

Attempting to Decolonize Oneself: Sonorities between the 'West' and the 'South'

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This item has been published in Issue 03 'Decolonizing the Self: How Do We Perceive Others When We Practice Autotheory?', edited by Shura Dogadaeva and Andrei Zavadski.

To cite this item: Garland M (2024) Attempting to Decolonize Oneself: Sonorities between the 'West' and the 'South'. *The February Journal*, 03: 23–38. DOI: 10.35074/FJ.2024.14.61.003

To link to this item: <https://doi.org/10.35074/FJ.2024.14.61.003>

Published: 30 March 2024

Attempting to Decolonize Oneself: Sonorities between the 'West' and the 'South'

Melanie Garland

The two parts of this contribution—poetic sonority and essay—are poetic and theoretical experiments in response to the challenge of decolonizing the self. In particular, I am interested in contrasting and intersecting past-present histories of the European diaspora in the global 'South,' drawing on my own family history marked by *mestizaje* and hybridity. Through voice narrative and sound archives, this sound piece challenges linear narrative by

playing with the idea of fragments. In it, traces of oceans and seas overlap, reflecting through sound and theory the histories of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, as well as the Mediterranean and North Seas, as containers and corridors of entangled past-present colonial histories. The piece opens new ground for interpreting hybrid cultures, a possible starting point for decolonizing oneself when standing between the so-called Global 'West' and 'South.'

Keywords: artistic practices, autotheory, borderland, colonial legacy, decolonial thinking, field recording, hybridization, sound art, sound ethnography



PLEASE LISTEN FIRST

(At the end of this essay, a transcription of the sound piece can be found.)

1. Sonic Archives

Sound and listening have enjoyed in recent decades a significantly growing interest in many disciplines outside the arts, music, and performance fields. Social scientists, anthropologists working with sound, science and technology scholars, and literary and cultural researchers, among others, have become interested in sound and listening as an enriching avenue of research within the academy. For instance, one of the pioneers of the anthropology of sound, Steven Feld (2004), has taken sound into ethnography. Through sound, listening, recording, and post-production, specific lived experience acquires a very distinct tangibility (Feld 2004). Sound, with its potential for acoustic-spatial imagination and situational experience, delivers a unique quality of environment awareness, which, through composer and accordionist Pauline Oliveros's (2005) method of 'deep listening,' makes it possible to experience 'sound-temporal spaces' (Ndikung 2020). These 'spaces' differ from visual

forms as captured in images. Oliveros (1999) formulates the method as

'Deep Listening involves going below the surface of what is heard, expanding to the whole field of sound while finding focus. This is the way to connect with the acoustic environment, all that inhabits it, and all that there is' (p. 5).

Sound, for its part, allows listeners to understand, feel, and sense our surroundings with an auditory consciousness as a means to not only document and shape reality, but also to amplify it. Sound and the technological power of recording allow us to register and amplify sonorous experiences that we cannot hear simply through our ears and that would have gone unnoticed by our hearing.

From a decolonial perspective, as the art theorist and curator Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung described in a 2021 seminar entitled 'Space-Time Continuum of Sonority: Deep Listening Sessions,' listening becomes a political act of sound and voice amplification, a strategy to combat the omnipresence of the image, especially nowadays, when the hyper speed of social media is dominated by the visual. Sound and deep listening turn into instruments that allow one to hear the 'marginalized' that usually go unheard, becoming a political practice of listening through situated knowledge. Here, this practice opens reflections on how we listen today and whether it is possible to decolonize our listening and thus overcome the hegemonic power structures dictating the way we listen (Garland 2023).

This seminar was the starting point for my interest in experimenting with art and ethnographic research methods that involve sound and listening. For my current PhD research, which investigates stories of places and people in a migratory setting of permanent precariousness and vulnerability due to border regimes, the question of how to represent 'the other' has been vital. I did not want to reproduce visualizations of the 'migrant body,' especially since my work is situated within the discipline of anthropology. The mainstream narrative of contemporary migration based on the vulnerability and victimization of the 'migrant body' via television and social media through video and photography has been an essential reason for my search for other methods and ways of engaging with migratory experiences. Thus, I began to experiment with sound, from collecting ambient sounds, creating sound archives, recording sound walks, and curating collaborative listening sessions as part of my fieldwork, thus going beyond the classic ethnographic methods.

