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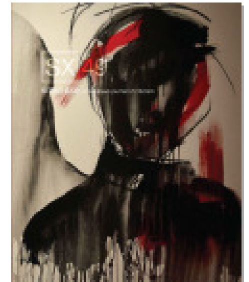

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Una escuela rara: Feminist Methodologies, Innovation, and the Sound of What Is to Come in Diaspora Studies

Samantha Pinto

The fifth chapter of Paul Gilroy's *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* argues that black expressive cultures, particularly popular ones like music and dance, are the site par excellence of a diaspora politics. An analysis of diaspora culture can circumvent what he sees as dangerous consolidations of race as a given: "Black culture is actively made and re-made. . . . This chapter introduces the study of black cultures within the framework of a diaspora as an alternative to the different varieties of absolutism which would confine culture in 'racial,' ethnic or national essences."[1] To say that these statements are the basis of his beyond influential *The Black Atlantic* is both obvious and a little skewed.[2] *The Black Atlantic* argues for a rethinking of modernity as centering on the experience of blackness, in all its varieties—and relies heavily on literary, musical, and other cultural texts for its argument. Through culture, Gilroy called for African American studies to look beyond the nation to sites of diaspora in its formation—much as he asked, in *There Ain't No Black*, for British culture to look at the integral

1 Paul Gilroy, *"There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack": The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 202–3.
2 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

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and central role of black British culture in its own formation. As Brent Hayes Edwards notes in "The Uses of Diaspora," culture is the medium of diaspora for Gilroy, ensuring that such a transnational structure proceeds "only through and across difference."[3]

I would like to call us back here, at our current moment of prolific and astute academic production around music and sound in African diaspora studies, to the significance of culture as it flexibly stands at the nexus of diaspora, capital, and progressive politics as Gilroy so astutely pointed out in 1987 (and continues to analyze in his subsequent works). Gilroy sites culture, as opposed to sociology, history, politics qua politics, and other objects and methods that one could claim, as the unit that could, possibly, both acknowledge the binds of this intersection and push our politics and analysis of race to a new point of generative undoing. In the years following, as we know, many scholars have taken up, extended, and challenged *The Black Atlantic*'s formulation of diaspora and difference—and, indeed, fleshed out Gilroy's earlier emphasis on black expressive cultures in relationship to feminist thought. As Jayna Brown notes, diaspora cultural studies have too often revolved around the experiences of men, and she urges us to consider "black women not as exceptions, but as critical modern subjects, citizens of the world."[4] A critical analysis of gender shifts our critical concept of black modernity, then—and the expressive cultures that constitute and articulate it. When we follow the trail of gender down several critical rabbit holes, we can map the critiques of the gender politics of diaspora through the longtime feminist scholarly work of Carole Boyce Davies, Hazel Carby, Alys Eve Weinbaum, Michelle Ann Stephens, Françoise Lionnet, Jenny Sharpe, Belinda Edmondson, Carolyn Cooper, Carla Freeman, and many more scholars in the field—and including specific works such as Jayna Brown's *Babylon Girls*; Jennifer Wilks's *Race, Gender, and Comparative Black Modernism*; Alexander G. Weheliye's new book on black diaspora feminist thought and the human, *Habeas Viscus*; and Brent Hayes Edwards's key chapter on the editing and production work of Paulette and Jane Nardal, in *The Practice of Diaspora*.[5]

It is this critical trajectory on gender and culture, and cultural form, that I hold with me as I read Alexandra T. Vazquez's *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music* alongside its recent diaspora studies compatriots: Shana L. Redmond's *Anthem*; Tsisti Ella Jaji's *Africa in Stereo*; and Edwin C. Hill's *Black Soundscapes, White Stages*.[6] None claim *women*, *gender*, or

3 Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text*, no. 66 (Spring 2001): 64.

4 Jayna Brown, *Babylon Girls: Black Women Performers and the Shaping of the Modern* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 3, 10.

