous habit among Arab Muslims is cigarettes. They smoke constantly, even on the Hajj.' There are also personal reflections on his mood, health and intense solitude. The words 'lonesome' and 'alone' appear on almost every other page. His thoughts on Saudi Arabia support the standard narrative that the hajj was transformative.

Yet the diaries show something else: when not in Arabia, Malcolm seemed to enjoy being away from his role as a religious leader, and away from religious strictures as well. Whether in Ghana, Guinea, Kenya or Egypt, he immerses himself in the cultural life of these newly independent states, and the younger Malcolm, the music aficionado, resurfaces, as he frequents nightclubs and dance centers again. In Nairobi, he goes to see his friend Gee Gee sing at the Equator Club, and then accompanies Vice-president Oginga Odinga to a party at the Goan Institute of Dance. ('The PM is a good dancer, remarkably for his age,' he writes.) In Guinea, he attends a wedding party, then goes to a nightclub and, 'watche[s] some Americans from the Ship-hope try to dance.' He rejoices in seeing newly independent states shunt aside European colonial music and celebrate their own musical traditions. In Accra – accompanied by Maya Angelou – he attends a party at the Ghana Press Club and enjoys 'Highlife,' which would become the country's national music (Angelou 1986, 134). But it's mostly in Egypt, which he saw as the bridge between Africa and Asia, a key player in the Non-Aligned Movement, that he spent the most time and experienced the most cultural immersion.

The story of Egyptian jazz dates back to the Harlem Renaissance, when African-American musicians who had settled in Paris, ventured east. In December 1921, Eugene Bullard, the Georgia-born military pilot, drummer and prize fighter, traveled from Paris to Alexandria, Egypt. For six months, he played with the jazz ensemble at the Hotel Claridge, and fought two fights while in Egypt (Lloyd 2000, 79). A decade later, the blues singer Alberta Hunter followed suit, singing in Istanbul and Cairo (Shack 2001, 43). The trumpeter and vocalist Bill Coleman would live in Cairo from 1939 to 1940, leading the Harlem Rhythmakers/Swing Stars. As Islam began to take hold in American cities and within jazz circles, Muslim jazz musicians would journey to Egypt. In 1932, an African-American Muslim with a saxophone turned up in Cairo, saying that he was working his way to Mecca (Berger 1964). With America's post-war ascent, jazz would spread around the world carried by servicemen, Hollywood and Voice of America broadcasts. In 1958, the bassist Jamil Nasir, trumpeter Idrees Sulieman, and pianist Oscar Dennard traveled to Tangier, where a VOA relay station would broadcast Willis Conover's *Jazz Hour* to listeners behind the Iron Curtain, where they recorded an album. They then went on to Cairo. In the Egyptian capital, the thirty-two-year-old Dennard would fall ill and die from typhoid fever; he would be buried in the city, his grave a regular stop for visiting jazz musicians.

All to say, by the time David Du Bois arrived in Cairo in 1960, there was already a local jazz scene and the State Department had launched its jazz diplomacy tours aimed at countering Soviet propaganda. Du Bois and his friends – with the support of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture – would try to create a music culture different from that sponsored by the US government. The Egyptian government was also leery of the jazz tours, and turned back 'jambassador' Dizzy Gillespie at Cairo airport in 1956 following the Suez War.

This was the buoyant cultural moment that Malcolm X encounters when he arrives in July 1964. Egypt is flourishing culturally, a regional leader in music, cinema and literature. Malcolm's diary entries from Egypt confirm the events and personalities described in Du Bois' novel. David Du Bois is working as an announcer at Radio Cairo, and lobbying

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Egyptian officials to have his father's books – especially *Black Flame Trilogy* – translated. (*Black Boy* by Richard Wright was the only work of African-American literature available in Arabic, he would write to his mother in November 1960; he wanted the government to translate Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* and Langston Hughes' primer on jazz.) The local jazz scene was feeding off musical trends in the US, as American jazz artists wrote compositions in honor of Africa and Afro-Asian solidarity. Malcolm would soak up the scene in Cairo and Alexandria, attending weddings and concerts, socializing at Cairo's elite social clubs, sailing down the Nile to the Valley of Kings. It's in Cairo that he meets Fifi, a Swiss woman who works for the UN, and who is quite smitten by him. All along, of course, he is networking with regime officials and scholars hoping to build a branch of Al-Azhar in Harlem. When he travels from Cairo to Saudi Arabia for hajj, he is struck by how culturally barren the kingdom is compared to Egypt.

The diaries in effect show a man who has landed smack in the middle of the 'Arab Cold War' of the early 1960s, which pitted Nasser's Egypt and her socialist allies against Saudi Arabia and the conservative monarchies backed by the US. As part of the Non-Aligned Movement, Nasser had stepped up his rhetorical attacks on American-allied monarchies in the region, through Radio Cairo, denouncing the royals for their social conservatism and alliance with the West. Music was at the heart of this propaganda effort, as top musicians were enlisted to sing the praises of 'our destiny' and 'historical leader.' And the expat jazz artists were solidly on the Egyptian side. One of the musicians, saxophonist Othman Karim, would set up the Cairo Jazz Quartet and record a track called '*Yayeesh Nasser*' ('Long Live Nasser') (Du Bois 1964, 47). Karim would go on to collaborate with Salah Ragab, a young drummer and major in the Egyptian army, who would become Egypt's most famous jazz musician, working with Sun Ra and Randy Weston.[2] When Malcolm X arrives in Cairo, he negotiates this cultural tug of war, hanging with the 'bros' but also listening to jazz with Morroe Berger, a Princeton Arabist, expert on Black Muslims and organizer of State Department jazz tours. This contest is subtly rendered in Du Bois' novel. Both Ragab and Karim make appearances – as characters named Salah Janin and Muhammad X – performing at the Cairo Jazz Combo. The Saudis would soon respond to Nasser's cultural diplomacy, creating a radio station with religious broadcasts. In 1964, they launched their own ideological offensive, setting up the Muslim World League, to mobilize various Islamist groups to counter the spread of socialism and secular Arab nationalism.