For this contribution, I delved into the sonic archives I recorded and collected during my PhD fieldwork, where I examined three self-made settlements of people-in-transit in Europe and South America, specifically in Italy, France, and Chile. The places—The Dzjantal,¹ Tiburtina² and Los Arenales³—were established by people-in-transit and remained self-organized with no governmental involvement. The collected sounds guided me to investigate how these settlements—so-called non-places—changed

and evolved into social places, and how the concepts of liminality (Turner 1960) and in-betweenness might play a role in their transformation. I recorded various ambient sounds related to the history of each place. Inspired by field-recording artists⁴ and ocean-sound artists such as Nick Kuepfer⁵ and Jana Winderen,⁶ who pay close attention to maritime sound environments and small underwater animals, during my fieldwork travels between 2021 and 2022, I recorded ambient and underwater soundscapes of the Mediterranean Sea, the English Channel (an arm connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the North Sea), and the Pacific Ocean.

I was interested in archiving these tones not only for their poetic and material quality of the ocean and sea sound, but also for the symbolism that this saltwater represents to the people of these settlements. For example, the Mediterranean and the English Channel often represent ongoing and recurring tragedies and dangerous journeys in the migratory narratives of the camp inhabitants in Italy and France, mainly from the African diaspora. Likewise, past colonial trade voyages in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans are present, albeit deep down, in the narratives of Afro-Caribbean communities who want to reach northern Chile to set up informal settlements in empty areas of the Atacama Desert.

Here, I was inspired by the 2023 exhibition *Indigo Waves and Other Stories* at the Gropius Bau in Berlin, which sought to rethink the Indian Ocean, integrating it into African histories of forced and unforced displacement that produced maritime relations charged by mercantile imperialism. The artists in this exhibition showed other perspectives on the African and Asian continents, highlighting these continents' historical, cultural, and linguistic connections. Rather than framing the Indian Ocean as a divider with layers of colonial histories and legacies, they offered multiple perspectives on cultural flows resonating today. *Indigo Waves and Other Stories* emphasized the 'perpetual hybridity' found in the Indian Ocean, moving away from a re-centering of colonial legacy and power imbalance marked by the ocean (Ginwala, Ndikung and Corsaro 2023).

In turn, I have found colonial sonic archives that allude to layers of the tangled histories of The Dzjangan, Tiburtina, and Los Arenales, which, digging deeper, reveal the legacy of colonial navigating between Europe and Latin America. Looking particularly at residents' narratives of these places, I was able to understand their relationships to the colonial past. This past includes not only colonialism in Africa and Central-South Asia—specifically the British Empire in Afghanistan, Sudan, and Somalia and the Italian empire in Somalia and Eritrea, countries from which Dzjangan and Tiburtina residents hailed—but also colonial trade in the Atlantic, the Haitian revolution, and its legacy in the Caribbean, essential to understanding the current migration to Chile. Los Arenales's residents are mainly Afro-Caribbean communities originating from Colombia, Venezuela, Haiti, Bolivia, and Peru. Los Arenales is a physical place where different layers of histories are entangled that, at first glance, are invisible in today's reality, but which come to the surface through the violent racist acts that

are taking place in Chile against Afro-Caribbean communities.

For the sound part of this contribution, I was mainly interested in using found tracks from the Huntley Film Archives and Archivio Audiovisivo del Movimento Operaio e Democratico, namely, fragments of the film *Italia Vittoriosa* (1936), which depicts the Italian migration to South America and its subsequent transmission of the colonial idea of a 'glorious Italian past' to the South American territory, and of the film *Colonial Africa* (1940), featuring the paternalistic propaganda of British colonialism. In deciding to experiment with colonial archives sonically, I kept in mind the poetic idea of the ocean and sea as a guiding thread and a catalyzing track as well as a compositional and theoretical container for colonial and contemporary stories of journeys through the Mediterranean and the English Channel towards the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

