MAKING MUSIC = MAKING KIN:

MUSIC AS A METAPHOR

FOR CULTURE

by

Adrienne Pollard

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ABSTRACT

Differences between Indigenous and settler colonial cultures, viewed through the lens of music, suggest the necessity of examining, reevaluating, and transforming settler culture. Adopting music as a metaphor for culture, rhythm, embodied in the booming of the drum, signifies the relationality—kinship—inherent in vitalistic Indigenous cultures. Alternatively, harmony characterizes settler culture—fractured by disharmonic tones of anthropocentric European-American intellectual norms promoting exceptionalism, individualism, and exploitative capitalism. Disharmony exhibited in settler song lyrics is counter to processes involved in making and listening to music which, like other aesthetic practices, is fundamentally relational. Dissonance in a culture, as in music, results in unsettlement: an unbalanced state not conducive to the health and well-being of individuals, nor to a people or to the planet. Responses to alleviate cognitive dissonance in an individual and in a culture include avoidance, rationalization, or adjusting beliefs and behaviors. Making kin—being in relationship with all of creation—is the central tenet of Indigenous culture and offers an alternative to the toxicity of a dissonant world. American culture's attachment to its music suggests relationality exists in the culture, even if just latently, and offers safe territory on which to challenge entrenched conventions. American settler colonial society is at a crossroads: we can persist in believing settler colonial mythology and ignore the unsettled landscape; we can continue to justify beliefs with a false narrative based on a flawed intellectual legacy; or we can begin the challenging process of transforming our perception and understanding of the world, recognizing the interrelated nature of the universe and embracing the implications of what is essentially a paradigm shift.

PRELUDE

On October 30, 1611, as night fell on the Kennebec River in what is now Maine, a gentle breeze drifted over the water. A small group of French explorers and two Jesuit missionaries ventured upstream and dropped anchor to await the tide when twenty-four Armouchiquois in six canoes approached and set up camp on the opposite river bank. Songs—Indigenous rhythmic melodies—carried across the open water. Upon hearing the Armouchiquois, the missionaries assumed the "*sauvages'"* chants as devil worship, prompting them to counter with sacred Christian hymns. Father Pierre Biard chronicled the encounter:

> Now as we supposed that probably their songs and dances were invocations to the devil, to oppose the power of this cursed tyrant, I had our people sing some sacred hymns, as the *Salve,* the *Ave Maris Stella*, and others. But when they once got into the way of singing, the spiritual songs being exhausted, they took up others with which they were familiar. When they came to the end of these, as the French are natural mimics, they began to mimic the singing and dancing of the Armouchiquois who were upon the bank, succeeding in it so well that the Armouchiquois stopped to listen to them; and then our people stopped and the others immediately began again. It was really very comical, for you would have said that they were two choirs which had a thorough understanding with each other....[1]

This musical exchange continued throughout the night. From the European perspective, the interaction was viewed as a sonic war between good and evil, with music operating as a means to establish a Christian foothold in the "new world." Little did the Jesuits know that the Indians were using song to prepare themselves for battle as a unified collective force and that they were calling on their ancestors for assistance.[2] The Armouchiquois share much in common with other Algonquian-speaking communities allowing reinterpretation of Father Biard's Eurocentric misconception of the "continual haranguing, singing and dancing" of the Indians, whether perceived as invoking demons or misconstrued as finding common ground through the universal language of music. Similarly, the Armouchiquois had no understanding of the meanings or intentions of the missionaries in this clash of cultures.

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[1] P. Baird, "Lettre Janvier 31, 1612," in *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791; the original French, Latin, and Italian texts, with English translations and notes, Vol. II,* ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, trans. John Cutler Covert (The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896), 35-37, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011021840&seq=7. Armouchiquois is a generic French term for Algonquian-speaking peoples known by the British as the Massachusetts, which is also a generic term for Native peoples occupying what is now the New England coast from Maine to Massachusetts and includes the Pequots, Narragansetts, and others.

[2] Michaela Ann Cameron, "Chapter 3: Singing with Strangers in Early Seventeenth-Century New France," in *Empire of the Senses,* eds. Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite (Brill Academic Publishing, 2017), 88-112.

Indigenous peoples and European-American settlers were engaged in a struggle for control of a physical landscape as well as control of a cultural domain in North America. While many historians focus on territorial acquisition and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples by colonizers, the battle for cultural dominion is intertwined with colonial conquest. Sounds, including spoken words and music, were part of an arsenal of weaponry used to wage this cultural confrontation. Christian beliefs resonate in sacred and secular music, ritual, and performance, and provide intellectual justification for the violence of colonization. Alternatively, Indigenous aesthetic practices, grounded in a sacred interconnected world view, function as weapons of resistance to settler colonialism.

The combatants held, and still hold, profoundly different ontological approaches, or ways of perceiving the world. While early newcomers arrived in the Americas from locales far and wide with the Spanish and Portuguese leading the way, a vast number migrated from Northern Europe. Often dispossessed, they traveled to escape religious intolerance and to make their fortunes. Though they hailed from different countries, spoke different languages, and had different customs, they had much in common. Settlers carried with them Christian beliefs and values rooted in Biblical lore and expressed in sacred music. Notions of exceptionalism and entitlement, as well as anthropomorphic separation of man from the natural world, grounded in dualistic thinking, characterize settler ideology. Indoctrinated by centuries of religious dogma, they also often harbored a fundamental mistrust, if not fear, of non-Christian others.

While comprised of many different cultures and communities, each having their own origin stories, ceremonies, and songs, Indigenous peoples share certain beliefs. Most Native peoples understand the world as a complex and interrelated universe in which human beings are a part of a larger whole. Animate and inanimate objects are endowed by a Creator with sacred essential natures. Therefore, they are respected, cared for, and communicated with in song and prayer by the people. An egalitarian relationality—kinship—informs the Indigenous universe.

Throughout this thesis, the abstracted terms "Indigenous," "Native," and occasionally "Indian," are used interchangeably when referring to commonalities shared by Native Americans; preferably, when possible, specific Indigenous groups are cited. The term "culture" refers to the fundamental cosmological beliefs of a people, not its manifestation in customs and artifacts. "Clash of cultures" is also too simple a concept to capture the complexity of the interface between Indigenous peoples and European-American settlers. In addition to the presence of a multiplicity of

discrete Indigenous cultural traditions, differences between newcomers and Natives were more subtle with occasional overlapping of beliefs, especially during the period of early contact.

In the late nineteenth century, anthropologists conceptualized the term "culture" to analyze and differentiate peoples by systems of ideas and behaviors. Following Western hierarchal conventions and subject to Eurocentric dualism, "subjects" were categorized with little attention paid to the intricacies and nuances of a culture. Such generalization is evident in settler accounts of engaging with Natives by frequent use of the term "savages," often obscuring identification of specific Indigenous communities. Written by explorers and settlers whose Eurocentric perceptions are evident, such biased characterizations pervade virtually all surviving historic material.[3] Whether due to Indigenous oral tradition or the result of settler colonial control of the narrative, only recently have documents been revisited by scholars, reinterpreting colonial accounts and giving voice to Native experience.

Mutual miscommunication and miscomprehension characterize Indigenous-European interactions from the earliest contact as illustrated by the nightlong sonic skirmish on the Kennebec between a party of French explorers and the Armouchiquois. Missionary Father Biard recounts hearing "all night" the "continual haranguing, singing and dancing" of the Indians on the far shore, adding disparagingly, "for such is the kind of life all these people lead when they are together."[4] The good father had no clue that the Indians were using rhythmic chanting and rigorous dance movements to achieve a transcendent state of being.

After assessing the foreigners, the Armouchiquois encamped on the riverbank and began to sing. In sync with rhythmic chanting, the Indians began to dance. As the rhythm resonated through their bodies, dancers' stomped feet, clapped hands, and tapped sticks (clapsticks) using percussion to amplify the sound transported over the water. The escalation of rhythmic chanting and energetic dancing enabled the dancers to reach a trance-like state, similar to that attained by chanting religious acolytes or the hypnotic trance attained by Indigenous medicine healers. Rather than healing, however, the ecstatic state achieved by the Armouchiquois had a much different purpose. While individually each dancer reached a transcendent state, collective ritualistic singing and dancing entrained all twenty-four dancers to

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[3] Anna Brickhouse, *The Unsettlement of America: Translation, Interpretation, and the Story of Don Luis de Velasco, 1560-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2015), 44-45. A few written Indigenous translations and narratives exist from the colonial era; per Anna Brickhouse, material such as that from Squanto, require reinterpretation.

[4] Baird, *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents Vol. II,* 35-37.

sound and move as a single unified being. As such, the Armouchiquois entrained with the universe, with the potent forces of creation, and with their powerful other-than-human ancestors.

Though Father Biard had suspicions regarding the Natives, he had no understanding of their ceremony. For one, he could not comprehend that the same transcendent state the Armouchiquois sought through song and dance—an ecstatic and entrained state of oneness with each other and with other-than-human spirits and their creator—was not that much different than the spiritual unity achieved by Jesuit missionaries singing Gregorian chants. He also did not realize that the Armouchiquois were engaged in what was, apparently, a "widespread pre-war ritual."[5]

The Armouchiquois were using the acoustic power of music to prepare psychologically and physically for battle. Entraining with each other and with their other-than-human elders made for a stronger, unified fighting force. The vociferousness of their collective sound was morale boosting and simultaneously intimidating to their enemies. Volume matters as it is advantageous to sonically overpower an enemy's similar attempt to use spirit-calling acoustics for themselves. Often, in Indigenous pre-war rituals, warrior vocalizations might include "harangues" as characterized by Father Biard. The Armouchiquois likely hurled accusations, insults, yells, whoops, boasts, and disparaging laughter across the Kennebec.

Additionally, in many Indigenous cultures, song is considered sacred because of its power to communicate to the non-human world. Songs are personal and are "owned" by a particular individual or jointly by a community. In war, Algonquian and Iroquoian people would steal and sing an enemy's songs in an effort to aggravate them by injecting interference in the connection with non-human beings.[6] Thus, when the French resorted to imitating the Armouchiquois, it was interpreted by the Indians as aggressive.

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[5] Michaela Ann Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice: A Dual History of Western and Algonquian-Iroquoian Soundways from Creation to Re-creation" (PhD diss., University of Sydney, 2018), 207-208. https://theoldparramattan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/michaela-ann-cameron-stealing-the-turtles-voice-2018.pdf. Samuel de Champlain gives an account of a parallel encounter between Algonquin and Huron peoples in which, after the warring parties parlayed and agreed to wait for daylight, they sang. "While we waited...the whole night was passed in dances and songs, as much on one side as on the other, with endless insults, and other talk..." Samuel de Champlain, *Voyages and Explorations* Vol. 1, 210. Earlier, in 1611 in Jamestown, Captain John Smith and William Strachey describe the Powhatan singing a "kynd of angry song against us, in their homely rhymes...[a] scornful song." The English officer on duty "rashly charged the [Powhatan] with his entire force of about twenty men," reacting to "the Indians' taunt[ing]" resulting in all the Englishmen perishing. William Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia*, 79-80. https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Historie_of_Travaile_Into_Virginia_B/fYYMAAAAIAAJ?hl=en; William M. Clements, "Translating Context and Situation: William Strachey and Powhatan's 'Scorneful Song,'" in *Born in the Blood: On Native American Translation,* ed. Brian Swann (University of Nebraska Press, 211), 402.

[6] Cameron, *Stealing the Turtle's Voice,* 209.

It was Father Biard's miraculous good fortune that the sonic pre-war skirmish did not escalate to a full-out attack. For as much as Biard misread the Armouchiquois' actions as devil worship and could only hear Indigenous sounds through his European frame of reference, so too, the Armouchiquois had no understanding of French sacred songs and could only interpret the foreigners' actions through their own Indigenous lens. The Armouchiquois had misconstrued the French explorers to be British and set a trap, abandoning them in a lake near a community of Abenaki who were warring with the British. Instead of a massacre, the French party was rescued and lived to tell the tale.

Demonstrated by the cunning trickery of the Armouchiquois, in addition to cultural misunderstanding, European-Indigenous encounters involved manipulation, deceptive tactics and, not infrequently, outright lying. Two centuries later, Lewis and Clark were disingenuous when dialoguing with Native peoples, not articulating the aspirational intentions of the expedition.

Language translation impacted subsequent actions of the parties involved as well as manipulating the historical narrative, dependent upon the veiled agenda of the translator—European or Native. In *The Unsettlement of America,* Anna Brickhouse investigates both, piecing together a revised understanding of a sixteenth-century Indigenous legend and later nineteenth-century English translation that conveniently suppressed evidence of a Spanish colony prior to the existence of Jamestown, thwarting challenges to U.S. possession of the continent. Brickhouse alerts readers to "a more nuanced and capacious understanding of the practices and politics of translation...arguing for the crucial role of...*motivated mistranslation* in the shaping of hemispheric encounter."[7]

Throughout, the narrative reiterates that the conflict between peoples was for control of the cultural as well as the physical space. For Indigenous peoples, cultural control secured a way of life. For settlers, establishing Christian European customs justified territorial acquisition by bringing civilization to the wilderness. Rationalized as a moral imperative, greed disguised as philanthropic benevolence enabled settler colonial ends to justify amoral means. The struggle was, at its core, a metaphysical battle for how people would view the world and how they would exist within the world. Viewed through the lens of music, differences between Indigenous and Western cultures suggest the necessity of examining, reevalutaing, and transforming settler colonial culture.

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[7] Brickhouse, *Unsettlement of America,* 5, 286-287.

Unlike the primacy of ocularcentrism today, multisensory ways of perceiving were vital in the early modern era for both Indigenous people and settlers. Sound was a subtle but powerful means of establishing command of the environment. "Settler acoustemology not only violently imposed and replaced the sounds of nature and of Indigenous peoples, but it infiltrated the environment and its people by 'constructing a new sensory repertoire.'"[8]

Constructing the sensory landscape of colonization required researching Indigenous autobiographies such as *Black Elk Speaks* and *Plenty-coups, Chief of the Crows,* among others, most of which were communicated orally to non-native authors and bearing their stamp. Secondary sources written by sensory historians, Mark M. Smith and, in particular, Richard Cullen Rath, provided essential contextual information.

Researching Indigenous cultures also involves attending to Indigenous methodologies. Care has been taken to respectfully convey Indigenous creation stories and to be sensitive regarding a community's intimate details of ceremony. Only previously published material has been reproduced and, though stories within cultures may vary widely, oral tradition is considered as valid historical knowledge. In addition to written transcriptions, recorded interviews of oral traditions and stories regarding non-native invasion and settlement were consulted such as those archived as the *Western American Indian Histories Project* at the Western Heritage Center in Billings, Montana and *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears* online at the American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Complimenting Indigenous oral tradition, non-native sources include ethnographer, explorer, missionary, and settler accounts of colonization, all considered with an eye for ethnocentrism. Essays and books regarding music accompanying European-American settlement present a handful of letters and journal entries which principally confirm the enjoyment of music and dance as social entertainment and as a diversion, but contribute little understanding of settler ideology so not included.

There is not a great deal of literature specifically concerning music and settler colonialism. Of special note, John Troutman's *Indian Blues* is a remarkable account of the politics of assimilation era Indigenous music. A great debt is owed to historian Michaela Ann Cameron whose article, "Singing With Strangers," opened avenues of exploration

[8] Hacke, Daniela Haacke and Paul Musselwhite, eds., "Introduction: Making Sense of Colonial Encounters and New Worlds," in *Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America* (Brill, 2017), 27.

including the seventy-three volumes of the *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, a wealth of information yet to be mined and reinterpreted. Cameron's work is narrowly focused on New France in the early seventeenth century, but her remarkable synthesis prompted this thesis's conceptualization of music as a metaphor for culture.

It is important to qualify that culture is dynamic. The use of terms like "traditional" are not meant to imply antiquated, unchanging, or of a long-dead civilization. Indigenous oral tradition is not static; stories change with the storyteller and with the telling, keeping the culture alive, vibrant, and relevant. Novelist and poet Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) connects story with survival writing: "Old stories and new stories are essential: They tell us who we are, and they enable us to survive."[9]

Philosopher Donna J. Harraway advocates for storytelling as a crucial practice for transforming a culture. As in Indigenous cultures, stories convey a fundamental way of thinking beyond framing a peoples' history or imparting ancient knowledge. Harraway emphasizes that "it matters what thoughts think thoughts [and] what stories tell stories" implying the importance of heuristics in shaping a peoples' thoughts and she makes way for stories from all critters—human and non-human.[10] At the heart of Harraway's vision, echoing Indigenous metaphysics, is a world in which human and other-than-human beings are intricately linked in a web of interdependent relationships.

This thesis is not an in-depth history of European-Indigenous relations, nor a comprehensive study of any single theme (i.e., Indigenous ceremonial song and dance, settler intellectual foundations, etc.), as all of these could be the focus of a single monograph. Rather, it is an exposé connecting aesthetic practices, primarily music, to the clash between cultures. Music takes on the role of metaphor for culture: what is revealed in music; what is created and reinforced by music; what can be gleaned from music; and how it can facilitate a way forward. Recognizing that American culture is obsessed with its music offers safe territory on which to challenge entrenched American conventions.

The arts—music, dance, visual media—often operate non-linguistically offering a way of knowing that is felt or intuited; understanding is generated through metaphor and images. This project has evolved in unexpected ways. Beginning as a visual study of the role music played in settler survival to recognizing the critical importance of music in

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[9] Leslie Marmon Silko, *Storyteller* (Penguin Books, 2012).
[10] Donna J. Harraway, *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Duke University Press, 2016), 39.

facilitating Indigenous resistance and survival, music became a metaphor for culture: rhythm signifying the vitalism inherent in Indigenous cultures and disharmony signifying anthropocentric European intellectual norms.

The crux of the argument is that while relationality—kinship—is fundamental to Indigenous music and therefore to Native cultures, it exists latently in settler culture which is divided against itself. Split between radical individualism reflected in settler lyrics and the interrelatedness of the practice of music, the division is symptomatic of Western cognitive dissonance and the prioritization of language over multisensory affective ways of perceiving and knowing.

Taking the lead from Indigenous methodology, this thesis incorporates many stories and employs a dual narrative. Chapters dance back and forth between Indigenous and settler colonist voices, echoing the ongoing conflict between cultures. Chapter One provides contextual information regarding the environment of the new world as perceived by Europeans, foregrounding sound and providing an overview of cultural beliefs, noting differences and unexpected similarities.

Chapter Two focuses on Indigenous drumming establishing rhythm as the "heartbeat" of Native cultures and as a metaphor for Indigenous culture. Settler colonial opposition through music is introduced as well. In Chapter Three, colonist's religious militarization of music is explored, with harmony identified as representative of European culture, both literally and figuratively. Vitalist metaphysics informing Indigenous perception is the focus of Chapter Four which emphasizes kinship with human and non-human beings and the attendant requisite acts of respect, gratitude, and caretaking communicated through song. Increasingly violent examples of settler colonial aggression reflecting strains of disharmony are also discussed.

In Chapter Five, the intellectual legacy of European settlers including property, capitalism, and individualism, is summarized exposing significant discord in cultural attitudes and social systems and reflected in settler music. The collective social structure of Indigenous communities—at odds with settler society—embodied in dance, is the subject of Chapter Six. Also reiterated in dance is the relationality and vitalism inherent in Native cultures.

Chapter Seven surveys the justificatory power of settler colonial ideology in mythmaking and the application of abstract intellectual beliefs actualized in stereotypical characters and song lyrics. In Chapter Eight, the final chapter, the devastating consequences of settler colonialism resulting in Indigenous dispossession as well as the adaptation of music for covert Indigenous strategies of resistance to colonialism are demonstrated. The thesis concludes with a Finale in which the dissonance exhibited in settler colonial culture is foregrounded and cultural transformation is suggested.

CHAPTER ONE

WINDS OF CHANGE

[THE SOUNDSCAPE OF THE NEW WORLD]

> He found him in a desert land And in the wasteland, a howling wilderness.
> He encircled him, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.
> —Deuteronomy 32:10
>
> I went along that day mourning and lamenting, leaving farther my own country,
> and traveling into a vast and howling wilderness. —Mary Rowlandson, 1675[1]

It was the wind that carried the wandering strangers across the ocean. Sailing ships harnessed the easterlies, almost continuously blowing east-to-west winds that encircle the globe as they flow toward the equator. Commonly referred to as the prevailing winds, their paths follow fixed patterns which influence the ease or difficulty of accessing various locales. As such, the prevailing winds directly affected European colonialism and empire building. Their association with merchant trade, in particular trade between Britain and the colonies, led to identifying these winds as trade winds.

Thus, it was the trade winds that transported Europeans to the shores of North America. The arrival of Europeans precipitated radical transformation to the land and its inhabitants. Newcomers invaded a dynamic and heterogenous new world they perceived to differ radically from the old world. Perceived as untamed wilderness and uncivilized people, European-Indigenous contact provided the catalyst for the clash of cultures which ensued. The confrontation was as much about controlling the cultural landscape as about accessing land and resources. Presenting the metaphysics structuring each culture and the importance of sound in the early colonial era, this chapter sets the stage framing the conflict between colonizing settlers and Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island.

★ ★ ★

Europeans arrived carrying several millennia's worth of cultural baggage. Foremost was the authoritative voice of the Christian church (including various reformed Protestant sects). Early colonists primarily hailed from Northern

[1] Mary Rowlandson, "Sixth Remove," in *Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, 1675, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/851/851-h/851-h.htm.

European countries and, while they may have spoken different languages, most were monotheistic, god-fearing, scripture-reading pilgrims. While settlement on the Chesapeake focused on resource exploitation, New England was colonized by religious refugees. Conditioned by centuries of Judeo-Christian theology, the northern settlements tended to be theocratic, strictly governed by church officials.

After centuries of Christian rule in Europe, including the brutality of the Inquisition, Western religious perspectives were ingrained in emigrating peoples' ontological world view. Diametrically opposite that of Indigenous conceptions, ancient Old Testament texts structured an anthropocentric belief system separating human beings from the natural world, placing original man and woman in a verdant garden, surrounded by a vast and inhospitable wilderness, and giving man dominion "over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."[2] Dualism informed, and continues to inform, the structure of Western thought: good versus evil, God vs. Satan, man vs. nature, body vs. spirit, light vs. dark, white vs. black, civilized vs. savage, and so on.

Contributing to the development of exceptionalist ideology, biblical texts also established an ethnocentric division between peoples by distinguishing the Israelites as a chosen people, "a special people...above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth," and advising the utter destruction of other peoples.[3] Notions of emigrating Europeans were carried westward by the wind to the new world. Dispersed across the continent, nurtured in American soil, these beliefs reverberated through time and continue to haunt the psyche of many non-native Americans.

A Hideous and Desolate Wilderness

> Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.
> —Matthew 4:1

Wilderness was a significant component of the imaginary of Europeans regarding the Americas. In the oppositional binary of Christian theology, the wilderness was synonymous with the underworld—a place of darkness where evil, perhaps even Satan, lurked. Non-adherence to the established religious code included banishment from God's earthly and heavenly community by being sent to the wilderness. Most Europeans envisioned the wilderness to

[2] *King James Bible,* Genesis 1:28. https://thekingsbible.com.
[3] *King James Bible,* Deuteronomy, 7:6 and 7:2. (Italics in original.)

be a place where imminent death awaits an inevitable final judgement, where one "hears His fate, thence downward to his dwelling hurl'd."[4] According to Dante, hell is a wilderness:

> Pass we then;
> For so Heaven's pleasure is, that I should lead
> Another through this savage wilderness.
>
> Here sighs, with lamentations and loud moans,
> Resounded through the air pierced by no star,
> That e'en I wept at entering. Various tongues,
> Horrible languages, outcries of woe,
> Accents of anger, voices deep and hoarse,
> With hands together smote that swell'd the sounds,
> Made up a tumult, that for ever whirls
> Round through that air with solid darkness stain'd,
> Like to the sand that in the whirlwind flies.[5]

Steeped in a culture of fear, seventeenth-century Europeans—Catholic and Protestant—correlated what they perceived as the primitive wilderness of the North American landscape with the savage terrors of hell. In New England, dissenters were punished with banishment, as in the antinomy case of Puritan Anne Hutchinson or death as in the New England witchcraft trials of the late seventeenth century.[6] Ironically, religious separatists emigrated to escape intolerance, yet they established theocratic, parochial, and intolerant class-based societies in the new world.

A strict and pious separatist reform movement, the Puritans were willing to brave the hazards of the North American wilderness, likening their relocation to the Israelites' foray into a desolate and barren wasteland as told in sacred ancient scripture. In 1620, William Bradford, Deputy Governor of Plymouth Colony, asks: "Besides, what could they see but a hideous & desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts & wild men? And what multitudes there might be of them they knew not."[7]

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[4] Dante Alighieri, *The Vision of Hell, c.*1300 (Cassell, 1892), Canto V, 49, https://archive.org/details/visionofhell00dant/page/204/mode/2up?q=wilderness.

[5] Dante, *Vision of Hell,* XXI: 204, III: 28-29.

[6] Anne Hutchinson, "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown," (1637), in *The American Intellectual Tradition,* Vol. 1: 1630-1865, ed. David A Hollinger and Charles Capper (Oxford University Press, 2016), 28-38; Amitav Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (University of Chicago Press, 2021), 252-253. Ghosh links witchcraft to fear of vitalism of the natural world.

[7] William Bradford, *A History of Plymouth Plantation, 1620* (Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1898), 95, https://archive.org/details/historyofplimoth00braduoft/page/92/mode/2up?q=wild+beasts.

In fact, there were multitudes of diverse Indigenous peoples with as many different cultures, beliefs, and traditions—which Europeans misperceived and misconstrued through an inherited cultural blindness or a calculated animosity. Both the wilderness and the Indigenous population were frequently characterized as "howling" in settler accounts.[8] For the most part, regardless of Native nation, early European settlers interpreted the sounds of Indigenous ceremony as invocations to the devil. Recall Jesuit Father Biard waging a sonic war with the Armouchiquois in a cosmic battle between God and Satan, music wielded as a weapon in the cultural confrontation.

In the wilderness, colonists heard Indigenous song and ceremony as the acoustics of hell. To European ears, Native singing was perceived as "hellish shouts and cryes" and "hideous noise and skriking."[9] In Jamestown, John Smith described Powhatan song as consisting of "exteame howling, showting, singing, [and] violent gestures" and "singing and yelling out...hellish notes and screeches."[10] George Percy, an Englishman at the Virginia colony, recounted watching a Native dance: "[O]ne of the Savages standing in the midst singing, beating one hand against another, all the rest dancing about him, shouting, howling, and stamping against the ground, with many Anticke tricks and faces, making noise like so many Wolves or Devils."[11] In both northern and southern settlements, Europeans imposed an old world ontology on the new world which precluded understanding of Indigenous cultural customs.

Contextualizing the Soundscape

In order to comprehend the significance of the singing contest between the Armouchiquois and the French—and by extension the militarization of music—requires understanding the critical importance of sound. Sound was a crucial source of knowledge for Europeans colonizing Turtle Island in the early modern era. While vision was gradually gaining prominence in part due to the invention of the printing press, literate seventeenth-century colonists placed

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[8] Thoreau in the north Maine woods in 1857 commented: "...generally speaking, a howling wilderness does not howl: it is the imagination of the traveler that does the howling" in *The Maine Woods,* "The Allagash and East Branch," July 27, 1857, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42500/42500-h/42500-h.htm.

[9] John Smith, *Captain John Smith: Writings with Other Narratives,* ed. James Horn (Library of America, 2007), 72 & 357.

[10] Smith, *Captain John Smith,* 20 & 318.

[11] George Percy, "Discourse: The Founding of Jamestown: 1606-1607," in *Captain John Smith: Writings with Other Narratives,* ed. James Horn (Library of America, 2007), 925-926.

greater significance on what they heard. Aurality—the meanings of sound and ways of hearing—remained a vital component of a multisensory way of experiencing the world.[12]

In colonial America, sounds ordered civic, political, economic, and social life. Town criers alerted townsfolk to important events. Church bells sounded the daily rhythms of everyday life in new world settlements where bells and bell towers were frequently the first structures erected.[13] Historian Richard Cullen Rath details the soundways of colonial America showing how sound and hearing were used to structure the workings of a community where church and state were intertwined and prior to the invention of mechanical timepieces:

> Meetinghouse bells summoned the faithful to church each Sunday. There was the pardon bell to forgive sinners, the Gabriel bell to awaken people from their slumber, and the pudding bell, tolled to let the cooks know that services had let out...a curfew bell was to be rung at nine in the evening "to prevent disorderly meetings" among the townspeople...[and] a nightwatchman...walk[ed] about "with his bell every night...to keep watch for alarums and fires, and give notice thereof"...Those beyond the bell's range, either beyond earshot or beyond obeying its toll, were in the wild.[14]

Colonizers and Native peoples used sound to define the boundaries of their relative communities. While Native Americans marked the perimeters of community with drums and voices, settlers marked the limits of villages with bells, guns, and trumpets. Through sound, settlers attempted to create separation between themselves and the wilderness. Sounds made by Native Americans threatened to fracture these contrived boundaries.

Ironically, adherents of certain Christian denominations regard vocalizations like chanting, droning, groaning, murmuring, whispering, ranting, railing, and shrieking, not to mention speaking in tongues, as legitimate means of communicating with the Divine, yet similar non-linguistic or ritualized vocables made by Natives would be considered childlike or simple-minded at best, and more likely as bestial, demonic, and capable of invoking evil spirits. Per musician and author Craig Harris, "Vocables were sung long before the First Encounter...[Indigenous people] sing vocables because that's the language we speak when we're born. It brings us closer to the Creator."[15]

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[12] Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Bloomsbury/Berg Publishers, 2007): 56-58.

[13] Jutta Toelle, "'Their Sound Hath Gone Forth Into All the Earth': Music and Sound in the Ministries of Early Modern Jesuits: Introduction," *Journal of Jesuit Studies* 3, no. 3, ed. Daniele V. Filippi (Institute for Advanced Jesuit Studies, Boston College, 2016): 362.

[14] Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Cornell University Press, 2003), 52 & 63-64.

[15] Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, 120-144; Craig Harris, *Rise Up! Indigenous Music in North America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2023), 44. Vocables are non-lexical vocalizations (i.e., sounds like "fa-la-la-la-la" and "alleluia in Western culture).

Unlike European-Americans, Indigenous peoples' perception of the world relied on multiple sensory apparatus, not favoring vision over other means. Nonetheless, orality connoting speaking, and aurality denoting hearing and listening, were vital components of a multisensorial Indigenous world in which daily life was (and is) considered ceremony.[16] Natalie Curtis observed: "there is scarcely a task, light or grave, scarcely an event, great or small, but has a fitting song."[17]

On the Plains, an Indian village bustled with sounds; days were spent doing chores, often accompanied by singing. Children learned through observing, listening, and imitating which informed much of their play. Constantly talking and singing to children from infancy to early childhood nurtured listening skills, essential whether hunting or learning from the stories of community elders.[18]

In *Braiding Sweetgrass,* Robin Wall Kimmerer weaves together the fundamental values that inform an Indigenous world view: values passed down through oral storytelling tradition and song, predicated on relationship and interconnectedness to each other and to a dynamic and animated universe. In Indian Country—kinship.

