

Decolonizing Listening to Decolonize Memory

Francis Sosta

Independent Researcher, Berlin

ABSTRACT

This article compares discussions stemming from decolonial, feminist perspectives and critical race theories on the topic of listening and the relationship with memory and history-making. Decolonial listening is investigated as the effort to listen beyond dominant and universal values to activate trajectories that sound new alternatives and futures. Decolonial memory refers to the ongoing project of unpacking the ways official historical records racialized, silenced, and erased heritages and bodies. By unraveling the territories where listening operates as a mechanism of discernment within racialized histories, this article poses listening, the work of overcoming silence, and the weaving of threatened historical voices with the current ones, as central to the decolonial project of envisioning more ethical relationships to the world and to others.

Keywords

Sound studies, decolonial listening, whiteness, blackness, decolonial memory, remembrance, weaving

The phrase “decolonize memory” implies acknowledging how and in which ways colonization is responsible for the process of oppression, suppression, and erasure of certain voices from official remembrance; and how these voices, stories, and communities have been silenced through history as a way to affirm Eurocentric, white, dominant worldviews. Yet, the histories of oppression and violence towards colonized, racialized, exploited bodies and cultures live in the memories, stories, communities, and cultural and intellectual contributions that resist disavowal, challenging our systems of thought and belief and questioning our perceptual spectrum.

This article compares discussions stemming from decolonial, feminist perspectives and critical race theories with the aim to generate more dialogical critical reflections on the topic of listening. Indeed, it primarily wants to echo the need for more decolonial accounts on sound, listening, and race within the field of sound studies.¹

Listening is here introduced as a theoretical framework and practice, which is essential for decolonial critique and the process of reorientation toward a more egalitarian, ethical society.² Exploring listening as a critical tool within the field of sound studies through key concepts in the literature means questioning white, Eurocentric predominance in sound theories and encouraging listening as a situated practice. It does that by recognizing: a) the

role of decolonial memory as the ongoing project of unpacking the ways official historical records racialized, silenced, and erased heritages and bodies; b) the role of decolonial listening, the effort to listen beyond dominant and universal values to activate trajectories that sound new alternatives and futures.

Although this article tackles decolonial memory, it does not address the physical sites of memory, namely the archives,³ where the materiality of the colonial project often becomes evident through the exclusion and the absence/silence of documentation. Rather, the emphasis of this article is on the ways we listen to those voices that are missing. Focusing on the modes and ways in which we listen, on our socio-cultural conditionings and positionality, this article introduces pathways to listen *otherwise*: ways-in to listen to the colonial history of modernity⁴; and ways-out to sound more egalitarian planetary alternatives. By unraveling the territories where listening operates as a mechanism of discernment within racialized histories, this article poses listening, the work of overcoming silence, and the weaving of threatened historical voices with the current ones, as central to the decolonial project of envisioning more ethical relationships to the world and to others. When listening and the ways we listen are interrogated, looking for the cracks in our dominant ideologies and epistemologies, we engage with ways of decolonizing our aural relationship to the world, to history and to future-making.

Listening positionality

Critical listening positionality refers to the process of being in relation to what/whom we listen to. This relation carries all our privileges, abilities, biases, and cultural backgrounds we apply to listening. In the encounter with the sonic, the lenses of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and ability cannot be separated from the very act of listening. Our aural relationship with the world is proprioceptive and embodied, and it exists within the underlying dynamics of power that hold certain bodies in specific places while erasing others. Becoming aware of our listening privileges reorients forms of perception and logic that have been forged by colonialism, situating listening in the entanglements of our positionalities.