I am inspired by Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt's (2013) notion of 'track.' In his essay 'Track Studies: Popular Music and Postcolonial Analysis,' Ismaiel-Wendt analyzes the idea of overlapping and looping in popular music as a counter-response to traditional linear-chronological narrative structures. My overlapping of tracks becomes a decolonial response to this linear way of storytelling, where mixing colonial sound archives (past) and sounds of the oceans and seas (present) allows for breaking with the linearity of storytelling. In Ismaiel-Wendt's (2013) words, 'The track does not imagine a fixed entity, it does not know a single order of events—and thereby lacks a hierarchy between melody, sound, and rhythm—and it is polymorphous and free from the sole task of representation' (p. 98).

I use the idea of 'catalyzing track' to refer to oceans' and seas' movements: not only to the flux of colonial trade and contemporary migration, but also to their power to connect and intertwine flows. In my sound piece, marine sound, ambient and underwater, conveys this poetic idea of navigating between the 'West' and the 'South' (see below), allowing me to reinterpret the colonial sonic archives. I am interested in bringing these two colonial soundtracks into an experimental and poetic context that differs from other sonic modalities dominated by a single narrative and colonial legacy, thus highlighting the idea that 'sound cannot be sounding without the use of power' (Ong 1999: 65). I consciously attune listeners to the sounds that occurred in a particular space-time, besides being careful not to reproduce a sense of violence and dominance when editing these sonic materials.

2. Hybridity

The amplified sounds of oceans and seas recorded in my past PhD fieldwork have been my primary source for reflecting on 'decolonizing the self.' I perceive the in-between space of the oceans and seas as a navigator between cultural identities and borderlands. I have reflected on in-betweenness not only as a state of transit that migrants experience when

moving from one place to another—something I have been researching in my current PhD project—but also in the territorial sense of being between geographical borders. The spaces between the Global 'West' and 'South' in particular, which I entangle with the perspective of 'the West and the Rest' (Hall 1992/2018), has played an important part in the postcolonial reflections of the last decade. In his essay by that name, Stuart Hall (2018), a Marxist sociologist and cultural theorist, analyzes how the notion of 'modernity' reached by 'advanced, developed and industrial' societies has come to represent the conception of Western societies. The 'West' is no longer just a geographical term but becomes a discursive and power binary, between so-called developed societies (Western societies) and undeveloped societies (non-Western societies).

When I started working on this contribution, it did not explicitly address the idea of what is 'West' and what is 'South.' Instead, I was interested in the liminal state between them, somehow blurring the lines between one and the other. Isabel Bredenbröcker, an editor at *The February Journal*, motivated me to look further into these assumed polarities, questioning whether such a clear division really exists today. The idea of standing in between the 'West' and 'South' resonated with my own life experience of being born in Chile and having European ancestors: South America has a distinct history of forced *mestizisation*⁷ that connects it to multiple cultural histories up to this day.

I was especially interested in the history of my own family, which is Chilean with a European background—Italian immigrants from the 1940s on my mother's side, and on my father's, British and Irish predecessors who moved to the Chilean desert to produce and extract the mineral saltpeter. My great-great-grandfather was part of the so-called glorious era of saltpeter, which today is widely criticized as a tragic history of the extractive exploitation of Chilean natural resources and the appropriation of Altiplano indigenous communities' land. Unlike my father's obsession with the family's genealogy, which he and my grandfather traced all the way back until 1680, my interest went beyond collecting our family archive, which I will not detail in this essay.

I want to note my interest in my father and grandfather's fascination with knowing our origins—not only with looking at our family history, but also with the idea of 'coming from Europe,' which still resonates with many South American families today. The European part of my family (and that of many Chilean families) that migrated to South American territory has significantly influenced my artistic and later anthropological journey and served as a starting point for my interests in 'colonial legacies.' Since I was a child, I heard from my relatives that we should be proud to be of European descent, especially because we should be grateful for inheriting a European passport, something that I took very seriously when migrating to Europe. The German and Italian states saw me as a citizen of the European Union for having an Italian passport, and not a 'Sudaca,' as many still derogatorily call people coming from South America.

