Challenging the Narrative of “Arab Decline”: Independent Music as Traces of Alexandrian Futurity

*Dépasser le discours du « déclin arabe » : la musique indépendante comme
témoin d'un avenir alexandrin*

Darci Sprengel

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/ema/3828>

DOI: 10.4000/ema.3828

ISSN: 2090-7273

Publisher

CEDEJ - Centre d'études et de documentation économiques juridiques et sociales

Printed version

Date of publication: 28 February 2018

Number of pages: 135-155

ISBN: 2-905838-96-5

ISSN: 1110-5097

Electronic reference

Darci Sprengel, "Challenging the Narrative of “Arab Decline”: Independent Music as Traces of Alexandrian Futurity", *Égypte/Monde arabe* [Online], 17 | 2018, Online since 28 February 2020, connection on 07 July 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ema/3828> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ema.3828>

DARCI SPRENGEL

**CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE
OF “ARAB DECLINE”:
INDEPENDENT MUSIC AS TRACES
OF ALEXANDRIAN FUTURITY**

ABSTRACT

This essay examines the lives and music of Alexandrian independent musicians to demonstrate how looking at the city's independent music scene offers an alternative vision of Alexandria as a future-oriented city. With so much scholarly and popular focus on Alexandria's past, how does looking at the city's independent music scene challenge a decline narrative and present us with notions of a distinctly Alexandrian future? Drawing from approximately 24 months of ethnographic research conducted in Alexandria since 2010, as well as the work of feminist scholars Jill Dolan and Kathleen Stewart, it argues that independent musicking is a type of performance that allows many young Egyptians to feel traces of an alternative future in the present.

In a top-floor apartment next to the Qaid Ibrahim Mosque, guests begin arriving for a night of jamming (known more formally as a *jalsah* or *jalsât*, pl.)¹ at around 10 p.m. Mostly Egyptian men but a few Egyptian women and foreigners, in their 20s and 30s, trickle in throughout the evening and number about a dozen. The majority in attendance are independent arts enthusiasts but are not trained musicians. Cushions, chairs, and pillows hug the three walls that form the living room. Scarves or semi-transparent cloth cover the lights, dimming ocular sense.

All are welcomed and encouraged to jam, whether s/he is a musician or not. In an environment where sociality is the most important value, musical ability does not matter much (Taylor 2015: 112). The attendees are a mix of people from neighborhoods spanning Bahari to the upscale parts of Smouha, representing some of the poorest and wealthiest areas in Alexandria. Before the music begins, it is a social affair, much like any house party. Eventually we take our seats in the living room, sitting in two rows facing each other.

The music that emerges depends on who shows up and with what instruments. Today we have an *ʿūd* (plucked lute) player, violinist, bass guitarist, acoustic guitarist, and a trained vocalist. Given the musicians' musical backgrounds, the group improvisation emerges as a mix of Arab art music (*al-mûsîqa al-ʿarabîyyah*), blues, and rock accompanied by various voices and percussion. The violinist begins an improvisation that draws from some elements of the Arab art music *taqsîm* but is not limited to this framework.² The bassist plays a four-tone riff to accompany him while the guitarist adds blues chords where appropriate. The trained vocalist joins by singing a *layâlî*, a vocal improvisation that explores the *maqamât* (melodic modes) using only the words "*ya layl*" (night) or "*ya ʿaîn*" (eye). Others contribute to the improvisation with their voices, sustaining tones, adding vocables, or singing melodies in a call-and-response style with the violinist. Others contribute by any means possible, such as by hitting metal service trays or taking a lighter to a glass bottle. Some chat casually, continue to drink and/or smoke, or just listen. With the violinist's and vocalist's uses of *maqamât* and ornamentation as well as improvisatory techniques such as the *lâzimah* and *gawâb*,³ the music at this particular jam clearly draws from Arab music aesthetics; but, with the

1 See Racy 2003.

2 A.J. Racy, preeminent scholar of music of the Arab world, defines *taqsîm* as an instrumental improvisation that follows certain Arab art music aesthetic frameworks and techniques. In the independent music scene, it was seen as distinct from the more general *irtigâl*, improvisation, which was used to express spontaneous composition in a variety of music styles (Racy 2003: 227-229).

3 A.J. Racy defines *lâzimah* as "a short instrumental interlude or filler between vocal phrases" and *gawâb* as the repetition of a note or phrase an octave higher (2003: 227).

bass riff, rock-influenced guitar chords, and various vocal and percussive elements, it does not sound like typical Arab art music.

As the night turns to morning, the jamming has moved outside onto the top-floor balcony that overlooks the harbor. More and more of its participants fall asleep. Some retire to another area of the apartment, sleeping on any available bed, chair, or floor. Others simply fall asleep in their places in the middle of the jam session. As more and more of its contributors drop out, the music gets quieter and calmer, eventually fading away entirely. Living in Alexandria for a year between 2010 and 2011 and again for the summer of 2012, I attended many such jam sessions that were still going as the morning sun rose, with its most enthusiastic contributors not stopping until 9 or 10 a.m. the following morning. Such gatherings gesture toward a concert, but lack many of its organized and public aspects. Nonetheless, such a gathering forms the backbone of the independent music scene in Alexandria that is largely hidden from view.

In the present-day city, there is little formal infrastructure to make independent arts visible in daily life. Unlike Cairo, Alexandria does not enjoy regular performance venues such as the Cairo Jazz Club or Saqiat al-Sawy;⁴ and it is common knowledge that the "best" musicians leave Alexandria for Cairo or abroad. For many musicians in Alexandria today, such a lack of artistic infrastructure acts as further evidence of the city's so-called decline. Musicians and arts enthusiasts frequently tell me stories of Alexandria's flourishing artistic past, contributing to narratives of what historian Lucie Ryzova calls a "once-had-and-lost" modernity (Ryzova 2015). In this well-known narrative, Alexandria was once a flourishing cosmopolitan and creative hub that drew artists and intellectuals from throughout the Mediterranean region and beyond. The beauty and cleanliness of its streets were believed to rival that of Paris and, home to the likes of renowned vocalist/composer Sayed Darwish, it was a birthplace to modern Egyptian music. For many young artists living in the city today, however, this vision of Alexandria seems a distant and painful reality. With the city's scant performance venues, it seems to place little value on the arts. This issue is further compounded for Egyptian youth because major state-run performance halls, such as the Opera House and infamous Library, primarily patronize the Arab and Western art music that thrived in the mid-20th century, upholding *these* musical forms as beacons of artistic greatness. In this context, independent music with its uncategorizable and geographically-ambiguous sound can be nothing other than a fall from artistic grace. Music scholars and even some independent musicians often talk about

4 The Cairo Jazz Club is an up-scale restaurant and bar that hosts performances of independent music almost every night. It also enforces strict door policies of couples only and does not allow women who wear the hijab. Saqiat al-Sawy is a music and arts venue that has multiple stages and features music and artistic events almost every night.