Reverence of the natural world and of a greater sacred power warrants respect, reciprocity, and gratitude and manifests in prayer. Per Curtis: "The Indian is at all times prayerful."[19] Lakota Delphine Red Shirt concurs, recounting how her elders expressed gratitude to the non-human world by singing at daybreak when they "greeted the rising sun with prayer" and continuing to sing prayers throughout the day.[20]

Red Shirt stresses a prayer had to be sung or spoken aloud to be heard. Sounds, whether voiced or made with instruments, speak the language of other-than-human spirits. Also, differing from Western perspectives, most Indigenous cultures make no distinction between the human voice, musical instruments, and the dancing body. All are considered to be spirit-talkers, and all have the ability to enter into dialogue with other entities, human and non-human,

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[16] Indigenous ceremony typically includes engaging multiple senses: music can be heard in the sounds of drums and voices, and it can be felt as vibrations carried in the air. Dance involves auditory and visual, as well as tactile senses through internally felt vibrations and externally interacting with other dancers. In addition, Indigenous ceremony often involves burning sage, tobacco, or other herbs, as well as feasting, stimulating olfactory and gustatory sensory receptors, respectively.

[17] Natalie Curtis, *The Indians' Book* (Portland House, 1996): xxx.

[18] Delphine Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter* (University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 16.

[19] Natalie Curtis, *The Indians' Book* (Portland House, 1996), xxx.

[20] Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter,* 63-64.

preferably the louder the better. Michaela Ann Cameron suggests that in the Algonquian-Iroquoian soundscape, "loud and/or powerful sounds...pierce through the vast multilayered cosmos to establish and maintain a line of communication between humans and the other-than-human elders on whom they depend."[21] Relationality expressed in sound is at the center of Lakota ontology. According to Red Shirt, when Wi, the sun, hears animals, birds, and people, it animates the movement of the world:

> Wi sees all things, hears all things spoken or sung, for in the voices of men, women, and children, in the call of the bird and animal, Tákuškąšką, our Creator, our Lakota God, hears itself. Tákuškąšką, that which moves, moves, becomes aware of itself. When men pray or sing, when women pray and sing the tremolo, when children play and laugh in delight, when the birds, like the meadowlark, sing their morning song, when Matho, the great bear, stands on its hind legs like a two-legged and growls as it attacks, Tákuškąšką moves and lives.[22]

Research indicates that societies that correlate written language with intelligence tend to develop a "self-oriented" identity that imposes the self onto the world, leading to a controlling, "mastery seeking" mindset.[23] Hearing societies, on the other hand, tend to embrace "a more passive, self-less understanding of the individual and the world where the primacy of the sense of hearing merges the self with the world."[24] Knowledge for most Indigenous cultures is conveyed orally. Hearing is on par with vision. The difference between living *on* or living *with* the natural world speaks to the contrast in cultures.

A Whisper of Kinship

Rath notes that for Europeans, "the belief that all sounds had some willful being as their source, whether visible or invisible, was still quite alive at the outset of the seventeenth century."[25] Michel Foucault has argued that Enlightenment discourse of the eighteenth century, stressing taxonomies and differences, replaced an earlier emphasis on relations, connections, and similarities.[26] Remarkably similar to the beliefs of Indigenous peoples, early modern colonists believed some natural sounds to be animate. Along with the practical role of maintaining order in a colonial

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[21] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 188.
[22] Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter,* 63.
[23] Smith, *Sensory History*, 47.
[24] Smith, *Sensory History*, 47.
[25] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 48-49.
[26] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 47, citing Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1973), xxii, 17-29; and Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: the Extensions of Man* (1964).

settlement, colonists granted sound a supernatural power manifested in the tolling of bells, the singing of sacred songs, the cracks of thunder and lightning, and the howling of the wind.

Europeans who ventured to cross over to the new world and Indigenous peoples of the Americas shared a respect for the power of natural phenomena. It was not merely a poetic turn of phrase when *Sea Venture* passenger William Strachey in 1609 anthropomorphized the sounds of a hurricane as "the terrible cries and murmurs of the wind," "the wind singing and whistling most unusually," and the dreadful storm "swelling and roaring as if by fits." [27]

Animate and mysterious, the sound of thunder was accounted for with a number of conflicting theories by seventeenth-century European colonists. On one hand, thunder and lightning were considered to be the voice of God who "thundred [sic] out of heaven and the most highest gave out his voice, hailstones, and coales of fire."[28] Alternatively, some deemed the deadly duo to be caused by devils and believed bell ringing had the power to ward it off. Catholics went so far as to baptize, bless, and inscribe their bells, believing that the bells' peals would carry words to the heavens where it would battle with the demons believed to be the source of the thunder, and if necessary, enlist God's assistance.[29]

In comparison, for Lakota and other Indigenous cultures, each clap of thunder was a discrete entity, sentient and powerful. In traditional Indigenous ontology, no distinction exists between animate and inanimate phenomena, hence "the making of a sound was first and foremost an act of identity, no matter what the source."[30] The thunder beings reside in the west, the domain of the powerful west wind, and are conceived as great thunderbirds whose black wings are clouds and whose eyes spark lightning, their formidable power manifests in the destructive violence of storms. The powers of the thunders caused lightning, they had personalities, they were reasonable and intelligent and could feel emotions, their actions were not always intentional nor human-centered, and they possessed powerful spirits.[31]

Recognizing some beliefs of early modern Europeans and Indigenous peoples as analogous suggests that the duality embedded in Christian ideology was less rigid in the early colonial era than in subsequent periods and today. The perception of agency in inanimate phenomena suggests an ambiguity that would not be tolerated in a stringent

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[27] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 14.
[28] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 13.
[29] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 13, 49.
[30] Rath, *How Early America Sounded,* 29, 32-33.
[31] Zitkala-Ša, *American Indian Stories, Legends, and Other Writings* (Penguin Books, 2003), 48 & 68; John G. Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks* (University of Nebraska Press, 1932 & 2014), 300 *n*2 & *n*3.

dualistic interpretation. Rather than diametrically opposed forces of animate vs. inanimate, there is the hint of an interconnected world in the unity of opposites in early modern perceptions.

In his 1630 address, "A Model of Christian Charity," John Winthrop, the first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, underscores the importance of forming and sustaining a unified company that is "knit together, in this work, as one man...always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, as members of the same body."[32] Winthrop's appeal for unity could be viewed as a pragmatic device to improve the odds of survival in the wilderness. At first glance, the high value placed on relationship and community appears to parallel the communal structure of Indigenous societies.

Winthrop likens the community to a body declaring, "There is noe body but consists of partes and that which knitts these partes together, gives the body its perfection, because it makes eache parte soe contiguous to others as thereby they doe mutually participate with each other, both in strength and infirmity, in pleasure and pain."[33] By analogy, the body's interdependent parts imply the Christian ideal of unity achieved through diversity, a notion Winthrop applies to the community's sociopolitical structure. However, the first line of Winthrop's sermon ranks the company's brethren—the "members of the same body"—according to theological predetermination whereby the condition of mankind is so ordered that, "as in all times some must be rich, some poor, some high and eminent in power and dignity; others mean and in submission."[34] Though Winthrop envisions an interconnected world, it is comprised of unequal parts, differing radically from Indigenous egalitarianism.

While there was overlap in which both European and Indigenous people shared conventions, there was also significant disparity. The importance of sound and relationship in an animate universe informed the soundscape of the new world providing context for the duel waged between European settlers and Indigenous peoples for cultural predominance.

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[32] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," 1630, in *The American Intellectual Tradition,* Vol. 1: 1630-1865, eds. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (Oxford University Press, 2016), 14-15.

[33] Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," 10.

[34] Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," 7.

CHAPTER TWO

THE SPIRIT OF THE DRUM

[INDIGENOUS RHYTHM]

> Before there was space and time "there was a void in the Universe" and nothing to fill this emptiness but a sound"—"the sound of things spinning...and being put together." Silence followed and then it came: *"boom boom—boom boom—boom boom."* It was "the sound of life coming": "the heartbeat of Creation. In time that rhythm would pulse through all that came into being, giving life to everything: "[t]he trees, the flowers, the water,...the people." —Wendat[1]

> According to Abenaki legend, it is said that the Creator heard a loud BOOM when making the earth. Arriving at the source of the thundering, Creator asked, "Who are you?" "I am the Spirit of the Drum...I would like to accompany the voices of the People." —Abenaki[2]

Many cosmological and theological systems of thought share the concept that the universe was created through sound. Some examples include creation language from the Christian *Bible,* "In the Beginning was the Word, and the word was God"; from Hindu tradition, the primordial sound Aum is the vibration which brings all things into creation; Australian aborigines speak of song-lines, the song-paths sung by spirit ancestors who walked across the landscape, singing landforms into being; while in the *Popul Vuh* of the Maya, much of creation occurs through words spoken by the gods. Present day adoption of the modern scientific theory of the Big Bang is extraordinarily similar to the Abenaki Spirit of the Drum.

In the Indigenous world, a thunderous drumbeat was not only the first sound but it preceded the creation of all other things, and its rhythm infused and brought everything else into being. Rhythm is present throughout the universe. Rhythm pulses in our heartbeats. It informs the movements of the planets and can be felt in the circadian and seasonal rhythms of the Earth. It resonates in the lapping of waves and throbs in the depths of a mountain.[3] As expressed in Indigenous oral tradition, all of creation is synchronized by a foundational rhythm that resounds through everything and unifies the diverse constitutive elements of the universe.

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[1] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 146. Wendat (Huron) creation story.

[2] Craig Harris, *Rise Up!* 43. Abenaki legend.

[3] Terry Tempest Williams, "The Resonance of Stone," https://www.patagonia.com/stories/the-resonance-of-stone/story-92810.html. Williams relates a story about Castleton Tower in Utah, a sacred mountain for Native tribes (Diné, Hopi, Zuni, Ute Mountain Ute), in which she maintains the mountain has a heartbeat: "Castleton Tower has a pulse. We have a pulse. The Earth has a pulse."

Rhythm is representative of the vitality of the natural world where Indigenous rhythms are felt as well as heard. Framing music as a metaphor for culture, it follows that rhythm is a metaphor for Indigenous cultures. The focus of this chapter is on the varieties of Indigenous drumming and its integral role in Native cultures and, illustrating the confrontation of cultures, the adverse reaction of European invaders to what they heard.

Spirit-Talkers

In addition to engaging with other-than-humans through song, for many Indigenous peoples all sound-makers were, and are, "envoiced" as a human singer's voice and have the capacity to communicate via sound to other-than-human beings. In other words, Indigenous peoples make no distinction between the human voice, musical instruments, and the dancing body—all are considered to be spirit-talkers or singers that can enter into dialogue with other entities, human and otherwise.[4]

Figure 1. *Untitled Tsistsistas (Cheyenne) Dancers and Drummers,* Wooden Leg (Tsistsistas/Northern Cheyenne), untitled ledger attributed to Wooden Leg, *c.* 1877-1878, Newberry Library/Ayer Collection, Chicago.

Drums are respected and revered as spirit-talkers with the ability to tap into the original source of creation. Lakota elders describe the sound of a drum as the heartbeat of Grandmother Earth—the sound vibrating in the earth.[5]

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[4] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 170.

[5] Severt Young Bear and R.D. Theisz, *Standing in the Light: A Lakota Way of Seeing* (University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 47. Construction is relevant and noteworthy because the animal skins—the "flesh"—conflicted with European missionary precepts discussed in Section V.) A thorough survey of the drum is beyond the scope of this project since even one drum type from a single Indigenous group has been known to require a long monograph.

Originally, there were two kinds of drums. One is made from a wooden frame hollowed out from a section of a tree or a gourd, covered with an animal skin of some sort, usually deer hide.[6] The other is a hand drum or rattledrum, about the size of a tambourine with skins stretched tightly on both sides of a thin frame, inside of which are small pebbles or stones. The rattledrum can be shaken or struck on the ground. Differences in scale and materials produce different sounds. The thickness and tautness of stretched skins affects tone, timbre, and strength of sound. Additionally, the composition of drumsticks, where struck on a drum's surface, and the manner of striking produce distinctly different sounds. In essence, each drum has a voice and can be configured in a specific way, dependent upon the emotional content of the message being communicated and the singers who might accompany it.[7]

Perhaps because drums are constructed from the sacrificial gifts of other-than-humans (i.e., trees, plants, and animals), and partly because they are long-lived, Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking cultures call their percussive instruments Grandfathers. Historian Cameron explains: "Grandfather Drum is a sentient, other-than-human elder possessing great power [with] his loud, commanding voice." She adds, "the Anishinaabeg also treated Grandfather Drum like a [human] person. To this end, as part of building and maintaining a respectful, personal relationship based on negotiation and reciprocity...they treated these rhythm-making instruments as people who needed sustenance, shelter, comfort, light, company and conversation."[8] Grandfather Drum personifies the relationality that informs Indian Country: making kin.

In the Indigenous world in which non-human entities are sentient, rattles were and are also considered to be spirit-talkers with the ability to call, speak, or sing to other-than human beings. Like drums, rattles are crafted from natural resources gathered from the land—gourds, animal horns, turtle shells—generously gifted by other-than-humans and therefore requiring respect, care, and gratitude. According to many Indigenous cultures, evil spirits which have the capacity to cause illness, fear the sound of the rattle, the wooden kettle or drum, and the flute, making these instruments sacred as well as conducive to healing in the hands of a skilled medicine person, as depicted in a Lakota narrative:[9]

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[6] Young Bear and Theisz, *Standing in the Light,* 46. Drum manufacture varies by Indigenous group.
[7] Young Bear and Theisz, *Standing in the Light,* 47.
[8] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 172 & 249.
[9] Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter,* 97; Craig Harris, *Rise Up!* 74. Flutes and whistles were used by shamans during ceremonies. They also served as warning signals or hunting calls. In a Sioux legend, a flute played at midnight lured a sweetheart by its melody. Eagle-bone whistles are still used in the Sun Dance.

> She sang all the while. Her voice low and calming. She did not sing the tremolo, the way only Lakota women know how to do. The way an owl's voice can be. How an owl calls at night with a tremulous voice. It hoots as it feeds on live prey. No, she did not sing the tremolo...She sang softly at times, a sigh. Her voice growing stronger as she reassured the woman that the medicine she gave would heal. She took the *'wagmúha,'* the medicine rattle made from a turtle's shell, and shook it gently...It is used to keep away the bad spirit causing the illness. Whatever caused the woman to be ill hears the sacred sound of the rattle and it flees. The same way, they say, a bad spirit would not like the sound of the *'chachega'* the drum, and the *'siyathaka,'* the flute.[10]

Indigenous healers use rhythmic aural medicine—percussion and song—to chase away evil spirits causing illness and to cure a patient. Healing occurs in a number of ways: For one, the medicine healer enters a trance-like state by drumming and chanting, thereby accessing the knowledge and power of spirit ancestors which is then conveyed to the patient through hypnotic rhythmic sound. During hypnosis, the patient experiences relief from symptoms allowing the body to return to a state of homeostasis, the first stage of healing.[11] Alternatively, illness can be understood as being out of balance—or out of rhythm—with the cosmos. In a process termed auditory driving, audible rhythmic patterns overpower neural oscillations or 'brainwaves' in the central nervous system, producing altered states of consciousness including trances. The anesthetizing effect suspends physical sensations, at least temporarily, making the patient/listener insensible to their pain. Plenty-coups recounts healing in an Apsáalooke (Crow) community:

> A crier now rode through the village...He told the people they must form a way from the brush lodge to the water in the river...and that perfect silence must be kept by everybody...Quickly our people formed the open way...and there was silence—not even a whispered word was heard. We could hear the wind in the leaves that covered the brush lodge and the sound of the water running in the river, but nothing else until the medicine-drums began to beat. I could feel them. They made me think deeply...[Medicine healer] Bird-shirt began to sing...[Bird-shirt takes on the appearance of a wolf by painting himself and donning a wolf skin, all the while singing his medicine song.] Suddenly the drums changed their beating. They were softer and much faster. I heard Bird-shirt whine like a wolf-mother that has young pups, and saw him trot, as a wolf trots, around the [patient] four times. Each time he shook his rattle in his right hand, and each time dipped the nose of the wolf skin in water and sprinkled it upon [the patient], whining continually, as a wolf-mother whines to make her young pups do as she wishes. [12]

Continuing to whine and howl, Bird-shirt coaxed his patient to rise and walk through the people to the water where he tended to the bullet wounds. Rhythm, personified in beating drums and spirit-talking instruments, facilitated healing by connecting to the primeval life force at the center of the universe. The drumming never stopped.

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[10] Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter*, 38.
[11] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 166, 228, citing Densmore, "The Use of Music," 557.
[12] Frank B. Lindemann, *Plenty-coups: Chief of the Crows* (University of Nebraska Press, 1930), 143-144.

Thou Wilt Burn Thy Drum

> The constant banging of the Sorcerer's drum was driving Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune mad. Aware that the Sorcerer is drumming to heal a chronic pain in his loins, le Jeune proposes a bargain: the Sorcerer is to enlist the whole Montagnais [Innu] community to sing while he tries the drum medicine one last time. "[I]f thee are not cured in that time, confess...thy din, howls and songs cannot restore thee to health" and give Christian prayer a try. If prayer yields a successful cure [which the missionary believes will occur] the Sorcerer will be obligated to tell his community that "the God of the Christians is the true God [and] they must believe in him and obey him." In addition, the Sorcerer must comply with le Jeune's demand and "in their presence thou wilt burn thy drum."[13]

Le Jeune's pact failed. Nonetheless, his tactics were adopted by Jesuit missionaries who made drum sacrifice a requirement for conversion, epitomizing the cultural conflict between European and Indigenous peoples. The Church's disdain for drumming—a disdain that persisted for centuries and carried to America—was two-fold. Early Church fathers were well acquainted with Greek and Roman orgiastic festivals for Dionysus and Cybele, deities who symbolized chaos, disorder, nature, fertility, and excess. Carnivals associated with these pagan gods involved wild dancing, howling, shouting, intoxication, excessive feasting, piping, and drumming—activities that encouraged licentiousness and, as such, were condemned in scripture. Such activities were strictly forbidden by early Christianity.

Additionally, some pagan rituals employed "primitive" instruments like rattles and drums, which were believed to induce ecstatic states. Drums, in particular, were reviled by the clergy. Along with inciting orgiastic rituals, propelling sensuous bodily movement, and fomenting ecstasy, drums were, and are, composed of dried and stretched animal skins—in the eyes of the Church they were a glorification of the flesh. For millennia, preceding Descartes' mind-body dualism, Judeo-Christian theology vilified the corporeal body and discredited embodied sensory knowledge, fearing that such knowledge led into temptation. "The early Church Fathers did not fail to notice drums were literally 'skins with voices.'"[14] Hence, drums and drumming—percussion in general—were forbidden by the Church in Europe and in the Americas.

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[13] Paul le Jeune, "Relation de ce qui s'est passe en La Novvelle France, en l'annee 1634," *in The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents: Travels and Explorations of the Jesuit Missionaries in New France, 1610-1791; the original French, Latin, and Italian texts, with English translations and notes,* Vol. VII, ed. Reuben Gold Thwaites, trans. John Cutler Covert (The Burrows Brothers Company, 1896), 129-135, https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015011021840&seq=7.

[14] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 67.

Exemplifying the orthodoxy of Christian ideology, up to the late sixteenth century, drums were not necessarily classified as musical instruments by European-American musical theorists."[15] Just as European colonists harbored a hierarchy of the natural world with human beings superior to all other beings, they possessed a hierarchy of musical instruments, originating in ancient biblical texts and classical antiquity, that placed the lyre and harp, and later the lute, at the pinnacle of civilization and more primitive instruments, primarily percussive, at the bottom.[16] Not until 1884 did the Catholic Church permit drums; there are still some Protestant sects that only allow singing of the psalms of David.

When missionaries in New France required Indigenous converts to Christianity to burn their drums, for the Indians it was equivalent to burning a grandmother or grandfather. In Indigenous communities, drums were and are passed down generationally, hence they were often ancient, and they held sacred power as spirit-talking instruments.[17]

In an Indigenous world view where rhythm is life-giving, a drum is a sacred object. The making of a sound, whether individually or collectively, facilitates a connection to the rhythmic life force that animates everything. In an interrelated and interdependent world, relationships matter. Respect of others, thankfulness for life-sustaining gifts, reciprocal acts of generosity, and responsibility for preserving balance in the world and doing no harm capture basic values of Indigenous peoples. Maintaining healthy relations with human and other-than-human beings—making kin—is reverently expressed in the rhythms of story, song, and ceremony.

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[15] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 68.

[16] In biblical text, David sang songs of healing accompanying himself with a lyre or harp; in Greek mythology, Orpheus charmed all living things with the lyre.

[17] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 249. "The Anishinaabeg...treated Grandfather Drum 'like a [human] person'...they offered Grandfather Drum food, human company, gifts such as a constant supply of fresh tobacco, clothing, a lamp and a bed."

CHAPTER THREE

FAITH COMETH BY HEARING

[TO AN ORDERLY HARMONIC UNIVERSE]

Religion was a significant component in the battle to secure the cultural landscape of the new world where missionaries dispatched a barrage of Latin chants and put the torch to Indigenous drums and sacred bundles. Paradoxically, as will be portrayed in this chapter, settler colonizers were guided by a religious edifice that evangelized harmony and counseled community.

While Europeans had diverse reasons for emigrating including seeking religious freedom, wealth, and adventure, most shared a monotheistic belief in a Judeo-Christian God and an obligation to spread the Christian gospel. Bringing non-believers into the Christian fold was not only the work of missionaries; it was a divine command abided by common folk and swashbuckling explorers. In the words of Samuel de Champlain, "For the taking of forts, the winning of battles, and the conquests of countries are nothing in comparison with the reward of those who prepare themselves crowns in heaven."[1]

Christian missionaries were presented with the phenomenal opportunity to convert a multitude of souls in the new world. They interpreted the sounds of Indigenous ceremony as invocations to the devil in what Augustinian Récollect lay Brother Gabriel Sagard described as *"une…harmonie de Demons"*—a harmony of demons.[2] Europeans were not using metaphor when characterizing Indigenous music as demonic; they literally believed it to be the *diabolus in musica*—the devil in music.

The torrent of songs launched over the waters of the Kennebec estuary in 1611 by Jesuit Father Biard and his compatriots was to counter the power of the devil, "this cursed tyrant." Both Europeans and Indigenous peoples believed that their respective creator was ever-present and could be accessed with sacred singing or sacred ceremony. Thus missionaries, in particular Jesuits, took scripture to heart, iterating: "So then faith cometh by hearing."[3]

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[1] Samuel de Champlain, *The Voyages and Explorations of Samuel de Champlain (1604-1616) Narrated by Himself,* Vol. 1, edit. Edward Gaylord Bourne, trans. Annie Nettleton Bourne (Courier Press Limited, 1911), 9.

[2] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 83.

[3] *King James Bible,* Romans 10:17.

Upon his arrival in Arcadia, the zealous Father Biard set up crosses in front of Indian "wigwams" while chanting a *Salve Regina*—a Gregorian chant—his weaponry for obliterating sorcery, creating a garden out of the wilderness, and saving Indigenous peoples' souls by singing them into the army of a Christian god.[4] Cameron reiterates: "With sound being so powerful for early modern Europeans and so central to [Indigenous] lifeworlds, most of the battles the missionaries entered into with the Native peoples in the name of converting them to Christianity were fought on the field of sound."[5]

Harmonic Tradition

> With various-sounding golden lyre 'tis thine
> To fill the world with harmony divine.
> —*The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*[6]

Settler interpretation of Indigenous musical traditions as demonic cannot be explained by religion alone. The association has deeper roots reaching back to pre-Christian origins. Europeans carried aesthetic preferences to the new world that originated in ancient Greece and Rome, if not earlier. Legend has it that pre-Socratic philosopher Pythagoras chanced upon harmonic overtones in the sixth century BCE by plucking the string of a monochord, a single-stringed scientific and musical instrument. The mathematical foundation of Pythagorian harmonic theory holds that vibrating strings of different proportioned lengths create complementary tones.[7] For example, sectioning a string into ratios of 2:1 or 3:2 produces intervals of a perfect octave and a perfect fifth respectively. These mathematical ratios underlie the diatonic musical scale which is the foundation of Western music—the sounds of which comprise European aesthetic preferences and gladdened the ears of wandering pilgrims. Embarking for America, an anonymous member of the Mayflower contingent reported:

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[4] P. Baird, *The Jesuit Relations Vol. I,* 163. A *Salve Regina* is a Gregorian chant.

[5] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 11.

[6] "To the Sun (Helios)," *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus,* Third-century BCE–second-century CE.

[7] Scholars debate the long-held view of Pythagoras as a mathematician and as a cosmologist as there is no conclusive evidence. Pythagoras didn't write anything, no contemporaneous writings exist about him, and only fragments remain from material written 150 years after his death. However, fragments indicate that Pythagoras may have held "a belief in a world structured according to mathematics [with] evidence...drawn from genuine mathematical truths such as those embodied in the "Pythagorean" theorem and the relation of whole number ratios to musical concords." From Carl Huffman, "History of Western Philosophy of Music: Antiquity to 1800," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2024, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pythagoras/.

> And when the ship was ready to carry us away, the bretheren that stayed having again solemnly sought the Lord with us and for us, and we further engaging ourselves mutually as before, they, I say, that stayed at Leyden feasted us that were to go, at our pastor's house, being large; where we refreshed ourselves, after tears, with singing of psalms, making joyful melody in our hearts as well as with the voice, there being many of our congregation very expert in music; and indeed it was the sweetest melody that ever mine ears heard.[8]

Harmony informs European music, both secular and sacred, and has long been an important part of Christian worship. In scripture, Paul councils believers to express faith by: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."[9] Early church worship involved "responsive chanting of the psalms" which, by the fourth century, transitioned to a "clergy-directed" call-and-response service in which songs were sung by the clergy and answered by the congregation.[10] Songs likely consisted of plain, simple, calming melodies sung in Latin in a slow, even chant.

Ancient hymns, which can be traced to Egypt, India, and Greece, were adapted and sung in the form of Gregorian chanting. For centuries, the simplicity of the Gregorian chant, or plainchant, resonated in churches and monasteries throughout Europe. Plainchanting involves a single line of melody sung in unison by multiple voices. It sounds a solemn, calm, meditative drone that conveys an ethereal quality. As in Indigenous ceremony, repetitive chanting can elicit a transcendent ecstatic state. However, rather than being outwardly expressed through dance as in Indigenous ceremony, the Christian ecstatic experience of "elevating the soul" and connecting with a supreme power is described as an internal feeling that often occurs in a meditative trance-like state.[11]

The early Church adopted the psalms of David and David's instrument, the lyre (or harp), as acceptable music for singing praises to the Lord, illustrated in the psalms below. Fifteen centuries later, the practice was strictly enforced by Puritan congregations in Europe and in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

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[8] Percy A. Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England* (Oxford University Press, 1934), 3, https://archive.org/details/puritansandmusic000115mbp/page/2/mode/2up?q=sweetest+melody; Beatrice Hudson Flexner, "The Music of the Puritans," *American Heritage* 8, no. 1 (1956), https://www.americanheritage.com/music-puritans.

[9] *King James Bible,* Ephesians 5:19.

[10] Marie Good, Ariya Gerike, and Summer Tuinstra, "Linguistic Markers of Individualism and Collectivism in Christian Music Lyrics: Relative Prevalence and Change Over Time," *Journal of Psychology and Christianity,* 52, no. 44 (2023), 280, https://www.proquest.com/docview/3059469790/fulltextPDF?accountid=28148&parentSessionId=ZZYzl2%2FANTSfMR0A5EEwdgzxvauV2P71pggfhu3CM9c%3D&pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals.

[11] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 69 & 71.

> Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
> Serve the LORD with gladness!
> Come into his presence with singing!
> — Psalm 100:1–2
>
> Give thanks to God with harp;
> sing praises to Him with the lyre of ten strings.
> —Psalm 33:2

Later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, musicians composed sacred hymns acceptable to the Church; however, for centuries, music was not to be used for sensory pleasure. Echoing Plato, by the fourth-century CE, the Church formulated codes for distinguishing the appropriateness of songs.[12] Any music that aroused emotions other than passion for the Lord was suspect as leading to unacceptable temptations. As discussed in Chapter Two, drums and drumming—percussion in general—was forbidden by the Church in Europe and in the Americas. Pythagorean harmonic tradition was embraced, and the primal rhythms of the universe, including the rhythms of Indigenous people, were denounced. By the time Europeans were emigrating to the new world, this arrangement was gospel.

Prior to the Enlightenment of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Church was the arbiter of what was considered "civilized" and Christian doctrine provided the ontological framework of Europeans setting out to cross the Atlantic. These deeply embedded notions about sound intensified when confronted with the rhythms of Turtle Island. As described in Chapter One, Europeans associated the wilderness with the dark underworld of hell, a place where torture reigned. If not the actual fiery underworld of scripture, the American interior was perceived to be an outpost of the devil's domain, a notion supported by the wails, cries, and shrieks reverberating in the wilderness. The back-and-forth volley of songs between Father Biard's French explorers and the Armouchiquois was not simply a cultural misunderstanding between civilization and primitivism. Rather, it was a sonic war between God and Satan, manifested metaphorically in a showdown between angelic harmony of the heavens and demonic rhythm of the underworld.

[12] Plato famously regarded music as having educational value but also posing societal dangers including rejection of authority and civic unrest. From Matteo Ravasio, "Pythagoras," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* 2021. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hist-westphilmusic-to-1800/.

Harmony of the Spheres

Reaching back to ancient Near Eastern cosmology, whether home of the gods or of the Hebrew *Bible's* God, the heavens have been envisioned as above the Earth. The *Bible* depicts heaven above the Earth and an underworld below, roughly corresponding to Greek cosmology. Plato believed the soul ascended to the sky at death. Early Christians blended the Platonic conception of the afterlife with an Aristotelian structure of the universe made up of concentric circles of heavens—hence the terminology of the heavens rather than the singular heaven.

While the acoustics on Earth were characterized by tranquility and restraint, St. Paul envisioned the heavens overflowing with light and music. In an early Christian vision, upon entering the City of Christ:

> 'thousands of thousands of angels and archangels and the cherubim and the four-and-twenty elders [were] uttering hymns and glorifying the Lord.' In the middle of the city...an individual [is] standing by a high altar...his 'face shone like the sun, and he held in his hands a psalter and a harp and sang praises, saying, 'Alleluia.'[13]

This imagery of an ordered, harmonious heaven filled with the sacred melodious sounds of winged, harp-playing angels has resonated through the ages. It commonly appears in art, as portrayed in Figure 2, and it likely informed the beliefs of wandering European separatists as they yearned for the final eternal destination.

Figure 2. *Angels with Musical Instruments,* artist unknown. The image captures European-American imaginary of heavenly angels harmonizing and praising God with musical instruments including lyre or harp, lute, and flutes.

[13] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 66. Paraphrased interpretation of the "Apocalypse of Paul" (388 CE).

Harmonic tradition was reiterated in multiple, often anonymous, Christian vision texts throughout the Middle Ages. "[S]weet voices" yielding "concerts of unequalled harmony" in which "choir followed choir, and all in sweet harmonious concert praised the Creator of all things" are just a few examples. A well-known nineteenth-century hymn reiterates the Christian vision of heavenly music:

> It came upon the midnight clear,
> That glorious song of old,
> From angels bending near the earth
> To touch their harps of gold;
> "Peace on the earth, good will to men
> From heaven's all-gracious King"—
> The world in solemn stillness lay
> To hear the angels sing.
>
> Still through the cloven skies they come
> With peaceful wings unfurled,
> And still their heavenly music floats
> O'er all the weary world;
> Above its sad and lowly plains
> They bend on hovering wing,
> And ever o'er its Babel-sounds
> The blessed angels sing.[14]

Polyphonic compositions emerged in the twelfth-century, featuring multiple, complex melody lines. Often sung by choirs of young boys or castrati, the layering and intertwining of high voices singing multiple melodies harmonizing together made for a rich and often haunting soundscape. Echoing the soaring gothic cathedrals in which this music floated, height (in architecture and music) was intended to inspire awe and transcendence, reaching upwards towards the heavens and elevating the faithful from earthly existence to the immaterial world of spirit.

