Listening with Displacement

Sound, Citizenship, and Disruptive Representations of Migration

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This article puts sound at the center of migration. Auditory cultures develop in displacement, while sounds are enrolled in regimes of citizenship, playing a key—but unheard—role in debates about freedom of movement. These ideas are presented through research in Athens, Greece, where people assert sonic belonging in the face of denied asylum, racialized persecution, and EU border politics that play out in urban space. I argue for listening with displacement. Such practices can amplify the creativities of people crossing borders, disrupt normative narratives that present migration as a problem, and challenge representational practices that reify ideas of "refugee crisis." Migration is a sonic process. Sounds are always moving, and can help us rethink society itself through movement.

■ **KEYWORDS:** Athens, citizenship, crisis, displacement, listening, representation, sound, voices

Introduction

"And the phonograph is standing on a chair in the road and in a moment a canned voice will be screeching a poison song from the time of the Turkish occupation." I start with some travel writing. American author Henry Miller ([1941] 2016: 23). Athens. Late 1930s. I begin here, as this article takes up some of the themes that resonate from Miller's writing: sound and listening, migration and memory, technology and territory. This article attempts two things. First, it argues for the potential of listening to open creative engagements when representing displacement, finding spaces of narrativity that have not yet been claimed and foreclosed, and disrupting the dominant tropes of "European refugee crisis." Second, it claims that focusing on auralities of displacement does not mean turning away from the policies and colonialities that create these situations in the first place. Sounds have politics. Sounds are enrolled in regimes of citizenship, playing a key—but unheard—role in debates about Europeanness and freedom of movement. Sound offers ways of democratizing theories and representations of displacement.

This article puts sound at the center of migration, hearing how political subjectivities are made through sonic practices in the present, and connecting these to histories of movement. Athens is the focal point throughout. At a time when the European continent is marked by closed borders and calls for the protection of national cultures, Greece, especially Athens, plays a pivotal role: at once positioned as the gateway to, or doorstep of Europe; but also posited as a warehouse for those attempting to move into and across the continent. Athens: imagined origin of European civilization. Athens: testing ground—or maybe dumping ground—for European experiments in austerity. Athens: a place of negotiating Europe's borders. Athens: a migrant metropolis. The city itself becomes a border; becomes a polis—a center of political action (Cabot 2014: 197; Panourgia 2011); becomes a "warehouse of souls" (McVeigh and Smith 2016), a giant urban quasi-camp, a living sound archive of refuge. Narratives of displacement gather in the border city, which in turn takes shape as a site of creativity (Lazzarini 2015: 182; Tsimouris and Moore 2018: 78). Border imaginaries sit at the intersections of political visions, street-level practices, modes of representation, and artistic endeavors.

Here I echo a call to critically connect border experiences with border representations by thinking migration through both politics and aesthetics (Brambilla et al. 2015: 2). I do so by framing both borders and migrations as sonic phenomena (Kun 2000). In Athens, people use sound to make claims on belonging in the face of denied asylum and racialized persecution. Protracted displacement fosters the development of new sound cultures, while histories of migration are at once recursive, looping and feeding back on themselves. These ideas develop out of extended fieldwork in Athens since 2016, where I research the connections between sound, borders, displacements, and citizenships.

I work with methods that combine ethnography with historical investigation and experiments in documentation, centering on collaborative practices of soundwalks and location recording. Through these methods I seek to listen with displacement: exploring the sonic politics of everyday life for those who have crossed borders, how migrant activisms fit into broader urban struggles, and how these experiences map onto histories of movement and migration in the city. These sonic strategies and common causes serve to disarticulate borders between refugees and hosts. And these ideas are guided by a central question: what does citizenship sound like? Sonic, street-level assertions of belonging remake and rearticulate the polis. Athens is the subject of this research not only because of its current role in the European governance of migration, but because of its history—symbolic and otherwise—and its location as a borderland between East and West and, increasingly, between North and South.

I begin this piece by positing migration as a sonic phenomenon, before focusing on a collaborative sound essay produced in summer 2017. I then turn to three interpretations of this recording work and their implications for thinking about migration and society. The article closes by considering the disruptive potential of sound in representing displacement and narratives of crisis that accompany it.

Audible Migrations

Sound is an access point to the agency of people on the move. It is a means of finding, to borrow from Brandon LaBelle (2018: 2), "escape routes and new social formations beyond the verbal and the visible." LaBelle calls this "sonic agency": hearing how people creatively negotiate systems of domination through listening and being heard (ibid.: 4). These ideas stem from work in the field of sound studies, which attempts to counter the dominance of the visual in modernity, in Western cultures, and in academic thinking and writing. This is an issue in (forced) migration

studies, especially in discussing representations of displacement, which often fall into an over-determined politics of looking (Moten 2003): tending to prioritize visibility over audibility, to focus on the camera rather than the microphone, and to invoke voices without really listening to them.