Egyptian music in a way that disparages the present and barely entertains the possibility of a future. In sum, both contemporary Alexandria and Egyptian music are eclipsed by shadows of their pasts.

Yet, musicians in Alexandria continue to make music independently from state patronage or the multinational music industry represented by corporations like Rotana. Besides intermittent concerts at a few restaurants and cultural centers, independent music in Alexandria today primarily circulates informally—as small informal gestures, such as the jam mentioned above, and as traces in everyday-life interactions. These scenes comprise a loose and fragmented infrastructure bound together by intimacy and affective relationships. Even in the midst of an overwhelming depression gripping Egyptian public feeling especially among urban youth, some highly active musicians in Alexandria choose to stay in the city despite its lack of official performance opportunities. Even when they told me that they felt alienated from Egypt, they still loved the city of Alexandria, and they vowed to continue to make music there despite the additional challenges it posed.

Looking at the lives and aspirations of some of these independent musicians, then, allows us to think about the city of Alexandria in terms of life and living, of possibility and potential. In other words, of a future. With so much scholarly and popular focus on Alexandria's past, how does looking at the city's independent music scene challenge a narrative of decline and present us with notions of a distinctly Alexandrian future?

In this essay, I examine some ordinary scenes of musicking in Alexandria to demonstrate how looking at the city's independent music culture offers an alternative vision of Alexandria as a future-oriented city. I use Christopher Small's concept "musicking" to emphasize music as a process encompassing a wide variety of activities (1998). These activities certainly include rehearsing, jamming, and recording but also listening, sitting, talking, planning, and dreaming in ways that are inspired by music. In other words, independent music is more than just the live performance or the recording; it is also an approach to life outside the music hall. I examine some of the actions and thoughts triggered by music to demonstrate how Alexandrian musicians imagine and live a future through independent musicking in the present.

Speaking about the affective potential of theater performance, feminist theorist Jill Dolan argues that beyond taste and cultural capital, people are drawn to theater for emotional, affective, and communitarian reasons. People are moved through performance—it can shake one's consciousness and provide new ideas about "how to be and be with each other" (2001: 455). She goes to theater, for instance, to experience that which orders, for a moment, her incoherent longings. In other words, theater compels individuals to gather with others, strangers, due to a utopian impulse. This impulse is a hope for moments that allow a reconsideration of the world outside the performance hall. The desire to be a part of the "intense present" of performance offers, if not overtly political, then meaningful emotional expressions of what the

future might *feel* like. Thus, Dolan argues that performance can reorder time such that the future becomes primary. This future is more just and equitable "with more chances to live fully and contribute to the making of culture" (Dolan 2001: 455). For her, these utopian moments extend beyond the theater itself because they can move those who engage it toward realizing the possibility of something better, training imaginations, inspiring dreams, and fueling desires in ways that may lead to larger cultural change (Dolan 2001: 460). Scholars across a variety of fields have similarly identified the transformative potential of the arts to galvanize emergent and fragmented impulses, desires, and feelings. Raymond Williams, for example, looked to the arts to theorize his well-known concept "structures of feeling" (Williams 1977).⁵

But what about contexts where the extraordinary moments of performance are limited, fragmented into smaller spaces and more incongruous moments? When the arts more often exist in the realm of mundane activities, sometimes only tangentially related to the live performance itself? Due in part to the lack of formal infrastructure for independent arts in Alexandria, locating the utopian potential of the city's independent music requires an analysis that goes beyond only the extraordinary moments of official performance to consider the affective registers of musicking more broadly. It necessitates a look at the myriad ways musicians have made independent music almost inseparable from the seemingly mundane moments of ordinary life.

Anthropologist Kathleen Stewart argues that limiting analysis only to large social structures obscures the affective potential of the "ordinary" present. The ordinary, she claims, is comprised of incoherent and heterogeneous singularities that are filled with affective charge, giving everyday life the quality of continual motion (Stewart 2007: 1-2). The significance of these "ordinary affects" lies in the thoughts and feelings they make possible—in where they might go. In other words, she demonstrates that small moments in daily life can likewise spur a reconsideration of the existing world. Building from Stewart, instead of looking only at performance to locate utopian moments in which the future is felt in the present, I examine how Alexandrian artists produce experiential moments of possible futures through the seemingly mundane, incongruous, and inconsequential musicking that exists in the realm of more mundane life.

This essay draws on almost a decade of ethnographic fieldwork with Alexandrian artists and arts organizers, who have long been telling me what Dolan and Stewart theoretically articulate. Bringing these perspectives together, I argue that independent musicking is a type of performance that articulates and embodies a sense of future in the present, even if only in

5 Williams defines structures of feeling as "a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange" (1977: 131).

feeling (Dolan 2001: 457). I locate performance in the traces—small gestures, intimate moments, fleeting desires—of independent music already found in ordinary life. In so doing, I attempt to build a map of independent musicking as a series of connections among seemingly disparate singular events. This analysis intends to take seriously the fact that most Alexandrian musicians spend more time listening to music, planning musical activities, and talking about music in street cafes than they do actually performing. Although this certainly is not unique to Alexandrian musicians, it is experienced distinctly in each time and place. The meanings Alexandrian musicians give to their state of apparent idleness emerge from their particular approach to past, present, and future, notions of which are informed by the specificities of Egyptian history and culture. Given the popular currency of discourses about Alexandria's more prosperous and cosmopolitan past, for many Alexandrians, especially, independent music is a seemingly natural part of the city's landscape to which it must inevitably return.