American officials were wary of which side Malcolm was going to take in this regional Cold War. According to cables at the National Security Archive in Maryland, American diplomats were displeased by the 'sympathetic stories' that Malcolm X – and that '[Black] Islam' in general – were receiving in the Arab press. Officials were convinced that the Nation of Islam was infiltrated by Communists, and wanted to keep Malcolm away from leftist movements abroad as well. It was around this time that the Muslim World League began considering sending emissaries around the world to spread Salafi Islam, including to cities in the West. Diplomatic cables from the early to mid-1960s show Mohammed Surur, then Secretary-General of the Muslim World League, asking the American embassy in Jeddah for permission to set up a branch office in the US to 'propagate the faith' and 'help raise the level of Islamic education in the US and particularly in the Black Muslim Movement,' whose 'doctrines' were 'in flat contradiction to the teachings of Islam.'[3] American officials would soon come to view the Muslim World League as an antidote to Black Muslim militancy.

Most of the diplomatic cables detailing Malcolm X's visits to Egypt and Saudi Arabia were written by Richard Murphy, now a retired career diplomat and fellow at the Council of Foreign

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Relations. I spoke to Murphy last year and he recalled that Saudi Arabia and the Muslim World League had sponsored Malcolm's visit to the kingdom in 1964, as a way to 'peel' him away from Nasser's influence – and the US supported that effort. 'Back then, we thought Islam was a potential friend in dealing with the radical black community,' recalled Murphy:

> We had a benevolent attitude toward what we called Wahhabi Islam. We saw the Saudis as devout, quaint, but not dangerous. Washington thought a better understanding of Islam could help deal with some of the violent tendencies in the black American community. The better Muslims they [Black Muslims] are, the less violent they'll be back home. Malcolm X was a prime example.[4]

Nowadays it is well-known that the US mobilized the Islamic right in South Asia and the Middle East to counter nationalist movements, but there is also the corollary idea – heard often in the Muslim American community – that in the 1960s the government used immigrant Muslims to counter or 'tame' Black Muslim organizations. COINTELPRO – the Counter-intelligence Program set up by the FBI – did see the Nation of Islam as a threat, and wanted to change the movement's philosophy 'to one of the strictly religious and self-improvement orientation, deleting the race hatred and separate nationhood aspects;' but there is no evidence to suggest that immigrant Muslims were used to neutralize Black Muslim organizations.[5] What seems to have occurred was that, as part of a broader Cold War strategy, American diplomats allowed the Muslim World League to set up a branch office in the US and to dispatch teachers of orthodox Islam to Muslim communities across the United States – in part to 'moderate' black militancy.

Malcolm X in turn was testing the waters, navigating the Cold War's shifting currents, assessing which nation-state or movement to align his new Muslim Mosque Inc. with, and even presenting himself as a bridge between rival camps. He was courted by the (Salafi) Muslim World League and the Muslim Brotherhood, who competed to pull him into their school of Sunni Islam. In September 1964, after undergoing training in Mecca and being appointed an official representative of the organization, Malcolm would consider establishing his Muslim Mosque Inc. in Harlem as a 'legal branch of the Muslim World League.' But his affection for Egypt ran deep. In a confidential letter to Muhammad Tawfik Oweida, Secretary-General for the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs in Egypt, Malcolm explains to the Egyptian official why he is building relations with the Muslim World League and the Muslim Brotherhood, two movements anathema to the Nasserist regime. 'My heart is in Cairo,' writes the civil rights leader, noting that the most progressive social forces in the Muslim world are in the Egyptian capital, but 'I can be more helpful and of more value' to these progressive forces by having strong ties to the conservative forces 'that are headquartered in Mecca.' He adds, 'When I passed through Geneva I even took time to speak with [the exiled Muslim Brotherhood leader] Said Ramadan so that I could find out what he was thinking without ever letting him know what I was really thinking.'[6]

In his final years, Malcolm X had embraced Sunni Islam, but which ideology or state he would have aligned with is today the subject of intense debate, with observers projecting their own ideological predilections onto his future trajectory. In Egypt he found a cosmopolitan progressivism but was wary of Nasser's secularism; in Saudi he found the religious orthodoxy to counter NOI teachings, but was suspicious of the kingdom's reactionary politics. By early 1965, Malcolm was still searching for a theology that could speak to racism, inequality and imperialism, not unlike Muslim youth today.

