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# Contrapuntal Citizenship: Solidarity Protests and Multi-layered Belonging in the Lebanese Diaspora in France

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## ABSTRACT

Normative models of citizenship delimit rights and obligations within the territorial boundaries of the modern state. These models fail to capture how political belonging can be stretched and reconfigured across polities. The 2019 '17 October Revolution' in Lebanon galvanised widespread solidarity protests and initiatives in the Lebanese diaspora in France. As sites of cultural encounter, solidarity protest movements in the diaspora created opportunities for different cultural and political identities to collide, producing 'contrapuntal' forms of citizenship. Drawing insights from Edward Said's examination of the 'contrapuntal,' this paper argues that as sites of encounter, diasporic solidarity initiatives pluralised definitions of political belonging producing contrapuntal forms of citizenship. By thinking *through* music, this paper will examine the overlapping layers, or *melodies*, of political belonging that constitute diasporic citizens. It will contend that diaspora solidarity initiatives allowed activists to enact multiple, sometimes contradicting, claims to belonging. In doing so, it will shift from hybrid to contrapuntal models of diasporic citizenship.



## KEYWORDS

Diaspora; citizenship; solidarity; music elicitation; social movements

## Introduction

On 17 October 2019, nationwide protests in Lebanon triggered the mass mobilisation of the Lebanese diaspora abroad. Weekly solidarity protests were organised by diaspora activists in cities such as Paris, Sao Paolo, and New York. These satellite protests leveraged the geographical reach of the Lebanese diaspora transporting the revolution and its demands abroad. In France, revolutionary songs and chants popularised on the streets of Beirut were imported into the sonic landscape of Paris, Strasbourg, and Nice. Solidarity initiatives across the Lebanese diaspora were moments of cultural and political encounter producing contrapuntal forms of citizenship.

Diaspora political action has challenged the normative delimitation of political rights and duties to the borders of a singular nation-state. Accordingly, theories of diasporic citizenship have responded by interrogating the nation-state's monopoly on political

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belonging, revealing the possibility of multi-layered political affiliation (Siu, 2005; Laguerre, 1998). These models have instead presented citizenship in diasporic contexts as multi-scalar, plural, and hybrid (Swyngedouw & Swyngedouw, 2009). While these approaches have successfully demonstrated that belonging claims can operate across multiple scales and layers of citizenship, for instance, local, national, diasporic, global (see Yuval-Davis, 1999), studies of diasporic citizenship have largely neglected how these layers interact or intersect with one another in practice. While the notion of citizenship as relational has been explored persuasively by critical citizenship scholars (see Isin, 2007), the nature of this relationality is often opaque. To address this gap, this paper will move from a hybrid conception of diasporic citizenship to a contrapuntal understanding. In doing so, it will offer a theoretical framework to understand the tensions *between* the 'layers' of citizenship. By claiming rights and performing political obligations vis-à-vis Lebanon within the French nation-state, diaspora activists negotiated multiple, sometimes contradicting, layers of belonging. Due to the nature of French Republican citizenship regimes which resist multi-layered modalities of belonging and citizenship, solidarity demonstrations became sites of encounter, producing contrapuntal ways of being and belonging.

In using the term 'contrapuntal' this study draws on Said's notion of 'contrapuntal' identity outlined in his memoir *Out of Place* (1999). Describing his own exilic and diasporic condition, 'contrapuntal' identity refers to,

A cluster of flowing currents. I prefer this to the idea of a solid self ... these currents, like the themes of one's life ... require no reconciling, no harmonising. They're 'off' and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place, and in the form of all kinds of strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally yet without one theme ... I have learned actually to prefer being not quite right and out of place, (Said, 1999, p. 686)

In musicology, contrapuntal refers to two or more independent melodies that are layered to create a tune. Contrapuntal can denote the balance of dissonance and consonance in a musical composition, i.e. the tension between disparate melodies or sounds. To exist contrapuntally is therefore to exist in tension, acknowledging the dissonances and consonances that characterise diasporic life. Contrapuntal identity mediates between disparate and contradictory elements to forge something new where nothing is rejected or 'thrust out,' to borrow Anzaldúa's phrase (1987, p. 79). Instead, disparate elements co-exist in contradiction, their 'ambiguity' is 'tolerated' or sustained (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 79). The integrity of these respective parts is not compromised, rather, what is produced by their encounter is something infinitely more unique. Indeed, the layers, or melodies, of diasporic citizenship 'require no reconciling, no harmonising' (Said, 1999, p. 686). Existing frameworks of diasporic citizenship have emphasised the multiplicity and hybridity of belonging (Werbner, 2010; Siu, 2005). However, they often overlook how citizenship is practically composed, how the different components, layers or melodies of belonging interact. Music is 'at home in circulation' allowing us to 'hear geographies in motion' (Shelemay, 2018, p. 48). By thinking through music, this paper intends to *listen* to the complex constellations of diasporic belonging produced through acts of solidarity and make audible the interactions and contestations within these layers of citizenship. To view diasporic citizenship contrapuntally is to recognise that citizenship is not only