In “Hungry Listening,” Dylan Robinson describes decolonial listening as a listening strategy that can move us beyond settler listening fixations (2020, 38) by exploring the legacies of settler colonialism within the histories and theories of sound cultures. In outlining forms of listening informed by settler colonialism, Robinson reveals how the colonial project ‘civilized’ attention and perception (38) and shaped listening around “fixations” and “unmarked structures of certainty” (10) that engender normative perceptions and reenact epistemic violence. Critical listening positionality is therefore essential to the self-reflexive process of situating listening and the subjectivities involved in listening. Robinson argues for an Indigenous epistemology of listening, reclaiming the space of the encounter with the sonic as

intersubjective (16). This shift from the subject/object relation in listening to the subject/subject interaction not only gives subjectivity to the sonic and to what is listened to but also allows us to understand positionality as a process (39), rather than a fixed standpoint. It is a process that always questions, guides, and orients our perceptions and actions beyond what we think we are listening to. Robinson proposes the perspective offered by un-knowing.⁵ This place of unknowing invites us to become “*no longer sure of what listening is*” as a way to move beyond listening fixations on knowing, feeling, and conquering the sonic (Robinson 2020, 47; emphasis added).

Relationality is essential for listening, according to Rolando Vázquez, too (2012). In “Towards a Decolonial Critique of Modernity: *Buen Vivir*, Relationality and the Task of Listening,” he outlines how relationality is a key to possible dialogues across colonial differences (Vázquez 2012, 6). “The question of *listening*, a form of the question of *relationality*, poses a particular challenge to the epistemic enclosure of modernity” (6). His concept of “humbling of modernity” (9) is the active process of unraveling universalities and disrupting the mechanisms of disavowal involved in the silencing of colonial differences. Both decolonial critique and humbling of modernity participate in the liberation of the voices denied to the present (7) in the effort to free the past from representations of history that reflect the hegemonic colonial project. Looking for futurity is not inventing new futures but re-activating the past as a space of possibilities and alternatives. Remembrance as a form of active relationality operates not only in the geographies and geopolitics of colonialism but in time, seeing the past as the place for giving birth to new futures, for “actively constituting the present” (8).

The work of decolonial listening implies understanding relationality when thinking about politics, engagement, solidarity, and dialogues by critically questioning the interconnectedness of “the global and systematic dimensions of racialized, sexualized, and gendered subjugation” (Weheliye 2014, 13).

“What you’re starting to listen to is how you listen”⁶

The project of decolonizing listening reflects the efforts to undo the ideologies that have shaped the sound and the ways we listen, questioning the ways hegemonic powers resonate in contemporary sonic research, and looking for what we were unable to listen to. Decolonizing listening implies a destabilization of the way we understand knowing, and the way we construct knowledge when we listen to, and encounter, the sonic. It means becoming aware of how our positionality orients the way we listen through our perceptual logics and normalized epistemologies. By becoming aware of the ideologies that we apply to listening and how much

these are shaped by colonial intentions, listening operates as a critical tool of discernment and reorientation toward new sonic knowledge-production outside of the colonial racial history.

In the field of sound studies, however, contributions from decolonial, critical race, and indigenous scholars do exist⁷ and are constantly readjusting the territories of inquiry. But the ongoing process of decolonization is very much alive and still needed. The earlier traditions of sound studies have broadly theorized listening in relation to sound as a physical and sensory phenomenon. This has, for a long time, in the relatively recent history of the field, constrained the study of listening to a series of dichotomies (*listening* vs. *hearing*),⁸ that have explored listening within the subject/object's relation from a philosophical, epistemological or ontological perspective, and that have often universalized sound by omitting relevant historical and social contextualization.⁹ A truly situated theorization of listening in relation to questions of gender, class, ability, and race is still an ongoing project.

Whiteness and sound

The commitment to decolonize sound and listening starts from becoming aware of the territories where *whiteness*¹⁰ operates. Matters of race, colonialism, gender and social life address whiteness in the discipline with the aim of making it visible, traceable and questionable. The concept of “white aurality” by Thompson (2017) and the “listening ear” by Stoever (2016) are examples of how deconstructing whiteness is functional to redefinitions of the sonic as a site of resistance to colonial, racial and cultural dominance.