The complexity of Renaissance and Baroque polyphonic sacred music was an effort to emulate what was imagined to be the sound of ancient music and its potential to inspire faith, as well as a reflection of the infinity of the heavens, implied by Copernicus and Galileo's expansive views of the universe.

Two-thousand years earlier, philosopher/mathematician Pythagoras had extended harmonic theory to encompass the heavens. Influenced by other pre-Socratics, including his mentor Anaximander, Pythagoras suggested the systematic order of heavenly bodies—sun, moon, planets, stars—had the same mathematical basis as the harmonic

[14] *It Came Upon the Midnight Clear,* Edmund Sears, 1849.

structure of music.[15] His theory, known as the "harmony of the spheres," posited that the heavenly bodies produced sound. In time, his followers claimed the planets were emitting the "most musical and gentle...sublime symphony" in the cosmos.[16]

In the early seventeenth-century, concurrent with early settlement in America, astronomer, mathematician, and astrologer, Johannes Kepler similarly proposed harmony existed in everything in creation and that the world was kept in tune by the divine hand of God.[17] Kepler's *Harmonie Mundi (Harmony of the World)* set forth a unified theory of the heavens based on a geometric plan. Science (for a brief while) appeared to find common ground with Christianity in endorsing a harmonic world.[18] The convergence of: i) European settler colonial forays in America dependent upon a harmonious populace; ii) the Church poised to spread Christian harmony throughout the new world; and iii) publication of Kepler's harmonic theory of the universe, can be construed as a remarkable heavenly alignment.

Anticipating Kepler by a couple of hundred years, in *The Divine Comedy* Dante blended the harmony of Christian voices with the Pythagorean harmony of the cosmos in verse: "Differing voices join to sound sweet music, so do the different orders in our life render sweet harmony among these spheres."[19] Conceptualizing music as a metaphor for culture and rhythm signifying Indigenous vitalism, harmony can be inferred to represent European-American anthropocentric order in the universe. For early European emigrants, harmony—literally, metaphorically, and musically—was critical for on-the-ground survival. As noted earlier, Winthrop's words are emphatic about forming and maintaining unity, as brothers, as members of the same body, in the utopian, albeit hierarchal, settlements of the new world.

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[15] Pythagoras' extension of harmonic theory to the music of the spheres is, in effect, a unified theory of the cosmos. There is an inherent principle of relatedness in the belief that everything in existence, be it the individual human body or a musical instrument, is the orderly, harmonious universe in microcosm. The interrelated nature of everything due to the identification of number—specifically the Monad, the "undifferentiated unity"—as the original element of all that exists implies Pythagorean theory has the capacity to connect every aspect of life in an interrelated web.

[16] Aristotle, *On the Heavens,* Book II, No. 9. Followers of Pythagoras also believed music was a form of medicine based on the idea that the same vibrations produced by an instrument have sympathetic vibrations in the human body. Thus mind, body, and spirit of an individual could be "tuned" to be in harmony with the musically ordered universe. Aristotle was influenced by Pythagoras, but debunked the harmony of the spheres noting the sound theoretically would be so loud we should hear it.

[17] Kepler and Robert Fludd published almost identical theories of a harmony of the universe at the same time (Kepler in 1619 in Germany and Fludd between 1617-1621 in England).

[18] Referencing the Church's condemnation of the Copernican theory of a heliocentric conception of the heavens, supported by Kepler and Galileo among others.

[19] Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso,* trans. Allen Mandelbaum (Random House, 2016), 54: 124-126. https://archive.org/details/paradiso0000dant_k1w9/page/54/mode/2up?q=spheres.

CHAPTER FOUR

SINGING THE WORLD INTO BEING

[RELATIONSHIP IN AN ANIMATED UNIVERSE]

In this chapter, the significance of relationality—the prime constituent of Indigenous metaphysics—is reiterated and expanded to reveal the corollary moral implications of kinship: caretaking and gratitude. Also exposed are violent and destructive settler colonial tactics for asserting cultural control and acquiring territory revealing a disharmonious strain in European-American settler culture, contrary to Indigenous strategies of stewardship and caretaking,

In the Indigenous world, sounds express emotions, respect, and gratitude, as well as prayers for assistance from other-than-human beings. While the drum is central to most Indigenous communities and the centerpiece of many ceremonies, voice is also a powerful force for creating the myriad components of the universe. Natalie Curtis articulates, "To the Indian, song is the breath of the spirit that consecrates the acts of life...In nearly every Indian myth the creator sings things into life...To the Indian, truth, tradition, history, and thought are preserved in ritual of poetry and song."[1] In a creation story from the Haudenosaunee, Sky Woman sings and dances the Earth into existence:

> In the beginning there was Sky World, a wondrous place wherein lived the Sky Dwellers, a people made of light who sparkled like stars. Sky World looked much like the Earth with trees, plants, mountains, valleys, animals, birds, and all species of living beings surrounding a sacred shining tree. The world below Sky World was dark, covered by dense clouds above an endless sea. Sky Woman fell through a hole at the roots of the tree. As she fell, she grasped plants, roots, and seeds. A shaft of light from above lit her fall. The animals saw Sky Woman floating down and worried where she might land. The geese rose up off the water and joined their wings together to form a softly feathered blanket to catch her. Still, where was she to land? Loons, otters, beavers, and fish gathered to form a great council. A giant turtle offered his back providing a place for the geese to safely deposit Sky Woman. The animals understood she needed land to make a home. One by one, they dove deeply to reach mud at the bottom of the water. Loon dove first, then otter, beaver, and sturgeon, but even the strongest swimmers returned empty handed. Lastly, muskrat, the weakest diver, tried. After being gone a long time, muskrat surfaced clutching a small handful of earth. Sky Woman spread the mud across turtle's shell. Moved by the extraordinary gifts of the animals she began to sing and dance in thanksgiving. She danced in a counter-clockwise direction, shuffling her feet and spreading the mud over turtle's shell. As she caressed the earth with her dancing feet, Sky Woman scattered the fruits and seeds she carried from above. The land grew and grew forming an island—what we today call Turtle Island.[2]

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[1] Curtis, *The Indians' Book:* 108.

[2] Variations of the creation story of Sky Woman are shared by many Indigenous peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Though particulars differ as relayed by each community and storyteller, the elements remain consistent. The above narrative is excerpted from a longer oral history and combines several versions from the following sources: Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 3-5; Santee Smith, "Skywoman: A Story Before Time," *Two Row Times,* Arts and

Sky Woman is the creation story of the Haudenosaunee, or the Five Nations Iroquois Confederacy comprised of the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca peoples (and in the eighteenth century joined by the Tuscarora making it the Six Nations). Prior to contact with Europeans, Haudenosaunee traditional lands consisted of much of what is now New York State and later ranged from Ontario and Quebec to the Carolinas on both sides of the Allegheny Mountains. The Haudenosaunee farmed, hunted, and fished the Eastern Woodlands, and scholars suggest their representative form of government preceded and influenced the formation of the U.S. Constitution.[3]

Far across the continent, the Laguna Pueblo people thrived along the river basin of the Rio San José in what is now west-central New Mexico. A sophisticated self-governing, agricultural society, the Ka-waik people farmed and herded in the region since 1300 A.D., though archeological evidence and Laguna oral history confirm human habitation as early as 6,500 B.C.[4] This is their ancient creation story:

> In the center of the universe she sang. In the midst of the waters she sang. In the midst of heaven she sang. In the center she sang. Her singing made all the worlds. The worlds of the Spirits. The worlds of the people. The worlds of the creatures. The worlds of the gods. In this way she separated the quarters. Singing, she separated. Upon the face of heaven she placed her song. Upon the face of water she placed her song. Thus she placed her song. Thus she placed her will. Thus wove she her design. Thus sang the Spider. Thus she thought.[5]

The Haudenosaunee and the Laguna Pueblo origin stories share a common theme: singing the world into being. There are numerous oral histories from other Indigenous peoples in which singing is involved in the creation of the world.[6]

Culture (2016), https://tworowtimes.com/arts-and-culture/skywoman-story-time/; Ionataié:was, *Kanienkehá:ka Creation Story* (Kanehsatà:ke, Mohawk Language Custodian Association – Kontinonhstats) 2016), https://www.kanehsatakevoices.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CREATION_-as-told-by-KANIENKEHAKA-woman-storyteller-FINAL2-April-13.pdf.

[3] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (Beacon Press, 2014), 26.

[4] T.J. Ferguson and Barbara J. Mills, "Supplemental Report: Archaeological Sites on the Laguna Indian Reservation," unpublished paper on file at the Pueblo of Laguna Tribal Historic Preservation Office, 2012.

[5] Laguna Pueblo creation story: Paula Gunn Allen's interpretation. https://gaearth.com/sound-as-medicine/sound-throughout-time/.

[6] In another creation story, The Aaniih (also referred to as the Astina or Gros Ventre of Montana) tell of a creator figure, a man and keeper of a great pipe, who survived a great flood. After building a raft, he proceeded to distribute earth retrieved by water animals and birds in each of the four directions while singing a powerful song. Howard L. Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing: Native American Sacred Ecology and Animal Kinship* (University of Arizona Press, 2000), 33.

In *The Animals Come Dancing,* Howard Harrod observes that "what was striking about [Pawnee] traditions and the ritual processes that embodied them was that the world was sung into being by a chorus of powerful voices."[7] The most powerful voice belonged to Tirawa who arranged the structure of the universe by placing the sun, moon, and morning and evening stars in each of the four directions, assigning them to uphold the heavens. To the Evening Star in the west, Tirawa gave clouds, winds, lightnings, and thunders which were to take the form of human beings. Clothed in buffalo robes, moccasins, with each holding a rattle, Tirawa appointed these four gods to be the creators of all things by singing:

> [T]he emergence of the world arose through song. The scene was filled with complex imagery: the four beings stationed in the west at the edge of Evening Star's garden began to sing and to shake their gourd rattles. As they sang, clouds arose, wind blew in the clouds, and thunder and lightning entered the clouds. At this point Tirawa dropped a pebble into the clouds, and after the storm had passed, there remained a vast expanse of water. When the four singers struck the water with their war clubs, it separated, and the earth appeared. As they began their second song, a great storm arose above the earth, bringing rain and lightning strikes, which gave life to the newly created world. With their third, fourth, and fifth songs the trees and plants came into existence, streams and rivers filled with pure water arose, and seeds were scattered so that other plants would grow on the earth.[8]

One of those ancient seeds was corn. By the time Europeans arrived on the shores of North America, Indigenous peoples had been cultivating corn for at least 5,000 years and possibly longer. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz unequivocally states, "Indigenous American agriculture was based on corn."[9] Originating in Mexico, corn is unique to the Americas. It spread north to the American Southwest, the prairies of the Midwest, and the Eastern Woodlands.

Singing to the Corn

It was not the wind that dispersed corn seed across North and South America. Rather, it was people who carried the seed far afield and nurtured tender seedlings. The development and domestication of corn is a singular innovation by the original American inhabitants because, unlike other grains, corn does not grow wild by self-seeding but requires human intervention and nurturing. "The only reason we have corn today is that for thousands of years

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[7] Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 70-73, citing Iroquois agronomist Jane Mt. Pleasant from Richard Wolkomir, "Bringing Ancient Ways to Our Farmers' Fields," *Winds of Change* (Summer 1996): 40-41; and Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing*, 38.

[8] Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing*, 40-41.

[9] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 16.

[Indigenous American] humans have selected seeds and planted them"—and cared for them.[10] Corn, grown in concert with squash and beans, the triumvirate known as the three sisters, are staple foods that provided sustenance for Indigenous communities from extremely diverse ecological environments for thousands of years.

In some locations, the cultivation of corn facilitated a shift from mobile to more sedentary lifestyles, which in turn led to the formation of densely populated urban civilizations characterized by sophisticated architecture including astronomical observation towers, and impressive agricultural technologies, centuries prior to European contact. Metropoles, including those at Cahokia, Hohokam, and Chaco Canyon among others, were surrounded by acres of corn and fed by massive irrigation systems. At the time of European contact, Native peoples cultivated over 700 varieties of corn.[11] Indigenous creation stories are often intertwined with corn. From an ancient Mayan story:

> It is said that in the beginning there was emptiness. The divine beings, the great thinkers, imagined the world into existence simply by saying its name. The divine beings tried and failed three times as they struggled to create human beings who would live right in the beautiful world they had created, with respect and gratitude and humility. From two baskets of corn, yellow and white, they ground a fine meal, mixed it with water, and shaped a people made of corn. They were fed corn liquor and oh these were good people. They could dance and sing and they had words to tell stories and offer up prayers. Their hearts were filled with compassion for the rest of Creation. They were wise enough to be grateful.[12]

Similarly, in a Navajo origin story, while First Woman is made from a perfect ear of yellow corn, First Man is formed, together with a perfect ear, from white corn.[13]

Indigenous peoples believed corn to be a sacred gift from their gods and, for many cultures, corn was, and is, considered kin. In multiple Indigenous cultures of the Americas, corn is revered as a sacred gift from an ancestral corn woman.[14] In the Wichita creation story, Bright Shining Woman "was given an ear of corn...[and] it was revealed to her that it was to be her food; that it was Mother-Corn; that it was to be the food of the people...that from Mother-Corn

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[10] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 71.

[11] Deb Echo-Hawk, "Pawnee Seed Project," KU, *University of Kansas News,* University of Kansas, 2025, https://news.ku.edu/news/article/2022/05/17/ku-journalism-prof-documenting-project-return-pawnee-varieties-corn-traditional. For additional information: Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 1-115; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 15-31.

[11] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 30.

[12] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions, 2013), 331-332. Adapted from oral tradition and Kimmerer.

[13] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 67, references Ethelou Yazzie, *Navajo History*, vol. 1, 9.

[14] Called "Mother Corn" by Pueblo, Pawnee, Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa peoples, and "Corn Mother" by Cherokee and Muscogee peoples. In the origin stories of Haudenosaunee and Cherokee peoples, corn was a sacred gift that sprouted from the sacrificial body of a woman.

the people were to be nursed."[15] She gave the corn to the women, taught them how to plant and care for it, and how to give thanks for it.

Indigenous women were integral to corn production. Dunbar-Ortiz makes the claim that it was "mainly women who domesticated wild plants and began cultivating others."[16] Women were entrusted with the seeds. They soaked the kernels, dug small holes, and planted six or seven kernels in each, usually adjacent to squash and beans. Women were responsible for harvesting crops and grinding the corn.

In many Native societies including the Pueblos, Pawnees, Mandan, Hidatsa, Anishinaabe, Seneca, and others, singing to the corn was an essential practice to ensure a successful harvest. Indigenous women tended and watched over the plants as they would a child, by singing as in this Diné (Navajo) planting song:

I
Truly in the East
The white bean
And the great corn-plant
Are tied with the white lightning.
Listen! rain approaches!
The voice of the bluebird is heard.
Truly in the East
The white bean
And the great squash
Are tied with the rainbow,

Listen! rain approaches!
The voice of the bluebird is heard.

II
From the top of the great corn-plant the water gurgles, I hear it;
Around the roots the water foams, I hear it;
Around the roots of the plants it foams, I hear it;
From their tops the water foams, I hear it.

III
The corn grows up. The waters of the dark clouds drop, drop.
The rain descends. The waters from the corn leaves drop, drop.
The rain descends. The waters from the plants drop, drop.
The corn grows up. The waters of the dark mists drop, drop.

[15] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 67, quoting George A. Dorsey, *The Mythology of the Wichita* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1995 & 1904): 25, 28.
[16] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 15.

IV
Shall I cull this fruit of the great corn-plant?
Shall you break it? Shall I break it?
Shall I break it? Shall you break it?
Shall I? Shall you?
Shall I cull this fruit of the great squash vine?
Shall you pick it up? Shall I pick it up?
Shall I pick it up? Shall you pick it up?
Shall I? Shall you?[17]

Singing to the corn illustrates the importance to Indigenous people of maintaining respectful and reciprocal relationships with non-human entities. The practice exemplifies the kinship and moral code enmeshed in Indigenous culture and its manifestation, reflected in caretaking.

Though corn may have held a preeminent position in Indigenous American cuisine, it was traditionally planted alongside beans and squash. Known as the three sisters, grown together the plants symbiotically support one another. Tall corn provides support for the tendrils of the climbing bean vine while squash's broad leaves shelter the ground, retaining moisture and deterring pests. Recognized as sentient non-human entities with spirits that have feelings and with whom humans can communicate, the three sisters are understood by Indigenous people as a metaphor for the interdependence and interrelated nature of the world.

Native people perceive the three sisters and other non-human beings as graciously giving of themselves to provide sustenance to human beings. It is this sacrifice on the part of non-humans which requires respect, thankfulness, and reciprocal acts of care from people, manifested in the careful tending and harvesting crops. Singing to the corn or performing the Corn Dance are expressions of gratitude. Through song and ceremony, Indigenous people nurture their relationships with the non-human beings who are essential to maintaining balance and vitality in the world.[18]

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[17] George W. Cronyn, ed., "Songs in the Garden of the House God," *The Path on the Rainbow: An Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1918), 80-81. https://archive.org/details/pathonrainbowant00cron/page/80/mode/2up?q=corn; also, Brenda Norrell, "Traditional Navajo Farming Songs of Corn and Life," *Indian Country Today* (July 2004): http://www.indiancountry.com/?1088692540.

[18] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 124-136.

Disharmonic Overtones

> [We] marched in battle array straight to the first villages, which are only half a league away [2 kilometres]. [We] found them abandoned, and almost reduced to ashes; for the enemy had set fire to the cabins before retreating from them. As our people found no one to fight, they set to work to destroy the Indian corn in the fields. They also burned that which was stored in the villages, and that which had been transported to a fort built of large stakes on a height, in a very commanding position, where the enemy had intended to defend themselves. We afterward proceeded to the other villages, about 4 leagues [16 kilometres] distant from the first, which we found abandoned, but not reduced to ashes...The destruction of the Indian corn is calculated to entail great inconvenience upon the Iroquois, and hunger is sure to cause many to perish.[19]

While the account might appear to be written by a soldier, it was actually chronicled in a letter penned by a Jesuit missionary. In addition to supplying evidence of the Church's complicity in irregular warfare waged against Indigenous peoples, it is out of tune with the stated Christian mission of spreading harmony in the new world.

When Europeans arrived in the Americas, corn was ubiquitous. It was the staple food crop of the Five Civilized Nations in the Southeast (the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Muskogee, and the Seminole). Acres of corn fields and granaries surrounded several thousand agricultural villages that made up the Haudenosaunee Confederacy in the Northeast. On the prairies, the Pawnee people integrated agriculture and hunting. They grew four sacred varieties of corn which were used ceremonially to ensure the return of the buffalo—entwining hunt and harvest in a complex and interdependent relationship. Also semisedentary, the Mandan, on the Northern Plains, believed they had emerged from the ground as "corn people." Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara women tended enormous cornfields that yielded a surplus used for trade with nomadic buffalo-hunting cultures. In the arid Southwest, the governor of New Mexico wrote: "Agriculture comes so natural to these Indians that their pueblos are the storehouses of all kinds of grain (especially corn)."[20]

In New France, explorer Jacques Cartier remarked on the extensive acres of Seneca cornfields writing that corn "has always been their staple article of food."[21] He goes on to explain how the Natives pounded the corn into flour and used it to make bread and soup, as well as how it was stored. Of the Hurons, Cartier describes "corn-planting"

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[19] R.P. Bechefer, "Letter of September 19, 1687," *The Jesuit Relations Vol. 63,* 274 and 276, https://archive.org/details/jesuits63jesuuoft/page/n273/mode/2up.

[20] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 111-114; Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 24-25.

[21] Jacques Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier,* trans. H. P. Biggar (F.A. Acland, 1924), 154-158, https://archive.org/details/voyagesofjacques0000cart_f4g3/page/n9/mode/2up?q=corn.

and "corn-gathering," noting that the work is "left entirely to the females and children."[22] Récollet missionary, Gabriel Sagard, noted that the Huron women had a two- or three-year surplus of corn. He describes getting lost in cornfields more often than in forests due to cornrows so clear of weeds they looked like roads.[23] Spanish conquistadors found abundant corn throughout the Southwest "as they reeled from Indian village to village—from corn supply to corn supply—as they wandered" in search of gold and corn for sustenance.[24] A Zuni valley was described as the "best that has been discovered, since all of it is cultivated and not a grain of corn is lost."[25]

An element of the struggle between Indigenous peoples and European-American settlers to gain control of the North American continent is demonstrated by what has become standard warfare in which non-native intruders—standing armies, loosely organized militias, and individual settlers—waged a genocidal, scorched-earth war on Indigenous food resources. Colin Calloway provides a brief summary that typifies the settler colonial assault on the corn:

> French armies burned Iroquois crops in the eighteenth century; a French campaign against the Foxes in 1728 cut down corn 'of so great a quantity that one could not believe it without seeing it.' The British razed Cherokee cornfields in 1760. Gen. John Sullivan's troops burned thousands of bushels of corn and cut down orchards during their march through Iroquois country in 1779; 'the Quantity of Corn in the towns is far beyond what any body has imagined'...Gen. Anthony Wayne's victory at Fallen Timbers in 1794 allowed him to destroy the Indian cornfield on the Auglaize and Maumee Rivers in northwestern Ohio...Wayne said he had never seen 'such immense fields of corn [which he subsequently torched], in any part of America, from Canada to Florida.'[26]

During a military campaign in 1863-1864, Kit Carson killed or captured Navaho, burned hogans, killed livestock, destroyed crops including corn and stored food, and cut down thousands of peach trees. Carson estimated he had destroyed two million pounds of grain in the first year.[27]

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and other scholars identify the methods of violence perpetuated against Native peoples as foundational to the development of "irregular warfare." Irregular warfare, termed "special operations" or "low intensity

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[22] Cartier, *The Voyages of Jacques Cartier,* 185.

[23] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 113; also, Gabriel Sagard, *Histoire du Canada et voyages que les freres mineurs recollects y ont faicts pour la conuersion des infidelles*, (Chez Claude Sonnius, 1636), https://archive.org/details/histoireducanada00saga.

[24] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 114.

[25] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 143.

[26] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 114-115.

[27] Elliott West, *Continental Reckoning: The American West in the Age of Expansion* (University of Nebraska Press, 2023), 163. Scholarly debate is ongoing regarding whether Carson's troops destroyed the peach trees or follow up army raids were responsible.

conflict" consists of counterinsurgent tactics such as murdering civilians and destroying food sources with the goal of crushing the will of the (enemy) people. Originating with the British during the colonial era, techniques were assumed by the new republic. Other tactics employed biowarfare in the form of the intentional distribution of smallpox infested blankets and handkerchiefs by both British and U.S. military to Indigenous peoples.[28] Often but not always, the U.S. military would turn a blind eye and allow unmitigated violence and genocidal tactics by local and state militias whose brutality was far more savage than that of the supposed "savages." Dunbar-Ortiz writes: "The chief characteristic of irregular warfare is that of the extreme violence against civilians, in this case the tendency to seek the utter annihilation of the Indigenous population."[29]

In his military career, Andrew Jackson practiced irregular warfare against the Native peoples of the Southeast where his Tennessee militias hunted down and killed civilians and, without mercy, pursued starving and homeless refugees in his campaign against the Muskogee. Jackson went on to wage three wars against the Seminole using counterinsurgency strategies including genocidal tactics and destroying food supplies before turning his attention to Indian removal of the Five Civilized Tribes. *The Hunters of Kentucky* was Jackson's signature presidential campaign song in 1824 and 1828:

> We are a hardy, free-born race,
> Each man to fear a stranger;
> What'er the game, we join in chase,
> Despising toil and danger.
> And if a daring foe annoys,
> What'er his strength and forces,
> We'll show him that Kentucky boys
> Are alligator horses.
>
> Oh Kentucky, the hunters of Kentucky!
> Oh Kentucky, the hunters of Kentucky!
>
> But Jackson he was wide awake,
> And was not scar'd at trifles,
> For well he knew what aim we take,
> With our Kentucky rifles:
> So he led us down by Cypress swamp,
> The ground was low and mucky;

[28] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 61-62; "Sir Jeffrey Amherst Suggests the Smallpox," in *American Indian History: A Documentary Reader,* ed. Camilla Townsend (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 76-81.

[29] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 59.

There stood John Bull in martial pomp,
And here was old Kentucky.

A bank was rais'd to hide our breasts,
Not that we thought of dying,
But that we always like to rest,
Unless the game is flying.
Behind it stood our little force,
None wished it to be greater,
For ev'ry man was half a horse,
And half an alligator.[30]

Military historian John Grenier points out that irregular warfare in North America began with mercenary soldiers in seventeenth-century Virginia and New England who regularly practiced burning villages and fields and killing noncombatant populations, and which continues to be in force in the twenty-first century.[31] Though Grenier makes an excellent point, he may not have the date of the onset of irregular warfare correct. Grenier overlooks Coronado's brutal assault on the Indigenous peoples of the Southwest beginning in 1540, during which the Spanish destroyed villages, stole food and clothing, and raped Indian women.[32]

Succeeding Spanish incursions followed suit continuing the implementation of irregular warfare against Indigenous peoples. The brutal Acoma Massacre in 1599 was, in part, triggered by the rape of Pueblo women by Spanish soldiers under Juan de Oñate's command, documented by Franciscan missionaries as well as by the solders themselves, who not surprisingly blamed the victims—designated as the "corn mothers" by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.[33] Leading up to the successful Pueblo Revolt of 1680, Inquisition documents included accusations of rape against several Franciscan friars by Taos Pueblo women, which in turn prompted accusations of raping Pueblo women against the governor as well. Considering most Pueblo societies were matrilineal suggests gender and sexual violence perpetrated by European colonizers was an exertion of patriarchal dominance and a form of genocide to control or eliminate Indigenous populations.

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[30] *The Hunters of Kentucky,* (also called *The Battle of New Orleans* and *Half Horse and Half Alligator),* Samuel Woodworth, 1821, (excerpt).

[31] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 57-58, citing John Grenier, *First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier 1607-1814* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5, 10.

[32] Andrea Maria McComb Sanchez, *Of Corn and Catholicism: A History of Religion and Power in Pueblo Indian Patron Saint Feast Days* (University of Nebraska Press, 2025), 56.

[33] McComb Sanchez, *Of Corn and Catholicism,* 60; Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, "The Corn Mothers Never Went Away" in *Latin American Perspectives* 89, vol. 23, no. 2 (1996): 143-149.

Author Robin Whyatt argues that during European colonization, "the rampant sexual abuse and murder of Native women constituted an integral strategy of conquest and genocide."[34] She contends systematic rape of Indigenous women began with Columbus's 1492 voyage. Upon his return to Hispaniola (now Haiti and the Dominican Republic), Wyatt cites historian David E. Stannard, writing the Spanish "were said to have gone wild, raping Native women and killing, torturing, and enslaving Native peoples with extraordinary brutality."[35]

Instances of irregular warfare, manifested in the destruction of Indigenous communities and life-sustaining crops, make tangible the violence accompanying the struggle for cultural control between settler colonizers and Indigenous peoples. After the destruction of hundreds of thousands of bushels of corn, in an ironic and tragic twist of fate during the assimilation era, the U.S. government attempted to force Indigenous peoples to become farmers.[36]

Buffalo Songs

> Carried on the wind, the 'stamping hoofs [of buffalo] too distant for even sensitive human ears' would be picked up by the 'commonly called tumble-bug.' According to Lakota Standing Bear, scouts would observe the more acoustically sensitive tumble bug which had 'two horns on top of the insect's head [which] invariably pointed toward the buffalo herd,' probably attracted by far away stamping hoofs.[37]

In addition to underscoring the importance of sound in the Indigenous world, the tumble-bug story reflects ancient knowledge garnered over centuries of existing in a landscape. In most Native cultures, the "Land" itself is a sacred entity made up of the living spirits of plants, animals, mountains, rivers, humans, histories, all of creation. Amitav Ghosh maintains Indigenous metaphysics is "a form of emplacement in which the landscape, and its hidden forces, are active, vital participants: they are by no means subordinate to humans."[38]

Buffalo ranged across most of the American landscape prior to European contact; the immense importance of their presence to Indigenous cultures is well-known. Buffalo were, and are, sacred, integral to the spiritual practices of

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[34] Robin Whyatt, "Violence Against Native Women Has Colonial Roots," *The Progressive* 87, no. 1 (2023): 42-46, https://www.proquest.com/docview/2783259020?accountid=28148&parentSessionId=PHrVfWg3Ye28PESauHTX4fOoPEkpKva7Zl9zCaW6LXE%3D&pq-origsite=primo&sourcetype=Magazines.

[35] Whyatt, "Violence Against Native Women," 43, citing David E. Stannard, *American Holocaust: The Conquest of the New World* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

[36] See Chapter Eight.

[37] Mark M. Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth Century America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 292, quoting Standing Bear (Lakota).

[38] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 220.

many Indigenous groups, and not simply a source of subsistence. Recounted in this chapter are ancient teachings for hunting buffalo which were conveyed to the people in song by other-than-human beings. Analogous to singing to the corn, Indigenous peoples had specific songs for respectfully communicating with buffalo, in most instances expressions of gratitude.

Buffalo maintain iconic stature as both an integral component of Indigenous cultures commanding numerous songs and ceremonies and as a symbol of settler colonial malevolence. Concluding the chapter and paralleling the settler colonial destruction of corn, targeting of buffalo for elimination depicts the perverse depth of violence rendered in the contest for colonial domination, sounding another disharmonious note in settler culture.

Buffalo are often present in Indigenous creation stories. Many Native peoples believed buffalo to have emerged from the earth and would return to the earth if wronged by those to whom they gave food and shelter, and provided protection. Per George Bird Grinnell, almost every part of the creature was utilized by Native peoples, from blankets and clothing, portable shelters, war shields, cooking implements, to food. Delphine Red Shirt describes the many uses of the buffalo by the Lakota and writes: "We owed our existence to it. It was a sacred animal given to us by Tákuškąšką. We were its people. We were its spirit embodied. We grew strong from it."[39]

While there was variation in oral tradition, rituals, and songs dedicated to interactions with buffalo, most Indigenous peoples followed similar hunting practices. Traditional methods included herding animals off a cliff, known as a buffalo jump, and corralling animals in canyons or fenced enclosures using song. Often the entire community participated in a buffalo hunt. Lakota medicine healer Black Elk describes a hunt in which the entire tribe participates:

> One morning the crier came around the circle of the village calling out that we were going to break camp. The advisers were in the council tepee, and he cried to them: 'The advisers, come forth to the center and bring your fires along.' It was their duty to save fire for the people, because we had no matches then. 'Now take it down!' the crier shouted. And all the people [the women] began taking down their tepees, and packing them on pony drags. Then the crier said: 'Many bison, I have heard; many bison, I have heard!' ...Then we broke camp and started in formation... [After stopping and conferring with a scout] the crier shouted like singing: 'Your knives shall be sharpened, your arrows shall be sharpened. Make ready, make haste; your horses make ready! We shall go forth with arrows. Plenty of meat shall we make![40]

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[39] Red Shirt, *Turtle Lung Woman's Granddaughter*, 17-18.
[40] Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 33.

For Indigenous Plains groups, buffalo was the single most important source of meat. While research indicates agriculture furnished more than one-half of an Indigenous diet with corn as the primary source of sustenance, many Indigenous peoples established a balance between planting and hunting in what anthropologists and historians describe as a "semisedentary horticultural way of life."[41] A corn-based diet was supplemented with game, birds, fish, other grains, squash, beans, nuts, and berries.

