Stealing the Turtle's Voice

Michaela Ann Cameron
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Stealing the Turtle’s Voice

A Dual History of
Western and Algonquian-Iroquoian Soundways from
Creation to Re-creation

Michaela Ann Cameron

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Department of History

University of Sydney

2018
This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Signed: Michaela Ann Cameron

Date: 10 January 2018
Authorship Attribution Statement

This thesis contains material published in the edited collection by Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite (eds.), Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America (Leiden: Brill, 2017), as a chapter entitled “Singing with Strangers in Early Seventeenth-Century New France,” pp.88–112. I was the sole author of the chapter. This content is distributed throughout the thesis; see pages 1–2, 10–12 of the Introduction; the section entitled “Singing with Strangers: What the Soldier of Christ Heard” as well as pages 96, 98–99 of One of God’s Great Instruments” in Part II: The Master Record; the section entitled “Singing with Strangers: What the Waabanaki Heard” in Part IV: The Remastered Record, pages 75–77 of “Diabolus in Musica” in Part I: The Harmonic Tradition; and pages 274–76, 279 of the Conclusion, with some modifications compared to the published text.

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Date: 12 February 2018

As supervisor for the candidature upon which this thesis is based, I can confirm that the authorship attribution statements above are correct.

Supervisor Name: Professor Michael A. McDonnell
Signature: Michael A. McDonnell
Date: 13 February 2018
Abstract

A major aim of my doctoral research is to bring the oppressed geography or “cosmography” of Turtle Island (Native North America) to the surface of the mainstream along with the sacred history of this forgotten place, submerged beneath European maps and histories for centuries.

To this end, my thesis traces the development of the western harmonic tradition and the subsequent mythical “narrative of conquest” that has dominated “the master record” of history; a narrative in which the sounds of Christian European modernity completely drowned out and destroyed the so-called primitive “howling wilderness” of Native North America and in which the “vanishing Indian” was also a silenced Indian. The thesis then seeks to listen below this “white noise” and to turn up the volume on the Algonquian-Iroquoian rhythmic tradition in order to “remaster the record.” The result is a story, not merely of conquest and destruction but of Turtle Island’s sustained sonic sovereignty and re-creation via sound-based neurodecolonisation.

The thesis draws on musicology, psychoacoustics, anthropology, linguistics, and archaeoacoustics to generate a narrative that simultaneously spans, in a material sense, from pre-contact to the present-day Powwow and, in a spiritual sense, from creation to re-creation.
All the perfect and the broken Hallelujahs have an equal value.

— Leonard Cohen
For all my relations, past, present, and future but most of all for my mother Ann, my pater familias John, my brother Drew, and my other-than-human children Buddy and Sissi, whose patience, love, support, and belief in me have made the repeated creation, destruction, and re-creation of this thesis possible.
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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge that this Ph.D thesis has not been written on Turtle Island (North America) but in another colonised land: the land of the Burramattagal clan of the Darug nation (Parramatta, New South Wales, Australia) in Iyura (Eora) nura (country). I can only hope that this history of how Turtle Island was colonised through sound and the ways in which it has been and can be further decolonised through sound may be of utility to the Original Peoples of my own birthplace, too.

I also wish to note the use of oral tradition as well as the open discussion of practices and beliefs in the work that follows, which may be considered esoteric knowledge that should remain secret and exclusive and therefore could be offensive to some living members of the cultures featured. The recorded narratives and beliefs were by and large collected in an era when members of the dominant white society felt entitled to gather the cultural assets of the peoples they believed they had successfully conquered. Some, not all, of the sources I have drawn upon have been produced at the request of the Original Peoples themselves who wished to have their practices and beliefs recorded to ensure the transfer of their lifeways to the next generation, so these texts have actively contributed to the re-creation of their lifeworld/s. For those sources that were not composed or collected with as much sensitivity, however, I hope that the reader will find some consolation in the fact that whatever circumstances the traditional wisdom was originally captured in print by collectors, it is now being repurposed to facilitate a multivocal narrative of resistance to colonialism, insofar as I have set out to join together numerous ancestral voices of the Original Peoples via oral tradition and sacred practices in the spirit of making their voices and their enrhythmed world more audible. If, even so, readers still find my methods and/or the resultant product offensive, then I offer my sincere apologies in advance and emphasise that my intention has been to celebrate the Original Peoples’ cultures and to hopefully contribute in some small way to their revitalisation.