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IV

One warm Monday morning last May, hundreds of people lined up to board buses on 125th Street and Seventh Avenue. Signs on the buses read, 'Annual Malcolm X Day and Pilgrimage.' The excursion is organized by the Organization of Afro-American Unity (an outfit that Malcolm founded in 1964), and has taken place on his birthday every year since his death. The caravan of buses left Harlem and wound its way up to Ferncliff Cemetery in Hartsdale, some twenty minutes north of the Manhattan. Upon arrival, the visitors – including dozens of schoolchildren - lined up, waiting for the ceremony to begin. A low wooden throne-like chair was placed near the adjacent graves of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz; an embroidered golden cloth and a framed portrait of the civil rights leader were placed on the 'throne.' The drumming began, and young men in white robes and skullcaps walked in file towards the grave, forming two lines in front of the wooden chair; other groups followed into the ceremony area and formed a semi-circle around the grave.

The event draws black groups from around the country and the Caribbean. The tone and attire recall an earlier era: young men and women in Black Panther and Garveyite military uniforms, older men in flowing white-sleeved African robes, women in resplendent gowns and head wraps. For two hours, Imam Talib 'Abdur-Rashid, a Harlem-based cleric, emcees a program which includes speeches, testimonies and prayers, and concludes with the folding of the red, black and green pan-African flag, which is then handed to someone who was close to Malcolm, a family member or one of his two bodyguards, now in their eighties.

I have been attending this 'pilgrimage' for over a decade and have watched it grow and change. It's still largely an African-American affair, but each year brings more visitors from other communities and from overseas – mostly young European Muslims. The pilgrims pay their respect differently. Once the flag is folded, devotees usually approach the grave, pour some water on the soil around it, and have their children place their hands on the bronze memorial plaque. But now people are also leaving offerings, like fruits or candles, and collecting a little soil to take back home with them. Visitors will leave their prayer stones or beads on the grave during the ceremony to absorb the martyr's *baraka*.

Malcolm X has become central to Muslim youth consciousness over the last decade. Young Muslim visitors now stop by Ferncliff cemetery throughout the year, wandering around trying to find 'Brother Malcolm's' grave, while tweeting to their friends. The Malcolm X story has circled the globe thanks to hip-hop, Lee's film and the internet. The interest on the part of Muslim youth, however, is part of a larger turn towards race and black internationalism, a response to recent political convulsions. With few exceptions, across North America and Western Europe, Muslim communities find themselves wedged between surveillance states, right-wing xenophobic movements and American state power. The situation in the wider Muslim world is equally dispiriting: civil wars in Iraq and Syria; drone strikes in Pakistan and Somalia; the wave of revolts that swept North Africa and the Middle East in 2011 has been suppressed by a massive counter-revolution launched by Saudi Arabia and her allies, as the Western-sponsored subjugation of Palestine enters its second century. The sense of besiegement has aggravated questions of belonging and identity among Muslim youth. There is a suspiciousness of the nation-state, which divides and demeans the *ummah*. And particularly in Europe's urban periphery, there is a need for a narrative of social justice that can make sense of the 'global Muslim predicament.'

This quest has often led the young European or American Muslim – often converts – toward Africa or the Middle East, in search of an authentic Islam. The student-traveler who heads East – traveling through space and time – in search of spiritual knowledge, and comes back bedecked

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in Middle Eastern or African robes, and with a bit of an accent, is now a familiar figure. But today it's also common to see young Muslims from Europe or elsewhere head westward across the Atlantic, to an American metropolis, in search of religious freedom or simply to immerse themselves in black history. The reason for this westward drift is partly the dismal state of progressive politics in the Muslim world. Cold War policies and local authoritarianism have created a Muslim political landscape dominated by the Right – by groups like the center-right Muslim Brotherhood, the ultra-conservative Salafi movement and the latter's more murderous offshoots – jihadist groups like Boko Haram, Al Qaeda and ISIS. The black freedom movement fills a political void.

W.E.B. Du Bois once observed that African-Americans have a 'great message' for humanity, and would offer the world a conception of freedom that would rival the French or Greek idea of liberty and that that would be conveyed through the 'gift of art,' more precisely, the Negro's 'magnificent art impulse.'[7] Since the end of the Cold War, the black freedom movement – with its message of social solidarity, and opposition to racism, militarism and imperialism – has emerged as the progressive alternative, appealing to marginalized groups worldwide, but especially to Muslim youth it seems. At a time when organized hostility and state persecution of Muslims transcends borders, when the US, UK and Australia are passing laws to strip their Muslim citizens of their passports, the experiences and internationalism of Du Bois and Paul Robeson resonate profoundly. In the mid-1950s, frustrated by the antics of Middle Eastern regimes, Elijah Muhammad briefly instructed followers of the Nation of Islam to face the direction of Chicago instead of Mecca for their prayers. Nowadays young Muslims searching for a narrative of social justice are figuratively turning towards Chicago, and towards black history more broadly.

Malcolm X is at the center of this process. If Islam is the unofficial religion of hip-hop culture, Malcolm X is the prophet or at the very least, the patron saint; his speeches are quoted, his dress and demeanor imitated. If hip-hop celebrates the rise of the outsider, the Nation of Islam activist's awesome trajectory from street hustler to the global arena, rising above any and all states, freed from the shackles of patriotism and national allegiance, fearing only Allah, is riveting to young Muslims (and non-Muslims) chafing under state domination in the favela, the *banlieue* or their appendage institution, the prison. For those who find black history liberating, here is an individual to whom history clung like metal shavings to a magnet.