Figure 3. *Buffalo Hunt Under the Wolf-skin Mask,* George Catlin, 1832-1833, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The poor buffaloes have their enemy *man*, besetting and besieging them at all times of the year, and in all the modes that man in his superior wisdom has been able to devise for their destruction. They struggle in vain to evade his deadly shafts, when he dashes amongst them over the plains on his wild horse—they plunge into the snow-drifts where they yield themselves an easy prey to their destroyers, and they also stand unwittingly and behold him, unsuspected under the skin of a white wolf, insinuating himself and his fatal weapons into close company, when they are peaceably grazing on the level prairies, and shot down before they are aware of their danger." George Catlin made this sketch on the Upper Missouri in 1832. —George Catlin, *Letters and Notes*, Vol. 1, no. 31, 1841.

Ancient methods of hunting buffalo were passed down generationally. Hunting required the singing of sacred ceremonial songs which conveyed a hunter's gratitude to the spirits of the buffalo. The story of Weasel-Woman relates the genesis of Blackfoot songs and ritual practices for hunting buffalo:

> She heard a strange sound....Then she heard what sounded like a voice, but she could not understand what was being said. Finally, the voice became clearer. It was singing:

[41] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 111-112.

Yonder woman, you must take me.
I am powerful.
Yonder woman, you must take me.
You must hear me.
Where I sit is powerful.

> Looking carefully, she came to a spot where there was a tuft of buffalo hair. Nestled in the hair there was a buffalo rock; this was the person who was singing. Buffalo Rock instructed Weasel-Woman to sleep away from the camp for four nights and to seek a vision. During the four nights she was given instructions about the ritual and songs of the *iniskim* [a rock shaped like an animal also called a buffalo rock]. After she had returned from her vision experience, Weasel-Woman instructed a young unmarried man who had been chosen as the leader of a buffalo drive. She taught him a song that would lead the buffalo into the drive lane and over a cliff.[42]

An ancient Cheyenne narrative, the Sweet Medicine tradition focused on the seasonal renewal and return of the buffalo. After being abandoned by the Cheyenne people, Sweet Medicine disappeared and, with him, the buffalo and all the animals. The people began to starve. Sweet Medicine journeyed to the Black Hills where he acquired stronger powers. He returned to the people and instructed them to form their camp in the shape of a crescent moon with the opening facing east. Within this circle they were to erect a large tipi:

> Sweet Medicine told the people to bring him an old buffalo skull and place it at the center of the camp circle. Sweet Medicine began to sing, and as he sang the buffalo skull grunted and moved toward him. At this point he took the buffalo skull, moved into the large tipi, and continued his singing. After he had been singing for two days and two nights, buffalo were heard in the distance. Then on the morning of the third day, buffalo could be seen here and there around the camp circle. He continued to sing, and on the fourth morning buffalo in great numbers were inside the camp circle, surrounding the tipi from which the songs emanated. Sweet Medicine said to the people, "'Now go and kill food for yourselves, as much as you need. I will sit here and sing, and the buffalo will not run away.'...After he saw that they had enough, he called out to them to stop...and those buffalo that were alive, all walked out through the gap in the circle."[43]

Passed down via oral tradition, Sweet Medicine brought the return of the buffalo to Cheyenne country by singing, in another instance of communicating with non-humans through song in order to maintain proper respectful relationships with those who furnished sustenance.

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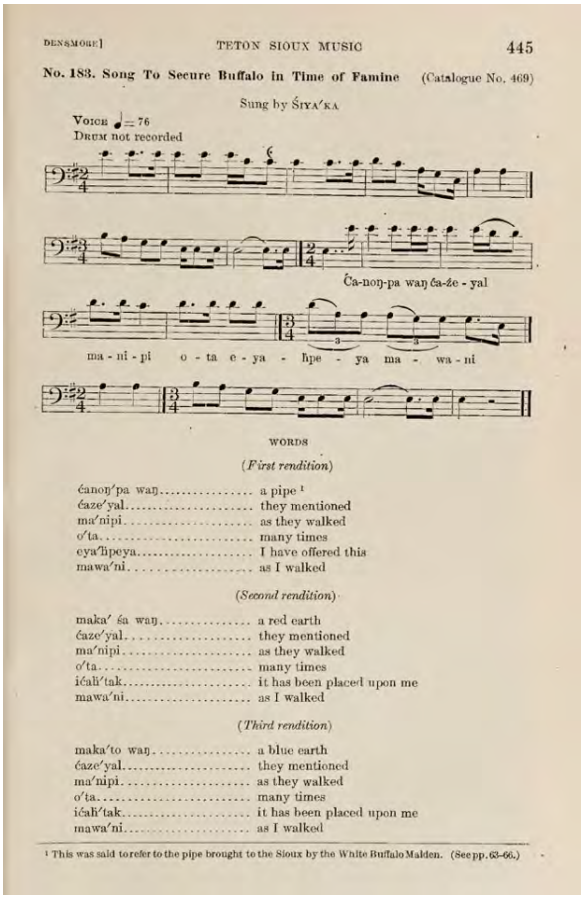
[42] Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing*, 79-80, citing Clark Wissler and D.C. Duvall, *Mythology of the Blackfoot Indians* (American Museum of Natural History, *Anthropological Papers,* 2:1, 1908): 85-87 and George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 229.

[43] Harrod, *The Animals Came Dancing*, 52-54, citing George Bird Grinnell, "Some Early Cheyenne Tales II," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 20 (1908): 278.



DENSMORE] TETON SIOUX MUSIC 445

No. 183. Song To Secure Buffalo in Time of Famine (Catalogue No. 469)

Sung by ŚIYA'KA

VOICE ♩ = 76
DRUM not recorded

Ća-nonj-pa wanj ća-že - yal

ma - ni - pi o - ta e - ya - hpe - ya ma - wa - ni

WORDS

(*First rendition*)

ćanonj'pa wanj	a pipe [1]
ćaze'yal	they mentioned
ma'nipi	as they walked
o'ta	many times
eya'hpeya	I have offered this
mawa'ni	as I walked

(*Second rendition*)

maka' śa wanj	a red earth
ćaze'yal	they mentioned
ma'nipi	as they walked
o'ta	many times
ićah'tak	it has been placed upon me
mawa'ni	as I walked

(*Third rendition*)

maka'to wanj	a blue earth
ćaze'yal	they mentioned
ma'nipi	as they walked
o'ta	many times
ićah'tak	it has been placed upon me
mawa'ni	as I walked

[1] This was said to refer to the pipe brought to the Sioux by the White Buffalo Maiden. (See pp. 63-66.)

Figure 4. *Song to Secure Buffalo in Time of Famine*. Francis Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music* (1918), Library of Congress. The song was recorded and transcribed by Densmore while on the Standing Rock Reservation between 1911 and 1914. From Densmore's extensive notes: "The [above] song is a medicine-man's song to secure buffalo in time of famine. Śiya´ka said that he had known of its successful use in this connection. The medicine-man painted a buffalo skull with red and blue stripes and laid beside it a filled pipe on a bed of fresh sage. It was believed that 'the skull turned into a real buffalo and called others.' This song was sung in the dark. In the song it is the buffalo who speaks. Śiya´ka said that in the old days, after this ceremony on the part of the medicine-man and the singing of this song, the buffalo came near the camp and thus the famine was relieved." —Śiya´ka (Lakota)[44]

Paralleling the Cheyenne Sweet Medicine ritual, a Lakota ceremony centered around the singing of a song to secure buffalo during lean times is presented in Figure 4. The first stanza of the *Song to Secure Buffalo in Time of Famine* begins with the words, "a pipe...many times I have offered this as I walked," invoking the legend of the sacred White Buffalo Maiden and revealing it is she who is singing the song. For over 2,000 years, Lakota and other Plains peoples have believed the White Buffalo Calf Woman brought spiritual teachings, rites, and the sacred pipe to the people, which

[44] Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music,* 444.

enables connection to the Creator and other-than-human beings. She prophesized she would return in the form of a white buffalo calf to restore balance and harmony to the world, thus imparting a warning about maintaining respectful relationships while also serving as a symbol of renewal and hope—essential during a time of famine.[45]

In the early twentieth century, three women ethnomusicologists, Frances Densmore, Natalie Curtis, and Alice Fletcher, made field recordings accompanied by written transcriptions of Indigenous songs and ceremonies. Using Edison wax cylinders, Densmore alone collected over 3,500 songs from roughly thirty different tribes. In addition to songs for a successful buffalo hunt, subjects include songs used in ceremonies such as the Sun Dance—a ceremony for renewal and the seasonal return of the buffalo—for which Densmore documented thirty-two Lakota songs.[46]

Ethnomusicologists recorded a variety of Lakota buffalo songs. There was a song for when a search party started out: "The direction in which the buffalo were probably located was pointed out, and the party started in that direction. They moved with a dancing step, and no drum or rattle was carried." A different song was sung when the searchers returned, and another song at the conclusion of a successful chase: "[This] song was usually sung twice with no break in the time, then shrill cries were given, after which the song was resumed, the drum continuing a steady beat throughout the entire performance."[47] After a successful raid, the people feasted, danced, and sang all night long. Lakota women would sound the "tremolo of joy," a high pitched, wavering, repetitive, vocalization.[48]

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[45] *Chief Arvol Looking Horse Speaks of White Buffalo Prophecy* (Knew Ways, 2010), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHqVdZmpRgI. Video podcast of 19th generation Keeper of the Sacred White Buffalo Calf Pipe, leader of the Lakota Dakota Nakota Oyate Nation.

[46] John W. Troutman, *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2009), 158-160. By having Lakota people sing songs and perform ceremonies, Densmore and the performers were breaking the law banning Indigenous dance enacted in OIA "Rules Governing the Court of Indian Offenses," March 30, 1883. See Chapter Eight.

[47] Frances Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music* (*Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin* 61, Smithsonian Institution, 1918), 436-447. Between 1911 and 1914, Densmore preserved over 270 Lakota songs, archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. In her book, she documents musical notation for four *Buffalo Songs* the recordings of which are not yet digitized; the Densmore Repatriation Project at Standing Rock is in the process of reintroducing songs and making them more accessible <https://www.lakotasongs.com>; a more recent online version with translation is available at *Ya-Native*, https://www.ya-native.com/Culture_GreatPlains/legends/asongofthebuffalohunt.html.

[48] The sound of the Lakota women's tremolo is a rapid, high-pitched *lililililili!* that is called *ųgnágicala hothúpi* 'screech owl hoot' (Boas and Deloria, "Dakota Grammar," 151), from Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks,* 307, n9. It is made by rapidly fluctuating airflow passing through the vocal chords.

Song and ceremony enabled Native people to sustain contact with the buffalo and other non-human entities such as corn. Importantly, traditional songs conveyed ancient knowledge to younger generations facilitating Indigenous sustenance and survival.

A Disharmonic Reprise

The struggle between Indigenous peoples and European colonizers, who viewed the world as separate and inanimate, is a metaphysical conflict between diametrically opposing ways of understanding the world as much as it is about territory. Indigenous peoples had, and have, a sacred connection to their homelands that exceeds economics or utility. Land is understood as a storied landscape made up of sacred sites that connect the people "to an ancient world whose lessons they must not forget."[49] For the Tohono O'odham (Papago), the people do not possess the land; rather, "it is the land that possesses the people."[50] Ghosh argues it is the vitality of the landscape that creates meaning, not the other way around where people create a cultural construction and imbue it with invented myths and meanings.[51] Indigenous people perceive these spirits of place as having a powerful presence which is acknowledged and honored through song, ceremony, and caretaking.

Stewardship of the land includes cultivating the soil, nurturing corn and other crops, as well as using fire. Woodlands were burned to control undergrowth and encourage the growth of young grasses and forbs which would attract a variety of animals including elk, deer, and bear, and facilitate hunting. Grasslands were burned to control the type and timing of germination enabling Native hunters to manage when and where they were likely to find herds of grazing buffalo. Dunbar-Ortiz writes, "When Lewis and Clark began their trek up the Missouri River in 1804...they beheld 'not a wilderness but a vast pasture managed by and for Native Americans.' Native Americans created the world's largest gardens and grazing lands—and thrived."[52]

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[49] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 7-8.
[50] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 7.
[51] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 220.
[52] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 28.

It is estimated that approximately thirty million buffalo inhabited the Plains prior to European contact.[53] Buffalo were hunted to near extinction during the nineteenth century by European settlers with the U.S. military largely responsible. They were initially killed primarily for their skins and tongues or for sport.[54] The U.S. military began a campaign of extermination in an effort to force Indigenous peoples to comply with land transfers and remove themselves to reservations. Frustrated they couldn't defeat the Plains Indians with conventional warfare, "the frontier army sanctioned the mass slaughter of buffalo to shatter the will to resist by eliminating a primary food supply."[55]

In another instance of irregular warfare by the U.S. military, ten to fifteen million buffalo were killed in less than two decades between 1865 and 1883. The 'Indian problem' was synonymous with the 'buffalo problem' which were an impediment to progress—for the railroads, settlement, and cattle. "Both faced similar extermination processes...destruction of one required destruction of the other."[56] The buffalo returned into the earth and it appeared that song and ceremony couldn't call them back.

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[53] *American Bison,* National Wildlife Federation. https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Mammals/American-Bison.

[54] Buffalo skins were used to manufacture pulleys for factories in the industrialized East; tongue was a food delicacy.

[55] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 142; Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance* (Verso, 2019), 110.

[56] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 68; Nick Estes, *Our History Is the Future,* 110.

Interlude

Wind from the East

[Whose Breath Blows Grey Mist and Sends Down Cold Rains][1]

Indigenous stories of initial contact are written in the scarred landscape of the Americas. Native accounts of first encounters are rare, due in part to oral tradition, perhaps lost to history, or silenced and erased in the retelling of the story of the battle for territorial and cultural dominance. Historian Sarah Keyes likens westward expansion to a military invasion and characterizes settlement as a sonic conquest.[2] For some Native peoples like the Salish, initial meetings between peoples are not featured prominently in oral tradition.[3] Other instances reverberate with misconceptions, confusion, and curiosity, as demonstrated by the night-long contest of songs between French explorers and the Armouchiquois in New France. The following vignettes present other first encounters with European-Americans as experienced and voiced by Indigenous people.

I

Salve, Regina, Mater misericordiae,
vita, dulcedo, et spes nostra, salve.
Ad te clamamus exsules filii Hevae,
Ad te suspiramus, gementes et flentes
in hac lacrimarum valle.
Eia, ergo, advocata nostra,
illos tuos misericordes oculos ad nos converte;
Et Jesum, benedictum fructum ventris tui,
nobis post hoc exsilium ostende.
O clemens, O pia, O dulcis Virgo Maria.[4]

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[1] Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) oral tradition tells of O-yan-do-ne, personified as the moose of the east wind.

[2] Sarah Keyes, "'Like a Roaring Lion:' The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest," *Journal of American History* 96, no. 1 (2009): 19-43. https://www-jstor-org.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/stable/27694730?seq=1.

[3] Salish Pend-d'Orielle Cultural Committee et al., *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark,* xiv.

[4] *Salve Regina,* Schola Sanctae Scholasticae, 2018, https://gregorian-chant-hymns.com/hymns-2/salve-regina-simple.html. English translation: Hail, Holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, O most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us, and after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary!

II

...on the Big River [the Missouri]...I saw a very large [boat] loaded heavily with white men's goods going up the river to some fort. Frenchmen, who sang happily, pulled it along with the largest rope I had ever seen, but in spite of the pads stuffed with antelope hair, I noticed that every man's shoulders were sore...But the Frenchmen sang almost constantly, as though they were glad. Afterward I saw that same boat coming back down the river with furs and robes. And now, when the river itself was doing all the work and there was reason for gladness, nobody on the boat was singing. I never understood this. —Chief Plenty-coups (Apsáalooke/Crow)[5]

III

Presently there peeled forth a peculiar, weird music and the words of a strange song. It was music from a melodeon, but I did not then know what that was; and the tune was 'Nearer, my God, to Thee.' Strange as it sounded to me, I felt that there was something soothing and gentle about the music and the voices...I saw for the first time how the white woman pumps so much air into a box that when she presses on the top boards it howls convulsively. I forgot my bashfulness so far as to listen openly and enjoy the operation, wondering much how the white man puts a pair of lungs into a box, which is furnished with a whole set of black and white teeth, and when he sings to it, it appears to answer him. —Charles A. Eastman (Santee Sioux)[6]

[5] Lindemann, *Plenty-coups,* 3. Songs of the French fur trade were adapted to accompany the motion of paddles dipped in unison. Tunes were usually in the call and response style often used in work songs. Singing helped pass the time and made the work seem lighter, and it is likely that fur trade company agents sought out and preferred to hire voyageurs who liked to sing and were good at it. They also believed that singing helped the voyageurs paddle faster and longer. While Indigenous peoples have songs for different tasks, they are not analogous to work songs sung by enslaved African American or prison work gangs.

[6] Charles A. Eastman, "From the Deep Woods to Civilization," in *Native American Autobiography: An Anthology,* edited by Arnold Krupat (University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 268.

CHAPTER FIVE

A CHOIR OF DISSONANT UNDERTONES

[SETTLER INTELLECTUAL FOUNDATIONS]

> Legend holds that as the Kimball family approached the mountains,
> they unloaded their piano, dug a large hole, carefully wrapped the piano
> in buffalo skins, gently placed it in the hole, and then covered it with dirt.
> The following spring an ox team transported it to Salt Lake City.[1]

Whether fact or fiction, the importance of music to European-American settlers of North America resonates in the odyssey of the cached piano. Aside from a piano signifying permanence, stability, and respectability, musical instruments enabled social interaction within families and with others. Music is fundamentally relational: listeners engage with sounds aired; making music often involves collaborating with other musicians; and, in concert, a listening audience is a community collectively sharing an auditory experience.

Music facilitated settler colonial domestication of North America. Colonization and domestication required emigrants survive.[2] While not overtly contributing to their health, settlers brought their musical traditions, which conceivably enhanced their odds. Neuroscience affirms that music is "central to our physiology, our psychology, and our very identity and sense of self."[3] Along with modulating physiological rhythms (i.e., heart rate and blood pressure) and influencing emotions and moods, song and dance promoted social bonding among wayfaring strangers documented in settler letters, diaries, and journals. More significantly, as argued in this chapter, music informed the ideological perspectives of migrants.

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[1] William W. Slaughter and Michael Landon. *Trail of Hope: The Story of the Mormon Trail* (Shadow Mountain, 1997), 24. Collection of the Latter-Day Saints Museum of Church History, Salt Lake City. Providence of the piano legend is undetermined. A descendant and historian notes: "In the parlor was a huge piano which, although several pianos were hauled west from Winter Quarters, Heber [Kimball] most likely imported [it] from St. Louis..." Stanley B. Kimball, *Heber C. Kimball: Mormon Patriarch and Pioneer* (University of Illinois Press, 1981). https://archive.org/stream/PresidentHeberC.KimballsJournal/president_heber_c_kimbal_journal_djvu.txt.

[2] Sarah Keyes, *American Burial Ground: A New History of the Overland Trail* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023). Keyes describes in detail the high rate of mortality for overlanders, primarily from cholera, documented in numerous diaries and letters.

[3] Elena Mannes, *The Power of Music: Pioneering Discoveries in the New Science of Song* (Walker & Co., 2011), 71.

Underlying the hostile actions perpetrated against Indigenous peoples was, and is, an inherited intellectual foundation replete with a full complement of implicit psychological heuristics. Despite diverse demographics, colonists had in common a Judeo-Christian background and European intellectual notions. Settler music reinforced the ideological beliefs of colonizers with sacred and secular song lyrics providing justification for territorial acquisition, resource exploitation, and Indigenous dispossession. Settlers also shared a demand for land and a view of Indigenous peoples as an obstacle to their ambitions. Centuries later, the legacy lingers.

The Covenant:

The U.S. Origin Story & Related Notions

> 'Stay not among the wicked, but let us to New England go.
> The Psalms shall be our musick', &c.[4]

The Massachusetts Bay Colony Puritans understood their sacred mission to be the creation of a godly community in the wilderness. In what might be described as a divine transactional turn, God reciprocally granted them abundance in a promised land. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz identifies this arrangement between the Puritans and God as covenant theology and argues that it is the origin story of the United States.[5] The Puritans adopted, adapted, and sang the covenant theology voiced in the Songs of David, Psalm 105, of the Old Testament:

> He *is* the LORD our God:
> his judgments *are* in all the earth.
> He hath remembered his covenant for ever,
> the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations...
> Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan,
> the lot of your inheritance:
> When they were *but* a few men in number;
> yea, very few, and strangers in it.
> When they went from one nation to another,
> from *one* kingdom to another people;
> He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea,
> he reproved kings for their sakes;
> *Saying,* Touch not mine anointed,
> and do my prophets no harm.[6]

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[4] Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England*, 274. https://archive.org/details/puritansandmusic000115mbp/page/2/mode/2up?q=sweetest+melody.

[5] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History*, 47.

[6] *King James Bible,* excerpt from Psalm 105:7-14.

The analogy from the land of Canaan to America is a fitting and accurate description of the mindset of early settlers. Governor Winthrop confirmed the transaction: "We are entered into a covenant with Him for this work. We have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles...Now if the Lord shall please to hear us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath He ratified this covenant and sealed our commission..."[7]

It was, in fact, not the Lord, but the British monarchy which granted the Puritans charter to the land—land England claimed based on the 1493 Doctrine of Discovery, a papal bull dividing territory in the Americas between competing sovereign claims and loosely establishing ownership based on a first-come, first-served basis. The principle of prior appropriation, "first in time, first in right," is a hallmark of colonial settlement applied to land and resources. That the new world was already inhabited was irrelevant to transplants; imbued with Eurocentric notions of "civilized" land use and keenly aware of social class distinctions, colonizers were predisposed to view Indigenous peoples as too primitive to own land.

Exceptionalist Airs

Having divinely and (supposedly) legally secured the land for the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Governor Winthrop cautioned: "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us..." implying the Puritans were not only a chosen people but the nascent colony would exemplify the embodiment of an ideal community—foreshadowing the rise of American exceptionalist ideology.[8]

Europeans of all persuasions understood their mission to include transforming the continent into a Christian landscape. A common Protestant hymn sung by the settlers, *On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand,* gives a clue to settler ideology:

> On Jordan's stormy banks I stand,
> and cast a wishful eye
> to Canaan's fair and happy land,
> where my possessions lie.

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[7] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," 1630, in *The American Intellectual Tradition,* Vol. 1: 1630-1865, eds. David A. Hollinger and Charles Capper (Oxford University Press, 2016), 14.

[8] Early American exceptionalism could be defined as the self-perception of being a chosen people who modeled Christian values with the implied mission of spreading a particular religious ideology. Over the course of a few centuries, this secularized and shifted to self-perception as a chosen people who model a particular version of liberty (democratic ideals confounded by individual property ownership and commerce) with the goal of spreading itself.

I am bound for the promised land,
I am bound for the promised land;
oh, who will come and go with me?
I am bound for the promised land.[9]

American exceptionalism is on full display in this sacred hymn. The "promised land" echoes settler ideology of divine justification for westward expansion and entitlement to the land. Implicit in the lyrics is a paralleling of the hardships of settler relocation to the biblical *Book of Exodus*, affirming the moral integrity of colonialism while ignoring the attendant practices of greed, violence, racial othering, and despoilment of the land.

A similar message is conveyed in secular tunes where entitlement to unclaimed territory is explicit in the lyrics. A typical example is *Home on the Range.* Written in 1873 and widely disseminated by traveling cowboys, today it is considered the unofficial anthem of the American West:

Oh, give me a home where the buffalo roam,
Where the deer and the antelope play,
Where seldom is heard a discouraging word,
And the skies are not cloudy all day.

The red man was pressed from this part of the West,
He's likely no more to return
To the banks of Red River where seldom if ever
Their flickering camp-fires burn.[10]

Conceiving the continent as a wilderness, essentially an empty space with the exception of wild animals and what might be labeled "the Indian problem," settlers perceived America as a place desperately in need of civilizing and agriculture as a civilizing practice. They harbored the yeoman's belief in property ownership and agricultural cultivation: making land productive made it civilized.

The assumed sense of entitlement may not have been fully conscious. Nevertheless, it is deeply embedded in the European-American intellect stemming from several hundred years of Christian doctrine. Colonizers conformed to the 1493 Doctrine of Discovery when preemptively claiming territory in the Americas.[11] Early Puritans subscribed to

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[9] *On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand,* Samuel Stennett, 1787 (excerpt), Hymnary.org, Calvin University, https://hymnary.org/text/on_jordans_stormy_banks_i_stand.

[10] *A Home on The Range,* lyrics by Brewster M. Higley and music by Daniel E. Kelley, *c.*1871 (excerpt), ed. John A. Lomax, *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads* (Sturgis & Walton Company, 1910), 39–43.

[11] The Doctrine of Discovery originated in a 1493 papal bull granting authorization to explorers to claim *terra nullius* in the name of their sovereign monarch, effectively giving alleged discoverers exclusive rights to land and

the Calvinist concept of predetermination which posits that certain individuals— the Elect—are "called" by God and granted eternal salvation. Though there are no guarantees, wealth was considered to denote election; poverty, misfortune, and darker skin were indications of damnation. Dunbar-Ortiz comments that the "attractiveness of such a doctrine" to the colonists is obvious, "for one could easily define the [N]atives as immutably profane, and damned, and oneself as predestined to virtue."[12] White Protestant supremacy as an integral component of American exceptionalism strikes the first dissonant chord.

Science supplied compelling justification to exceptionalist sentiments. Enlightenment philosopher/scientists, obsessed with creating order—harmony—out of a chaotic world devised hierarchal categories for classifying the natural world. Linnaeus organized human beings in stages from primitive to civilized based on physical characteristics such as skin color, gender, geographic origin, ethnicity, language, written or oral tradition, and sedentary vs. nomadic lifestyle, among other criteria. Despite valid evidence, Northern European Protestant white males were identified as the pinnacle of civilization in an example of pseudoscience supporting a belief system that already inclined toward American exceptionalist thinking. Striking yet another disharmonious chord, this line of thinking takes an ugly turn with the emergence of social Darwinism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, solidifying racist and ethnocentric ideology.

Also displayed in song is the presumption of the vanishing Indian, reinforcing a commonly held settler belief that appears in sheet music since the mid-nineteenth century.[13] Explicit in the lyrics is a romanticized notion of the Great Plains: in 1871, did the song's author believe buffalo would continue to roam the plains? Government-sanctioned extermination was already underway when the song was written, with bison all but eliminated within ten years. While harmony reigned supreme on hallowed ground, strains of a dissonant air were stirring in the secular realm of the new world.

The Devil's Tritone

> ...according to legend the Church forbade the tritone's use because it was the acoustic manifestation of Satan and punished those who defiantly used it to deliberately invoke the Devil. Despite the apparent lack of documentary evidence to corroborate the tritone legend it is not altogether far-

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resources, https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/doctrine_of_discovery. Protestant colonizers assumed the Doctrine of Discovery turning a blind eye to its Catholic origins.

[12] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 48-49, citing Akenson, *God's Peoples,* 112.

[13] See Chapter Seven for additional information regarding the vanishing Indian trope.

> fetched that the Church considered an unnerving and hauntingly jarring musical interval to be actually invocative rather than merely evocative of the Devil and hell.[14]

An element of utopianism resided in the minds of European people relocating to America. Religious or material intent aside, emigrants in the early modern period shared a common goal of creating a better life in the new world. United in spirit, colonists intoned an absolutist mantra and regarded dissension and disorder as adverse to a harmonious community, as well as antithetical to a harmonious universe. A dissonant musical interval—the tritone—was termed "the devil's interval." Originating in hell, such dissonant tones permeated the wilds of America.

Though religion continued to have a significant presence, reason gained epistemological prominence in the intellectual consciousness of settlers in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Broadly speaking, Enlightenment values promoted a belief in the power of the intellect to enhance life. Faith in "progress" is a legacy of the era, a notion that meshed seamlessly with the Protestant work ethic of settlers. Scientific inquiry, a view of the universe as mechanized, revolutionary political theories, and the transformations of the Reformation reverberated across Europe and America. While Enlightenment reason and science challenged the authority of the Church, the devilish triad of individualism, property rights, and capitalism propelled settler colonialism forward in the struggle for cultural and territorial sovereignty.

American Individualism

The roots of American individualism can be traced to early Protestant settlement. The Reformation's emphasis on personal faith as a means of salvation was a move making God's words more accessible to common folk. The First Great Awakening religious revival of the mid-seventeenth century further shifted the power from church elders (white patriarchal males) to members of the congregation by permitting individuals to directly engage with God.

These intellectual shifts are the first whispers of American individualism that is later apparent to de Tocqueville, recognized by Turner, reverberates in myth, and dominates the ideology of some factions of American culture today.

[14] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 97-98. The tritone consists of two notes, mi and fa, played simultaneously; classical composers used it to represent the acoustics of hell; it is used in film as an acoustic cue of impending sinister action.

Remarking on the young U.S. republic in his observations about democracy in America in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville suggests social equality fosters individualism, which, in the long run, will destroy community. His comments are prescient:

> Egoism is a passionate and exaggerated love of self, which leads a man to connect everything with his own person, and to prefer himself to everything in the world. Individualism...disposes each member of the community to sever himself from the mass of his fellow-creatures...he willingly leaves society at large to itself...Egoism blights the germ of all virtue; individualism, at first, only saps the virtues of public life; but, in the long run, it attacks and destroys all others, and is at length absorbed in downright egoism...[15]

Individualism promotes competition. Radical individualism enables a person to rationalize behaviors where, in a quest for personal gain, the ends justify the means, as manifested in the irregular warfare waged against Indigenous peoples. Marked by disregard for others, individualism contributes to the stratification of social classes, the theme of this nineteenth-century ditty:

My country, 'tis of Thee,
Land of lost Liberty,
Of Thee we sing.
Land which the Millionaires,
Who govern our affairs,
Own for themselves and heirs,
Hail to thy King.

Land where the wealthy few
Can make the many do
Their royal will.
And tax for selfish greed
The toilers till they bleed;
And those, not yet weak-kneed,
Crush down and kill.[16]

Individualism strikes a dissonant chord in the settler colonial ideology of composing a harmonious community and disseminating harmonic Christian doctrine. Yet individualism, with exceptionalism, are deeply ingrained beliefs residing in the psyche of settlers. Complicit with private property and capital accumulation, America's brand of radical individualism is a powerful component of settler colonialism enabling adherents to trample on the rights of others.

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[15] Alexis de Tocqueville, "Chapter II: Of Individuals in Democratic Countries," *Democracy in America,* Book Two, 1840, https://gutenberg.org/cache/epub/816/pg816-images.html#link2HCH0023.

[16] *The Future America,* Traditional and H.C. Dodge, *c.*1890 (excerpt), *The Hand that Holds the Bread: Progress and Protest in the Gilded Age Songs from the Civil War to the Columbian Exposition*, New World Records, 1997.

#2: Invention of Property

The principle of prior appropriation, "first in time, first in right," characterizes settler colonialism. As historian Patricia Limerick writes, the idea of getting there first carries an almost mystical weight. Though there are other measures for allocating property rights (i.e., merit, need, intention), preemption facilitated settler land acquisition despite the time-honored presence of Indigenous peoples.