5 Jennifer Wilks, *Race, Gender, and Comparative Black Modernism: Suzanne Lacascade, Marita Bonner, Suzanne Césaire, Dorothy West* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2008); Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

6 Alexandra T. Vazquez, *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013); Shana L. Redmond, *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Tsitsi Ella Jaji, *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014); Edwin C. Hill, *Black Soundscapes, White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

feminism in their main titles but all engage with feminist methodology at their very cores. What, in particular, does music offer this moment in the field—as a case study, as a methodology, as an aesthetic experience, as a mobile unit of analysis—that might signal a new feminist pathway for diaspora studies, nearly thirty years after Gilroy diagnosed culture as the understudied site of diaspora's possibility? And what does feminist methodology offer music and cultural studies? The amazing work of these four books, taken together, shows a seismic shift in the ground of diaspora studies not just for where it is taking black sound studies, but for how it is changing the ways we think about black expressive cultures in all of their complexity. This shift alters how we understand performance, yes, but it also sheds new light on the means of and access to production and takes seriously the history of reception and the half-life of commodity cultures that reverberate through what looks like a more domestic consumption of capital. In other words, centralizing questions of gender and feminist inquiry demands new scholarly moves in and on black expressive culture. And the amazing complexity of black popular music's production, reception, and consumption offer unique opportunities for the boundaries of feminist inquiry.

As Tavia Nyong'o articulates in his 2014 *Small Axe* review of two important books in black sound studies, Alexander Weheliye's *Phonographies* and Julian Henriques's *Sonic Bodies*, the absence of gender—and, really, of women—in the field can still be glaring even though there are already the major correctives in the field mentioned above and on the horizon.[7] A serious and central analysis of gender is necessary—it is methodologically imperative—as we can see from these four first books springing into the field in 2013–14. For American ethnic studies, the turn to the deep history of music and performance studies has been an explicitly feminist one in recent years: Sherrie Tucker's *Swing Shift* and *Dance Floor Democracy*; Deborah Paredez's *Selenidad*; Deborah Vargas's *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music*; Shane Vogel's *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret*; Fred Moten's *In the Break*; Erin Chapman's *Prove It on Me*; Farah Jasmine Griffin's *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery* and *Harlem Nocturne*; Gayle Wald's *Shout, Sister, Shout!*; Emily Lordi's *Black Resonance*; Daphne Brooks's *Bodies of Dissent*; Anne Anlin Cheng's *Second Skin*; Francesca Royster's *Sounding Like a No-No* (which includes Jamaican performer Grace Jones); and the editorial and scholarly work of Josh Kun, Kara Keeling, Karen Tongson, and Jennifer Stoever, to name but a few key works and figures working at the nexus of music, gender, and sexuality.[8] Diaspora studies, at book length, has

7 Tavia Nyong'o, "Afro-Philo-Sonic Fictions: Black Sound Studies after the Millennium," *Small Axe*, no. 44 (July 2014): 177–79. Nyong'o reviews Alexander G. Weheliye, *Phonographies: Grooves in Sonic Afro-Modernity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); and Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing* (New York: Continuum, 2011).

8 Sherrie Tucker, *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); Deborah Paredez, *Selenidad: Selena, Latinos, and the Performance of Memory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Deborah R. Vargas, *Dissonant Divas in Chicana Music: The Limits of La onda* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Shane Vogel, *The Scene of Harlem Cabaret: Race, Sexuality, Performance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003); Erin D. Chapman, *Prove It on Me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Farah Jasmine Griffin, *If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (New York: Ballantine Books,

more recently jumped on music as a particular site from which to theorize feminist connections that emanate from several of the key geographic, linguistic, and political foundations of diaspora, including francophone and hispanophone Afro-diasporas, cultural studies based in Africa, and connections between various Pan-African movements.

But incorporating women into diaspora studies is now not only not enough but also not the limits of feminist diaspora thought. Feminist methodology requires that we look for new and different ways of "doing" diaspora beyond massive official archival presences or significant published or produced work as performers/authors—beyond the traditionally documented, so to speak, which is really about how and what we think of as documentable. By critiquing certain modes of anthropology and ethnomusicology as hiding under an encyclopedic array of details meant to prove knowledge, authenticity, and the scope and scale of major importance, Vazquez's book answers questions about "mastery" that shadow scholars working on ethnic and diaspora studies more than others. *Listening in Detail* actively resists this kind of musicological engagement, theorizing itself as "an instructive failure" at the onset, one that "trouble[s] the anthropological underpinnings of the field that presumes that objects can be known."[9] Vazquez writes this about one of her own objects of study, in and of itself an instructive detail that the entire book follows as methodology, a blurred line between critic and expressive culture, a text in which Cuban music and musical performers are our diaspora theorists. It's also a rallying cry against, I think, the masculinization of sound studies—*pace* Nyong'o and Weheliye's response to his critique in the *Small Axe* book discussion mentioned above—in object, but also in theory and practice. In other words, when women are doing the performing, how are we writing about it? And when they aren't, are we still theorizing and analyzing gender? What's feminist—what could be feminist—about sound studies, even when it doesn't "take on" woman as object?