I began this project a third of my lifetime ago, in 2007, as a follow-up to my undergraduate Honours thesis, which, while not exactly the same topic, was a contribution to the field of early American aural history. Given the amount of time that has passed I regret I may fail to recall everyone who deserves to be credited for making this auditory hallucination I once had, a real-life thesis.
Support for my thesis came in many forms. Financially, my doctoral research was supported by an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) for the years 2007-2009. As my “thesis dedication” indicates, there would be no thesis without the full support of my family. Thank you is not enough. A promise that happier days and clearer skies are ahead for us all is, by far, the most valuable thing I can offer you in return right now. My gratitude, however, goes beyond your support of my recent educational endeavours, because by instilling in me an historic sensibility and a love of music you were my first teachers. Not only did Papa, my late maternal grandfather, give me wide listening experiences, finely tuning my ear to all his favourite mid-century sounds with his personally curated mix-tapes, Mum and Dad also went above and beyond in seeking professional tutelage for me in extracurricular activities, particularly in music and dance. Without any of this I would never have had the inclination or the ability to research sonic ways of being in and knowing the world.

I, of course, owe a huge debt of gratitude to all the teachers who have inspired me over the years in both my extracurricular and formal educational environs. They include my classical voice teacher Bransby Byrne and guitar teacher Alfred Alexander and the outstanding History teachers of my secondary education; Kerryn Morrissey, Andrew Gallagher, and Joanne Kemp. Special mention, though, must go to my teachers at the tertiary level who, since 2002, have honed my historical skills in the Department of History at the University of Sydney. To Professor Michael McDonnell, who first taught me in 2004 in “Natives and Newcomers,” a course for which the assigned readings and theoretical discussions echo throughout this thesis: thank you for being my supervisor for my Honours thesis “Neither French Nor Savage” in 2006, and for continuing on in the primary supervisory role for this PhD. Despite the years it has taken, you always remained so positive I could do this. Thank you to Dr. Frances Clarke, who has served as my associate supervisor on the Ph.D and has been extremely encouraging since first teaching me in 2003. As the person who taught most of my senior level undergraduate courses in my Bachelor of Arts degree, you have left an indelible mark on my thinking. Emeritus Professor Rhys Isaac who is, sadly, no longer with us, was most forthcoming with reading recommendations, for which I am grateful. I must also offer up my thanks to the late Emeritus Professor John Hirst, who privately advised me and led regular Postgraduate Seminars as well as a writing group for years during my candidature. Professor Hirst never failed to light up my mind with his call to produce history for the widest possible audience by writing in a way that was engaging for diverse readers and effectively employing marketing techniques to reel them in: “After all,” he said, “if you’re going to the trouble to write history, don’t you want people to READ it?” I am indebted to Professor Shane White whose impassioned lecture about artful writing and collaborative work with Graham White, The Sounds of Slavery: Discovering African American History through Songs, Sermons, and
Speech (2005), published during my pre-Honours year, significantly shaped this project. I combined your point that those without a voice on the traditional historical record could be heard on their own terms with my interests in World Music and love of the work of Nēhiyaw (Cree) singer-songwriter and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie — and my thesis topic was born. Thanks to my history teachers during my undergraduate years including Professor Andrew Fitzmaurice, Dr. Kit Candlin, Dr. Clare Corbould, Associate Professor Neville K. Meaney, Dr. Jill Levenberg, and Associate Professor Richard White. Thanks to the members of the Department who have served on the Annual Review committee during my candidature, affectionately known as “The Gang of Three.” These include, but are by no means isolated to, Professor Robert Aldrich, Dr. Julie Ann Smith, Associate Professor Nick Eckstein, Professor Penny Russell, and Professor Chris Hilliard. Thanks are also due to visiting scholars Professor Philip J. Deloria, Professor N. Bruce Duthu and Hilde Ojibway for both formal and informal conversations that clarified my thoughts and arguments and reassured me I had a valuable contribution to make to Native American history despite being a cultural outsider.

I owe an enormous debt to the editors of the Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America (Leiden: Brill, 2017) volume, Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite, for inviting me to be a contributor. My participation provided me with opportunities to receive feedback and encouragement from early American sensory history experts and helped immeasurably in organising my thoughts and research for the larger project, the thesis.

It is imperative that I thank those who began this journey with me as well as those I met along the way. Thanks to everyone from my original Ph.D cohort of 2007, but particularly Dr. Alexander Cameron-Smith: your science background was the only thing that reassured me I had not gone insane when I ventured into Pythagoreanism and the western harmonic tradition. Thanks also to the students I taught in “A House Divided” in 2010, “Emerging Giant” in 2014, and “History Beyond the Classroom” in 2015-2017, and from whom I have learnt a great deal. Thanks to Dr. Michael Thompson, Dr. Gabrielle Kemmis, and Dr. Danielle Thyer. Danielle, what would I have done without you during the great Ph.D write-up? Your support has been incredible and your friendship is invaluable. To my cousin Liam Coughran, Sarah Anne Bendall, Emily Yeldham-Peers and Simon Gollan thank you for the much-needed catch-ups and the laughs over the years. Big thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Miller, Dr. Catie Gilchrist, Dr. Kirsten McKenzie, Dr. James Findlay, Dr. Hannah Forsyth, and Stephen Thompson for heartily cheering me on to the finish line.
Some of the knowledge and experiences I needed to complete my academic research were actually found outside my topic area and even outside of academia. I am grateful to Benjamin Barnett and the Yelp Sydney community (2013–2014), the Dictionary of Sydney, the Parramatta history and heritage community, and the online followers of my various history and heritage-related social media accounts and online projects who have engaged with my work since I established my online presence in 2013. I especially want to thank my fellow “Twitterstorians” Dr. Helen Rogers and Dr. Tim Causer for supporting my public history work. These encounters have each played their part in keeping me moving onwards and upwards.

