Toward A Rupture in the *Sensus Communis*: On Sound Studies and the Politics of Knowledge Production

Roshanak Kheshti

In *Christine Sun Kim*, a film by Todd Selby, we follow the performance artist from her apartment to a busy street corner in New York's Chinatown where she records a soundscape, jots down some notes and ruminates on the project to which the film gives us a behind-the-scenes view.[1] Cut to a scene of loud rustling and various shimmering and colorfully dusty materials dancing on a speaker cone as Kim blows into a microphone dialed up to full volume. The spectator watches and listens from the sidelines of her studio as Kim experiments with the audio recordings she (presumably) made earlier, channeling them to numerous speakers that have various materials taped to or placed on their cones, vibrating wildly, animating sound anew. As Amanda L. Cachia has written in an exhibition catalog including Kim's work,

> Christine Sun Kim . . . focuses on the material forms that sound takes. . . . As a deaf artist who uses sign language, Kim has been interested in creating sound environments that generate visual, tactile elements. . . . Kim relates her scoring of sound/silence to ASL [American Sign Language], which is a spatial representation of meaning not tied to a given set of phonemes, yet it is part of a network of significations that we call "language." (Cachia 2015, 40)

Kim's aesthetic practice employs the methodology of translation as a medium of sonic transduction. So while hearing members of her audience may experience deafening noise transduced into physical, colorful, visual form, deaf members of her audience synesthetically see noise; it is this multilingual, synesthetic effect that results in various sensory experiences by differently situated audiences.

Back in her art studio Kim signs an origin story (that I, a non-speaker of sign language, must read subtitles to follow) in which she recalls a coming-into-consciousness about sound by way of a disciplinary apparatus that forced upon her the sense that she was not an "owner" of proper sound. Interestingly, Kim does not lay the blame for this on her parents, since as immigrants they were also newcomers to linguistic sound in America. Instead, narrating a story in which she not only absorbed her parents'

Current Musicology 99–100 (Spring 2017)

linguistic alienation but additionally felt alienated from them because of her deafness, Kim carefully points out a larger structuring logic, signing: "There were all these conventions for what was proper sound. . . . I learned to be respectful of *their* sound." Kim describes not only linguistic alienation experienced as a child of immigrants whose first language was Korean but also a linguistic alienation vis-à-vis her deafness. Kim's coming-of-age story narrates the hereditary transfer of a disciplinary apparatus which shushed and glared at her parents' racial noise on its way to chiding her racialized deaf noise.

Kim's insightful narrative reflection upon the structuring ideologic of proper sonic decorum for not only a deaf child but her immigrant parents is a jumping off point for exploring the problem of theorizing sound in sound studies and the function of what Kant called the *sensus communis*. Employing Ranjana Khanna's reading of the modern *sensus communis* "as common sense and sense of community" (2009, 111), I attempt here to understand how sound studies facilitates, factors and chronicles sound's entrance into a "common sense" as well as how it creates a "sense of community" through what qualifies and gets quantified in the taxonomy of sound. Just to be clear, this is not an appeal for a cultural relativism with regard to what matters as sound; on the contrary, it is an appeal for a political recalibration of sound studies' desire in knowledge production. As I will argue, pushing beyond the limits of the *sensus communis*—which is what I interpret Kim's performance art to be attempting to do—requires a sensitivity to what critical autism studies scholar Damian Milton refers to as "divergences of perception," which I will argue the sound studies scholar has an ethical obligation to be not only attentive to but to cultivate an epistemological and ontological relation toward. Put differently, I examine in this essay the degree to which making various sounds and listening(s) a part of the *sensus communis* isn't also a disciplining of those very things. I probe the politics of the *sensus communis* as an ethical imperative that pertains to how we sense, what we sense, who constitutes the *we* who sense and what the various means are by which we attest to the value of that sensing as scholars of sound. What I want to develop further in this article is the connection between the politics of knowledge production in sound studies research, the methods employed to perform research, and the outcomes of that research.