Speaking of the tendency in sound studies and sound art to return to questions of ontology, Marie Thompson describes “white aurality” as a “racialized perceptual standpoint that is both situated and universalizing” (2017, 266). She argues that by philosophically decentering the human subject, renouncing anthropocentrism, and focusing on realism and materialism, we sweep out critical, key questions about the social, economic, and historical inheritance of the sonic, entering a critique that focuses on violence on marginal groups as cultural representation. This critique operates at the level of speculation, of speaking on behalf of, but hardly reaching out for the *unspeakable*: the real, lived, and material process of racialization (269). Questions of ontology indeed do not challenge the systems of representation that generated them. Thompson points out, quoting Frantz Fanon, that “Ontology [...] does not permit us to understand the being of a black man” (Thompson 2017, 267). In other words, ontology is double bonded with colonialism (268). The colonial history of race and racialization is not inscribed in the ontological dimension of Black life. Systematically erased from the white perceptual spectrum, Black life talks about the “subjectless.” Thompson openly critiques the Cagean lineage of sound studies and the tradition that links sound to Euro/North American experimentalism, echoing the critique of George E. Lewis (Thompson

2017, 272). Whiteness enabled Cage to position himself as a subject capable of being an “objective arbiter of aesthetic value” (272) and to perform the “self-invisibilization of the white, masculine and Eurocentric standpoint” (272). This is what George E. Lewis criticized, stressing Cage’s conception of the “nature of sound,” based on Eurological, white musical values. Thompson also analyzes “white aurality” in the materialistic notion of Sonic Flux by Christoph Cox (2018) and in the concept of the soundscape. Looking for what can escape whiteness, Thompson concludes with the proposition that whiteness is something that enables a practice of reorientation of our critical gaze (Thompson 2017, 278), something that can serve the immense decolonial process of critically thinking, seeing, listening, and making sense of the world outside dominant Western epistemic and aesthetic frameworks.

In “The Sonic Color Line,” whiteness is analyzed by J. L. Stoever as an “auditory construction” (2016, 19). Sound and listening are investigated in their ways of enabling racism’s perseverance (5). Stoever theorizes “the Sonic Color Line” and the “listening ear” as new critical theoretical concepts. These concepts both serve as ways to talk about listening, race and power structures in society (1). The sonic color line is the line that divides whiteness from blackness. It positions the process of racialization by linking certain bodies to certain sounds, reinforcing the hierarchical division of whiteness and blackness. On the other side, the listening ear is what constantly accelerates this line forward, showing how dominant listening practices evolve. The listening ear works as “the qualifier of how dominant cultures apply pressure on the interpolation of listening practices into social understanding and norms” (Mehmi 2017, 364). By connecting sound and race in American culture, Stoever studies listening in its agency of operating as an “organ of racial discernment, categorization, and resistance” (2016, 2) to cultural dominance.

Introducing sound as crucial to opposing racial identities and structural violence, decolonizing listening means to break the silence around the struggle of Black people and act in solidarity with racialized bodies and communities that express their right to exist (Stoever 2016, 2). Stoever does not only enable an interpretation of “race as an aural experience” (18) but traces how Black writers and musicians have used sound to mobilize aural imagery that challenges the white power structures of our society (17), opening up new possibilities and new forms of agency through listening. In her book, she talks about how the histories of racial violence, the sounds, and the stories, resonate over time and space: they talk about “American resonant racial history” (3). Here resonance is understood as the space where sound replicates and enables dominant ideologies and the systems of power of white modernity.¹¹

Stoever, together with Liana Silva and Aaron Trammell, founded *Sounding Out! The Sound Studies Blog* in 2009 to openly address institutionalized whiteness in sound studies.¹² As the authors pointed out, “neither sound arts nor experimental music has a far-reaching

feminist history and [...] categories of race, ethnicity and nationality may have played out through compositional practices and within acoustic ecology discourses in particular” (Ingleton 2016). In 2015, on *Sounding Out!*, Gustavus Stadler wrote “On Whiteness and Sound Studies,”¹³ asking for more confrontations of whiteness in the emerging field. Tracing the racialized trajectories in listening and race, Stadler points out how some foundational publications in sound studies, despite dealing with questions about social difference and race, did not take into account contributions from the field of American Studies that might have been relevant in regard to those topics.¹⁴ Stadler is calling out for a more radical commitment from scholarship that confronts the underlying whiteness of the field, openly inviting a more ‘aggressive’ account on the topic from the “most influential figures in sound studies” (2015).