For taking an interest in my thesis progress and celebrating the thesis milestones with me, thank you to my friends and all my extended family members.

* * *

Thank you to my Ph.D examiners, sensory historian Professor Mark M. Smith (University of South Carolina), Professor N. Bruce Duthu (Dartmouth), and Professor Philip J. Deloria (Harvard) for your valuable, detailed feedback and overwhelmingly positive response to my dissertation.
Prelude

A Tale of Two Turtles

Old Toad-Woman was most likely the first to steal the turtle’s voice. After all, taking the turtle captive was well within the notorious child-snatcher’s capabilities just as it was well within her ken that the turtle had much worth taking.¹ In life, as everyone knows, the amphibious, transformative turtle is a renowned spirit-talker who carries messages throughout the vast, multilayered cosmos — abilities gifted to all land and sea turtles long ago in honour of the one known as “the Great Turtle.”² In death, the cunning old woman doubtless realised, the great emissary’s transcendental, spirit-talking powers could be stolen, sustained, and used at her own will and pleasure.

If she was, indeed, the culprit, we can imagine what Toad-Woman did next.³ She would have killed and dried her captive turtle, “neatly scooped out” his marrow “without injuring [his] head, tail, and feet, or the skin which unite[d] the...two shells so...[he still] look[ed] as if whole,” then stretched out his neck to form a handle and, to make the dead turtle speak again, placed some pebbles within his hollowed-out shell and shook.⁴ At once, the turtle’s

¹ From the Anishinaabeg to the Sisseton and Wahpeton Dakota of the Plains, Toad-Woman is depicted in oral tradition as an old woman who steals unwary mothers’ children. See “Old-Toad-Woman Steals a Child” OT-II; Amos E. Oneroad, Alanson Skinner, Laura L. Anderson (ed.), Being Dakota: Tales and Traditions of the Sisseton and Wahpeton, (Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society, 2005), p.178; John C. Wright, The Crooked Tree: Indian Legends of Northern Michigan, (Harbor Springs, Michigan: John C. Wright, 1917), pp.53–58. For the episode from which the above account has been elaborated, see “Nanabushu slays Toad-Woman, the Healer of the Manitous,” OT-I. As noted elsewhere in this thesis, other-than-human beings are believed to have agency; they give themselves to be made into a rattle or to hunters to be transformed into food for human consumption to help their helpless grandchildren survive. Snapping-turtles, however, which are quite aggressive, are depicted in oral tradition as war chiefs and as ones who resist and escape capture and often bite off the heads of those who would kill and eat them, including a woman on one occasion. See “Snapping-Turtle Goes to War,” in OT-II, pp.113–21. VoS, p.52.


³ I have concluded Old Toad-Woman was most likely the first to steal the turtle’s voice (invent the rattle) because (a) I did not encounter any stories in which Toad-Woman was originally gifted the rattle by another being and (b) because she is the first being associated with the rattle. The reconstruction offered here seems to be supported by the fact that capturing a turtle to appropriate his powers is in keeping with her reputation as a notorious kidnapper.

⁴ To reconstruct the creative process Old Toad-Woman would have gone through when she first fashioned the instrument, I integrated information regarding turtle-shell rattle construction from these
transcendental properties would have imbued the rattle’s percussive, rhythmic sounds with the ability to resonate throughout the material and spiritual realities, calling and drawing the spirits from all parts of Creation towards it.⁵ For the rattle’s voice was itself “the sound of creation...of things spinning and being put together” — the same sound that had filled the void in the universe and summoned life at the very beginning of all things.⁶ Old Toad-Woman, no doubt, would have lifted her voice and sung the song she would sing again and again thereafter:

From the beginning of the world has the sound of my voice been heard;
From the ends of the earth is the sound of my coming heard;
From the ends of the earth do I come with the sound of my rattles, sha!⁷

With the power of Creation in her hand, Old Toad-Woman could heal all that was sick and broken among her fellow Underwater beings, with whom she was in league.