On Divergences of Perception as a Rupture in the *Sensus Communis*

Mainstream cognitive neuroscientists and psychologists claim that those diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are unable to read the

social subtext (aka "pragmatics") determining the other's "theory of mind" and thus fail to empathize. Damian Milton has been quite critical of discourse that locates empathic failure only within the ASD individual, identifying what he calls a "double empathy problem" as a way to reframe what he sees as the "ontological problem" facing people with autism spectrum disorder (2009, 883–887). Milton flips the script to ask why the non-ASD individual is not perceived as failing to grasp the social subtext and theory of mind of the ASD individual:

> It is a 'double problem' because both people experience it, and so it is not a singular problem located in any one person. Rather, it is based in the social interaction between two differently disposed social actors, the disjuncture being more severe for the non-autistic disposition as it is experienced as unusual, while for the 'autistic person' it is a common experience. (2009, 884)

Milton perceives the encounter between a non-ASD and ASD individual as a failure on the part of both actors to empathize, what he refers to as "divergences of perception" (2009, 886). Those semantic and pragmatic elements of communication conventionally assumed to be shared by linguistically and culturally fluent members of a non-ASD community and breached by ASD individuals Milton sees as in fact a structural failure in communication, what I extrapolate to be a rupture in the presumed *sensus communis*.

By revealing the normalization agenda propagated by psychology and neuroscience, Milton's critique illustrates that what is taken as unproblematically given for ASD individuals—empathic lack—is similarly lacking in the non-ASD individual and hence the disciplines and scientists themselves. The question then becomes one of "What empathy? Whose empathy?" revealing yet again a fixation on and pathologization of lack rather than an examination of the situatedness of divergent experiences. Christine Sun Kim's reflections upon her art practice reveal how she is produced as an artist at the intersection of the racialized lack (and excess) her parents were thought to embody with her own lack of hearing (and excess of noise). By exposing all the manifold ways that sound materializes beyond auditory perception, her work is a rebuttal to this. I work through these examples in an effort to reflect upon contemporary sound studies and the critical impasse that scholars in this field have reached. In such a moment we should do what Milton has done in response to autism's abnormalization and apply the same bewilderment to sound, asking, what sound? Whose sound? How can other intellectual histories help us better understand the debates currently structuring sound studies? By examining some of the crises that have struck numerous other "studies" over the past

thirty to forty years, I identify a set of patterns across numerous fields that reveal the significance of politics to crises in various field formations. What can sound studies learn from these intellectual histories?

I begin with a set of questions that are in no way novel. Within Western epistemology, questions pertaining to politics and knowledge production have been a preoccupation for everyone from Plato and Aristotle to Enlightenment intellectuals and young Hegelians like Marx, continuing through nineteenth century philosophy and experiencing an apex in the twentieth century work of figures like Du Bois, Boas, and the Frankfurt school scholars, and revived again in the postcolonial, post civil rights era.[2] If we understand *the political* in this lineage to be that which articulates the relationship between the two meanings of *sensus communis* that Khanna identifies above—common sense and sense of community—then what counts as sound in sound studies is also a question about how sensing sound does or does not construct subjects of a community. And it is also a question about the commons, about who can access those commons, and about what forms of knowledge are included there (and what forms are included by force).[3] If in sound studies there is a push for a common sense and a desire for a reordering of senses of community, then, by virtue of this, there is also a contradictory impulse—the disciplining of sound and a collapsing of community with discipline. By collapsing these are we seeking a proper *a priori* object of study or are we seeking a non-convergence that exists in distinction through forms like sign language, divergences of perception, and, what I will go into in more detail below, synesthesia? I pose a series of ethical questions about how difference is treated in the commons, about how difference is disciplined within this site and the degree to which it should be the objective of sound studies scholars today, like the songcatchers of yesteryear, to capture, chronicle, and document all sound. My examples show that disciplines cannot form around a central sense to which others can be multiculturally added. Instead the examples I offer represent practitioners who never get counted as belonging in various disciplinary formations, and are thus able to work from within their difference, outside of the disciplinary *sensus communis*.

Sound Studies as *Sensus Communis*

At the scale of society and culture, *sensus communis* is the common sense shared by members and not shared by outsiders. But can we also think about a disciplinary *sensus communis* forming within sound studies, about the disciplining of sound studies knowledges through institutionalization? Consider, for example, the recent *Sounding Out!* piece by Gus Stadler, "On Whiteness and Sound Studies." Having been established as a

marquee venue for sound studies since July 2009, on July 6, 2015 *Sounding Out!* published this most widely circulated and read of its pieces.[4] Stadler focuses in particular on the publishing boom in sound studies, and the recent outgrowth of a number of anthologies focusing on sound yet lacking representatives from the field of American studies, where he argues there is an abundance of work on sound with a greater emphasis on race, writing,