Politically, varying Muslim interpretations of Malcolm are emerging. If younger Muslims are drawn to Malcolm X's radical internationalism and embrace of a political identity that transcended the nation-state, older integrationist Muslims argue that toward the end of his life – when he delivered his speech 'The Ballot or the Bullet,' Malcolm had come to terms with America and the nation-state. What is striking is that fifty years after his death, the Muslim conversation about the significance of Malcolm has taken a distinct theological turn and 'Imam Shabazz' is gradually becoming almost a saintly figure, a *wali*, whose life offers personal and spiritual guidance. Sheikhs now debate various aspects of Malcolm X's life, his views on music, marriage, parenting, political participation and so on. Prominent clerics like Imran Hosein of Trinidad issue opinions on whether Malcolm X's receiving an advance for his autobiography from Grove Press in 1964 constituted *riba* (interest). And it's not unusual to hear those with Sufi leanings describe the pilgrimage to Malcolm's grave as a *mausam* and his death anniversary as an *urs* (a saint's union with their beloved God.)

Thus not surprisingly Muslim readers have taken a rather dim view of Marable's book as well. Many were irritated by Marable's claim in the prologue that the civil rights leader adopted a pro-Palestinian position simply to gain Nasser's support. The more religious were incensed by how Marable had (allegedly) sullied the martyr's reputation. In *A Life*, Nation of Islam leader

Louis Farrakhan tells Marable that 'Malcolm was like a clock…I never saw Malcolm smoke. I never saw Malcolm curse. I never saw Malcolm wink at a woman. I never saw Malcolm eat in between meals. He ate one meal a day. He got up at 5 o'clock in the morning to say his prayers.' This is the image that Muslim community leaders have of Malcolm as well – a startlingly self-disciplined and self-abnegating individual, who stands as a testament to the power of Islam to inspire and rehabilitate. But Marable punctures this image describing a man who enjoyed a rum and coke, had a roving eye, and – at least when overseas – had more than one meal a day.

The recently-released *Diary of Malcolm X 1964* published by Ilyasah Al-Shabazz and Herb Boyd (2014), tries to restore Malcolm's image, presenting the leader in his own words. The volume hews closely to the original diary, but doesn't include Malcolm's random jottings in between daily entries. Thus on his trip to Gaza in September 1964, for instance, readers won't see his scribbled reference to the Khan Yunis refugee camp, his attempts to write in Arabic script or his hand-written rendition of a poem about Palestinian exile by poet Harun Hashim Rashid whom he meets in Gaza. The edits and commentary in the published diary don't seem to be trying to assuage the pique of religious conservatives or left-wing critics. For example, on November 15 1964, Malcolm arrives in Geneva and checks into the Hôtel du Rhône, and then Fifi, the UN secretary he had met in Cairo comes to see him. They talked for several hours until 5pm. 'She claims she is in love with me & seems willing to do anything to prove it.' The following morning Malcolm wrote, 'I slept late then went to buy an overcoat,' took a tour of the city and the UN headquarters, 'had a glass of wine' and then went to meet with Dr. Said Ramadan. At 9:15pm, he returns to his hotel room, 'Fifi was knocking on my door as I came up the stairs… We talked till 11pm and she left. I went for a walk in the rain, alone and feeling lonely….thinking of Betty.' This potentially controversial passage is reproduced in full but for some reason the phrase 'thinking of Betty' is redacted out.

The daughters, who commissioned the publication of the travel diary, seem mainly interested in protecting their father's reputation against Marable's allegations of infidelity. Marable claimed that Malcolm, by 1965, had 're-connected' with his old girlfriend Evelyn Williams from Boston, and had started an affair with an eighteen-year-old named Sharon Poole – and speculates that he spent the night of Feb 20 – his last night – with the latter at the New York Hilton. Marable's claims were based on interviews with Abdullah Abdur-Razzaq, Malcolm X's personal assistant, who insisted – until his passing last November –that he was grossly misquoted.[8] To be sure, in the published diary, there is one passing mention of Evelyn and none of Sharon; the notebook from early 1964, which does describe a conversation that Malcolm had with Evelyn about her relationship to Elijah Muhammad, has not been published.

V

European and American officials were initially unalarmed by the rise of Islam-inflected hip-hop or the growing interest in Malcolm X in the 1990s. Right-wing Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafi movement were given space in Western cities from the mid-1960s onwards, often seen as a force against urban disorder, and, in the US, a counter to black groups supported by Nasser and Castro. Yet with the 1967 War, the political geography of the region was redrawn, altering the direction of black and Muslim movements in the West. With Nasser's defeat, Elijah Muhammad would find himself deprived of a key ally. As states that were Soviet clients gradually entered America's orbit, they withdrew their support for leftist African-American movements. In 1973, Algeria renewed its ties with the US – broken since 1967 – and expelled the Black Panthers, who had established their headquarters in Algiers. Likewise, when Anwar Sadat left the Soviet camp and forged a strong alliance with the US and Saudi Arabia,

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he quickly abandoned his predecessor's language of pan-Africanism and Third World solidarity. David Du Bois would leave Cairo in 1972, repulsed by Sadat's crackdown on leftists, but also because an editor at Random House, a woman by the name of Toni Morrison, expressed interest in the manuscript of his novel; he would settle in Oakland, where he became the editor of the Black Panther Party's newspaper.