Alternatives exist. Jonathan Sterne (2003), for example, takes issue with the idea that visual thought and forms of communication somehow replaced aural ones during the Enlightenment. Such thinking, he argues, is predicated on a binary of sound and vision—what he calls the "audiovisual litany" (ibid.: 15–16)—which posits sound as the subjective and affective, emotional and ephemeral counterpart to the visual; something incompatible with modernity. Instead, he details how sound and hearing were enrolled in modernity's projects of rationalization. This centers on the development of listening practices—"audile techniques" (ibid.)—that move in lockstep with cultural and technological change (Erlmann 2010).

People learned to listen in new ways. But because sound and listening are cultural, they are also culturally positioned: full of equivocations, modulations, and differing value systems (Ochoa Gautier 2019). Recent work has expanded the geographies of sound studies, considering how audile techniques played key roles in colonial knowledge production, how sounds have long been part of the global trade of ideas, and how conceptions of sound and auditory cultures differ across times and places (e.g., Ochoa Gautier 2014; Steingo and Sykes 2019). This matters when thinking about migration and society, especially in relation to what is still being called the "European refugee crisis." Take, for instance, the integral place of sound and listening in Islamic belief. Islamic culture finds its means of self-expression in hearing and acting rather than in seeing (Grabar 1983; Mattern 2017: 133). Privileging the visual risks reinforcing forms of Eurocentric thinking that silence histories of Islam across the continent.

Emphasizing the audibility of migration, then, is not merely a means of experimenting with representation; it offers an opening for disrupting and democratizing ways of thinking about displacement altogether. Migration is a sonic process as much as a spatial one (Kun 2016). Sounds are always moving, and can help us rethink society itself through movement. Sound can counter narratives that present border crossing as a problem, and can contribute toward moves to de-exceptionalize displacement (Cabot 2019). Plugging sonic perspectives into practices of representation allows for an unsettling of storytelling, where the messiness of life across borders overtakes reductive tropes of refugeeness; and circulation, encounter, and friction are placed front and center in the mix.

Histories help us here. Mette Louise Berg and Nando Sigona (2013: 352) write of how "specific locations have histories (and memories) of migration, as well as minorities' struggles for rights and recognition." In Athens, the city's history is one of refuge, and sound cultures emerge through everyday interactions between the recently arrived and the longer settled. The communities that developed out of a forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s (Hirschon 2003), for example, not only made (very popular) music, they also forged public listening cultures. Back to Henry Miller. To the phonograph on the chair in the Athenian street. To the canned voice about to enter the city's aural public sphere. Nicholas Pappas (1999) writes of how refugee communities in Athens and Piraeus in the 1920s and 1930s could not afford to buy gramophones, so made use of φωνογραφιτζήδες—men who toured the streets, markets, and tavernas with portable gramophone machines. For a small fee, they would play records, sharing songs within a sound culture of displacement. Such practices illustrate how people crossing borders are resourceful, creative, and disruptive; and how sonic practices are central to the socialities that emerge from these movements. Efforts to access and sound out contemporary refugee subjectivities should strive to be equally creative and disruptive.

Listening with Displacement

The project from which this article stems focuses on these audible migrations. It pursues what Steven Feld and Donald Brenneis call doing anthropology in sound: "Ethnography should include what it is that people hear every day . . . one's sonic way of knowing and being in the world" (2004: 462). In a city of migration like Athens, many such "acoustemologies" exist. This work puts the idea of the "ethnographic ear" at the center of research (Clifford 1986: 12; Erlmann 2004). It combines local specificities with transnational dynamics, hearing how the city vibrates and resonates with both. Listening with displacement is a way of asking how sound can distort the logics of "refugee crisis": the idea that migration in Europe is somehow a new thing rather than a long historic description of the continent, and the discursive and political violence that reifies "refugees" as a category apart from the rest of humanity (Malkki 1995).

In Athens, I work with a community formed in transit and in waiting. Border closures, slow asylum processes, and rejected claims combine to make displacement protracted; and not just since 2015, but as part of a longer geopolitical unfolding that positions and pressurizes Greece as receiver and container for those seeking refuge (Cabot 2014). This community exists in imbrication with others in the city. Athens is an arrival city: both for those currently attempting to move into and across the continent, and in historical movements of people within Greece's borders and multiple migrations from elsewhere. I am routinely told that "βέρος Αθηναίος δεν υπάρχει" ("There is no such thing as the native Athenian"; although I am also told the opposite, in the form of γκάγκαρος who have been in the city for several generations). Ideas of "refugee" and "host" communities do not easily map onto Athens's histories and urban geographies. Belongings are at once flexible and fraught, depending on who you ask.

