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The American University in Cairo
Humanities and Social Sciences

Dawsha w Al-Qāhirah:
Listening to Power and Possibilities in Cairo's Everyday

A Thesis Submitted to the Anthropology department
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

by Noor Salama
(under the supervision of Dr. Munira Khayyat)

July 2018

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Discovering *Dawsha*

“As you live, some things kind of just stick to you.” - The Little Prince

‘*Kefaya dawsha*’, my grandmother admonished, which roughly translates into ‘enough with the noise’. I had heard this admonishment levelled multiple times and to multiple people in a vast array of situations. I still hear it today. In this particular instance, I was fourteen and precocious, self-righteously voicing concerns over the systemic maltreatment and exclusion of women in the Coptic Church. I have always been loud, and as a child, I was not particularly self-conscious about it. When (quite rudely, and often by a family member whom I was engaging in any sort of debate with) I was asked if I was deaf or if I had problem with my hearing, I brushed it off with ease. I was passionate and excited about challenging things that I saw were unjust – many abounded in Cairo – and a loud voice was a small price to pay for bringing these things to my family’s attention. I was loud, wholly and unabashedly myself, effortlessly certain, and unaffected by adults who thought I should be quieter and less of a nuisance and a disturbance.

I grew up and became conscious of the implications and social consequences of ‘loudness’. As was impressed upon me over and over again (in between questions of ‘are you deaf?’), loud was not feminine, and it was not befitting of a well-brought-up young lady of *our* class. My articulations of things that I would get excited or angry about were disturbing and unwelcome to those around me.

At some point in my early teens, I realised that the (perceived) decibel level of any given statement could be used to discredit any legitimate and critical argument and debate. In that

particular instance with my grandmother, however, I had made a considerable and concerted effort to speak quietly, and so her '*kefaya dawsha*' caught me off guard.

That day, I realised that '*kefaya dawsha*' had as much to do with the content of my speech as it did the decibel level. It had to do with disturbance, with nuisance, and with being unwanted and out of (my) place. My *dawsha* was made ever-more offensive by the fact that I am a woman. We, naturally paired with children, should be seen and not heard as the old adage goes. There are very real social (and often violent) repercussions for non-permissible sensorial performances.

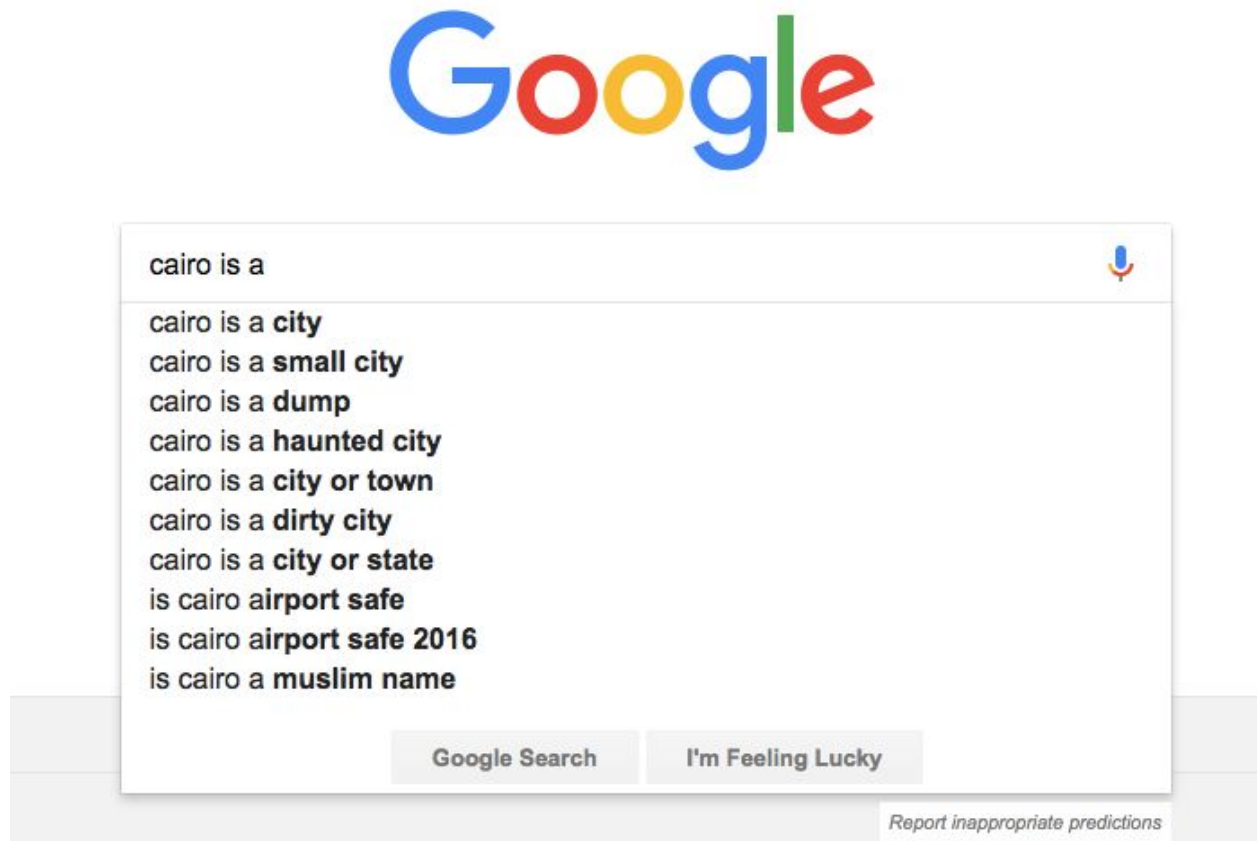
I have been told, on more occasions than I care to remember, that my loud voice and controversial opinions made me unattractive, abrasive, and not feminine. I was loud, unapologetically critical, and sharp around the edges. Something about this was perceived as unnatural and unpleasant – and was treated with the disdain of body odour by those around me. Perhaps unable to communicate it at the time, I bristled angrily at men and women who invalidated and dismissed me by presuming that I existed for the palatable consumption of society as a whole.

Now, I have come to terms with my particular brand of *dawsha*. I use it to challenge and disrupt the imagined and insulated 'harmony' of my upper-class social spaces. I, and many around me, were brought up to exemplify manners, respect, and femininity. As a child, I was repeatedly told not to sit with my legs open, not to argue with men double my age, and to temper and rein in my controversial opinions into something more palatable for 'our society'. Women, especially young women, should not be objectionable, they should be agreeable. Conflicting

opinions were translated into ‘aggressive’ and ultimately translated to lacking in femininity or respect for my elders and the status quo.

If I were to be totally honest, they were not wrong. I did not respect the opinions of my elders or the status quo. I was more uncomfortable with things that I perceived as unjust than with the criticisms and opinions of family and friends. There were things that I knew, in my body, were wrong. I was more preoccupied with these things than with the ever-looming threat of what ‘people’ would say. *El nas hat’ool eih?* [What will the people say?] I resented being treated as an extension of my family insofar as my way of being-in-the-world would come to act as a reflection on them. Cairo, like I am sometimes, is regarded disdainfully by very much the same people. There is something that seems to be unsettling, uncomfortable, disturbing, and *dawsha* about both of us.

Tuning In: ‘A City Where You Can’t Hear Yourself Scream’



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Where to begin and where to be based are fundamental questions to ask in a world in which power is about whose metaphor brings worlds together. – Donna Haraway

The White Rabbit put on his spectacles. 'Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?' he asked. 'Begin at the beginning,' the King said gravely, 'and go on till you come to the end: then stop.'
- Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

It is always hard to find a beginning, to make a conscious and deliberate decision on where exactly to begin. In any kind of act of narration, we are *always* situated in medias res,

beginning while being in the middle of everything. As storytellers, we seemingly arbitrarily choose one moment, one encounter, one experience to mark the beginnings of our narratives. X marks the spot, and here we are, and from here we can look forwards, look back, and/or reflect while positioned in X. We impose linear and teleological narrative structures on experiences: here is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Everyday life is rarely so simple, neat, chronological, and ordered. Everything is always in the middle of something else. Our ethnographic encounters too will begin already in the middle of everything else. Anyplace is a good place to start.

I met Galila, a South-Sudanese refugee and teacher, when I worked at an international NGO that was building a youth and community center for Sudanese refugees in El Barageel, a *a'ashwaiyat* area [slum] underneath the Ring Road in the Greater Cairo Area. I was doing an entirely different kind of fieldwork back then, and in the 'community consultation and research' phase of the project, I spent a lot of time speaking to Galila, who was a leader in the community.

When talking to me about the need for this community center, which would also act as a primary school that would offer the Sudanese national curriculum, Galila pointed to the incredible amounts of harassment and abuse the children (some as young as five or six) face when taking the metro to one of the only refugee schools in the country, which was an hour and a half away from the neighborhood. The parents and wider community could no longer take the abuse inflicted upon their children by everybody from young children, men, grandmothers, and apparently everyone in between. Sudanese refugees in Egypt face incredible amounts of discrimination, and so they needed this community center, a space close to home, to minimise this particularly for younger children.

The community center would also offer 'cultural' activities like percussion and

drumming workshops and singing classes, as well as *zaar* ceremonies [a traditional East African auditory ritual of trance and spiritual possession]. The building of the community center was already an incredibly contentious issue with the local community, and many of us working there came across Egyptian residents of El Barageel who expressed hostility and aggression towards this community center because, ‘why do they get a community center when those of us who are *from here* get no assistance?’ There was already tension in El Barageel between the Sudanese and Egyptian residents, where fights and incidents of violence between groups of teenage boys and girls were so common they were almost a weekly occurrence.

The straw that broke the camel’s back, so to speak, was the ‘opening’ of this community center when the Sudanese community turned out in full force to celebrate the community center. Many people brought their drums and the night commenced with heavy percussion and singing by a popular Sudanese singer that Galila had invited to celebrate and commemorate the center’s opening.

Galila had once told me that there was an unspoken rule that, at the community center and in community meetings in general, Sudanese politics could not be discussed since there was much polarisation within the community. This was ruptured by the fact that the singer that had been invited was effectively a political exile from Sudan for being an outspoken critic of Sudanese President, Omar al-Bashir.

A few people heckled the singer, a few other people rushed to her defence. The situation escalated, and shouting began. The drums did not cease and the singer did not stop singing. More and more people got involved, either to take a side or to urge everybody to calm down. Everybody was equally ‘loud’, equally as confrontational, and within a moment, the situation

was a physical and violent one. The singer and most of the drummers stopped, but some drummers did not and picked up the tempo, as if to mirror the situation unfolding in front of us.

Galila ran over to the makeshift stage and grabbed the microphone to call for everybody to stop fighting, reminding them that there were women and children present. Perhaps I imagined it, but while she was speaking, there seemed to be a lull in the, now rather large, altercation. The altercation somehow moved outside which, in retrospect, was probably the worst thing that could have happened because a group of Egyptian boys had been hanging out outside the community center and wasted no time getting involved and the fight got far bigger.

An older Egyptian woman who was on the street marched right up to Galila and began screaming at her, and blaming her for the fight. ‘*ENTO MOZ’EEGEEN* [YOU ARE DISRUPTIVE]. *BETE’MELO DAWSHA* [YOU MAKE NOISE]. IF YOU WEREN’T SO DISTURBING, WE WOULDN’T HAVE THIS PROBLEM,’ she gestured towards the altercation. ‘We’re just trying to live our lives, get through every day and feed our families, and here you are with your drummers and your singers like you don’t know where you are. What are you teaching your children, your daughters? Do you know how many of us don’t want you here? You don’t help yourselves at all, you don’t respect the community you live with at all. Maybe this is what is normal in Sudan, you and your satanic practices [presumably referring to *zaar*], but it’s not normal here and you are getting what you deserve.’

This encounter preceded my fieldwork but really brought to the foreground the hostility that certain sounds from certain sources can elicit. They sounds and their subsequent perceptions auditize social relationships and tensions - they provide a proxy, that is, the sounds of the other represent and evoke the other and are treated as such. The aural hierarchy is social stratification

made real. This encounter illustrates quite clearly how the deployment of the category of *dawsha* (in both its production and its perception) is intimately implicated in processes and practices of the (re)territorialisation of spaces in Cairo. Arbitrary auditory hierarchies and *dawsha* as a category from which we order the worlds around us, and make and stake claims about our identities, is the heart of this project.

Indulge me for a few moments. Close your eyes and really *listen* to your surroundings. What can you hear? What do these sounds and silences tell you about the place you're currently in? For most of us, we can constantly hear things as we go through life. We cannot close our ears with the ease with which we can close our eyes and so, as an act of evolutionary self preservation, we do not *listen* to everything that we can hear. Some sounds go unnoticed by our conscious minds unless we make the deliberate decision to tune in to them. This, for me, is the difference between listening and hearing. Listening, for purposes of this project refers to the deliberate decision to tune in, while hearing happens all the time, often subconsciously and involuntarily. Listening interrupts hearing as a mode of perceiving sounds and engaging with the world. In everyday life, and in constant hearing, our ears come to act as filters in, for, and from the invisible worlds of sounds, but this does not mean that they do not inform the way we experience the spaces we inhabit - whether consciously or unconsciously. Sounds are an invisible layer of the world, as ubiquitous as land. Swirling around us, sounds come into conversation with other sounds and with us - informing and underpinning the ways in which we are in the world, making us in the same instant that we make them.

Let us begin this encounter with a declaration that we have heard repeated over and over again: Cairo is *dawsha* [noisy]. This is a statement that has been repeated so many times, and by

so many different people, that it has effectively become simultaneously both redundant and Truth. It is a fact of life, as taken for granted as it is obvious and familiar. Sound, especially unwanted sound, informs our experiences and imaginaries of Cairo. Things, however, are often hidden in their obviousness and taken-for-grantedness.

We are constantly surrounded by, and enmeshed in, sounds. They are omnipresent in the worlds we ‘dwell’ in, in that they are incorporated into the patterns and textures of our everyday experiences (Ingold, 2000). Sometimes sounds ground us in places, and at other times, they make us lose our bearings. They shape experiences and evoke affects: settling or unsettling us, stilling or transporting us, distracting us or allowing us to tune in, connecting and interrupting us.

This project was borne out of a fascination with the everyday of Cairo, and a desire to cast a critical eye (and ear) on the lived experiences behind sensational headlines and dominant narratives. Over and over again, headlines and official narratives scream that Cairo is a heavily populated and polluted capital city. In this discourse, ‘noise’ [*dawsha*] is a particular pillar of pollution, an undesirable staple. ‘Out of place’ sound, like air pollution, is dirty. In Cairo, it is used to construct a crowded and filthy place. Cairo, with all its sprawl, unruly bodies, and unregulatability, does not fit with ‘modern’ sensibilities and imaginations of the ‘global city’. It does not fit in with the project of ‘colonially-mediated modernity’ (Peake & Rieker, 2013).

In *A City Where You Can’t Hear Yourself Scream*, The New York Times’ international editor unintentionally but succinctly summarises the rhetoric, ‘The *incredible* background noise of a city *crammed* with 18 million people, and millions of drivers who always have one hand on the horn and a *rules-free* way of thinking.... Noise — *outrageous, unceasing, pounding noise* — is the *unnerving* backdrop to a *tense* time in Egypt,’ (Slackman, 2008, italics my own). I was

tempted to write to the author, a white North-American man obviously, to ask him if Cairo inhabitants really were ‘unnerved’ by our ‘incredible background noise’, or if he was just guessing.

In my fieldwork, Cairo’s amplified soundscape (which can be attributed to compressed space and a multitude of people - similar to many other large cities) was rarely articulated as unbearable except by upper-class inhabitants. It was articulated, often nonchalantly, as something that just *is*.

You may also remember that - more recently - international and local publications had a field day with the World Hearing Index’s ranking of Cairo as the second noisiest city in the world, second to Guangzhou, China (Keegan, 2018). The authors of the study likened it to ‘living in a factory’ - an interesting and telling comparison when situated in the context of the colonially-mediated ‘modern’ and ‘global’ city, and within narratives of teleological economic developmentalism. That is, the taken-for-granted ‘natural evolution’ and development of economic systems from primary and secondary economies to tertiary economies: in layman’s terms, it is the movement from relying on extraction and industrial production (factories) as the lion’s share of your national economic output and moving to the desirable service sector.

A study jointly commissioned by Egypt’s Ministries of Planning and Health in 2016 found that decibel levels in the city often exceeded more than double and triple the ‘legally permissible’ decibel levels (according to Egypt’s penal code). This official study also attributed the ‘noise pollution’ to overpopulation and ‘cultural factors’ (El Samra, 2016). As a longtime Cairo dweller, the notion that there exists such a thing as ‘legally permissible decibel levels’ that regulate sonic production in residential or commercial areas is almost laughable. The notion is so

far removed from how I, and other Cairo dwellers, have experienced Cairo up until that point that it borders on ridiculous. It is an effectively meaningless law in everyday experience, but still significant in that it is the state's official position and framing of the phenomenon of *dawsha*.

In numerous pieces and conversations, discussions of/on Cairo's 'extraordinary' noise almost always connect this phenomenon to 'overpopulation', traffic, other forms of pollution, adverse health effects, a lack of regulation, tension, and poverty. Here, Cairo's 'noise pollution' is often used as shorthand to indicate a population that is as unable to be quiet as it is presumably unable to use contraception. The fixation on sound levels - their synonymy with chaos and disorder - is used to evoke and construct Cairo as a dirty container for too many unruly bodies unable to perform or handle colonially-mediated 'modernity' sensorially. What makes this consistent characterisation of Cairo as *dawsha* even more interesting is that 'noise' is very much central to the construction of the category of the 'urban'. Cities, by and large, are constructed and imagined as loud, so why is this different? Why this particular fascination, fixation, and fetishisation with sounds in Cairo if sound is inextricable from our experiences and imaginations of 'the urban' in this contemporary moment?

The narrative and construction of Cairo and its dwellers as noisy has become established through its persistent, consistent, and constant repetition. The storytellers are powerful: their voices are authoritative and their stories are disseminated widely. I take issue with this, and so this project is also inspired by an unsettling discomfort with this categorisation and this narrative. Mbembe (2015), using Fanon, argues that we need to interrupt and subvert this repetition. There are questions that inspire and evoke sharp, critical imaginations that inspire questions that poke holes in universalising regimes of knowledge and order. Questions arrest and interrupt. If we

hope to provincialise these dominant and taken-for-granted narratives - at the beginning, middle, and end, we need to continue asking questions.

Mbembe positions self-ownership as decolonisation, highlighting the importance of seeing (or hearing) ourselves clearly, not through the eyes and constructions of others, despite how pervasive their narratives may be. Self-ownership and this ‘hearing-ourselves-clearly’ necessitates that we own, create, and tell our own stories (to ourselves and to others) rather than internalising and retelling the stories of others about ourselves. To borrow from Foucault, the stories that are told have become the dominant discourses, and to escape, we must interrupt and reclaim. With my engagement with sonic imagination and articulation, I work to recenter the sensorial, the affective, and the everyday - areas that have been (and still are) rendered unimportant and unworthy of note in trans-colonial everyday life, art, and academia.

Often, things are hidden in their simplicity and familiarity. Raffles (2002) explores the relationships between water and landscape in ‘Amazonia’ – a place that exists in contemporary imagination in ways it does not in the collective lived experience of its inhabitants: as aggressively physical and untouched by humans when this is not the experience on the ground. This is my approach to the sounds of Cairo. ‘Cairo’ as a sonic space (characterised as oppressively *dawsha*, a sonic overload, and disturbance) exists in contemporary imaginations in ways that it might not in the collective and lived experiences of its inhabitants. There is a profound unity that ties people to sounds in Cairo, a sensorial and emotional entanglement in the shared destinies of movement, collective affect, spills, sprawls, flows, and interruptions of sonic intimacies where the politics of places are practiced and experienced, and where places are produced.

Any inhabitant of Cairo - with the exception of urban planners, perhaps - will tell you that, at any given movement, we know less than a fragment of what is taking place. At the same time, in the same place, multiple realities are experienced, connections are forged and broken, things are assembled and reassembled, bodies and capital flow and circulate, spaces sprawl and contract, and things are interrupted. An unimaginable number of interactions and sounds and events *happen* in a moment in Cairo. The city itself is a challenge to any attempt to understand it, refusing, as it does, to just stand still for a picture. How, then, can we all unanimously come to the conclusion that Cairo is loud (or *dawsha*), and that this is a fact of life?

While it is important to focus on structural exclusions, othering, and violence, it is also significant to engage with how Cairo is lived, produced, created, and contested in our everyday lives, practices, and experiences (Anjara and McFarlane, 2011). According to Simone (2016), the urban environment is characterised by presence and intimacy - that is, everything seems to be happening everywhere at once (consider things thrown together in an amplified container). Sounds, as constant yet fleeting events, play a huge role in this. As a compressed space that houses multiple people, things, and relationships, Cairo and its sounds are immediate and intimate. The sounds within Cairo seem to have a ubiquitous presence where the centre of sound is everywhere and its circumference is nowhere - a constantly shifting surround sound, where you are simultaneously at the core, periphery, and somewhere in between a seemingly infinite number of sound loci.

For purposes of this exercise, and in keeping with the metaphor of core and periphery, let us simplify and visualise sounds as a ripple effect. Imagine that every sound originates at a source (the core) - this sound has a sphere of influence, it incrementally vibrates and flows

outwards in a circular radius (touching the periphery). Different sounds have different spheres of influence; listening to music on headphones is vastly different from a car honk is vastly different from fighter jets flying low overhead. In your immediate space, consider how many sounds occur in an instant, or a minute, and imagine how the spheres of sound influence, layer, intersect, drown out, and overlap one another. How do they colour your experience? Now picture this happening at the macrocosmic level of Cairo.

I am interested in Cairo as a ‘soundscape’ (Schafer, 1993) in which we are constantly immersed, and through which we make sense of the worlds around us. This ‘soundscape’ gives birth to, or provides a proxy for, different kinds of hierarchies and taxonomies that represent and are shaped by the worlds they are enmeshed in as crystallised in the order-word of *dawsha*. I deploy Ingold’s (2000) ‘dwelling perspective’ here. Our immersion, one way or another, in the world of sounds is a condition of our existence. This project is not about sounds per se, rather it is about the meanings that we attach to sounds (cf: *dawsha*). This world of sounds does not come ready and pre-loaded with meanings that we must discover and cognitively grasp before we can meaningfully act within it. Our engagement with it is often affective, intuitive, conditioned, and subconscious; we do not need to ‘apprehend it’ to produce and be produced by it. That is, what is termed ‘cultural knowledge’ is actually produced in bodily and perceptual practices, encounters, and engagements. Ingold contends that dwelling provides us with a better avenue of coming to grips with the nature of human existence than does the conceptualisation of a mind somehow detached from the world that renders the body invisible.

We dwell in and ‘inhabit’ fields (sonically, socially, spatially, culturally, temporally) that are much wider than our immediate environments (Csordas, 1994). In examining aural culture,

acoustic terrain, or soundscapes, we are subjectively interpreting a world of experiences, emotions, relationships, and connections rendered acoustic and perceived. Building on Herzogenrath's (2017) 'sonic thinking', this project deals with *dawsha* as a process-oriented ontology of *becoming* and not of being; recognizing entities, sounds, flows, and spaces as events and encounters that *make us*, and through which we make the worlds around us.