multi-layered and polyphonic, meaning, composed of overlapping, independent melodies and harmonies that combine to create a musical composition. To view citizenship as contrapuntal is to attend to both the consonance and dissonance within the polyphony. By moving from a hybrid to contrapuntal model of citizenship, this paper extends a growing corpus of literature on multi-layered diasporic citizenship by interrogating the way layers of identity and citizenship interact.

I draw on 21 qualitative semi-structured interviews<sup>1</sup> conducted between March and April 2021. The sample consisted of individuals aged between 19 and 32 who self-identified as belonging to the Lebanese diaspora and were residing in France at the time of the interview. Informed written consent was provided by all participants involved. Participants engaged in a range of diasporic solidarity initiatives including attending weekly solidarity protests, organising donation collection, artwork auctioning or humanitarian relief. Solidarity protests became spaces of cultural encounter as placards were translated into French, Arabic and English and Lebanese Cedar flags were waved in front of the Eiffel Tower, the apotheosis of French national iconography. As symbols of nationhood collided, converged or clashed during the protests, so too did activists' definitions of political belonging and citizenship, producing forms of contrapuntal citizenship.

## Diaspora Political Mobilisation

Early academic approaches tend to reduce diaspora political action to 'long-distance nationalism' (Anderson, 1998, p. 56). Quoting Dalberg-Acton (1967), Anderson (1998) argues that 'exile is the nursery of nationality' (p. 60). By engaging with political action, Anderson's 'long-distance nationalists' reproduce the nation's imagination abroad through essentialised performances of nationalism. In this vein, many early approaches examine diaspora political mobilisation through the lens of conflict resolution, viewing transnational activists as either 'peacemakers' or 'peace-wreckers' (Smith and Stares, 2007, p. viii), 'nesting pigeons' or 'militant birds of passage' (Tarrow, 2005, p. 54). These models view the mobilising factors behind diaspora mobilisation exclusively through the lens of the 'homeland' state. While diaspora political participation plays an important role in identity-construction, helping to form and maintain the boundaries of a diaspora community, as evidenced in Amarasingam's (2015) study on the Sri Lankan diaspora in Canada, other scholars have analysed diaspora political action as examples of multi-layered citizenship.

Diasporas complicate normative models of citizenship that delimit rights and responsibilities to a singular nation-state. While critical citizenship approaches have offered ways of conceptualising citizenship as 'multi-layered' (Yuval-Davis, 1999), 'multiple' (Werbner, 2010), or 'hybrid' (Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw, 2009), these accounts rarely investigate how this multiplicity or hybridity functions in practice. Indeed, Werbner's (2000) work on the Pakistani Muslim community in the UK emphasises the notion of 'co-responsibility' as a mobilising factor behind diaspora activism. This sense of 'co-responsibility', which manifests in gestures of transnational solidarity (for example, remittances, protests, lobbying), is not simply an expression of 'long-distance nationalism' and therefore not restricted to homeland political causes. Instead, Werbner (2010) demonstrates that this sense of 'co-responsibility' extends to global human rights issues and the transnational Muslim community. Through political participation,

diaspora activists '[play] on multiple citizenships' entangling local, national, and global scales of citizenship (Werbner, 2010, p. 130).

Werbner's work contributes to a growing corpus of scholarship at the intersection of diaspora and citizenship studies which emphasises the multiplicity of political affiliation and belonging in transnational contexts. Scholars like Cho (2016) have insisted that 'diaspora de-forms citizenship,' (p. 1) rupturing its founding assumptions and revealing its mechanisms of production. Cho (2007) is uneasy with the term 'diasporic citizenship', suggesting the phrase is a 'deliberate oxymoron,' (p. 469). While Cho (2007) does not believe citizenship can be 'recuperated' from its attachment to universalism, other scholars have attempted to rehabilitate the term and view citizenship through the lens of diaspora.