These openings and tensions are also found at a refugee social center where I have worked since early 2017. The social center is relocating at the time of writing, but has offered various services and spaces since 2016, staffed by Greek solidarians, by refugees, and by volunteers from elsewhere in an effort to work nonhierarchically and through consensus-based decision making. Centers like this one fit into a reconfiguration of the idea of the social that has proceeded in austerity-ridden Greece. Katerina Rozakou (2018) writes of the ways in which the word "social" (κοινωνικό) has been adopted by collective organizations and citizens' initiatives, and how social centers emerge as a focal point for political projects of solidarity.

The center has a music space, which is where I work. I have been running music workshops, simply seeking to provide a decent space where music can happen: sourcing instruments and collaborating with others in soundproofing the room after getting complaints from the neighbors for being too loud during the quiet hours of the afternoon. After a few months of doing this, I found myself one day in conversation with two colleagues—Muhammad, from Syria, and Azim, from Afghanistan. We were talking about sound, and whether Athens was a quiet or a loud city. We figured that it depends where you come from. After a few years living in Edinburgh for postgraduate study, to my ears Athens was a gloriously haphazard soundscape; if you're from Aleppo, it sounds different.

This prompted reflections on Athens as an aural borderland. Eleni Bastéa (2000) traces the "orchestration" of the city following its installation as capital upon Greek independence from Ottoman rule in the 1830s. This orchestration was an attempt to construct homogenous national space, and part of the wider effort to scrape away the "shamefully Turkish patina"—to borrow Michael Herzfeld's (1982: 17) memorable turn of phrase—that had accumulated over the previous centuries. Yet Athens remained a city of overlapping (sound) cultures and border logics. And the recent arrivals of people seeking refuge, and the accompanying swell in movement to

Greece from elsewhere—through humanitarianism, "voluntourism," and "crisis chasing" in the ethnographic disciplines (Cabot 2019)—join with these histories.

I asked my colleagues to take me to places in the city that were meaningful to them; for us to listen to those places, to the rhythms and encounters that structure everyday life in protracted displacement. We were joined by two Greek friends: Sofia, a musician and engineer, attuned to sounds and movements in Greece; and Georgios, an artist with deep knowledge of Athenian history. We were able to connect current displacements to historical ones. But we also kept things iterative: not planning what to record, and to see, instead, what happened through hanging out and thinking sonically together. The focus was more on the city—on movement and circulation—than on "THE SOUNDS OF REFUGEES" or something equally exoticizing. Through dialogue and collaboration, a series of listening walks and recording sessions around the city this eventually became a sound essay (Karimi et al. 2017).

The result is probably a bit opaque. But then, people, particularly those seeking refuge, have the right to opacity (Khosravi 2016). These are not refugee stories. Voices come and go, shout and scatter; narratives flicker and flee; at no point is it clear which sounds are "Greek" and which are "refugee." Instead, everything migrates. Part I begins at the Victoria metro station beneath the square of the same name—a key site for multiple refugee communities living in the city. It then jumps to a bazaar held every Sunday across town at Botanikos. The bazaar is located just down the road from the Eleonas refugee camp, so while it is mostly associated with the Roma community of the city, it is now also part of a network of trade for newer refugee communities. The sound of buzzing insects—which blanket the Athens soundscape through the summer months—then comes into the foreground, before this part closes with the almost-silence of the street outside an unofficial mosque, a sound marked by its absence, in the recently gentrified Psiri area of the city (Figure 1).

Figure 1. An unofficial mosque on Eschilou Street. Photograph by the author, August 2017.

At every point we ran into history. Bastéa writes of the bazaar as the center of late Ottoman Athens, with markets taking place in front of mosques across the city. There has been no official mosque in Athens since independence—part of the purging of Ottoman history—meaning that Muslim migrants find themselves caught in pasts that drive their worship underground (Cabot 2014: 177). The sonic implications of this are that certain religious practices are silenced, heard as not belonging in a "European" soundscape (Bohlman 2013; Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009). Part II of the project focuses on musical encounters, Part III on the movement of people and things around the city, as Sofia guided us through the traces of twentieth-century migrations to Athens, and their effects on the built environment and on auditory and culinary cultures.