It is in this spirit that Vazquez introduces us—initiates us, really—into *una escuela rara*, a moment that both exposes and expands the pleasurable fictions of skill, craft, class, and gender that route through the diaspora. It is a reference, in Vazquez's book, to the self-taught way that Graciela Peréz plays the bass—a method learned of necessity on the diaspora road that a critic mistakenly attributes to an ethnographic/cultural root. *Una escuela rara*: In 2013–14, here is a critical mass of books that press diaspora through and as a practice of culture, all through sound, incidentally and not incidentally. Here is a collection of first books that ask us to rethink what we think we know—but more important, *how* we think we know—about the practices of diaspora, about what constitutes its languages, its history, its formation, its

2002), and *Harlem Nocturne: Women Artists and Progressive Politics during World War II* (New York: Basic Civitas, 2013); Gayle Wald, *Shout, Sister, Shout! The Untold Story of Rock-and-Roll Trailblazer Sister Rosetta Tharpe* (Boston: Beacon, 2007); Emily J. Lordi, *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013); Daphne Brooks, *Bodies in Dissent* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Francesca T. Royster, *Sounding Like a No-No: Queer Sounds and Eccentric Acts in the Post-soul Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

9 Vazquez, *Listening in Detail*, 14, 7; hereafter cited in the text.

movement, its politics. What is diaspora's form, and what could be its forms in the future if we, as scholars, reinvestigate its potential subjects, infuse it with—and as a methodology that necessarily has to expand its repertoire to include, as details, as evidence—the work of those who are not well documented, the detail that is too small to matter in the narrative of mastery. Music and sound necessitate diaspora and transnational study, since the transnational is integral in telling production and reception histories, the formation stories of influence that come from trauma and travel, as well as historical and present political pains and pleasures too keen to only register in law, in language, alone. Music is eminently exportable, commodifiable, co-optable but also irresistible—a great carrier, a great metaphor, a complicated communications delivery system that refuses just rationality. Music is not just sounds but stage, performance, visuality, textuality, culture, and, yes, commodity and consumption.

Una escuela rara is the touchstone for Vazquez's book about the makeshift aesthetics of a diaspora predicated on culture at the center, and on the foundational significance of gender to not just what but how we study. Vazquez's book is feminist in methodology, then, in its insistence, its devotion, to the detail and its refusal of certain field protocols and narratives around music and race. "Listening in detail" is the practice itself, a practice of blackness, a method of following moments and movements that may not be legible among more formal or disciplinary pathways (35).[10] Recalling Jayna Brown's earlier articulation of the limits of the "who" of *The Black Atlantic*, Vazquez traces a complicated recording and performance history between Graciela and Florence Jones, an African American performer and club owner in Paris: "Far from being shipwrecked on some domestic shore, the link between Jones and Graciela not only swells the scope of who is constituted by the Black Atlantic but also how this greater who has adapted to its typical coordinates" (116).

Una escuela rara: A school of innovation that asks us to let go of any and all of our presumptions, however progressive, about the very concepts of race and gender and diaspora and sexuality. Vazquez and her peers are articulating methods that are always folding back on and/or questioning themselves, their tenets, their keywords, their rubrics, their objects, "to remind [us] that [we] know nothing" (33). Music is not just inspiration/metaphor/opening act, but is acting here as theory in and of diaspora, as doing intellectual work in its time, not just beyond it. This *una escuela rara* is, Vazquez insists throughout the book, resistant to the anthological impulse she diagnoses across music studies and Cuban cultural studies, arguing that the kind of academic and artistic compilations that emerge in the field "reveal . . . the tension between the cultural and the empirical in scholarship" (62). Her book, then, is more like a loose collection, not meant to "save [us] time" (75) like the anthology often claims to do with its performance of comprehensive knowledge—though Vazquez gives lie to this fiction by allowing seeming anthologies and even documentaries on Cuban music their own eruptive and interruptive moments that perform "an extraordinary bypass" (76), in her terms. Instead,