In seeking to theorise diasporic citizenship, Siu (2005) investigates the 'constellation' of political attachments that diaspora groups are embedded within. Her work on the Chinese diaspora in Panama emphasises that citizenship(s) in diasporic contexts are multiple and relational, cultivated through political participation and mediated through transnational sentiments of belonging. Equally, Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw's (2009) study on the Congolese diaspora in Belgium and the UK foregrounds the multiplicity of political affiliation and identity. Their work demonstrates how diaspora members experience a belonging to 'both' the country of origin and the country of residence, cultivating a 'multi-scalar hybrid identity' (Swyngedouw and Swyngedouw, 2009, p. 69). Equally, Faria's (2012) investigation of everyday acts of political engagement in the South Sudanese diaspora reveals how individuals maintain 'citizenly obligation' to both new and old 'homes' (p.1060).

This literature speaks to a wider trend that attempts to interrogate the 'methodological nationalism' (Beck, 2007, p. 286) of normative citizenship frameworks and decolonise the institution of citizenship. Critical citizenship scholars (Isin, 2007; Caraus, 2018; Hsu, 2008) have critiqued approaches that link the claiming of rights and the exercising of duties to the territorial and legal borders of a singular nation-state. As the possibility of exercising rights and responsibilities in relation to multiple polities (Isin, 2019) has accelerated due to globalisation, citizenship as 'multi-scalar' or 'multi-layered' has gained significant traction (Staeheli, 2011). Yuval-Davis (1999) insists on the importance of recognising citizenship as organised into 'different layers – local, ethnic, national, state, cross-or-trans-state and supra state' (p. 119). Indeed, beyond the theoretical category of diaspora, multi-layered approaches of citizenship have been used to conceptualise the relationship between national and European forms of citizenship within the European Union (Rumelili, Keyman and Isyar, 2011; Baübock, 2010).

Collectively, this body of work has contributed to decolonising the institution of citizenship by interrogating its 'Westocentric' attachment to universalism and the nation-state model (Yuval-Davis, 1999; Isin, 2020). In doing so, these scholars have opened new possibilities for understanding citizenship as pluralised, relational and hybrid. However, these accounts often offer limited insight into the nature of these relations or the interaction between the layers of belonging. While Bauböck (2010) has proposed the idea of citizenship constellations, differentiating between vertically and horizontally nested relations, his analysis is focused on questions of governance and the coordination of policy and membership allocation. Yuval-Davis' (1999) foundational work focuses on the historical contexts that produce the conditions for multi-layered forms of citizenship,

offering limited analysis on how these layers interact in practice. Werbner's (2010) paper acknowledges the tensions present in the condition of diaspora as possessing both 'ethnic-parochial and cosmopolitan' (p. 120) impulses. She argues, 'the challenge, remains, however, to disclose how the tension between these two tendencies is played out in actual situations,' (Werbner, 2010, p. 120).

This paper takes this challenge seriously and through the case-study of the Lebanese diaspora in France seeks to examine the relations *between* the layers of citizenship. It will move away from conceptions of citizenship that are *hybrid* and towards an understanding of diasporic citizenship as *contrapuntal*. This theoretical shift speaks to the tensions, dissonance, or friction that sometimes exists between the layers of citizenship and reveals how diaspora activists negotiate multiple, sometimes contradicting, belonging claims through solidarity demonstrations.

### Sacrificed at the Altar of the French Nation: Challenging Republican Regimes of Citizenship

The need for a *contrapuntal* theory of diasporic citizenship emerges clearly in the context of the Lebanese diaspora in France. While Abdelhady's (2011) work does not focus on citizenship or diaspora activism, her comparative study of the Lebanese diaspora in France, Canada and the United States reveals the different experiences of belonging that emerge due to varying assimilationist or multiculturalist policies. Diaspora activists are embedded in specific citizenship regimes that enforce certain modalities of being and belonging vis-à-vis the country of residence. Diaspora activists in this study acutely felt the pressure of the French model of belonging and citizenship resulting in complex, contrapuntal negotiations of belonging and identity through the solidarity demonstrations.