It ends with Georgios, who took it upon himself to guide us on a bespoke walking tour of the traces of Ottoman history in the center of Athens, perhaps in an effort to make Azim and Muhammad feel welcome, and to show that the city was as much theirs as it was his. Histories of migration and displacement bump into one another. We named the piece after a sound that we found in a graphic novel (Prudhomme 2009) about rebetika (a music of displacement that developed out of the 1920s population exchange). Georgios connected this sound with that an Egyptian friend of his makes after smoking a cigarette: ΤΣΣΣΣ ΤΣΣΣ ΤΣΣ ΣΣΣ (Figure 2). Sounds are part of the long movement of people, goods, and ideas around the Mediterranean—speaking to the idea of the sea as a coherent and unified space of circulation, as theorized by the historian Fernand Braudel (2002), as much as they are part of current border violence. For the remainder of this article, I shift toward three interpretations of this sound essay: what it might tell us, and why listening with displacement matters for understanding migration and society.

Sounding Citizenship

My first contention is that sound is essential to understanding citizenship—of hearing inclusion and exclusion. This idea builds on work by Susanna Trnka, Christine Dureau, and Julie Park (2013: 1), who argue that "citizenship is a constant process, produced through the senses and

Figure 2. ΤΣΣΣΣ ΤΣΣΣ ΤΣΣ ΣΣΣ, from Ρεμπέτικο: Το Κακό Βοτάνι, by David Prudhomme, trans. Thanasis Petrou (2009). Used with kind permission of Futuropolis, Paris and Γνώση, Athens.
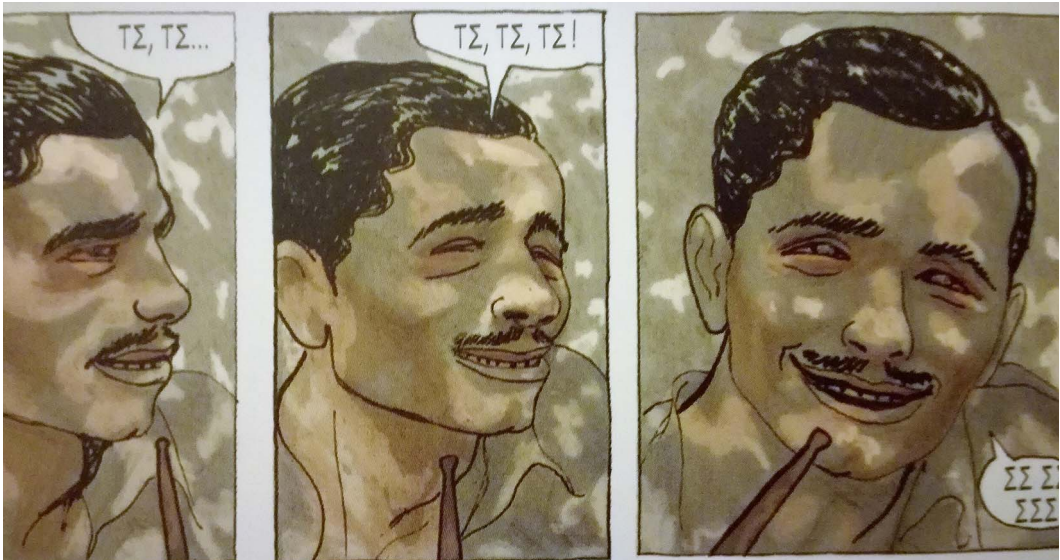
their perceived naturalization." In Europe, this naturalization has a long history and is produced at great cost. Ian Biddle and Kirsten Gibson (2013) chart how Europe fixated on ritualizing the senses early in its coming to self-consciousness, and the assumed superiority of European civilizations enabled the emergence of Europe as a kind of quality or feeling. Sound plays a key role. The construction of the European listening subject is embedded in discourses of inclusion and exclusion (ibid.: 4).

These histories pivot on the idea of noise. Noise has been, and still is, indexed to race and ethnicity—as well as gender and class—and was a concept employed by European colonialists to domesticate the sonic expressions of those subjected to imperial order (Radano and Olaniyan 2016). While some cultures associate the noisiness of social life with health and vitality, noise in Euro-modernity accrues metaphors of pollution and foreignness: something to be regulated, abated, eliminated (e.g., Bijsterveld 2008). In Greece, this history stretches back further. We find the first known instance of acoustic zoning in Sybaris, ancient Greek colonial city, where tradesmen were forced to live outside the city walls due to the noise they made (Goldsmith 2013: 38). Athens, too, was an acoustic city. Amphitheaters acted as sound filters; oratory techniques were about finding sonic sweet spots; the open agora generated what Shannon Mattern (2017: 121) describes as "a cacophony of citizens' voices." At the same time, however, the ideal city—for both Plato and Aristotle—was a "city of discourse," which meant limiting the size of the population so that people could hear a herald's voice. Ultimately, Athenian citizenship was about "passive democracy" (Hall 1998: 37): listening and voting, and an acoustics of exclusion that permitted participation only to rich men.