After the Camp David Accord and the cementing of the Egyptian-Saudi alliance – which would become the linchpin of American power in the Arab world – left-leaning Black Muslim groups would find themselves bereft of economic and political support. The Saudis withdrew their support for Muslim Mosque Inc. upon Malcolm X's death.[9] The Salafi movement and the Muslim Brotherhood would expand their presence in Western cities further following the first Gulf War. The Muslim Brotherhood is economically and socially conservative but believes in political participation and coexistence with non-Muslims. The Salafi movement, on the other hand, while also economically conservative, is with few exceptions largely opposed to political participation, seeing it as corrupting, preferring to separate from the larger society and focus on 'self-rectification.'

But the Salafis' libertarian political attitude – not asking the state for anything – fit well with the Reaganite and Thatcherite free-market thinking of the 1980s and 1990s: as the state stopped providing services and amenities, religious groups, including Islamists, stepped in to fill the vacuum. The Salafis' ultraconservatism and intolerant rhetoric, though recognized as a potential problem, was, proponents argued, mitigated by their political quietism. To be sure, similar arguments were made in the 1960s in defense of the Nation of Islam's economic and social conservatism. In their pioneering study *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan lamented the NOI's 'nationalist and racist' tendencies while lauding the movement's 'traditional values' and 'Horatio Alger' entrepreneurial spirit. In the 1990s, Islamist groups' ability to patrol the streets, rehabilitate young men, restrain anti-state sentiment and mobilize capital through their economic networks was seen as an asset to cash-strapped city governments. (Interestingly, the Nation of Islam and the Salafis are also conspicuously absent from the annual pilgrimage to Malcolm's grave; in addition to a neo-liberal/libertarian outlook, both groups also share a disdain for graveside rituals.)

After 9/11 – and following the London and Madrid bombings – as it became evident that the quietest Salafis could not control the violent extremists in their midst, the Bush and Blair governments cracked down on Salafi organizations and began to look for an alternative Islam to back. It was around this time that state officials would gain a keen interest in Malcolm X, prompted by the case of John Walker Lindh, a young American who in October 2001 was found in Afghanistan fighting with the Taliban. Just how did this middle-class boy from Marin County end up joining the Taliban? His online postings, experts argued, offered a clue; in hip-hop chat rooms, Lindh often posed as black, adopting the name Professor J. 'Our blackness does not make white people hate us, it is THEIR racism that causes hate,' he once wrote. Experts would trace the young man's 'journey' to radicalism to the age of twelve, when his mother took him to see Spike Lee's film Malcolm X, after which he read Haley's *Autobiography* and began listening to hip-hop. American and European officials would thereafter note the centrality of Malcolm X to Muslim youth politics, and argue that a 'moderate' understanding of the 'Malcolm X narrative' can help 'rein in' Muslim youth.

In the early 2000s, a movement appeared in Antwerp, Belgium, that illustrates just how present and pervasive the influence of Malcolm X is. The Arab European League (AEL) started off as a local immigrant-advocacy organization, but grew more militant in response to Vlaams Blok, a far-right party that had gained power in Flanders. By the end of 2003, AEL was one

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of the most organized youth organizations in Western Europe. With followers in several countries, the AEL hoped to build a civil rights movement that mobilized Muslim youth across borders. What struck observers was how American this Antwerpian movement was, and how it drew heavily on the Black Power movement. The AEL organized Black Panther-style patrols to 'police the police,' with groups of unarmed youth dressed in black following the police around Antwerp and Brussels, carrying video cameras. The media soon began referring to these youths as the 'Arabian Panthers' and the movement's Lebanese-born leader, Dyab Abou Jahjah, as the 'Arab Malcolm X.' Abou Jahjah embraced the role. He appeared at media events surrounded by bodyguards, speaking in short sound bites, declaring that integration was 'degrading,' demanding '100 percent rights;' he warned that European Muslims would get their rights 'By Any Means Necessary!' The Belgian government cracked down hard on this movement.

In Europe and the Americas, the specter of Malcolm X tends to arise among urban-beleaguered minorities in peripheral areas where states, despite heavy policing, don't fully reach (i.e. ghettos, banlieues, favelas) and – these days mostly among Afro-Latinos in South America, and Muslims in Europe. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of the New Black Panthers in Paris, the *Pantrarna* in Gothenburg, and the Black Panthers of Athens, the latter formed by immigrants for self-defense against the far-right Golden Dawn party. In North Africa and the Middle East, interest in Malcolm X surges during democratic openings, when the political left stirs. It's not a coincidence that it is in Turkey, the region's oldest democracy, where Haley's *Autobiography* was first translated, and where there is a slew of books in Turkish on the leader's speeches and ideas, including an illustrated biography for high school students (*Malcolm X* by Alex Haley 1995; *Malcolm X* by Andrew Young 2007; Senturk 2008). The first Arabic translation appeared in Morocco in 1996, just as the ruling monarch began liberalizing, allowing more space for political parties and civil society (Abouzied 1996; Al Issa 2007).

The revolts of 2011 sparked a new wave of interest. In August 2011, a bookstore owner in Cairo told the newspaper *Al-Akhbar* that since Mubarak's downfall, Che Guevara's and Malcolm X's memoirs had become bestsellers (Shair 2011). The current interest is partly because of the parallels between the 'Arab Cold War' of the 1960s, and the current 'Middle Eastern Cold War' between Saudi Arabia and her allies (Egypt and the American-backed monarchies) and Iran and her allies (Syria, Iraq and Hizbullah). It's not surprising that interest in Malcolm X surged in Egypt during a moment when a transition seemed possible, and it seemed like the country could wiggle out of the Saudi-American chokehold. In chatrooms, students asked what would Malcolm think of the Muslim Brotherhood? Or of the Sunni–Shia conflict?