Philosopher John Locke formalized the concept of property in 1689. Locke's influential political ideas included enclosure of the commons in England and America and the privatization of property. The enclosure of the commons was a draconian mechanism for dispossessing the less privileged. An anonymous landless commoner sums up the situation in song:

> They hang the man and flog the woman
> That steals the goose from off the common,
> But let the greater villain loose
> That steals the common from the goose.
>
> The law doth punish man or woman
> That steals the goose from off the common
> But lets the greater felon loose
> That steals the common from the goose.
>
> The law locks up the hapless felon
> who steals the goose from off the common
> And geese will still a common lack
> Till they go and steal it back.[17]

Advocating for private plots of land as superior to collectively farmed public spaces and likening Indigenous peoples to English commoners, Locke asks "whether in the wild woods and uncultivated waste of America, left to nature, without any improvement, tillage, or husbandry, a thousand acres yield the needy and wretched inhabitants as many conveniences of life as ten acres of equally fertile land do in Devonshire, where they are well cultivated."[18] Locke never stepped foot in America; if he had, he would have seen vast acres of cultivated corn and other crops tended by Indigenous women, far outpacing the yield of the exhausted English countryside.

Locke's contention is that labor provides the basis for property rights. More specifically, the cultivation (or improvement) of land, wherein a planter mixes his labor—the work of his hands—with something existing in the state

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[17] *The Goose and the Common,* 17th century folk song; author unknown (excerpt).
[18] John Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, 1689 (George Routledge and Sons, 1903), 204.

of nature (or "the common state Nature placed it in"), grants ownership rights to he who worked the land. In the *Second Treatise on Civil Government*, Locke argues:

> Though the earth and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a "property" in his own "person." This nobody has any right to but himself. The "labour" of his body and the "work" of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever, then, he removes out of the state that Nature hath provided and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with it, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.[19]

Locke's treatise is significant in that it provided colonists with philosophical justification for taking Indigenous land. In fact, Indigenous peoples were cultivating land *en masse;* they just weren't using European methods. As delineated in Chapter Four, agriculture accounted for more than one-half of Indigenous food, with corn the primary crop.[20] In lore passed down in song and story, colonists conveniently ignored the acres of corn and other plants they found and subsequently destroyed.

Although Locke's formula for property had long-range implications leading to commodified parcels, evidence shows "that common property was a central feature of both Native and settler forms of land tenure in the early colonial period and that dispossession came about largely through the clash of an Indigenous commons and a colonial commons."[21] In the seventeenth century, the conflict lay in differing methods of managing the commons: Indigenous peoples did not have livestock so fences were unnecessary; settlers allowed livestock to roam in the wild including on Indian lands threatening Indigenous subsistence. In time, settlers encouraged their stock to trample Indian fields "in a deliberate effort to drive Natives away and take over their lands."[22] Addressing Indigenous property rights, Locke erroneously portrays Natives as hunter-gatherers:

> The fruit or venison which nourishes the wild Indian, who knows no enclosure, and is still a tenant in common, must be his...before it can do him any good for the support of his life...Thus this law of reason makes the deer that Indian's who hath killed it; it is allowed to be his goods who hath bestowed his labour upon it, though, before, it was the common right of every one. And amongst those who are counted the civilized part of mankind...in what was before common, still takes place..."[23]

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[19] Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government*, 204.

[20] Allan Greer, "Commons and Enclosure in the Colonization of North America," *The American Historical Review* 117, no. 2 (2012): 369, https://www-jstor-org.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/stable/pdf/23310740.pdf?refreqid=fastly-default%3A14b149feed673ac22f7b7e6253bfb6c9&ab_segments=&initiator=&acceptTC=1; also, Dallas Bogan, "Indian Cornfields," Warren County (Ohio) Local History, 2004, https://warren.ohgenweb.org/Bogan/bogan134.html.

[21] Greer, "Commons and Enclosure," 366. Early settlements utilized a commons as basic survival tasks superseded fencing.

[22] Greer, "Commons and Enclosure," 382.

[23] Locke, *Two Treatises on Civil Government,* 204-206.

Simply stated, the Indian has a right to a successfully hunted animal but has no particular claim on the other deer in the forest (until his labor has dispatched one). Nor does the Indian have a claim on the forest itself as, according to Locke, (ignoring preemptive rights), it is in a state of nature, the common right of everyone.

In addition to divine entitlement, colonists believed they had a cultural imperative to domesticate the American landscape. Following the hierarchal structuring of nature, "it was a common assumption that societies followed an inevitable sequence of development, from hunting and gathering to herding, agriculture, and, finally, manufacturing."[24] Locke's formulation of property rights resonated with colonists, including the founding fathers of the American republic who viewed the Jeffersonian ideal of an independent, diligent, hard-working, yeoman farmer as the model citizen of a democratic republic. In their view, the "success of the American experiment rested on the property-holding success of many individuals."[25]

Explicit in Locke's formulation of property is the notion of "progress"—an expectation that the world must be kept in a constant state of "improvement." Newcomers' perceptions of a howling and desolate wilderness was not simply about recreating an idyllic English landscape. Europeans understood improvement to involve making the land productive "in ways that were recognizable as such by Europeans." Conquest, then, was not merely the acquiring of territory; rather, it required the imposition of European notions of civilization and colonizing methods of production—ecological interventions called terraforming.[26] As voiced in this song, settlers held an enduring faith in progress:

> The age of giant progress,
> Americans all hail!
> The land all interwoven
> With telegraph and rail;
> No sluggish chains shall bind us,
> No tardiness delay;
> The morning light is breaking
> O'er our destiny.[27]

Of course, Indian Country was productive and stewarded, just in ways unrecognizable to settlers (i.e., companion planting to enhance growth and fire to shape the landscape). Oglala Lakota chief Standing Bear reflects on

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[24] Patricia Nelson Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 58.

[25] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest,* 58.

[26] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 63.

[27] *The Age of Progress*, H. De Marsan, *c.* 1860 (excerpt), Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, https://www.loc.gov/resource/amss.sb10001b/?st=image&r=-0.352,0.257,1.11,1.001,0.

the difference: "We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills, and winding streams with tangled growth as 'wild.' Only to the white man was Nature a 'wilderness' and only to him was the land 'infested' with 'wild' animals and 'savage' people. To us it was tame. Earth was bountiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery."[28]

European settlers, on the other hand, viewed the elements in the landscape as objects to be conquered for resources that could generate profit as well as provide sustenance, a notion instantiated in the various Gold Rushes. The lyrics of an 1849 miner's song reiterate the settler assumption of property rights applied to resource extraction: cultivation, or the making and working a claim gives the miner ownership rights to the findings. Forty-niners were also frantically following the European historical tradition of prior appropriation, in the race to stake a claim. In the Gold Rush incarnation, the promised land of Judeo-Christian scripture is not a promise of religious freedom but of wealth accumulation.

Inspired by the Gold Rush, miners often adapted minstrel tunes to express positive and negative Gold Rush sentiments.[29] Some well-known compositions include Stephen Foster's *Oh Susannah!* (coopted to *Oh California!* by prospectors) and *Camptown Races.*[30] Gold Rush songs like *Ho! For California!* were also standard repertoire:

> Then, ho! Boys ho!
> To California go
> There's plenty of gold in the world we're told
> On the banks of the Sacramento
>
> We've formed our band, we're all well manned
> To journey afar to the promised land
> Where the golden ore is rich in store
> On the banks of the Sacramento shore[31]

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[28] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 64, citing Thomas Yellowtail, *Yellowtail, Crow Medicine Man and Sun Dance Chief: A Autobiography* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 49.

[29] Minstrel shows were an immensely popular form of entertainment for European-Americans during the nineteenth century. Minstrel tunes incorporated black vernacular, the dialect of enslaved African Americans. In another example of white supremacy, when performed by white actors in blackface, the intention was to ridicule African Americans as dimwitted, lazy buffoons. Instrumentation included banjo, fiddle, accordion, tambourine, and bones. Note that most musical instruments in a minstrel show were composed of animal skin and bones, decried by clergy as glorification of the flesh and tools of the devil.

[30] *Oh Susannah!* and a number of other minstrel tunes were written by Stephen Foster who ironically was an abolitionist.

[31] *Ho! For California!,* 1849, lyrics by Jesse Hutchinson, Jr. to Dan Emmett's *Boatman's Song* melody (excerpt), Ballad of America, *Ho! For California: About the Song,* https://balladofamerica.org/ho-for-california/.

Though prospectors formed communities in mining camps, a philosophy of "every man for himself" ruled, echoing Crèvecoeur's observation: "Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, SELF-INTEREST: can it want a stronger allurement?"[32]

Also implicit in the song is the settler embrace of capitalism and property, the emergence of which roughly coincided with the onset of settler colonialism. In conjunction with Locke's formulation of property, the enclosure of the English commons and the great American commons was a significant change in land-use. According to both critics and supporters, loss of the commons led to the rise of capitalism, due to a simultaneous increase in the "factors of production: natural resources, labour, capital, and enterprise," all of which there was no shortage in colonial America.[33]

#3: Capitalism

In a radically simplified rendering of capitalism, Adam Smith argued that an increase in the profits of an individual entrepreneur would lead to an increase in the collective wealth of a community, assuming the reinvestment of surplus profit in additional production. Thus, the notion of continual progress, already fixed in settler logic, is embedded in capitalism.

The advent of capitalism coincided with the concept of property and both are intertwined: the enclosure of the commons created a surplus of labor available for industrialized production. Settler colonialism emerged concurrently with both capitalism and property, quickly conflating and misconstruing the economics of capitalism with American values of democracy and liberty, and incorporating the corrosive factor of radical individualism.

Implicit in a capitalist system is reinvestment as opposed to wealth accumulation. That capitalism requires reinvestment in production is at odds with America's radical individualism (as forewarned by de Tocqueville). The theory of egoism as altruism led to severe social class division and the impoverishment of working people as conveyed in this laborer's song lyrics:

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[32] Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782), Chapter III. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/4666/pg4666-images.html.

[33] Charlie Harris, "Enclosing the English Commons: Property, Productivity and the Making of Modern Capitalism," *University of Oxford Global History of Capitalism Project* (2022): 7, https://globalcapitalism.history.ox.ac.uk/files/case26-enclosingtheenglishcommonspdf.

In Summer he toil'd through the faint sultry heat;
Alike in the "Winter the cold and the wet;
So blythe and so merry, he'd whistle and sing,
As canty as ever a bird in the Spring."

'I moil and I toil, and I labour all day,
At night I do bring my full wages away;
"What tho' it be possible we do live poor,
"We still keep the ravening wolf from the door.'"

"I reap and I mow, and I harrow and sow,
Sometimes I to hedging and ditching do go;
No work comes amiss, for I thresh and I plow;
Thus I eat my Bread by the sweat of my brow.[34]

The dispossession of Europe's working classes created the material conditions for settler colonialism to thrive by creating a multitude of impoverished people in need of land, which America offered in no short supply. Capitalism supplied the psychological conditions—both distress and incentive. Critical theorist Robert Nichols argues capitalism and dispossession are historically intertwined.[35] He finetunes the definition of dispossession to consist of the combined processes of alienation and diremption.

Alienation is a condition that occurs when people become distanced from the social and economic structures they created—for settlers that being capitalism, a system in which laborers are disconnected from the products of their labor. According to Nichols, in Europe and subsequently America, capitalism spawned and continues to spawn alienation in the multitudes of emigrant settlers and their descendants by creating a society which holds dominion over the individuals that constitute it. Whether political or religious émigrés, colonizing settlers—squatters, homesteaders, frontiersmen, and traders—were often destitute, displaced, and dispossessed themselves, casualties of what John Stuart Mill refers to as "social tyranny." Due to the insidiousness of its source (that being capitalism), social tyranny results in alienated and displaced people in need of a home and land—setting the stage for dispossession of others.

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[34] *The Honest Labourer,* Traditional, *c.* 1685 (excerpt), *Roxburghe Ballads* Vol. VII, (The Ballad Society, 1893): 328-330, https://ia801305.us.archive.org/29/items/roxburgheballads07chapuoft/roxburgheballads07chapuoft.pdf; Robin Ganev, "Ballads and Poems' Condemnation of Enclosure in Eighteenth Britain," in *Songs of Protest, Songs of Love: Popular Ballads in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Manchester University Press, 2009), https://dlc.dlib.indiana.edu/dlcrest/api/core/bitstreams/e3ba2e2f-9243-4fe7-965b-7f29f08dc115/content. Alternative final stanza: "Come, buy this new Ballad, before you doe goe: If you raile at the Author, I know what I know. To the Tune of Ile tell you but so."

[35] Robert Nichols, *Theft is Property: Dispossession and Critical Theory* (Duke University Press, 2020), 92-98.

Figure 5. *A Family of Itinerant Musicians with Houseboat near Fargo, North Dakota,* Fred Huttstrand, *c.* 1900. The exact location is unknown, possibly Devils Lake, North Dakota, or the Missouri River near Fargo. Details regarding the family are also unknown, though it appears likely they are landless and live on the houseboat.

At the same time, capitalism encourages competition, creating social divisions and furnishing conditions for othering to flourish. Diremption, or hierarchal categorization, works hand-in-hand with capitalism creating what amounts to a caste system. Nichols contends alienation allows hierarchal categorization to take precedence, thereby skewing the power dynamic and setting up "the domination of *some by others.*"[36] Diremption, in concert with the alienation of capitalism, are contributing factors for dispossession—the dispossession of the European and American non-elite and the subsequent dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

From a binary perspective, dispossession is often referred to as the flip side of territorial acquisition and possession. The relocation of Europe's dispossessed not only prompted the dispossession of Indigenous peoples; in the minds of settlers, it necessitated it, a consequence of the intellectual legacy of a dualistic world view.

Dissonance in music is a metaphor for dissonance in culture. Where in music, the devil's tritone is perceived as harsh and uncomfortable, in the psychology of an individual and of a culture, cognitive dissonance manifests as discomfort, stress, anxiety, anger, guilt, and shame. The devil's triad—individualism, property, and capitalism—in concert with the disharmony informing settler religions, underly the unsettled and violent dissonance of settler colonial culture.

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[36] Robert Nichols, *Theft is Property,* 95.

CHAPTER SIX

EMBODIED COSMIC VIBRATIONS

[NATIVE DANCE]

> [T]he Chiefs sung this song, and accompanied the music with dancing, and gestures that corresponded with the sentiments expressed, as a kind of stimulant to increase their courage, and anxiety to march forward to the place of carnage...When they perform it, they arm themselves with a war-club, tomahawk and knife, and commence singing with firm voice, and a stern, resolute countenance: but before they get through they exhibit in their features and actions the most shocking appearance of anger, fury and vengeance, that can be imagined: No exhibition of the kind can be more terrifying to a stranger. —The War Dance of the Six Nations

> The Peace Dance was performed to a tune without words, by both sexes. The Indians stand erect in one place, and strike the floor with the heel and toes of one foot, and then of the other, (the heels and toes all the while nearly level), without changing their position in the least. The squaws at the same time perform it by keeping the feet close together, and without raising them from the ground, move a short distance to the right, and then to the left, by first moving their toes and then their heels. This dance is beautiful, and is generally attended with decency. —The Peace Dance of the Six Nations[1]

Captured by the Seneca in 1755, Mary Jemison's narrative is insightful and less biased than most other settler observations of Indigenous customs. After twelve-year-old Jemison was taken captive by the Shawnee, she was adopted by the Seneca with whom she remained until her death in 1833. Jemison contrasts the warrior's terror-inducing War Dance with the quiet, subtle, shifting movements of women and men participating in the Peace Dance, without casting judgement. The War Dance would be performed prior to going to battle. Both dances would be performed in succession at an end of the year ceremony, a nine-day feast held at the time of the old moon (the end of January or beginning of February), in preparation for the new year.

Seneca dances are representative of the collective social structure that informs Indian Country, in part the locus of this chapter. The communal existence favored by Native peoples—at odds with settler social convention—is a logical extension of the relationality inherent in Indigenous cultures with ceremonial dance the embodiment of those cultural values. As exemplified in the encounter on the Kennebec between French sailors and the Armouchiquois, misinterpretation by Europeans of Indigenous dance reflects the cultural disconnect and are examined further.

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[1] Mary Jemison, *A Narrative of the Life of Mrs. Mary Jemison, Who was taken by the Indians, in the year 1755, when only about twelve years of age, and has continued to reside amongst them to the present time*, ed. James E. Seaver, https://www.gutenberg.org/files/6960/6960-h/6960-h.htm.

John White's watercolor drawings of Secoton (*c.* 1585), an Algonquian village on the coast of what is now North Carolina adjacent to the ill-fated Roanoke colony, were minimally influenced by European aesthetics and misconception. White's watercolors are the earliest known drawings by Europeans of Indigenous peoples and, like Jemison's narrative, convey an interrelated and ordered Indigenous world informed by ceremony.[2] Figure 6 captures details of life in Secoton village. Pictured in the foreground is a ceremonial dance. Dancers wave rattles and a drummer sits at the far right. Fields of corn are depicted in varying stages of growth along with a tomb, sacred fire, various structures, and people dining among other things.

Figure 6. *Indian Village of Secoton*, John White, *c.* 1585-1586. The town of Secoton; bird's-eye view of town with houses, lake at the top, fire, fields and ceremony; watercolor over graphite, heightened with white, on paper. "White took most care here in depicting the activities of the people in the town: guarding the corn, which he indicates was sown in three stages (so it was ready for harvest from late July until September); 'sitting at meate'; their place 'of solemne prayer'; the 'Tombe of their Herounds'; and the 'Ceremony in their prayers' around posts carved with faces, while others rest on the sides." Text K. Sloan, *A New World: England's First View of America*, London, BM Publications, 2006, No. 8, 110-11, The British Museum, London.

[2] "Roanoke Island in the 1500s," Fort Raleigh, National Park Service, Washington, D. C., https://home.nps.gov/fora/learn/historyculture/roanoke-island-in-the-1500s.htm.

Jamestown resident William Strachey wrote detailed descriptions of the colony and the customs of the region's Native inhabitants. Strachey notes no single day was more holy than another in the Powhatan village but dances would be held in times of distress, fear of enemies, times of triumph, and gathering bountiful fruits.

> [T]he whole Country—men, women, and children, come togither to their solempnities, the manner of which jolly divotion is sometymes to make a great fier in the house or fields, and all to sing and daunce about yt, in a ring like so many fayries, with rattles and showtes, four or five howers together, sometimes fashioning themselves in twoo Companies, keeping a great Cercuyt, one Company caunceth one waie and the other the Contrary, all very fynely painted, certayne men going before with either of them a Rattle, other following in the midst, and the rest of the trayne of both wings in order four and four...[3]

According to Strachey, the Indians would not think they had sufficiently welcomed a guest into their community "until they had shewed them a daunce" which he then describes:

> ...one of them standeth by with some furre or leather thing in his left hand, upon which he beates with his right, and sings withall, as if he began the quier, and kept unto the rest their just tyme, when upon a certayne stroke or word (as upon his Cue or tyme to come in) one riseth up and begynns to daunce; after he hath daunced a while steppes forth another, as if he came in just upon his rest; and in this order all of them some many as there be one after another who then daunce and equall distaunce from each other in a ring showting, howling and stamping their feete against the ground with such force and paine that they sweat agayne, and with all variety of strang mymick tricks and distorted faces, making so confused a yell and noyse as so many frantique and disquieted bachanalls, and sure they will keepe stroak just with their feete to the tyme he gives, and just one with another, but with the hands, head, face, and body, every one hath a severall gesture...[4]

Though Strachey identifies different reasons occasioning Native dance, other European explorers made little distinction and often misinterpreted Native ceremony. Samuel de Champlain records numerous instances of Natives "dancing and signifying the pleasure they felt" when greeting the Frenchmen. "A great many savages came to us, both men and women, who ran up from every direction dancing...There a hundred and fifty savages came to meet us, singing and dancing, according to their custom."[5]

While John Smith's *Writings* are often identical to Strachey's narrative and he echoes Champlain's experience of Indigenous dancers as welcoming, Smith also relays a markedly dissimilar experience:

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[3] Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia,* 91-92. Historians note that Strachey stands out from his contemporaries in part because of his detailed descriptions of Indigenous ceremony, and while firmly situated in a Eurocentric interpretation, he was not as critical of Powhatan singing, writing: "When they sing they have a pleasaunt tange in their voices." Clements, "Translating Context and Situation," 405; and Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia,* 64.

[4] Strachey, *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia,* 81.

[5] De Champlain, *Voyages and Explorations*, 99, 116 and 122.

> Two dayes we were inforced to inhabite these uninhabited Isles which for the extremitie of gusts, thunder, raine stormes, and ill wether we called Limbo. Repairing our saile with our shirts, we set saylc for the maine and fell with a pretty convenient river on the East called Cuskarawaok, the people ran as amazed in troups from place to place, and divers got into the tops of trees, they were not sparing of their arrowes, nor the greatest passion they could expresse of their anger. Long they shot, we still ryding at an Anchor without there reatch making all the signes of friendship we could. The next day they came unarmed, with every one a basket, dancing in a ring, to draw us on shore: but seeing there was nothing in them but villany, we discharged a volley of muskets charged with pistoll shot, whereat they all lay tumbling on the grownd, creeping some one way, some another into a great cluster of reedes hard by; where there companies lay in Ambuscado.[6]

As in the exchange of songs between the Armichiquois and the Jesuits, Indigenous dance could have different meanings the difference of which Europeans could not always discern. Anna Brickhouse describes a similar situation (minus the dancing) when Columbus was exploring San Salvador and a large group of Natives came to shore offering food and water. Columbus becomes "'afraid, seeing a big stone reef that encircled that island all around.'" Brickhouse suggests what is more dangerous to Columbus than being lured onto the reef is his "failure to imagine that the diplomacy of [Natives]...involving a potentially dangerous opponent, deploys the appearance of social niceties to effect underlying strategy."[7] The centuries' long history of colonialism has been riddled with such misconception and misinterpretation.

Two hundred years later, Lewis and Clark utilized music and dance as a tool of diplomacy for engaging with Indigenous communities as well as a form of entertainment and recreation for the members of the expedition. While wintering at Fort Clatsop on what is now the Oregon coast, a large gathering of Natives assembled at the expedition's camp. Clark recounted the evening soirée:

> [On April 28, 1806] ...a little before Sun Set the Chim nah poms arrived; they were about 100 men and a fiew women; they joined the Wallah wallahs who were about 150 men and formed a half Circle arround our camp where they waited verry patiently to See our party dance. the fiddle was played and the men amused themselves with danceing about an hour. we then requested the Indians to dance untill 10 at night. the whole assemblage of Indians about 350 men women and Children Sung and danced at the Same time. most of them danced in the Same place they Stood and mearly jumped up to the time of their musick. Some of the men who were esteemed most brave entered the Space around which the main body were formed in Solid Column and danced in a Circular manner Side wise. at 10 P M. the dance ended and the nativs retired; they were much gratified in Seeing Some of our Party join them in their dance. one of their party who made himself the most Conspicious Character in the dance and Songs, we were told was a Medesene man & Could foretell things. that he had told of our Comeing into their Country and was now about to Consult his God the moon if what we Said was the truth &c. &c.[8]

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[6] Smith, *Captain John Smith,* 336.

[7] Brickhouse, *The Unsettlement of America,* 23.

[8] William Clark, *Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition: 1803-1806,* January 1, 1805, https://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/item/lc.jrn.1806-04-28#lc.jrn.1806-04-28.02.

The closing sentence of Clarks' journal entry is prophetic. In part due to translation issues and in part to disingenuity, Lewis and Clark never told Native peoples the true nature of the expedition which, in addition to cementing the fur trade, was for the young republic to eventually take control of all Indigenous land.

In oral histories recounting the meeting between their ancestors and the expedition, the Salish Pend-d'Oreille Committee and Salish Elders attribute profound misunderstanding and miscommunication to both sides. They suggest that communication between Indigenous and white people was for the most part flawed. The "Salish thought the expedition members must have been in mourning, since their hair was cut short. They thought their skin was pale pink because they were cold. They thought the African American member of the expedition, York, was a warrior who had painted himself black in preparation for war or in mourning after his defeat in battle...[Lewis and Clark] did not take with them the robes and clothing Chief Three Eagles had given them [nor did they eat the dried meats and baked camas]. Perhaps they did not understand they were gifts."[9]

The Salish Elders are being incredibly gracious; in 1806, with the expedition on its return, members had enough knowledge of Indigenous customs to know not accepting a gift was extremely disrespectful. In *Braiding Sweetgrass,* Kimmerer explains the difference between a gift economy which involves a formal give-and-take that honors participation with and dependence upon other human and non-human beings as opposed to a market economy where everything is a commodity to be bought and sold.[10] Existing in relationship to all of creation kindles a set of ethical standards markedly dissimilar to settler norms.

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Kinship Embodied

Although there are five-hundred seventy-four federally recognized Indigenous tribes in the U.S. with each retaining a distinct culture, there are commonalities between groups as well. Dance plays a central function in most Indigenous communities and often has sacred ceremonial value. Relationship, central to Indigenous existence, is

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[9] Salish Pend-d'Orielle Cultural Committee and the Elders Cultural Advisory Council, Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, *The Salish People and the Lewis and Clark Expedition* (University of Nebraska Press, 2008 & 2016), 91-94. African American York mystified the Salish. In addition to confusion about his black coloring, some thought he was a *q^{w}ásaq^{w}i?* —a ceremonial blue jay (medicine person), with his face covered in charcoal readying for a ceremony. Also, blankets were given to sit on; the corps members threw them about their shoulders (91-105).

[10] Kimmer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 29-31.

expressed through collective dance. The cooperative nature of dance reflects the importance of human relations in addition to the community's interdependence in a larger world. In its broadest sense, dance is a vital expression of community for Native peoples and a means of "establishing harmony with the earth."[11]

Indigenous dances have multiple purposes and can be separated into ceremonial and social traditions. Social dances are primarily for socializing children to the ways of the community, achieved by representing a community's social structure and traditional values visibly arranged and ordered through dance.[12] Unlike Western dance, Indigenous social dance is not intended for entertainment, recreation, or courtship. In contrast, ceremonial dances facilitated sacred connections to the non-human world. Though dances may have targeted themes (i.e., good health, successful harvest or hunt, rain, etc.), the overriding intention of ceremony and dance was, and is, to express gratitude—in particular to the other-than-human world.

Native dance traditionally follows a circular form. In his autobiography, Lakota visionary and healer Black Elk speaks of circles:

> You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles...The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles...The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood...Our tepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.[13]

Artist George Catlin captured ceremonies and the traditional regalia of Plains Indians in paintings. Catlin feared the demise of Indigenous peoples and strove to accurately document rituals, dress, shelters, and other cultural markers. The circular formation of the Buffalo Dance of the Mandan is depicted in Figure 7.

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[11] Howard Meredith, *Dancing on Common Ground: Tribal Cultures and Alliances on the Southern Plains* (University of Kansas Press, 1995), 18.

[12] Ron LaFrance, "Inside the Longhouse: Dances of the Haudenosaunee" in *Native American Dance Ceremonies and Social Traditions*, ed. Charlotte Heth (Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of the American Indian, 1992), 20.

[13] Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*, 121.

Figure 7. *Buffalo Dance, Mandan,* George Catlin, 1835-1837, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The [buffalo] mask is put over the head, and generally has a strip of the skin hanging to it, of the whole length of the animal, with the tail attached to it, which, passing down over the back of the dancer, is dragging on the ground. When one becomes fatigued of the exercise, he signifies it by bending quite forward, and sinking his body towards the ground; when another draws a bow upon him and hits him with a blunt arrow, and he falls like a buffalo—is seized by the bye-standers, who drag him out of the ring by the heels, brandishing their knives about him; and having gone through the motions of skinning and cutting him up, they let him off, and his place is at once supplied by another, who dances into the ring with his mask on; and by this taking of places, the scene is easily kept up night and day, until the desired effect has been produced, that of 'making buffalo come.'" —George Catlin, *Letters and Notes,* Vol. 1, no. 18, 1841.

Indigenous values are expressed ceremonially in dance of which there is tremendous variety. One of the earliest records of an Indigenous dance was of a ceremonial corn dance at Secoton (*c.* 1585-1587), described by Thomas Harriot and painted by John White (Figure 8).[14] Performed throughout Indigenous agricultural communities, the Green Corn Dance is a celebration of the ripening of the corn and an expression of thanks and recognition of corn (along with beans and squash) as life sustaining. Author Kimmerer explains that one of our responsibilities as human beings is to find ways to enter into reciprocity with the other-than-human world. She writes, "We can do it through gratitude, through ceremony, through land stewardship, science, art, and in everyday acts of practical reverence."[15] The Corn Dance, which varies by community, provides a way for people to maintain a healthy relationship to the corn with a ceremony rooted in gratitude and responsibility.

[14] Thomas Harriot, *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia,* 1590, 59. An engraving of *The Corn Dance* in Harriot's book was copied from White's original by Theodor de Bry, in which the figures were amended to exhibit European attributes. https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/hariot/hariot.html.

[15] Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass,* 185.

Figure 8. *Corn Dance* (a festive dance, around circle of posts), John White, *c.* 1585-1590, watercolor over graphite on paper, The British Museum, London.

Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) women perform a ceremonial dance called the Women's Shuffle Dance. The dance is led by a young woman carrying a basket containing the three sisters—corn, beans, and squash—the "givers of life." In an expression of oneness, care, comfort, and fertility, the dancers shuffle to massage Mother Earth with their feet.[16]

An example of a social dance, the Drum Dance of the Caddo is a ritual that serves to socialize a young person into the community by conveying the people's creation story, migratory customs, and traditions for civil governance. It is the opening dance of every Caddo ceremony, reflecting and reinforcing the community's history and values:

> Carrying the drum, the men lead, moving in a circle, "traveling in harmony with the movement of the earth, clockwise. Initially, a sequence of eleven songs relates the origins and early heritage of the Caddo. In these songs, specific events are narrated as the Caddo moved from the preceding world into the Southern Plains. Young boys are allowed to join the lead singers...As the dance proceeds around the ground, other men and women join the singers, following their lead. All experience is thereby brought into the image of the tribal narrative.[17]

War Dances, broadcast by the Armouchiquois and chronicled in Mary Jemison's account, were performed before and/or after a battle and usually accompanied by a feast. The dance was characterized by rigorous movements inducing dancers to entrain together, empowering them to operate as a unified fighting force. Loud vocalizations called

[16] LaFrance, "Inside the Longhouse," 25.
[17] Meredith, *Dancing on Common Ground,* 25.

on the power of the ancestors. Accompanied by fierce expressions, dancers' threatening messages were meant to intimidate an enemy and galvanize a warrior's courage.

In Kiowa and other Plains cultures, the Sun Dance was the central most important ceremony, assuring the return of the buffalo, reassembling independent bands of people after the winter dispersal, renewing relationships, and reenforcing unity.[18] Staged at the beginning of summer, the ceremony is centered on community well-being. Apsáalooke medicine woman Pretty Shield recalls the multi-day ceremony as intended "to purify the people and to give them power."[19] Black Elk concurs, explaining that the Lakota held this highly ritualized dance "in the Moon of Fatness [June] because that is the time when the sun is highest and the growing power of the world is strongest"[20]

Synchronicity

The Sun Dance is a multi-day ceremony consisting of purification rites, fasting, prayer, in some instances ritualist piercing of the skin, and dancing. A sacred tree, usually a rustling cottonwood, is cut down and placed at the center of a partially enclosed shelter, tipi, or lodge. To the rhythmic accompaniment of a drum and singers, young men dance in a circle around the pole rising on their toes and blowing whistles until they collapse from exhaustion. The dance is a trial of physical endurance in which the dancers are performing a symbolic sacrifice for the benefit of their community.