> I'm struck, however, by the relative absence of a certain strain of work in these volumes—an approach that is difficult to characterize but that is probably best approximated by the term "American Studies." Over the past two decades, this field has emerged as an especially vibrant site for the sustained, nuanced exploration of forms of social difference, race in particular. (Stadler 2015)

This is punctuated by the timing of his critique, "at a time when the field of sound studies has grown more prominent and coherent—arguably, more of an institutionally recognizable 'field' than ever before." Stadler notes that sound studies emerged as a marginal formation—imagined as the other of visual and music studies—but warns that its marginal status seems to be fading with its increasing popularity. He seems to be agitating for a recognition that the post-humanist tendencies in sound studies, which seek out a pure object of sound unencumbered by so-called socially constructed categories of social difference, are marking off a terrain that uncomfortably reinscribes a hierarchy of knowledge forms, prioritizing an unmarked pure sound studies from one inflected with particularities of social experience or identity.

Perhaps what Stadler is referring to in his characterization of American Studies is what Donald Pease first reflected upon as the work of "the New Americanists" in 1990, which "returns questions of class, race, and gender from the political unconscious of American Studies" (Pease 1990, 16).[5] Both Stadler and Pease note an anxiety in their respective fields; Stadler is very specifically calling out an inattention to race in much of the work currently being anthologized in sound studies.[6] This could easily be a question of visibility and accountability. But if we interpret Stadler's question as one about the nubile movement's "field imaginary" and its disciplinary unconscious we can interpret it to be working with the assumption that sound studies like American literary studies is an inherently political formation and that within the American context without an overtly integrationist politics it is by default interpreted as segregationist. As Robyn Wiegman has put it with regard to Whiteness Studies,

> the transformation from segregation to integration reconstructed not only the materiality of black life in the United States, but the national

> imaginary of race and race discourse within which white identity since the 1960s has been anxiously forged. Integration, no matter how failed in its utopian projections of a nation beyond race division, nonetheless powerfully suspended the acceptability of white supremacy's public display, so much so that the hegemonic formation of white identity in the postsegregationist era has come to be understood as taking shape in the rhetorical, in not always political, register of disaffiliation from white supremacist practices and discourses. (Wiegman 1999, 119)

After the mainstreaming of New Historicism in literary studies in the 1990s, we begin to see this integrationist ethos developing the status of a *sensus communis* there and in fact radically changing the field of American Studies.[7] The common sense acquired by this white integrationist politics in American Studies, according to Stadler, is not, however, the case for sound studies. Stadler's deployment of an affect of shame arises from an incredulity toward a perceived lack of common sense among editors of sound studies anthologies regarding the ontology of integration and a rejection of segregation in what Wiegman refers to as "liberal whiteness" (2012, 153).[8] So while Wiegman recognizes that "identity studies are distinguished from the other areas of contemporary knowledge in the US university by their acknowledged attachment to the political" (2012, 13), it seems that Stadler is insisting on a political awakening for an on-the-surface non-identitarian intellectual movement. So how do we understand and read those political and psychic desires that do not overtly pronounce their attachments through identity?

Diana Taylor similarly insists upon a high stakes for performance studies by firmly grounding it in the political. In her exploration of the "staging of cultural encounters" exemplified by performance and ethnography, Taylor identifies a parallel formation in both "embodied behaviors" (2003, 2) she refers to as "scenarios of discovery" (75). These scenarios reenact, intentionally or not, the primal scene of discovery. Like the Freudian primal scene that represents that primary traumatic fantasy of becoming for the subject, which Pease reads into the canon of American literature, we can similarly understand Diana Taylor's scenarios of discovery thesis: as that primary traumatic fantasy of the settler colonial subject who is caught in a tautological loop of return to this scene of becoming. Much like the politico-ethical New Americanist movement in literature and American Studies in general, the performance studies turn Taylor chronicles pivots on a version of the political that is tied to race, dispossession, colonialism and social movements.