By this, I do not mean to devalue my family history, much less to simplify or reduce the great suffering and agony that my great-grandfather experienced when he emigrated from the Italian port of Genova to the South American port of Valparaiso during the Second World War to escape from poverty and persecution by the Italian government. Rather, I am critical of the idea of 'coming from Europe' as something that elevates a heritage alien to our reality as South Americans, as it is entangled with the colonial legacy of seeing value as coming from the European continent. Knowing that 'we came from Europe' provoked me to start reflecting on this supposed polarity, the difference between 'Europe' and 'Latin America,' or, as we were erroneously taught in elementary school, the duality between the 'first' and the 'third' worlds.

My personal feeling of being in-between has been a significant reference point in my interest in hybrid cultures and hybridity. The concept of hybridity, which resonates strongly with my own family history and that of many South Americans, is one of the broad terms employed and disputed in postcolonial theory. The term was coined by Homi Bhabha (1994), a scholar of contemporary postcolonial studies, who argues that all cultural statements and structures are based and articulated in a 'third space of enunciation' (p. 37). 'Hybridity' commonly refers to the emergence of new transcultural forms in zones that had contact with colonization and thus formed 'third spaces' that are hybrids of two or more cultures. Bhabha recognizes the eventual contradictions of the 'third space' for cultural identity, but, according to him, it can contribute to transcending the exoticism of 'multiculturalism' and 'cultural diversity' so criticized within the postcolonial discourse for neglecting the colonial power and legacy that a 'multicultural' society represents. Instead, the 'inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity' (Bhabha 1994: 38) can open a way for conceptualizing an international culture that is not based on exoticizing other cultures (Mambrol 2016).

In her book *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), an American scholar of Chicana feminism, cultural theory, and queer theory, adds another perspective to this hybridity critique. Drawing from her own life of being born and raised on the Texas-Mexico border, including personal experiences of cultural marginalization, Anzaldúa's (1987) theories intertwine social marginalization with the processes of hybridity, in-betweenness, and mixed-race status (Keating 2006), entangling academic and poetic writing. Anzaldúa (1987) speaks of the notion of 'border thinking,' of being between two realities, which can also produce spaces of possibility for new understandings. She claims:

'Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others who have or live in more than one culture, we receive multiple, often opposing, messages. The union of two self-consistent but usually incomparable frames of reference causes a clash, a cultural collision' (Anzaldúa 1987: 85).

The concept of borderland provides a new way of understanding the polarization between borders. Borders do not just create two sides; the borderland is an in-between with its own spatiality and sensoriality, a place of collective negotiation and encounter for marginal subjectivities that can articulate hybridity as a political and intellectual position.

The concepts of hybridity and the borderland as Bhabha and Anzaldúa put forward play an important role in understanding my own positionality between the supposed polarities of 'Western' heritage and my present 'South.' Looking at my own identity allows me to grasp hybridity as much more complex than a simple location 'in between' two poles, challenging me to find some initial hints to the answer of how one can decolonize oneself. Being between cultures, territories, and identities opens the potential for an alternative interpretation of this dominant duality delivered since the colonial past. Placing my own family genealogy in the borderland represents a way to initiate a process of self-decolonization in the face of a colonial legacy.

The sound piece I produced for this contribution is also premised on the ideas of hybridity and borderland; it consists of different overlapping tracks that are fragments of sound archives encountered from a colonial past, and sound archives of oceans and seas recorded in the present. Here I played with Johannes Ismaiel-Wendt's idea of the track as a way of decolonial listening by changing the context from which these colonial archives originate and their propagandistic idea of 'coming from Europe.' I opted to overlay the sound fragments of colonial propaganda with sounds of the oceans and seas, and with my own narrative voice. The overlapping of different tracks thus relates a multiplicity of stories between languages and rhythm, its sonic superimpositions pushing back against the linear, colonial perspective of a single history or 'track' (Garland 2022).