Iran had claimed Malcolm X's legacy in 1984, releasing a stamp in his honor to promote the Universal Day of Struggle Against Race Discrimination (fifteen years before the US issued its own stamp). After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, as Iran seemed ascendant, a number of young Muslim activists argued that Shi'ism, with its tradition of protest and minority consciousness, was better suited for Muslims in the West than Sunni Islam. This argument would be famously made by Malcolm Lateef Shabazz Jr., the civil rights leader's late grandson, who embraced Shia Islam and moved to Syria in 2007. The twenty-seven-year-old became quite popular among Muslim youth in Europe and the US, lecturing and starring in political hip-hop videos, but caused an uproar at an event in Detroit in 2011 when he spoke negatively about the *sahaba* (the Prophet's companions) and declared that had his grandfather lived, he would have become Shia. Marable's book quickly got caught up in the cultural politics of the revolts. The author's most incendiary claim, in this regard, was that Malcolm X may have been influenced by Shiism and inspired by Hussein's tragic murder in Karbala. 'Like Husayn [sic], Malcolm made the conscious decision not to avoid or escape death,' writes the historian. 'Perhaps, like Husayn, he wanted

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his death to be symbolic, a passion-play representing his beliefs.' Marable's book, published in April 2011 when sectarian tensions were running high, and as youth in Europe were organizing reading groups around this book, seemed to support the argument made by Malcolm Jr.

The states trying to contain Iran would in turn underline Malcolm X's Sunni credentials. The Saudi-based Salafi evangelists who appear on Saudi television regularly reference Malcolm X, as do the Muslim-American hip-hop ambassadors dispatched by the State Department. Ironically, Malcolm who despised American diplomacy and the United States Information Agency's efforts to use black culture for propaganda purposes is today seen as a useful diplomatic tool – and not just by the US.

VI

In one letter to his mother written in November 1960, David Du Bois confides that in Egypt he wants to work in 'the general area of propaganda in the interest of African freedom, possibly with the Afro-Asian Committee in Cairo, or some other Pan-African organization.' He asks her to send him books, because the little that is available on 'Negro life' and which comes from 'official sources' at the US embassy is 'incomplete' and 'erroneous.'[10] (Shirley Graham would join her son in Cairo shortly after Nkrumah is overthrown in February 1966.) But Du Bois lists the books he wants translated, clearly seeing black culture and history as an antidote to whatever American diplomats were spouting. His novel, … *And Bid Him Sing*, broaches the dangers of trying to counter American propaganda. The Cairo Jazz Combo wants to play compositions about black suffering and Afro-Asian ascendance for Egyptians and members of liberation movements based in Cairo, but US officials (from the 'embassy of Babylon') keep showing up at their gigs. Suliman the poet is in a particularly tight spot: he works for USAID, studies at Al-Azhar, and wants to perform his poetry but is worried about 'whiteys from the embassy' sitting in the front row.

A year after Du Bois published his novel, the Chicago-born writer Sam Greenlee who is today better remembered for his novel *The Spook Who Sat by the Door*, published *Baghdad Blues*, which eerily parallels Du Bois's book. It's a semi-autobiographical novel depicting Greenlee's deep alienation as an officer working for the United States Information Agency in Baghdad on the eve of the 1958 revolution, which topples that country's American-backed monarchy. (The book cover, evoking the blaxploitation era, shows the protagonist Chicago-native Dave Burell in a white suit standing legs apart in front of two tanks, and behind him is a veiled woman, armed Bedouins and Iraqi soldiers.) Burell is angered by the way his 'liberal' white colleagues speak about the Iraqis, and how his superiors want to use him to 'dispel negative attitudes' about America's race problem. 'You have great representational potential.' his boss tells him at one point, 'The Arabs seem to like you.' Burell (Greenlee) is sent to Mosul and Kirkuk to screen American films to villagers. 'You must know by now how distorted and exaggerated the race question is in the European and Arab press. They either don't know about Ralph Bunche or people like that, or they find it convenient to ignore them,' explains his boss, 'So don't be hesitant to discuss our racial situation in the United States with Arabs … Your own accomplishments are as good an example as any that it is possible for Negroes to progress if they want to in our country' (Greenlee 1976, 48). He distances himself from his colleagues, stays home drinking and listening to his jazz records or wanders the streets of belle époque Baghdad frequenting bars on the Euphrates, until he makes some Iraqi friends, some of whom are plotting to overthrow the country's pro-American king. Then the intrigue begins.

A recurring theme in these novels – … *And Bid Him Sing*, *Baghdad Blues*, and one can include journalist William Gardner Smith's *The Stone Face* about the Paris Massacre of 1961 – is that

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black Americans exist in a liminal state; US citizenship is neither full nor secure, and acceptance by other states is not guaranteed either. As such, they are transnational actors, allies of Third World peoples, unbound by borders and politically obliged to counter the public message of the State Department. This certainly was uppermost on Malcolm X's mind as he traveled through Africa and the Middle East, excoriating the USIA (United States Information Agency) and its 'propaganda,' all along expecting to have his passport revoked. In Cairo, he notes the admiration people have for President Kennedy, 'Most people here idolize JFK because they thought he seriously tried: I shot holes in the JFK image so fast.' This was, in fact, part of his ongoing debate with Bayard Rustin – who said that that 'if you want to criticize the United States you do it at home' – and with diplomat Ralph Bunche, who thought African-Americans had a special role to play in American diplomacy, 'owing to their unique ability to gain more readily the confidence of the Native.' Malcolm X dismissed the government's 'information agents,' calling out Bunche himself.