Jump forward a few centuries. Greece, thanks to its particular history and geopolitical location, develops as an aural borderland. Many writers tell us how Greek society is informed by its position at the crossroads between East and West. Histories stack up, and auditory cultures sit at the intersection of overlapping Greek, Ottoman, Mediterranean, and European border logics. The nation is transnational: as part of the Ottoman Empire; as "crypto-colony" of the European "protecting powers" following independence (Herzfeld 2002); as laboratory for ongoing EU experiments in border management. Yet, since the creation of the modern Greek state in the early nineteenth century, Western Europe has been the main political and cultural reference point (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009: 958).

On its installation as capital city, Athens was reimagined to fit fantasies of Greece as ur-Europa (Herzfeld 1982): designed and constructed by Northern European architects and intellectuals along mythologized lines of ancient civilization. Greece began measuring its progress in terms of proximity to "civilized Europe" (Bastéa 2000). The sonorities of the city echoed these developments. In becoming a European city, Athens followed a shift in urban planning marked by a changing aurality of space: a move from the sounds of narrow streets and religious spaces to the beginnings of rationalized modern urban centers (Biddle and Gibson 2013: 169)—designed to discipline and muffle their human inhabitants (Mattern 2017: 130).

Listen closely and you can still hear these histories. The silence of the unofficial mosque in our sound essay is a result of these geopolitical power plays. Ottoman Athens was populated with mosques—there was even one in the Parthenon, complete with minaret—but this history and sonic presence was repositioned as a threat to Greek identity following independence and erased from the urban landscape. Discussions around building an official mosque in Athens have been bubbling again for the better part of 140 years, but its ongoing absence has led to the proliferation of prayer rooms in apartments, basements, shops, and storage facilities (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009: 963–964). In Europeanizing, Athens followed what Philip Bohlman (2013: 207) earmarks as the "dramatic modulation of public soundscapes" that came with and after the Enlightenment. While mosques had previously moved from the courtyard to the street,

announcing their presence through the common auditory experience of listening to the *adhan*, minarets have more recently come to signify the "sonic limit of tolerance" (ibid.: 210–213).

In Germany, the *adhan* has been claimed to "disrupt and Islamicize" the German soundscape (ibid.: 215). In Switzerland, a referendum in November 2009 resulted in a ban on the building of minarets, following a debate that was both about skylines and soundscapes. This, in Bohlman's words, "created a public space of silence where there had previously been the sound of Islam" (ibid.: 223). In all cases, the long history of Islamic auditory culture across Europe is willfully forgotten. Jump back a few centuries. In 1311, the Council of Vienne prohibited the call to prayer in Christian territory, where the *adhan* was considered both a nuisance and an offense (Remie Constable 2010). In 1477, King John II called for the destruction of all minarets in Valencia (Mattern 2017: 132).

These stories are a European version of what Jennifer Stoever (2016) calls the "sonic-color line," wherein sounds become segregated, indexed to certain people, ethnicities, and religions. Wherein certain histories are routinely erased, feeding into the populist discourse of Europe as the cradle of white people, and the walls of silence that have been erected around "Fortress Europe." The mosque debates in Greece have not extended to a discussion of pluralizing Greek citizenship. A creaking door in place of a call to prayer. The long histories of so-called minorities in Greece—Jews, Catholics, Armenians, Roma, Muslims—are silenced through forms of structural and sonic violence, in service to a fantasy of homogeneity that is used to contest the legitimacy of newer immigrants' claims to citizenship (Appadurai 2006; Rosen 2015).

From another footing, a sensory ethnography attuned to street-level assertions of belonging can not only show how citizenship is produced through sound, but can also open up different ways of thinking about citizenship altogether. Sound in Athens is used to prize open questions of national belonging. Certain sonic practices remained in place through the urban changes described above; Bastéa (2000: 105) recounts a city of "dust and noise." And people continue to use sound to form what Charles Hirschkind (2006) calls "counterpublics," resisting top-down efforts to shape sound cultures. The aural borderland contains many ways of listening and being through sound.