Mary Douglas (2003) postulates that dirt is nothing more than 'matter out of place'. I extend this further to explore the idea that *dawsha*, similarly, is 'sound out of place', which begs the question: whose place? Here, noise and *dawsha* refer to unwanted sounds. In this light, I argue that the perception and production of sounds is socially and politically constructed and situated, and that the imposition of the category of *dawsha* - this sensorial ordering, hierarchisation, and othering - is necessarily a socially and politically evaluative act that is situated in wider dynamics of dominance.

I use *dawsha* as an 'order-word' in the Deleuzian sense, as an expression that contains collective assemblages and implicit presuppositions of social knowledges that transform bodies from modern to non-modern, from upper class to working class. As an order-word, *dawsha* arrests, stops, and organises stratified compositions of the social world. However, beyond its capacity to impose order, it also offers the potentialities and possibilities of rupture and resistance. I explore *dawsha* as a constructed category, as a metaphor predicated on relational definition and differentiation - it doesn't exist without its binary opposite - *hodou* ' [peace, calm]. It is a marker of distinction and difference. In the same vein, 'Cairo' and its construction as *dawsha* and disorder does not exist without its inverse - the colonially-mediated global and

modern city (Dubai, London, New York) - one cannot meaningfully exist without the other (how do you have better if you don't have worse?).

Dawsha in/as Cairo, as a relational category and as an order-word, is a site where we can work to trace the making and unmaking of power relationships in a given place at a given time. Intimately implicated in Cairo, *dawsha* is a site for disciplining and ordering subjects, and for the making of modern and non-modern, wanted and unwanted dwellers, and for staking claims about who we are and where we fit into (or spill out of) in terms of the different categories of identity.

I argue that *dawsha* as a category incorporates forms of knowledge that are inextricable from the sonic and from Cairo, but that can (and do) transcend these categories. While it has been used to deem people, communities, relationships, and happenings 'unwanted', non-modern, disorderly, and out of place, it has a built-in element of transgression, rupture, interruption, and disturbance that presents opportunities to recolonise and reappropriate spaces, and to remake boundaries on our own terms.

Further, I make the case that we do not hear 'sounds' as abstracted vibrations in space or as entities in a vacuum, that this is misleading and a dislocation: we hear *relationships* and sources of sounds rendered acoustic, that is, people and things making sounds that are subsequently perceived and sensorially ordered and hierarchised. As my fieldwork demonstrates, we (my collaborators and I) attribute meaning to and make evaluative judgments of individuals, events, encounters, communities, and spaces from/in the category of *dawsha*. It is both a site and an ontology of *becoming* where, constantly in flux, we make a claims about our identities, mark differences, territorialise and reappropriate space, and where we situate ourselves in relation to the order-word.

This project is about listening to the power and possibilities of Cairo's everyday designations of *dawsha*. It is personal, political, and philosophical. I work to tease out the way we come to hear sounds in the city and to apprehend the sensorial orderings, otherings, and hierarchisation of sonic regimes crystallised in the order-word of *dawsha*. In a world that deifies the substantial, the quantifiable, the tangible, and *knowing* 'with certainty', the decision to conduct research on the affective and ontological assemblage that is 'soundscapes' is a political, epistemological, and philosophical intervention.

We make Cairo, and Cairo makes us. We make *dawsha*, and *dawsha* makes us. These things are constantly in conversation, and this project is circular in the sense that it is a constant process of engagement and iteration, of feedback, adjustment, and reworking. I explore how we hear *dawsha* in Cairo as situated and social listeners and producers of sound who, in our perceptions and productions of sound, simultaneously shape and are shaped by wider dynamics of dominance (class, race, gender, religion, ethnicity, etc.) and taxonomies. Partly inspired by the subdiscipline and methods of sensory geography, I then explore the role of sounds and their perception in place-making, sense-making, and boundary construction and imagination in Cairo.

I use the imposition of the category of *dawsha* as an analytical entry-point from which I begin to make sense of this. Why do we deem things *dawsha*? What happens when the category of *dawsha* is imposed? What does it *do*? How do individuals and communities negotiate, internalise, and resist sonic hierarchies and the container of *dawsha*?

Building upon the work of John Law (2004) and Michael Jackson (1996), I make the case for epistemologies that allow for mess and for the sensing body as a site of knowledge production by using autoethnography, sensory/aural ethnography, and fluid fieldwork methods.

For the purposes of this project, I am focusing on *dawsha* as a particular and primarily sonic phenomenon (as opposed to touch, smell, taste) because of the presumed relationship between ‘the urban’ and sound, and because of Cairo’s synonymy with ‘*dawsha*’. I will also be making a necessary distinction between ‘loud’ and ‘noisy’, where ‘noisy’ is used particularly to indicate *unwanted* sound - *dawsha*.

I explore the lived bodily and embodied experiences of hearing and of listening to the social world in Cairo. I argue that our senses shape, and are simultaneously shaped by, the social worlds we inhabit. I explore Cairo as a sonic space, paying attention to the tacit/ bodily knowledges and perceptive practices that enable us to make sense of spaces, and demarcate their boundaries through sounds, perceptions, and imaginations that can then proceed to rupture and remake those boundaries. Larkin (2008) argues that sounds and soundscapes accentuate socio-spatial territories within a larger container. As this research illustrates and evokes, soundscapes are the (constantly shifting) sonic renderings of and engagements with classed, gendered, racialised, and otherwise exclusionary and colonially-mediated affective spaces.

When I say tacit knowledges, I refer to knowledge through the body and through bodily/ sensorial practices and performances. It is important to note here - as I have discovered over the course of my fieldwork - that *knowing* through the body does not necessarily entail being able to translate, explain, or articulate those experiences, affects, and knowledges, and to render them legible. There is an abstraction inherent in writing affective, bodily, and emotional experiences and responses; I often found that textuality left me wanting more when I was attempting to translate sounds to the written word.

The characterisation of Cairo and its inhabitants as *dawsha* is steeped in teleological and neo-colonial imaginations of urbanisation, modernisation, development, and densification. It is situated in the context of colonially-mediated modernity. It is implicitly borne out of the dominant and prevailing narrative of quiet-as-default (and as synonymous with peace). *Dawsha* as a non-permissible sensorial performance can be traced back to a genealogy that indicates that managed and regulated sounds are markers of discipline, civility, development, and modernity. I argue that the perception and imposition of the category of *dawsha* (noise) in and on Cairo constitutes and is constituted by intersecting axes of difference and domination, which include coloniality, gender, class, race, ethnicity, religion, and Butler's etcetera.

Moving beyond the macro and tuning in to the micro-experiences of everyday life, perceptions of sound in and on Cairo play an important role in making sense of place and spatial boundary-demarcation and disruption, and so the category of *dawsha* is a uniquely relevant entry-point from which to consider shifting regimes of power. As a category and an imposition, *dawsha* functions to silence, marginalise, and render communities, places, people, and things 'disturbing', 'out of place', and unwanted.

As my work unfolded, I grew ever-more intimidated by the sheer complexity and ungraspability of sounds, and of the affective narratives and sensorial experiences articulated by my collaborators, I grew more and more frustrated with theory and the confines of textuality. I was paralysed by my inability to contain sensual experience in classical academic conceptualisations and categories.

To that end, I sought refuge in the unlikely figures of Victor Turner and Levi-Strauss for patchwork theory and the *bricolage*. As Turner (1975) highlights, theories, especially in their

entirety, are insufficient for grasping social reality. I have drawn upon various bodies of literature - from classical and contemporary anthropology, to urban studies, to sound studies, to geography - to put together a patchwork of conceptual and critical analytical framework that can explore, ground, and tease out the possibilities of sound and *dawsha* in our everyday experiences of Cairo. They roughly correspond to the what, where, how, and why of this project. Respectively, these are: soundscapes, Cairo as a site of thrown-togetherness and becoming, the everyday, and knowing through our bodies. Like sounds, these are not linear and distinctive concepts; they are messy, layered, and they overlap. There is a consistent thread of ‘sonic experience’ that weaves through.

Although I have touched upon them earlier, I briefly explicate the four foundations of my analytical toolkit below before expanding upon them and exploring them in more depth, and in conversation with ethnographic encounters, in the subsequent chapters.

What? - Soundscapes

Put simply, these are the acoustic environments that we, as positioned and conditioned listeners, are immersed in. In this research, I explore our experiences, perceptions, and classifications of Cairo’s distinctive soundscapes and sonic experiences. The soundscape is a figure of thought, a mindset, and a position that enables a certain intellectual approach. In this ‘figure of thought’, we will perhaps be able to perceive Cairo in a special (maybe new) way (Herzogenrath).

Where? - Cairo as a Site of Thrown-Togetherness and Being-Made

I conceptualise Cairo as an imagination, an imaginary that exists in different ways to my collaborators. It is a multiplicitous and non-homogenisable spatial formation that is variously

produced by, and differently produces, its dwellers. It is an assemblage of people and things that are thrown together in a spiderweb of entanglement where connections and interruptions produce a city and/of dwellers that are constantly being made in relation to colonially-mediated modern cities and/of dwellers through *dawsha*.

Why? - A Focus on Cairo's Stories and Everdays

These are the stories, lifeworlds, articulated sonic experiences, narratives, and sensorial orderings of my collaborators and myself (all Cairo dwellers). I use these articulations and explications of *dawsha* to trace and track micro-perceptual and productive aural practices that construct everyday lives and dynamics of power. These can be used to foreground our understandings and apprehensions of structural orderings, otherings, and exclusions.

How? - Knowledge Through the Body

Our senses are shaped by, and subsequently shape, the social worlds around us. I attend to the listening and sensing body as a site of knowledge, as our main mode of being-in-the-world that is particularly adept at grasping the ephemeral and fleeting world of sounds, and producing alternative knowledges.

Put in conversation with each other, the concepts of soundscapes, embodiment, everyday experience, and Cairo as a site of thrown-togetherness/ becoming can begin to ground our understandings of sonic politics and everyday perceptual practices in Cairo. Each one speaks to a distinct theoretical and ethnographic engagement. These 'concepts' are discrete yet interrelated, and are intended as avenues from which we enter into a more holistic apprehension of the worlds of auditory power and possibility.

Sounds and *dawsha* are experienced as wholes, and in wholes. I struggle with this. Splitting and slicing them up according to my articulation of what should take precedence seems counterintuitive. This writing is intended as a journey that can transport readers into spaces of sonic imagination and disturbances. It is not a linear journey - it bends and curves with contradictory narrations of experiences. This is the truth of this project, and it would be dishonest and counterintuitive to transform it into something rigidly-bounded and structured. It is not prescriptive or conclusive, but rather, it is an invitation to critically listen to Cairo as dwellers together. It is a beginning that is already in the middle of everything else.

That being said, and for purposes of legibility and signposting, this thesis is split into loose chapters and unbounded fieldwork encounters that, like sounds, flow, spill, overlap, and interrupt.

Chapter 1: Listening to Cairo, Hearing *Dawsha* is split into two subsections that respectively explore *listening* as the epistemological foundation and the methodological approach of this project, and embodiment and the body as a source of knowledge-production on/of *dawsha*.

1.1 - How Do You Make Listening Listened To? outlines the epistemological and methodological issues, positioning, and challenges of this project. It highlights the problematics of researching and writing sounds and sonic experiences, and illustrates how I work to overcome and circumvent these often built-in challenges. It lays down the rationale for my collaborative and co-creative research method(s) of aural ethnography and autoethnography, paying particular attention to ‘sound in situ’ - that is, emplaced aural ethnographic encounters, and ‘textual

aurality' (Voegelin, 2010) - which is a deeply descriptive way of writing about sounds and sonic experiences that maintains openness and works to evoke being-in-the-world..

1.2 - Knowing and Making Cairo in our Bodies attends to listening, sensing, and social bodies being sites of knowledge. Borne out of Jackson's phenomenology, it explores embodiment as a productive theoretical paradigm, and argues that because our bodies are how we experience, perceive, and attribute meaning to our lifeworlds, the body as the center and locus of knowledge is a uniquely appropriate entry-point into researching the sensorial, perceptual, affective, and evocative worlds of sounds. It is a different way of working in academia that draws upon and connects more intimately to our bodies which are often the sites of precognitive and irreducible knowledges. It is considered academically counterintuitive to ask, *How do I feel?* rather than, *What do I think?* This section also explores how power shapes our bodies, perceptual practices, and processes of meaning-attribution, and how, in parallel, our bodies are produced by, and produce places on maps.

Chapter 2: What is *Dawsha*? unpacks and critically addresses the category/order-word of *dawsha*. From the (subjective) perspective of my Cairo-dwelling collaborators, *dawsha* is a relational category, a marker of difference, and an order-word that everyone has a position on, indicating discomfort, disturbance, and unwantedness - especially when tied to its source (often something undesirable). Their definitions and explications are culturally and socially specific to Cairo and touch on *dawsha* as a ubiquitous category of mainly class differentiation intimately tied to Cairo as a site and a space. I critically analyse their definitions and illustrate how, as concept, classification, and category, they speak to and of the everyday life and dynamic of

power in Cairo. This subsection extends to explore *dawsha* as a metaphor for ‘outsideness’ and as an order-word, among others, that is used to stratify the social.

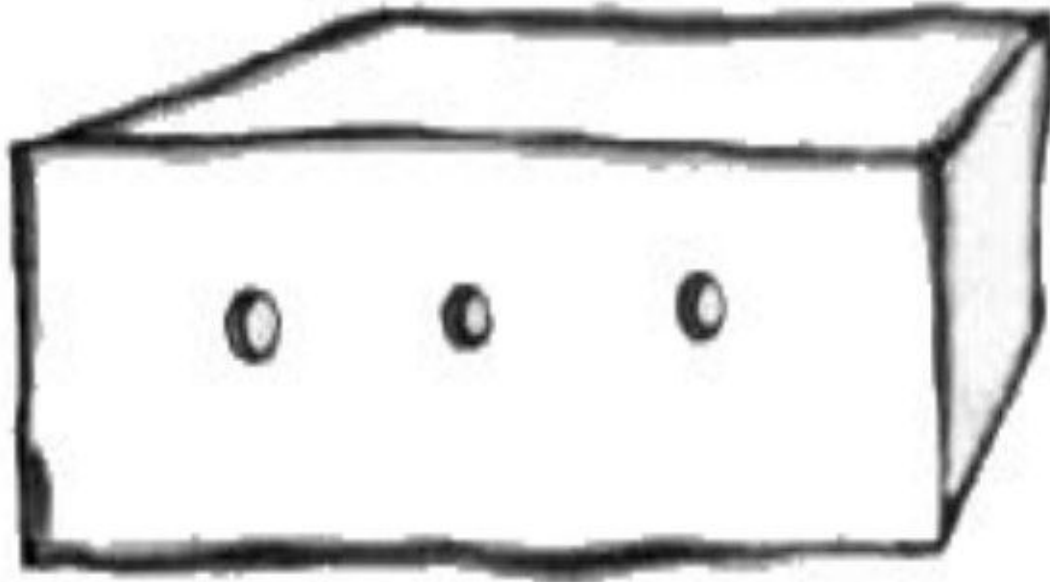
Chapter 3: Sounding Cairo’s Everyday Life of Power focuses on using individual narratives and stories of everyday life along with sensorial experiences in Cairo as heuristic devices to grasp and access fluidity and perplexity, and to trace the processes and movements of power structures. This uses whole individual experiences to build a bigger picture. Predicated upon Ingold’s ‘astonishment’ and on humility in research, collaborators who experience Cairo through their senses/ bodies get to speak for themselves, capturing nuance, complexity, mess, and sprawl. This chapter shows that collaborator narratives, which are often contradictory, are incredibly useful when working to avoid reinforcing binaries and categories, and when attempting to apprehend and evoke what is constantly in motion and the invisible.

Chapter 4: From Maadi, with Disdain: Mapping and Classing Cairo in Sound interrogates the role sounds and silences play in demarcating and rupturing boundaries in Cairo, and in producing Cairo as a space from the privileged location of Old Maadi. It also explores how sounds and their perceptions act as markers of difference and how they contribute to the making and unmaking of power relationships in the city, paying attention to the readings of ‘non-permissible’ sonic performances in Maadi in particular. In the context of *dawsha*, I look at the ethnographic articulations of sensorial orderings, othering, and hierarchies particularly as they come to denote and differentiate class from/in Maadi residents. It contains a textual rendering of a very particular autoethnographic sound-journey in Cairo. This chapter also attends to decolonisation as a personal and political act in academia, and how this is implicated in my research on *dawsha* in Cairo.

Chapter 5: Tuning Out of the City: Silence is *Dahab* [Golden] takes a break from Cairo and its sounds. As a getaway, it ventures out into the South Sinai beach and desert to pause and reflect on where we are, what sounds do to us, and how we make sense of silence. Alone in the stillness, under an expansive starry sky, we stop to breathe, think, and consider uncomfortable silence.

Chapter 6: Al-Qahirah as a Site of Thrown-Togetherness and Being-Made (re)turns our attentions to Cairo as site, space, and layered patchwork assemblage. I argue that one of Cairo's most striking features is its thrown-togetherness - as apprehended by Simone's notion of *cityness*. This chapter also explicates Cairo as a site of making and being-made, as a site from which we come to be situated inside and outside of categories, order-words, and stratifications of the social, and how within those conditions of possibilities we can (re)make and (re)invent spaces and worlds on our own terms. It also explores how dominant sensorial hierarchisations, while fluid, can be frozen and deployed as narratives legitimising exclusion by powerful people and institutions.

Chapter 1 - Listening to Cairo, Hearing *Dawsha*



It is a sheep inside of a box. Look, it's fallen asleep.

"Only children know what they are looking for." - The Little Prince

This chapter addresses the methodological and epistemological foundations of this project, exploring listening as a mode of engagement with the world, both as person and researcher in everyday life. I excavate the body as a site and location of knowledge production, while attending to previously-marginalised experiences. As a result, I conclude with analyses of how *dawsha* is constructed, (re)produced, and imposed.

1.1 - How Do You Make Listening Listened To?

Hearing is caught in the flow of time and bodily movement. - Tim Ingold

The question we are faced with in this section can be broken down into three questions: ‘What is listening?’, ‘Why listen?’ and, ‘What can we do with listening?’

One of the hardest things to perceive is perception itself: it is nearly impossible to apprehend and adequately track and articulate the movement and translation of the ‘perceived thing’ from the macrocosm of the world to the microcosm of the mind, that is, the thing crossing over from outside to inside (Ingold, 2000). Does our perception and experience of sounds happen inside our heads, or somewhere in between body, movement, practice, time, and space?

As social and cultural researchers, and as beings in the world, we are always listening. We are immersed and implicated in invisible worlds of sounds that we do not actually perceive universally - we perceive them as informed by our experiences, memories, associations, dominant discourses, etc. As anthropologists, listening affords us unique opportunities for research. On a personal note, it completely blurs the boundary between myself-as-researcher and myself-as-being. More specifically, as an aural ethnographer, my research is explicitly subjective, wholly informed by my own personal sensibilities (and those of my collaborators) - making no claims of objectivity or universality, only expressing an interest in experience and experientiality, in the aural production and demarcation of space, and the hierarchisation of sensorial performances.

I do not engage ‘listening’ as a mere physiological fact, rather as a particular way of making sense of our worlds. It is a mode of exploration. Listening allows us to think in new ways about space, how it is constructed and remade, and how it is used. It is a chance to further consider the processes of becoming and differentiating, and to explore how the practices of sound production and perception are a part of that process. It also allows us to check in with

ourselves and to explore our own practices of perceiving and producing sounds, and simultaneously those of others. We are certainly not godlike social researchers, perceiving the world with an omniscient bird's-eye view from up high; we are listeners, wanderers, dwellers, and wayfarers very much rooted in everyday and subjective experience.

By assuming the very particular position of engaged and active listeners, and by deploying listening as a methodological approach that is important in academia but also in everyday life, we remain open to interacting with knowledges, connections, and relationships rendered acoustic, and we remain open to exploring the world in entirely new and unexpected ways.

What was particularly difficult while conducting my 'fieldwork' for this project was that it never truly stopped. I could not stop listening to Cairo and its dwellers. Every day was fieldwork, and having made the conscious decision to 'tune in' to Cairo as an aural assemblage, I found myself having to deliberately tune out sometimes. This project blurs the lines between 'proper' social research and my everyday life, so this project is incredibly personal and subjective.

I offer an interdisciplinary methodological and epistemological intervention in the way that we can research and write sensorially-engaged ethnographies in contexts of neoliberalism and colonially-mediated modernity. From both epistemological and practical standpoints, sound is notoriously problematic to engage with academically. Sounds are fleeting and intangible events that are constantly happening. This poses quite the challenge to researchers, but should not be a reason to completely eschew and avoid this type of research.

Historically and canonically, ‘Western’ social research has been conducted as if nothing is fleeting, as if everything is concrete, stable, and *knowable*. In my world, and as I had learned during the course of my ‘fieldwork’, very little about sounds is stable. They exist in precarious, transitional, liminal, and transcendental states. I conduct research on the fleeting, the transformative, the non-material, and the invisible because this is the type of anthropology that I would like to see more of.

Using my personal network, aural ethnography, and autoethnography (engaged listening and curiosity, basically), I conducted fieldwork with twenty Cairo dwellers of different ages, classes, occupations, and genders where I attempted to explore how we, as positioned listeners, use sounds to ‘*hear*’, map, class, and imagine the social in Cairo, and how we produce and demarcate space within (and how sounds and spaces also produce us). I tease and trace the sonic politics - situated within wider dynamics of dominance - behind the imposition of the category of unwanted sound that is ‘*dawsha*’. I also explore how this category is deployed, internalised, negotiated, and resisted in Cairo.

This writing is an experiment in textual aurality and sensorial experientiality where openness, play, adventure, and imagination are essential and reign supreme. It is variously inspired by the sounds of Cairo, by Adorno’s (1984) idea of the essay as a formless form characterised by hybridity, by Pandian & McLean’s (2017) reflections on ethnographic writing, by Law’s (2004) messy social realities, by Jackson’s (1996) *being in the world* and lifeworlds, by Ingold’s *dwelling*, and by *The Little Prince*. It seeks to make no universal claims about the nature and relationships of places and sounds. Rather, this essay is an experiment, a suggestion, and a provocation: writing as a way of marking and maintaining an openness to the possibilities

and pluralities of sounds in Cairo (Voegelin, 2014). It is an invitation to have our head in the clouds together, to listen and to interpret and to imagine together - not sounds per se, but the articulations and renderings of experiences of sounds that will be interpreted and that will produce other sounds in the imaginations of readers. It is my attempt to write up the messy and subjective world of sounds and sonic perception without reduction, abstraction, or dislocation. I give my collaborators the space to articulate and elaborate freely, and I work hard to avoid sterilising, coding, and neutralising their experiences. I try to write openly and deeply to evoke *being in the world*, to transport, and to avoid the over-intellectualisation of sonic experience.

This open and elicitive writing is both a political and a practical decision. From a practical perspective, we cannot grasp sound that has been dislocated from the temporal and spatial conditions that made it possible (El-Wardany, 2013). If you were to record your auditory environment at this exact moment in time and replay it later, you would lose much of the affectivity of the experience. If you were to attempt to faithfully document, describe, and articulate every sound in your immediate vicinity, you would probably fail. This is about the possibilities and ruptures of sonic possibilities, as explored in aural ethnography and autoethnography. I write to evoke a sense of *being in the world*, as opposed to objective and intellectual ‘actuality’. From a political perspective, I have no interest in speaking *for* my collaborators. We are all Cairo dwellers. I do not know more than they do about how they experience sounds in Cairo. I am not any more of a listening expert than anyone else; I am a social researcher interested in how we tune in, and listen to, Cairo and how we make and are made by *dawsha* in/and Cairo.