Dubbed the 'illusion of French inclusion' by Perkins (2019, p. 181), the French concept of 'colour-blind integration' (Bleich, 2001, p. 270) shapes the logic behind republican citizenship in France. Republican discourses of political belonging hinge on ideals cultivated during the French Revolution concerning the importance of an 'indivisible' national political identity predicated on a 'common Frenchness' (Brubaker, 1992, p. 35). The paradigm of French equality fostered by the republican model of assimilation dictates that only by apprehending the French language and culture and renouncing cultural particularism, can one truly become French (Fassin and Mazouz, 2009; Vergès, 1999). Silverstein and Tetreault (2017) view France's model of 'integration' as a 'punishing formula of loss of culture,' as cultural difference is sacrificed at the altar of French nationhood. In seeking to transcend categories of race and religion, French republicanism demands total fealty to a universalist definition of French identity. Accordingly, Schor (2001) views cultural difference as incompatible with republican citizenship arguing, 'assimilation, as it functions in France, cannot accommodate the copula, the alliance of a universal and a particular identity' (p. 54). Indeed, Isin (2020; 2015) suggests that the paradox of citizenship lies in this faulty promise of inclusion and its pretence to universalism. Decolonising citizenship requires interrogating this contradiction. Implicit in the decolonial project (Mignolo, 2000; 2006, Grosfoguel, 2011) is an endeavour to move towards the 'pluriversal' (Mignolo, 2018, p. 91). To borrow the Zapatista's terminology – 'a world in which many worlds would co-exist,' (Mignolo and Walsh, 2018, p. ix) – decolonising citizenship requires imagining a form of citizenship where multiple

‘citizenships’ can co-exist. This does not presuppose that this co-existence is always harmonious or without friction. Instead, *contrapuntal citizenship* allows space for the dissonance that is often a reality of hybrid identity formations. It allows individuals to be ‘out of place’ (Said, 1999) and out of tune and play creatively with the overlapping melodies of their identities.

## Feeling ‘Out of Tune’: Identities in Tension

The impact of French assimilationist models of belonging was explicitly discussed by participants. Despite holding French citizenship and speaking fluent French, Participant 2 discussed her experiences of being racialized and verbally attacked in Paris. Participant 13’s father grew up in Morocco, arriving in France in the 1980s. When reflecting on how identity was expressed and cultivated within his family, Participant 13 explained that his father,

tends to put [his identity] away, and just fully embrace France and not talk about anything anymore. You know, I think it’s very linked to policies of integration, like not embracing identities, [unlike] the British or Americans ... in France we tend to erase, you know, we tend to force people to erase where they come from. (P13)

Participants described constantly negotiating multiple overlapping, sometimes contradictory identities. This produced what participants termed ‘identity crises’ (P19; P21). For example, Participant 19 shared,

I always constantly navigate multiple identity crises ... I was born in America, and I grew up in Lebanon ... And then I added France into to mix, because you know, I like to complicate things. (P19)

Participant 7 explained how her mixed identity left her feeling perpetually ‘out of tune.’ Describing his own mixed identity, Edward Said employs similar musical metaphors in his memoir *Out of Place* (1999). Out of sync, ‘out of place,’ out of tune, many participants echoed Said’s (1999) struggle to negotiate an ‘unsettled sense of many identities – mostly, in conflict with each other’ (p. 31). Like Said, the participants of this study have amassed multiple identities spanning the vast geographies of their scattered migrations. Before moving to France, Participant 2 grew up in the Ivory Coast. Participants 1, 3 and 20 spent their childhoods in the Gulf. Participants 7 and 21 left Lebanon as children, growing up in Venezuela.

The feeling of navigating separate and seemingly irreconcilable identities was commonly expressed amongst participants. Participant 16 shared, ‘I’m French in Lebanon, I’m Lebanese in France,’ revealing how she had grown up feeling out of place in both contexts. In a similar vein, Participant 18 grew up in Lebanon but attended a French school, she moved to France as a young adult and shared her struggle to integrate into France,

I’m very white. I was blonder before, I always looked European. And I didn’t know how to speak Arabic very well. I had a French accent when speaking Arabic. So, when I was in Lebanon, back home, everyone would think I was European, that I came from abroad, no one would talk to me in Arabic, they would be shocked when I spoke Arabic. And I always loved French literature, French movies, I was always a little bit, like, ‘Frenchie’, they would call me ‘Frenchie’, because I had a very strong tie to French culture. And when I got there, it was not what I expected. When I spoke French, people would make



fun of my accent ... I had such a hard time integrating. I was always the French person in Lebanon. And then I came to France, and I was the Arab. Whereas I was never considered to be Arab, like I barely knew my own language. So yeah, that was the identity conflict I was referring to. (P18)

In the context of migration, the pressure to assimilate to a standard French accent has been well-documented (Safi, 2024; Telep, 2015). Silverstein and Tetreault (2017) connect linguistic assimilation to a 'punishing formula of loss of culture' produced by the French republic's expectations of integration. Participant 5 argued that republican models of citizenship do not allow room for 'hybrid ways of being.' As a Lebanese Jewish and Polish Jewish woman raised in Paris, Participant 5 described her white-passing appearance and French cultural habitus as, 'every French President's wet dream, this is what they wanted assimilation to do.' She defined herself, a little wistfully, as the 'perfect product of assimilation.' Growing up in France, Participant 5 was told to 'tell everybody you're French, it doesn't matter, you're just French. Now, that's, you know, very violent, because you're cancelling the other [part].'