Acoustic strategies today fit into a larger picture of solidarian and migrant activism, with people demanding the rights of citizenship while simultaneously drawing attention to how precarious it is (Tyler and Marciniak 2013). Citizenship, from this perspective, becomes something turbulent: subject to violence and rupture when its contingencies are exposed. Citizenship is not only something conferred or denied by the nation-state. Citizenship is something bought and sold (Figures 2 and 3). Citizenship is a border, filtering; perhaps the most brutally patrolled

Figures 3 and 4. Citizenship for sale in Greece. Photos by the author, Athens, November 2018.

border of all (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2013). Citizenship is something performed, and these performances are ethical, cultural, creative, social, and often pleasurable.

This line of thinking extends from Engin Isin and Greg Nielsen's (2008) work on acts of citizenship, where they divert attention away from already held status and toward the creative moments in which acts of citizenship occur. This logic, they argue, opens a sense of possible citizenships to come. Sonic strategies—especially in public spaces—flesh out these ideas. Athens resounds with examples. Nicos Trimikliniotis, Dimitris Parsanoglou, and Vassilis Tsianos (2015: 68–69) give the case of migrant street musicians playing on Geraniou Street—or Gerani, as it has come to be known—which is now heard as an emblem of urban decay in the city. The street is full of people from different places, queueing to buy phone cards or transfer money to other countries. Two musicians perform on accordion and clarinet with a child singer. Nothing much is happening. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, one of the musicians loudly announces the next song as "a traditional piece from Epirus!" People leave the queues and join hands to form a circle and start dancing. A pedestrian police patrol passes. When the police are gone, out of earshot, people rejoin their respective queues, the musicians return to their original repertoire.

These collectivities are what LaBelle (2018: 15) calls "unlikely publics," who resort to sudden festivities to assert alternative modes of belonging. Music is useful for these plays and practices—Epirus is a region of northwestern Greece bordering Albania to the north, with a history and music that straddles both places—enabling imaginative border crossings on city streets. Our sound essay is full of such moments of sonic agency. These performances of citizenship join with local attempts to shape the aural public sphere. Residents of Themistokleous Street, running southwest from Exarcheia Square, utilize live music played from the steps outside buildings to transform the street into a self-organized public festival to deter drug dealers (Poulimenakos and Dalakoglou 2018: 179). And these efforts sit in tension with practices elsewhere in the city from members of the far-right political party Golden Dawn (Χρυσή Αυγή), who use chanting and the national anthem to reterritorialize public space. Citizenship should be heard as something performed and enacted, claimed and defied, protested and resisted, sounded and silenced.

Recording (Super)Diversity

This means engaging with, even embracing, the complexity and dynamism of urban multiculture. Many of the tensions and solidarities that sound mediates in Athens relate to the relatively recent recognition of diversity in the city. Only in the 1990s did the Greek state develop clear immigration policies—and a discursive shift from "foreigner" to "migrant"—in response to post-Soviet migration, and the end of the idea of Greek homogeneity (Green 2018). Greek society is now characterized by cultural and religious diversity, yet national self-understandings remain largely monocultural and monoreligious (Triandafyllidou and Gropas 2009). At street level, however, things sound different. Athens becomes what Nicholas De Genova (2015) terms the "migrant metropolis": not only does the city's demography change, but migrant populations become involved in the production of distinct urban spaces, remaking the city.

As Tracey Rosen (2015) details in her work on the Chinatown just to the west of the historic center, increasing visibility and heterogeneity of migrants in public spaces make Athens appear more like the cosmopolitan cities of Europe. Again, this is linked to policy, and a shift from migrant undocumentation to complete institutional control of people crossing borders (Rozakou 2018: 192); to the erasure of long histories of diversity that accompany the privileging of the nation-state over the Ottoman past. In any case, the language used locally to describe this cosmopolitanism—οι αυτοί (the "they")—highlights how all representations of otherness

interact with and contextualize one another. This speaks to the concept of superdiversity, which has been proposed as a replacement term for multiculturalism (Vertovec 2007). While multiculturalism constructs ethnic communities as units of analysis, superdiversity draws attention to patterns of the "diversification of diversity" in urban centers across Europe, emphasizing fluidity, hybridity, and migrant transnationalism (Berg and Sigona 2013).

Steering this back to our sound essay, and to its implications for practices of representation, this approach encourages a focus on everyday intercultural practices, on "the politics and poetics of belonging and how they relate to social and spatial practices of inclusion and exclusion" (ibid.: 349). If we think specifically about ethnographic sound recording, and the kinds of work it can do in the current historical moment, all this prompts a shift away from archives of ethnicities and nations and a move toward an archive of encounters and relations. (An interesting side note here is that at exactly the same time as the "European refugee crisis" has been unfolding, national sound archives across the continent have been disseminating old archival recordings as "sound heritage": recordings often made as part of colonial knowledge production and through particular racial epistemologies, circulating purified versions of national and continental history, in which migration goes completely unheard.)