Decolonizing feminism

Perhaps here, it is a good place to share more about my own positionality. As a European white woman committed to the decolonial project while researching in Western Academia, my responsibility goes along with supporting, counterbalancing, amplifying, and echoing non-white critical voices. Having approached sound studies from a feminist perspective, my critical positionality diverged from white feminism exclusivism. I committed to opening and facilitating spaces in my artistic and critical work to openly address whiteness, decolonize knowledge, and re-center Black, Indigenous research to enrich the sonic with non-white critical methodologies.

Indeed, contemporary multidisciplinary research on sound and sound practices have been affected, influenced, and redefined by feminist theories and methods, which have questioned the very way we listen, and the binaries applied to listening, and have redefined the subjectivities implied in listening in dialogical terms. However, they don’t stress enough the importance of critically reflecting on the entanglements between race, power, and sound, as much as they often do not question Western white feminism’s positionality. This reflects the structural deficiency of the institutional academic world in being truly diverse and inclusive.

If we understand decolonial work as the effort to challenge and unsettle what we think we know about dominant disciplinary academic debates, anticolonial methods should insist on bringing non-white academic and non-academic voices into dialogical relation (McKittrick 2021, 48). We are at a pivotal historical crossroads where not only the territories of the listening need to be reframed but also the critical lenses proposed by feminism need to be a subject of discussion. Indeed, there are different *feminisms*. Decolonizing feminism means challenging the geographies of feminism where it operates and “reproduces the idea of Europe as the beginning and end of history” (Espinosa–Miñoso 2020). And this has the direct consequence

of enriching the sonic with alternative and situated critical tools, methods, and creative practice.

Thanks to the theoretical contributions of analysis on coloniality and race that decolonial, Black, and Indigenous feminists have produced, the sonic can serve as revisionism of the Western, white theories and political contributions of dominant feminism. Black feminism, indeed, looks at how questions of class and race intersect gender, makes visible the interconnections between systems of oppression, and provides critical thinking that can serve a wider critical social theory. As Patricia Hill Collins, one of the key figures in the development of Black Feminism thought, stated: “Black feminist thought’s identity as a ‘critical’ social theory lies in its commitment to justice, both for U.S. Black women as a collectivity and for that of other similarly oppressed groups” (2000, 9). Critical contributions from Black feminism are not only designed to oppose oppression but to resist it through forms of thought and action that diverge from standard academic theory, language, and format, introducing poetry, music, essays, and storytelling as acts of resistance (9).

Black methodologies

“If we are committed to anticolonial thought, our starting point must be one of disobedient relationality that always questions, and thus is not beholden to, normative academic logics.” (McKittrick 2021, 49)

In contemporary sound art research, ‘sonic methodologies’ investigate sound as a knowledge-generator. As stated by the editors of *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methodologies*, Michael Bull and Marcel Cobussen (2020), sonic methodologies explore the multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity of contemporary sound practices and research. However, methodologies might also echo predominant epistemologies. If analysis of power relations in sound production and sound-knowledge production are not reflected in methods, modernity’s colonial project and hegemonic structures could be reinforced and reflected in sound.

Black feminist theories revealed the intersectional struggles of certain methodological approaches to reach the global academic discourse, unraveling geographies made of structural barriers that work institutionally with racial, colonial logic. These methodologies also affect the sonic, and they arise from observing the sonic more “globally” through the lens of neo-colonialism, neo-liberal capitalism dynamics, and race studies, with the aim to destabilize and unable overarching narratives while enhancing alternative epistemologies.