This research has initially focused on very broad questions: how do we ‘hear’ socialities in Cairo? How do we use sounds to map and navigate the city? Over the course of my ‘fieldwork’, as my collaborators weighed in - deeming some things important and some things meaningless - these questions were refined and refocused on the experiences of sounds in Cairo and the imposition of category of *dawsha* [noise] on out-of-place or unwanted sounds (and the people and things making those sounds).

Waitt & Duffy suggest that sound is an integral part of the interplay between space, the body, and subjectivity. Listening and aural experience, indeed all sensory experiences, can evoke and elicit instinctual, affective, and emotional responses – it follows, then, that the knowledges derived from listening might be able to capture, represent, and embody the ephemeral, affective, emotional, and felt qualities the body (2010).

Here, we meet a practical limitation, or a methodological challenge: while conceptually inspiring, how do we put these qualities into words and actually conduct this research without falling into the exact trap we are trying to avoid – the textual abstraction and dislocation of something that fundamentally needs presence to be experienced, and that might be incredibly difficult to communicate through language and textuality? Jackson (2004) suggests that meaning should not be reduced to what can be said or thought of.

Jackson (1996) calls for the deep understanding and exhaustive, detailed description of social phenomena and lived reality; giving equal theoretical and practical weight to the knowledges of the different modalities of existence and experience. Further, Smith (1967) highlights and stresses the incomparable importance of experiencing the everyday lived realities of both ‘being-in-the-world’ and ‘being-there’ in regards to phenomenology. Regarding sounds,

he brings forth another important problem: a phenomenology of sound (by academics) is constantly split and splintered between the phenomena of sound in and of itself, and intellectualisations of it.

These calls bring us face-to-face with a similar methodological and practical issue to the one I mentioned above; Jackson suggests that not all experiences are ‘reducible to knowledge’ or to language (1996), and that experiences are lived in ways that go well beyond the grasps of the schemes of academia. As somebody who might find that what is being researched – essentially, how socially-located people produce and perceive sounds and silences in spatially, culturally, and temporally-mediated places – is irreducible, or at least difficult to translate into language, where does phenomenology leave researchers working on the irreducible? How do we work without intellectualisation? How else can we capture our being-there and our being-in-the-world?

We all *know* and feel our own experiences in our bodies and our minds on our own terms. This project is about maintaining an openness to the possibilities of sound, to the diversity and subjectivity of experience, and to the very real notion that not all experiences, particularly aural and listening experiences, can be rendered legible, textual, and communicable without losing much of their muchness.

In a very immediate and embodied way, we physically experience space, time, and the world. Is consciousness simply about lived immediacy? Sound, an immediate, constant, and yet constantly-moving presence, is central to experiencing and making sense of our everyday lived experiences. Deep and detailed description is uniquely important for this research question. However, with deep and detailed description comes its own pitfalls: what about lived and

embodied everyday experiences that are not translated into clear, intellectually identifiable and communicable meanings, and what about experiences that are guttural, pre-cognitive, and intuitive?

This presents me with distinctive challenges to ‘researching’ sound on all levels: from data collection, capture, and documentation, to analysis and interpretation, to (re)production and (re)presentation. There are very real practical considerations and constraints in doing and (re)presenting anthropological work on and in sound (Feld & Brenneis, 2004; Pink, 2009; English, 2014).

How can we work with the personal, the emotional, the sensual, and the elusive? How do we collect the lived experiences of sounds? As a longtime resident of Cairo, I am familiar with the textures and rhythms of *my* Cairo’s soundscapes - the spaces and routes that I travel, dwell in, and *occupy* regularly. We all have territories that we are familiar with, and spaces where unexpected and unwanted sounds make us feel ill at ease.

Sound is experienced beyond words, but I attempt to use words (along with the artistic and collaborative sound installation element of this project) to maintain the presence of sound, capture the everyday and embodied lived experience of listening, and somehow still allow reflections on emotions, memories, instinctual, physical, and affective responses.

The question of methodology is frequently complex (if not outright problematic) and fraught with scholarly insecurity and anxiety in this particular area of research (Isen, 2014). Incidentally, Feld (2004) points to the state of ‘sounded anthropology’ as being, counter-intuitively, he opines, all about words. Since I explore how people listen and make sense of sound and/in/through space (and vice versa, since I argue that they co-constitute each other)

and how/why they impose the category of *dawsha*, I have chosen to utilise the umbrella research methodology of autoethnography and ethnography and adapt the methods and focus to my own research interests. I hope that my research can contribute to the growing interest in multi-sensory ethnography in contemporary anthropology (English, 2014; Pink, 2009). This research also adheres to contemporary practices of interpretive research (Gershon, 2013b). I use a derivative or variant of ethnography that has been, almost interchangeably, termed ‘aural ethnography’ (Erlmann, 2004), ‘sonic ethnography’ (Gershon, 2013a; Rennie, 2014), or ‘sound ethnography’ (Pink, 2009).

Here I am using the senses as a means and an avenue for inquiry, rather than as an object of study in itself. *What is lived and felt through hearing and listening?*

I am not studying sounds per se - as dislocated vibrations and frequencies in space - but our perceptions of them, our hearing(s) of them, as relationships that are constant, fleeting, and instantaneous. As the famous philosophical conundrum goes, if a tree falls in a forest and nobody is there to hear it, did it really make a sound? For the purposes of this thesis, no, it did not: the sound is its perception. I attend to the experiences and understandings of sound, *dawsha*, and perception of people in Cairo, bearing in mind that we experience our senses subjectively, not universally, and that our perceptions are culturally constructed and informed (Howes, 2010).

I am using the term aural ethnography to mean the practice of empirical data-gathering through active listening and immersive ‘fieldwork’, that is, being there and tuning in, and having conversations with my collaborators in situ. It is an embodied, sensual, and subjective form of collecting data; one where I, as a situated listener along with my collaborators, am implicated in the production of ethnographic knowledge, and where it is implicated by us (Pink, 2009). I am

also using ethnography to indicate a holistic and multi-modal approach to research: one that includes qualitative methods deemed most suitable to the situation and context, such as interviews, informal conversations, ‘hanging out’, participant observation or listening, field-notes, soundwalks, and recordings. Like Chandola (2010) who researched water routes in slums on the outskirts of New Delhi, India, I thought it would be most suitable to have fluid and unstructured research methods appropriate to the material of the project. This functions twofold; by putting my collaborators firmly in the driver’s seat, I let them guide the focus of this project, and fluid methods make a lot more sense with the nature of what is being researched - listening. Methodology, unfettered by structure and rigidity, is more able to reflect on the messy and ungraspable nature of hearing and perceiving sounds in Cairo (Chandola, 2010; Law, 2004).

Note on collaboration, sound + situation as embodied, emplaced research practice:

What can we tell about a place (and ourselves) by listening to it with others? Hall et al. (2008) ask, how can we bring the terms sound, space, and the everyday into creative synthesis? They put forward the idea that movement takes us forward: sound, space, and the everyday come together in movement, in *flow*. While movement is interesting, stillness is too. I endeavour to conduct all of my research in the presence of Cairo’s sounds (which was not hard, it is actually impossible to do the opposite).

Developed by Schafer (1994) for his World Soundscapes Project, the soundwalk, strictly defined, is ‘any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment’ (Westerkamp, 1974). It is the physical exploration of space and sounds and their relationships and meanings (Hall et al, 2008). As a methodology, it is deployed to understand and identify experiences and

perceptions of acoustic environments. Adams et al. (2008) opine that it is an excellent method for collaborative knowledge production and the generation of new kinds of knowledges.

The way I conceptualise the soundwalk is as a combination of sensory ethnography, interviews, and embodied and emplaced research methods. As such, I have operationalised the ‘soundwalk’ to refer to the combination of situated and emplaced interviews (Pink, 2009) and the being there inherent in sensory ethnography as a research methodology, particularly being present in the context that we are discussing and attempting to explore, and in the focus on the lived experience of listening to and hearing fleeting everyday sounds. None of the research methods seemed sufficiently comprehensive in and of themselves alone, and so I felt the need for the amalgamation.

A focus on *dawsha* with my collaborators and myself provides me with access to the perceptual undertakings and practices behind listening, and, more interestingly, allows me to simultaneously explore how, why, and when I impose this category myself. It also gives me the space to probe the possibilities and ruptures inherent in this category of sounds and experiences.

I am a privileged, English-speaking, and upper-class researcher located in Cairo, a space of much inequality and poverty. I have been educated in international schools and have studied abroad - my English is stronger than my Arabic. I have spent my entire life in Old Maadi, an affluent suburban district designed by British colonialists; it was (and is) a designed vision of what constituted a ‘modern’ neighbourhood in the centre of non-modernity.

No description can do Maadi justice like Doaa Kaddah’s (2017), ‘Maadi’s nostalgic past might be fading away in some parts, but in this quarter, its past and present imagery is securely maintained.’ Old Maadi, or Maadi Sarayat, is green and wealthy with a strictly ‘Western’

diversity. Old Maadi residents take pride that many of the white foreigners live there and we have the American Embassy's school here. We walk our pedigree dogs, often bemoan the encroachment of outsiders, and take sadistic pleasure in the fact that Maadi was designed to be confusing to outsiders and that they inevitably get lost. We don't have street names, we operate on a numbered grid system (yes, just like New York!). We are a little bubble of exclusionary exclusivity that used to be in the periphery of Cairo, but with Cairo's sprawl is no longer 'the suburbs'. By and large, we do not really interact with our neighbours, unless we bump into them walking our dogs on the leafy and narrow streets lined with expensive cars. Signs ordering drivers not to honk exist on every other street.

There is a nostalgia about Maadi, a romanticisation and an ominous foreboding that Something Is Changing and It Is Bad. Move a little bit farther to New Maadi (a place that many claim *taints* the name of Maadi), or to any popular surrounding neighborhood easily available on foot, and you will be in a completely different world. There are invisible yet palpable barriers between worlds - a form of social segregation. Maadi is produced relationally at the expense of others who do not belong. However, sounds are not bounded by these invisible boundaries, and so much of boundary demarcation, rupture, and remaking, along with the recolonisation and territorialisation of space happens aurally. The aural becomes another battlefield for the territorialisation of space and for the assertion of identity.

In fieldwork encounters outside of my socio-economic class, I was hyper aware of this. I felt the power asymmetries that existed in my relationships with collaborators who were outside of my class, and they went both ways. Yes, I am privileged, but no, that privilege did not feel good. It made me stand out more and made me feel more visible and uncomfortable. I was put in

positions well-outside of my comfort-zone, where, despite my privileged positionality, I had to depend on my collaborators for access, safety, and security. It was a humbling exercise, and I experienced a lot of growing pains and anxiety.

Beyond situated positionality, outside of the context of fieldwork and now in the writing part of the project, I am also cognizant of the politics of knowledge production (and Anthropology and Sociology's colonial histories). By virtue of being able to write about my interlocutors in a language some of them would not be able to read, to feel that I could produce some kind of knowledge about them to 'add to the literature', I feel it is incredibly audacious, insensitive, symbolically violent, and entirely naïve. Not to mention unfaithful to the subject matter and purposes of this project.

I am committed to nuanced research that exists firmly within the rubric of collaborative co-creation and co-production of knowledge, and that works without exoticising, freezing, or orientalisising 'the subject(s)' that are being researched.

I conduct research with a group of very different people; they range in age, gender, class, and ethnicity. These people have very little in common except a relationship to my personal network, an interest in sounds, and a Cairene address. We are all brought together by the fact that we are all Cairo 'dwellers', enmeshed and immersed in sounds. They can be grouped by class, gender, age, or any other etcetera. Alternatively, it can be considered that in our collective, subjective, and individual 'dwellings', we all enter engagements, relationships, and affectivities with human and non-human actors that are provoked by sonic and bodily experiences.

Some ethnographic encounters were short (two hours in an Uber), but many were much more long-term (conversations and soundwalks that took place over months).

My own privilege, and the colonisation of my own ears, which I had initially perceived as a handicap in my ability to ethically research listening in Cairo, proved to be an incredibly unique advantage when speaking to upper-class Cairo residents. These are people who work to create and enforce a sonic regime and sensorial orderings that render the poor and working class unwanted and out of place in affluent areas, and sometimes in the city as a whole - I mean this in the Foucauldian dominant discourse sense. Following in the Foucauldian tradition, 'discourse' for purposes of this dissertation has been defined as: any practice by which individuals imbue reality with meaning, i.e. the ways in which a topic has been constructed within society, specifically encompassing how 'privileged' discourses and unequal power relations are embedded and transmitted in textual and conversational articulation. At its essence, it seeks to unearth and expose power relations embedded in discourse.

1.2 - Knowing and Making Cairo in our Bodies

"In the establishment of anthropology as a science of the social or the cultural, entire domains of human experience were occluded or assigned to other disciplines, most notably the lived body, the life of the senses, ethics and the imagination, the emotions, materiality and technology." - Michael Jackson

We make Cairo, and Cairo makes us. We know Cairo, and Cairo knows us. We listen to Cairo, and Cairo listens to us. Our senses are everywhere, and the fact that they 'mediate between mind and body, idea and object, self and environment' has been established across historical, political, and cultural contexts (Howes, 2010; Chandola, 2011).

Sparkes (2009) suggests that our knowledge of ourselves, others, and the worlds we inhabit is inextricably linked to and shaped by our senses. Elaborating on this and building on the assumptions that sounds and silences are loaded with meanings and that they are quintessentially social (Bull & Back, 2003), I attempt to understand, trace, and (re)imagine these highly

subjective, mediated, affective, relational, and embodied perceptions of vibrations in space and time. I delve into the lived bodily experience of hearing and of listening to the social world and to social phenomena. Further, I work through the processes of becoming, meaning-attribution, and place-making inherent in listening. To do so, I engage with the framework of ‘embodiment’, and I (re)centre the body in my research.

Much like the social worlds we inhabit, sounds are messy, complex, layered, fleeting, floating, dynamic, subjective, ineffable, and ephemeral (Law, 2004), and there are potentially multiple layers of meaning embedded in every single sound we hear (Bull & Back, 2003). Because of the way we experience them, the very nature of sounds and silences works against theorisation and systematic/scientific observation, analysis, and textual representation. Their very ephemerality works against their classification. Sounds are highly affective (Gershon, 2013a); they elicit emotional, cognitive, instinctual, and physiological responses (Davies et al., 2013), and are evocative of both individual and group memories and practices (Pink, 2009). Sounds shape how individuals conceptualise themselves, others, spaces, times, ecologies, and their ‘everyday’ experiences (Gershon, 2013b:).

Law (2004) argues that we need to unmake certain methodological habits, namely the drive for certainty, authoritativeness, and generality, and suggests that we embrace looser and broader methods that are more uncertain, modest, generous, and interdisciplinary. Law (2004) puts forward the idea of a situated and located ‘knowing’ through the body, emotion, and intuition (among other modes). To illustrate this point, he uses a metaphor of blindness and seeing; the quick knowing through seeing is contrasted with the slower groping of a blind person, concluding that, as methodologies, they produce intrinsically different kinds of knowledges

(2004). While probably intended to be figurative, this metaphor, this alternative mode of knowing – with its emphasis on the systematic privileging of the ocular – has very literal significance to my research project.

Regarding embodiment as a methodological paradigm, I inquire into the body and bodily experience as a site of (sometimes precognitive) knowledge and knowing (Csordas, 1990, 1994; Bourdieu, 1977, 1990; Jackson, 1996). Likewise, I believe phenomenology and being in the world have incredibly significant implications on the research of listening and experienced sound (Jackson, 1996; Smith, 1967).

It is especially interesting that the body had been under-theorised in or excluded from the social sciences, following in the Cartesian binary, since the body is the key to perceiving, experiencing, and making meaning in and of the world. On the level of perception, which is quintessential to subjectivity and to *being/ becoming in the world*, it is illogical to distinguish between mind and body since they are effectively indistinguishable and inseparable. Almost exclusively, we experience others and express ourselves in and through our bodies; human consciousness is ‘mediated by the body’ (Berger & Luckmann, 2011; Jackson, 1996). ‘Being in the world’ is a necessarily embodied and bodily experience (Waitt & Duffy, 2010). Taylor (2002) states that the social imaginaries enable the practices of society and the making-sense of them. I would like to narrow this assertion further and suggest that ‘practices of society’ is too broad a category – the ‘practices of society’ are constituted by individuals interacting within it, with these people and interactions often exceeding the sum of their parts. ‘Social practices’ are made by people, they do not exist as an abstract reality and often elude and exceed the imagined boundaries of social classifications.

Building upon that, and beginning with the body as a productive starting-point for doing work and researching ‘self’ and ‘culture’ (Roodenburg, 2004), embodiment is a methodological paradigm that can be consistently used to examine and analyse data, and that, as a perspective, can also generate exciting new research avenues and questions. It takes the body to be a spring and vector of knowledge (Ignatow, 2009). Within this paradigm, the body functions as the center and locus of data collection and analysis. Its primary methodological assumption is that the body is both the subject and the existential ground of ‘culture’ (Csordas, 1994). Utilised as a useful point of departure for sensorially, emotionally, and affectively-engaged research, I use it to complement the ‘textuality paradigm’, which Csordas (1990) suggested was, at the time of writing, far more developed than embodiment.

Csordas (1990) explicates that the body is typically assumed, in academia and in the wider world, to be a fixed entity that exists outside of cultural and social parameters. As an entity, or a mass of entities, it is characterised by its inner biological necessities and is frequently made invisible, to disappear from awareness and play second fiddle to mind and soul. He argues, however, that this conceptualisation and invisibility is problematic, that the body and its practices of perception are not immutable, ahistorical, unchanging facts of nature; they are historically and culturally specific, socially constructed, conditioned, and constantly in flux. Mauss, cited in Csordas (1990), posits that the body is the primary tool through which we shape our social worlds, and through which we are shaped. That is, the body is socially informed: its tastes, compulsions, preferences, aversions, revulsions, and intuitions are influenced, to an extent, by social and cultural orders. The body’s senses are somewhat structured by social

determinism, and there is a constant and continuous interplay between sensory modality and perception, experience, social interaction, and meaning-construction and attribution. (1994).

Focusing more on questions of power and order and their role in the shaping of the body, Bourdieu (1997) observes that social order takes advantage of the disposition of the body and that the body is the site where it enacts its power. The body becomes a site of inculcation and history (Roodenburg, 2004). Bourdieu suggests that symbolic power (1990) works through the control and policing of other people's bodies and practices, arguing that systems of order derive their efficacy from the translation of their imperatives into physical actions that go without saying (the hierarchisations of sounds, for example, and how those translate to bodily dispositions when producing or perceiving sounds).

He further argues that bodily automations (physical practices that seem natural, common-sense, and taken-for-granted) are social necessity internalised, and political mythology realised, embodied, and transformed into natural dispositions. It is Foucault's *dispositif* and bio-power: knowledge structures that enhance and maintain the exercise of power on the social (listening and sounding) body. Taxonomies become incorporated into bodily dispositions, but beyond power, there is always a practical logic underscoring our bodily practices – a 'regulated improvisation' (Roodenburg, 2004). Bourdieu stresses its importance, suggesting that 'what is learned by the body is what one is'. But while our bodies are being shaped, while they represent social orders, our bodies shape the worlds around us (and how others experience and perceive their worlds too). The processes are, like so many other circular processes in this project, co-constitutive: simultaneously, through our past and present interactions, our bodies and the bodies around us internalise the external, and externalise the internal (1990, 1977).

I work with the notions discussed above: the body as our way of experiencing and perceiving the world, the body and its practices as a site, struggle, and enactment of power and order, the body as inculcated and inscribed with ‘culture’, our senses as shaped and constructed, and on embodiment as a methodology more adept at accessing and exploring lived listening experience – our way of being in the world and listening to it and delving into it (Roodenburg, 2004: 215). I apply these notions to my conceptualisation of our (necessarily-embodied) sense of hearing, and the acts of listening, perceiving sounds, attributing them with meaning, and reacting to them. I begin to understand sonic experience through the body (Waite & Duffy, 2010). If meaning is constructed through the body, the senses are of much cultural (and subsequently academic) significance (Jackson, 2004).

Lefebvre states that it is ‘through the body that space is perceived, lived, and produced’ (1991). Furthermore, Merleau-Ponty (2013) suggests that it is through the body’s orientation, this bodily *being*, that we perceive, live, and produce places, since ‘we cannot dissociate being from orientating being’. Jackson (1996) positions phenomenology as a ‘being in the world’, a way of illuminating things by bringing them into the light of everyday understanding. After all, the everyday reality is the most privileged and dominant of all the realities we inhabit and experience (Berger & Luckmann, 2011). Csordas (1990) suggests that the phenomenological approach is most suited to researching or working on ‘existential immediacy’ (10), to act as an avenue of accessing lived experience. This suggestion is echoed by Berger & Luckmann (2011), who also propose phenomenological analysis and research as a point of departure for making sense of the subjective experiences of everyday life.

Chapter 2 - What is *Dawsha*?

SAFEYA: ON SILENCE AS *DAWSHA*

We continue with a snapshot of a banal and very ordinary encounter: how Safeya and I both made sense of surrounding sounds on a dark and quiet street in Old Maadi. Safeya is a beautician who visits our house once a month - she does hair, nails, eyebrows, and hair-removal. Now in her mid-fifties, Safeya had been our family's beautician since before I was born, and knows our family very well. Strictly speaking, this encounter preceded my fieldwork but stayed with me. As memory, this narrative of encounter is infused with my own subjective perceptions and reworkings of events, and my own selective mobilisation of the encounter. It says as much, if not more, about me than it does about her. This encounter stayed with me because it revealed that there is something entirely subjective about what and how we hear and subsequently attribute meaning to sounds and silences.

Safeya lives in Dar el Salaam, a popular neighbourhood physically close to Maadi, but that is very structurally dissimilar. Despite being a few metro stops away, it is a different world; much busier than Maadi, the streets are always wider, louder, and less green. The buildings and people are in very close proximity to each other, certainly closer than they are in Old Maadi. Everything about Dar el Salaam seems to me to be sensorially *bigger* than Old Maadi, from smells to sights to the sounds of the residents, the businesses, the surrounding buildings, the cars, and other modes of transport. It is distinctively different than the colonially-mediated modern, sanitised, and exclusionary Old Maadi.

We are a household of six (or more) women at any given moment, so when Safeya visits, she spends the entire day with us. There are generations of women, from my grandmother, to my

mother, to my cousins who congregate at my house every few weeks (or before special occasions) for this timeless ritual.

Timeless as it may be, the sheer number of women Safeya has to get through in one visit renders it a rather time-consuming process. Almost always, Safeya comes in the early afternoon and leaves when it is dark outside. After one such ‘beautification day’, we had finished at around ten pm. For transport, Safeya takes the metro for a few stops to Dar el Salaam. We live very close to the metro (a four minute walk) so the process is usually very straightforward. That day was different because we were experiencing a neighborhood-wide power outage and it was pitch black outside.

‘Come with me to the metro,’ she demanded as soon as I was out of the shower.

‘Is a grandmother like you scared of the dark, or what?’ I asked her, teasingly. She rolled her eyes at me. I took my dog and walked with her. As we left my house, she asked me if I was scared of walking in the dark alone. I told her I wasn’t, and in any case, I had my dog with me and felt very safe in the area between my house and Road 9 (where the metro station is).