That musicking renders the future felt in the present suggests an experience of different temporalities woven together, which historian François Hartog elucidates through his concept "regimes of historicity." It describes the particular ways social groups give meaning to and organize senses of past, present, and future. This order, in constant flux, renders some actions, behaviors, and imaginations more possible than others (Hartog 2015: xvi). That the city's past has overshadowed any sense of future has given many of those who live in and write about Alexandria an overwhelming sense of "decline" that I describe below. The removal of certain types of arts from daily life, which has only intensified since 2013 with the rapid closing of independent arts spaces throughout Cairo and Alexandria, has likewise produced for some an endless sense of the present. By "futurity," then, I build from Hartog to indicate a transformation in temporal arrangement such that the future—not the past nor present—becomes the most dominant sense of time. Similar to the way Dolan describes attending the theater due to a utopian impulse, independent musicking is a way for some to reorder time such that the future is experienced now in the present even if only momentarily or on the level of feeling.

At the same time that independent musicians' utopian impulse is a response to experiences of marginalization, as with most utopian impulses, the one examined here also perpetuates its own exclusions. Many independent musicians in Alexandria feel a future by markedly excluding the working-class music and culture that they consider to dominate public life in the present. While sensitive to these multi-level exclusions, I have chosen to focus here on what this utopian impulse does for the independent musicians who feel it. I examine independent musicking through the lens of queer and feminist theory because this literature has shed considerable light on the experiences of marginalization that result from confluences of capital, race, place, gender, and sexuality. It details how those living at the losing end of these intersections persist through feelings of depression and desires for better

futures that may never come, producing something not as clear as "hope" but a sort of resilience if only on an affective level. As a result, in what follows I focus less on the sound itself in favor of expounding on the experiences and feelings that give sound meaning. In so doing, this essay offers an alternative to well-worn "decline" narratives, refocusing attention on the ways some Alexandrians continue to feel a sense of purpose and attachment, however imperfect, to the city they call home.

INDEPENDENT MUSIC AND THE NARRATIVE OF "DECLINE"

The "fusion" music that opened this essay is, intentionally or not, often implicated in competing temporal arrangements. Known as "independent music," its fans for instance relate it to novelty and change. Independent music in Egypt is primarily associated with urban middle-class youth who make music without relying on support from the multinational music industry or state patronage.⁶ The scene is largely delineated by production process instead of musical genre; thus, it includes musicians who perform music inspired by heavy metal, jazz, rock, electronic, hip-hop, reggae, and Nubian, to name only a few, as well as styles more heavily influenced by Arab art and folk musics. Although encompassing a wide variety of perspectives and styles, independent bands are often formed by those interested in lyrically exploring topics "other than love," a subject that many musicians told me saturates the commercial sphere, and producing music that they saw as not widely available in the Egyptian market. A pioneering Alexandrian independent band, al-Hubb wa al-Salam (Love and Peace), for instance, was formed by composer and pianist Nabil al-Baqly in 1975. Working with Alexandrian poet Ahmed Yousry, al-Baqly sought to produce a new style of Arab popular song that mixed local aesthetics with globally-circulating genres, such as American rock and pop, and that dealt with a wide variety of social topics. Continuing until the early 2000s, al-Hubb wa al-Salam would become an important model for independent music in the city. Many of Alexandria's most successful musicians

6 Musicians often use the English word "independent," but also use the Arabic term *mustaqill*, or denote the scene by saying *al-bândât al-mustaqillah* "independent bands" or *al-bândât al-badilah* "alternative bands." With some independent musicians participating in state-run festivals and workshops as well as receiving corporate sponsorship, the meaning of "independent" is endlessly fuzzy. Additionally, many of the most well-known and active independent musicians are well into their thirties and forties, including some interviewed for this essay. As a result, I use the term "youth" loosely to describe the general demographic most associated with independent music. In Egypt, it is widely considered a musical form catering to the aesthetics and values of a younger generation.

today—including those currently performing in Nour Project, Massar Egbari, as well as with Awakening Records and Mohamed Mounir—learned by performing in al-Baqly's band. Thus since its inception, independent music in Alexandria has emerged from desires to create that which is considered innovative and unique. For some, this could be seen as a future-oriented act: It transforms that which already exists in the present into what could be.

For critics, in contrast, independent music is only further indication of Arab “decline.” Although Egyptian musicians have always been making multicultural and independent musical forms, the eclectic roots of independent music as it is commonly understood today stem from the 1970s, when Egyptian culture and economy underwent neoliberal restructuring through president Anwar al-Sadat's open-door policies known as *al-infitah*. A reversal of what had been Egypt's post-independence socialist policies, the economic “opening” aligned the country more closely with the West and increased foreign investment in the Egyptian economy. For most scholars and cultural critics, the Western-influenced musical styles emerging following this restructuring have been treated negatively, amounting to what ethnomusicologist Michael Frishkopf calls the “decline-theory of Arab culture and civilization” (Frishkopf 2010: 6).⁷ As it relates specifically to the study of Arab music, this theory posits that electronically-mediated and/or “fusion” musical forms emerging especially since the 1970s are aesthetically and culturally inferior to Arab art and religious musics/sounds that flourished in previous decades. The music produced during the mid-twentieth century prior to *al-infitah*, especially, is known affectionately as music of “the Golden Age.” Dominated by such megastars as Umm Kulthum and the focus of the vast majority of musical studies, “the Golden Age” has unproblematically become a discursive “center” to which all subsequent musical forms can be only disparagingly compared (see also Danielson 1996).

Commenting on this trend, film scholar Kay Dickinson argues that “Arab music” has become almost synonymous with the word “traditional.” Borrowing Gayatri Spivak's term, she amounts the choice to ignore or devalue contemporary styles to “epistemic violence” (Dickinson 2013: 5). Indeed, compared to the number of studies on Arab art musics and religious sonic forms, especially those that flourished in the mid-twentieth century, there are few academic studies of contemporary popular music in Egypt or the Arab

7 Due to space constraints, a full consideration of this literature must necessarily remain beyond the scope of this essay. For more on the topic of decline, see for instance Bayat 2013 [2010]; Halim 2013; Abu-Rabi' 2004; Kassab 2010; Kassir 2004; Radwan 1997.

world written in English.⁸ To date, there are almost none on independent music in Egypt.⁹ Avoiding the "scandalousness" that arises from the outspokenly "Westernized Arab," scholars of the Middle East have preferred to focus on traditional, rural, art, religious, and folk musics in which they can more easily locate appeals to indigeneity and colonial (or post-colonial) resistance (Ferguson 2006; El Zein 2016).