10 Vazquez cites the work of Fred Moten and Hortense Spillers here in aligning blackness with "a doing."

Listening in Detail is meant to slow the reader way, way down—to question the connections one was or was not making, can or cannot make between the United States and Cuba, and between the black diaspora and the music that emerges from its complicated and difficult routes. This lag, these breaks, are, I would argue, critical feminist interrogations of the field of diaspora studies and its methodological imperatives.

If Vazquez offers up the detail as a new unit for thinking through the idiosyncratic connections between gender, music, and diaspora, Shana L. Redmond's powerful *Anthem: Social Movements and the Sound of Solidarity in the African Diaspora* establishes the genre, or "sound franchise," of the twentieth-century anthem as its basis for reconsidering the African diaspora political landscape—and includes Africa itself as a sight for cultural production, not just of origin. Anthems, which offer repetition and duplication but with critical differences according to venue, audience, and performance, "carried alternative theorizations and practices of blackness, becoming representations that were sought out, not stumbled upon."[11] In this way, Redmond concerns herself with the creative but highly intentional political purposing and repurposing of music, rather than the surprise path of the detail—offering up in each chapter rich and detailed social histories of a particular song and the movements for civil, national, and Pan-African rights that surround its production and circulation. But in striking out for this direct engagement with "big P" Politics, Redmond does not blindly fall into the ideal of solidarity and the anthem, in particular, as a transparent unit of cohesion; instead, she documents how the uses of the anthem also "resisted the containments and fixity of nations and rights . . . foregrounding the ways in which Black musics have remixed the modalities of the state. . . . Beyond a rights paradigm that privileges only those principles and persons established and enlisted, Black anthems negotiated and announced the ambitions and claims of those whose very bodies throw into crisis the normativity of rules and liberties."[12] In doing so, *Anthem* insists on the presence and significance of not just women musicians (such as Nina Simone and Miriam Makeba) but women activists involved in cultural and national movements that strategically erased their rights and interests.

Anthem generatively analyzes both masculinist visions of "rights" as well as their deconstruction and adaptation by tenacious women activists in the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the US civil rights movement, and the African National Congress. Redmond also locates alternative political strategizing in music itself, such as Nina's Simone's oeuvre: "Her music therefore modeled important organizing strategies, such as constant movement/evolution, flexibility, and unpredictability"—embodied in Simone's musical compositions, her live performances, and her lyric compositions that constantly called attention to the lives and politics of black women as subjects and citizens.[13] Here, the turn to music is again aligned

11 Redmond, *Anthem*, 4–5, 2.
12 Ibid., 4.
13 Ibid., 234, 183.

with Edwards's construction of diaspora as practice—where anthems are not objects as much as a method of twentieth-century black politics. Redmond's feminist re-visioning of political movements through the lens of the anthem allows social history a place next to a musicological analysis that focuses on the cultural producer but not the context and aftereffects of production, including adaption and reception. Such an inclusion in method also allows an inclusion of women. A feminist methodology underpins Redmond's insistence on expressive culture itself as the innovative frontier of black politics—as she readily and steadily awaits a new formulation of the anthem—or even a new genre of musical politics altogether—in our twenty-first-century moment in her conclusion.[14]

Tsitsi Ella Jaji's wonderfully necessary book *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity* also trumpets music as a site of innovation—especially as one that seeps into all manners of other cultural productions. In her focus on African American music and its presence in a long twentieth century of African history she powerfully takes up and reverses Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* and others who locate Africa as a resource but not as "an active participant."[15] In *Africa in Stereo*, we get the flip side of Yogita Goyal's critique of *The Black Atlantic*; here, African American culture, often placed at the center of diaspora, gets remade as a key cultural touchstone of African sites of colonial and postcolonial negotiation, rather than the other way around, in South Africa, Ghana, and Senegal.[16] Somewhere between the detail and the anthem in its sense of political intentionality, Jaji's analysis of music in twentieth-century African culture is attuned to the uneven intersections of notions of racial solidarity that are transformed and transferred through cultural expression and the concept of "modernity in Africa as a long decolonizing process, [that] coincides with a period when black diasporic music has circulated widely on the continent." Music sits at this juncture, "inform[ing] what it meant to be 'modern' in the context of globally inter-connected, mutable, and mutually constituted black identities."[17]