In their daily lives, participants negotiated a citizenship regime that encouraged the suppression of their other identities. This produced tensions within their identities that participants found themselves grappling with during the solidarity protest movements. Lebanese-French writer Amin Maalouf (1998) asks: 'so, am I half French and half Lebanese?' (p. 2). He explains, 'if only one affiliation matters, if a choice absolutely has to be made, a migrant finds himself split and torn' (Maalouf, 1998, p. 38). Diaspora activists in the Lebanese diaspora in France often negotiated 'torn' identities as they began to mobilise in October 2019. However, solidarity demonstrations, as sites of encounter, proved to be spaces where diasporic identities could collide in generative and contrapuntal ways. Through solidarity demonstrations, diaspora activists made the particularities of their identities audible, disrupting universalising, republican models of citizenship.

### **Making Identities Audible: Thinking Through Sound and Affect**

During the solidarity protests, the sonic landscape of Lebanese cities like Beirut was reproduced in Paris, Strasbourg and Nice, allowing the revolution to travel globally through music and sound. Music functioned in two critical ways during Lebanese solidarity protests in France. First, it served to amplify the demands and objectives of Lebanese October Revolution in the diaspora. Second, it functioned to make the 'particular' identities of the Lebanese diaspora visible and audible within the republican French context. Revolutionary anthems like 'El Haq Ma Bimout' and 'Beirut Sette Donia: Ya Beirut' became songs through which the diaspora could vocalise support and solidarity.

Music and photography were central repertoires of solidarity utilised by activists, featuring prominently in both the 17 October Revolution in Lebanon and the solidarity protest movements in the diaspora abroad. Revolutionary songs popularised in the streets of Beirut were imported into the sonic landscape of Paris, Lyon, Strasbourg and Nice. As a result, this study integrated music and visual elicitation and encouraged participants to share artworks, sketchbooks, poetry, and literature in their interviews. Participant-driven semi-structured visual and music elicitation invites participants to select and share material that represents the phenomena or topic suggested by the



researcher (Bates et al., 2017). These methods generate participant-driven data, leading to deeper, personal reflections by triggering memory and emotions. While photo elicitation has gained traction in sociological methods, music elicitation remains underexplored and underused in the discipline (Allett, 2010). Music can function as a powerful ‘anchor to memory’ (Levell, 2019, p. 1) increasing the active participation of the interviewee in the production of knowledge. Moreover, music can help to articulate ‘experiences that may be difficult to voice verbally’ (dos Santos and Wagner, 2018, p. 1).

Participants asserted their sense of belonging to Lebanon by playing revolutionary songs during solidarity protests (Table 1). Four participants chose to share Joseph Attieh’s ‘El Haq Ma Bimout’ (2010) during the music elicitation exercise. This song regained popularity during the revolution and was played in the streets of Lebanon and France. The uplifting song features a refrain that promises, ‘Lebanon will come back, and the right will never die ... the sun will rise again and decorate the sky of Beirut’ (P4). The song reminded participants of the beginning of the protests and the hope they felt for a new Lebanon (P4; P9; P10). The song’s punchy refrain is accompanied by short and sharp staccato beats before a percussive crescendo that builds triumphantly into the chorus. The song powerfully rallies emotions, the building crescendos and percussive beats generate a sense of urgency and excitement while the chorus combines multiple singing voices lending itself to a feeling of collectivity and unity. Participant 10 called the song ‘patriotic’ explaining that it was a ‘song about pride ... [about] *being* Lebanese.’

For many participants, engaging in solidarity protests in France was a way to ‘prove’ (P21) their political commitment to Lebanon and assert their claim to the Lebanese political identity. Protesting allowed diaspora members to ‘feel enough ... feel as if we were worthy’ (P2) to call themselves Lebanese. They claimed the ‘fight’ as their own, ‘I felt like this is my fight too’ and ‘I felt like it was my country, and my country couldn’t live this without me,’ (P2). Music was a central component of this claims-making, allowing the diaspora to share the revolution and amplify its demands abroad. By participating in solidarity protests, playing the same music as protestors on the ground in Lebanon, diaspora activists aligned themselves with the Lebanese political community. Indeed, by claiming the ‘fight’ as their own, they laid claim to the Lebanese political identity within the French context.