If not ignored, Egyptian youths' attachments to fusions and Western cultural influences, especially, have been treated negatively in popular and academic circles both within Egypt and abroad. Prominent Arab music scholar Habib Hassan Touma, for example, considers multicultural musical styles to be "a monstrous distortion [that] has irresponsibly compromised the essence of Arabian music" (Touma 1996: 143). Although Touma represents the cultural purism often championed by an older generation, musical "fusions" are also criticized by young musicians in the independent music scene. For instance, Rami Abadir, a thirty-five-year old music critic and independent musician from Cairo argues that Egyptian fusion amounts to lazily and forcefully mixing simplified musical forms from two or more "unrelated genres" to create a "disfigured" product. He writes,

To merely add a vocal sample from Oum Kalthoum, folk music or a mawwal,¹⁰ and repeat it continuously over dance music, such as dubstep or house, is neither creative nor innovative. Nor is playing oriental melodies with western instruments accompanied by a hybrid Arabic vocal line. The separate units are already familiar to listeners' ears because they have been played and heard before. In my opinion, merely combining them amounts to lazy opportunism. (Abadir 2015)

Unlike Touma, Abadir is not a cultural purist. He recognizes value in what he calls "appropriating" foreign musical forms and does not adhere to a notion of Arab music's fundamental "essence." Nonetheless, his views support a decline theory of Arab culture. He considers the audible recognition of Western musical forms lazy imitation and indicative of an overall creative lack. In short, the "fusion" musical styles produced by Egyptian independent

8 For studies of Arab art music see Touma 1971; Nettle and Riddle 1973; Racy 1977, 1982, 1988, 1998, 2003; al-Shawan 1982, 1984; Danielson 1998; Shannon 2006; Lohman 2010. For studies of contemporary popular music, see Danielson 1996; Frishkopf 2010; Burkhalter 2013; Burkhalter et. al 2013; Gilman 2014; El Zein 2016; Ramzy 2016; Salois 2016; Silverstein 2016.

9 Except for one essay on Egyptian metal in Burkhalter et. al 2013 and on *mahraganât* in Swedenburg 2012.

10 A.J. Racy defines *mawwâl* as a vocal improvisation of colloquial poetic text (2003: 227).

musicians today are widely accused of perpetuating Arab decline to the extent that this discourse is advanced by some independent musicians themselves.

Compounding the issue for independent musicians in Alexandria, independent musicking in Egypt's second largest city has long existed in a less commercial sphere and on a smaller scale than its counterpart in Cairo. Since 2014, independent musicians' ability to engage the public has been constricted more than ever before. Increasingly strict regulations on non-profit and non-governmental organizations have claimed, one-by-one, the lives of many longstanding cultural organizations that were the primary supporters of independent arts. In Alexandria, public artistic projects such as Mini Mobile Concerts that flourished after the 2011 revolution have ceased (see ElNabawi 2013); and, in August 2016, al-Cabina, the primary hub for independent artists in Alexandria since 2011, shuttered its doors. Without venues or funding, live performances in Alexandria have become increasingly rare. One musician commented on FaceBook that she was "Trying to forget corruption and focus on music. But it seems there is no escape. They don't want to let us be, not even in very small places." Unlike Cairenes, who have enjoyed a few stable venues and the possibility for larger artistic projects, Alexandrians have by necessity relied on the informal, itinerant, and intimate. For many, its lack of stable artistic infrastructure is only further evidence of the city's decline, and there is a general sense of "no escape" from an endless present where things only ever get worse. One Alexandrian independent musician told me that the year 2017 represents the peak of depression for creative artists in the country. Many independent musicians in Alexandria have recently left Egypt or abandoned the arts, escaping an increasing sense of strangulation as opportunities to achieve normative markers of artistic success disappear. The jam sessions that I and others enjoyed several times a month for years have mostly faded to memory, because, as another friend lamented, "People today are too depressed to jam."

Hartog calls these periods "gaps in time, intervals which are entirely determined by things which are no longer and things which are yet to come." They are moments defined by a sense of endless present when time seems to have come to a halt (2015: 106). Given the resounding negativity toward independent music, the study of contemporary music in Egypt has mirrored in some respects the study (or lack thereof) of the city of Alexandria—both are marked by an overwhelming focus on the past and a disdain or disregard for that which exists in the present.

THE ORDINARY AFFECTS OF INDEPENDENT MUSIC

Independent musicking in Alexandria as a utopian impulse must be understood within this larger narrative of "decline" that has trivialized most youth-led attempts at innovation or creative participation in public life. It is within this context that independent musicking can move some out of the past toward the

realization of something better now in the present. It thus renders possible new actions, thoughts, and behaviors despite the persistence of larger social exclusions. Stewart views such seemingly idle periods not as a “gap” in time but as a process of slow condensation that gives ordinary life a sense of unfolding—that “something is stirring” (Moawad 2016). In other words, a state of calm is only a temporary lull in the action (Stewart 2007: 18-19). For those independent musicians who choose to stay, Alexandria’s intimacy and slower temporal pace are not evidence of decline but a resource and source of inspiration. Building from Stewart, in what follows I build a map of connections among the fragmented, the itinerant, and the incoherent to demonstrate how, for the musicians who want to remain in Alexandria, independent musicking reorders temporal regimes to reveal felt traces of what could be.

As one community member commemorating al-Cabina on Facebook, says, “you can’t kill an idea.” Indeed, as soon as one Alexandrian venue closes, two more take its place. These new spaces—apartments-turned-venues—sprouting up around the city’s landscape are smaller, more obscure, and sometimes disappear as quickly as they came. They are the types of places that emerge only through an atmosphere of cooperation and community—when owners make agreements with neighbors and when musicians are friends who perform for free. They host intimate performances in spaces not much larger than an apartment living room, but every night. Considering these alternative performance models, it may not only be that musicians are too depressed to jam, but that there is an even more intimate and itinerant infrastructure for performance emerging. This fragmented network is making the jam session a nightly event, demonstrating the extent to which the Alexandrian scene has grown even as it is buried underground—jamming at a friend’s apartment several nights a month is no longer enough.