Katherine McKittrick describes Black methodologies as courageous acts of disobedience and rebellion from our current systems of knowledge built on systematic, institutionalized racial violence and structural inequalities (2021, 35). Black methodologies

both narrate and disrupt the overarching traditions that threaten Black life. They aim to critique modernity and question the forms of institutionalized racism and structures of inequalities. Black methodologies want to expand Black life's epistemological power beyond scientific analysis, shedding light on how our collective histories of racial violence shaped the way we live now (McKittrick 2021, 12). Black methodologies are radical. They celebrate Black interdisciplinarity as a strategy of liberation and survival. While challenging systems of representation, they bring together collaborations, stories, texts, places, and resources as forms of storytelling. Storytelling and speculative fiction are strategies that Black methodologies use to address scientific work as story-making. As McKittrick says, "the practice of twisting stories and narrative (lying, counterfeiting, remapping, recoding, forging) subverts, refuses, and resists racism" (2021, 8).

The types of storytelling that McKittrick collects in "Dear Science" are stories that request a specific listening practice that refuses the idea that listening is anything regarding mastering what has been said and heard (2021, 10), but rather listening is *engaged*, and it constitutes the conscious effort of making sense of the heterogenous material shaped by thinking and resisting. Sound and the sonic therefore play important roles in shaping black methodologies. In "Dear Science," McKittrick refers in many places to sound as a methodological approach that critiques colonialism, racism, social inequalities, and other forms of violence. Both in the way we understand the legacy between sound and social movements, in the way sound celebrates Black cultures, and in the way sound is practiced in collaborative methods that disrupt disciplined ways of knowing (McKittrick 2021, 56).

McKittrick echoes the scholarly work of Black philosopher, writer, and feminist Sylvia Wynter while introducing Black lives and practices of rebellion as intrinsically tied to cultural production (2021, 154). Making, sharing, and listening to Black cultures cannot be separated from the history of oppression and cultural resilience that Black creatives resist. Black cultures are methods of resistance to racial histories that deny Black life. It is a response to the materiality of white supremacy's racial economy. McKittrick describes how Black culture work with rebellion and invention: rebellion against the systematic oppression of Black expression and knowledge perpetuated by economic imperialism, colonialism, and racial economies; invention as the practice of re-inventing Black life (2021, 161). These practices and methodologies interrogate listening and question the current systems of subjugation, violence, and institutional inequalities in our society. They tell, dismantle, and regenerate forms of listening and forms of future-making.

Remembrance

A clear example of how an exclusively philosophical, phenomenological account of sound might address the question of memory as a mere question of perception can be found in Salomé Voegelin's concept of memory as a "pathetic trigger" (2006, 13-18). Voegelin argues for memory as material for artistic production, outlining how it participates in the production of the 'now'. However, her concept of sonic memory material remains a signifier for reinvesting in the emotional, individual perception of the present, without either tackling memory as collective material shaped by colonial historical forces or any social or ethical implication in the work of remembrance.

Instead, memory plays an essential role in Black studies.¹⁵ In a world that holds on forgetting the violence and systematic subjugation reserved to Black life and cultures as a way to perpetually move forward the machinery of progress, remembering constitutes a strategic tool to pursue a critique of modernity. "*Memory is a fact for blackness in more than one way*" (Givens & Bennett 2020, 2; emphasis added). To acknowledge that in what has been passed on to us, history has omitted stories of violence and struggle that need to be remembered and listened to, is fundamental to envisioning new collective pathways of liberation. Remembering and situating "correct the record" (2) and allow the past to inform different futures.

An example of how Black methodologies and listening work as regenerative tools for future-making can be found in the project "Tell Me About That World," where Black feminism meets listening practices (Thompson 2021). Even though it remains an online archive, where little is shared about its policy, targets, and objectives, the project constitutes an interesting, more accessible archive. A digital space to find how the practice of listening intersects Black Feminism methods, such as storytelling, story-making, and speculative narratives. "Tell Me About That World" is a platform, website, and collection of resources created by mutual aid and community care organizations in New York City. The narrators conceive the project as a way to talk about the importance of listening and community care, and a way to imagine how to build worlds beyond white supremacy and racial capitalism.