This – Malcolm's contempt for American public diplomacy and for the idea of an inviolable state sovereignty, as seen in his efforts to use the UN to address racialism in America – is what sealed his fate. But the disputes between Bunche and Malcolm, Rustin and Malcolm – on state allegiance versus transnational solidarity, on whether to partake in public diplomacy or not – are just getting started in Muslim communities today; and each camp, it seems – the separatists, integrationists and radical internationalists, to borrow Marable's framing – is using the language and ideas of the civil rights movement to make its case. It's thus ironic, but not surprising, that over the last decade Malcolm X has emerged at the center of American diplomacy towards the Muslim world.

In May 2011, with the Arab revolts at full throttle, the US embassy in Tunis organized a public-speaking competition for youth who want to be like Malcolm X, 'Are you the next Martin Luther King? The next Gamal Abdel Nasser? The next Malcolm X? Can you inspire and move people with your words?' American officials are aware of the hunger for African-American history among Muslim youth, and the power of black music; and various soft-power projects have been launched to tap this awe. State Department planners now speak of hip-hop with its adulation of Malcolm X as a 'natural connector' to the Muslim world, which sounds rather ominous given recent revelations of USAID's attempts to use hip-hop to infiltrate youth movements in Cuba, Tunisia and Lebanon (Weaver 2014). In November 2008, Al Qaeda released a video following Obama's electoral victory in 2008, celebrating Malcolm X's militancy and describing the president-elect as a 'house slave.' (Islamists now regularly use the term 'house Muslim' to discredit their liberal adversaries.) American embassies soon began sponsoring events during Black History Month and on Malcolm X's birthday, celebrating Obama and post-hajj Malcolm X together, accenting their meteoric rise to international eminence and relationship to Islam, stressing that it was Malcolm X, a 'symbol of a vital, open America,' who made Obama possible.

The British government also began to support Muslim organizations that had a 'moderate' understanding of Malcolm X, again focusing on his post-hajj transformation. Peter Mandaville, a political scientist and former member of Hillary Clinton's Policy Planning staff, argues that the resurging interest in Malcolm X, as seen in the 'aggressive and confrontational' lyrics of British Muslim hip-hop acts, has implications for national security. Mandaville has praised the work of the British government in funding a 'counter-radicalization' project that combined 'traditional Islamic scholarship and social consciousness with hip-hop sensibilities' and sought to mobilize British Muslim youth around the 'more cosmopolitanism impulses of Malcolm X after his break with the Nation of Islam and subsequent global travels' (Mandaville 2010).

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VII

It's hard to exaggerate all the geo-political maneuvering and counter-movements that Malcolm provoked. He inspired most obviously the Black Power movement, yet his critiques of Christianity as the 'white man's religion,' would also trigger a crisis of faith in Christian thinkers like James H. Cone (1969) and give rise to Black Liberation theology. Likewise, for all that has been written about neoconservatism in the last decade, little has been said about how this ideology emerged partly in response to black radicalism and the discourse of Afro-Arab solidarity put forth by Malcolm X and then Stokely Carmichael. For the neoconservatives – most of whom were leftists in their youth – the militancy of Black Power, the calls for racial quotas, the Soviet Union's oppression of Soviet Jews and the radical left's embrace of the Palestinian cause only bolstered their anticommunism and defense of a hyper-liberalism. That the black nationalists and African-American Muslims were claiming solidarity with the Arab world, describing Islam as color-blind and not talking about the trans-Saharan slave trade, was particularly galling to the neoconservatives.

'We can understand why many blacks would give up the name and language of the white men who bought them as slaves, but why on earth would they want to adopt the name and language of the Arabs who sold them into slavery?' asked Bernard Lewis. Lewis, a British scholar of Islam, had been warily watching Malcolm and the rise of Islam among African-Americans from his perch at the University of London. In 1970, he published *Race and Color in Islam*, which directly challenged Malcolm X's view of Islam and questioned the epiphany he experienced at hajj. Lewis wrote that although 'Malcolm X was an acute and sensitive observer … the [Islamic] beliefs which he had acquired' prevented him from seeing the 'Alabama-like quality' and 'Southern impression' of Arab life.

Today tensions between black and Jewish nationalism in the US have largely abated, but this discourse has traveled to Europe. The 'Eurabia' literature that warns of a weak Europe being overrun by Muslims, is informed not only by an American Cold War outlook but also by the memory of Black Muslim agitation and the racial tumult of the 1960s. French and Dutch commentators cringe when Malcolm-style agitators start speaking of Black or Muslim power, finding the language so distastefully American. The 'Eurabia' genre tends to single out Tariq Ramadan, the Egyptian-Swiss theologian, for reproach. One reason is that Ramadan's grandfather was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood. Another is that the dapper, globe-trotting scholar, popular among Muslim youth worldwide, not unintentionally evokes the specter of Malcolm, posing like the leader in photographs, telling rapt audiences how he sat on Malcolm's knee as a toddler, and how the last letter on Malcolm's desk was addressed to his father whom he claims brought the American into Sunni Islam. 'Ramadan is said to have been influenced by the example of Malcolm X in the United States, or at least by Spike Lee's Malcolm X,' writes Paul Berman, another American leftist-turned-Eurabia-alarmist, in a twenty-eight-thousand-word profile of the Swiss scholar published in *The New Republic*, though granting that 'Ramadan, who has something of Malcolm's air of touchy dignity, has nothing of Malcolm's demeanor of unstated threats.'