In addition, guided by Oliveros's (2005) method of deep listening, I approached the colonial archival tracks with the intention of attuning myself to sensory experiences, especially as I listened to the Spanish-language track that prominently communicates the idea of 'coming from Europe' and 'the glorious Italy' as a dominant culture in South America. I noticed the sonic textures of the recordings from the Huntley Film and Movimento Operaio e Democratico archives: they are digital recordings of speakers playing analog recordings of the material, producing a multi-recording (reproductions of reproductions). Instead of synthesizing the sounds, the different sound layers added more textures, creating what I would describe as 'noise' in terms of technical quality. 'Noise' I do not interpret in this context as a polluted and disturbing sound; instead, I refer here to a sound of low intensity, uniform and continuous.

In my piece, I brought these recordings together with the ambient and underwater sounds of the oceans and seas, which I recorded with one to four omnidirectional microphones and recorders with underwater hydrophone microphones. These recordings have a delicate quality because they direct recordings without sound textures of other artifacts in-

between. In the final piece, these two sonic textures of 'noise' and 'delicacy' (re)present the tension of being in the in-between, between the blurred sonic qualities of the past and the hypersensitization of the present. Thus, experimenting with sensibilities outside the colonial matrix, I found an alternative basis in praxis and materiality while navigating between colonial legacies of the 'West' and present narratives of the 'South.'

3. Oceans

I cannot help remembering my father when looking at the letters and postcards he used to send from Chile to Germany, where he described how this large puddle of water called the Atlantic separated us. Yet, the ocean space connected our ancestors to the global 'South.' When I started collecting materials about my family history, I realized that the common thread weaving these stories together was the narrative of saltwater spaces (oceans and seas), specifically the European seas such as the Mediterranean and the North Sea that were my ancestors' starting points towards the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Oceans have been a supposed separating element between continents, islands, and countries, a divisive colonial idea, but if we focus on the sea as a corridor where water moves through maritime currents, this conception of separation shifts, turning water into a connector of histories, stories, routes, and relationships (Ndikung and Römhild 2023). Oceans and seas are great spaces to reflect on decolonization processes, as navigating waters that lie between the idea of the 'West' and 'South' allows for holistic contemplation of both/multiple perspectives. From a 'third space' (between the 'West' and the 'South'), it is possible to appreciate the multiple narratives generated as we free ourselves from a pre-written colonial binary.

Postcolonial and decolonial studies have been interested in the oceans and seas as containers of sociopolitical and historical entanglement. From colonial trade routes to today's wars, the oceans have seen different layers of historical events that now form the basis for postcolonial and decolonial knowledge (Erbe 2018). New ocean studies have integrated this perspective and produced a heterogeneity of discourses on how the oceans divide but also unite continents, cultures, and thoughts.

Here, I do not want to leave out the tragic narratives of oceans and seas marked by dangerous past and present journeys where many fail to reach their final destination, such as the ones that take place in the Mediterranean and the English Channel today. Also, the Atlantic Ocean was key to the colonial slave trade, a forced migration that many did not survive. The repercussions of these tragic journeys are still present today. They are at the core of the oceans' and seas' narratives, marked by 'memories of loss,' as Arjun Appadurai (2003) refers to today's collective memory of migration.

Postcolonial scholars have also focused on oceans' circulation

relationships. The sociologist and cultural studies scholar Paul Gilroy (1993), in his renowned book *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, focused on the double consciousness of the African diaspora and its history of migration, using the image of the slave ship to represent bodies that are between lands, identities, cultures, pasts and futures—bodies that are impossible to define in terms of territorial borders and border regimes. *The Black Atlantic* transcends this diaspora's histories, defining the colonial legacy as 'the dark and well-hidden side of Western modernity' (Mignolo 2011: 2, cit. in Erbe 2019).

In a similar vein, environmental anthropologist Gísli Pálsson (1991), known for his work about fishing communities and their relationship with the ocean, argues that the supposedly isolated 'new' and 'old' worlds were in fact connected by colonial voyages, which he defines as a 'global but polarized network of power-relations' (p. xvii). Moreover, the writer and anthropologist Epeli Hau'ofa (1998), who explored how the indigenous peoples of the South Pacific islands experience the challenges of modernization, has reconceptualized the idea of the Pacific islands and their culture, people, and surroundings as a network of waters, which, rather than separating the lands, connect them into a 'sea of islands.' Hau'ofa revives the term 'Oceania' to encapsulate how the ocean is a pathway rather than a barrier for the Pacific islands' rich natural, historical, and cultural resources. The poet and philosopher Édouard Glissant (1997) has similar reflections: his 'archipelagic thinking' alters our perspective by saying that the world is a largely connected archipelago (cit. in Erbe 2019).