While music amplified the demands of the revolution abroad and allowed the diaspora to claim a sense of belonging to Lebanon, music also operated to disrupt the French soundscape. Western’s (2020) work on ‘sounding citizenship’ foregrounds the

**Table 1.** Music elicitation song choice.

Song	Artist	Participant
Nassam Alayna El Hawa	Fairouz	1
Li Beirut	Fairouz	2, 21
Beirut Sette Donia: (Ya Beirut)	Majida El Roumi	3
El Haq Ma Beymout	Joseph Attieh	4, 9, 10, 19
Cherie je t’aime	Bob Azzam	5
Lebnani	Assi El Helani	10
Mokhtar El Makhateer	Fairouz	13
Adesh Kan Fi Nas	Fairouz	13
Fi Amal	Fairouz	17
Comrades	Mashrou Leila	20

importance of attending to the aurality of cities to hear the soundscapes of ‘inclusion and exclusion’ (p. 299). Western (2020) urges citizenship scholars to listen to the ‘acoustic strategies ... of solidarior and migrant activism’ (p. 301) to appreciate how sound can rupture existing regimes of citizenship. As a ‘sonic strategy’ of citizenship (Western, 2020, p. 302), solidarity demonstrations transformed the soundscape of French cities, disrupting the aural identities of iconic places like Trocadéro, Paris. Participant 18 recounted her experience protesting in Nice,

We spent hours at the Place Nationale, like screaming, singing Lebanese songs – Lebanese songs from the revolution – putting music on speakers, dancing. Like the feeling I had when I was there was not [that] because I’m miles away that I can’t do anything ... Lebanese people [in Lebanon] will see these pictures and realise that they’re not alone, that we, the diaspora, we’re here for them, we’re here to support them. And even if we’re miles away, Lebanon is always in our hearts.

She emphasised, ‘the more we made sound, the more photos were published and shared, the more people would know about what was happening’ (P18).

Participant 2 recalled,

Marching from the metro station to Trocadéro [Paris]. People had these huge Lebanese flags, these different Lebanese slogans on different boards and you just get there and there’s hundreds and hundreds of Lebanese people, so you hear Lebanese, there is Lebanese music, there are people dressed in traditional Lebanese clothes.

The extensive online sonic archive ‘Soundlandscapes’ of sound recordist, Des Coulam (2023), reveals the audibility of Paris’ spatial divisions that are inevitably echoed in the aural landscape. Luxury shopping at rue de Rivoli, or along the Champs Elysée, the sound of students congregating around the Latin Quarter, gives way to the specific sonic markers of a West-African market stall in place de la Gare, Saint-Denis, or a Vietnamese restaurant near Maison Blanche. Scholars like Silverstein and Tetreault (2017) have dubbed French cities like Paris as ‘postcolonial urban apartheid’, critiquing the stark urban divisions within the city between the centre and the periphery, i.e. the banlieues. Historically, migration has been concentrated at Paris’ outer edges, forging particular spatial and aural identities.

Solidarity demonstrations in Paris were often held in le parvis des droits de l’homme, which offers an iconic view of the Eiffel Tower. Songs sung in the Lebanese dialect reverberated through the streets of Paris through loudspeakers. This visibly, and audibly ‘Lebanese’ environment cleaved open new ways of relating to Paris for participants. Participant 20 shared that while he was singing and dancing during the protests in Paris, he, ‘felt like Lebanon had just moved to Paris.’ Participant 1 explained that she had always felt a divided sense of self, experiencing a pressure to express different parts of her identity in France and in Lebanon. However, she revealed that the protests, ‘were the first time I was my Lebanese self in Paris.’ For many participants, the solidarity demonstrations were opportunities for the different parts of their identities to collide and co-exist in contrapuntal ways.

### The Cedar Flag and the Eiffel Tower: Layered Nations in Dialogue

While music disrupted the French soundscape, causing a sonic collision of identities and belonging(s), symbols of Lebanese nationhood also functioned as instruments of dialogue as the Lebanese flag encountered French cultural and national symbols. These

encounters produced contrapuntal modes of political belonging. Describing the photograph she took during a solidarity protest movement in Paris, which depicts a large Lebanese flag next to the Eiffel Tower, Participant 19 remarked,

It's moving. Because you know, in the end, it's like you're in a foreign place and you're not in Lebanon, but you have this flag, that kind of anchors you to your past in Lebanon. And it serves as a ... basically it serves as a reminder of what you left and what you left it for, you left it for this Eiffel Tower.

She teased out the dialogue between these two iconic symbols of nationhood: Lebanon's Cedar flag and France's Eiffel Tower, describing the diaspora protests as a liminal space where these symbols meet, mix and layer (P19). Contrary to republican models of citizenship, moving from Lebanon to France does not mean exchanging one symbol for another, one nation for the next, these spaces co-exist together to produce contrapuntal notions of political belonging and identity.