Sitting at a street cafe (*ahwa*) called Tasty Treats¹¹ in al-Manshiyya district of downtown Alexandria one evening, I drink tea with thirty-four-year-old *ʿūd* player Adham El-Habashy, who has a lot to say about how the Alexandrian scene has grown. Inspired by the music of independent bands such as al-Hubb wa al-Salam and Resala, he founded Soot fel Zahma (A Voice in the Crowd) in Alexandria in the early 2000s. According to its Facebook page, the band’s music is characterized by “Arabic rock” fused with “Egyptian folklore” and lyrics that express the lived realities of daily life. Over the last fifteen years, El-Habashy has witnessed the scene grow from a handful of bands to something much more impressive. Instead of the present marking a depressive moment, he sees the opposite:

11 Name has been changed.

The field of independent music grew a lot because of the revolution. Even today, you can walk into a shop, any normal supermarket, and hear independent music such as Massar Egbari playing . . . when you're riding in a taxi you might hear Salalem. Independent musicians have reached the level of stardom. This spirit (*rûh*) is there no matter what. No matter what, Alexandria has an audience for this now. I doubt that this could ever really die, it is the opposite, in fact. It is an industry now. In Alexandria there are a lot of bands, a lot of musicians . . . It used to be that whoever was a good musician would leave Alexandria, but that's not the case anymore. There are a lot of good musicians here now that aren't leaving.

El-Habashy attributed these changes to what he called "*rûh*" (spirit), indicating the extent to which performance lingers far beyond its moments in the concert hall. Thus, even if arts venues are plucked one-by-one from the landscape there will still be a large audience in Alexandria for independent music, something that he tells me had not existed when he first started his band. Given how much its fanbase has grown in only the past decade and its continued traces in ordinary life in supermarkets and taxis, independent music gives a sense that the future has already arrived on an affective "spiritual" level.

In an environment with few official performance opportunities, independent musicking also inspires new avenues of community, imagination, and action. First, it heightens the performative significance of ordinary "sitting." Although the location is continually changing, in the winter of 2016 for example, independent musicians and artists regularly sat for hours each evening at Tasty Treats. Members of different bands frequently passed by the coffee shop before or after rehearsals, and, no matter what day of the week, I could always find artists there I knew. Especially in such times of overwhelming precarity, there is a special comfort that comes with knowing that a community exists and that you will be able to find it every day. Because even if you are miserable, you never have to be miserable alone. Unlike the sprawling nature of Cairo, where hours of traffic increase the distance between neighborhoods, the intimacy of Alexandria promises certain advantages. As El-Habashy told me, not sitting in traffic is what gives him the time to "sit" with friends.

Demonstrating the extraordinary significance of this ordinary sitting, I know several Alexandrian musicians who finally moved to England after years of being frustrated at the lack of artistic opportunities in Alexandria. Meeting with them individually in London in 2016, I expected to find them different, happier people. Instead, they both told me that they were equally unhappy abroad. Even after living in London for years, they each felt a distinct absence of community. As one put it, "No one here 'sits' after work." Musicians' supposed idleness, then, actually amounted to important moments of community formation. In a smaller scene, each musician can feel that s/he plays a larger role in contributing to a community. Being absent from "sitting" at Tasty Treats for more than a few days would almost always invite concerned inquiries from friends and fellow musicians. Whereas in

larger music scenes musicians are easily drowned out, in Alexandria they almost always stand out.

Beyond only cultivating a sense of community, "sitting" was an important site where musicians collectively articulated alternative futures. In his study of boredom among un- and underemployed rural male youth in Egypt, anthropologist Samuli Schielke found that creative writing was a form of imaginative leisure and escape. His interlocutors, denied visas to travel, could visit foreign countries in the literature they wrote. They thus compensated for their physical immobility through dreaming (Schielke 2008: 264-65). His study shows, first, that un- and underemployment not only affects musicians but the country's youth more generally. It further demonstrates that the solution to this boredom was to do something meaningful (2008: 267). For Alexandrian musicians, making independent music was likewise a highly meaningful activity. Their conversations at coffee shops revolved around how they could utilize their music to produce a better life and more positive future. Spending countless hours at Tasty Treats, I heard musicians frequently discuss strategies for promoting their recordings and videos, including how to get more views/likes on social media and what production companies to work with. They would often share news of upcoming workshops and performances as well as discuss issues such as inadequate compensation and ways to work around the lack of performance venues. Some debated strategies for moving to Cairo or leaving the country altogether. Others played from their mobile phones unfinished recordings of their original compositions for feedback from friends in other bands or suggested new international and local artists to listen to.

Sitting in coffee shops was an important part of musicking in which musicians' dreams and creative expressions could be acknowledged by others. In the absence of regular performance opportunities that garnered public recognition, "sitting" provided musicians a regular audience for their creative works. Similar to a performance, they received public approval and feedback that would inform what directions they could take in their music. In this sense, the ordinary acts of smoking *shisha* (tobacco water pipe) and drinking tea created a space of not only imagining alternative artistic futures but also of experiencing these futures in the present. While some of the dreams they imagined there took musicians far from Egypt, for others sitting provided the social and imaginative spaces for making life better within it.

It was also where kernels of ideas and desires began to take root. In late 2016, the ordinary coffee-shop conversations inspired by independent music began to coalesce into an organized movement. Twenty-eight-year-old bass player Ahmed Abd Elrasol was a regular at Tasty Treats and has played music in a number of Alexandrian bands, including Storm, Wasla, and most recently, al-Mena. Through hours of "sitting" and listening to his peers, he recognized that Alexandrian independent musicians must overcome similar obstacles. He decided to gather a representative from each Alexandrian band to meet at the French Institute in the Manshiyya district. The purpose of the meeting was to

discuss how the bands could work together to address administrative issues and the lack of performance opportunities. The meeting produced spirited and at times heated discussion. Inspired by the energy and sense of community such discussions solidified, Abd Elrasol told me that he intends to make these more organized meetings a regular occurrence in order to form something akin to a grassroots musicians' union.

In this case, independent musicking inspired forms of organizing. Rather than an indication of idleness, "sitting" was a type of stirring. It was a slow process of collecting that which had been fragmented to inspire action. Similar to Dolan's experience of theater performance, sitting organizes the incoherent desires of everyday life for many Alexandrian independent musicians. It is a fundamental yet often invisible part of independent music. Indeed, it is how many musicians spend most of their time. As an alternative site of performance and public recognition, it spurs the direction of the scene, revealing traces in the present of what the future may feel like.