‘I don’t know how you live here. It’s far too quiet. Too *hoss hoss* [indicating quiet]. I would be very scared to walk down these quiet streets all the time. But I guess it’s better than all these new cities in the desert. Where I live is always *dawsha*, always *wanas* [lively, full of pleasant company], always awake. There are always people around so I never feel this fear.’ What she was saying struck me as entirely counterintuitive, I don’t know if being in a constantly lively, constantly-crowded space like Dar el Salaam would *scare* me, but it would definitely give me anxiety and would definitely not make me feel at ease. She continued, ‘I know all the *shabab*

[young men] on the streets, they're like my sons. If anything ever happens to me there, anything at all, I know that one of the boys of the area will come help me,'

I wondered why this was. Was her discomfort at the silence where we were simply about familiarity or was there more at play? This was when I started really thinking through this research. This encounter left me with two things: a bruise, from where I fell over in the dark on my way back from walking Safeya to the metro, and the idea that we all hear things and experience/perceive sounds in a completely different way. Even though we were hearing the exact same sounds (or lack thereof), we were perceiving them uniquely and attributing wholly polarised meanings to them. They were evoking incredibly distinctive affective and visceral responses in/via our bodies. In the silence, she was feeling fear and I was feeling freedom and serenity. In the silence, on the empty street at night with my dog, I was feeling free from the from the perceived sensory and stimuli overload that I usually experience in Cairo. This could have been a simple question of personal preference, but I wondered if audio-conditioning and class conditions affected the way that we were both listening to this particular space in Cairo and attributing meaning to it.

I have, since then, been tempted to abandon this project more times than I would care to admit. The more I listen in to Cairo, and the more I listen in to other people's listenings in to Cairo, the more this project seems ridiculously ambitious. My own ears are upper-class, and I was wary of imposing my own auditory categories on the stories of others, and rendering this project entirely meaningless. However, with this project came emotional growth and humility. There is so much to learn about ourselves when we can get out of our own way and listen with, and to, others.

At its essence, this is a project about what auditory experiences variously disturb us in Cairo. Cairo, obviously, is not a homogenisable space, it is an assemblage. It houses, hosts, and homes millions people and their lifeworlds at any given moment in time who experience and hear the city in just as many ways.

In Safeya's narrative about Old Maadi's silence, and in conversations we later had, it became clear that her articulation of her fear of the quiet, and the dangers of empty streets is an extension of her experience of Maadi as a dead space lacking in security, movement, life, community association, and 'knowing your neighbours'. Safeya's Maadi, with its silence, is a space characterised by a lack of life and vibrancy, a space of social isolation and insulation from the 'real Cairo' of Dar el Salaam and other popular neighbourhoods. To Safeya, Maadi's silence was a type of *dawsha* - disturbing, uncomfortable, and out of place. In her auditory hierarchy, this silence had the same disturbing effect of *dawsha* to upper-class contributors to this project, which I will discuss in more depth later. For now, it suffices to say that *dawsha* or auditory experiences that disturb truly are in the ear of the beholder - how and why, then, does *dawsha* come to be deployed as the only categorisation for sonic disturbance in Cairo?

Safeya's hearing of Old Maadi's quiet was one of discomfort, but to me it was respite. The silence was something I actively sought out, was proud of, and accustomed to. I remember being unable to sleep at a friend's house in Mohandessin and asking her how she lived like this, with sounds filtering into her room on the tenth floor at all hours. Other than my relief when hearing certain kinds of silences and sounds typically associated with peace (birds chirping, the absence of honks and shouts), I realised that there was a very audible class dynamic present in my hearing and perception of sounds - a quiet spot in a crowded city is a marker of difference, of

the ability to *afford* space and therefore silence, of residents *performing* auralness in a very particular way. The invisibility and inaudibility of my neighbors, and the relative anonymity and isolation, are things that I perceive and evaluate to be better than their binary opposites. We, as Cairo dwellers, to a very large extent, are products of our environments and experiences. We are positioned listeners situated in invisible but still very palpable world of situated sounds, relationships rendered acoustic, power, and possibility.

Schafer (1993) categorises ‘noise’ as sounds that we have learned to ignore. My conversations with my collaborators rendered this definition entirely insufficient. There is a disturbing, disruptive, and unwelcome quality to *dawsha*. *Dawsha* is, simultaneously, sound that is marginalised but can also sound power and resistance.

This is what *dawsha* means to some of my collaborators:

Dana: It’s an overload. It’s a sound that is unexpected and evokes a visceral bodily reaction.

Amir: It’s sound that is obtrusive and is too much for our ears to process - so, basically, it’s Cairo.

Farha: It is three things, and they’re all in Cairo: *zahma* [crowdedness], fights, and honks.

May: It’s honks on the street that don’t ever end. It’s that one asshole with his hand on the honk.

Sherine: It’s the people shouting to sell stuff on the metro.

Bassem: According to my mom, it’s the sound of *sha’abi* [popular] music.

Adam: It’s something that is annoying to you, something that you can’t make sense of.

Taha: It is the sounds of thirty million angry people living on top of each other.

Mariam: Sound that is irritating and floods your senses.

Habiba: A social construct, or, you know, Wust el Balad (Downtown Cairo).

Mailk: Crowded noise, but I guess one person alone can be *dawsha* so it's sounds that are disturbing and inconvenient.

Sara: A collection of sounds that clash and go against each other.

Tanya: A combination of sounds that are disturbing and inconvenient to me.

Zein: An unpleasant combination of sound.

Sarah: It's *eza 'ag* [disturbance]. Someone who is disturbing you, either with their voice or their overall presence.

Karim: It has a negative connotation. It's a sound that is unfamiliar and not comforting.

Amira: An audible sound that upsets the peace. It can extend to visual stimuli too.

Hana: Unwanted, senseless, meaningless sound.

Tamara: A multilayered and continuous disturbance of silence or a harmonious soundscape.

Amal: It's sound that you don't want. Sometimes that's about decibel level, sometimes it's about what the sound actually is, but most often it's about the source of the sound.

Galila: It depends who you're asking, different things disturb different people, but I would say that it is a sound that is disturbing - disturbing to whom is the question you want to be asking.

What these varying definitions have shown is that *dawsha* is not always, and singularly, about loudness, nor is it always about sound, but it is almost always about Cairo. Noise is a matter of social and cultural specificity and subjectivity. Noise is a social, cultural, and political act and term - in its production, performance, and articulation (Attali, 1985). It is an order-word very specific to imaginations and formulations of Cairo. *Dawsha*, as a specific characteristic to identify the loud and disturbing Other, is consistent rhetoric in the narratives of my collaborators,

particularly when denoting class in/and Cairo. Here, loud does not always translate to noisy or *dawsha*, which always comes with a connotation of unwantedness. It is an order-word and metaphor.

Turner (1975) and Haraway (2004) argue that metaphors have incredible power. We need to be aware of their possibilities and potentialities as well as their (inevitable and inherent) limitations and blind-spots. They can be a useful speculative apparatuses or self-fulfilling prophecies. Regarding *dawsha* as subalternising, there is a post/transcolonial legacy of segmenting people into civilised rights-bearing citizens and fragmented racialised culture-(or *dawsha*)-bearing-majorities (Mamdani, 2001; Mbembe, 2000). To rework Agamben (2005) and Arendt (1953), true power lies in the ability to impose the metaphor of ‘outsideness’, and to translate these order-words (like *dawsha*) and imperatives into seemingly-natural bodily imperatives, practices, and dispositions. Power can produce boundaries and situate people, places, and communities as outside them – on the margins of a colonially-mediated imaginary (Mbembe, 2000). If, as Arendt (1953) suggests, everyone experiences marginalisation in the ‘modern world’, this imposition is a necessarily subjective and violent act.

In naming and framing *dawsha*, the relationships that make this classification possible are removed and rendered invisible. To name is to necessarily come from a position of power. It is to impose an identity, to reduce, to claim (knowledge of), to appropriate, and to situate firmly within the namer’s world. The act of naming transforms the relationship to that of knower/known (or, to invoke academia: subject/object), and enables the already-privileged knower to construct, speak for, and write the known with increased power and authority. Suffice it to say, this

knowledge/power couplet (Foucault, 1984) or ‘information as control’ has far-reaching epistemological, social, and political implications.

This dynamic of classifying-as-domination is exemplified in the contemporary neoliberal moment in Cairo that subalternises and dehumanises individuals and communities stamped with ‘*dawsha*’. It deems them unwelcome and disturbing, renders them non-modern (as *outside* arbitrary parameters of permissible sensorial performances), and assigns them a corresponding set of characteristics, (re)presenting them within a particular discourse that legitimises their exclusion and subalternisation.

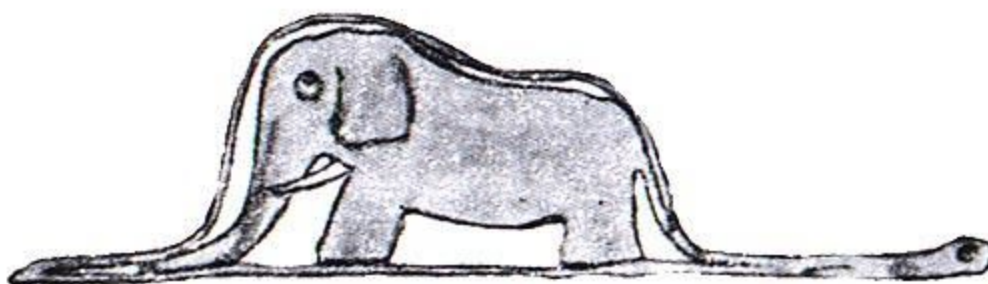
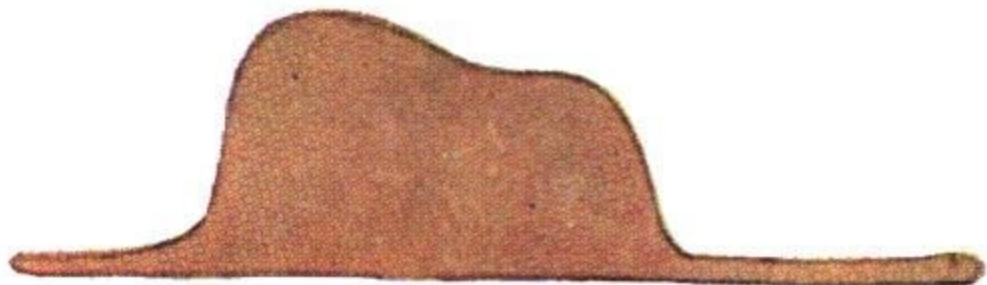
Headlines abstract, freeze, and de-historicise relationships. Wolf (1982) argues that, since the social world consists of interrelated and interdependent processes and relationships, naming sets of relationships abstracts them and turns them into ‘things’, thereby creating false models of reality. We must ask, in relation to *what* does *dawsha* exist?

Here, I want to bring to light Munro (2010) and Chandola’s (2013) suggestion that restraint in sound-making and its performance and enforcement is a European bourgeoisie trait of ‘civilisation’ par excellence – reigning in the loud, *dawsha*, uncouth, boisterous, and unruly nature of the working class. Performing polite sounding in public space comes to act as a marker of class. Quiet too, is a privilege in Cairo – to be able to experience ‘quiet’ you need space from your neighbors and your family. To have space in a densely-populated city like Cairo, you must be able to afford it. Soundscapes and sound levels can and do act as indicators of socio-economic positions in relation to power.

I argue that this framing of *dawsha* in Cairo is a neocolonial and upper-class framing that fits nicely with global attempts to regulate, tame, and ‘modernise’ life, shaping it to look more

like the colonially-mediated ‘global cities’ of the so-called West (or Dubai). In other cities, notably New Delhi, the construction of ‘others’ (the working class and the poor) and their spaces as dirty and uncivilised has lent itself to regimes of exclusion, violence, and demolition. Articulations of the relationship between *dawsha* and Others are legitimising claims for the State, elites, and mainstream local and international media that take on a self-appointed, self-important, and moralising tone to ‘re-render’ the city and its dwellers as desirable/ undesirable on their own (exclusionary) terms.

Chapter 3 - Sounding Cairo's Everyday Life of Power



This is not a hat, it is a boa constrictor that has swallowed an elephant!

"The thing that is important is the thing that is not seen." - The Little Prince

Safeya, Farha, Dana, Adam, Galila, Taha, Amir, Lara, May, Karima, Jihan, Zein, Nader, Hania, Dina.

Each person has a story and a life-world. There are, of course, many more. Many more names, individuals, stories, subjectivities, and lifeworlds - narratives that can come together to reveal something. Their stories are productive, contradictory, evocative, and mobilising narratives that reveal meaning without reducing, essentialising, and naming - only speaking for themselves, illustrating the subjectivity of their perceptions and their very particular positioning

that cannot be taken to generalise upon a general public with different particulars. In an increasingly perplexing, messy, globalised, and excessive world, it is no surprise that social theory has struggled to find its feet (Law, 2004; Ramamurthy, 2003). Rooted in Western colonialism, patriarchy, and Enlightenment notions of modernity, our epistemologies are notoriously problematic: often Eurocentric, universalising, and utilising the methodologies of the natural sciences, which are unsatisfactory in the face of chaotic social reality and sound. These epistemologies and methodologies have been complicit, if not culpable, in systems of structural violence, and as such, academics need to be especially conscious of the asymmetrical relationships between knowledge producers and ‘objects’ of study (Nagar, 2013), lest knowledge-production become (or continue to be) another space for flattening and oppression.

To that end, I invoke Ingold’s (2011) ‘astonishment’ and Saint-Exupery’s (2000) *The Little Prince*; that is, putting aside the scholarly fixation with the element of surprise, the extraordinary, and the spectacular. I read Ingold’s ‘astonishment with the everyday’ as indicating humble, childlike wonder and naivety - reminiscent of the wonderment, astonishment, smallness, and amazement that we feel when looking up at the expansive starry night sky. Astonishment throws academic ego, cynicism, and expectation out of the window and delights as it perceives the world anew. Astonishment is humility enacted.

Sound is a mundane facet of everyday life – constantly present, rooted in the banal and the habitual, it is intimately woven into everyday experience. Sound is not contained - it spills over, transgressing and disrupting boundaries and spaces. There is a sprawl and a muchness in sound that mirrors messy, untameable, and undocumentable socialities.

To that end, Das (2011) suggests that attentiveness to the everyday can help us grasp

boundaries that are fluid and track the movements and nuances of macro-processes without falling into the trap of ‘speaking for’ people. Nagar (2012) and Johnson (2007) highlight the usefulness of storytelling in exploring the everyday life of power, since individual narratives allow complex individuals and communities the space to speak to each other and for themselves.

With this project, I collaborate with other Cairo dwellers to interrogate, unearth, and traverse the everyday micro-politics of sonic perception and production in Cairo (which simultaneously shape and are shaped by wider dynamics of dominance). These people are excessive (as people are) - neither they, nor their narratives and experiences can ever fit into neat boxes and axes. This was one of the biggest struggles I had when sitting down to write this - to a very great extent, the thematic organisation and coding of stories and narratives would have achieved the opposite of what I sought to achieve: which is to somehow evoke the potentialities of sounds in Cairo, to remain open to possibilities, and to use textual aurality and ethnographic writing as transporative and evocative, rather than prescriptive.

Undoubtedly, while class, gender, racial, and economic power operate in, on, and around our bodies, I try not to reduce my collaborators to only their demographics since they and their lives constantly spill out far beyond socially-constructed categories (like sounds!). They are whole people with whole lives, everything is messy, and they cannot (and should not) be reduced to only identifiable classifications. Again, they are more than the sum of their parts. Constantly shifting, intersecting identity categories, axes of difference, and marginalisation are constitutive of each other. They affect social realities, constantly (re)situating individuals, and (re)shaping how they experience the worlds around them (Sultana, 2009; Johnson, 2007; Ramamurthy, 2003; Das, 2010).

Do we want macro, birds-eye theories that simplify the mess, or do we want pluralistic and idiosyncratic stories of everyday life that can help us unpack the abstract category of *dawsha* to look into how power and possibility comes to be audible in everyday life?

Undoubtedly, I have curated and selectively mobilised my ethnographic encounters and experiences so they make sense within the scope and structure of this thesis. After most ethnographic encounters, I work to crack them open and highlight and analyse the elements that are the most interesting and illustrative to me. In writing, I have rendered them as well as I can, and it is entirely possible that readers will find things within the encounter more compelling or eye-catching. In my analyses of these narrations, I do not want to suggest that these are the only ways to read and interpret these encounters. I want them to be read openly, allowing readers to draw their own insights from the ethnographic encounters.

Through looking at the everyday perceptual practices and experiences of individuals who hear, listen, and make sounds in Cairo, I try to work towards toolkits of understanding the mechanics and big-picture workings of macro-structures. I argue that individuals and their everyday practices (re)present a microcosm of larger gender, class, and ethnic conflicts and tensions. That is, so-called ‘macro-structures’ are situated, enacted, and experienced in our bodies in the everyday. Over the course of fieldwork, almost all of my collaborators recognise how distinctive, overlapping, and always-shifting axes of marginalisation shape each other, and shape their interactions with the world and with their auditory environments.

Our complex everyday lives of power are necessarily packed with contradictions, contained as they are within contexts of overwhelming structural violence, precarity, and factors beyond our control. Our everyday negotiations and manipulations of the relations of power that

we are embedded in are the contradictory politics of territorialisation, resilience, resistance, assimilation, agitation, and internalisation. We put in labour, performance, resources, and ourselves as we work to navigate the everyday of Cairo - these are the micro-politics of our lives. The exploration of the minutiae of the micro-politics of people in and from the margins (and we are all variously marginalised along one axis or another) shines a spotlight on the complex interplay of competing forces and affective experiences.

My collaborators and I are all shifting subjects who are constantly evocative of our perplexities (Ramamurthy, 2003). Nothing comes without its world. All of my collaborators tell fluid, constantly evolving stories. In their narratives, they bring forth and evoke entire social structures and life-worlds, particularly since subjects are always embedded in multiple relations of power, and along various axes of marginalisation. A focus on the micro, everyday lives of individuals embedded in social structures, where the only constants are categorisations, can reveal the meanings of macro-processes without making the mistake of fixing those meanings in all-encompassing categories that can function to further hegemonic narratives. Indeed, as Ramamurthy (2003) opines, individual experiences are never really individual in scale.

Narratives are ways through which we can understand complex and contradictory social spaces. Multiple narratives can be used as building-blocks or layers in a *bricolage* to construct more complete conceptualisations of social realities that do not reinforce 'category'. By engaging with the narratives of Safeya, Farha, Dana, Adam, Taha, Amir, Lara, May, Karima, Jihan, Malik, Nader, Zein, Hania and Galila, I begin to work through this project, and learn more about the possibilities of sound and *dawsha* in the city. How does power unfurl itself and demand it be felt through sound in everyday life

While reading Gordillo's (2014) *Rubble*, I was constantly haunted by ghosts, echoes, and traces of Cairo. While the sometimes-shambling, sometimes-shiny, often-haphazard, and always-eclectic city can only be technically and strictly classified as ruins or rubble in very particular places, there is a feeling of wreckage, of debris, of urban decay, dirt, and dust; a pervasive and ephemeral sense of abandonment and regeneration. Ours is a complex cityscape that constitutes and is constituted by movement, violence, disaster, destruction, politics, capitalism, ecology, people, and power – an abstracted, lived, and entangled space that houses multiplicitous constellations of rubble that aggressively defy singular representation. A thriving ecosystem of balances, it is, if anything, a city that can 'think', or more appropriately, that has a logic beyond and independent of its human dwellers (Kohn, 2013). Gordillo asks, then, all things considered, how do we give a sense of what places feel like? How do we touch their textures, their everyday, their degradations, destructions, and their regenerations? How do we explore the lived experiences of interrupted and entangled geographies? How do we hear cities? How do we feel them?

In 1993, Canadian composer, environmentalist, and acoustic ecologist, Raymond Murray Schafer, first used the term 'soundscape' to refer to the acoustic environment. This conceptualisation proved to be highly influential, and effectively birthed the interdisciplinary field of sound studies - a field defined by the unification of method and object (Sterne, 2012). Schafer sought to explore the impact of the constantly-changing soundscape on 'society' (Cobussen, 2011). His 'soundscape', a deceptively simple premise, is any acoustic environment in which we are immersed: a space of events and occurrences that can be heard and that can be isolated from their surroundings and studied - much like a landscape, although with considerably

less ease. He conceptualises the world as a ‘macrocosmic musical composition’ (6) with distinct and identifiable auditory features, and suggests that we identify the most significant aspects of soundscapes and begin our analysis there. Even in the relatively new subdiscipline of sound studies, there is a hierarchisation of sound, an imperative to identify and investigate ‘the most significant’, rather than the everyday and ordinary.

Sound Studies as it currently exists is concerned with the production and consumption of sound, and the consideration of the soundscape as its own cultural and social system (Cobussen, 2011, Chandola, 2013). Building upon the visual metaphor of ‘figure’ and ‘ground’, Schafer provides us with the terms to discuss the soundscape – ‘soundmark’, ‘earwitness’, and ‘signal’. Schafer brings forth the figure of the ‘earwitness’: the conscious listener who can (aurally) witness social life.

Building upon Schafer’s soundscape, other academics beyond the field of sound studies (most notably, anthropologists, historians, and geographers) have called for social thinkers to ‘tune in’ to and hear our social worlds (Butler, 2006; Hunt, 2008; Munro, 2010, Samuels et al., 2010). Here, the soundscape, or our sonic environment, is considered both constitutive of and constituted by social life. This auditory sensibility, particularly when deployed in ‘non-Western’ contexts breaks away from the dominant visualism of the Enlightenment, and challenges the Cartesian essence of epistemology. Similarly, Samuels et al. (2010) argue that a focus on the aural (or on sensory epistemologies, more broadly) rightly decentralises Eurocentric ocularism and textuality, and so the authors call for a more ‘sounded anthropology’. The criticism that social thought privileges the visual and the intellectual at the expense of sensorial and everyday

perspectives has been echoed by many authors across many disciplines (Goodale, 2011; Sterne, 2003; Munro, 2010; Järviluoma et al., 2003; Schrag, 2014; Cobussen, 2011; Chandola, 2013).

Sonic experiences, as happenings in everyday life, are disordered, arrhythmic, unexpected, and transcendental - they rupture, transport, and transform. This shift in focus is not a simple change of perspective, but rather an epistemological intervention. This break can be situated within the 'messy', 'postcolonial', multi-modal, and interdisciplinary shift in contemporary anthropology.

It is important to note that when I refer to soundscapes, I do not mean to suggest, as the term and its genealogy indicate, that this is some sort of abstracted, background entity. I suggest that, far from existing as some sort of discrete background to our lives, the soundscape is a generative fabric that implicates and shapes movements and moments in the city.