She continued by explaining the relationship as dialogical,

The Eiffel Tower is in the background, it's as if ... there is a dialogue between the flag and the tower. And they're both side by side. I think it's a beautiful representation of our ... of our sense of belonging, our dual identity, or not necessarily dual, not in my case, but our plural identities (P19).

Participant 20 shared these sentiments when he remarked that, 'at some point it felt like even the Eiffel Tower was protesting with us.' Symbols such as the Cedar flag and the Eiffel Tower appeared in dialogue in the diaspora space, forcing their meaning and attachment to notions of nation to collide and layer. Solidarity protest movements facilitated cultural encounters allowing different symbols of national iconography to interact and produce new definitions of belonging. Indeed, the image of iconic French spaces such as *le parvis des droits de l'homme* in Paris, *le palais des droits de l'homme* in Strasbourg or *la promenade des Anglaise* in Nice filled with Lebanese flags captures the spectacle of cultural collision produced by diasporic solidarity. These performances of cultural encounter are more than hybrid or multi-layered expressions of identity. The visible and audible collisions of belonging that occurred during the protests are shaped by relations of friction produced by the specific citizenship regime these acts are exercised within. As symbols of a particular Lebanese identity meet symbols of the universal republic, solidarity demonstrations were liminal zones where belonging(s) were generated in 'strange combinations moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, contrapuntally' (Said, 1999).

### Letting Identities 'Float': Towards a Contrapuntal Citizenship

In his memoir, Said (1999) writes that he could 'not absorb, much less master, all the meanderings and interruptions of these details' of his identity (p. 31). In response to being perpetually 'out of place', Said rejects the romanticised 'idea of a solid self,' (1999, pp. 141, 23) and instead imagines his identity as a 'cluster of flowing currents' that may be 'off, or 'out of place' yet, 'require no reconciling, no harmonising' (Said, 1999, p. 141)

Participant 11 reflects that he doesn't 'feel the need to know' exactly where he fits within his various identities. In doing so, he also rejects the 'idea of a solid self' (Said, 1999, p. 141).

I know that I'm Lebanese, but I know that I'm not only Lebanese, I know that there's a European culture ... I have a lot of Lebanese friends and we talk about this stuff. They're like, we're lost in our identity, in our culture, we don't really know what we are. But I don't really feel the need to know. (P11)

Equally, when asked about how he navigates his own multi-layered identity, Participant 20 explained that 'the more you label things, the more difficult it gets ... we're always looking for consistency.' Instead, he thinks it is easier to let your identities 'float'. 'Floating' identities allow room for both dissonance and consonance, they do not aspire to consistency or reconciliation. Instead, this approach to identity is flexible and even playful, allowing the individual to negotiate and move *between* the layers of belonging.

As a lover of music, Participant 13 analogised his identity to a multi-disk CD player,

Sometimes you're in your car, the car is your life, so the car is what you're doing. Sometimes you're putting on the Lebanese CD, sometimes you're putting on the French CD, and sometimes you're putting CDs that mix both. And I think in the end, that's why ... I'm acting this way sometimes and I'm acting another sometimes. I'm relating more to this sometimes, and sometimes I'm relating more to that. But it doesn't mean I don't relate to both, or, I just relate to one (P13).

The analogy of the CD player is a useful tool to think about identity and belonging in the context of diasporic citizenship, emphasising the polyphony of citizenship. While the existing literature has revealed how processes of migration result in multi-scalar and multi-layered belonging claims, limited attention has been given to how these layers relate to one another: how they interact, how they function in practice, or how individuals may move between layers. Participant 13 offers a useful framework for thinking about how the various parts of his identity intersect. He explains the mechanisms behind this relationality as context-dependent, sometimes he relates more to one part of his identity, at other moments, he relates more to another. He can flick between the 'tracks' of his identity and claim different layers of belonging depending on what is most salient to his context.

Through Participant 13's analogy, we can view Participant 1's reflection that the solidarity demonstrations 'were the first time, I was my Lebanese self in Paris,' in a new light. Like most of the participants in this study, Participant 1 straddled multiple, often conflicting, layers of belonging and identity stretching from Lebanon to Dubai to France. Using the metaphor of a CD player, the protests allowed Participant 1 to play the CD that 'mixed both' (P13), where she was able to be her 'Lebanese self in Paris.'

The playfulness of identity and belonging was also expressed through participants' discussions of home.

Participant 7 revealed,

It's not like this is my home and this is not my home. It's more that I get to choose ... the little bits and pieces of what makes this place my home and what makes that place my home ... It's my own territory.