Recognizing the potential of sitting as a site of performance, Alexandrian film director and cultural curator Emad Mabrouk started the Alexandria-based website Platform¹² with the aim to utilize public space (or any space for that matter) for the broadcast of live artistic performance. The idea driving the project is that music, and art more generally, has no particular place. It thus aims to use technology to make live performance available anywhere, including at *ahawi* (s. *ahwa*). Unlike typical streaming services already available on social media sites such as Facebook, Platform records artistic events specifically with the arts in mind, using cameras that utilize different angles and high-quality microphones to do justice to the quality of the performance. With this technology, it provides live performances for streaming on mobile devices, computers, or televisions. Still in its nascent stages, it offers the potential for street cafes to live broadcast artistic performances held in distant locations or in spaces too intimate to hold a large audience. Ideally, attending a performance of independent music, then, could compete with the popularity of football matches, the entertainment currently reigning in public space. In this vision of Alexandria, the lack of performance spaces no longer hinders an artist's ability to engage a public. The city's absent cultural infrastructure is instead a "platform" for creative solutions that infuse the arts more firmly into ordinary life. At the same time that Platform offers a future oriented-vision, it likewise harkens back to a time when, instead of football matches, the public gathered to listen to renowned singer Umm Kulthum's (b. 1898 d. 1975) weekly radio broadcast every Thursday night. The broadcasts of her live performances were so powerful in gathering a public that they were widely reported to have stopped Egypt's notorious traffic.

12 <https://www.nowhereonlineplatform.com/>, accessed January 10, 2018.

Further demonstrating the importance of the street cafe as an alternative site of artistic performance, Ahmed Saad, a poet in his late twenties, regularly sits in street cafes around the city to capture in prose what he calls the Alexandrian "spirit" (*rûh*). His poems, detailing the places and ordinary-life events of the city, are sung by over a dozen Alexandrian bands.¹³ Although anyone can write about Alexandria, Saad maintains that only an Alexandrian can truly capture her spirit. Given the widespread depression that has taken hold of public feeling especially in the last several years, the Alexandrian "spirit" is a somewhat remarkable contrast. Even amid seemingly endemic desires to leave Egypt among certain urban groups, a positive affective attachment to the city of Alexandria persists. Many of the Alexandrian artists I spoke to chose to stay in the city because of what they described as Alexandria's soul or spirit (*rûh*), personality (*shakhsîya*), or "mood" (in English). Saad's poetry captures these special qualities. In his poem "Alexandria," sung by al-Mena, for example, he writes

Alexandria
A girl, how did she fall in love?
An autumn season
All the leaves dwindling and sad
Except her tree

Saad's words express a sentiment that is widely shared not only among Alexandrians but among urban Egyptians more generally. "If you are ever feeling depressed," he tells me, "you can always sit by the sea and feel better. That's why people talk about Alexandria as their love." Egyptians rarely have such positive affective attachments to Cairo. Saad associated Alexandria with the horizon both as a geographical feature and a sense of time. Being able to sit at its shoreline and see the horizon, in both senses of the term, has a cathartic effect. If all of Egypt is "dwindling and sad," Alexandria stands as a last beacon of hope and source of Egyptian pride for many of the country's urban youth who have otherwise come to feel quite estranged. El-Habashy, for instance, told me

Alexandria is very livable. Despite the fact that it may be a bit closed off (*ma'fûla*), it is very intimate (*balad hamîmîya gedan*), everyone is very close to each other. You feel that it is a village not a real city . . . Cairo is a tough place. It is not easy. Everything there is faster than it needs to be, and difficult, and artificial . . . But Alexandria gives you the space in your life where you can really play [music]. You have time to actually meet other people because everything is so close

13 Including Al-Mena, Khatt Ahmar, Wasla, Karakeeb, Soot fel Zahma, Storm, Paranoia, High Dam, Sorour, Salib Sufi, Meshwar Band, and Omdan Nour, among others.

together, the most it will take you [to drive from one place to another] is a half hour . . . I can go and visit Cairo, but I do not feel any sense of belonging there. In Alexandria, it is the opposite.

This affection for Alexandria harbors utopian feelings. It is a stubborn sense of connectedness to Egypt despite a post-revolutionary environment that drives feelings of animosity, precarity, and alienation for many urban young people today. Alexandrian independent musicians who sing Saad's hopeful verses broadcast ideas of what affectionate feelings of belonging to Egypt are possible—of what “could be.” It is perhaps no surprise that “Alexandria” is al-Mena's most popular track, with audiences even in Cairo often overpowering the musicians in singing its words at concerts. Although these romantic longings for Alexandria can sometimes border on a backward-looking nostalgic ideal, they are also what fundamentally keeps musicians in the city, binding the scene together. It produces an independent music scene not formed by the (often false) promises of capital but by affective relations and a deep sense of belonging, sentiments that I found to be largely absent in Cairo's scene.

The special affinity for the city of Alexandria and the closeness among its musicians has led to two compilation albums, *Mûsiqa min hena* (*Musik von hier*/Music from here), that proudly feature only Alexandrian bands. The two volumes released through the support of the city's Goethe Institute on CD in 2016 and 2017 respectively, present an alternative to the individualized branding and entrepreneurship privileged in capital-driven arts scenes. These albums suggest instead that the city itself is a brand.

Sitting in the front seat of a microbus one day, Ahmed, a musician featured on the CD, listens to the first album on his headphones. Unexpectedly, the microbus driver turns to him to ask if he'll play them some music. Ahmed decides to play al-Mena's track “Al-Ahly.” The lyrics, written by Saad and sung in multi-track vocals, describe the scenes of ordinary life—drinking coffee, opening the balcony door, and cheering on al-Ahly football team—as well as themes that speak to the experiences of many Egyptian youth—waking up late for Friday prayer, feeling a sense of alienation in one's own home, and being out for half the night. Supporting the lyrics, multiple guitars play a mixture of blues and rock while a beatboxer spits quick rhythms to form a catchy groove. After listening for a moment, the driver asks, “What kind of music is this?” Ahmed replies using a common language with the driver, “It is a new type of ‘*mahraganât*’ music.” The driver seems pleasantly surprised, “This music is better than Oka and Ortega's. It's not as noisy as the old *mahraganât*.” Seeking to encourage the driver's interest, Ahmed gives him the first *Mûsiqa min hena* CD in the hopes that he will continue to play it for passengers.