Ingold (2011) argues that the notion of the soundscape has outlived its usefulness because the world is not sliced up according to our senses and that the suffixes of -scapes strip the world of complicated and intersecting sensory stimuli. In perceptual practices and experiences, Ingold argues, the sensory registers are intimately linked. I agree that, in the deliberate singling-out of sound at the expense of other senses (both dominant and marginalised), there is a risk of disembodiment and dislocating all other sensory modalities. Here, I break away from Schafer's conceptualisation of the soundscape as a discrete entity and I argue that it cannot *meaningfully* be isolated from its environment. Our experiences of our senses are so entangled in our perceptions and experiences of everyday life that we usually do not try to tell them apart. I argue that, because sound is experienced holistically (in the package of perception), and is very much situated in multisensory, everyday life experiences and practices, research in sound and sonic

perception is another avenue and entrypoint into working on life in Cairo and its everyday (as wholes). This is made ever-more appropriate because Cairo in contemporary imaginations is synonymous with ‘noise’, and because *dawsha* is so prevalent in the construction of Cairo, both internally and externally. I do not use the soundscape as an end in itself, rather as a doorway. As Howes (2010) suggests, sometimes different senses convey significantly different knowledges. This project attends to the knowledges produced by listening as an engaged act, and hearing as an unconscious act in our everyday lives in Cairo. I want to note here that whether the senses work in synergy, harmony, or in opposition is a debate that is far from a foregone conclusion, and is somewhat out of the scope of this project.

Sounds (and their possibilities) in Cairo allow us to differently imagine and track boundaries (and their ruptures and remakings), otherisation, and the enmeshment of worlds. I situate the aural as more intimate than the visual - in that you cannot maintain the same distance with the ‘thing perceived’ when variously engaging with sight vs. sound. Simply, ‘as far as the eye can see’, is a lot further than ‘as far as the ear can hear’. Sounds implicate you and situate you in worlds in ways that, I argue, the eyes do not.

The category of *dawsha* - initially a sensory category borne out of the perception of sound - transcends the borders of the sonic and is imposed and deployed in contexts that extend far beyond the realm of aural phenomena. *Dawsha* can be applied to everything from visual stimuli to political upheaval. It incorporates forms of knowledge inextricable from the sonic and from Cairo but that often travels, with its distinctive knowledges, beyond these spheres and formulations.

I do not believe, as Ingold suggests, that the soundscape has outlived its usefulness, especially not in Cairo, where the aural is so key to its relational construction as disorderly and Other. I am particularly interested in Schafer's conceptualisation of the earwitness who can attest to social life through auditory experience. However, to Schafer, the figure of the earwitness is very similar to the figure of the Western scientist, the modest witness, or the expert. Schafer's figure of the earwitness is scientific, rational, objective, 'removed' from the situation, and conventionally-educated. His 'ear-witnessing' is an abstracted, seemingly objective academic exercise for furthering knowledge, and producing knowledge with or without the inputs of other, less educated and more 'involved', listeners.

Frankly, I find the fetishisation and glorification of the 'expert' figure in academia, mainstream media, and my professional and personal life quite despicable and difficult to stomach. It is even more jarring in some iterations of classical social research. As Jackson (2012) illustrates, the expert figure is reified and deified in Western academic regimes. The expert is knowing, authoritative, and therefore able to 'produce knowledge' on the bodies of others in languages that they might not understand. Any lifeworld(s) peripheral to the experts are effectively illegitimate, ignored, or minimised - and this includes the realm of unseen and immeasurable soundscapes. It is the tyranny of the quantifiable, and in this authoritative tyranny, things and people are spoken for, flattened, frozen, and lose much of their muchness.

My apprehension of Cairo's invisible-yet-palpable worlds of sounds invites the application of *all* of our critical and affective imaginations of the sonic - from the position of humility and knowledge co-creation and collaboration - and blurs the boundary and binary between researcher and researched.

FARHA: HADAYEK EL MAADI

Conversations with Farha were some of the most inspiring, enlightening, and interesting. Farha is probably the *biggest* person I have ever met in my life. A tall, big-boned, loud, jolly, and boisterous woman whose love of life, disregard for social convention, and eclectic experiences really shaped the direction of this research. The woman is a hustler and a sage. Farahana has been my grandmother's housekeeper and companion for the last few years and has single-handedly taught me so much about life, Cairo, and myself.

Farha took a keen interest in my research from the point of its inception. There was a huge part of Cairo that I was not privy or exposed to, and Farha decided that she was going to be my guide to the working-class, *real* Cairo that she thought I did not experience. I frequently visited her at her home for what were initially research purposes but that transformed into socialising with her, her children, and her neighbours. Despite the fact that she lives less than five kilometers away from my house, Farha occupies another world - we may as well be living in different cities.

I never went to Farha's house alone - she wouldn't allow it. She would either chaperone me herself, or send one of her sons in a taxi to pick me up or drop me off at home. 'It's not safe for you to come here alone, I wouldn't want anybody to bother you. You're not from this area, and unfortunately, there are boys here whose mothers forgot to raise. They could upset you. When you're with me or Hamada or Ahmed [her sons], people from the area will know you are with us and that they can't speak to you or bother you. If anybody ever says anything to you, tell me and *ana haa'ala'o w ha'aala'o* [I'll undress him and hang him].'

Farha lives in Hadayek el Maadi, a very lively and densely-populated area that borders Old Maadi. The roads are more like alleys - incredibly narrow - and while most of the buildings are unpainted, the balconies are all painted in bright, eye-catching colours. There is a supermarket, a kiosk, or an *ahwa* [café] around every corner. There are always lots of people around - shouting from their balconies and/or on the streets, honking, and occupying public space in a way you rarely see in Maadi. I never walked around in the area, and my experience of it is purely what I saw while in the car and from Farha's balcony.

Over tea at her house on the first day I was there, Farha shooed her two adolescent daughters out of the living room/reception area where we were sitting and told them to go to their aunt's a few houses down so she and I could talk more freely. 'Don't play in the street, or with the children in the street,' she ordered, 'I don't want you picking up their habits and language.' The two girls nodded dutifully, promised to call her as soon as they arrived, and left. We were sitting on cushions on the floor around an old low brass table (almost Bedouin-style). We were drinking Arousa tea with mint and eating *lib* [sesame seeds].

Farha turned to me and rolled up her sleeves, revealing white, hairy, and meaty forearms, before pulling out a packet of Cleopatra cigarettes and offering me one. I declined the offer, and she asked me if I wanted to go out onto the balcony and smoke the best *hashish* [hash, a drug] Cairo has to offer. 'We have the best stuff here, not like that fake chemical stuff you get in nice areas like yours.' I laughed and declined that offer too. We were about to get down to quite meaty business. I told her that I did want to go out onto the balcony though, and so we moved with our tea and snacks outside.

Her balcony is phenomenal. Quite narrow, she has decorated it with colourful rugs and old movie posters. She lives on the third floor, so we're quite close to the street and can clearly hear the conversations going on below. Often, Farha will shout to somebody walking down the street, either as greeting to her neighborhood or as admonishment to one of the young men or women down there who are behaving in a way that she deems unsuitable. She had once told me that she experienced the entirety of the 2011 revolution from her balcony, ready with pots of boiling water or oil to spill on anybody who tried to 'take over' her building.

We sat down on plastic chairs that she had made surprisingly comfortable using old foam. 'Look here, my woman,' she began authoritatively, with the air of an educator about to impart something important on a pupil, '*dawsha* to me is two things: fights and honks. Both of these things happen constantly. Cairo is crowded, and people's voices are loud - from people selling things to the chatter on *mowasalat* [modes of transport, both formal and informal]. People are angry, and this has a knock-on effect: *el gheiz el beyzeed a'an haddo beygeeb deddo* [proverb and saying that loosely translates to: frustration that gets out of hand begets reactionary anger]. In *mowasalat*, *shabab* [young people] play music [electro-*sha'abi*] that nobody understands - the tempo doesn't make sense... There's music that's calm and that helps you to relax, but this music is *tawator* [anxiety-inducing] and *darbaka* [chaotic]. I know that other people might like this, and that music taste is subjective, but to me this sounds like drug-user music. It has no tune like the music of the old days - it's just *dawsha*.'

Farha has been married six times, and is probably the most staunch feminist I have ever come across, 'As you would expect, men's voices are always louder than women, except in the markets, where you hardly hear any men,' she rolled her eyes, 'There's a class element and a

gender element to *dawsha*, you know? Things are different for men and women, and things are different in *hetat nedeefa* [clean places, referring to upscale neighbourhoods] than they are in *manate' sha'abeya* [popular, working class areas]. In your street, when a girl has a loud voice, people look at her and say *eih el bee'a dee* [loosely translates to: what's this tacky/working-class girl]. Here,' she gestures expansively to the street, 'and in areas like here, when girls are quiet, we think they're cowards and can't protect themselves. If a man harasses a woman in a *sha'abi* neighborhood, she's going to give him more than he expects. She is going to shout and scream and bring down the whole world on top of his head' she laughed, 'Everyone in *sha'abi* neighborhoods has a loud voice. *Hena, lazem takhdi ha'aek b lesanek aw dera'aek*' [Proverb: here, you have to get what you're owed with your tongue or your arm].'

This opened up an entire world of imagination for me. It was a thread that was unravelling. Previously, I could not have imagined or considered the importance of *sounding* (as verb) and *dawsha* as a strategy for survival, assertion, and the (re)territorialisation of space. Going well beyond the confines of a stationary and frozen category, *dawsha* functions differently in different contexts. Farha recognised that binary distinction when comparing reactions to loud women in my neighbourhood and in hers, she illustrated its relational importance in her life-world. While in an affluent area like mine, *dawsha* is regarded as a marker of the Other, here, it was a marker of strength, courage, and the ability to survive and navigate spaces of structural and prevalent gendered violence. I thought back to incidents of sexual harassment in Old Maadi, and how the advice given to, 'look forwards and keep walking,' instills a feeling of helplessness when it might be more rewarding, if more dangerous, to just scream back, to assert ourselves and our right to traverse public space in/through sound: to make *dawsha* and make a

scene. Farha further reflected this contradictory tension in her imperatives to her daughters not to pick up the language and mannerisms of children on the street.

Farha privileges education, and perceives it as the way out of precarity, and to transcend class, for her two young daughters. She doesn't want them to get married if they don't want to, teaches them English, and wants them both to go to university. Farha recognises *dawsha* as a category and marker of difference, as an order-word that stratifies the social and renders bodies out of place and unwelcome, and so does not want her children to pick up the mannerisms and language from 'the street' so that they can go on and move beyond their class. She warns her daughters that if they become friends with 'the children of the street', they will never be able to associate with *nas nedeeffa* [clean people]. 'I raise them so that they can be prepared for a better future, not one like this.'

Reflecting on my experiences with Safeya and Farha, and their narratives, I realised that, to a large extent, our practices of hearing, listening to, and producing sounds are culturally-constructed, performative, and socially-mediated. We are subjectively positioned and this affects our relationship to, interpretations of, and production of sound. I do not conceptualise sounds as mere 'disembodied' vibrations in space, but rather, I work to consider 'whole' and situated sounds, and aural practices more generally in socially, historically, geographically, and temporally specific contexts.

GET TOGETHER: GARDEN CITY

In a penthouse apartment in an upscale apartment overlooking the Nile, I was enjoying evening cocktails with a small group of people. I was invited to this get-together by a friend of

mine who works in an international NGO. She had told the host that I was researching sounds and *dawsha* in Cairo and he thought it was incredibly interesting. He had told her to invite me and that he would be interested in participating. Moreover, he felt that his guests would also have something to contribute to this work. The people present were an interesting, if slightly self-important, bunch. Most were politically and socially active in Cairo in some way or another. There were bloggers, lawyers, development workers, columnists, commentators, and self-proclaimed activists and intellectuals who got together once a month to ‘drink, argue, and hang out,’ as the host put it.

We were on an expansive balcony on a warm night at the end of spring, and when you looked down at the Nile you could see the brightly-lit, neon party-boats and feluccas making their way down the dark river. The boats were playing electro-*sha’abi* music that floated up to us.

Electro-*sha’bi* is a popular Egyptian music genre. *Sha’bi* means ‘popular’ or ‘of the people’ and the word has class connotations, usually referring to the large working class. The genre is associated with the urban working class in Cairo, and is frequently criticised as overtly political, critical, sexually obscene, and overwhelming or *dawsha* by upper-class commentators. The songs are satirical and often express frustrations with life in Egypt, discussing drugs, sex, relationships, unemployment, religion, and alcohol - topics deemed harmful and detrimental to public morals and decency by the powers that be. While initially controversial and incredibly ‘disruptive’, it had recently been appropriated by Cairo’s elite and can frequently be heard at weddings and nightclubs where booze flows free.

Oka & Ortega's immensely popular song, *Ela'ab Yala*, was playing on one of the brightly lit boats. Its thudding baseline, unapologetic and controversial vocals, and layered electro-synthetic tones could be both heard and felt seven floors up. Amir, an Egyptian-American political commentator and Western media darling who can't speak Arabic announced, 'This is one of my favorite Arabic songs - I feel like it really connects me to the *sha'ab* [people].' Sherine, a popular blogger and Twitter activist snorted loudly, 'That's a bit of a pretentious thing to say, Amir, don't you think?'

Amir jumped to defend himself, 'I just think it's very representative and evocative of the working class and their concerns.' He looked at me, 'This is a great example of what people think is *dawsha* - the music is obtrusive and too much for our ears to process. It's headache music, but I like this song.' Bassem, a corporate lawyer, added, 'We played this song at my wedding - my mother was horrified and suggested that, if this was the music that we were going to play, perhaps we should just get married on the streets of Imbaba (a working-class neighborhood) instead of at a country club.'

'That's so bourgeois,' responded Sherine. Bassem rolled his eyes, 'What can I say? She is very much a product of her class upbringing.'

This encounter left me feeling a little bit uncomfortable and quite self-conscious. I had been guilty of making similarly classist remarks before I began with my research, particularly about *tok-toks* [motorcycle rickshaws] playing loud music on the streets at night. Once upon a time (pre-Master's), it would not have been surprising to hear me saying something very similar to Amir, but now I could *hear* what was being said clearly.

During this encounter, I could see a very clear ‘otherisation’ in the upper-class framings of noise. It was sonic ordering and (class) hierarchy articulated. It was couched and disguised in a discourse of civility and civilisation or a desire for peace and quiet, but at its heart, what it does is deem people unwelcome, unwanted, disorderly, and out of place because of their sounds, and because we would rather mute those sounds and their sources. Here, *dawsha* functions to deem unwelcome. We did not feel like they belonged on our ‘sanitised’ streets because we felt like they belonged on their own ‘unruly, dirty, and crowded’ streets. These comments actually had nothing to do with sound, more with a desire to render people as Other and exclude them. If I had heard these songs at a wedding or at a nightclub, I would have danced like there was no tomorrow, but because of the source of these sounds (the ‘unwelcome’ *tok-tok* in Maadi or the *sha’abi* party-boat), I perceived it differently, and those around me did too.

Herein lies the the potential of sound (deemed *dawsha*) to truly disturb. If our neighborhoods are clearly demarcated and clearly bordered, then it is easy to maintain class segregation - but sounds are unbounded: they travel and spill and bring you into their world, contributing to the constant (re)creation of new worlds. Sounds (re)make space. There is no escaping a loud sound, particularly if it traces back to, and therefore indicates proximity to, something or someone you don’t want.

Sound scholar, Oosterbaan (2009), suggests that music preference is a certain kind of identity politics. To this, I can attest: my listening to music is entirely socially and politically conditioned. To me, as a thoroughly colonised creature, *sharqi* [Eastern] music sounds like *nashaaz* [out of tune, discordant] and I thoroughly dislike listening to it (whether Amr Diab or Oum Kalthoum). There is a class element at play here, but there is also an audio-conditioning

element: Western music, the music that I grew up listening to, is the type of music I have been conditioned to find harmonious. Western music uses fulltones and halftones, while *sharqi* [Eastern] music fills the empty spaces in the notes with quarter-tones. These quarter-tones are what sound discordant to my ears. Think of the Spanish guitar and the Oud – the key difference is that the Spanish guitar has frets (the raised lines on its neck) and Oud is fretless, enabling quarter-tones to be played. These frets enable or disable quarter-tones, and this to me makes all the difference between *dawsha* and ‘music’. This particular position is not a purely individual one, nor is it sonically and politically neutral.

Dawsha, particularly in the form of electro-*sha’abi* can disrupt, but can also be mainstreamed, assimilated, and appropriated by those in power. Electro-*sha’abi* has started to become mainstream and it is increasingly popular among Cairo’s elites - whether this assimilation and appropriation is transformative, transgressive, or declawing of the disruptive power of *sha’abi* is a conversation for the next project, but the ethnographic encounter that we will now read raises some very interesting questions about the role *dawsha* and *sha’abi* can play in (re)shaping socialities in Cairo.

ZEIN: RAMADAN KHEIMA, 6TH OF OCTOBER

Ramadan was in full swing, and I was at a ‘Suhoor’ concert at The Tap’s (an expensive resto-bar, frequented by Cairo’s affluent elites) Ramadan *kheima* [tent]. To make the most out of a dry month, as was the case every Ramadan, The Tap’s line-up of acts for the Holy Month consisted of really big *mahraganat* and *sha’abi* artists (Ahmed Sheba, Oka & Ortega). Zein, my friend, is employed as a sound engineer at The Tap. Usually her work is with the DJs and

Western music bands that make the rounds between the clubs that cater to Cairo's elites, and so this was a new challenge for her. Oka & Ortega were playing that night and I went to see them and to hang out with Zein afterwards. This whole setup was incredibly fascinating to me: a huge electro-*sha'abi* act playing for an affluent upper-class audience. It seemed like a really fruitful (and fun) place to conduct research on sounds in Cairo.

In the vibrantly coloured tent, the audience was an eclectic mix of people. There were veiled women, a notable exception for The Tap, as well as people who wouldn't usually pass their stringent door selection process. That being said, it was still an expensive night out, so nobody who was there (with the exception of the act and their teams) could be described as anything other than upper-class. 'Everyone looks like us, there's nobody who's really different,' Zein remarked before the show. She had to go and set up, so I got chatting with a stranger standing beside me.

'I've never seen a *sha'abi* act live,' she exclaimed excitedly, 'It isn't underground anymore - everyone listens to *sha'abi* now. It's not just something for the street now, it's worked its way up from *tok-toks* and places like Boulaq and street weddings where it started - it's mainstream now, we hear it at nightclubs and weddings when the DJ wants us to dance. It's so high energy.'

We were standing beside a man who works for Oka & Ortega's team, I think he was their manager but I'm not certain. He was an older man, in his mid-forties, who looked out of place in a button-up, short-sleeved shirt. He had obviously been listening to our conversation and decided to weigh in, 'Sorry to interrupt, and I didn't mean to be listening to your conversation, but what do we have in Arabic culture now that makes people dance other than *sha'abi*? Oum Kalthoum

and Amr Diab are from a different time. How many songs do we have in Arabic that can make you dance? *Mahraganat* is the new culture and the new generation of music coming out of Egypt. It made its way into places like this from *sha'abi* areas. At first, people resented it and said it was ruining our culture. What culture? This is our culture. Everyone, no matter how religious they pretend to be, likes to party and do drugs. People like Oka & Ortega are developing our culture. This is life: new things come and they change everything. People may say that *mahraganat* music is from the street but it's revolutionary. The street is where the revolution happened.' He excused himself, because the show was about to start.

A big man got onto the stage with a microphone and started hyping the crowd up, 'Get up? Are you ready?' He was shouting, pumping people up, getting the energy levels up, and the previously-seated began getting to their feet. Suddenly, a large group of men with all different kinds of drums marched onto the stage and began beating and smashing their drums in time with his calls. It reminded me of a football match, or a protest, and the drums and reverberations were having a huge effect on ramping up the energy and anticipation levels of the now-excited and standing crowd. Oka & Ortega came on to the stage and for the next two hours, the crowd went wild.

I have been to enough concerts, raves, parties to be able to say that this was something that I had never seen before. It was so loud: the beats were so bassy, the auto-tune brilliant but deafening, and the energy levels at their maximum level. Everybody was dancing and jumping, people were standing on couches, on chairs, on each other's shoulders. Nobody was sitting down. Oka & Ortega (and their crew) really knew how to work up the crowd and whip them into

a frenzy. As they performed, they got off the stage and walked between the audience - grabbing people's phones and taking selfies with them.

Crazy energy. It felt like a human force-field. Everyone was singing along, they knew the lyrics.

A few hours later, after the incredible show had ended and everybody had gone home, Zein was working to take down the equipment, we were talking about her experience. She couldn't stop smiling.

'That was so weird, man. It was an experience like I'd never had before. All my monitors were in the red, but I didn't care. As a sound engineer, I really didn't know what to expect. I was a bit nervous about the type of people I was going to be dealing with. Would they look down at me and respect me less because I'm a female sound engineer like I get from the bands who usually come to The Tap? They were amazing, they only wanted one thing - they wanted things to be fucking loud, and they want reverb. That was their only goal.'

'Before they came, we did what we always do. We mic-ed up the drum-sets and the percussion instruments. When they came, they didn't want any of that. They didn't want any microphones on the drums and we were pushing them to have them. It's a big tent, and you want to make sure everyone in the back can hear, right? They kept insisting that they didn't need microphones, and they were right. They didn't need microphones on the drums. In the middle, we actually had to use medical tape to tape up the kick-drums so they wouldn't rip because they were banging them so hard.'

‘It was really different from what I was used to. It was fun, even if it was really loud. As a sound engineer, one of my key goals is taking care of my own ears and other people’s ears. With *sha’abi* acts, I can’t do that and I don’t want to. This is the style of the music.’

As I discovered, certain combinations of sounds in certain places and at certain times elicited a visceral bodily reaction. Here, the sounds were pumping me up, making me move, dance, and jump. I was so ‘in the moment’ that, even after hours of vigorous and sweaty dancing, I did not once consider sitting down to rest. Outside the scope of my ‘fieldwork’, this was made especially evident to me at a music festival that I attend every year. ‘Music festival’ is a little bit of a misnomer - it is more like a three-day techno rave by the sea.

This year (the 2018 edition), there were two stages with acts playing simultaneously. At either stage, you could not hear the other one, but while moving from one stage to another or at other areas in the festival, you could actually hear the music from both stages at the same time and it was a very disorientating and unsettling experience. With a few notable exceptions, the music was dark and deep techno-trance, resonating and resounding with high-pitched electro-synth shrieks paired with bassy thuds that you could feel in your body. At either stage, I was fine, I was not overwhelmed, but the second I could hear both - while walking between stages, or sitting down at a picnic table to eat. my heart would kick into high gear and I could feel a panic attack bubbling in the pit of my stomach. Sounds truly affect us viscerally, affectively, and pre-cognitively, and I don’t know if we pay enough attention to that, and to the ways in which this happens to us in our everyday lives.

SHISHA WITH DINA: DOWNTOWN BAR

Dina is an immensely popular local musician and a friend of a friend. She is currently producing a solo album where the music is made up entirely of train sounds that she recorded. Beyond the scope of my research, her project is fascinating and based on the simple premise that beauty, or *dawsha*, is in the eye of the beholder. Anything can be a musical instrument if that's your frame of mind. She focused on using screeches, shouts, and honks to make sonic harmony on her album.

We were sharing a *shisha* in Wust el Balad and talking about her album, 'I wanted to show that anything could be used to make beautiful sounds. In Egypt, the sounds are representative of what's happening inside and around us.'

Over the duration of this project, I have grown more attuned and sensitive to sounds and the way they affect me and my experiences of everyday life. I was not explicitly aware of the impacts of sound on me, on how I variously interpreted them and attributed meanings to them. I could not articulate these experiences, but despite this, they unconsciously shaped and underpinned the way I moved through my world.