Opening Prayer of the Sun Dance[21]

Tunka' sila	Grandfather,
Ho' uwa 'yin kte	a voice I am going to send,
Nama' lion 'ye	hear me.
maka 'sito 'mniyan	All over the universe
ho uwa' yin kte	a voice I am going to send.
nama' lion ye	Hear me,
tunka' sila	grandfather,
wlni' ktelo'	I will live,
epe'lo	I have said it.

The Sun Dance exemplifies characteristics found in much Indigenous ceremonial dancing. Drums, rattles, and flutes as well as singing voices are employed as spirit-talkers. Dancing bodies operate as resonators of the auditory

[18] Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count,* 305-306; Meredith, *Dancing on Common Ground,* 48-49.
[19] Frank B. Lindemann, *Pretty-shield: Medicine Woman of the Crows* (Harper Collins, 1932), 15.
[20] Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks,* 59.
[21] Francis Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music*, 131.

experience. Using their bodies as instruments, dancers kinesthetically reproduce the rhythmic patterns and sounds they hear and feel in their musculatures. Moving in concert with the rhythms of drums, rattles, and chants, dancers increase the volume of sounds with foot stamping, clapping, and jingling and rattling objects sewn onto their clothing. By amplifying the sounds of the spirit-talkers, dance improves the chance of being heard by other-than-human spirits.[22]

Figure 9. *Drawings of Lakota Sun Dance.* Top: Eagle Shield; Bottom: Jaw. From Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music,* 1918, Plate 17. The top drawing illustrates the typical staging of a Sun Dance with an open structure, center pole, and encircled dancers. The drawing below shows dancers with one tied to the pole and another collapsed on the ground. Red Bird, "a thoughtful member of the tribe" (Lakota) described the Sun Dance to Densmore: "There is a great deal in what a man believes, and if a man's religion is changed for the better of for the worse he will know it. The Sun dance was our first and our only religion. We believed that there is a mysterious power greater than all others, which is represented by nature, one form of representation being the sun. Thus we made sacrifices to the sun, and our petitions were granted. The Indians lived longer in the old days than now. I would not say this change is due to throwing away the old religion; there may be other reasons, but in the old times the Sun dance was held annually and was looked forward to with eagerness. I believe we had true faith at that time. But there came a year when 'the sun died,' There was a period of darkness, [referring to a total eclipse August 7, 1869] and from that day a new religion came to the Indians. It is the white man's religion. We are timid about it, as we are about the other ways of the white man. In the old days our faith was strong and our lives were cared for; now our faith is weaker, and we die." —Red Bird (Lakota), 1911.[23]

[22] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 174-175.
[23] Densmore, Teton Sioux Music, 86.

"[R]hythmic beating, gradually speeding up to a climactic pitch, produces a state of excitement and frenzy strongly imbued with the dancers' feeling of oneness."[24] Such ecstatic dancing combines vigorous bodily motion and chanting (or other vocalization) and has the capacity to evoke an altered state of being. It can be augmented by fasting, hyperventilation, and exhaustion as well as by burning tobacco or sweetgrass, or introducing hallucinogenic plants. Performed collectively, dancers can coalesce to "sound and move as one unified being." Termed rhythmic entrainment, dancers synchronize not only with each other but with the spirit world and the ancestors. For Indigenous dancers, "the rhythm that has mastered all of them is a sacred, higher power: the power of Creation. Rhythm is the sound of life itself; the heartbeat of Creation."[25]

As illustrated in Figure 9, structures are constructed for enclosing the Sun Dance ceremony in order to maximize sound. These architectural spaces act as acoustic cavity resonators, further amplifying the auditory experience and providing an environment conducive to entraining rhythmically and achieving altered states of consciousness.[26] Augmenting sound, however, Indigenous ceremony revolving around dance was, and is, a multisensory experience, integrating auditory, tactile, and visual sensation, as well as olfactory and gustatory elements.[27]

For Indigenous peoples, achieving a state of being that produces a transcendent feeling of oneness is a collective ritual that establishes unity for a community. It is not an individual's personal quest for enlightenment as even a vision quest is undertaken for the benefit of everyone. Implicit in the relationality inherent in Indigenous dance is the understanding that community takes precedence over an individual, a concept the opposite of which has come to dominate many non-native American people.

Metaphorically, dancers are representative of all beings. Individually and collectively, they are responsible for maintaining synchronicity with the rhythm driving the universe. As stories, songs, and ceremonies reflect a culture's beliefs, collective memories, and dreams, so too dance. In Indian Country, dance literally and symbolically connects people to one another, to the environment, and to the spirit world. Indigenous aesthetic practices—drumming, singing, and dancing—reflect an Indigenous world view by reinforcing the relationality that informs the universe.

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[24] Barbara Ehrenreich, *Dancing in the Street: A History of Collective Joy* (Henry Holt and Company, 2006), 173.
[25] Hacke and Musselwhite, *Empire of the Senses,* 104.
[26] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 174-175.
[27] Olfactory sensory apparatus activated on account of burning sage, tobacco, or other herbs; gustatory sensory input, the result of feasting which was generally included as an element of Indigenous ceremony.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A SONIC INVASION:

[A TEMPEST OF SETTLER COLONIALISM]

> I was a very small child when the white people came into our country.
> They came like a lion, yes, like a roaring lion, and have continued so
> ever since, and I have never forgotten their first coming.
> —Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins (Northern Paiute), 1883[28]

Foundations of settler colonial intellectual convictions outlined in Chapter Five are actualized in this chapter, depicted in a handful of historical scenarios and relayed in music. Examples range from outright illegal squatting to homesteading to more subtle forms of encroaching on Indigenous land. Vignettes are not comprehensive analyses of frontier myths; rather, the intention is to make visible the dissonance lodged in settler colonial culture (discussed in Chapter Five).

All societies have supporting myths expressed in literature, visual culture, and music. Myth provides psychological justification for cultural norms, beliefs, and behaviors. Myth informs a culture's metaphysical conception of the cosmos—its scale and structure and how and where human beings figure in the overall plan. The power of myth lies in its capacity to influence human thought and behavior; in the case of settler colonialism, it structures and reinforces a narrow and distorted understanding of history.

Settler colonial culture has a grand frontier myth encompassing the exploits of the earliest settlers, iconic characters both European and Indigenous, stereotypical figures including the settler, the cowboy, mountain men, the Indian princess, the vanishing Indian, and concepts such as manifest destiny. The land itself is mythical in scale, in its untamed wild spaces, howling or silent, inhabited by a primitive race or empty.

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[28] Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins, *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (Arcadia Press, 1883 & 2017). Winnemucca Hopkins (Northern Paiute) was born in 1844 near Humboldt Lake, Nevada. In 1883, she penned the "first known autobiography written by a Native American woman." "A roaring lion" is a biblical allusion: Peter 5:8: *"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."* During the mid-late nineteenth century, the phrase "roaring lion" was commonly used as a metaphor for the devil, per Sarah Keyes who did an extensive online search yielding nearly 800 hits for the period 1840-1885. Note the reversal of European satanic attributions.

[28] Scholes, *The Puritans and Music in England and New England*, 274.

A Cacophony of Myth

The lands of the western frontier were regarded by the U.S. founding fathers as a pressure valve for an expanding white population and as an apparatus for evading political issues including chattel slavery and the Indian problem. With the continent inhabited by a plurality of peoples, implied in the frontier was the potential of finding common ground as conveyed in the nation's motto *E pluribus unum:* out of one, many. "The West, the theory had gone, was the place where one escaped the trials and burdens of American civilization...But the workings of history carried an opposite lesson. The West was not where we escaped each other, but where we all met."[29] The following stereotypical characters and constructs illustrate the dissonant elements inhered in settler colonial society.

Squatters and Speculators

Squatting and speculation comprised the forward line of westward expansion.[30] Settlers believed they had natural rights to land with ownership on a first-come, first served basis. "First in time, first in right," the principle of prior appropriation prioritizes speed, promotes competition (versus community), and favors the wealthy who have capital to invest.

I staked me a claim in the forest
And sat myself down to hard toil
For two years I chopped and I struggled
But I never got down to the soil.

I tried to get out of the country
But poverty forced me to stay
Until I became an old settler
Then nothing could drive me away.

No longer the slave of ambition
I laugh at the world and its shams
As I think of my pleasant condition
Surrounded by acres of clams.[31]

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[29] Limerick, The *Legacy of Conquest,* 291.

[30] Unabated colonization resulted from the demands of a quickly growing settler population, unrestrained exploitation of animals in the fur trade, and pressure from southern slave-holders to expand an oppressive, capital-driven, plantation-based economy.

[31] *Old Settler's Song (Acres of Claims),* Francis D. Henry, 1874 (excerpt), https://balladofamerica.org/old-settlers-song/.

Prior appropriation also appears to override Locke's property-defining condition of "improving" the land as the practice inspires speculation—the acquisition of property, not to develop it, but specifically to gain profit from resale as a commodity at a higher value. Speculation was enmeshed in the earliest Puritan colonial settlements signaling the capitalist ethic at work in America over a century prior to Adam Smith's publication of the *Wealth of Nations* in 1776. Historian Patricia Limerick writes, "speculation was an economic activity bordering on criminality and playing on unfair advantage; speculative profits were an unearned increment by which selfish individuals took advantage of the innocent and hardworking whose labors constituted the real improvement of the country."[32]

In 1823, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall's decision in *Johnson and Graham vs. M'Intosh,* referencing the preemption clause in the Doctrine of Discovery, established public ownership of Indigenous land in U.S. law, granting Indigenous peoples rights to reside and hunt, while restricting their ability to sell land to anyone except the federal government. While Marshall was attempting to maintain federal control of Indigenous land transfers and curb squatting, his ruling opened the flood gates to westward colonization and wild land speculation. The decision enabled an imperialist and populist U.S. government (the Jacksonian era) to break up Indigenous territory, turn a blind eye to squatters, encourage settlement on Indigenous land, and consistently break treaties with Natives.[33]

Historians note government land allocation plans could not keep up with settlement.[34] Often, officials tasked with oversight were speculators themselves. Comprising the vanguard of westward expansion, squatting was rarely challenged as the ends of individual settlers and of the government were aligned. Both were questing after territory: the individual coveted a piece of ground, the government envisioned the country spanning sea to shining sea. Conveyed in tune lyrics, squatters felt entitled to Indigenous land:

> I am looking rather seedy now while holding down my claim,
> And my victuals are not always served the best;
> And the mice play shyly round me as I nestle down to rest
> In my little old sod shanty on my claim.

---

[32] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest,* 67.

[33] *Johnson and Graham's Lessee v. William M'Intosh,* U.S. Supreme Court, 1823, https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/21/543.

[34] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest,* 61-62, 66-69; Ned Blackhawk, *The Rediscovery of America: Native Peoples and the Unmaking of Native America* (Yale University Press, 2023), 176-247.

> The hinges are of leather and the windows have no glass,
> While the board roof lets the howling blizzards in,
> And I hear the hungry cayote as he slinks up through the grass
> Round the little old sod shanty on my claim.
>
> Yet, I rather like the novelty of living in this way,
> Though my bill of fare is always rather tame,
> But I'm happy as a clam on the land of Uncle Sam
> In the little old sod shanty on my claim.[35]

Though often dispossessed themselves, squatters tended to be self-reliant, fiercely independent, and anti-government which they viewed as infringing on their individual rights. Harboring illusions of white supremacy, they viewed Indigenous peoples as constraints to their project of amassing (stealing) land. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur displays little tolerance for squatters describing them as "the most vicious of people."[36]

> Now we arrive near the great woods, near the last inhabited districts; there men seem to be placed still farther beyond the reach of government, which in some measure leaves them to themselves. How can it pervade every corner; as they were driven there by misfortunes, necessity of beginnings, desire of acquiring large tracts of land, idleness, frequent want of economy, ancient debts; the re-union of such people does not afford a very pleasing spectacle. When discord...wretchedness must ensue...they are often in a perfect state of war; that of man against man, sometimes decided by blows, sometimes by means of the law; that of man against every wild inhabitant of these venerable woods, of which they are come to dispossess them...He who would wish to see America in its proper light, and have a true idea of its feeble beginnings and barbarous rudiments, must visit our extended line of frontiers where the last settlers dwell...There, remote from the power of example and check of shame, many families exhibit the most hideous parts of our society...Such is our progress, such is the march of the Europeans toward the interior parts of this continent.[37]

Author Amitav Ghosh reflects on the progress of the march west, much of it fronted by squatters: "What makes the European colonization of the Americas distinctive, is the sheer scale and the rapidity of the environmental transformations that accompanied it, radically altering more than a quarter of the Earth's land surface in a few hundred years."[38] Characterized by self-centered individualism, unrestrained greed for land and wealth, and conflicted beliefs and behaviors (i.e., Christian harmony/American democracy vs. genocidal violence), the stereotypical squatter exemplifies the dissonance lurking in settler colonial society,

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[35] *The Little Old Sod Shanty on the Claim,* Oliver Edwin Murray (O.E. Murray), 1880 (excerpt), in *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*, ed. John A. Lomax (Sturgis & Walton Company, 1910), 187-189.

[36] De Crèvecoeur, "What is an American?" Chapter III.

[37] De Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer,* Chapter III.

[38] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 54-55.

Manifest Destiny

Faith in the progress of civilization was encapsulated in the fabled concept of manifest destiny. A product of capitalism and religion, manifest destiny fulfilled settler economic ambitions as it also justified colonialism on religious grounds. It fortified a mythic vision of an exceptional nation founded on equality, opportunity, and an unlimited supply of land and raw materials. Exceptionalist settler colonial ideology of manifest destiny informs the lyrics of this nineteenth-century patriotic song:

O beautiful for spacious skies,
For amber waves of grain,
For purple mountain majesties
Above the fruited plain!

O beautiful for pilgrim feet,
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness!

O beautiful for patriot dream
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears!

America! America!
God shed His grace on thee
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea![39]

Homesteading and Fortune-Seeking

The confluence of historical events in the mid-nineteenth century, referred to as the "great coincidence" by historian Eliott West, was so extraordinary as to seem mystical—the raw material of myth. Historical scholar West is alluding to the conclusion of the Mexican War and the discovery of gold on ceded territory within days of each other in 1848, significant numbers of emigrants relocating to the Oregon Territory which had begun a decade earlier, and the exodus of Mormons to Utah.[40] To that convergence add the potato blight and famine in Europe beginning in the same decade.

[39] *America the Beautiful,* lyrics by Katherine Lee Bates, music by Samuel A. Ward, 1893, 1904, 1911 (excerpt).
[40] West, *Continental Reckoning,* 3-18.

The great coincidence ignited a massive movement of primarily white, Protestant, European-Americans west. Statistical data indicates that between 1840 and 1860 alone, over 315,000 emigrants traveled overland.[41] This includes homesteaders headed for Oregon and California, over 40,000 Mormons, and thousands seeking to make a fortune in the gold fields. Two decades later with the end of the Civil War, the Homestead Act making additional land available, the railroad and telegraph unifying the continent, and gold and silver discovered in multiple regions across the western territories, the invasion of settlers continued.

Figure 10. *David Hilton Homestead, Weissert, Custer County, Nebraska, c.* 1887, Solomon D. Butcher, photograph, Nebraska Historical Society. Displaying settler progress in carving civilization out of the wilderness—terraforming—in the foreground is an ornate pump organ surrounded by the Hilton family, immigrants from England via Wisconsin. The organ is placed in front of a fenced corral behind which extends a treeless plain. Fencing defines the border between civilized and uncivilized land. Though titled the *David Hilton Homestead,* the homestead is nowhere to be found. The photographer's notes are telling. "We did not want to show the old sod house to friends back east, but the young lady and mother wanted to prove they owned an organ."[42] The organ as the central feature of the photograph is clearly Mrs. Hilton's most prized possession, attesting to the value of music for this family. Mrs. Hilton was a proud woman, so embarrassed about her living situation she refused to be photographed in front of her sod dwelling. She had Mr. Hilton and the photographer haul the organ out and away from the house. Mrs. Hilton understood that a photograph could fix and convey a story. She was also cognizant of the fact that she could manipulate the story being told by controlling the set-up, propping, framing, and camera angle. Bison and any trace of Indigenous peoples are long gone.

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[41] Other estimates are as high as 350,000 emigrants for the period 1840-1849 in Lillian Schlissel, *Women's Diaries of the Westward Journey* (Schocken Books, 1982), 23-24.

[42] *David Hilton Homestead, Weissert, Custer County, Nebraska, c.* 1887, Solomon D. Butcher, Nebraska Historical Society, Lincoln. #14567: Family in farmyard of David Hilton, shown with pump organ and stool, https://nebraska.access.preservica.com/uncategorized/IO_7d8c9f52-99bd-4c04-9425-1e625aba2c1e/.

Build me a cabin in Utah
Marry me a wife, catch rainbow trout
Have a bunch of kids who call me "pa"
That must be what it's all about,
That must be what it's all about.[43]

Bob Dylan's iconic lyrics capture the settler colonial imaginary: a mythic quest for rootedness, settlement, and harmony in what was assumed to be unsettled wilds of backcountry America. The desire of settlers for stability, fixity, belonging, and integration is at odds with the romanticized national character of a lone, self-reliant, boot-strapping individual precisely because the latter is a myth. Advanced by Frederick Jackson Turner's infamous frontier hypothesis, the settler myth has taken on the aura of truth and it manifests in anti-social behavior. While recent creative endeavors have attempted to dismantle the stereotype, it remains deeply ingrained in the mainstream American imaginary.[44]

Turner's frontier theory has been debated and debunked. Turner astutely commented on, but did not endorse, the potential for U.S. imperialism to extend its reach beyond the contiguous borders circumscribed by geography in a move toward building empire. His assessment of American character was considerably less accurate. Many of the traits he attributes to a typical frontier American, principally individualism, are illusionary. Per Patricia Limerick, "Nothing so undermines the Western claim to a tradition of independence as this matter of federal support to Western development," pointing out that two key frontier schemes—subduing the Indigenous population and distributing land—were federal operations.[45] To this she adds federal subsidies to transportation (i.e., the railroads and later highways) and subsidies to ranchers and loggers through free access to public lands and resources. The U.S. government overlooked any conflict of interest between the public good and private individuals: the goals for each overlapped in terms of land acquisition and progress.

Limerick also foregrounds another frontier trait missed by Turner: the tendency of Westerners to cast themselves as victims. Squatters appropriated Indigenous land and subsequently were perturbed when attacked by Natives; miners followed resource booms only to be frustrated and angry to have missed out. In these and similar instances, contrary to claims "of self-reliance and individual responsibility, misfortune has usually caused white

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[43] *Sign on the Window*, Bob Dylan, 1970 (excerpt), ©1970 by Big Sky Music; renewed 1998 by Big Sky Music.

[44] Though recent films have attempted to dismantle the myth, the settler stereotype remains deeply ingrained in the mainstream American imaginary, as exemplified by the popular television series "Yellowstone."

[45] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest,* 82.

Westerners to cast themselves in the role of innocent victim."[46] Limerick effectively destroys the illusion of an independent individual writing, "There is nothing wrong with interdependence; it is, among other things, a fact of life...In a region where human interdependence has been self-evident, Westerners have woven a net of denial."[47]

Limerick's analysis is thirty years old yet the myths endure. Perhaps their persistence is in part a consequence of egocentric content. John Dewey accepted the historical significance of the frontier, but turned it on its head contending "the legacy of the frontier was narrow-mindedness, anti-intellectualism, and intolerance...[and] the nation was bigoted, selfishly individualistic, and backward-looking."[48] Dewey's comments suggest another element missing in Turner's frontier hypothesis: there being no acknowledgement of the original inhabitants of the continent, Indigenous peoples, as well as women, African Americans, and other ethnic populations. The omission raises the question: who is included and who is excluded from the storied myth of the settler colonial new world? Although Woody Guthrie expanded his community to include the destitute poor, for the most part it was disenfranchised non-native settlers he was singing to when asserting:

> This land is your land, this land is my land
> From California to the New York island,
> From the redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters;
> This land was made for you and me.
>
> As I was walking that ribbon of highway
> I saw above me that endless skyway;
> I saw below me that golden valley;
> This land was made for you and me.
>
> I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps
> To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts;
> And all around me a voice was sounding;
> This land was made for you and me.
>
> When the sun came shining, and I was strolling,
> And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling,
> As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting:
> This land was made for you and me.[49]

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[46] Limerick, The *Legacy of Conquest,* 42.

[47] Limerick, The *Legacy of Conquest,* 95-96.

[48] Kerwin Lee Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination: Narrating the European Conquest of Native America, 1890-1900* (University of California Press, 1997), 21.

[49] *This Land Is Your Land,* words and music by Woody Guthrie, ©1956, 1958, 1970, and 1972 by Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc. & TRO-Ludlow Music, Inc. (BMI).

Homesteaders and fortune-seeking prospectors personify discordant settler colonial traits. Though professing the self-reliance and self-sufficiency of individualism, in actuality, the success of settler colonization was reliant on community and the government.

The American Cowboy

An enduring icon of the American West, the mythological American cowboy shares traits of individualism and self-reliance with the settler, yet has no interest in putting down roots or seeking a fortune. Above all else, a cowboy values freedom from social constraints. At home on the open range, the cowboy is imagined as a lone, white, male individual on horseback with spurs on his boots, a Stetson on his head, packing a rifle and a guitar. The mythic cowboy frequently appears in novels, film and song:

> One night while I was out a ridin'
> The grave yard shift, midnight 'til dawn
> The moon was bright as a readin' light
> For a letter from an old friend back home
>
> And he asked me
> Why do you ride for your money
> Tell me why do you rope for short pay
> You ain't a'getting' nowhere
> And you're losin' your share
> Boy, you must have gone crazy out there
>
> Ah but they've never seen the Northern Lights
> They've never seen a hawk on the wing
> They've never spent spring on the Great Divide
> And they've never heard ole' camp cookie sing[50]

Dismantling the myth, in many songs the cowboy life was difficult, lonely, and marked by longing for a sweetheart and a home. Additionally, cowboys didn't play guitars: they were too bulky to carry on horseback on long cattle drives; more likely, they had fiddles, banjos, or harmonicas. Significantly, not all cowboys were white. According to *The Negro Cowboys,* more than five thousand African American cowboys served on ranch crews following

[50] *Night Rider's Lament,* Michael Burton, ©1975, 1994 Michael Burton Music (excerpt).

emancipation.[51] The fluid transition of former enslaved men to cowboying can be attributed to previous experience working with livestock on Southern plantations.

In twentieth-century film and dime-store novels, the cowboy image evolved into a tall, lanky, white, male, gunslinger—still adverse to social dictates—whose mission was to protect (white settler) civilization from Indigenous Americans and encroaching Mexicans. In effect, the mythical cowboy became the embodiment of racial segregation and anti-immigration ideology, epitomizing settler colonial ideology. In a reflexive feedback loop, the cowboy both reflects the storied character of myth while he concurrently helps craft and disseminate the stereotype through the media, advertising, the arts, and true believers.

Figure 11. *Johnny Guitar,* directed by Nicholas Ray, 1954. This frame from the film encapsulates the stereotype of a cowboy/gunslinger. The film itself, however, is a subversive melodrama that deconstructs the Western genre. "Nicholas Ray's mesmerizingly strange Western takes the stock idea of ranchers trying to keep out newcomers and turns it into a heady allegorical fable about xenophobic persecution...It's a splendid, elemental drama ripe for feminist, Freudian and Marxist interpretation." —British Film Institute (2025)[52]

[51] Philip Durham and Everett I. Jones, *The Negro Cowboys* (University of Nebraska Press, 1965), cited by Dom Flemons, *Black Cowboys*, African American Legacy Recordings, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2018, 5.

[52] Johnny Guitar (1954), BFI/British Film Institute, 2025, https://www.bfi.org.uk/film/4f80b666-69bb-5690-8066-b578647d4134/johnny-guitar.

On Sound & Subduing

In the battle to control the cultural domain, sound (and music) played a role in restructuring the sensory landscape. In addition to defining boundaries, sound in language—naming—is a means of claiming ownership of a place, object, or event in the struggle for cultural control. Colonists regularly imposed European names on Indigenous sites in the process of domesticating the wilderness and claiming ownership. Historian Jean M. O'Brien (White Earth Ojibwe) notes that naming, which she describes as a "possession and replacement narrative," is keenly implicated in the process of place making. The replacement of Indigenous names with settler colonial names was an effort to erase Native peoples from existence, noting that "Indian names of prominent objects were discarded, and others adopted, frequently... without meaning. Indian names were always significant; but in almost every instance, their meaning is lost to us."[53]

In another linguistic instance of appropriation, settlers coopted and adapted Indigenous ways of knowing by restructuring a sensory experience and replacing the Native concept with a European-American idea so as to appear as "natural" as the original sensory experience. An example of coopting and adapting occurred with the thunders: to align with Christian beliefs, settlers exchanged the separate powers and some of the characteristics of the thunders with an all-powerful, all-knowing God, differences being multiple impersonal thunders versus a single human-centric God. This shift retains the Indigenous supernatural property of thunder but alters it to fit Christian ideology. Language matters in claiming ownership and control of the cultural domain. "These practices, then, could be said to undergird [settler] assertions of sensory sovereignty over particular spaces in the New World."[54]

Language also played a role in recasting the foreigner as native in the oxymoronic phrase, "native born" settlers. Amy Kaplan posits that the idea of the home as the site of the domestic or internal creates a division separating it from that which is external and therefore foreign. With regards to settler colonialism, domestication—"home-making"—by white European-American women is the mechanism that enables colonizers to invert the relationship between colonizer and colonized and ironically adopt the mantle of "native-born."[55] Domestication occurs in a number of ways including

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[53] Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 91-93.

[54] Haacke and Musselwhite, *Empire of the Senses,* 27.

[55] Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2002), 26-34.

planting gardens with non-native species, cooking foods from the old country, playing the "great white mother to the Indian race," and making music that reinforces nativity.[56] The following anthem demonstrates the occupancy of the land and possession of the historical narrative by non-native settlers:

> My country, 'tis of thee,
> sweet land of liberty,
> of thee I sing:
> land where my fathers died,
> land of the pilgrims' pride,
> from every mountainside
> let freedom ring!
>
> No more shall tyrants here
> With haughty steps appear,
> And soldier bands;
> No more shall tyrants tread
> Above the patriot dead—
> No more our blood be shed
> By alien hands.
>
> Our fathers' God, to Thee,
> Author of liberty,
> To Thee we sing;
> Long may our land be bright
> With freedom's holy light;
> Protect us by Thy might,
> Great God, our king.[57]

Domestication, taming, subduing: settlers used the language of conquest to describe their collective goal of conquering the wilderness. Ghosh writes, "subdue was a key word in these conquests, recurring again and again in reference not just to human beings ['brutes and savages'] but also to the terrain...an entire range of nonhuman beings—trees, animals, and landscapes."[58] In the encounter between cultures, he asserts that subduing was a crucial step toward de-animating the interrelated Indigenous natural world and replacing it with an inert Eurocentric metaphysics—thereby opening the world to human control in the ongoing quest for progress.

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[56] Margaret D. Jacobs, "The Great White Mother: Maternalism and American Indian Child Removal in the American West, 1880-1940," in *One Step Over the Line: Toward a History of Women in the Great American West,* eds. Elizabeth Jameson and Sheila McManus (University of Alberta Press, 2008): 191-213.

[57] *My Country, 'Tis of Thee,* lyrics by Samuel Francis Smith adapted to the melody of *God Save the King*, 1831 (excerpt).

[58] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 38-39.

European-Americans associated certain sounds with progress. Settlers heard the regulated, controlled, ordered sounds of industrialization as conquering the "visceral and undisciplined 'yell of the savage.'"[59] Hezekiah Niles observed: "Everywhere the sound of the axe is heard opening the forest to the sun, and claiming for agriculture the range of the buffalo...the sound of the spindle and loom succeeds the yell of the savage or the screech of the night owl in the late wilderness of the interior."[60]

Historian Sarah Keyes likens the sounds of westward migration to an advancing military battalion where, "On their journey, Euro-American emigrant trains ripped through the soundscape of the West with a veritable arsenal of sonic weaponry." Emigrant wagons "creaked, groaned, rumbled, and squeaked across the continent. The constant, mingling tones of grinding, lumbering wagons, their bolts grating and iron-encased wheels jolting sharply over rocks, the crack and thwap of whips, and the whistling, hallooing, and hollering of men driving braying mules, lowing cattle, and oxen resounded across Indian country."[61] An overlander describes the sounds reverberating on the trail in 1850:

> We hear on all sides the lowing of cattle, the neighing of horses, the braying of mules, and barking of dogs, mingled with the clack of human voices. To this added the sound of the viol, bugle, tambourine and clarionette. To fill up the chorus, rifles and pistols are almost constantly cracking, responsive to the rumbling, grinding music of carriage-wheels still passing along.[62]

When the armada of wagons would halt and industrious emigrants set up camp or, later in newly established settlements, a different set of sounds filled the air. Axes chopping firewood, hammers pounding, campfires crackling, pots banging, children playing, and settlers playing music, singing, and dancing. It is these sounds, the activities of domestication, that in 1608 John Smith recognized as more important than cannons for establishing a colony at Jamestown. Smith, in effect, understood the necessary framework for building a settler colonial structure: that by changing the environment, "carpenters would succeed where soldiers had failed in dispossessing the natives, because

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[59] Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth Century America,* 108.
[60] Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth Century America*, 108.
[61] Keyes, "'Like a Roaring Lion,'" 38.
[62] Franklin Langworthy, *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains and Mines, or a Diary Kept Upon the Overland Route to California, by Way of the Great Salt Lake: Travels in the Cities, Mines, and Agricultural Districts Embracing the Return by the Pacific Ocean and Central America, in the Years 1850, '51, '52, '53* (New York, 1854 & Forgotten Books, 2016), 73.

[settler] houses and fields would make the landscape hospitable for the [settlers] and inhospitable for the Indians."[63]

Alexis de Tocqueville depicts a similar transformation of the landscape by encroaching colonists:

> From the day when a European settlement rises in the neighborhood of territory occupied by the Indians, the wild game takes fright...the moment the endless noises of European industrial activity are heard in any place, the animals begin to flee...A few European families, by settling in widely separated locations, finally drive away the wild animals from all the intervening land for ever. The Indians who had lived there up to that time in some sort of abundance find it difficult to survive and more difficult still to acquire the necessary articles of barter...Soon they lose, almost entirely, the means of subsistence. Then these doomed people are seen roaming like hungry wolves through their deserted forests.[64]

De Tocqueville would not necessarily perceive this transformation as war *per se*. Ghosh terms this process "terraforming," and argues it functions as a subtle mode of irregular warfare resulting in the elimination of prior inhabitants—human and non-human.

Figure 12. *An Evening Scene, Boston Flat, Calaveras County [miner playing flute] c.* 1857, half-plate daguerreotype, Society of California Pioneers, San Francisco. Terraforming is pictured in a romanticized image of a miner spending leisure time at camp. The reality is that this landscape is already scarred. The few remaining trees still standing will soon be "reduced to shorn stumps, midst unsightly mounds of earth, despoiled river-beds, and denuded slopes." Text from Jane A. Aspinwall, *Golden Prospects: Daguerreotypes of the California Gold Rush,* Yale University Press, 2019, quoting Hubert Bancroft, *History of California* (1888).

[63] Peter C. Hoffer, *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 72.

[64] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America,* trans. Gerald E. Bevan (Penguin, 2003), 378-79.