An archive of encounters and relations takes us toward an anthropology of situations, through which analysis attends to the irreducible "complexity, heterogeneities, conflicts, contradictions" of transnational and local social formations (Kelly 2012: 53). Picture the scene: Exarcheia Square on a Thursday night. Drummers from Senegal and Gambia pound out rhythms. A Greek saxophonist riffs over their beats. People from elsewhere in Europe dance, drink beer, and cheer. Athenians stroll by like nothing is happening. I sit and listen with people from Syria. In the sound essay, this moment is preceded by an impromptu performance from my collaborators and me together in a hallway after an afternoon spent listening to and sharing music, jamming on improvised instruments, playing for (and playing up to) the recording machine. And these moments are followed by the sound of a West African gospel group filming a music video on top of Areopagus, looking across to the Acropolis, where Azim and I spent another afternoon. "Europe needs revival"—the song's refrain repeats as the singers mime along to their own recording, and the crumbling imagined origin and adopted symbol of European civilization shimmers in the fading light behind them. Fade out.

Scenes like these develop in cultures of displacement but are only possible because of a massive inequality around free movement. At the time of writing, freedom of movement is being defined and defended as a "European value" in the aftermath of the Brexit vote in the UK, at exactly the same time as the EU has been shutting down the very possibility of this for others elsewhere. Anna Lazzarini (2015: 177) writes of urban borderscapes as "lived spaces for observing and experimenting forms of communal lives, emerging through multiple and continuous negotiations among identities, cultural differences, citizenships." In Greece—the prison of Europe (Cabot 2014: 202–207)—this means recognizing how the poetics of encounters and relations are haunted by various ongoing colonialities and conditions of war and torture (LaBelle 2018: 115). These scales of the everyday and the geopolitical are enmeshed and not easily disentangled (Fernandes 2017: 163). Recording superdiversity, in this context, means making audible the transnational connections that produce and police borders, and the power structures that make refugees in the first place.

"Refugee Voices"

And this builds toward a critical response to current representations of displacement, which often focus on "refugee voices" in an effort to stimulate sympathy. As Heath Cabot (2016) puts

it, some refugees are very "marketable" and therefore useful for humanitarian campaigns. But these voices are filtered through an aura of victimhood and are thus silenced as critical and active/activist subjects, even as advocates carve out space for them. In other words, "refugee voices" stories serve to abstract and homogenize: depoliticizing displacement and rendering refugees as an ahistorical human category (Malkki 1996; Sigona 2014). This fits into a broader culture of storytelling that, for Sujatha Fernandes (2017: 2), presents "carefully curated narratives with predetermined storylines as a tool of philanthropy, statecraft, and advocacy." Under these conditions, complexities, histories, ambiguities, and political struggles go missing. And in all cases, agency is denied.

Cabot argues that ethnographers often employ the same tropes—selectively calling upon and then silencing voices. She asks for a rehumbling of the ethnographer and, in specific consideration of writing about forced migration, for an "ethnography of not knowing" (2016: 664). We can never fully know or render the voices and lives of other people; and ethnography should avoid reproducing the structures of aid and asylum interviews, which serve up reductive prototypes of flight, suffering, and refugeeness (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2017). The idea of "giving voice" to the voiceless, then, is discursive sleight of hand. The notion that people can now speak for themselves is a construct that gives a platform only to those able to make their personal experiences legible to a mainstream audience through use of dominant narratives and devices (Fernandes 2017: 5). The politics and histories that silence people vanish altogether.

But we need another point here. Anthropologists and forced migration scholars tend to focus on voice only as a metaphor for agency, forgetting that voices also do a lot of work as sounding entities. Voices are sonic phenomena; what Amanda Weidman (2014: 40) calls "deeply felt markers of class, race, geographical origin." Weidman argues that the equation of voice with agency and intention ignores complexities of how voices are actually constructed, mediated, and heard (ibid.: 41). Instead, we should consider what is done with the body, and with space and technology, to produce the voice. Listening with displacement is a way to bring these two levels of voice and voicing back together.

This is especially the case when we consider how borders materialize in urban space on migrants' bodies. And even more the case when we consider that many people on the move are coming from a situation where "speaking out" or "raising voice" brought with it the risk of persecution, disappearance, death. Voices carry the border within their timbres. Voicing presence in displacement is courageous as well as creative. Both the polis and the demos are thus transformed by refugee voices. Cities have long functioned as a sounding board and transmission medium for vocality. Cities have long been resonance chambers for protest: shaping, galvanizing, and sounding out insurgent sentiments and solidarities (Bayat 2010: 162; Mattern 2017: 119, 135).