After leaving Lebanon as a child, Participant 7 grew up in Venezuela before moving to France to commence tertiary studies. She expressed her flexible conception of home as her 'own territory'. In doing so, Participant 7 breathed new life into Anderson's (1983) notion of imagined communities. Unlike Rushdie's (1991) understanding of 'imaginary homelands' as replications of the nation's imagination abroad, Participant 7's self-

proclaimed 'imagined home' layered different cultural spaces. By fusing parts of Venezuela with parts of Lebanon and France, she amalgamated these three spaces into a unique imaginary space she could call home.

Sustaining the ambivalence of identity by allowing contradictory components to 'float' and co-exist in tension is central to contrapuntal citizenship. To be simultaneously 'there and elsewhere, rooted and open' (Glissant, 1997, p. 34) is a product of these complex cultural encounters that compel individuals to develop a certain 'tolerance for ambiguity' (Anzaldúa, 1987, p. 80). Cultural encounters can be disorientating and destabilising, producing 'identity crises' that can seem irreconcilable and irresolvable. Solidarity demonstrations allowed diaspora activists to negotiate these layers of identity and belonging, producing contrapuntal forms of diasporic citizenship.

## Conclusion

Solidarity initiatives in the Lebanese diaspora in France were spectacles of cultural and political encounter producing contrapuntal spaces of belonging. As iconographic symbols of Lebanese and French nationhood collided and Lebanese music infiltrated the French sonic landscape, solidarity protests produced new ways of being and belonging to and beyond Lebanon and France. Indeed, the layers of citizenship, like the layers of identity:

Require no reconciling, no harmonising. They are 'off' and may be out of place, but at least they are always in motion, in time, in place ... moving about, not necessarily forward, sometimes against each other, *contrapuntally* yet without one theme (Said, 1999, p. 141).

To recall, contrapuntal in musical terms refers to two or more independent melodies that are layered to create a tune. More importantly, the contrapuntal signifies how musical compositions balance consonance and dissonance, meaning, the tension between notes or chords aesthetically associated with 'pleasant' or 'unpleasant' sounds (Kolinski, 1962). Polyphony denotes multiple overlapping but independent voices. Critically, 'polyphony rests on the equality between voices, there is typically no domination of one voice over another' (de Groot, 2010, p. 130). As a specific type of polyphony, the term contrapuntal moves our thinking beyond the plurality of voices, allowing us to listen to the friction or tension present in a melody.

Building on musical theory developed in *Music at the Limits* (Said, 2013) and *Musical Elaborations* (Said, 1991), polyphony and contrapuntal recur as extended metaphors in Said's literary and cultural critique. In *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000), Said proposes music as method and model noting 'music's extraordinary disciplinary rigour, its capacity for plurality of voice' (p. 35). For Said, contrapuntal and polyphonic identity – and the consonances and dissonances it sustains – lies at the centre of his own diasporic experience. Music as metaphor captures the modalities of belonging and being that characterise feelings of dispersal and diaspora,

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal ... Exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, contrapuntal (Said, 2000, p. 186).

Indeed, the contrapuntal speaks to the ‘unassimilable’ (Said, 2000, p. 562) parts of identity produced by experiences of diaspora. Various components of identity form independent melodies that simultaneously move with and against one another, in tension, occasionally ‘out of tune’ (P7). These overlapping melodies, like the layers of diasporic citizenship, while unique and independent, co-exist, producing new melodies and new possibilities. To view diasporic citizenship in musical terms is to recognise that the French ‘melody’ overlays the Lebanese ‘melody’. To hear diasporic citizenship as contrapuntal, is to listen to the dissonance between these melodies, to allow their moments of clash and contradiction to be audible. It allows us to perceive these moments of clash, or friction, not as evidence of a fundamental incompatibility, but to hear how dissonance enriches identity and ‘requires no reconciling’ (Said, 1999, p. 141). While existing literature has acknowledged identity and political belonging as polyphonic through theories of multi-layered or hybrid forms of citizenship, it has yet to empirically and theoretically explore contrapuntal constellations of belonging. In focusing on the contrapuntal, this paper has not only examined the multiple layers of citizenship but has explored the relations between these layers. As spaces of encounter, solidarity demonstrations allowed diaspora activists to express contrapuntal citizenship, disrupting French republican models of belonging and carving out new ways of relating to both France and Lebanon.

## Note

1. This paper is based on research conducted for the author’s MPhil thesis, titled ‘Belonging beyond borders: mapping citizenship, solidarity and protest in the Lebanese diaspora in France’ at the University of Cambridge.

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