The introduction of livestock—cattle and pigs—is another instance of terraforming the landscape. Colonist's livestock repeatedly intruded on Indigenous farmed fields in the early settlements. In the nineteenth century, herds of cattle accompanied settlers west trampling the grasslands on which buffalo and many Indigenous groups depended.[65] "Ecological impacts of the colonists' domestic animals were far-reaching: they worsened the effects of erosion, eliminated native grasses, consumed resources that native fauna depended on, contributed to shifts in microclimates, and helped to convert forests into farmland."[66] Following the Civil War, cattle drives brought ranching and cattle, and eventually fences, transforming the landscape by carving up and enclosing the open space of the American West. Musicologist John A. Lomax jotted down this cowboy song:

> As I was a-walking one morning for pleasure
> I spied a cowpuncher all riding along
> His hat was throwed back and his spurs was a-jinglin'
> As he approached me, he was singin' this song:
>
> (Chorus:)
> Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies
> It's your misfortune and none of my own
> Whoopee ti yi yo, git along little dogies
> You know that Wyoming will be your new home
>
> (Yodels:)
> Hoo---------Hoo-Hoo-Hoo.
> Hoo-------Hoo-Hoo-Hoo
> He-oo-He-oo-oo-He-oo-000
> Hoo----------Hoo-Hoo-Hooo.[67]

The struggle to control the physical and cultural landscape ranged from the terraforming of the cowboy to genocidal massacres by local militias and the U.S. military. At the front lines of westward expansion, individual squatters consistently infringed on Indigenous territory and instigated any number of violent acts. Earlier in seventeenth-century Jamestown and New England, a pattern evolved involving settler-rangers forces who, after provoking Indian retaliation,

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[65] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 67.

[66] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 67.

[67] *Whoopee Ti Yi Yo, Git Along Little Dogies*, anonymous, recorded by John Avery Lomax *c.* 1910 (excerpt), *American Ballads and Folk Songs*, eds. John A. Lomax and Alan Lomax (The Macmillan Company, 1934), 387-389. Lomax writes: "The music resembles very slightly the tune you sing, and nothing else at all that I know, It's altogether the wildest I have met in print or open air; and whatever it was originally, the open air and the plains and the night have played their part in giving it the shape I succeeded in capturing."

would practice "wilderness warfare." Rangers would "discover, pursue, fight, surprise, destroy, or subdue" the enemy in a war of annihilation which included killing Indigenous women and children, and destroying villages and fields.[68] A century later, squatter militias followed suit employing similar tactics of unlimited and irregular warfare against Indigenous peoples. Three centuries later, this approach devised to eliminate Indigenous peoples and adopted by the U.S. military, is reiterated in song memorializing Custer's last stand:[69]

> Do you hear the bugles blowing, Sgt. Flynn?
> Do you hear the Sioux-buck crowing, Sgt. Flynn?
> Do you hear the bugles blowing,
> Do you hear the sioux-buck crowing,
> But he doesn't know the tale of Garry Owen.
>
> Here they come like screaming banshees, Sgt. Flynn,
> Sioux and Blackfoot and Commanches, Sgt. Flynn,
> Let their blood run red and gory,
> Write another page for glory,
> Drive the sabers to the hilt for Garry Owen.[70]

When settlers attacked Indigenous settlements, they put dwellings and granaries indiscriminately to the torch, as if to obliterate the [Indigenous] way of dwelling in the landscape." Alternatively, when Indigenous warriors targeted colonial structures, it was not to occupy or use them, but to halt the Europeanization of the landscape by destroying them with fire.[71] In both instances, the intention was less about possessing the land than it was about controlling the cultural landscape.

The Vanishing Indian

A settler colonial myth, the notion of the "vanishing race" or "vanishing Indian" posited that Indigenous peoples would either assimilate or die off and European-Americans as the more "advanced race" would prevail. "The myth aims to justify...in the Western conscious...the decline of Indigenous populations and the colonial measures

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[68] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 63-64. A tactic developed during King Philip's War, settler-ranger forces would enlist Indigenous people as aides and discard afterwards.

[69] Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History,* 56-59.

[70] *Sergeant Flynn (Garryowen),* unknown author and date (excerpt). Revised lyrics to *Garryowen,* a traditional Irish drinking song and Gen. George Armstrong Custer's famed regimental song.

[71] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse,* 66.

weaponized against them."[72] In the words of a settler: "The print of the moccasin is so soon followed by the tread of the engineer and his attendants, and the light trail of red man is effaced by the *road of iron;* hardly have the echoes ceased to repeat through the woods, the Indian's hunter cry, before it is followed by the angry rush of the steam engine, urged forward! still forward! by the restless pursuer of the fated race."[73] Vanishing race ideology held strong currency among white Americans during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This commonly held settler belief was disseminated in a number of ways ranging from literature to visual art, to government policy, to this popular song written in 1855:

> They are gone, they are gone from the wide spreading prairie,
> And hushed is their yell in the deep forest gloom;
> The light bark canoe that once danced like a fairy,
> On the calm silvery lake has a watery tomb.
>
> The smoke of the wigwam, no more is seen curling
> Up through the green leaves on the soft summer air,
> Beside whose low threshold, the brown maiden braided,
> The broad "Mystic Wampum" for lover or sire.
>
> The chieftain no longer the war path is treading,
> As with quiver and bow to his broad shoulders bound;
> And the flashing of hate in his eagle eye gleaming,
> He once led his braves to the fierce battle ground.
>
> Gone, gone is the war-dance, the heart-stealing song,
> That once woke the echoes in valley and glen;
> The Angel of death, hath hushed the wild tongue,
> And left not a trace where those revels have been.
>
> They are gone, they gone but their presence still haunts us,
> With the chill, nameless dread of a terrible dream;
> They are gone, they are gone but they've left their remembrance,
> In valley and woodland, on mountain and stream.[74]

As early as the 1820s, the federal commissioner of Indian Affairs collected painted portraits of Native Americans to document peoples he thought were "doomed" to disappear.[75] The writings of James Fenimore Cooper in the 1820s

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[72] "The Vanishing Indian," *Settler Colonial Myths* (Legal Aid Saskatchewan, University of Saskatchewan, 2024), https://gladue.usask.ca/settlercolonialmyths.

[73] Smith, *Listening to Nineteenth Century America*, 108.

[74] *The Red Man's Requiem,* T. Wood, 1855 (excerpt), U.S. Library of Congress, Horace Waters, 1855, https://www.loc.gov/resource/music.mussm2-sm1855-760580/?sp=1&st=image.

[75] Martha Sandweiss, *Print the Legend: Photography and the American West* (Yale University Press, 2002), 218. Thomas McKenney was Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1824-1830).

romanticized the anticipated demise of Indigenous people. On western expeditions, artists Karl Bodmer and George Catlin painted Indigenous scenes in the 1830s in an attempt to save "from hasty oblivion what could be saved for the benefit of posterity."[76] Perhaps most notorious is Edward S. Curtis's monumental 20-volume effort, *The North American Indian (1907-1930),* the signature image entitled *The Vanishing Race*. Curtis called the image of Diné in Cañón de Chelly "a touching melancholy poem," implying his intention to convey a story of Indigenous displacement—a myth which he sincerely believed— though in actuality the image was contrived.[77]

Figure 13. *Crow Lodge of Twenty-five Buffalo Skins,* George Catlin, *c.* 1832-1833, oil on canvas, Smithsonian American Art Museum. "The Crows, of all the tribes in this region...make the most beautiful lodge...they oftentimes dress the skins of which they are composed almost as white as linen, and beautifully garnish them with porcupine quills, and paint and ornament them in such a variety of ways, as renders them exceedingly picturesque and agreeable to the eye. I have procured a very beautiful one of this description, highly-ornamented, and fringed with scalp-locks, and sufficiently large for forty men to dine under. The poles which support it are about thirty in number, of pine, and all cut in the Rocky Mountains, having been some hundred years, perhaps, in use. This tent, when erected, is about twenty-five feet high, and has a very pleasing effect." —George Catlin, *Letters and Notes,* Vol. 1, no. 7, 1841.

Between 1911 and 1914, ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore recorded 270 Lakota songs on Edison wax cylinders, fearing the loss of traditional Sioux music.[78] Though laboring under the misconception of vanishing race,

[76] Sandweiss, *Print the Legend,* 219, citing George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (1841; reprint Dover Publications, 1873): I, 3.

[77] Timothy Egan, *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012), 147.

[78] Densmore, *Teton Sioux Music,* 1918.

Densmore is now credited with saving Lakota music. In yet another remarkable example, R.H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian School and known for the phrase "kill the Indian in him, and save the man," aggressively promoted cultural assimilation. Supervising imprisoned Native warriors at Fort Marion in the 1870s, Pratt had them perform traditional dances for the public as well as make drawings of pre-reservation era life which he then sold (he claimed) to help fund assimilation projects. By doing so, Pratt, whose mission was to destroy Indigenous cultures, ironically ended up preserving Native cultural practices and historical events as remembered by Natives in practice and in detailed ledger drawings.

Native Americans were also aware of the myth and its effect on their way of life. A 1829 article in the *Cherokee Phoenix* had this observation:

> It is frequently said that the Indians are given up to destruction, that it is the will of heaven, that they should become extinct and give way to the white man. Those who assert this doctrine seem to act towards these unfortunate people in a consistent manner, either in neglecting them entirely or endeavoring to hasten the period of their extinction.[79]

Vanishing race mythology permeated government policy, giving rise to the Indian Removal and Relocation Act of 1830 and the General Allotment Act of 1887. The vanishing Indian myth was and is just that—a myth. The following chapter foregrounds Native peoples' survivance—survival and resistance—despite devastating settler colonial tactics of dispossession. Indigenous people defied settler colonialism using music as a weapon of resistance and as a weapon fostering human flourishing. Craig Harris writes in *Rise Up!:* "Rather than defeat, the music reflects resilience and determination... Despite more than a half millennium of systemic genocide, Indigenous pride has not been extinguished. Native peoples are building toward the future, making sure the lessons from the past are not forgotten."[80]

Enduring frontier myths uphold a narrow and distorted understanding of history. While mainstream settler culture appears to vehemently support their mythic heroes, Indigenous peoples have worked diligently to overcome the vanishing race fiction, wielding music as a weapon for flourishing, as outlined in the following chapter.

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[79] Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *"All the Real Indians Died Off" and 20 Other Myths about Native Americans* (Beacon Press, 2016), 60-75.

[80] Harris, *Rise Up!* 293.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A CRUEL WIND

[THERE WAS LITTLE SINGING ANYWHERE]

Processes of forced removal and relocation of Indigenous peoples from their homelands was a hallmark of settler colonialism since the earliest European settlements on American shores. Deliberate extermination of the buffalo echoed the destruction of corn and crops in the war of annihilation waged by colonists. Removal and relocation of Native peoples onto reservations reenacted earlier dispossession and relocation waged by white settlers coveting land from New England to the Southeast to California. This chapter addresses the dispossession and the resistance of Indigenous peoples, a consequence of the European-American effort to establish a particular way of life on stolen land, and the pivotal role of music in countering the brutality of settler colonial domination.

Resourceful Indigenous peoples employed creative strategies utilizing music to defy colonial authorities and to influence public opinion and effect political change. Methods ranged from appropriating U.S. holidays for traditional ceremonies, repurposing Christian songs as Indigenous, and exploiting the popularity of wild west shows to preserve Indigenous customs as well as draw attention and support for Native causes, underscoring the adaptability of the medium. Foregrounded in this chapter are some examples where Native peoples deftly used culture—hybridized forms of Indigenous/settler music—to change cultural perceptions and effect social change.

Narrow is the Road

The U.S. state-sponsored expulsion of the approximately 100,000 Indigenous people of the Southeast from their homelands in the 1830s involved a long journey by foot, wagon, or steamboat, to designated Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. Dispossession included the abrupt loss of farms, livestock, crops, and possessions, as well as the severing of ancient ties to sacred lands harboring the spirits of ancestors. It also resulted in an estimated 12,000-17,000 deaths due to cholera, other diseases, exposure, starvation, and trauma.[1]

[1] Jeffrey Ostler, "The Trail of Tears, Plural: What We Don't Know About Indian Removal," *Humanities,* National Endowment for the Humanities, Vol. 45: 3 (2024),

Alexis de Tocqueville bore witness to a large contingent of Choctaw as they made their way to Indian Territory in 1831 at the crossing of the Mississippi:

> It was then in the heart of winter, and the cold ravaged that year with an unaccustomed violence; snow had hardened on the ground, and the river carried along enormous pieces of ice. The Indians brought along their families with them; they dragged behind them the wounded, the ill, infants who had just been born, and the old who were going to die. They had neither tents nor carts, but only some provisions and arms. I saw them embark to cross the great river, and this solemn spectacle will never leave my memory. One heard neither tears nor complaints among this assembled crowd; they were silent. Their misfortunes were old, and they felt them to be irreparable.[2]

In historian Claudio Saunt's analysis, "the policy of eliminating every [N]ative individual from the region east of the Mississippi—for that was the intent if not the letter of the law in the 1830s—was extraordinary."[3] Legislated and implemented in the name of progress, removal and resettlement is described by Alexis de Tocqueville as a situation where "the tyranny of the government is ordinarily added to the greed of the colonists."[4]

Settler motives for displacement erroneously suggested Indigenous peoples were too primitive to survive in the civilized lands east of the Mississippi. The claim was vigorously disputed and legally challenged as the Five Civilized Tribes were so-named as a result of the adoption of European-American practices and in process of assimilating into settler culture. Indigenous nations had established constitutions based on the U.S. constitution. Many inhabitants of the communities spoke English, practiced Christianity, wore European clothing, and successfully cultivated land, with some holding enslaved African Americans. Cherokee leader Sequoyah developed a written syllabary *c.* 1821, facilitating preservation of the Cherokee language, engendering the establishment of a printing press and the publication of the *Phoenix*—the first Native American newspaper.

Credit for the survival of much Cherokee music can be attributed to the syllabary and written transcriptions of musical notation and lyrics in the Cherokee language. While Christianity, and specifically the singing of Christian hymns, was originally used to force assimilation, many Cherokee people accepted conversion as they found similarities with their spiritual beliefs. Not only did the Cherokee worship a single deity who was creator of all things and to whom

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https://www.neh.gov/article/trails-tears-plural-what-we-dont-know-about-indian-removal#:~:text=All%20told%2C%20about%2088%2C000%20people,between%2014%20and%2019%20percent.

[2] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 310-311.

[3] Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2020), xvii.

[4] De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* 320.

prayers could be addressed, the Great Spirit could present in different forms, paralleling the Christian Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Additionally, the Christian practice of singing hymns as prayer correlated to Cherokee ritual practices of singing prayer. Like many other Indigenous cultures, the Cherokee believed that singing was a potent means of calling upon the spiritual power of non-human beings and ancestors.[5]

The singing of Christian hymns took on greater significance for the Cherokee people during forced removal west of the Mississippi on the *Nunna dual Tsuny* (Trail Where They Cried), or the Trail of Tears. During this extremely trying time, the Cherokee found strength and comfort in these songs, an instance of music effecting survival. Christian hymns were adapted, loosely following melody lines but changing the lyrics to reflect their immediate conditions. Musicologist and musician, James E. Green (Cherokee) provides liner notes for a number of hymns:

> During the Trail of Tears in 1838-39, the Cherokee sang Christian hymns in the native language while incarcerated in stockades and while being marched westward. Over one third of the twelve thousand Cherokee died during the infamous *Nunna dual Tsuny (Trail Where They Cried)*...During this terrible trek, families sang songs in the traditional language to locate their kin and to bring comfort to the grieving. The Cherokee language and songs held the people together.[6]

North Wind (Cherokee Wayfaring Stranger), an adaptation of the Christian hymn *A Poor Wayfaring Stranger,* is a song the dispossessed sang during relocation. Though the tune follows the traditional melody, the song was sung in the Cherokee language, and the lyrics were changed to reflect the difficult road they were traveling:

u-ne -la-nv hi-u-we-tsi	God's Son
tsa-sv-na-quu wi-yu-lo-se	Has returned to heaven
tsa-a-li-sga sdo-di-na-sgi	I depend on him
wu-lo-sv-sy da-tso-lo-si	To take me where he went
a-ya-to-li wi-ha-na-nv-nv	Narrow is the road
u-na-da(n)-ti wu-ni-lo-se	Where all the good people went
u-ne-tla-nv hi-tsu-wo-tlv	To God's throne
hna-quu-a-se wi-tsi-ga-ti	Is my destination[7]

By appropriating Christian hymns, the Cherokee were asserting ownership of the songs and enacting a subtle form of resistance to the violence of settler colonialism. Another traditional Christian hymn sung during removal to the

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[5] Ethan Cartee, "Music of the Cherokee Nation" (University of Missouri, 2017), https://cwp.missouri.edu/2017/music-of-the-cherokee-nation/.

[6] James E. Green, "About the Cherokee People," *North Wind: Cherokee "Wayfaring Stranger"* liner notes, Hinshaw Music, Hal Leonard Corp., 2024, https://www.hinshawmusic.com/product/north-wind-cherokee-wayfaring-stranger-satb/. Estimates range between 12,000–17,000 deaths of Indigenous people.

[7] *North Wind: Cherokee "Wayfaring Stranger"* (excerpt), Hinshaw Music, Hal Leonard Corp., 2024.

Indian Territory is the Cherokee version of *Guide Me, Jehovah,* the first lines being, "Take us and guide us, Jehovah/as we are walking through this barren land./We are weak, but thou are mighty. /Ever help us."[8]

Legend holds the Cherokee song *Orphan Child* was composed on the Trail of Tears. According to the liner notes, the song describes hardships faced and asks those who survived the journey to care for the orphaned children. When asked how she survived the terrible time, Choogie Kingfisher's granny replied, "Chong, the creator, U Ne Tiv Nv. He has helped us through these may times. For you see as we walked over the trail, there were many songs that came forward. Songs that helped heal the soul. You see the creator gave us these songs. And even today, we sing these songs; songs of rejoicing, songs of pride, and most of all, songs of survival."[9]

In musician Ethan Cartee's analysis, he notes the Cherokee people did not "strictly sing these hymns the way Europeans did; rather, they took them and made them their own."[10] They adopted Christian hymns and changed them to match characteristics found in Indigenous music including monophonic melodies, improvisation, syncopation, vocal gliding, extensive use of vocables, and occasional yodeling. In doing so, Indigenous peoples laid claim to the songs, symbolically resisting colonialism, staking claim to their lived experience, and affirming their cultural heritage.

Indigenous people from all of the Five Civilized Tribes were dispossessed to west of the Mississippi, each having their own brutal forced migration. The Choctaw endured a blizzard with minimal food, shelter, blankets, shoes, or clothing and then a month in record low temperatures awaiting a steamship on the Arkansas River before arriving at their destination. From fragments archived at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, the *New Jaw Bone* poem was written as a song by an anonymous Choctaw person during their journey from what is now Alabama and Mississippi to Indian Territory along the "Trail of Tears and Death."[11] In the multi-versed song, the author conveys hardships endured, references the route traveled, and identifies key governmental players involved.

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[8] *Guide Me, Jehovah, Beautiful Beyond: Christian Songs in Native Language CD*, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2004.

[9] Choogie Kingfisher, "Intro to Orphan Child," *Cherokee National Children's Choir: Voices of the Creator's Children*, Cherokee Nation, 2001, www.cherokee.org.

[10] Cartee, "Music of the Cherokee Nation," 2017.

[11] Iti Fabvssa (writers), *Biskinik,* August 2020 (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, 2025), https://www.choctawnation.com/news/search/?_sft_posts_categories=iti-fabvssaa-trail-of-tears-song-the-new-jaw-bone/. Choctaw researchers comment that a letter accompanying the fragments states, "the author was in Peter Pitchlynn's moving party and that he likely attended the Choctaw Academy in Kentucky, a Choctaw Nation-funded

Jackson send the Secretary War
To the Indians of the law
Walk o jaw bone walk I say
Walk o jaw bone walk away.

Eaton tells us go away
Here no longer you can stay
Walk o jaw bone walk I say
Walk o jaw bone walk away

On my way to the Arkansas
G_d d__n the white man's laws
O come and go along with me
O come and go along with me

At Memphis town we took a draw
And over more dam'd old Uncle Sam
The die is cast and we are undone
The die is cast and we are undone

Be our fate good or bad
We have cause to be sad
The Indian question now is o'er
The Indian question now is o'er,

But When we have gone to the west
You will say tis for the best
We shall never think it so.
We shall never think it so.

The damd'st time we ever saw
Was at the Post of Arkansaw.
The meanest place in all the world
The meanest place in all the world.

Seventy sleeps there we laid
While it snow'd and upon us hail'd
Oh the hard times we did see
Oh the hard times we did see.

It snow'd it hail'd I do you tell
I thought it twould pelt us all to hell
O the hard times we did see
O the hard times we did see.

The salted pork and damn poor beef
I nough to make the Devil a thief
This is hard times I do say
This is hard times I do say[12]

The New Jaw Bone pinpoints the disingenuity of the sociopolitical forces responsible for the campaign of dispossessing the Five Civilized Tribes. The U.S, government, politicians, southern planters, and northern speculators reframed their lust for land with the philanthropic notion of relocation as beneficial for Indigenous peoples. In their words they were "protecting" the Indians from settler violence. Superintendent of Indian Affairs under President Andrew Jackson, Thomas McKenney determined the Indians "could still be saved, but only if they were fast removed from the scene of their victimization."[13] The Indian Relocation policy of the 1830s set the precedent for subsequent interactions with Natives as well as establishing a strategy still in effect today: that of banishing the victim.

On full display in Indian removal and relocation are the underlying ideological beliefs of white Christian colonizers: exceptionalism (white supremacy), entitlement to land (rampant individualism), and capitalism

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boy's boarding school." For a comprehensive accounting of forced removal of the Five Civilized Tribes see Claudio Saunt, *Unworthy Republic:* 2020.

[12] *The New Jaw Bone,* 'Poem regarding removal of Choctaw,' Peter Pitchlynn Collection, 4026.8176 (excerpt), Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Gilcrease Museum, 2025, https://www.choctawnation.com/news/search/?_sft_posts_categories=iti-fabvssaa-trail-of-tears-song-the-new-jaw-bone/.

[13] Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest,* 193.

(commodification of land and resources). Saunt argues "the expulsion of the 1830s was a turning point for [I]ndigenous people and for the United States," transforming the "relationship between the continent's longtime residents and its newcomers."[14] The unprecedented mass expulsion of the Indigenous population of the Southeast continued the westward movement of a frontier intent on delineating who was and who was not eligible to be included in the American populace. For the Five Civilized Tribes, music functioned as a psychic and emotional support contributing to survival. On the Plains, music became a political force as well.

There Was Little Singing Anywhere

A few decades later, winds of change were bearing down on the Plains. The U.S. resettlement of eastern Indigenous peoples to Indian Territory encroached on Native people already inhabiting the Great Plains, fueling intertribal warfare for resources that were quickly becoming scarce. The great coincidence of the 1840s brought waves of white settlers.[15] Repeating the historic pattern, state and settler militias took the lead in instigating conflicts and conducting genocidal massacres. The U.S Army of the West, having no real enemy during the Civil War, turned their attention toward the Indigenous population, engaging in indiscriminate irregular warfare, decimating communities, and exterminating buffalo—a crucial source of sustenance for Indigenous communities. In another example of banishing the victim, the military determined to remove Native people from the land and confine them on reservations.

Indigenous people had premonitions of what was to come—spiritual visions and hard data. For centuries, Native peoples shared knowledge, customs, and information via an expansive trade network. Native communities understood the politics at play in the struggle for land and a way of life, and adapted strategies to assure survival in a world with constantly changing dynamics.

Though the Apsáalooke (Crow) had not yet had direct conflict with settlers, chances are they had heard tales of encounters from other Native groups. As a young man, Plenty-Coup (Apsáalooke) had a vision foretelling the departure of the buffalo with "Spotted-buffalo" (cows, bulls, and oxen) replacing them on the Plains. In the dream,

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[14] Saunt, Unworthy Republic, xvii.

[15] The phrase "great coincidence" was coined by historian Elliott West to denote the synchronicity of events in the 1840s including the Mexican-American War, the Gold Rush, emigrant migration to the Oregon Territory, and the Mormon exodus.

Plenty-coups beheld a dark forest and a "fierce storm coming fast." He heard the Thunders call out and watched as the Four Winds charged and "beautiful trees twist like blades of grass and fall in tangled piles where the forest had been." A single tree remained standing which sheltered the lodge of the Chickadee.[16]

The elders interpreted the four winds to represent the white man, the forest of trees to personify the Indigenous peoples. The single remaining tree signified the Apsáalooke people, while the lodge of the Chickadee stood for the lodges of Plenty-coup's particular band of people. Yellow-bear, considered the wisest elder, decoded the vision's meaning:

> The Chickadee's lodge in that standing tree is the lodges of this tribe pitched in the safety of peaceful relations with white men, whom we could not stop even though we would. The Chickadee is small, so are we against our many enemies, white and red. But he was wise in his selection of a place to pitch his lodge...he still held his home, his country, because he had gained wisdom by listening to the mistakes of others...The tribes who have fought the white man have all been beaten, wiped out. By listening as the Chickadee listens we may escape this and keep our lands.[17]

Plenty-coup's vision guided the Apsáalooke to extend friendship to the U.S. military. Though, in the long run, they succeeded in retaining a small portion of their lands, allyship did not repay them for soldiering or for their dead horses, nor did it spare them from the reservation system. Plenty-coups describes the devastation of the reservation era, not of a single individual, but the loss of a way of life for an entire culture lamenting: "But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened...There was little singing anywhere."[18]

In *Radical Hope,* Jonathan Lear analyzes the psychological and emotional devastation experienced by the Apsáalooke people upon the destruction of their traditional way of life. Prompted by Plenty-coups' dismal words, Lear contends that dispossession involved not just the loss of territory or the dehumanizing tactics of racial othering, but significantly, the silencing of the people's singing voices. Again, among most Indigenous peoples, singing is integral to how people relate to one another, to the environment, and to the non-human world. Ceremony is not an "event" but a way of life where it is critical to nurture relationships with other-than-human beings who have sentience and power.

A people's culture informs the metaphysics that structure a way of life—a way of perceiving and gaining knowledge, a way of understanding the world. Yet, Lear posits that with "the destruction of this way of life came the

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[16] Lindemann, *Plenty-coups,* 36-37.
[17] Lindemann, *Plenty-coups,* 40-41.
[18] Lindemann, *Plenty-coups,* 169.

destruction of the end or goal—the *telos*—of that life."[19] He explains that one of the functions of a culture is to train the young, to instill a "sense of life's possibilities." A culture is not equipped to train anyone for its own breakdown. Lear articulates: "The situation we are dealing with here, however, is the breakdown of a culture's sense of possibility itself."[20]

In addition to the physical dispossession of their homelands and the psychological erasure of personhood, for Indigenous peoples the loss of song—silencing kinship relations—is the equivalent of being dispossessed of a crucial mechanism for survival. It is equally as devastating as the loss of territory in a world where culture and land are inseparable: in the Indigenous world, land is a living entity that encompasses all human and non-human beings; culture is the expression of a people's inclusion in the land and their relationship to all those other-than-human beings.

It would appear that in the battle to control the cultural domain, settler colonialism predominated. However, it would be a misconception to assume Native peoples had not been resisting colonialism for the preceding centuries. In the silence of the first years of the reservation era, Indigenous peoples found weapons to withstand the forces of colonialism, with music assuming a leading role.

A Whirlwind

The Ghost Dance religious revival that swept through Indian Country during the 1880s and 1890s was, in fact, a later incarnation of an earlier practice with origins on the Columbia Plateau of the interior Pacific Northwest. According to historian Greg Smoak, religious ceremonies for renewal, collectively known as the Prophet Dance, emerged early in the nineteenth century when the area's Native communities, primarily Shoshone and Bannock peoples, were impacted by Christianity and disease introduced through the fur trade.

The Ghost Dance, as its earlier iterations, was a religious ritual that combined Indigenous beliefs with evangelical Christianity, prophesizing "a return of the old ways, with plentiful game and plant food and all Indians, living and dead, reunited on a renewed earth."[21] A more militant version of the dance occurred in the 1870s, heralding the destruction of all whites and promoting strong pan-Indian resistance to European-American domination, finding

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[19] Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Harvard University Press, 2006), 55.
[20] Lear, *Radical Hope,* 83.
[21] Louis S. Warren, "Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance: Christian Prayer, American Politics, and Indian Protest," in *Reviews in American History* 39, no. 4 (2011): 671, https://www-jstor-org.proxybz.lib.montana.edu/stable/41348922?seq=1.

an unusual common ground with Mormon preachers who believed Indians to be one of the lost tribes of Israel and shared dislike of government with Natives.

In the 1880s, Wovoka, a Paiute prophet, had a vision in which he met the Great Spirit and was given instruction for a new religion whereby a communal dance would transform the Earth to a place where white people would no longer rule the Indians, buffalo would return, and dead Indians would be brought back to life. It would be an Indian's paradise.[22] A blend of Indigenous and Christian ideals, Wovoka conveyed to his followers a moral code imparted by God against lying and stealing, and encouraging love, peace, and work. In Smoak's interpretation, Wovoka's revelation was less militant, envisioning peace and racial harmony among peoples.[23]

Though less hostile, in addition to renewal, Wovoka's Ghost Dance was a dance of resistance to colonial rule. The dance can be understood as an assertion of grievances against the evils of an oppressive (and dissonant) modern system in which Indigenous peoples had no rights or access to political agency. Per Smoak: "Ghost Dances provided one path from older belief systems to a unified Indian identity that explained reservation life and gave hope for the future...in a continuing pattern of religious practice that stretched throughout the nineteenth century and survives to this day."[24]

Both a religious practice and a protest movement, the Ghost Dance rapidly spread across the Great Basin and the Plains. Conditions were prime for a spiritual revival: famine, drought, and disease were rampant on reservations. The first participants reported visions of meeting dead relatives and receiving messages telling of the return of happier times.

There was no standard formula for the Ghost Dance; the ceremony varied and different songs were sung. The Lakota ceremony began with fasting and purification in a sweat lodge which cleansed participants of the burdens caused by white society. Preparations for the dance included painting circles, stars, and the crescent moon on dancer's faces (and later on shirts that were believed to have the power to protect a dancer from enemy bullets). Dancers encircled a sacred tree. Also in the center holding the sacred pipe, a young woman faced west where the Messiah lived and where

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[22] Rani-Henrik Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country: Lakota Voices of the Ghost Dance* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2018), 5, 8.

[23] Warren, "Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance," 672.

[24] Warren, "Wounded Knee and the Ghost Dance," 672.

the sacred White Buffalo Woman had gone.[25] A leader would call out and sing songs. The dance would begin slowly and gradually increase in speed and sound with dancers shouting out the names of deceased relatives. "Dancers detached from the circle, screaming and making great leaps in the air, until they fell on the ground with shaking limbs and finally lay still, as if dead...there may have been as many as a hundred dancers lying on the ground at one time."[26] Holy men would interpret the visions of the dancers.

Some songs were verbal interchanges with the Messiah or the Father.[27] Others engaged ancestors or dead relatives. Young Skunk (Lakota) recorded detailed descriptions of his Ghost Dance experiences. In a trance-induced vision, in addition to interacting with long-dead relatives, he "went walking in a beautiful land where the grass was really green"—a drastically different landscape than that of the Pine Ridge Reservation.[28] Young Skunk related these Ghost Dance songs:

I
He comes, he, he , he comes he, he, he comes he he
He said this_ye, he said this
He said this ye-ye
The Father said this, he said, yo-yo-yo
You will see your relatives
This is why he said, he said ye-ya
The Father said so, he said yo-yo

II
Father says this, he says it, yo yo
Father says this, he says it, yo yo, he says it ya yo
That he says, he says, he says
You will see your relatives, he says!

III
He came, he-e, he came, he-e, came, he-e, he came he-e
Father pity me, many want to see you
And those they want to see their relatives, have pity on them
He came bringing this song
You shall see your relatives
The Father says so, say it yo yo, say it
The Father says so, say it you you.