Inspired by saltwater and the interconnected Mediterranean and North Seas and the Pacific Ocean as vessels for my own genealogy and many other time-space narratives, I experimented with varying sonic textures in the sound part of this contribution. I felt it was necessary to go beyond academic writing to find a comfortable poetic and artistic form for facing the question of how to decolonize oneself. By exposing myself to the oceans' and seas' sounds, vocal narration, and sonic archives, I was able to find a respectful and authentic way to address *mestizaje* and the colonial legacy in my own family genealogy. Thus, using the connections between oceans, lands, histories, and journeys; the abstraction and sonic materiality of oceans and seas as entangled elements of past-present-future narratives; and the notion of hybridization, I sought an answer to the question of self-decolonization.

1. The Dzjanganl was a self-made settlement between the late 1990s and 2016, located in Calais, on the French-English border at the English Channel. The Dzjanganl was pejoratively labeled by the mass media 'The Jungle,' phonetically interpreted from the word *Dzjanganl* meaning forest, bush, and wood in the Pashto language and in Arabic dialects. Before the final demolition in 2016, there were about 8,000 people living there, mainly from the North and Horn of Africa and the Middle East (Garland, fieldnotes, 2022).

2. Tiburtina was a self-made settlement between the late 1990s and 2003, located in Rome. The name 'Tiburtina' was self-proclaimed by this settlement's community and referred to the nearby Tiburtina train station. It was also pejoratively labeled the 'Hotel Africa' by the Italian press for being a settlement inside a building inhabited by more than 800 people mostly from Eritrea and Ethiopia (Garland, fieldnotes, 2022).

3. Los Arenales has been a self-made settlement since 2015, located on the edge of the Atacama Desert in the upper part of Antofagasta, Chile. The name 'Los Arenales' was given to the settlement by its community to refer to the sandy territory that houses this macro-settlement, consisting of six camps with 3,000 people, mainly from Caribbean countries (Garland, fieldnotes, 2022).

4. By 'field recording artists,' I mean artists who engage in the artistic practice of field recording, as described by the curator Manel Benchabane: '[F]ield recording consists in recording sound landscapes in specific natural or built environments, in order to give sustained attention to the sounds that make up these landscapes' (2017). Field recording practice is the 'sound perception' recorded and produced outside of a recording studio, focusing on recording human and non-human sounds as well as soil vibrations and underwater field recordings, among others. See Shane and Benchabane 2017.

5. See 'Nick Kuepfer' on Constellation's website: [cstrecords.com/en-int/pages/nick-kuepfer_\(07/01/2024\)](http://cstrecords.com/en-int/pages/nick-kuepfer_(07/01/2024)).

6. See Jana Winderen's website: [www.janawinderen.com\(04/01/2024\)](http://www.janawinderen.com(04/01/2024)).

7. The word *mestizaje* is the Spanish translation of 'miscegenation,' which refers to a biological and cultural mixing between different ethnicities. In a postcolonial era, 'miscegenation' is considered derogatory due to its racist connotation implying that one of the ethnic groups is 'superior and purer' than the other. *Mestizaje* has been used mainly to define Latin American identity, referring to the mixtures between Europeans and indigenous people. Since the 1930s, the term has been widespread in many Latin American countries in an effort to eradicate racial conflict and foster a national identity (Gonzalez-Barrera 2015). From a decolonial lens, *mestizaje* continues to hide racial structures, especially those groups that have a major indigenous ancestry. Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) draws on the definition of the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, who calls *mestizaje* a 'cosmic race' in opposition to the theories of 'pure Aryan,' to formulate her ideas about a 'new *mestiza* consciousness,' which is a person conscious of its hybridity and borderland (p. 99).

Sound piece transcription

Between the 'West' and the 'South'

TRACK 1

*Decolonize as a verb,
Decolonize as an action,
Decolonize as a narrative,
Decolonize as a memory,
Decolonize as a way of thinking.
How can one decolonize oneself?*

In-between geographical borders,
South American genealogy,
A history marked by forced *mestizaje*.