Although the driver could simply have been being polite, Ahmed found the exchange meaningful. He quickly recounted every detail of the story on Facebook, spreading the idea to others who commented that his phrasing and

"recruitment" of a microbus driver had been a good idea. For him, the exchange enabled the momentary experience of an alternative future in which independent music bellowed from microbuses, *takâtik* (s. *tuktuk*),¹⁴ and taxis instead of the working-class genres, such as *mahraganât*, that normally monopolize these speakers. With *mahraganât* having become hugely popular in part by circulating through an alternative media infrastructure of public transportation, public transport holds profound potential in environments with limited opportunities for live public performance. Ahmed's account demonstrates that independent musicians are actively striving to find ways to harness it.

In a recent article, anthropologist Jessica Winegar demonstrates that the inability to present "dignified middle classness" in public space was a driving force behind the utopian aesthetics of the 2011 uprisings (2016, 612). For the middle class, at least, this utopian aesthetic was concerned with cultivating certain notions of public cleanliness, orderliness, and politeness during and immediately after the 2011 revolution. As the above examples have shown, the inability to perform a particular dignified middle-class subjectivity also extends to the sonic realm. For most independent musicians, the urban working-class genres that dominate public space are sonic signifiers of "backwardness." *Mahraganât* artists Oka and Ortega's heavy use of autotune, overly-synthetic sounds, and crass language, for instance, reveals not a sense of future but of what should have been left behind. The utopian vision described here, then, focused as it is on bringing independent arts into the everyday spaces of street cafes and public transportation, is one that markedly excludes those already sounding there. In so doing, it perpetuates a state-supported ideal of modernity that upholds the middle-class citizen as exemplary at the same time that it seeks to challenge middle-class exclusions from public life. Winegar insightfully attributes these exclusions to utopia's ultimate failure. But the musicians examined here were not defeated by the likely possibility of never fully realizing the future they imagined. Independent musicking was more about the feelings and temporal sensations it made possible in the present.

As the violinist from this essay's opening jam session recently told me, "These times challenge you to be creative. Now I can be very experimental with my music and in finding alternative ways to perform in public. I am realizing my own creativity in finding ways around the situation we are in." In planning the next iteration of an annual independent music festival held in Alexandria, for instance, organizers are relying more than ever on personal relationships. With money for non-profit ventures harder to come by following the state's new regulations on NGOs (Human Rights Watch 2017), individuals from the community are increasingly volunteering their time and space. The festival organizers assured me that the festival is happening, even if

14 The *tuktuk* is a three-wheeled semi-enclosed vehicle used as a form of public transportation primarily in crowded or low-income urban areas.

it means holding it in someone's living room. One told me, "I have no choice but to be optimistic on an emotional level. It's the only mindset that allows you to survive, that makes anyone want to make art or music. In this challenging time, you have to be optimistic and flexible."

Visual artist and one of the founders of Gudran Association for Art and Development, Sameh el-Helwany expresses similar sentiments. Even as traditional sources of funding disappear for Gudran, a non-profit arts organization that he has nurtured and grown for almost two decades, el-Helwany radiates positivity. He is quick to make a lighthearted joke or laugh at all the new creative ways he is finding to implement projects. "This is an incredible moment," he tells me, "These are not ordinary times. You really have the chance to contribute something and make a difference. This is something amazing." Even in the face of great adversity, many Alexandrian independent artists are driven by the sense that they can do something even, or perhaps especially, in trying environments. Indeed, some theorists of utopia have posited that utopian artistic performance only exists in conditions of tension—in the *absence* of utopia (Dolan 2001). Rather than emerging through a linear, coherent, or tangible plan, this optimistic sense of future is a feeling existing in the present on what one musician calls an "emotional level."

Manipulating the feeling of time was central to how these arts organizers fueled their optimism. As other non-profits slowly suffocate and disappear from the Egyptian landscape, el-Helwany's continued work with Gudran "is about the long game. You cannot win the game. But you can make the game go on for a long time. As long as you keep making the game longer you are winning. Along the way you will win things and lose things, but it is about making this take forever." Similarly, for the violinist, "There is no peak that can be sustained forever. It is a law of physics. Even if this depressive peak for creative people lasts 15 years, or longer, I would rather be active and try new ways of doing things, to still be creative, than quit." Both el-Helwany and the violinist express a sort of contentment with the sense that the future may never actually come—they can still feel it in the present.

Sitting with el-Helwany in an *ahwa* near al-Cabina in al-Manshiyya, I see traces of alternative futures everywhere. Every few minutes el-Helwany warmly greets someone passing by whom he knows. Having worked closely implementing community arts projects with people in the area since the early 2000s, he tells me story after story of how he first met and befriended local business owners—people who may otherwise not be involved in the arts—through their participation in various artistic projects. On the wall to our left, vibrant red, orange, and yellow paint provide a striking contrast to the muted colors that make up the ordinary palette of public space. They are the visual residue of a project that Gudran completed over a decade ago that still radiate a reminder of what public life could be. Now walking in Muhatet al-Raml (downtown Alexandria), I frequently see young people carrying instruments across their shoulders, a rare sight in 2010. Even the walls these days seem to be speaking

of music. In early 2017, I find spray painted along the Cornish the question, "What do you think music's affect is on us?" next to tags of Pink Floyd, Iron Maiden, and Mashrou' Leila.

Instead of treating Egyptian independent music as further evidence of Arab "decline," more can be gleaned by taking seriously the alternative ways of life and living it makes possible in the present. This requires getting away from classical Arab art music as a center to which all music thereafter can only be disparagingly compared. If nothing else, Alexandria's independent music scene demonstrates the power and potential of getting away from centers, period. This is not to belittle the real challenges posed by an increasingly hostile environment toward the arts or the lived difficulties of making music outside the capital; rather, it aims to focus our attention on the energy of Alexandrian independent musicians who continue to make music in spite of them. Their resilience demonstrates that the condensation of everything into a totalizing system, of which everything must necessarily be a part, may not be the only—or best—possible model. Even fragmented gestures and traces can lead to profound results (see for example Bayat 2013 [2010]). Similar to Dolan, who goes to the theater because it temporarily "orders" her "incoherent longings," independent musicking gathers some Alexandrians' fragmented desires, culminating in an alternative vision of society. For these Alexandrians today, it renders new actions and imaginations possible. Just as with the jam session that opened this essay, it enables moments in which to live differently and to contribute to culture more equally. In this sense, it provides traces of what the future might feel like as some wait for the "long game" to pass.