Which is to say that "refugee voices" cannot be reduced to tropes of victimhood. The complexities that gather around questions of visibility and invisibility in representations of displacement become even knottier when thinking through audibility and inaudibility. Silence is not just a politics of domination and nonparticipation—silence is a strategy to respond to situations of conflict; silence is a creative tool (Ochoa Gautier 2015: 183–184). Silence can also be agency. Submission can also be subversion. These tactics are enrolled in politics of gender and race, and ways of sounding and hearing that crosscut both (Herzfeld 1991; Stoever 2016). And not just protest and silence; experiences of, and responses to, displacement are constantly being voiced, and these voicings contain the many different strategies and socialities that develop in life crossing and contained by borders.

Our sound essay was, in some ways, an attempt to grapple with these issues. But in other ways it was just a beginning, an experiment, an opening. The project expands from here, involving

sound recording and editing workshops with grassroots organizations founded by or involving refugees in Athens, and the distribution of recording equipment to these associations in an effort to further decenter practices of sonic storytelling and destabilize forms of aural authorship. It attempts to understand how refugees make sense of and articulate their own experiences, listening to the theories that come out of such experiences, and embedding them at the center of the project. And this, in turn, strives to combat the ways in which "theory" has historically been used in the ethnographic disciplines to reinforce the colonial divide. As though we study people lacking theory (Stokes 2013). As though theory is somehow a European domain, and the rest of the world is merely "the field."

An example. In a souvlaki place close to Exarcheia Square, a friend from Damascus tells me about the idea of "refugee feedback." About how refugee creativities *feed back into* host societies and cultures, but how they also *generate feedback*: sounding out the violence of borders and exclusionary regimes of belonging. By listening to these practices, narratives of forced migration become less about tragedy, victimhood, stigma—and more about creativity, resistance, protest. We need to recognize and amplify this creativity: not only creativity in the sense of performing arts like music, but also the creativity involved in developing and sustaining cultures in and of displacement. I'll call on Lyndsey Stonebridge (2018), who argues that "[the creative practices of refugees], often done on hope and shoestrings, adds to the archive of statelessness that has been growing steadily since the middle of the last century." "More than ever," she writes, "we need to recognize that this is not so much work from the margins as from the vanguard of the arts and human sciences, made by people who know at firsthand how our current political morality turns on what is seen and not seen." (To which I would add, as is hopefully obvious by now, what is heard and not heard.)

And while I am certainly not claiming to have resolved this, I would also add that collaboration—of the kind attempted with the sound essay—is potentially a way of avoiding tragic tropes, amplifying creativity, and disrupting dominant narratives of displacement. George Marcus posits collaboration as a key feature at the scene of ethnography today: "One gets caught up in the events of ordinary local life, as always, but one finds there reflexive subjects who stimulate a politics of collaboration necessary for ethnography to proceed in a way quite different from the way anthropologists have in the past enrolled subjects in their projects. The subject and scale of fieldwork are negotiated in a found imaginary out of such collaborations" (2010: 268). Marcus continues: "The cliched participant observation of traditional ethnography for the archive here is replaced by an aesthetic of collaborative knowledge projects of uncertain closure" (ibid.: 275). Collaboration allows us to say something about the complexities of immigration experiences without romanticizing, victimizing, or stigmatizing people who cross borders. It is a way of willfully complicating things.

Confusions

Which leads me not to any conclusions, but instead some confusions. I mean this in the sense of trying to productively unsettle understandings of the naturalness and inevitability of borders and citizenships, and the logics that follow that posit displacement as crisis. This can be done on four levels, with which this article reaches its own uncertain closure. First, destabilizing *representations of "crisis"*: offering collaborative soundings of displacement and engaging the ethnographic ear to disrupt narratives that strip away agencies and silence voices. Second, embracing the *crisis of representation*: remembering the partiality of any attempt to render people's lives, adapting the "writing culture" (Clifford 1986) debates from anthropology to a "recording cul-

ture" debate, and recognizing ethnographic recording as something creative as much as something documentary.

Third, engaging with *representations of representations*: thinking about the proliferation of humanitarian depictions of borders and migrations, how scholarly representations enter into systems of objects alongside these, and the effects of this on the people we study. And fourth, kicking up a *crisis of "crisis"*: insisting on putting the words "refugee crisis" in scare quotes, showing it up as not a crisis of or caused by refugees, but a crisis of political will and morality. And in the process, drawing attention to the concept of crisis itself as an analytical blind spot (Roitman 2013), as something made and sheltered by policy makers rather than something that just happens, as something violent and full of silence. Listening with displacement, as I have attempted to argue here, is a way of doing exactly this.

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