My own family history, Chilean with European roots.
My mother with an Italian past,
My father with a British heritage in the Chilean desert.

TRACK 2

...This is Britain's colonial empire, two and a half million square miles from the Antarctic to the tropics, with dependencies in every continent and every ocean.

The people of Britain are directly responsible for the well-being of all the people of the colony. There are 60 million of them: men, women and children of every race, color, and creed, with 100 different languages, hundreds of different customs and ways of living.

To guide and develop this last empire is no easy matter. Hong Kong in the Far East, with its constantly shifting population of Chinese, presents very different problems from Fiji and the islands of the Pacific.

TRACK 1

My great-great-grandfather was part of the so-called 'glorious' saltpeter era: Today, a tragic story of expropriation of indigenous Altiplanic lands.

How can one decolonize the self when it is between the global 'South' and the 'West'?

Multiple histories, mixing past and present, languages, rhythms, and sonorities,
The personal feeling of being 'in-between,'
As one navigates through the European colonial legacy between the 'West'

and the 'South.'

Hybrid cultures,
Hybridization,
Borderland.

*Decolonize as a verb,
As an action,
As a history,
As a memory,
Decolonize as a way of thinking.*

Contrasts between the 'West' and the 'South.'
My own genealogy of being in-between,
Like being on the borderline.
Narrative entanglements between the 'South' and the 'West'
crossing oceans and seas.

TRACK 3 (Original audio in Spanish)

...which prevailed in Europe and later in America and greatly influenced the formation of a new race in the new world. From ancient times, our land has been linked to the great Italian nation...

The Italian people were forged in sacrifice. Many were the episodes in its men's and women's lives that tested their courage and strength. The resilience of the Italian people has always been enormous. The pride of those who feel strong, their awareness of their capacity...

TRACK 1

Aquatic narratives of colonial and decolonial histories.
Mediterranean, North Sea, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans.

Oceans shelter histories,
Oceans are not an 'empty space,'
Oceans are full and rich with stories, histories, relationships,
Connections and entanglements,
Similar stories and roots cross these waters.

*Decolonize as a verb,
As an action,
As a story,
As a memory,
Decolonial as a way of thinking.*

How can one decolonize oneself when one is between the 'West' and the

'South'?

Is ocean narrative an alternative answer to decolonizing oneself?

Between the 'West' and the 'South.'

Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank the editors of *The February Journal*, especially Dr. Isabel Bredenbröker, who motivated me to delve deeper into the so-called binary between the 'West' and the 'South' by questioning whether such a clear division exists today. Thanks to the editors of this special issue, Dr. Shura Dogadaeva and Dr. Andrei Zavadski, who welcomed contributions that departed from the purely textual academic paper and gave me a space for sonorous and poetic experimentation. Thanks to the proofreader of this essay, Elias Seidel, for harmonizing my English writing. Thanks also to my dear friend Bastian Manteuffel for helping me with the audio editing and bringing his Korg synthesizer to this sound contribution. Finally, I would like to thank my PhD supervisors, Dr. Regina Römhild and Dr. Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, who have guided and supported me in studying the acoustic, relational, and conceptual aspects of the oceans and seas through a postcolonial lens.

Funding

Parts of these contributions were made in the context of my dissertation, which was funded by the Elsa-Neumann Scholarship (2020–2023), and by DAAD Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (2021–2022), which funded my PhD field work trips.

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Minor arrangements with sound samples from *Videvo* under royalty-free license. Accessed online at www.videvo.net (04.02.2024).

Author's bio

Melanie Garland is a Berlin-based artist, heritage restorer, and currently a PhD candidate at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin's Institute of European Ethnology. Her research topics are migration, art of resistance, postcolonial studies, and decolonial practices through artistic and ethnographic methods. Since 2010, she has been interested in the relationship between art, heritage, migration, and anthropology, working with artistic practices such as installation, sonority, participatory art, art actions, and performative processes. Currently, all her artistic work is focused on her PhD project, which engages multisensorial and collaborative practices to expand beyond the violence of ethnographic display traditions.

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