Following Pease, then, what is the "field imaginary" of sound studies? How do we parse the political and the psychic here and how do we trace their circulations? On the one hand, this is evidenced in the dis-

covery trope in which the sound studies scholar recalls their first coming into sonic consciousness or the discovery of a new sound or a new way of listening (or simply the repetition of the battle over what counts as knowledge and for whom)? Consider once again the seminal text *Noise*, where Jacques Attali writes, "For twenty five centuries Western culture has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible" (1977, 3). The potential that this discovery held in the 1970s has been curtailed by an epistemological looping within "the primal scene of discovery" where so many scholars drawn to this emergent field have to repeat in one way or another such a discovery for themselves as the requisite right of passage into sound studies. Consider as well how in the introduction to his anthology *The Sound Studies Reader* Jonathan Sterne notes the parallels between science and sound studies, especially as it pertains to discovery. He writes, "Sociologist Robert Merton pointed out long ago that the normal process of science is simultaneous discovery. As people confront similar problems and conditions, they work out similar or related solutions. The same is true even for fields that are not nearly as coherent as sciences" (2012, 11). Sterne makes a direct reference to discovery as the infinite *raison d'être* of science and hence sound studies, making obvious that sound studies's field imaginary is anchored in "scenarios of discovery." In repeating the primal scene of discovery, sound studies risks becoming just another system of taxonomy taking stock of, organizing and hierarchically ordering the sonic world much like the material world has been. As Taylor has argued for performance studies, "By taking performance seriously as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge, performance studies allows us to expand what we understand by 'knowledge'" (16). Can sound studies make the critical and necessary shift to challenge not only what counts as knowledge but for whom and about whom that knowledge is produced? Can sound studies be receptive to maintaining the incoherences and untranslatabilities, avoiding the forced inclusion inherent to field formation?

Referencing Heidegger, Du Bois, and Freud in his introduction to the *Sound Studies Reader,* Jonathan Sterne also comments on the kinds of questions that were posed through sound in the past, writing, "To think sonically is to think conjuncturally about sound and culture: each of the writers I have quoted above used sound to ask big questions about their cultural moments and the crises and problems of their time" (2012, 3). Sterne charts here how sonic inquiries have marked paradigm shifts in Western philosophy. But beyond marking these shifts, how has "thinking sonically" altered the *sensus communis?* I now detour through an archive that consists of sonic as well as other media forms as an example of a research practice

that melds sound with questions of politics. I argue that synesthesia functions here as a political hermeneutic that begins and ends in a disruption in the *sensus communis* by, borrowing from Taylor, "learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge" (2003, 16) and thus transforming what counts as knowledge and the means by which it is derived.

What I am agitating for is an ethical consideration of how difference is treated and resolved in the commons, where the force of difference is shut down when absorbed there. In what follows I explore synesthesia as one example of a form of knowledge that never makes it into the commons, accessible nevertheless in the domain Fred Moten and Stefano Harney call the "undercommons" (2013).

Undisciplined Synesthesia

When the sensible is the outcome of mandated processes in which only particular sense organs are understood as authentic receptors of phenomena, normative standards emerge that function to discipline bodies and distinguish them from the undisciplined, atypical, unruly and disabled ones in the production of a *sensus communis.* Thus emerge concepts like "synesthesia" that map a curious disorganization of modes of perception by some bodies. This perceptual breach raises a number of questions: Is synesthesia a disability? Is it a racialized form of perception? Does it queer the synesthetic person? I explore through the work of Zora Neale Hurston how synesthetic analysis emerges for her as a research methodology arising from having been excluded from the *sensus communis*.[9] Hurston's sonic infidelity went against the realist drive of fidelity to sound source that was standard practice among fieldworkers of her day. Her synesthesia combined with what I call her "phonographic refusal" made her sound production work useless for the archive (Kheshti 2015, 130–31). Not only did Hurston employ sound recording as one of her research methods but she made films, wrote plays, engaged in voodoo initiations, wrote ethnographies, short stories and of course novels. When looking across these media forms some fascinating stylistic overlaps emerge that relate to her oft-cited notion of "feather-bed resistance" discussed in *Mules and Men* (1990), which is Hurston's thesis on black resistance to the white gaze.[10]

In her essay "Black Death," Hurston opens in her signature style: "We Negroes in Eatonville know a number of things that the hustling, bustling white man never dreams of. He is a materialist with little care for overtones. They have only eyes and ears, we see with the skin" (1996, 381). Hurston describes a synesthetic mode of perception native to her hometown, an Eatonville, FL way of knowing and she presents double-consciousness as no mere paranoid pathology but a "Negroe" [*sic*] way of knowing and a

means to a racialized insight. Hurston's localization of this mode of perception, as not only local to residents of "the oldest incorporated African American municipality in America" (which is the Eatonville, FL motto) but also localized to the largest organ on the body—the skin—represents Hurston's signature style of knowledge production. For her the provincial—applicable to spatiality as well as the embodied and corporeal—is a prism through which she extrapolates and theorizes universal conditions. Seeing with the skin represents Hurston's promiscuous use of recording technologies as methods with which to see, hear, feel and know, ways that exceed the limits of the fieldnote recording conventions otherwise standardized among fieldworkers of her day.