Acknowledgments: Thank you to Abd Elrasol, Adham El-Habashy, the violinist, Sameh el-Halawany, Abdallah, Ramez, Amr, Yasmine al-Baqly, Ahmed Saad, Rami Abadir, Samuli Schielke, Youssef El Chazli, and the two anonymous reviewers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abadir R., 2015, "*faqr musiqa al-mazaj wa kayf yehduth al-tajdid al-haqiqi*" [On the bankruptcy of fusion and how musical innovation really happens], *Ma3azef*, 22 November, <http://bit.ly/1ScOxFh>, accessed January 10, 2018.
- Abu-Rabi' I.M., 2004, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Studies in Post-1967 Arab Intellectual History*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Bayat A., 2013 [2010], *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East*, 2nd ed, Stanford, Stanford University Press.
- Burkhalter T., 2013, *Local Music Scenes and Globalization: Transnational Platforms in Beirut*, New York, Routledge.

- Danielson V., 1996, "New Nightingales of the Nile: Popular Music in Egypt since the 1970s," *Popular Music*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 299-312.
- 1998, *"The Voice of Egypt": Umm Kulthum, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Dickinson K., 2013, "Introduction: 'Arab' + 'Avant-Garde,'" in *The Arab Avant-Garde: Music, Politics, Modernity*, edited by T. Burkhalter, K. Dickinson, and B. J. Harbert, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press.
- Dolan J., 2001, "Performance, Utopia, and the 'Utopian Performative,'" *Theatre Journal*, vol. 53, no. 3, pp. 455-479.
- ElNabawi M., 2013, "Itinerant Music Spreads Peace in Alexandria's Streets," *Egypt Independent*, 15 April, <http://www.egyptindependent.com/itinerant-music-show-spreads-peace-alexandria-s-streets/>, accessed January 10, 2018.
- El Zein R., 2016, "Performing el Rap el 'Arabi 2005-2015: Feeling Politics amid Neoliberal Incursions in Ramallah, Amman, and Beirut," PhD dissertation, City University of New York.
- Ferguson J., 2006, *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.
- Frishkopf M., (ed.) 2010, *Music and Media in the Arab World*, Cairo, American University in Cairo Press.
- Gilman D., 2014, *Cairo Pop: Youth Music in Contemporary Egypt*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.
- Halim H., 2013, *Alexandrian Cosmopolitanism: An Archive*, New York, Fordham University Press.
- Hartog F., 2015, *Regimes of Historicity: Presentism and Experiences of Time* [translated by S. Brown], New York, Columbia University Press.
- Human Rights Watch, 2017, "Egypt: New Law Will Crush Civil Society," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/06/02/egypt-new-law-will-crush-civil-society>, accessed January 10, 2018.
- Kassab E.S., 2010, *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- Kassir S., 2004, *Considérations sur le malheur arabe*, Paris, Actes Sud.
- Lohman L., 2010, *Umm Kulthum: Artistic Agency and the Shaping of an Arab Legend, 1967-2007*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press.
- Moawad S., 2016, "Something is Stirring in Egypt," *Muftah*, 30 May, <https://muftah.org/something-stirring-egypt/#.WWMHddMrJp8>, accessed January 10, 2018.
- Nettl, B. and R. Riddle, 1973, "Taqsim Nahawand: A Study of Sixteen Performances by Jihad Racy," *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* vol. 5, pp. 11-50.
- Racy A.J., 1977, "Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt," PhD dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- 1982, "Musical Aesthetics in Present-Day Cairo," *Ethnomusicology* vol. 26 no. 3, pp. 391-406.
- 1998, "Improvisation, Ecstasy, and Performance Dynamics in Arabic Music," in *In the Course of Performance: Studies in the World of Musical Improvisation*, edited by Bruno Nettl and Melinda Russell, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- 2003, *Making Music in the Arab World: The Culture and Artistry of Ṭarab*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

- Radwan N., 1997, *al-Shabâb al-misrî al-mu'âsir wa azmat al-qiyam* [Contemporary Arab youth and the crisis of value], Cairo, hi'at al-Misriyya al-'ama li al-kitab.
- Ramzy C., 2016, "Autotuned Belonging: Coptic Popular Song and the Politics of Neo-Pentecostal Pedagogies," *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 60, no. 3, pp. 434-458.
- Ryzova L., 2015, "Unstable Icons, Contested Histories: Vintage Photographs and Neoliberal Memory in Contemporary Egypt," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* vol. 8, pp. 37-68.
- Salois K., 2016, "Fleas in Sheepskin: Recontextualization, Glocalization, and Cosmopolitanism in Moroccan Hip Hop," in K. van Nieuwkerk et. al, *Islam and Popular Culture*, Austin, University of Texas Press, pp. 364-82.
- Scheilke S., 2008, "Boredom and Despair in Rural Egypt," *Contemporary Islam*, vol. 2, pp. 251-270.
- Shannon J.H., 2006, *Among the Jasmine Trees: Music and Modernity in Contemporary Syria*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press.
- el-Shawan S., 1982, "The Role of Mediators in the Transmission of al-Musika al-'Arabiyyah in Twentieth Century Cairo," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* vol. 14, pp. 55-74.
- _____, 1984, "Traditional Arab Music Ensembles in Egypt since 1967: 'The Continuity of Tradition within a Contemporary Framework?'," *Ethnomusicology* vol. 28 no. 2, pp. 271-288.
- Silverstein S., 2016, "The Punk Arab: Demystifying Omar Souleyman's Techno-Dabke," in M. Veal and E. Tammy Kim, *Punk Ethnography: Artists and Scholars Listen to Sublime Frequencies*, Wesleyan, CT, Wesleyan University Press, pp. 265-87.
- Small C., 1998, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performance and Listening*, Middletown, CT, Wesleyan University Press.
- Stewart K., 2007, *Ordinary Affects*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.
- Swedenburg T., 2012, "Egypt's Music of Protest: From Sayyid Darwish to DJ Haha," *Middle East Research and Information Project* vol. 42, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer265/egypts-music-protest>, accessed January 10, 2018.
- Taylor T.D., 2015, "World Music, Value, and Memory," in D. Helms and T. Phelps, *Speaking in Tongues: Pop Lokal Global*, Berlin, Verlag.
- Touma H., 1996, *The Music of the Arabs*, translated by L. Schwartz, Portland, OR, Amadeus Press.
- Williams R., 1977, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Winegar J., 2016, "A Civilized Revolution: Aesthetics and Political Action in Egypt," *American Ethnologist* vol. 43 no. 4, pp. 609-622.