Jaji calls this attentive notion of solidarity "stereomodernism," as a nod to both the multidirectional nature of "stereo" itself and her insistence on the significance of aesthetics and the practice of reading various cultural platforms as a key tool for analyzing the African diaspora. Practices of listening, reading, receiving, and even consuming are foundational rather than side projects to cultural authorship/production in the book. Rather than characterizing women as dupes of modernity's various cultural fictions, *Africa in Stereo* and its methodology argue that women consumers themselves "discovered the gap" between colonial promises and on-the-ground experience.[18] Calling this process "sheen reading," Jaji is able to "include not only those who travel, but those who inhabit the contact zones enabling such travel, many of

14 Ibid., 288.
15 Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, 6.
16 Yogita Goyal, *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
17 Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, 3, 1.
18 Ibid., 21.

whom are women."[19] Hence her analysis of Pan-Africanism as a process rather than a position comes out of a feminist critique of a focus on aesthetic production at the expense of tracing the difficult routes of consumption and reception that implicate those not in a position to have access to authorship in traditional terms. Jaji's intensive, multilingual cultural studies and close reading of aesthetics—of music, or cultural expression emanating out from music—are underpinned by the assumption that African subjects are knowing subjects, "keenly aware of both the possibilities and the limits of solidarity" and hence active agents in capital and colonial exchange.[20]

Vazquez, Redmond, and Jaji are all invested in "how music activates other fields of cultural production."[21] As I trace here, that "how" is intimately and integrally linked with feminist critique. Edwin C. Hill's *Black Soundscapes, White Stages* makes this link the absolutely central tenet of his sweeping, hugely compelling study of francophone diaspora "soundscapes." Like his colleagues above, he theorizes music as diaspora itself—playfully translating *le tumulte noir* as "black people on the move."[22] And like Jaji, Gilroy, Brown, and Weheliye, he posits black music/sound/expressive culture and modernity as coeval "events." Where he pushes a feminist innovation in diaspora methodology is by considering a gendered critique as about how we listen/who we consider a part of the "soundscape," his unit of analysis itself: "Soundscape scholars typically consider the sonic life of people as taking place against the backdrop of the soundscape, rather than as being part of that backdrop. . . . Which sounds constitute background and which foreground? Which are meaningless or otherwise without reason and which form the conditions for the possibility of meaning?" Hill poses this specifically and directly as a feminist question of critical practice—how do we create and describe and analyze meaning in the diaspora: "While 'negritude in the major' creates a masculinist hero who intervenes at the mythical crossroads of History, 'negritude in the minor' concerns itself with the alternate and everyday management of the conditions of pain characterizing histories of black Atlantic subject formations . . . revis[ing] the poetic genealogy of the negritude scream and beat, articulating their relations to the torn gender dynamic of black Atlantic colonial musicality, speech, and performance."[23]

Hill's focus on gendered analysis constitutively alters the way we might listen to and for diaspora. Here, he claims it as the central dynamic force of his entire study, theorizing capital in the process of representation without dismissing the cultural production and receptions that come out of the relationship between black expressive cultures and white colonial funding and consumption. He takes this up through the complicated figure of the *dou dou*, a colonial relic diminished to a problematic nostalgia for colonial and white rule and interracial

19 Ibid., 116, 17; citing Jaqueline Nassy Brown, *Dropping Anchor, Setting Sail: Geographies of Race in Black Liverpool* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).
20 Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, 147, 6.
21 Ibid., 20.
22 Hill, *Black Soundscapes*, 1.
23 Ibid., 10, 11, 16.