TAHA: FEAR AND LOATHING IN MAADI

It was late afternoon and Taha and I were walking down a quiet street in a leafy and affluent Maadi street. He works as a doorman in a nearby building and was running an errand for a resident. We were going to the nearby supermarket to buy eggs and cheese. On the quiet street, you could hear birds chirping. Mums and maids are walking around with their children in strollers and their dogs in tow. There was the bell ring - *ding ding* - of an odd bicycle that passed

us, and we could hear the conversations of the nearby security guards and doormen. It was very quiet. Oddly for Cairo, and even for this Maadi side-street, you could hardly hear any cars. The only sounds of cars came from a nearby main street and sounded far away. They were getting louder though because we were walking in that direction.

This main street that we were going to is a really interesting one. It very clearly marks the border between Old Maadi and Maadi Sakanat/Kobry Torah: one bridge overhead and one street are the difference between an affluent area and a working-class area. They are separated by less than 500 metres, but the worlds are completely distinct. 500 meters on, and gone are the foreign and upper-class mums in tank tops with pugs on leashes, gone are the security guards, and gone is the relative silence, the homogeneity of the buildings, and the trees. They are replaced with unsupervised children playing by entrances, donkeys with carts attached on the side of streets, parked *tok-toks*, balconies painted in defiantly bright colors – lime greens, pinks, reds, and yellows, and veiled women and men in white vests on the sides of the roads.

As we were walking along the side street, there was an annoying, grating, and loud honking in the background - the sound of a blow-horn at a football match - *TOOT TOOT TOOT* - but pitched slightly higher. It pierced the air consistently and relentlessly at thirty second intervals. To me, the honking sound was both annoying and noticeably out of place - *dawsha*.

I think my face had scrunched up in distaste because Taha looked at me and smiled. He knew that I was doing research on sound and *dawsha*; he thought it was meaningless to study, ‘Why are you studying this? It doesn’t matter. Thirty million angry people live on top of each other. Of course Cairo is loud, it will always be loud, and there is nothing you can do to change that.’ But he indulged me anyway. He explained, ‘This honk is for the man selling *ghazl banat*

[cotton candy]. The next road over, there is a man on a bicycle selling it. This honk sounds exactly the same everywhere in Egypt.’ I asked him how he felt about it, whether or not it annoyed him, and he shook his head.

‘For me, it has a lot of memories of *massyaf* [beach summer getaway], it reminds me of summers on the beach as a boy. It’s like the song of the Western ice-cream truck,’ he hummed the tune, ‘only this one is very Egyptian. The children hear it and they come out running, and the parents hear it and get frustrated.’ The honking was getting louder. ‘Do you want some? He’s getting closer.’ We were moving towards the cotton-candy seller on the main street, and he was moving towards us. I told him that I did not, and we continued our walk to the nearby market.

As we approached the main road, the cars got louder. This area is a *maw’af mowasalat* [informal public transport hub] and there were drivers of minibuses calling out destinations for passengers. I made a conscious effort to open my ears, listen to them, and to tune in to the sounds around me. There were young men hanging around a kiosk having a heated argument. I felt uncomfortable in the midst of all the shouting - even though I was with Taha, I did not completely feel safe. I was the only woman (unveiled, too) in the immediate vicinity, and I was hyper-aware of that fact. I didn’t know whether was my imagination or not, but it felt like I was getting longer and more lewd looks than usual. It was hot under the scorching sun and I was sweating profusely. Cars honked and men shouted and street dogs barked. I felt overwhelmed. Everything was happening everywhere at once. I felt my palms begin sweating and my heart began racing. A man from the group that were shouting by the kiosk whistled at me, drawing my and Taha’s attention to him. Suddenly, the group’s attention was on me and the harassment began in earnest.

My skin prickled as I tried to listen to exactly what they were saying. I felt disconnected from myself like I was having an out-of-body experience. My legs felt heavy, my vision blurred, and my head spun. A car screeched dangerously close to me. I didn't want to be there. I wanted to be back on my street, in my area, where I feel safe, where I belong, where I am not so visibly out of place, and where it is more quiet. I felt overwhelmed, like I was not in control any more.

Retrospectively, the kiosk whistle (and the jeers and comments and assorted sexual harassment) directed towards me, and my subsequent panic attack were rich encounters that helped me tease out how sound, power, and space come into conversation in the everyday. On that street, with the way I was dressed and the way I looked, I was very much out of place. I physically represented wealth and privilege in a place that was not my own and at a time where government price-hikes were making the working class more and more uncomfortable. There was an inherent tension in that encounter, and the whistles and other sonic enactments of harassment in that space came to function as clear boundary demarcation and as a (re)colonisation of *their* space.

This was the first panic attack I ever had while conducting fieldwork, but it was not the last. I discovered that my conscious decision to tune in to the city and its sensorial stimuli was an incredibly significant decision that would frequently overwhelm me and cause me to experience panic attacks. The sonic overload, often paired with the fact that I was in areas where I did not feel safe or comfortable, particularly in areas where I felt out of place and visibly Other, was prone to inducing debilitating panic attacks. It felt like I was hearing too much, I could not filter anything out, and I did not like how I was feeling. I was tuning in to more than my brain could process and so the system went into overdrive.

I excused myself from Taha and walked home, as he went to have a confrontational conversation with the man who had whistled at me. The walk back only took a few minutes, but the second I was back in an area that I deemed ‘my territory’, I immediately felt better. What initially felt like quiet fell over the area and I felt safe again. Upon reflection (and this happened to me more than once) I realised that it was not necessarily ‘quiet’ as such that fell over the area, more that I was moving into a space where I was used to the sounds and the rhythms. I was in a space where I was comfortable, and could predict the sounds, their decibel levels, and their rhythms to some degree of accuracy. These were sounds I knew and could comfortably situate myself within.

Sonic phenomena and auditory events, whether banal or extraordinary, frequently open doors to worlds of imagination and temporalities that go well beyond the constraints of their immediate context or source. As situated listeners, our listening is shaped by our attentiveness and by broader concerns and factors not contained within the actual audition of the sound itself (Voegelin, 2010). Auditory perception is anything but universal, as English (2014: 3) puts it, listening is a ‘perceptive undertaking that operates simultaneously across a broad array of engagements with sonic dynamics in space over time’.

As I have argued previously, our positions as beings that listen and hear, while highly subjective are socially, politically, and culturally conditioned and informed. The way we decode, interpret, and make sense of sounds are, to a degree, an extension (conscious or unconscious) of our social positions and our relations to power. Hearing and listening are not neutral activities.

UBER RIDE WITH MAY

I was going to an outing in Zamalek, an affluent Cairo neighborhood, with another Maadi resident, May, an old school friend. As almost neighbours, we were going to go together and were coordinating transport logistics. It was Thursday night and Google Maps predicted that traffic would transform a usually 45-minute long journey into one that would take something just shy of two hours. We were arguing on the phone, and I was trying to convince her that we should take the Metro. ‘This is obviously for your research, yeah? Otherwise, why else would you take the Metro?’ she asked.

I reflected for a moment. Taking the Metro versus driving would shave about an hour and a half from our journey, and that was probably reason enough to take it. But I had to admit that there was some truth to her, rather derisive, question. I had never taken the Metro before commencing with my fieldwork; the first time I took it was when my research was more focused on urban mobility and transport routes with Farha. I really liked it, and it quickly became the most logical mode of transport for me when I was going anywhere near Wust el Balad (Downtown Cairo). My office at the time was located in Tahrir Square very close to the metro station, and I also live very near another station. It was a no-brainer, so I began taking it twice a day. At some point, I had become fixated on the sounds of the Metro sellers, and had once told her about how they use their voices to move their products - selling everything from makeup to chocolate to electrical cables to clothes to *sweet soury* (Syrian hair-removal wax). It is fair to assume that this conversation about sounds was playing in her mind when she explained her reluctance to take the Metro, ‘It’s way too crowded, I don’t want to get to the restaurant feeling gross and sweaty and annoyed and harassed. It’s too loud, all the yelling and shouting makes me feel violated. They just do it right in your ear, they have no respect for personal space and they

have no idea how to behave in public. I don't mind taking the Tube in London, but here I just can't do it. The people are just so inconsiderate, and it smells disgusting. Even putting in headphones does nothing to tune them out. I'd rather spend an extra hour in the car to avoid that'.

We ended up taking an Uber. The driver was using GPS which took us on an unknown, but supposedly quicker, route. As far as routes to Zamalek go, this one was pretty sketchy. It went through a few *aa'shwaiyat* where I was hyper-conscious of my clothing choice of ripped jeans.

Everything was going fine until we got to Dar el Salam, a popular working-class neighborhood (the same one that Safeya lives in), and a fight broke out between two cars in front of us. They had almost crashed, I think, but they stopped to get out of their cars thereby completely halting traffic on the crowded street. More and more people joined the almost-fight, which then transformed into an actual fight. Suddenly, we were in the middle of what I could only describe as a really enormous fight or a micro-protest. Shouting bodies appeared and swelled up around the car, and a motorcycle almost drove into the side of the Uber we were in. In an instant, the situation transformed from regular crowding and a casual street altercation, which I am used to, to something that felt dangerous and untameable. Bodies swelled around the car in no formation that I was familiar with. Banging. Chants. Swearing. Honking. Screams. Smashing. Sounds that, to me, represented disorder, rage, and frustration. It looked like a boiling-over, the explosion of a pressure-cooker that made no sense in that instant. The driver locked the door and began praying as young men began to bang their hands on the windows and the hood of our car (and those of other cars stuck in the traffic jam with us). I looked at May who

was as white as a sheet beside me, and I could see my emotions clearly mirrored on her face. Fear, and a desire to be anywhere but here. The shouts and honks were constant - not coming in waves - for ten minutes they did not stop. All the while, inside the car was total silence. The driver had switched off the radio, after muttering, '*fein el hokouma?*' [where is the government?]. We were a pocket of terrified stillness and frozen silence in a sea of sounds that made us feel entirely out of place. Finally, the altercation was resolved and we began moving again. I heaved a sigh of relief as we reemerged onto familiar, but still crowded, roads.

When we arrived, May looked at me apologetically. We had hardly spoken during the car-ride. We had both been incredibly tense and were coming down from the anxiety experienced previously. She asked, 'I guess we should have taken the metro, right?'

In this unexpected encounter, initially not intended as 'fieldwork', I experienced - for the first time since the protests between 2011 and 2013 - the collective sounds of rage. Sitting stock-still and straight-backed in that car, somewhat isolated but somewhat implicated in the collective rupture that we found ourselves within, I found myself thinking about sound and sonic disturbance as an assertion of existence for those who have few articulations, avenues, and outlets to express their increasing stress and discomfort: an auditisation and externalisation of internal affects.

In a poor, popular neighborhood that has been transformed into a main thoroughfare for 'outsiders' like me trying to get from Maadi to Zamalek with the popularisation of GPS systems and route and traffic optimisation, I saw a very clear polarisation between the drivers of private cars on the one hand, and microbus, *tok-tok* divers, and area residents on the other hand (those sitting at the *ahwas* on either side of the street, and those hanging out on the pavements). The

collective frustration, the moment of violence or car accident that somehow instantaneously grew and boiled-over into a pop-up mob looked like it was the straw that broke the camel's back. I began thinking about what opportunities these residents have to express their frustration at price-hikes, increasing inequality, precarity, institutionalised violence, and corruption. Do they feel as helpless every day as I did in that car? Do the men feel impotent, like they are somehow unable to socially or publically perform 'masculinity' correctly? What of the women who have to pay to put their school-age children in private lessons because if they don't, their teachers might fail them? How do they *voice* their experiences and emotions? Where do they *go*?

The collective rupture and explosion began to look like the inevitable conclusion to a story of violence, helplessness, injustice, disenfranchisement, and inequality. A conclusion that, in the contemporary Egyptian moment, I would not be surprised if I saw more of.

NADER: UBER

Nader, my Uber driver and I were stuck in a particularly horrendous and loud traffic jam. *BEEP. BEEP. BEEPBEEP.* We hadn't moved more than fifty meters in half an hour and the constant honks and lack of movement were getting to both of us. He huffed and grumbled something, and to break the ice, I told him that those of us unfortunate enough to live in Cairo were definitely going to go to heaven. He laughed, and asked me if I had really needed to take this journey today, or if I was putting both of us through hell for no reason.

I told him that I was going to university for a class that I couldn't miss. He prayed out loud for God to grant me success.

He introduced himself, 'I was originally a psychology teacher, but then Uber came along

and I have a family to feed. What are you studying?’ I told him that I was an anthropology student currently pursuing my MA, and he asked me what I was researching. I explained my project as *dawsha* in Cairo and he perked up and asked me if he could participate because he could add valuable information. I enthusiastically agreed and he began, ‘The reason Cairo is so loud is because it is so crowded, and it is a relatively small space. Another big thing is the tension, frustration, and anger. When you pair that with the anonymity of the city, you get people who don’t care about the people around them, and they don’t care how people see them. You also have many people from rural and upper Egypt - farmers and people from outside who don’t know how to be civilised. The close proximity of these bodies, the tension, these things lead to fights and *dawsha*’

‘I want you to make an important distinction between *sha’abi* areas and *a’ashwaiyaat* areas [‘slums’]. In *sha’abi* areas, people know each other and they behave like they have been well brought up. These areas are the hubs of Egyptian culture and the sounds in them are normal and tolerable and decent, whereas *a’ashwaiyaat* are full of farmers and the lowest classes in society whose parents didn’t make any effort to bring up. These are the people who sexually harass women, I am sorry, but you wouldn’t be able to go into one of these areas dressed the way you are. They think that *regoula* [manliness] is in being loud and disruptive, but these men don’t provide for their families at all, they send all of their wives to go work as *shaghalat* [domestic workers] or worse. They spend all their time smoking *shisha* [water pipes] and cigarettes and *hashish*, *la mo’akhza* [hash, if you will excuse me], I am sorry to say this to you, but it is the truth. People like me, who are from areas like El Moezz, the home of Naguib Mahfouz, we don’t send our wives to work. We work two or three jobs to make sure we make the money to give her

and the kids anything they want.’

‘*Dawsha* is definitely related to class. You don’t find people who are from Maadi, Zamalek, or Masr el Gedida shouting at each other on the street. Have you ever ridden a microbus?’ I replied that I had not, and he continued, ‘You won’t believe the music they play on microbuses - the people who enjoy this type of music are all on drugs. People can’t stand anything, it’s hot and there are so many of them in such small spaces that it is almost a foregone conclusion that they will lose their tempers.’

This was the second time a collaborator made a reference to children having not been brought up properly, to the *dawsha* music of microbuses being both disruptive and as the domain of drug users, and to the notion of many frustrated people sharing space necessarily leading to explosions. This encounter in particular also illustrated the permeation of *dawsha* as order -word. Nader was using it to compare upper-class areas to working-class ones along with their residents, illustrating how it stratifies the social, he was deploying it as a differentiator, a marker of class and social difference. In his, and in many of my other collaborators, enthusiasm to contribute to my project, I also realised how pervasive and permeating the notion of *dawsha* is. It is a phenomenon that everybody has *something* to say about: whether it is criticising it, decrying it, analysing its roots and sources, deploying it to compare spaces and people, or just using it to bond over the unique experience of living in Cairo, it is provocative and socially relevant to my interlocutors.

FARHA IN THE CAR

Farha and I were in the car together on the way to the North Coast, where Farha would be staying with my grandmother for the summer. It was a five-hour drive and we were chatting about my research.

‘You know, yesterday, I thought of something that hadn’t occurred to me before. I think people, especially *sha’abi* people are *dawsha* because they want to be heard, they want somebody to hear them. Things are so stressful, *dawsha* expresses what’s going on inside people in Cairo - the anxiety within and the voicelessness. I guess we also affect each other. We create what is normal for our society, so if enough of us are loud, the rest of us become loud too. Of course, this is something that comes down to manners and upbringing: when people are brought up right, they don’t shout on the street, but nobody is brought up right anymore, and people are angry, and it’s hot, and it’s crowded. People are *makbooteen* [repressed], sexually and socially and politically and economically. They feel like they have been forgotten about, so they are loud to make themselves heard.’

She continued, ‘The city is completely different from *el reef* [the rural] and *mohafazat* [other governorates] where I grew up. There, at night, you can’t hear anything, and this is very scary for me now, I’m not used to it anymore. There are fewer people, and everybody knows everybody - here in Cairo, everybody is *mag’hood* [anonymous]. You can do whatever you want here, because everybody does whatever they want. Back *fel balad* [in the countryside], there are spaces between the family homes and land as well, so your closest neighbor probably won’t hear you if you shout. In the city, you’re living in very close proximity with people you don’t know. People are expressing the anger inside them, the repression. They bring the *ez’aag* [disturbance] inside them to the outside. They also bring you into their world, they force you into it when

they're loud. When my neighbor fights with her husband or someone is gossiping loudly on the metro or in a microbus, I can't help but be involved in their private lives, I feel like I am participating. They made their private lives public - there are things that should not leave the home. Now, nobody cares, and everybody airs their problems for the world to see.'

Here, sounds connect lives and imposes worlds - they bring people together, blurring binary, traditional distinctions between public and private space.

DANA: DOWNTOWN BAR

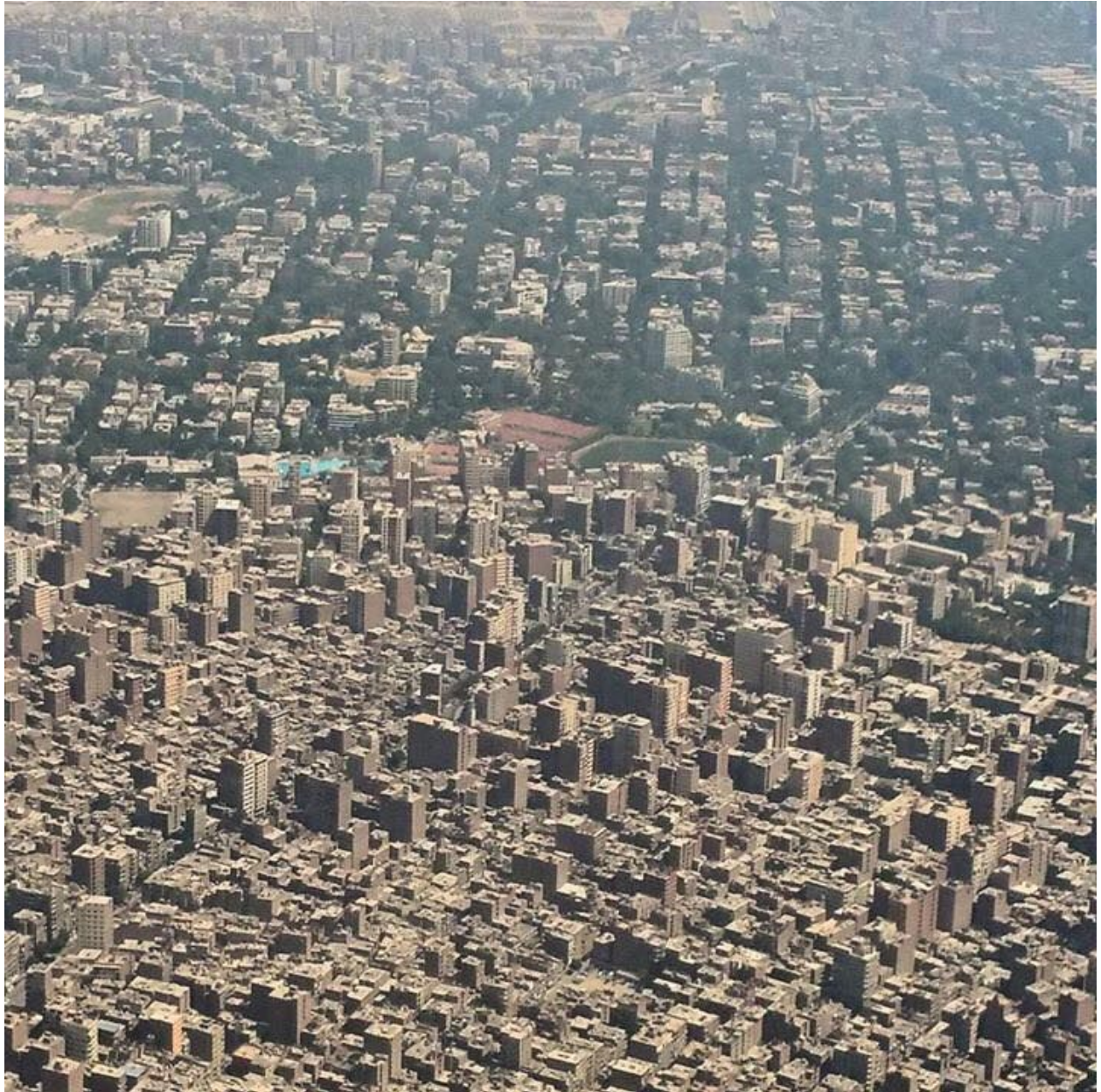
Dana is a multimedia artist who has produced sound installations before. Sitting in a crowded dive-bar in Downtown Cairo, her eyes darted around before she took a sip of her beer. We were about to go to an art exhibition where her art was being displayed. It is ground-level bar on a main street, and in the background, we could hear drivers arguing with a *sayes* [informal parking attendant], non-stop honks, and the chatter of the men around us.

She sighed, 'I wish Cairo were more quiet. At its loudest, Cairo is startlingly frightening.' I asked her to elaborate. 'To me, noise is sensory overload. If we can agree that there's a spectrum of sound that we define for ourselves, and which we use as guideline to base our auditory expectations on, noise is anything that falls outside of this spectrum. It's unexpected sound that produces a visceral bodily reaction. There are subcategories of noise - white noise or background noise that fall outside of this category, but in the context of Cairo, the suddenness of sound is what defines noise for me. I guess in Cairo, we actually have grey noise - white noise that is grey because it's Cairo. I just don't expect it - it jolts me. It's a car honk when you're distracted, an unexpected shout, the blast of music playing when you forget you had the volume

turned up to the max - everyone has encountered noises that have made them flinch, and they're the ones that are the most unpleasant. Cairo makes me flinch. We can't really tune it out either - if we see a bright flash of light, we close our eyes and protect our retinas. To protect our eardrums, we have to use our hands, and even that doesn't really afford them the best protection.'

Reflecting on the ethnographic encounters discussed so far, this chapter works to unpack the notion of really *listening* to Cairo, and teasing out how we hear and make sense of *dawsha*, and how we use our interpretations of sounds to stratify the social. They touch on class and gender dynamics, the politics of places, and how power is audibly and bodily enacted and maintained. My encounters with Dana, Safeya, Farha, Nader, the Garden City intellectuals, May, Zein, Dina, and Taha all offer illuminations and different entry-points that can allow us to access the micro and macro-politics of sonic perception and production. When and why does Cairo come to be configured as something to be scared of or something disturbing in these very different narratives, and by whom?

Chapter 4 - From Maadi, with Disdain: Mapping and Classing Cairo in Sound



An aerial view of Maadi and Dar el Salaam

“You're beautiful, but you're empty... One couldn't die for you.. My rose, all on her own, is more important than all of you together, since she's the one I've watered. Since she's the one I put under glass, since she's the one I sheltered behind the screen. Since she's the one for whom I killed the caterpillars (except the two or three butterflies). Since she's the one I listened to when she complained, or when she boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing at all. Since she's my rose.” - The Little Prince

Narratives on sounds and *dawsha* in/from my Maadi collaborators, where I grew up, were deeply disturbing but were also illustrative. This chapter includes three Maadi-centric ethnographic encounters that tell us much about how power operates in/from space through sound, and how it comes to demarcate space, create cores and margins and peripheries, and how *dawsha* comes to be configured as a site from which define ourselves, make claims about our identities, and the identities of Others.