The folks you will listen to here are dreaming about and strategizing towards diverse ways out of white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, ableism, and racial capitalism. We have to learn to listen to each other talk about those dreams. We have to learn to use those sites of sharing as ones of world(s)-building, places where we dream together, critically and deliberately, to build a universe under which many worlds and many bodies can breathe, find love, survive. (Thompson 2021)

The proposed listening practices combine listening exercises with embodiment, bringing the focus back on the bodies and breathing, using texts, listening tracks, and sets of questions that lie unanswered to mobilize embodied awareness. Listening here is proposed both as a

way to practice imagination and liberation, and a method to engage with these stories of liberation:

It is in an effort to advance such questions that I offer you not only a mixtape of stories but also a method for listening to those stories. If we can learn to listen, we can learn to dream, we can learn to hear the worlds and futures that are calling to us. We engage in liberatory studies in the dark. We can exercise our imaginations and build the elasticity and stamina necessary to imagine expansively about the spatio-temporal possibilities of our love. (Thompson 2021)

Through practices of ethical responsibility, inter-dependency, co-creation, and care, in *Black Feminist Listening Practices*, listening constitutes a radical tool that, while dismantling systems built on exclusivity, elitism, and white supremacy, facilitates networks and community-building. In doing so, the relationship between listening and remembering remains fundamental to avoid generating forms of novelty that are oblivious to the colonial past of modernity. Imagining is not inventing but weaving the inheritance that works through us into new, liberatory reconfigurations. As “In order to live, we visit the dead” (Givens & Bennett 2020, 3).

Weaving

The immense project of decolonizing memory begins and ends as a circular, constant yet improvisatory gesture of weaving the untold stories, the voices that have been silenced, the voices of the dead, and our own into a new fabric that celebrates all life and all differences. Weaving might indeed help us to address the “tangled knots” (Jarvis 2021, 13) of memory and the entanglements of histories that have shaped the complexity and multidirectionality of the colonial past. In “Multidirectional Memory,” Michael Rothberg interrogates dominant accounts on memory-making and proposes memory as multidirectional, as the ongoing negotiation between heterogeneous historical memories and their intercultural dynamics (2009). Multidirectional memory, the work of remembrance towards a “rearticulation of historical relatedness beyond paradigms of uniqueness” (Rothberg 2009, 14), stresses the differentiated collective memories and how they can hold together similarities and differences to mobilize remembrance in service of ethical responsibility (211). I argue that this can be compared to the work of weaving, where one can still follow each thread of history back to where they originated, yet the movement of back and forth allows us to build and generate history as new containers. As Anni Albers puts it in her feminist theory of weaving: “weaving is not just a set of processes: it is also [...] a certain mediation of the semiautonomous zones of form and history” (Albers quoted in Smith 2014, 172).

These movements back and forth allow the traumatic nature of the colonial past to be essentially relational and generative, to invite collective movements of history-making.

Weaving is listening *otherwise*. “Listening to the echoes of the past in the present helps save the past from premature burial and the present from instant oblivion” (Rothberg 2009, 211).

When listening is investigated within a much larger set of methodologies that constantly question the epistemologies we apply to the sonic, it becomes a strategic tool for recovering those past stories and sounding alternative ones. A decolonial, feminist perspective constitutes one of these pathways that aims at exploring listening and sound as essential mechanisms that can challenge, disrupt, and question modernity through radical imagination, storytelling, and regenerative methodologies.

By decolonizing listening, we weave stories of resistance collectively, sowing seeds for new forms of history-making that are able to reorient and reorganize society around different, more equal, and just paradigms. Weaving rewires the past into new possible planetary futures where our interconnectedness and entanglements are acknowledged, honored, and stretched into new meaning-making: “*We relate, know, think, world, and tell stories through and with other stories, worlds, knowledge, thinkings, yearnings*” (Haraway 2016, 97; emphasis added).

Notes

¹ Sound studies, as a relatively new field in rapid development over the early twenty-first century, has not yet an established tradition of decolonial critique, if compared to the contributions on race from music studies, black music, and popular music studies, most notably the work of Paul Gilroy (1991), Fred Moten (2003), and George E. Lewis (1996; 2008), amongst others. This relative absence of race and decolonial perspectives in sound literature is also the line of argument by Gustavus Stadler, reported further in this article.