The irony is that Malcolm has become central to American soft power at a time when we are told that interest in Malcolm X has dipped at home, or differently put, that the country has moved on – beyond either hating or adulating 1960s' icons. That is, the nineties may have seen a public celebration of Malcolm and other sixties radicals (recall boxer Muhammad Ali lighting the Olympic flame in Atlanta in 1996), but the new century brought us the rise of Obama, an HBO documentary that exposed Muhammad Ali as a charlatan, and the Marable biography that,

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according to *The New Yorker*, showed that Malcolm's best decision was 'choosing to entrust his story to Alex Haley.' Obama's victory was thus presented as evidence that Rustin's and Martin Luther King Jr's integrationism had triumphed over the black separatists and the radical internationalists, with their fanciful visions. The image that best captured this mood, plastered on posters at the inauguration, was a photo-shopped version of the famous photo of Malcolm X shaking hands with King in Washington; the 2008 version showed King shaking hands with – in lieu of Malcolm – a smiling Barack Obama. 'The Dreamer and the Dream,' read the caption.

Yet policymakers in Europe and the US who see the parallels and connections between the racial militancy of 1960s' America and the Islamist militancy of today realize that Malcolm can't so easily be airbrushed out. Malcolm is 'the bridge' connecting these eras and communities; through him the history of black protest flows to Europe's urban periphery. That is why black protest is now part of American 'strategic communication' and public diplomacy efforts. Even the security policies once used to neutralize black militancy are now being used to contain or 'de-transnationalize' Muslim youth. The NYPD's surveillance program, for example, is modeled on the FBI's Ghetto Informant program introduced in the 1960s to monitor black neighborhoods (Apuzzo and Goldman 2013, 130). And American policies from 'broken windows' to 'race classification' to 'citizenship stripping' are now being exported to Europe, just as the SWAT teams and armored vehicles used in Afghanistan are being deployed on the streets of America. Even the public discourse about Muslim youth echoes the narrative about 'undersocialized' black youth: it's cultural pathology, bad behavior and unbridled sexuality – and not policy – that holds these young men back, and the solution is a belief system that teaches hard work, respectability and self-improvement. If in the 1960s, the FBI was trying to get the embassies of Pakistan and Egypt to denounce and isolate Black Muslim groups, today the US government is more likely to send someone from the Black Caucus or NAACP to help 'moderate' youth in Islamabad or Cairo.

This past year was a difficult one for champions of black internationalism. Amiri Baraka, Maya Angelou, Sam Greenlee and Ali Mazrui died within months of each other. One wonders what these elders would make of the current tumult; they left just when the troubles began. But their words are in the air. 'We can hear their whispers,' as Pastor Mike of Harlem recently said. When shocked or in crisis, this country has been known to circle back towards the 'great message.' And now with nationwide protests and new solidarities forming, with youth in Ferguson, Missouri, proclaiming their support for Mexico's missing students, and activists in Syria holding signs saying 'I Can't Breathe,' we may see young Americans rediscover Malcolm and American internationalism all over again.

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Notes

1 Interviews with Esther Cooper Jackson, friend and colleague of W.E.B Du Bois and editor of *Freedomways*, August 21 2014; and interview with Max Rodenbeck of *The Economist* (May 12, 2014 Cairo, Egypt).
2 Interview with Ahmed Aladdin, grandson of Salah Ragab. May 12, 2014, Cairo, Egypt.
3 Richard W. Murphy, 'Memorandum of Conversation,' aerogram, Department of State, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, October 30, 1965; Nicholas G. Thacher, 'Muslim World League Representatives to Visit US to Investigate Black Muslims,' aerogram, Department of State, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, May 26, 1964, A-397.
4 Richard W. Murphy, 'Malcolm X Visits Jidda,' aerogram, Department of State, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, September 29, 1964. 240; Richard W. Murphy, 'Activities of Malcolm X,' aerogram, Department of State, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, September 29, 1964.
5 Letter from Director's Office to Chicago Agent Marlin Johnson Counterintelligence Program, FBI File Date, January 7, 1969, cited in Evanzz (1999, 476–477).
6 Letter to H. S. Muhammad Tawfik Oweida, the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, Cairo, UAR, November 30, 1964, Reel #3, Box #3 (Correspondence), Folder #4, Malcolm X Collection, Schomburg Center.
7 Wrote Du Bois: 'We are that people whose subtle sense of song has given America its only American music, its only American fairy tales, its only touch of pathos and humor amid its mad money-getting plutocracy.' See Marable (1986, 36–8).
8 Interview with author May 19, 2013; Panel on Malcolm X, Schomburg Library, May 20, 2011.
9 Richard W. Murphy, 'Muslim World League No Longer Assisting Muslim Mosques, Inc.,' aerogram, Department of State, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, June 26, 1965, A-378.
10 Letter from David Graham Du Bois to Shirley Graham Du Bois, November 20, 1960, Papers of Shirley Graham Du Bois, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University.