sexuality that Hill seeks to recover, not as the break that Negritude claims but as a modern and continual question that "crystalliz[es] the double bind of success and failure within the imperial and transnational consumption of black Atlantic popular culture and the iconicity of black sound."[24] These last words, about performer Josephine Baker, anchor Hill's study as one that takes seriously what the soundscape in all of its complexity can offer that visual and verbal/textual representations alone cannot—including what it might offer studies of gender and sexuality that he attends to throughout, as well as what his deep focus on gender, sexuality, and desire offers to studies of black music and/as diaspora itself. Hill and Jaji especially ask questions about the assignation of cultural production and authorship—and about how sound problematizes this. Jaji does this through Jacques Attali, who articulates music as a necessarily collaborative process with an audience; Hill provocatively asks: "Who is responsible for Josephine Baker's song and dance in *Princess Tam Tam*?" and goes on, like Jaji, to imagine an entire soundscape of "cultural practitioners and projects" actively engaged in these negotiations over authenticity and "ownership."[25]

In moves that recall Gilroy's claim about culture's capacity for making and remaking, or what Frank Guridy terms "diaspora-making as a form of adaptation," Vazquez, Redmond, Jaji, and Hill place gender at the center of innovation in diaspora methodologies.[26] Vazquez lays out the detail as a response to masculinist notions of disciplinarity and even evidence, and each of the texts discussed above enact their own version of this methodological challenge. In *Listening in Detail*, this takes the form of a refusal to perform ethnomusicological mastery in favor of a deep, diverse, referential way of understanding—and showing understanding—of the threads that make up diaspora musical production and reception. Redmond's *Anthem* focuses on how the gender politics of twentieth-century movements for civil rights and black solidarity across the diaspora extend to the reception and repurposing of music's politics not just by women but through concurrent analyses of the structural politics of masculinity and the innovative adaptations that women involved in these moments made using the anthemic genre. Jaji's *Africa in Stereo* follows suit, taking enormous care to demand that the commodification of black culture is thoughtfully unpacked to think through women's participation in music reception and commodity consumption. And Hill's *Black Soundscapes*, *White Stages* recovers and re-centers the *dou dou* and in doing so marks a significant turn in thinking through francophone culture in its complex, globalized, capital framework—the pleasures, the pitfalls, and the possibilities of a cultural circulation of black expressive production that depends on women's cultural labor.

24 Ibid., 77.

25 Jaji, *Africa in Stereo*, 13, citing Jacques Attali, *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985); Hill, *Black Soundscapes*, 153.

26 Frank Andre Guridy, *Forging Diaspora: Afro-Cubans and African Americans in a World of Empire and Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 16.

The diaspora sound mapped in these four critical books centers on feminist thought—one that revisits the cultural form of music as an expressive culture that allows for and demands complex analyses of gender, race, and the flow of capital when thinking through ideals of racial solidarity. Like Stuart Hall's innovative positioning of the Caribbean as the exemplary site of the renegotiation of cultural identity in the diaspora—one that is not predicated on static notions of history, belonging, or origin—this move changes the very field itself.[27] These critical studies are, following in the footsteps of feminist diaspora critics before them, adapting and remaking the concept of diaspora, and diaspora studies, through the cultural analysis of music. Redmond rightly asserts that "music is a method," but she and her colleagues also demonstrate that feminist thought has changed the angle by which we can look at music as an expressive "object" of study.[28] This methodological pathway asks us to creatively generate and unmake our assumptions about what constitutes the African diaspora as a cohesive unit of study, and race as a basis for political critique and critical solidarity. In this way, these four scholars ask us to hear not only the echoes of past critical moves, nor just their own present and pressing critiques; they ask us to constantly listen for the futures of the field in innovative ways, with new questions to pose in the face of diaspora's complex networks of meaning and meaning-making—even and especially when we are hearing what feels like the same old song. Feminism offers, like and alongside music's critical flexibility, a fundamental innovation in the work we do when we say we're doing diaspora studies. Vazquez and her peers all thoughtfully reposition feminist thought as a central methodological impulse in diaspora cultural studies—an *escuela rara* that reteaches us the ways that cultural expression itself is uniquely situated in interdisciplinary, transnational routes.

27 See Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," in Jonathan Rutherford, ed., *Identity: Community, Culture, and Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), 222–37.
28 Redmond, *Anthem*, 1.