² By decolonial critique, I mean the ongoing effort to disentangle knowledge-production from Eurocentric hegemonies. It is the body of critical theories that question the colonial history of modernity and, by looking for the interconnections between systems of oppression, it simultaneously disrupts colonial and settler-colonial logics of racial capitalism in the contemporary global structures and patterns.

³ I refer to the physical archives and collections. The project “Tell Me About That World,” mentioned further in this article, constitutes an online archive accessible from the web.

⁴ In this article, I focus on modernity from a decolonial perspective by looking at how Eurocentric historical values, as well as socio-cultural norms, systems of governance, ideologies, and economies informed forms of colonialism (settler-colonialism, neo-liberal colonialism), and systems of subjugation and oppression up to the present day.

⁵ Un-knowing does not refer to an original position to return to, nor an *a priori* condition – which is impossible or idealistic – but as a space of uncertainty, as a starting point to listen through diversities.

⁶ Quote from an Ultra-Red member’s interview, “Force of Listening” (in Farinati and Firth 2017, 84), emphasis added. Ultra-Red are a sound art collective founded in 1994. They are active in Los Angeles, New York, London, and Berlin. Members in Ultra-red range from artists, researchers, and organizers from different anti-racism, anti-gentrification, and community development social movements.

⁷ Most notably, the work of Jennifer Stoeber (2016) and Marie Thompson (2017); and, specifically, the studies on listening and race by Ana María Ochoa Gauthier (2014), Roshanak Khesthi (2015), Ashon Crawley (2016), and Nina Sun Eidsheim (2019); and the work on listening and Indigenous studies by Robin Robinson (2020), amongst others.

⁸ This emphasis on listening can be traced back to R. Barthes and J.L. Nancy’s contributions to listening, as well as Pierre Schaeffer’s theorizations on *Musique Concrète* and his taxonomy of listening; and to R. Murray Schafer’s work (i.e., the theorist of acoustic ecology often celebrated as a father of the discipline).

⁹ While many theoretical inquiries within sound studies focused on sound primarily as a sensory or physical perception, a critical response to sound’s essentialism can be found in the works of Jonathan Sterne (2003; 2012) and Steven Feld (2000).

¹⁰ Whiteness in postcolonial studies can be previously traced in the concept of ‘white paranoia’ in Edward W. Said (1978), and in Frantz Fanon (1952), amongst others. However, here, it is meant to be explored as it emerged in the field of sound studies.

¹¹ For a deeper understanding of the concepts of resonance and dissonance within the politics of listening, see Bickford (1996).

¹² See “Home,” <https://soundstudiesblog.com/>. Accessed June 10, 2022.

¹³ See Stadler 2015, <https://soundstudiesblog.com/https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/07/06/on-whiteness-and-sound-studies/>. Accessed September 10, 2022.

¹⁴ Stadler mentioned specifically the collections of essays and writings present in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies* (2012), edited by Karen Bijsterveld and Trevor Pinch; *The Sound Studies Reader* (2013), edited by Jonathan Sterne; and *Keywords in Sound* (2015), edited by David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny. There are exceptions to this statement, as the author reported in the blog. However, Stadler stirred the waters and pointed out effectively the disbalance in the economy of sound literature dedicated to race, black and decolonial studies.

¹⁵ Black Studies is an interdisciplinary field of studies focusing on the African diaspora, African cultures and histories, and the unfolding critical research methods on social difference and race in today’s society.