It was precisely Hurston's synesthetic methodology—seeing with skin—that critically spoke back to Enlightenment distinctions of perception and the senses. This poetic tactic granted Hurston not only creative license but insights that translated across her work. Hurston's synesthetic mode of knowledge production not only challenges the normative expectation of gathering empirical knowledge through vision but it furthermore offers a racialized mode of perception such that seeing with the skin is the predicament of blackness. Being forced into a white supremacist system of human value results for Hurston in a sensibility through the very organ that marks her as other: the epidermis. Her insight allows us to imagine how white privilege can also mean the privilege of the sensible that corresponds with the order of things and a prerequisite for access to that privilege is the adoption of the common sense that defines that sensibility. In other words, white privilege enables whites to see with the eyes; anti-black racism imposes the synesthetic disorganization of the sensible resulting in seeing with the skin.[11] Thus a deconstruction of the epistemic order through which synesthesia is imagined as a disorder is needed in order to imagine alternative modes of knowledge production.

How can we recognize the disruptive potential of this crisscrossing of sense organs and experiences of the sensible, or in Milton's terms these "divergences of perception." If we read Milton's insistence upon "divergences of perception" as a theory about the field imaginary of cognitive psychology vis-à-vis ASD, and, returning to Christine Sun Kim's soundscape recordings, if we understand them as not only sonic renderings of her social worlds but meditations on perception as performance as well as a self-portrait of a sensual positionality, also moored in "identity knowledge," then we have examples here of critical insights on the *sensus communis*. For Kim, recording is not simply a mimetic capture of reality but a translation into another medium, the act of which reflects upon an epistemology of perception. Through their situated experiences of the world, Kim and

Hurston objectify and defamiliarize what might otherwise be imagined as ambient sounds and passive modes of perceiving those sounds, revealing instead their artifice, their ideological structuration, their dynamism, their textures, colors and visualities. This is a *performative listening*—a form of aural perception that enacts and materializes, that is active and productive. In Kim's case the translation of ambient street noise into vibrant color and texture materializes these sounds as colorfully apparent. This rematerialization makes the perceiver newly aware of her previously subdued relationship to these sounds, causing a shift in her perception and a kind of double-consciousness vis-à-vis not only her automatic perception but, because of the re-performative and counter-mimetic effect, of another's perception. The rearrangement of these quotidian sounds is a reperformance of an otherwise valueless soundscape in a form that renders it newly sensuous. And the listener is again made aware of her once acquiescent aurality through the acoustic mirror of Kim's recording and re-arrangement. And in the case of Hurston's audio recordings for the WPA, where she broke from convention by opting to record herself singing (rather than record local residents of Florida and Georgia), it is evident that what I refer to elsewhere as her "sonic infidelity" is a method similar to Kim's (Kheshti 2015, 139). Hurston's performative listening functions both as the method through which she developed her repertoire of black children's and migrant farm work songs as well as the method through which she practiced her own "feather-bed resistance."[12] This is how Hurston cultivated a praxis of phonographic refusal that denied the archive access to this African American cultural patrimony (Kheshi 2015, 130–32).

On the Limits of Ruptures in the *Sensus Communis*

Efforts to resist enfoldment into the *sensus communis* continue, as evident in struggles over reconciliation taking place between Canada and First Nations communities. Scholar Dylan Robinson warns of the limits of what he terms the "arts of reconciliation" or those efforts that focus colonial reparations and reconciliation around artistic and aesthetic forms. Robinson uses the example of the recent Canadian state Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) efforts

> effecting the *sensus communis* of state injustices by holding public hearings; disseminating their findings through print, online, and broadcast media; advocating for revisions to educational curricula; and sponsoring both large and small public and community events where cultural and artistic presentations take place. Such cultural and artistic events seek to shape the public discourse on the history of the nation state. (2012, 112)

Robinson examines the degree to which intercultural art music can or does enable reconciliation or whether or not it creates a "reconciliatory affect" (2012, 116) allowing audiences to experience a "symbolic form of reconciliation" (118). In this example, the presumptive goal of the TRC's efforts, which Robinson interprets as the desire to change the *sensus communis*, actually results in a new form of colonization in which "the experiencing of such performance *is* the doing of reconciliation itself" (123). Thus the aestheticization of reconciliation creates a shortcut through which Canadian audiences can enjoy the affective fruits of reconciliation without engaging in the hard work of reconciliation.