LARA: MAADI COFFEE SHOP

Lara is a young professional, employed at one of Egypt's leading advertising agencies - she has lived in Maadi her whole life. We're sharing a coffee at a popular Maadi coffee shop on the bustling Road 9. Her perfectly manicured nails tap incessantly on her phone - the clicking is constant when I'm with Lara. She raises her eyes from her screen and she arches an eyebrow at me as the metro passes: we can both hear and feel it as it thunders past the coffee shop. She places her phone, screen facing downwards, on the table.

'I think you've built something too close to the metro if you feel an earthquake every time it passes you. This is an example of how we plan things in Cairo - the whole thing is a mess. There's so much *dawsha*, so much unnecessary and unwanted noise. This really stands out in Maadi, because we're supposed to be so much more serene and more peaceful than anywhere else. Where you live really changes the sounds you hear.'

'Our main roads in Maadi now really don't feel like Maadi anymore. We could be living in Imbaba, the way that people drive and behave. There are so many honking minibuses and *tok-toks* that play awful music now. They totally disregard the rules of the road, and the, like, unspoken rules of Maadi. Maadi used to feel like a cocoon when I was a kid. When I would drive

into Maadi, I would feel like I had come home but I don't feel like that anymore. Law enforcement doesn't care, you can basically drive anything in Maadi now, donkey carts, horses, trucks, and eighteen-wheelers. If I wanted to drive an unlicensed go-kart through the streets of Maadi, nobody would say anything. That's basically where we are now, it's lawless - it's so crowded and nobody gives a shit anymore.'

'The vehicles are part of the problem, but the people that drive them and the people that they bring are also an issue that really contributes to the pollution of Maadi, like, not just noise pollution when they honk or shout or play their music or harass girls, but actually throwing trash on the floor. To me, Maadi is a state of mind: it's about peace, calm, greenery, and serenity. It's about being a community and that's the best part about it. We know our neighbours, and we're super disconnected and different from the rest of Cairo. In the last few years, Maadi got crowded and *dawsha*, and people from here started moving to the suburbs like New Cairo. This changed the demographics of Maadi, and new people moved in who have a different mentality than us. We used to be an ungated gated community, and now look, harassment and *shabab* [young people] are everywhere. I mean, don't get me wrong, we're definitely not like the hustle bustle of *dawsha* downtown - yet - but we're turning into Shoubra [a middle-class neighbourhood] or a slum.'

'Maadi has an unspoken rule, or used to have an unspoken rule - be considerate of the people living around you and respect the place you're in. This means no shouting, no yelling, no sexual harassment, no cussing, no honks, and no loud *sha'abi* music. Now, no matter where you are, you can always hear cars and motorcycles - they're the fucking worst. When I walk, I always

have headphones in just because I don't want to hear anything that's going on around me. But that's dangerous too, because what if a car hits me because I can't hear it?

'Men are way louder than women on the street, and they're the ones driving cars and minibuses and *tok-toks* that are the actual worst - either they never remove their hands from the horn, or they have customised honks, or they use them as a language, like to swear or celebrate. It's usually lower-class men as well. I think the reason Maadi is so bad is because we have so many public schools in the area, and because *shabab* come to Maadi specifically to *sbot* in the *mayadeen* [hang out at the roundabouts], and they're the worst perpetrators of noise. They just don't understand how to behave. I always want to stop and ask them: why are you in Maadi? Surely it's because it's nicer here than where you live, it's tolerant and green and quiet. So why do you want to ruin that and make us like you? I don't feel comfortable walking around in a tank-top anymore. I don't know why Maadi became a chilling spot for outsiders, but I hate it and I wish they would just go back to where they're from.'

'For me, *dawsha* is the unexpected and unwanted background noise - it does to your ears what constantly-flickering lights do to your eyes. It gives you a headache, but at least with flickering lights, you can just close your eyes - how do you close your ears? There's a difference between *dawsha* and loud sounds too, I think, if I'm at a football match or at a party, I don't always think - oh, this is *dawsha*, but if I'm at a party and they're playing Arabic music, it always sounds like *dawsha* to me. The music just isn't as tidy, it's all over the place, like the culture of the lower classes, right?'

'I guess it makes perfect sense that this music - *sha'abi* - came out of the lower classes, it matches perfectly with their environments and the way they conduct themselves in public.'

This tirade got me thinking about how we use sounds to map places. Feld and Brenneis (2004) assert that sound is a key indicator of space and place. It plays a key role in the creation and maintenance of meaning, the construction of boundaries, and the demarcation of space. Nowhere have I experienced this more intimately than in Maadi. Sounds are fundamental to shaping how we interpret the spaces, times, and worlds we inhabit (Sparkes, 2009). The aural, whether or not we choose to recognise, articulate, and question it, is central to everyday lived experience in Cairo. These encounters stress the importance of hearing, listening, and perceiving as practices of making sense of our everyday lives, and of those around us. Sound as a modality of knowing, experiencing, and being in the world, literally as embodied beings who know and make sense through sounds, is primal and instinctual.

If our knowledge of ourselves, others, and the worlds and spaces we inhabit is inextricably linked to and shaped by listening, then an exploration of our perceptual experiences of our everyday in Cairo can tell us much about the everyday life of power and the making and unmaking of power relationships in the city. Our acoustic environments, and our experiences and perceptions of them, can tell us much about power in space and place.

ADAM: HIS HOUSE, MAADI

Adam is a British-Egyptian musician. I was at Adam's apartment in Maadi late one night when the power went out. We were plunged into darkness which made us both acutely aware of the sounds around us. Before moving to Maadi, Adam had lived in Haram, a lively and densely-populated neighbourhood close to the pyramids, with his family.

'The last power-cut I experienced was at home in Haram - it sounded nothing like this,'

he volunteered. I asked him what that meant, and he explained.

‘Haram is hectic in a sense that you have people there shouting and there are *tok-toks* who go by blasting music. There are fights in the street, there are women calling down to the street to get fucking milk. Like, it’s crazy. There is no no regard for like other people’s, not privacy, but *raheithom* [comfort]. Like, they seem to be unaware that they live around people. There’s very little, like, fucking space in between these buildings, so you can hear everything. If our neighbours in the building opposite us are having a fight, we’ll hear that and we’ll hear everything that’s being said. So it’s quite different from other places in Cairo and like even in my hometown – where my dad’s from – in Menoufia [governorate] there’s a completely different sound there because it’s quite rural. It’s sort of like, yeah, there’s cars there, there’s everything, there’s a road right in front of the piece of land that we live on but it is still very quiet. At night you can hear the occasional car go by but you can actually hear crickets.

‘You can hear kids in the street, you can sometimes you hear cows. It’s so different from the city. As opposed to this part of Maadi - I know where you live is deadly quiet. I live quite close to a main road so it’s very hustle bustle. *Yaany fee dawsha* [I mean there’s noise] all the time... fucking trucks – it doesn’t matter what time it is I can hear a motorbike screeching outside the fucking house at two o’clock in the fucking morning, three o’clock in the morning, *haga keda* [something like that] casual *neik* [as fuck],’ he laughed and lit a cigarette.

‘It’s actually much more peaceful here... like you won’t have that many people shouting. There’s people shouting, but it’s just not at the same level. It’s guys going home from a night out so you can hear them slurring and drunk.’ Adam lives close to The Tap, a popular bar.

‘In general, here is a peaceful and quiet area, except for the *bawab* [doorman] for the

building opposite us. His voice is so loud, it's ridiculous, it's like he swallowed a tractor. That just reminds me of being back in Haram because he's super loud for no reason.' I asked him if he thought neighbourhoods in Cairo sounded different.

'I don't know. There's also a lot of space between the buildings in New Cairo and 6th of October. The people who live there are different too, when you hear them it's because they're sitting in their garden having a conversation or having a party, not because they're shouting for milk or having an argument.'

'I guess Haram is noisier than New Cairo because people who live in New Cairo are either wealthy or nouveau riche. They sort of have this understanding that *mayenfa'ash* [it's inappropriate], and they're decent in a certain way and won't bother the people around them. They have more awareness of people around them as opposed to people who live in Haram. People in Haram just don't give a fuck.' I asked him what he meant by that, and he smiled.

'I'm not being classist - I am from there, my family still live there. I think it's them reacting to the cards that they've been dealt in life. If you have a shit job and can't make ends meet, if you're not living well according to society's standards and everything is fucking crowded and expensive, you let go, don't you? You quit caring what other people think of you. You're just like, fuck it, fuck everybody else. There's sort of a relationship between that and how loud you are - what you will shout when you know your neighbors can hear you, and what you will keep as a private, indoor conversation. You don't understand how close you are to your neighbors in Haram.'

'Haram is loud, but it's a completely different experience to being in the centre of the city, where I sometimes work. There's so much stuff going on in the heart of the city - you have

people coming and going from all walks of life. The people don't talk very loudly, they're just normal, but there are so many of them so the overall sound is quite loud. They just go about their day. I guess there are always cars, and boats on the river who have loud music on. You can imagine how loud it is down there if I can hear it from the 23rd floor.'

'Cairo sounds like chaos. It's just chaos coming and going, you will hear cars honking, motorcycles. You will hear people walking past you, you will hear catcalls because fucking people don't know how to control their urges, you will hear boats going by, you will hear horses and carts going by, you will hear sounds of whips, of men who are riding the horse and cart who are whipping the horse to go faster. In Cairo, you use every sense you have. They're elevated,'

'You don't think Cairo dulls the senses?' I asked

'Not at all because there are so many things happening. You're hearing and seeing a shit-tonne of things that are in front of you and around you - people, horses, cars, boats on the Nile. You're hearing all of that, and that is chaos. You're hearing so many things at the same time, and your ears can't compute it. What the fuck is going on? That's why I think Cairo sounds like chaos, as opposed to, say, London. London is kind of chaotic, but there's a system. Cars don't honk, people don't generally shout. But you can hear indistinct chatter. People walk a certain way... they follow a system. You have traffic lights, you have a system. You will hear cars at the same time you'll hear indistinct chatter. When the lights go red, you'll hear motors, but you won't hear honking, but you will hear footsteps... there's sort of like an organisation of sound happening. I would say it's a fucking orchestra.'

'You don't think Cairo is an orchestra?'

'Cairo is *so* not an orchestra. Cairo is an orchestra that have no idea what the fuck each

one of them is playing, and some people like that. I like having a system in place - something that I can see is organised. This is my problem with *sha'abi* music - it's disorganised. There are so many sounds that don't really fit together, there's too much that's going on. It's much like Cairo in that sense - there's so much going on that you can't just focus on one thing. There's no system. It's like our cultures too'.

'The culture in the Middle East is very chaotic, there's always *hamag* [chaos, barbarism, vulgarity]. *Sha'abi* music comes from, and is generally associated with, the lower classes. It's played at lower-class weddings, it's played in *tok-toks*. The volume is crazy too, they play it really loud. When you compare it to Western music, Western music is quite organised, it's 4s, there's a flow, there's an up, there's a down... and there's an ending. You understand the elements in the music. You understand what's going on... there's an organisation, and, maybe *sha'abi* music is the way it is because it comes from these places. There's a lot of disorganisation, lots of chaos, and lots of stuff happening in these areas, and I'm sure this has an effect.'

'What's the difference between sound and noise?'

'Noise - or *dawsha* - is, by definition, something that is annoying to you.' In the background, a car honk beeps loudly and a man shouts, 'Like that, that is bad noise'.

This encounter articulates many of the things previously discussed in this thesis and touched on in the ethnographic encounters up until this point: the association of *dawsha* with crowding, chaos, and the working class (Haram, blurring the boundaries of public and private space), *dawsha* as a marker of disorder and difference (evidenced in *sha'abi* music from *tok-toks*, and the idea that *dawsha* is just as much about its source as it is about its content and its decibel

level, and *dawsha* as a site of comparison in relation to colonially-mediated modernity (particularly with the comparison to London, New Cairo, and the notion of Cairo and the Middle East as chaos). This encounter is also incredibly evocative, and every single time I read it, I find myself thinking about something different. What I always find compelling when reading this encounter is the notion of Cairo as an incompetent orchestra, and the poeticism and succinctness of ‘Cairo is chaos. It’s chaos coming and going.’

THE MAADI ENVIRONMENTAL RANGERS

My mother once took me along to a pseudo town-hall meeting that was hosted by a self-appointed Maadi environmental watchdog group. She thought it would be a wonderful site of research, since ‘noise pollution’ was the first item on their agenda for the meeting. The text-invitation that my mother received began, ‘We all want a cleaner and quieter Maadi...’

The meeting was held at the Maadi Yacht Club, and was celebrating the group’s anniversary. The group had brought their Zamalek (another upscale Cairo neighborhood) counterparts to speak at the event. They hosted the leaders of a group called the Zamalek Guardians for the exchange of ‘best practices’, since their Zamalek counterparts had been supposedly successful in tackling the issues that we were to discuss (littering, loitering, and noise pollution).

After two incredibly classist (and dull and pretentious) ‘keynotes’ that lasted about half an hour each, they opened the floor for discussion where we could all participate in dialogue to presumably make Maadi great again.

An outraged Maadi resident – Jihan, an affluent mother of two teenage boys - spoke up first, ‘We have to do something about these *tok-toks* everywhere. They’re worse now than they ever have been before and, frankly, it’s getting ridiculous.’ Her intention was not to debate the issue, and it was a foregone conclusion that everybody in that room would agree that the *tok-toks* needed to be eradicated from Maadi. Another man, Ismail, added, ‘and the minibuses too! They also have to go.’

Jihan spoke again, ‘I can hear them from my garden at all hours, honking constantly and incessantly playing *their* music [here she was clearly referring to *electro-sha’abi*], paying no attention to what time it is.’ The disgust was evident in her tone and she continued, ‘This might fly where *they* live, where people are loud all the time and think this is normal and natural, but this definitely doesn’t work for us in Maadi.’ Many audience members murmured their assent.

Karima, the head of the Maadi group nodded and responded authoritatively, ‘We’re already in discussions with the *haay* [the local municipality] about this problem. *Tok-toks* are already banned from Maadi and face a fine of EGP 5,000 if they’re found here, but the problem is that this just isn’t enforced at all. If we start hitting them where it hurts - their wallets - they won’t come here anymore. But you know the police, they don’t care about anything. Let me speak to the governor and see what we can do,’ she paused thoughtfully before adding and addressing the man who had voiced his desire to ban minibuses from Maadi, ‘I understand your concerns, Ismail, but I don’t think there’s anything we can do about the minibuses.’

At the end of the meeting, I approached Karima, Jihan, and Ismail to explain my research project to them and to ask them if I could include their comments in my thesis. They all

responded enthusiastically and affirmatively, and Karima added that, ‘People need to know about the epidemic *dawsha* in Maadi. It’s reached ridiculous proportions.’

These are all affluent adults in their early fifties who have no problem speaking about the working class as if they are a cockroach infestation that is tarring and marring the visage, aesthetics, and experience of Maadi. There is an incongruence here, because both Karima and Jihan have domestic workers and drivers from working-class backgrounds who facilitate their lives. These labourers all undertake very intimate work in their homes: they cook, clean, drive them around, and care for their children and their aging parents.

I brought this up to Jihan, who is, at the end of the day, a good friend of my mother’s. ‘These *tok-toks* and minibuses provide transport for the people who work in your home, without them, your life would be much harder, wouldn’t it?’

She laughed, an incredibly shrill and high-pitched sound, ‘You just don’t understand, *habibti* [darling]. The people on these *tok-toks* aren’t taking anybody anywhere, they’re just loitering and gawking. They’re here to harass women and steal things.’ Here, I feel like it would be unfair of me not to add that Jihan was the victim of an unpleasant attack a few weeks prior, where she was walking down a main road in Maadi with my mother and a *tok-tok* drove by and tried to grab her bag. She held on and then got dragged down the street, almosting dislocating her shoulder, and getting a few serious scrapes and cuts. She sighed, ‘Maadi was never like this before. We used to have people from the lower classes come in to work here years ago but they never behaved like this. They’re out of control, like animals. I’ve never been scared to walk in Maadi before, but now, I don’t go anywhere without my Jeep. If someone bothers me, I can just run them over.’

Sounds can transgress boundaries and and sprawl and spill over. The policing and regulation of sounds, the arbitrary and subjective impositions of *dawsha* on particular sounds, individuals, and communities, can point to sonic regimes and hierarchies that are localised and situated, but can also tell us much about how and where power operates. What comes to be rendered noise is tied to dominant narratives and complex spatial, conceptual, and personal experiences (Augoyard, 2014; Patsarika et al., 2014). Atkinson (2007) suggests that sound, music, noise, and silence construct place and territory and that the acoustic backdrop is shaped by and shapes relations of power. Here, the soundscape is as an invisible but active acoustic territory to enact, express, or resist power relations. Producing and attempting to muffle sounds in space is an act of asserting power.

Textual Aurality: Soundscapes from Maadi to Downtown

I use words to grant you access to sound's present unfolding, for you not to hear the same, but to hear its possibilities. Writing about the possibility of sound is a constant effort to access the fleeting and ephemeral, that which is barely there and yet influences all there is. Sound is the invisible layer of the world that shows its relationships, actions, and dynamics... Sound is the thing thinging, a contingent materiality that is not captured as noun but runs as verb.'

- Salome Voegelin

The route: walking in Maadi to the Sakanat Metro Station – taking the metro for 9 stops, getting off at Sadat Metro Station in Tahrir Square, Downtown Cairo – walking down Mohamed Mahmoud street to the Greek Campus, a startup hub and tech-park.

My footsteps are soft, steady, rhythmic thuds. This is me and my movements in the sounds of Cairo. This is one of the ways that I navigate the city. The area where my house is is incredibly quiet, and the the sounds are very distant. Very few cars are heard in the immediate space, and the predominant language I hear on this part of my commute is English – I live beside an international nursery, and parents and drivers are taking kids to school. As I approach Road 9 (a busy street where the metro is located) the decibel levels get higher and the area gets

noisier. I can hear the chatter of more people (almost all men), the sounds of motorcycles and bicycles, and a rapidly increasing number of honks. The distance between the cars and myself is getting closer, and I am starting to unintentionally use these sounds to chart and affect the way I walk.

A shrill wolf-whistle breaks through the noise, it rises and falls – and then another one, and then another one. They are piercing and dominant, an assertion of something. They are almost certainly directed at a woman, and I begin to feel uneasy being on foot alone in public (seemingly there for the public consumption of men). There is a group of teenage boys sitting in front of the metro station and as I approach, their previously boisterous conversation hushes. In anticipation, my stomach tenses and I brace myself for discomfort. Their attention turns to me - now at the on the steps of the metro station, I am out of place. They begin shouting in my direction, hissing, and making comments about my ripped jeans. If I weren't recording this, I would have definitely had my headphones in and turned up the music to insulate myself from these unwanted sounds, but since I am recording I also feel a strange sense of power. What these young men are saying will be captured – I am an earwitness. As if on cue, a woman begins wailing to my right. Her shrieks are heart-wrenching and tug at my gut – I cannot see her but am hyper-aware of her existence. I am having an emotional response to her existence. Why is she screaming? What's happening? Who is helping her? Beside me, a man selling tissues on the ground reassures another man: it's fine – she gets like this sometimes. I picture her dressed in brown. Behind me, cars are fighting for their place on the street, honking as a way of communicating.

I pass through the security gates of the metro and the metal detector beeps loudly. The sound goes unacknowledged by the policeman who doesn't even glance up at me. I swipe my card and the turnstile - the rolling metal electronic gate dings its approval: my card has been accepted, and I pass through the circular turnstile. Click. Click. Click. The clicking is a clear sound-marker indicating my passage from one part of the world to another. I hear the whirring of the metro pulling in to the station and the ding ding ding that warns you that it's approaching or about to pull out – somebody is holding the door to one of the cars open so the train beeps faster and in a higher pitch. Dingdingdingdingding.

The sounds of machines are now drowning out the chatter of people on the platform. The train rumbles, groaning and screeching as it pulls forwards. This is one of the older trains – I can tell by the sound it is making. This also means that it doesn't have AC, so I wait for the next one. I can hear faint honking and men yelling from the street behind me. This honking is different now – it is celebratory rather than aggressive. Distinctive short beeps, in rhythm. Beep beep beepbeepbeep. The platform alarm goes off [deet deet deet], alerting us that the next train is about to arrive. I get on the mixed car instead of the women's car, and I am one of the few women there. The soundscape of the metro car is wholly dominated by men. As we pull into stations and the doors open, different sounds rush in, and are silenced or muffled when the doors close. Ding ding ding. The machine comes to life; the cogs come together and we lunge forward with a groan of metal and a thud, and we screech to a halt with the screams of metal on metal. The ride is rhythmic and repetitive, with sounds that let you know where you are and where you're going. The sounds come in waves. There is a soothing predictability that puts me at ease. As we go underground, the sound of the train changes, there is a resonant rumbling, a shaking, a

banging, all exacerbated by the echo of the tunnel. A few stops later, I reach my destination and get out. The relative muffling of the metro car is gone and sounds of the underground station echo and rush at me - mostly chatter. I put my card to another turnstile clicking to mark a transition in space - click click click - from one world to another. As I walk up the stairs to exit the station, my footsteps, usually very noticeable, are drowned out by the footsteps of multiple others. I can no longer hear myself - find myself - in the sounds.

As I emerge from the underground smack bang in Tahrir Square, the sounds are overwhelming. Gone is the muffling of the car and the muffled but resounding echoes of being underground. I can only hear the sounds of transport, of cars and motorcycles honking and revving their engines. They are close to me and the louder the sound is, the closer the object is, and the more potentially dangerous and hazardous the situation is. Honking is a way of asserting existence, a way of communicating and negotiating space, a language in and of itself that does not stop. BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEPBEEP. During the walk down Mohamed Mahmoud, my soundscape is entirely composed of revving engines and honking. I can hear my footsteps, still rhythmic, but faster and more urgent now than they were in Maadi. As I cross the road, the obnoxiously pitched and unending beeps and the bassy, vibrating, and resonating engine revs are the closest they've been. Men lean out of their car windows to shout at pedestrians and each other. In the not-so-far distance, I hear a screech, the squeals of tires and brakes forced into motion to stop a moving car. Immediately afterwards, in the absence of the sound of a crash, I hear men swearing and shouting at each other.

I reach the Greek Campus where my office is located. For the third time in my commute, I put a card to a scanner on a turnstile and pass through the rolling metal gate. It pings its

approval: I am to be allowed entry. I pass through, from one world to another – click click click – into the relative quiet and serenity of the tech-hub. As a space, it is insulated acoustically and ideologically from its location. I say good morning to the security guard and walk towards my office. The sounds die down and it is quiet again as I start my working day.

Sounds act as an indicator or benchmark of order, authority, social position, and power, especially when sounds and their interpretations and categorisations are repeated. Sound, especially in public space, is everyday territorialisation and demarcation of space. Consider the wolf-whistle at the kiosk or the prevalent phenomenon of sexual and gendered harassment on Cairo's streets. Public space is never truly public wherever you are in Cairo. Power in many forms operates to construct physical space and shape how we as subjective and variously-implicated individuals experience it. Sound, and particularly sexual harassment, is an enactment of different iterations of power, as an assertion of existence.