[25] Lakota oral tradition relates the story of the sacred white buffalo woman who brought the sacred pipe and taught the people sacred ceremonies. https://aktalakota.stjo.org/lakota-legends/white-buffalo-woman/.
[26] Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country,* 103.
[27] Note: Christianization of Creator to Messiah or Father.
[28] Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country,* 98-107.

My son, hold me by the hand
You will prosper, ye ye
Father says this, yo[29]

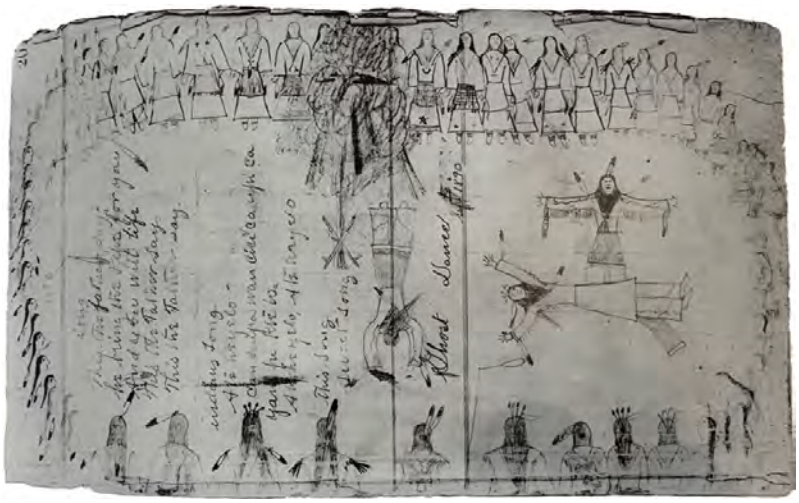

Figure 14. *Ghost Dance,* Amos Bad Heart Bill (Lakota), ledger drawing, September 1890. A graphic representation of the dance circle at an actual performance of the ceremony of the Ghost Dance. The page is framed by the circle of dancers, men and women. In the center is the sacred tree, bearing sacrifice banners. Two sacred pipes are crossed at its foot. Near the tree lies a man in a trance. A little farther to the right lies another. Behind him is a third. From *A Pictographic History of the Oglala Sioux*, University of Nebraska Press, 1967 and 2017.

Historian Rani-Henrik Andersson, whose research is focused on the Lakota, emphasizes that not all Indigenous peoples, even within the same community, shared the same feelings about the Ghost Dance. There were dancers for whom the Ghost Dance was a genuine expression of religious belief. Some viewed it as a last resort; others opposed it. Red Cloud remained neutral reckoning, "If it was true, it would spread all over the world. If it was not true, it would melt away like snow under the hot sun."[30] With a fundamental message of resurrection, the Ghost Dance had elements of Christianity, yet progressive Christian Lakota rejected the dance as a form of heathenism.

Missionaries and settlers appeared to have no comprehension of the purpose of the Ghost Dance, found it threatening, and suspected it was a movement intended to incite rebellion. One of the party who brought the Ghost

[29] Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country,* 99-100, 103, 105-106.
[30] Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country,* 165.

Dance to the Lakota, Short Bull said, "My people do not want to fight, they want peace."[31] Instead, the Ghost Dance catalyzed U.S. military anxieties, irrational fear, and racism that led to the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890.

An Unsettled Round

Though not intended to provoke violence, the fact that Indigenous peoples were dancing was, in itself, a form of resistance. In 1882, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) had banned the Sun Dance; a year later they banned "all similar dances and so-called religious ceremonies...'Indian Offenses,' punishable by 'incarceration in the agency prison for a period not exceeding thirty days.'"[32] Additionally, dancing could be punished by "withholding of treaty-guaranteed rations and imprisonment for up to six months."[33] In this way, Indigenous cultural practices, in particular those involving music—dancing, singing, and drumming—became means of resistance to settler colonialism.

The OIA's assault on the practice of music on reservations was influenced by missionaries who viewed Indigenous ceremony as heathenish and Indian agents who viewed it as dangerous and antithetical to the goal of assimilation. By the late nineteenth century, many white Americans believed that without assimilation Indigenous peoples were doomed to extinction.

The OIA's tools for implementing assimilation included allotment of communally held Indigenous land and destruction of Indigenous culture including language, religious beliefs, social organization, and the various ways of expressing culture including music. In 1887, reformers and legislators enacted the Dawes Act believing allotment of communally held Indigenous lands would naturally lead to assimilation, the rationale being that by forcing Native peoples to adopt the European-American model of nuclear families farming small plots of land, they would assume the work ethic and lifestyle the OIA deemed civilized. Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle wrote that Dawes legislators believed "private property...had mystical qualities about it that led people directly to a 'civilized' state."[34] More to the

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[31] Andersson, *A Whirlwind Passed Through Our Country,* 53. From Short Bull's account recorded by George C. Crager in 1891.

[32] "Rules Governing the Court of Indian Offenses," U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, March 30, 1883, http://robert-clinton.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/code-of-indian-offenses.pdf.

[33] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 27.

[34] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 7, citing Vine Deloria Jr. and Clifford M. Lytle, *American Indians, American Justice* (University of Texas Press, 1983), 9.

point, Henry L. Dawes said communal land ownership discouraged "selfishness, which is at the bottom civilization"—making blatant the inherited European ideological triad of property, capitalism, and individualism which informed, and informs, settler colonial culture.[35]

While "pagan" Indigenous ceremony provoked the ire of missionaries, OIA officials viewed multi-day ceremonies as detracting from time they believed ought to be spent cultivating the soil. In effect, they blamed Indigenous dance for "the dire reservation conditions created by the government's ineffective agricultural policy."[36] In actuality, the failure of Indigenous peoples to become successful farmers was the direct result of OIA policies. On the Lakota reservation, many of the people were unfit to successfully farm (either too old, too young, sick, or disabled), nor did the agency provide enough tools or supplies. Additionally, most of the reservation land was unsuitable for farming, soils were poor, and rainfall was often insufficient. Ranching was not an option because allotted land was not large enough to sustain a herd of cattle in addition to requiring more capital than Indian people could raise. Until the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), OIA officials continued to blame the victims, holding Indigenous dance responsible for government policy failures.[37]

During this particularly difficult period of Native American history, when targeted by the OIA, Indigenous peoples had limited access to the political arena. Music assumed a politically charged adversarial role by providing a means of resistance to racist OIA policies. Music historian John Troutman argues, "Music mattered, as a means not simply of resistance but of active involvement in the shaping and implementation of federal policy initiatives. Music operated in a decisively political manner, just as it operated in other social and cultural contexts."[38]

Indigenous peoples employed a variety of strategies to challenge and evade OIA restrictions beginning by cleverly scheduling dances to coincide with U.S. federal holidays. Indigenous communities across the Plains petitioned to hold dances in conjunction with Independence Day, purportedly an expression of patriotism—a request OIA agents could not refuse. Often, Indigenous ceremonial calendars parallelled American celebrations, an example being the Sun

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[35] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 7, citing Alexandra Harmon, "American Indians and Land Monopolies in the Gilded Age," *Journal of American History* 90, no. 1 (2003): 106-33.
[36] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 45.
[37] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 25, 45-46.
[38] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 5.

Dance which was traditionally held around the onset of summer coinciding with the Fourth of July. Dances were also held late at night, behind closed doors and shuttered windows, when white Americans were sleeping.

Another avenue seized on by Indigenous peoples was dancing in agricultural fairs organized by the OIA to encourage farming and ranching. Lakota drummer Severt Young Bear explains:

> Here in Porcupine they went to the [OIA] superintendent or the boss farmer and said, "You outlawed traditional dancing and singing, but we want to honor the New Year and have masquerades for good health and so that our cattle and horses and produce will grow well for the next district fair or tribal fair."...We were allowed to dance at fairs in late summer or early fall because there would be displays of vegetables, rodeos, and other signs that we were becoming good modern citizens instead of sticking to all that old ceremonial and warrior stuff. But we still got to dance.[39]

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a rise in interest from the non-native public in "Indianness," a stereotypical conception of Native peoples counter to reality, due in part to the influence of Buffalo Bill's wildly popular Wild West Shows. Wild west shows and similar staged performances were tolerated by the OIA who considered them less threatening than actual religious ceremonies. In addition to earning an income, Native people, well aware of the façade, used the opportunities to "publicly assert their tribal identity, and to demonstrate their virtue and skill both in dances that they selected and controlled and as warriors in sham battles in which they interpreted previous heroic acts again the U.S. Army."[40]

Such was the popularity of public dancing that Native peoples attempted to hold events to raise money for the benefit of the community. Revealing the ideological intractability and stubbornness of OIA officials to acknowledge their failed policies is an incident from 1908:

> ...a group of men from the Oak Creek District of Standing Rock formed an association for the ostensible purpose of raising money to buy a threshing machine or a separator "for the use of the association and for others."...Because the local agent forbade the association for holding the song meetings, Ignatius White Cloud, a member of the association, directly petitioned the commissioner of Indian Affairs [in Washington, D.C.] to gain permission to sing. The acting commissioner contacted the Standing Rock agent, who informed the commissioner that he believed the association was really raising funds, not for these machines, but for more and more song meetings and feasts that would subsequently interfere with their tending of crops. In what was certainly a devastating rebuke, consequently the agent confiscated the singing association's drum.[41]

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[39] Young Bear and Theisz, *Standing in the Light,* 55.

[40] Troutman*, Indian Blues,* 35.

[41] Troutman*, Indian Blues,* 44. From National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC, File 71473-08-751, SRA, CCF, 75. Destroying or mishandling a drum—considered by Indigenous people to be a living ancestor—is unconscionable and "would almost certainly devastate them, which is probably what the agent intended" (Troutman, n.74, 271).

Along similar lines were "giveaway dances," originally held by the Lakota to raise money for WWI initiatives such as the War Work Fund, the Red Cross, and Liberty Loans.[42] Giveaway dances transformed into a method of redistributing wealth to people in need. Gifting, a tradition embedded in Indigenous societies, is explained by Young Bear: "the traditional way of thinking tells us that when you have material possessions, the best thing you can do with them is to give them away, especially to those who are without or are having a hard time. A leader is not the guy who can store up and keep lots of things, but instead someone who will share them with the people."[43]

True to form, OIA agents banned giveaway dances because they believed the dances undermined Western precepts to individually accumulate and cherish. Young Bear adds, "It's funny, when you think of the Christian principle of charity, that once we were put on reservations, both the missionaries and the BIA opposed the sharing of material goods because it kept us from becoming modern, self-supporting American citizens."[44] Of the giveaways, Troutman writes that "the philosophy of the event shattered one of the most fundamental elements in the OIA's cultural citizenship agenda, that of instilling the sacred value of private property." Correspondingly, the dances were, and still are, celebrations of communal values—an anathema to mainstream American culture.

A Political Crescendo

In the bleakness of the reservation era, many Indigenous peoples held tight to fundamental cultural beliefs and customs. The patriotism exhibited by Native peoples in the First World War led to American citizenship in 1924, a step toward assimilation that stymied Indian agents in their efforts to enforce dance prohibitions. Citizenship granted rights to Indian peoples enabling them to challenge the legality of OIA policies. In addition, as children returned from forced boarding school education, they embraced Indigenous dance as a way to reclaim indigeneity, spurring a dancing resurgence.

Veterans and educated boarding school students, the two groups OIA officials thought most likely to assimilate, directly challenged the restrictive dance policies of missionaries and the OIA. In doing so, they challenged the basic

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[42] An estimated 12,000 American Indians served in WWI. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, 2020. https://americanindian.si.edu/static/why-we-serve/topics/world-war-1/.

[43] Young Bear and Theiz, *Standing in the Light,* 57.

[44] Young Bear and Theiz, *Standing in the Light,* 58.

concept of assimilation, which led to then Commissioner of Indian Affairs Charles H. Burke to issue circular 1665 in 1923 to 15,000 reservation superintendents. Burke acknowledged that dance was "something inherent in human nature" but he condemned:

> ...any dance which involves acts of self-torture, immoral relations between the sexes, the sacrificial d[e]struction of clothing or other useful articles, the reckless giving away of property, the use of injurious drugs or intoxicants, and frequent or prolonged periods of celebration which bring the Indians together from remote points to the neglect of their crops, livestock, and home interests; in fact any disorderly or plainly excessive performance that promotes superstitious cruelty, licentiousness, idleness, danger to health, and shiftless indifference to family welfare.[45]

Commissioner Burke's circular had little or no effect on Indigenous people as most never received the notice. It did, however, receive substantial press attention. Per Troutman, "The sympathy of the press...signaled a sea change in public support over the federal government's assimilation policy."[46] Though the assimilationist Indian Rights Association (IRA), the YWCA, and other missionary organizations supported Burke, circular 1665 sparked a fury of outrage from both the non-native public and Indigenous people.

As might be expected with any diverse group of people, there was support for Burke's anti-dance agenda from some Native people, usually those with an agenda of their own.[47] The vast majority of Indigenous people were upset and offended. For some, the dances had religious significance. Others brought attention to the OIA's out-of-date and underfunded agricultural policies. Confusion arose due to Burke's condemnation of the Hopi Snake Dance, a ritual to guarantee rain, specific to the Hopi, which as a major tourist attraction, supplied a crucial source of income for the community. The fact that most Indigenous peoples had never heard of the Snake Dance reveals Commissioner Burke's complete lack of understanding regarding the tremendous cultural diversity of Indigenous groups.

Many Native people objected to Burke's language implying Indian dance as immoral and made comparisons to the jazz craze sweeping mainstream culture. The Wichita wrote:

> The jazz-dance is offensive to us...[We] would be very glad to have the Board of Health of Reviews or Censors to contrast our manner of dancing with those of the white-folks and from the stand-point of saneness and morality and healthfulness show which of the Dances are more in keeping with

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[45] "Indian Dancing," circular no. 1665, Office of Indian Affairs, File 10429-1922-063, GSF, CCF, NARA, https://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~rfrey/PDF/329/IndianDances.pdf.

[46] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 67.

[47] Examples include: Bird Above of the Crow Reservation was looking for OIA support for the peyote religion; in another instance, two Apsáaalooke women were lobbying to have a government building on the reservation converted into a gymnasium; Catholic Lakotas objected to the dances as threats to the advancement of Christianity.

> standards as set out...We would not allow our children to degrade themselves to go to one of such dances as the white folk put on...We are willing to go on trial...to prove to the world that we our manners and customs are much superior in many points of virtue over our boasted white brethren.[48]

Indigenous people also argued for the economic importance of dancing publicly. Blackfeet "professional dancers made Glacier Park Hotel their head-quarters" and they received constant requests to perform in motion pictures and rodeos. A Wisconsin superintendent commented: "I find it very difficult to prevent my Indians from leaving home when they have little or no money or provisions and are promised good wages to dance."[49]

Per Troutman, dancers used American patriotism to protect their cultural practices and they used Indianness to gain the support of mainstream white society. He writes, "Native people found that, in this case, dance spoke louder than words."[50]

Powwow Thunder

No one is exactly clear when the first powwow took place. The form evolved from agricultural fairs, wild west shows, and the Pan Indianism that developed with the intertribal relationships of WWI soldiers and the shared experience of diverse boarding school attendees. According to Presidential Medal of Honor recipient, author, and the "last living Plains Indian war chief," Joe Medicine Crow (Apsáalooke) noted: "The powwow is one vehicle that is keeping our children 'Indian.'"[51]

"Powwows combine 'love for song, music, dance, rhythm, grace of motion, prayer, chant, ritualism, body decoration, and symbolic design.'"[52] Powwows may have included traditional dance, but they also had, and have, a varied repertoire that might include a marching band with horns and drums as well as the singing of romanticized songs written

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[48] Troutman, *Indian Blue*s, 98. From a letter from the Wichita Nation Association to Charles L. Ellis, Supervisor of Indian Affairs, File 10429-19-063, General Service File, Central Classified Files, NARA.

[49] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 101.

[50] Troutman, *Indian Blues,* 103.

[51] Joe Medicine Crow, "Introduction," *Native Spirit: The Sun Dance Way*, by Thomas Yellowtail (World Wisdom, 2007).

[52] Craig Harris, *Rise Up!* 45.

by non-native composers.[53] Indigenous people had no problem reconciling the different styles and genres, which speaks to the vitality of Native cultures. They were not, and are not, static but innovative and constantly transforming.

Indigenous rhythmic drumming is the defiant beating heart of the powwow, which draws together Native and non-native people from across Turtle Island. "Drums provide the heartbeat of a powwow...'Our whole culture centers around the drum...[It] brings the heartbeat of our Earth Mother to the powwow for all to feel and hear. Drumming brings everyone back into balance.'"[54]

A powwow traditionally opens with a Grand Entry, a legacy of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Shows. Accompanied by the booming of drums—the sound of creation, the rhythm which brought everything into being according to many Indigenous cultures—dancers enter the circular arena. "Before long, the floor is packed with Plains-style dancers, grass dancers, Eastern Woodland dancers, and fancy dancers in their respective regalia. Jingle dancers add to the spectacle."[55]

During a powwow, dancers move to the rhythm of ten to fifteen drummers pounding a buffalo- or moose-hide drum while singing. The drum's rhythm is amplified by the movement of dancers who make sounds with their bodies, stepping, stamping, stomping, clapping, and shaking rattles. Clothing is often adorned with "spirit-talkers," exemplified by the Jingle Dance of Anishinaabe peoples, where jingling metal cones are attached to dancers' dresses. The cones "tinkle at every motion [and] sing out to the spirits when the dancers lift their feet in time with the drum."[56] Traditional dances that have been passed down generationally are interpreted and modified by dancers, keeping the form alive and meaningful in the present. For example, Jingle dancers are believed to have a healing power derived from the "soft jingling" of the metallic cones which in the present are cut from Copenhagen snuff containers. According to Michaela Cameron, the jingles "must number 365 and are attached one per day and every day of a year-long berry fast...made spiritually powerful through the dancer's fasting and her humble petitions for spiritual aid each and every time she attached a jingle."[57]

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[53] Beginning mid-nineteenth century, non-native composers wrote Indian-themed songs—love songs, songs of longing for the past, and expressions of the demise of Indigenous peoples (the "vanishing Indian" trope)—often popular tunes among non-native people.

[54] Harris, *Rise Up!* 43, citing Paul Gowder, founder of Powwows.com.

[55] Harris, *Rise Up!* 43.

[56] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 267.

[57] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 267.

While a powwow dancer may be performing competitively and to entertain an audience, there is also a spiritual component where the best dancers are those who most successfully entrain their movements with the drumbeats, which are often complex and improvisational. Drumming is the catalyst enabling some powwow dancers to achieve a state of altered consciousness—a transcendental experience where the interconnectedness of the world is all-encompassing.

Long considered sacred in Indian Country, the drum is at the center of the powwow. Its rhythm connects participants and onlookers to one another and to the interconnected metaphysical reality of an Indigenous world. Cameron notes: "At the modern-day Powwow we clearly find social cohesion or 'synchrony' on an increasingly bigger scale in the interconnected reality of Creation. It is a spiritual happening that, with the help of a drum, draws humans and other-than-human persons to a cosmic centre."[58]

Indigenous peoples fell back on deeply enmeshed musical traditions in response to settler colonial imposition. As exhibited, Indigenous aesthetic customs were and are not static but adapted in creative ways to resist assimilation, thwart erasure, and combat elimination. In the process, the rhythm of Indigenous culture was, and is, preserved and transformed.

[58] Cameron, "Stealing the Turtle's Voice," 269.

FINALE

[MUSIC AS KIN]

The war of songs waged on the water in the depth of night between Indigenous Armouchiquois and French sailors depicts the clash of cultures between European and Indigenous traditions. From earliest contact, the contest for cultural dominion was intertwined with the battle for territory. Music played a role in subduing the wilderness and transforming the landscape into colonized American terrain by helping legitimize settler territorial acquisition and Native dispossession. Correspondingly, music was and continues to be a weapon of Native resistance to settler colonialism and a significant factor contributing to the survival of Indigenous peoples.

I

The interconnected universe of Indigenous peoples is reflected in song and ceremony. From creation stories resonating in the sounds of drumming and singing to ancient knowledge conveyed through song and story, to connection with animate, non-human entities, music is a fundamental element of the Indigenous world. The rhythm informing living beings is the rhythm informing all of creation, represented by the booming of the sacred drum. Sound created by singing or spirit-talkers is a means of communicating with other-than-human spirits, expressing gratitude, and accessing powerful ancestral wisdom. Collective dancing fosters and reinforces human relationships and enables dancers to achieve an entranced state of oneness with the interconnected web of the cosmos. Rhythm is at the center of Indigenous culture.

As the songs and stories of Indigenous peoples include metaphor and myth, so too does the settler colonial narrative. Initially, the harmonic musical tradition of Christian missionaries and religious refugees was a unifying force for building community. Pythagorean harmony of the spheres and later Kepler's harmonic theory of the universe proposed a unified world interconnected by a geometric architecture. Christianity embraced harmony and militarized music as a means to combat the evils of a savage and howling wilderness in the new world. The Christian mission of "civilizing" and expanding God's army on Earth included non-Christian tactics of silencing Indigenous voices by prohibiting the speaking of Native languages, forced boarding school education for Indigenous children, and the destruction of sacred Indigenous objects. In addition to turning a blind eye to settler violence, missionaries also lobbied

for implementation of violent assimilative strategies, making Christianity complicit in the genocidal agenda of settler colonialism.

The purity of harmonic tradition was diametrically opposite the hypocrisy pervading the Christian choir. Moreover, exacting and unyielding harmonic purity did not accurately reflect the complexity of a dynamic world, leading to the collapse of Pythagoras' and Kepler's harmony of the cosmos. Absolutist in theory, utopian in approach, and exclusive in practice, Christian harmony was unsustainable. Discordant fault lines emerged with the ascendance of the secular realm.

II

Dissonance in settler culture is embedded in European-American intellectual foundations. Radical individualism and exceptionalist beliefs yield stratified social classes, white supremacy, and entitlement to land and resources. Contingent on relentless growth (or progress), the socioeconomic structure of capitalism encourages exploitation (of land and people) and the acquisition of excessive material wealth. Inherent in settler ideology is the anthropocentric belief of human beings as removed from and superior to nature, with human control of the environment implied.

The cultural conflict between Indigenous peoples and European-American settlers was, and is, reflected in each culture's musical traditions. Indigenous aesthetic practices—singing, drumming, dancing, and collective rituals—provided emotional, psychological, and spiritual support by reflecting and reinforcing an interrelated and interdependent Indigenous metaphysics in an omnipresent drumbeat. An Indigenous world view places human beings squarely in the natural world rather than apart, and does not establish a hierarchal taxonomy distinguishing homo sapiens as superior to other species, nor categorize people by geography, race, class, or gender. Reflected in Indigenous music, Native cultures recognize the environment as alive, dynamic, powerful, and therefore commanding respect, leading to a world view built on relationships and valuing community: kinship. Indigenous emphasis on relationship fostered a gift economy in which respect, gratitude, sharing, and responsibility are foregrounded in an environment in which people are merely a component. Song and ceremony reinforce the relationality that informs Indian Country.

In contrast to Indigenous song and ceremony, settler music harbored and amplified discordant colonial ideology including racial hierarchy, preemptive property rights, and belief in a divinely mandated conquest of the planet. Song lyrics also helped spawn a mythical settler frontier origin story that continues to reflexively support and reinforce the

settler ideology with which it is infused. Additionally, music was a means of claiming and domesticating the landscape. The imposition of singing Christian psalms was viewed by missionaries as a subtle means of introducing Western religion to Indigenous adults and children. Music and dance in settlements and on the westward trails competed with the sounds of the natural environment and Native ceremony. "From the moment European powers first stepped foot in the New World, they wielded sound to establish territorial dominion and cultural control."[1]

III

In Indian Country, music bolstered resistance to settler colonialism, aiding Indigenous survival with ingenious methods of infiltrating enemy lines through surreptitious maneuvers, theatre, and reverse aesthetic appropriation. Consistently, ceremonial musical performance reinforced the relationality that informs Indigenous ontology. Musician and author Craig Harris stresses the presence in Native music of Indigenous belief in the interconnectedness—kinship—between human beings, the natural world, and the spiritual realm. He contends that the kinship informing Indigenous metaphysics, abuzz in Native music, contributed and contributes to the resilience and determination underlying Indigenous survival.[2]

Music also played a significant role in the survival and establishment of settler colonialism across North America. In addition to music's capacity to modulate embodied physiological systems and influence emotions and moods, song and dance facilitated social bonding among strangers embarking on a demanding journey to an unknown destination. Both sacred and secular song lyrics provided an ideological framework that reinforced justification of territorial acquisition, property ownership (including human property), resource exploitation, and the dispossession and genocide of Indigenous peoples.

IV

Music also exposes a dichotomy in settler colonial culture. The dissonance exhibited in settler song lyrics, reinforcing an ideology of exceptionalism, entitlement, and individualism, is counter to the processes involved in making and listening to music. Music is fundamentally relational: it involves makers of sounds and listeners; it is often made in

[1] Keyes, "Like a Roaring Lion," 20.
[2] Harris, *Rise Up!* 291-293.

combination with others; and listening to music in concert with others is a shared collective auditory experience. In all of these contexts, music fosters interactions that build relationships and community.

Regardless of culture, music is an essential tool for human flourishing. Human values are expressed through musical sounds. Beyond the basic function of communicating information, human relations are forged and sustained through music. Music also marks events in time and shapes both individual and collective memories. It has the capacity to affect emotions and to foster altered states of being. Whether making musical sounds or listening to them, music forges and sustains relationship, thereby revealing a contradiction in a culture that believes its myths of individualism and exceptionalism.

Contrary to the obsessive Christian maligning of dissonant rhythm, both Western and Indigenous music (and cultures) are composed of melody and rhythm, and both can carry harmonious or dissonant tones. Philosopher Theodor Adorno contends that "dissonance is the truth about harmony" suggesting a dialectic resolution of opposing traditions.[3] Arguing in defense of dissonance in a culture that ironically rejects it, Adorno submits that harmony cannot exist without dissonance: the one defines the other and the tension between them creates balance and homeostasis. Adorno is to be credited for his defense of dissonance as a subaltern voice; nonetheless he is imprisoned in the structuralist language of dialectical opposites where antagonistic concepts define one another: primitive vs. civilized; dissonant vs. harmonious; evil vs. good; rhythm vs. harmony. It is an instance of European-American intellectual reasoning entrapped in a false dichotomy, resulting in a fraught and unsettled world.

As this thesis illustrates, jettisoning centuries of entrenched European intellectual beliefs and adopting an Indigenous epistemological perspective of interrelatedness—admittedly a significant paradigm shift—presents an alternative to the paradox.[4] Existing in relationship with all of creation changes the playing field to accommodate all human and non-human beings—which in turn engenders consideration, respect, and care of others. Being in relationship diffuses the tension ensconced in adverse perceptions: dissonance is curbed by harmony; the "civilized" is

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[3] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 110, https://archive.org/details/aesthetictheory0000ador/page/n5/mode/2up?q=harmony.

[4] Relevant to a paradigm shift in perception is continental philosopher Jacques Ranciére's notion that changing aesthetic perception is a means of changing culture—an oversimplified reading of a concept yet to be explored and beyond the scope of this thesis.

enhanced by the "primitive"; evil is restrained by the collective good of a community. Nonetheless, it would require an aesthetic shift in perception in order to precipitate a change in the behavior of mainstream Americans.

The first step is acknowledging that relationality exists in settler culture—resounding in the music. Recognition provides an opening for reframing settler perceptions and laying the groundwork for reevaluating entrenched colonial structures. Settler colonial ideology and the frontier myth still influence and reinforce mainstream American beliefs and act to deter decolonial strategies including restoration or restitution of land and repatriation of sacred ancestors and objects. Not until mythical American settler colonial beliefs are dismantled can a process of reconciliation begin.

Coda

"There was an alternative," Claudio Saunt writes in his concluding chapter of *Unworthy Republic*.[1] It didn't have to be this way. Claudio Saunt's words echo in my mind. Though he was referring to Indian removal in the 1830s, the words ring true today. Faced with options, choices were made, and a disturbing and violent history unfolded.

Amitav Ghosh poses a perplexing question: how is it that a "civilized" people can wage a war of annihilation on every living and non-living being on the planet? Considering that evolutionary theory provides strong evidence linking human beings to other life-forms, he asks, "Shouldn't the discovery that all humans are descended from shared ancestors have created a sense of fraternal solidarity?"[2] Instead, it reinforced and continues to reinforce belief in the supremacy of one type of human being—white, Northern European, Christian, male. Ghosh goes on to note that no other culture (or species) has embraced the idea that the well-being of one kind of human necessitates the wholesale eradication of other species, including other humans. Perpetuated in rampant acts of irregular warfare, dissonance is unrestrained in the Western intellect.

Dissonance in music is contained: discordant notes sounded in modern classical music and improvisational jazz are held together by a rhythmic foundation of sorts (not necessarily uniform); atonal compositions devoid of traditional

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[1] Saunt, *Unworthy Republic,* 320-322.

[2] Ghosh, *The Nutmeg's Curse*, 81-82. This peculiar behavior of humans could be rooted in the Platonic-Christian conception of spirit as the highest state of being. From this (delusional) perspective, genocide and ecocide are means to achieve the apocalyptic evangelical Christian idea of the Rapture.

form are ordered by their disorder; they sound chaotic postmodern challenges to assumed norms—assumed norms which are often the discordant undertones lurking in the wings.

Unbound dissonance in a culture, as in music, results in unsettlement: an unbalanced state not conducive to the health and well-being of individuals, nor to a people or to the planet. Neuroscientists affirm cells of living bodies strive to return to a state of homeostasis.[3] On a macro level, the Earth's complex, interdependent ecosystems seek balance. So too, just as the dispossessed crave stability, a healthy culture aspires to a state of equilibrium.

Equilibrium is not the product of homogeneity; as in music, purity is an illusion, its pursuit having the capacity to provoke ruinous repercussions. As the intertwining of rhythm, melody, and harmonic overtones evokes emotion, embracing diversity has the potential to invoke wonder, prompt curiosity, broaden knowledge, and foster kinship in a culture. Making kin—being in relationship with all of creation—is the central tenet of Indigenous culture and offers an alternative to the toxicity of a dissonant world. Perhaps settler colonial genocidal tactics are masking an awareness of something too difficult for colonists to acknowledge: that Indigenous people were right all along, that human beings are part of an interrelated and interdependent world where relationships matter?

Responses to alleviate cognitive dissonance in an individual and in a culture include avoidance, rationalization, or adjusting beliefs and behaviors. For a culture, altering a system of beliefs warrants significant effort. Philosopher Donna J. Harraway writes that the process of cultural transformation is a challenging one and involves a form of grieving:

> Mourning is about dwelling with a loss and so coming to appreciate what it means, how the world has changed, and how we must *ourselves* change and renew our relationships if we are to move forward from here...The reality, however, is that there is no avoiding the necessity of the difficult cultural work of reflection and mourning. This work is not opposed to practical action, rather it is the foundation of any sustainable and informed response.[4]

American settler colonial society is at a crossroads: we can continue to believe the settler colonial mythology and ignore the fractured landscape; we can and do justify our beliefs with a false narrative based on a flawed intellectual legacy; or we can begin the challenging process of transforming the culture. There is an alternative; it doesn't have to be this way.

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[3] Antonio Damasio, *Feeling & Knowing: Making Minds Conscious* (Pantheon, 2021), 15-17.
[4] Harraway, *Staying With the Trouble,* 38-39.

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