Robinson's caution stands in contrast to what Barry Shank, building upon Nancy and Rancière, proposes for what he terms "the political force of musical beauty" (2014). Though I, and I assume Robinson, would agree with Shank's claim that "the political role of aesthetics, or the heteronymous function of aesthetic production, derives from its ability to change the sensible" (28), when we consider both meanings of *sensus communis* "as common sense and sense of community" in light of Robinson's analysis of "reconciliatory affect" we see that there are political complexities to how the common is achieved. And although Shank admits that "[i]n changing the sensible, musical beauty does not produce social justice, equality, or any other political value" (28), he nevertheless insists that "[t]he political agency of music works by distributing the sensible in such a way that it transforms the experience of the common. This felt difference in the common then prompts the leaning in described by Nancy as a *clinamen*" (24). Again, I must ask the question: whose common? Which commons? Robinson's analysis reveals how the aestheticization of politics or the mere rearrangement of the sensible provides a shortcut that all too often is a substitute for the "hard work of reconciliation." It exemplifies how common sense disconnected from a sense of community can also satisfy a desire for experiencing difference without too much skin in the game, so to speak (or without seeing with the skin, as Hurston might say).

As Robinson's work shows, decolonizing sound studies should entail more than simply absorbing indigenous verbiage or racialized forms and experiences into the sound studies lexicon. And what we can learn from Damian Milton's critical autism studies scholarship is that empathy—what we once thought was a pathway to intersubjectivity—is a cul-de-sac of majoritarian and settler intrasubjectivity. And finally, the byproduct of critical white scholars shaming other scholars for their whiteness, as Wiegman reminds us, is white guilt, which begs the question: What are the limits of a field formed through an affect of white guilt?

The status of lack through which so many interdisciplinary formations

have emerged (queer, feminist, disability, etc.) reveals the zero-sum game of critique. On the one hand the critical theorist *cannot not* point out the logical flaws inherent in hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, doing so makes the very disposition/perspective/identity vulnerable to systemic appropriation. But disciplines cannot form around a central sense to which others can be multiculturally added. When we name a new mode of inquiry that indexes a revelatory interdisciplinary perspective we see time and time again that it can only gain traction by being legible across a heterodox disciplinary terrain. Yet, its legibility is contingent upon its succumbing to a disciplinary force of translation, which imposes the hegemonic order upon it. Such is the double bind of interdisciplinary knowledge production: it must be disciplined in order to be legible and it is through this process of disciplining that the *sensus communis* is introduced. But how can one shake a common sense without objectifying and fetishizing abject, subaltern or secondary modes of perception; how do we resist the inertia that constructs sound and or music in such a way? The work of Hurston, Robinson and Kim suggest that there is no way to study sound without dissolving everything else that grounds the disciplining of it throwing all the things we rely on to systematize the field into crisis; this story I tell is a part of the drama.

Notes:

Thanks to Amy Cimini, Curtis Marez, Sora Han, Laura Harris, Ivan Ramos, Mercy Romero and Sara Mameni for their feedback. Thanks as well to the anonymous reviewers.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mqJA0SZm9zI&list=PLQwQL-vuib8q6S5NCJS-Gw8yJ2pko_TY4z&index=55. Accessed March 24, 2016.

2. Of particular interest to this essay is the subfield of aesthetics and politics that has concerned itself with what Rancière calls "the distribution of the sensible" or what scholars like Vico, Shaftesbury, Kant and Gadamer have referred to as the *sensus communis*. Although, the exact place of sound within this aesthetic lineage is not entirely clear since aesthetics has tended to refer to the visual, and less commonly the musical, but almost never to just sound. See Jacques Rancière (2013, 7). On Vico, Shaftesbury and Gadamer's contributions to this debate, see Ranjana Khanna (2009).

3. Thanks to Sora Han for pointing this out to me.

4. Arguably hosting the most racially diverse cast of authors publishing in the field of sound studies, it is noteworthy that Stadler's piece is the the most widely read of the dozens annually published on the digital humanities site since 2009. See Trammell (2015).