On the other side of that, variously-privileged groups are able to construct the sounds of *their* 'Others' as nuisance, as discordant noise, and as unacceptable. I came across this phenomenon multiple times over the course of my fieldwork in Cairo, where sounds associated with the working class were frequently described *dawsha* [especially *sha'abi* music, *tok-toks*, and urban slums [*a'ashwaiyaat*] particularly by upper-class residents, and at the beginning of this project, by myself.

To draw a more general theoretical conclusion from these ethnographic encounters, the acoustic environment can be read (heard?) as the expression of the social conditions that produce it, and can subsequently and simultaneously (re)produce and social conditions and spaces. No doubt, the dimensions of auditory presence and sonic dominance are political and shaped by

power – the soundscape is an acoustic arena for the negotiation and enactment of identity politics, and for the assertion and consolidation of particular social categories. This has been echoed in my ethnographic encounters, particularly in relation to *dawsha* as a marker of Other, undesirable, and classed people and spaces in Cairo. But despite asymmetrical sound and power relationships, soundscapes are also spaces where power can be resisted and subverted.

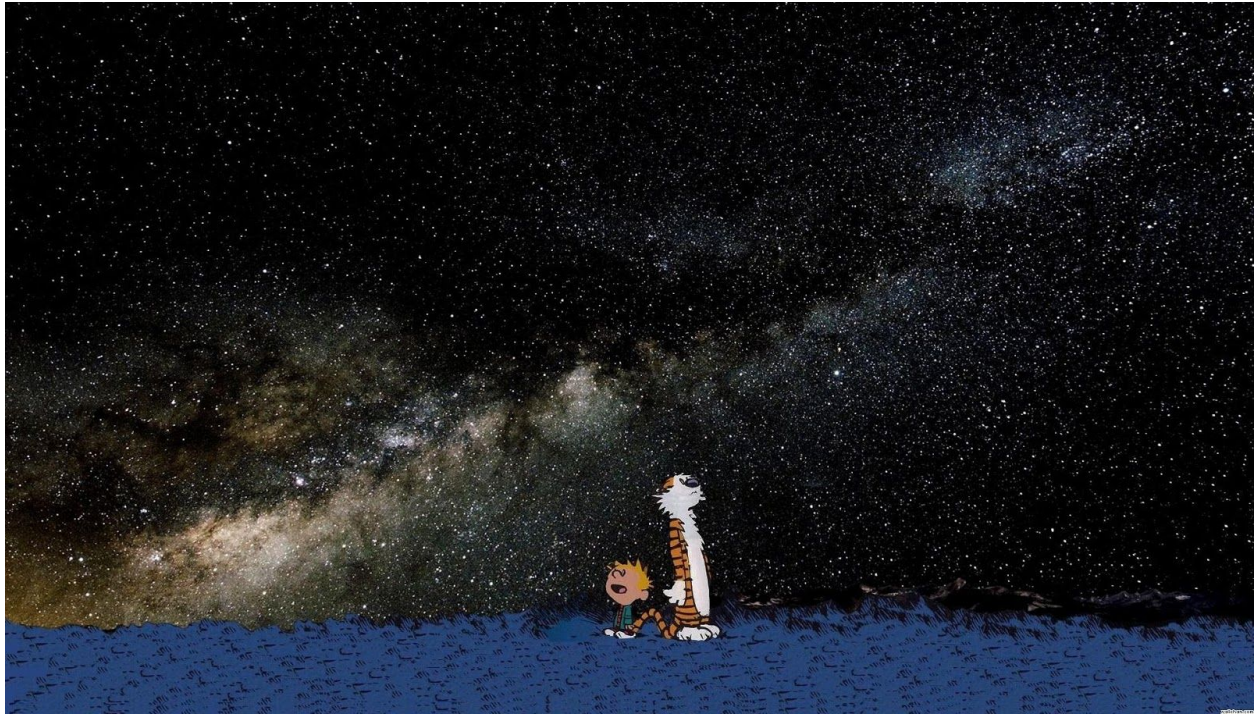
Beyond ‘othering’ sounds and rendering them out of place, the power of socially-privileged groups can extend theoretically to exerting literal control over the soundscape: controlling decibel levels, or the time and place where sounds can occur/be heard, or by literally silencing others metaphorically or in dialogue (women, children, slum-inhabitants, the working-class, marginalised communities), rendering them as the subalterns who cannot *meaningfully* speak (Spivak, 2010). This is what the theory says, but falls short of really grasping auditory experience in Cairo - because in Cairo, save for a few very upper-class spaces, it is impossible to extend any kind of control or regulation over the soundscapes. They just *are*.

We construct meaning through sound. We ‘auditise’ or externalise our social hierarchies in sound, and these social hierarchies can be challenged, negotiated, and transformed within the same realm. Within sonic regimes of power that are similar to colonisation in structure, construction, pervasiveness, and permeation, the soundscape - like social reality - is a space that reflects, constructs, and reinforces disadvantageous discourses and unequal power relationships based on category of identity, and - like social reality - is a place where these categories can be resisted, challenged, subverted, and transformed.

Sounds and silences are layered, complex, and impossible to capture without abstracting and dislocating, and in that way they are highly congruent to the chaotic mess that is social

reality. That said, and incorporating the subjectivity of individual sound-producers and perceivers, there are dominant categories of inequality that have cut across into the sound-waves by way of repetition. Mbembe (2015) suggests that it is through the constant and consistent repetition and retelling of stories that power becomes power, and that power becomes oppression. We get stuck in the stories that we tell. He suggests that the only way out is through the interruption of the telling of these stories over and over and over again. How, then, do we get out? How do we interrupt the repetition?

Chapter 5 - Interlude / Tuning Out of the City: Silence is *Dahab* [Golden]



'I'm significant!' screamed the speck of dust - Calvin & Hobbes

"I have always loved the desert. One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams..." - The Little Prince

HANIA: CAMP IN DAHAB

Sometimes we just need silence. After a particularly stressful week with work, research, and life, I needed a break from responsibility and from Cairo. A good friend, Hania, convinced me that we should take a week-long vacation and head up to Dahab, a beachtown in South Sinai for some rest and relaxation.

We drove up together. We were stopped seven times, and thoroughly searched for four of those. With every military checkpoint, and every demand for identification, and every imperative to stand and sweat in the sun while a man in a uniform rifled through my rather-intimate things, I grew more agitated. At the final checkpoint, and after removing every single item from my small

bag (bikinis, bras, and underwear laid on the ground for the world to see), he opened my toiletries bag and pulled a packet out, ‘What is this?’ he asked. I found myself telling him they were private, *feminine* things, as my skin prickled and my ears turned red. The officer then proceeded to open my tampons, one by one, and peer into them. I was completely silent. Satisfied, they allowed us to pack our bags and continue on our way. The truth of the militarisation and securitisation of this historical moment in Egypt was encroaching upon my attempts at insulation. It was an incredibly intimate violation. I kept asking myself, and Hania, why on earth we were doing this to ourselves? I could have been sweating, agitated, and humiliated in Cairo without needing to drive for six hours.

Deemed *secure enough* to move in our own country with the necessary identifications and impromptu background checks, we got in the car and continued driving. Hania was the one driving and needed to stretch her legs, so we stopped at a hard shoulder halfway through the drive. Our rest stop was set against the dramatic backdrop of massive mountains. The thing most striking about this stop was that as soon as I stepped out of the car and came to light my cigarette, my ears were assaulted by... nothing. Literally nothing. In the middle of the Sinai desert, I couldn’t hear a single thing. It felt like a vacuum, and I’d never heard anything like this nothing before. It was transformative and terrifying. We were truly alone here, in a way that I cannot remember ever being. Alone, disconnected, and temporarily detached from the spiderweb, just the two of us - we were tiny specks against the unfolding landscape. I tried to close my eyes but couldn’t - at least with visual stimuli I could be sure that I was really *here...* when I closed my eyes, there was *nothing* except the warm breeze touching my skin.

We got to Dahab, spent the night at a hotel, and took a boat out to Abu Galum at sunrise the next morning. After half an hour in a speedboat (or two hours by camel via the mountains, our concierge offered) we found ourselves at our destination: the stunning Abu Galum, a camp by the sea. The extent of the infrastructure was huts and tents pitched a few meters away from the water, with the desert and mountains at our backs. The camp was as basic as they come; we were sleeping in huts, on mattresses on the floor, without electricity or running water. If we wanted water, we had to get it from the mountains. I was a little bit irritated by the lack of amenities (and the fact that there was no signal) but the disconnection, the silence, the swims, and looking up at the stars at night made it all worth it. We were untethered, disconnected, in silence. We were in the off-season, and I suppose tourism had taken quite the hit, so Hania and I were entirely dependent on each other, and the camp managers, for company.

In the vacuum of the dead-quiet at night, Hania and I were laying back stargazing and contemplating our lives. It was so quiet and still that we found ourselves whispering. We were talking about what different people we would be if we had spent our whole lives in Sinai.

‘Cairo is intrusive,’ Hania said quietly, ‘there’s no sense of individuality or privacy. It doesn’t just feel like you’re one of many. You’re policed and observed, people involve themselves in your decisions and your life, both at home and when you’re out in public,’ she paused and looked around, ‘peace and quiet and greenery and serenity are not things you can find in Cairo.’

‘Did you know what it meant before you came here to just sit in silence? To not be able to hear *anything*? I can’t hear anything right now, and that’s terrifying me. After my family moved from Masr el Gedida to New Cairo, I couldn’t sleep for weeks. It didn’t feel soothing to

me, like it was supposed to - it felt eerie. The lack of sounds around me, the absence of *lamma* [group of people] all brought home the fact that we now lived in the desert pretty much by ourselves. I didn't feel safe.'

'I know,' I responded, I had had trouble sleeping since we got to Abu Galum too. I didn't know how to process not processing sounds. 'I think that when it's quiet, all the sounds you hear are amplified, so you become hyper-aware of them.' I was actually terrified, not of anything in particular, but I was just aware of how small I was. I was feeling this smallness in my body, this awe at the expansive world around me.

She nodded. 'But it's more than that. Silence says that we're alone here. There's nobody else around. I've never really felt like that before,' she paused and laughed, 'I guess nothing makes me happy - when I'm in Downtown Cairo I constantly bitch about the *dawsha*, but now that I'm here, I guess I kind of miss it. Don't get me wrong, this is really nice, but I think if I lived here I'd go crazy.'

I knew what she meant; as temporary respite, it is doable and refreshing, even if a bit jarring. Doing it more permanently would demand serious reprogramming of the self that has spent the majority of its life in Cairo.

This break from the city pulls me to reflect on the sounds and silences that my collaborators and I variously configure as scary or disturbing. Personally, I am unable to sleep in the dark and silence, I prefer to fall asleep with the TV on, while my sister sleeps with the door closed and an eye-mask on because the slightest light or sound will jolt her awake. Safeya experiences Old Maadi's silence as disturbing, while I love it - I find it freeing and serene. Alternatively, I configure Dar el Salaam's constant sonic stimuli and *dawsha* as equally as

disturbing, whereas to her, it points to the safety and security of communality and collective associations. In Maadi interlocutors' renderings of '*dawsha* outsiders', we meet narratives that illustrate sounding as power, survival, and resistance like Farha's, Safeya's, my experience with Taha and harassment as the (re)colonisation of space. Where we can, we use sounds to (re/de)territorialise spaces.

The silence here in Abu Galum, Dahab is jarring, but it forces us to confront how alone we are. Sounds in Cairo represent life, movement, and event. They represent lives happening in close proximity, always touching each other. Cairo's soundscape is a generative fabric of connection and (re)making.

It is a Western bedtime story that sounding can indicate power and silence can indicate oppression – a story that has been repeated so many times that if it wasn't true before, it has probably become true somewhere along the way. I do not wish to reinforce European binaries since, as John Law (2004) suggests, we are usually forced to inhabit the social realities we create in our epistemologies. If we present silence as binarily opposed to speech and sounding as characterised by power, then I worry that silence will be prone to be further characterised as powerlessness. It is also a binary and a characterisation that crumbles when faced with the complicated and uncomfortable reality of power and oppression: What if the subaltern does not want to speak? What about the marginalisation and silencing of transgressive people by way of representation, incorporation, and assimilation (like electro-*sha'bi*, maybe)? That is, silencing by way of speech and sound. What of the appropriation of the subaltern's speech and sound and in that appropriation, the neutralisation and declawing of resistance?

Chapter 6 - Al-Qāhirah as a Site of Thrown-Togetherness and Being-Made



“What makes the desert beautiful,’ said the little prince, ‘is that somewhere it hides a well...”
 - The Little Prince

Al-Qahirah: The victorious, the vanquisher, the oppressive. My ethnographic and personal journey with this project brought few concrete conclusions except this: We are thrown-together. Cairo, as a space, will not be pinned down or homogenised. It is excessive, like its dwellers, and it interacts in ways that far-exceed attempts to order, regulate, and account for it (Simone, 2010). It is unpredictable, spontaneous, messy, and it is threatening and promising in equal parts. It is impossible to generalise (Amin & Thrift, 2008). Even its temporality is ungraspable, since Cairo is constantly experienced simultaneously as memories, as the present, and as dreams, desires, and dreads.

Put simply, Cairo is multiplicitous, an assemblage, a social product, and a site of social relationships – felt and negotiated in a multitude of ways, illustrated in the different encounters

discussed here (Lefebvre, 2011). It houses multiple porous worlds and soundscapes that constantly collide and enmesh. I borrow from Amin & Thrift (2008) and conceptualise Cairo as a particular spatial formation, characterised by the concentrations of things and people, by the juxtapositions of lives that happen in very close proximity to each other, and by flows and circulations that cut across neighbourhoods, cities and governorates, binaries, imaginaries, and borders. Cairo is implicated in local, regional, and global processes of connection, capital, culture, and control, and this implication (re)makes its dwellers (Sassen, 2002).

Even as an open and connected spatial formation, Cairo does not simply exist as a static site; rather, as Ingold poignantly suggests, it *occurs* (2011). Cairo is not a frozen and abstracted space; it is its socialities and relationships that render it meaningful. As Simone (2010, 8) articulates, ‘*cityness*’ refers to city and space as ‘thing in-the-making’, and within it, simultaneously, we are beings thrown together and in-the-making. Cairo is a site for disciplining, for shaping subjectivities and identities in relation to *dawsha*, among other order-words and markers of difference. There are always ruptures and potentialities in *cityness*. Places, lives, and people are (re)made and experienced in the everyday. Every moment, every sound, can spark ruptures and engagements that are ‘unforeseen and unforeseeable’ (Amin & Thrift, 2008; 8). We are all always embedded in multiple and intersecting relations of power.

As people, and always in relation to other people and things, we feel, move, territorialise, think, experience, resist, and connect. Dwelling in this space, we are all connected in vibrating spiderwebs of entanglement, consciousness, intimacy, and imagination. In Cairo, the connections, experiences, associations, and relationships themselves may very-well be fleeting, transient, and temporary. But the vibrating spiderweb of the city, and its ability to bring together

bodies, collectives, and constellations and to create connections and ruptures in everyday life is, arguably, the most fixed tenet of ‘the city’. This is my reading of Simone’s *cityness*, a notion that intimately embraces the mess that is social reality, the thrown-togetherness, the everything-ness of Cairo – the unique collective phenomenon of anticipating the unpredictable and unforeseeable ruptures and connections that characterise the way we experience our city. Cairo is characterised by its ability to provoke and reshape relationships, interactions, practices, and ways of being and becoming. As we rework Cairo, it reworks us, throws us together, and (re)makes us.

Various authors have made compelling cases against a universal grammar or theory of urbanity and cityness – which is precisely where canonical approaches, both in classical social theory and urban studies, fall short (Leitner & Sheppard, 2016; Roy, 2016; Malaquais, 2011, Edjabe, 2011). Roy (2016) argues that we should more critically interrogate the relationship(s) between knowledge, space/place, and power. I would like to note that the ability to impose the metaphors of core/margin, centre/periphery (or iterations of them), or impose a teleological reading of the city is necessarily a political and violent act that is steeped in a long and problematic history of imperialism, social power, and epistemology.

Knowledge-production is necessarily situated. Historically (and still today), knowledge of the city was/is linked to the regulation of particular bodies and spaces (Simone, 2016). As ethically-engaged scholars struggling to make sense of the places we live, speaking from places on maps, and in-parallel, participating in the production of places on maps, we want to work towards technologies of understanding our cities that do not counterintuitively freeze spaces and that do not perpetuate exclusionary or universalising epistemologies. We need to remain open, to speak to those most familiar with their cities, as experts and theoreticians in their own right, not

as sources for raw data that we can then interpret on our own terms (Leitner & Sheppard, 2016; Simone, 2016).

Cairo, if it is anything, is an unbounded and sprawling spatial formation that consists of always moving parts – circulations, people, and relationships (Simone, 2016). Following in the footsteps of the authors discussed here, I suggest that we pay more attention to the ‘politics of location’ (Roy, 2016) and ‘plurality’ to move away from the dominance of singular theory, and to move towards toolkits and stories (Amin & Thrift, 2008) as ways of apprehending the seemingly ungraspable nature of our lives in Cairo. Fixing cities, people, or communities in space and time has proven to be an overwhelmingly fruitless endeavour (Simone, 2010).

Despite its taken-for-grantedness/invisibility, cityness as a point of departure enables us to begin to make sense of sound in Cairo – and moments in a city - where everything, anything, and nothing can and does happen. Cityness captures the potential, the unpredictability, and the uncontainable movements and relationships of the city. It captures the Cairo as a container of assemblages, and as a site where things and people (that are always themselves situated and embedded in the spiderwebs of relationships and entanglement) are always thrown together and being made – as promise, as threat, and as resource. Cityness in Cairo means that another reality, and multiple realities, have always been and will always be possible in an urban moment (Simone, 2010).

Cityness is a way of existing and thinking about the city that emphasises the importance of connections, relationships, movement, difference, marginality, thrown-togetherness, being-made, and in-betweenness. Cityness is multiplicity, multiple realities, and multiple modes of being, existing, and sharing time and space - it is thrown-togetherness and becoming. Both the

thrown-togetherness and the being-made-ness of Cairo are haunting in the sense that they are in everything in and always there. They are embedded and entangled in the city - the way we experience and attempt to make sense of it. Thrown-togetherness and being-made can be paired with *dawsha* as a technique, a perspective, and an epistemology that can begin to get us thinking about soundscapes, possibilities, and power in a spatial and imaginary formation like Cairo.

Socially-privileged collaborators in my research use the sensorial vocabulary of *dawsha*, and a sensorial othering, to extend and legitimise a hatred and a disgust for Cairo's working-class poor. It is a rhetorical and cognitive continuation of an elitist and state agenda to contain bodies and conquer spaces in the name of progress and colonially-mediated modernity, development, civility, and civilisation. We can see this most clearly with the New Capital City that is currently being built by the Egyptian government. It promises distance, peace, and quiet from the unfixable mess that is contemporary Cairo. Housing prices are so expensive in the New Capital City as to make it prohibitive for the poor to rent or buy homes there. It is a new capital city intended for the citizens that the state wants: the 'civilised', 'modern' socio-economic elites who won't make a mess of the new city with their filthy, *dawsha*, non-modern bodies, and bodily practices recentralising power from a diluted Cairo. The new capital promises space, silence, and a lack of density and congestion - all things posed in juxtaposition to the current capital city. The move and the 'unique selling points' of the new capital find themselves legitimised and justified in this sensorial ordering and that takes place on the bodies of 'others', and on our own bodies relationally. We can also see this in the movements of Cairo's most wealthy to suburban areas and satellite-cities like 6th of October and New Cairo (the naming is interesting).

In these accounts, the relocation of Egypt's capital city, among other state-sanctioned violence and exclusions directed towards the working poor, finds its justification. Obviously, different contexts have different sensorial regimes, orderings, and otherings. Compare Farha's commentary on silent girls in *sha'abi* as cowardly juxtaposed with the Maadi Environmental Rangers' disdain at the 'encroachment' of the working class *tok-toks* on Maadi. But here the issue is not about juxtaposing orderings of sound coming into conflict, it is more about the dominance and powerful institutions' adoption of one over the other (as exemplified by the bombardments adverts for the 'New Capital City').

What kinds of sensorial performances are desired in Cairo? What does the upper-class framing of Others as *dawsha* actually achieve?

My research finds that it justifies and legitimises the imagined dehumanisation of 'others' - that is, they cease to exist as individuals and come to exist as one categorised mass of undesirables (whether classed, gendered, racialised, or age, or a combination of any or all). This is a sensorial hierarchisation that is deployed to mark difference and distance from those who have been historically characterised as Others.

When the stratification of everyday life and the commodification and the deification of 'modernity' is professionally endorsed (in academia, mainstream media, by the state, and by those in power) it comes to be taken up in wider culture, the language of (dis)order, outsideness, and Otherness exemplified and crystallised in *dawsha* comes to be inserted into the social, public imagination. Therein, as category, it takes on a life of its own. As an order-word, it is internalised, negotiated, and resisted by people living within it, and with it stamped upon their bodies. People can, and do work with *dawsha* to meet their own ends (as is the case with

electro-*sha'abi*), or can use it to legitimise the exclusion, dehumanisation, and the exertion of violence on Others (like the Maadi Environmental Rangers).

With *dawsha* as a metaphor permeating and hanging over our heads (and socialities), people find themselves configured and limited within the possibilities and confines of that particular story. As a story, *dawsha* is both limiting and circular. We are stuck in it. It freezes the characters within it, and shapes the way they perceive themselves and those around them in relation to this order-word. There is an outside and an inside, and we are forced to find and situate ourselves within this story, both as dwellers in Cairo and as the city itself. As a limiting narrative, it is repeated and deployed over and over again to render us *outside*. Mostly, we work within it; we cannot find a way out of it, as illustrated by Taha's resigned statement that *dawsha in Cairo just is, and there's nothing we can do about*. We need a way out of *dawsha* as colonially-mediated and stratifying order-word.

Leitner & Sheppard (2016) opine that agency is distributed (albeit unevenly) among actors in space. When I refer to agency here, I am referring to the ability to (re/de)territorialise, (re)colonise, and (re)appropriate practices, processes, and places (*sounding* as an assertion of power and existence). It is about negotiating power and finding potentialities in different spaces in Cairo - especially in and from the margins (Certeau, 2011). Certeau and Arendt (1953) both argue that marginality is an increasingly pervasive facet of everyday life, and that we are all variously marginalised along intersecting axes of difference. In these always-growing and moving margins, I suggest that we will (and already) always find new ways to short-circuit attempts by institutions to regulate us and our untameable socialities.

As Mbembe suggests, there are questions that inspire and evoke sharp, critical imaginations that inspire questions that poke holes in universalising regimes of knowledge and order. What is *dawsha* and what does it do? Why and how do we use it? These are questions that arrest and interrupt established, stratifying and authoritative narratives. If we hope to provincialise these dominant and taken-for-granted narratives, at the beginning, middle, and end, we need to continue asking questions that unsettle power.

Mbembe positions self-ownership as decolonisation, highlighting the importance of seeing (or hearing) ourselves clearly, not through the eyes and constructions of others, despite how pervasive their narratives may be. Self-ownership and this ‘hearing-ourselves-clearly’ in relations to *dawsha* necessitates that we own, create, and tell our own stories (to ourselves and to others) rather than internalising and retelling the stories of others about ourselves.

This project, and these questions, offer an interruption to the story of *dawsha* as told by powerful others, taking inspiration from Mbembe. I do not take issue with the decibel levels in Cairo, but rather in their constant and consistent utilisation in framing Cairo and most of its dwellers as Others, situated just outside of potentially-attainable modernity.

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