References

- Bickford, Susan. 1996. *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Bull, Michael, and Marcel Cobussen, eds. 2020. *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Sonic Methodologies*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Collins Hill, Patricia. 2000. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. 10th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Routledge.
- Cox, Christoph. 2018. *Sonic Flux: Sound, Art, and Metaphysics*. London: University of Chicago Press.
- Crawley, Ashon. 2016. *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Eidsheim, Nina Sun. 2019. *Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Espinosa-Miñoso, Yuderlys. 2020. “Why We Need Decolonial Feminism: Differentiation and Co-Constitutional Domination in Western Modernity.” *Afterall*, July 1. <https://www.afterall.org/article/why-we-need-decolonial-feminism-differentiation-and-co-constitutional-domination-of-western-modernity>. Accessed August 30, 2022.
- Fanon, Frantz. 1986. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. London: Pluto Press.
- Farinati, Lucia, and Claudia Firth. 2017. *The Force of Listening*. Berlin: Errant Bodies Press.
- Feld, Steven. 2000. “A Sweet Lullaby for World Music.” *Public Culture* 12 (1): 145-171.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1991. “Sounds Authentic: Black Music, Ethnicity, and the Challenge of a ‘Changing’ Same.” *Black Music Research Journal* 11 (2): 111-136.
- Givens, Jarvis R., and Joshua B. Bennett. 2020. “In This New Hour: Memory’s Insistence in Black Study.” *Souls* 22 (1): 1-4.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ingleton, Lee. 2016. “Listening Out for a Feminist Subject.” *Composing Paradoxes | Feminist Process in Sound Arts and Experimental Music*, April 3.

- <https://www.feministfrequencies.org/listening-out-for-a-feminist-subject/>. Accessed August 30, 2022.
- Lewis, George E. 1996. "Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives." *Black Music Research Journal* 16 (1): 91-122.
- . 2008. *A Power Stronger than Itself: The AACM and American Experimental Music*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Jarvis, Jill. 2021. *Decolonize Memory: Algeria and the Politics of Testimony*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Khesthi, Roshanak. 2015. *Modernity's Ear: Listening to Race and Gender in World Music*. New York: New York University Press.
- McKittrick, Katherine. 2021. *Dear Science and Other Stories*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Mehmi, Deepak A. 2017. "Stoever, The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening." *Journal of Radio & Audio Media* 24 (2): 363-366.
- Moten, Fred. 2003. *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Novak, David, and Matt Sakakeeny, eds. 2015. *Keywords in Sound*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Ochoa Gautier, Ana María. 2014. *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Robinson, Dylan. 2020. *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rothberg, Michael. 2009. *Multidirectional Memory*. Redwood, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. 1979 [1978]. New York: Vintage Books.
- Smith, T'ai Lin. 2014. *Bauhaus Weaving Theory: From Feminine Craft to Mode of Design*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Stadler, Gustavus. 2015. "On Whiteness and Sound Studies." <https://soundstudiesblog.com/https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/07/06/on-whiteness-and-sound-studies/>. *Sounding Out!* July 6. Accessed August 30, 2022.
- Sterne, Jonathan. 2003. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- , ed. 2012. *The Sound Studies Reader*. Abingdon, UK: Routledge.
- Stoever, Jennifer Lynn. 2016. *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening*. New York: New York University Press.
- Thompson, Marie. 2017. "Whiteness and the Ontological Turn in Sound Studies." *Parallax* 23 (3): 266-282. Accessed August 30, 2022.
- Thompson, Taylor. 2021. "Tell Me About That World." *Speculative Archives and Black Feminist Listening Practice*. <https://tw.sandbox.library.columbia.edu/>. Accessed August 30, 2022.
- Vázquez, Rolando. 2012. "Towards a Decolonial Critique of Modernity Buen Vivir, Relationality and the Task of Listening." In *Capital, Poverty, Development*, edited by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, 241-252. Aachen: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz.
- Voegelin, Salomé. 2006. "Sonic Memory Material as 'Pathetic Trigger'." *Organised Sound* 11 (1): 13-18.

Weheliye, Alexander G. 2014. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Francis Sosta is a Berlin-based multidisciplinary artist, performer, curator, and independent researcher in the fields of Sound Studies and Performance Art. Her artistic research aims to facilitate spaces for critical reflection and alternative sharing of knowledge and care practices, where embodiment and sound-making are explored as political and collective regenerative social practices. Sosta has presented her works internationally. She is Sound Studies Forum's Editorial Manager in Italy and Assistant Curator of the Invisibledrum Art Research Platform based in Trondheim, Norway. She holds a BA in Art History from the University of Milan and a MA in Sound Studies and Sonic Arts from the Berlin University of the Arts.