5. Noting a "crisis in the field-Imaginary of American Studies," Donald Pease (1990, 3) takes to task Frederick Crews, whose *New York Review of Books* review mockingly coins the term "New Americanists" to disparage an emerging movement within literary studies organized around what he saw as special interest groups focused on the "critique of 'slavery,' 'Indian removal,' aggressive expansion, imperialism, and so forth."

6. As Stadler suggests, when we look at these mainstream anthologies we find passages like

this one from the Introduction to the six-hundred-page *Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*: "Fouche's chapter is one of the few in the volume where issues of race and ethnicity and audio technology are inter-connected" (Pinch and Bijsterveld 2012, 23).

7. See Veeser (1989).

8. Wiegman (2012, 153n26) defines this as "the way that all white racial representation in the ['90s] decade is configured in relation not to state-authored white supremacy but to its representational suppression, itself a consequence of the transformation of the white supremacist state wrought by the legal end of segregation."

9. I began this research as the epilogue to my first book, where I listen for this radical potential in recordings made by and of Zora Neale Hurston singing songs from the Southern black folk repertoire that she was hired by the WPA to capture, which is the focus of the book's epilogue. See Kheshti (2015). I am currently working on a book about this subject.

10. "Feather-bed resistance" is Hurston's concept to describe the black Southern strategy of coy cordiality that gives the impression of hospitality and openness, but is in fact highly guarded and protective. See Hurston (1990, 2–3).

11. However, one should not interpret Hurston's insightful and poetic reading to indicate enviousness toward the capacity for sensible normativity. On the contrary, Hurston proudly lays claim to this capacity as a privileged form of insight, an identitarian knowledge, if you will.

12. See Kheshti (2015, 126).

References

Attali, Jacques. 1977. *Noise*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Cachia, Amanda L. 2015. *Loud Silence: Works by Shary Boyle, Christine Sun Kim, Daddin Martin and Alison O'Daniel*. La Jolla, CA: Gallery at CaliT.

Hurston, Zora Neale. 1990. *Mules and Men*. New York: Harper Collins.

———. 1996. "Black Death." In *Harlem's Glory: Black Women Writing 1900–1950*, edited by Lorraine Elena Roses and Ruth Elizabeth Randolph, 381–386. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Khanna, Ranhana. 2009. "Technologies of Belonging: *sensus communis*, disidentification." In *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, edited by Beth Hinderliter, Verod Maimon, Jaleh Mansoor and Seth McCormick, 111–132. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Kheshti, Roshanak. 2015. *Modernity's Ear: Listening to Race and Gender in World Music*. New York: NYU Press.

Milton, Damian. 2012. "On the Ontological Status of Autism: the 'Double Empathy Problem.'" *Disability and Society* 27 (6): 883–887.

Moten, Fred and Stefano Harney. 2013. *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York: Minor Compositions.

Pease, Donald. 1990. "New Americanists: Revisionist Interventions into the Canon." *boundary 2* 17 (1): 1–37.

Pinch, Trevor and Karin Bijsterveld. 2012. *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Studies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Rancière, Jacques. 2013. *Politics of Aesthetics*. New York: Bloomsbury.

Robinson, Dylan. 2012. "Intercultural Art Music and the Sensory Veracity of Reconciliation: Brent Michael Davids' Powwow Symphony on the Dakota Music Tour." *MUSICultures* 39 (1): 112–128.

Shank, Barry. 2014. *The Political Force of Musical Beauty*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Stadler, Gus. 2015. "On Whiteness and Sound Studies." *Sounding Out!: The Sound Studies Blog*, July 15, 2016. http://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/07/06/on-whiteness-and-sound-studies.
Sterne, Jonathan. 2012. "Sonic Imaginations." In *The Sound Studies Reader*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 1–17. Florence, SC: Routledge.
Taylor, Diana. 2003. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*. Durham: Duke University Press.
Trammell, Aaron. 2015, "The Top Ten Sounding Out! Posts of 2015!" *Sounding Out!: The Sound Studies Blog*. Accessed March 24, 2016. https://soundstudiesblog.com/2015/12/21/sounding-outs-top-ten-posts-in-2015.
Aram Veeser, Aram, ed. 1989. *The New Historicism*. New York: Routledge University Press.
Wiegman, Robyn. 1999. "Whiteness Studies and the Paradox of Particuliarity." *boundary 2* 26 (3): 115–150.
Wiegman, Robyn. 2012. *Object Lessons*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.