In any case, what is certain is that it was Toad-Woman who was first observed chanting her song and carrying this turtle-rattle through the woods, and it was then that this ancient personage encountered one even more cunning than she — Mother Earth’s half-spirit, half-human grandson, Original Man. Recognising how useful this spirit-talking instrument would be for his fellow humans who suffered illness and had no way of healing themselves, Original Man—ever the trickster—conned Toad-Woman into teaching him her healing song as well as how to use the rattle. He then clubbed her to death, flayed her, and wore her skin while rattling and singing to fool the Underwater beings into thinking he was the genuine article. Original Man then gifted the rattle and song to his fellow humans so they, too, could summon the spirits and the power of Creation in their healing ceremonies.

Across the great salt water in a land called Arkadia stood the mountain Khelydorea — so named because it was “rich in tortoises.”⁸ Of all the large land-turtles that called Khelydorea

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⁷ OT-I, pp.145, 263, 399.

home, however, only one was destined to waddle up to the messenger god, Hermes, at the threshold of a high-roofed cave in which the newborn god lived with his mother, Maia. Hermes, the trickster son of Zeus, was at that moment conspiring to steal fifty cattle from his brother Apollo and so beheld the creature with endless delight and laughed at his good fortune:

An omen of great luck for me so soon! I do not slight it. Hail, comrade of the feast, lovely in shape, sounding at the dance! With joy I meet you! Where got you that rich gaud for covering, that spangled shell?…[Y]ou shall help me and I will do you no disgrace, though first…you must profit me…Living, you shall be a spell against mischievous witchcraft; but if you die, then you shall make sweetest song.

Without further ado Hermes carried the tortoise within the cave where, in a state of inspiration, he cut off its limbs and scooped out the marrow. “He cut stalks of reed to measure and fixed them, fastening their ends across the back and through the shell of the tortoise, and then stretched ox hide all over it by his skill. Also he put in…horns and fitted a cross-piece upon the two of them, and stretched seven strings of sheep-gut.” Then, “he proved each string in turn with the key, as he held the lovely thing. At the touch of his hand it sounded marvellously.”

There was nothing and no one that Hermes’s “new-uttered sound” could not charm — not even “the deathless gods.” Though furious with Hermes over the theft of his cattle, for instance, the god Apollo reportedly “laughed for joy” upon hearing the instrument for the first time, as “the sweet throb of the marvellous music went to his heart” in a way no other music had done previously, “and a soft longing took hold on his soul as he listened” to Hermes’s “sweet playing.” Hermes promptly gave Apollo the instrument as a peace offering and Apollo, in turn, gave the instrument to the mortal Orpheus. In the dexterous hands of Orpheus, the instrument combined with the hero’s charming voice soothed the wildest of beasts, changed the course of rivers, and—perhaps most famously—persuaded the gods to make a conditional arrangement to release the musician’s dead wife, Eurydice, from the Underworld and return her to the land of the living.

Thus it was that Hermes “made the tortoise a singer” and the mere mortals were gifted that most harmonious instrument: the lyre (chelus).  

Thereafter, the musicians who enquired of the rattle and the lyre “with wit and wisdom” “cunningly” learnt “through [their] sounds all manner of things that delight the mind.” For in those sounds of the turtle-shells the philosophically inclined musicians heard “a grand metaphor for natural sonic relations, the way tones combine together in time, as well as for social relations, for people doing things in concert.” The grand metaphor the Great Turtle’s people heard in Old Toad-Woman’s rattle was rhythmic synchrony, while for those on the other side of the great salt water, the grand metaphor Hermes’s lyre revealed to them was harmony. In both cases, the grand metaphor became the basis of an ideal way of life.

And so it came to be that two very different acoustic worlds were created on the backs of two turtles. But while Old Toad-Woman, Original Man, and Hermes were the first to steal the power of the turtle’s voice, they were certainly not the last.

Introduction

Darkness descends on the Kennebec River on October 30, 1611 and the night air is filled with song. The wind carries the rhythmic melodies of twenty-four singing and dancing “Armouchiquois” men camped on the riverbank to the ears of a small group of French explorers at anchor in the middle of the river. The Frenchmen respond by singing some of their own sacred songs and, later, by mimicking the “continual haranguing, singing and dancing” of the Armouchiquois. Upon hearing something akin to their own music echoing back across the water the Armouchiquois fall silent; and when the French pause, the Armouchiquois resume their singing. A Frenchman aboard the barque that night, the Jesuit missionary Father Pierre Biard, considers this intoned dialogic exchange to be “really very comical,” for not only do the participants appear to be “two choirs which ha[ve] a thorough understanding with each other,” it is scarcely possible to “distinguish the real Armouchiquois from their imitators.” The next morning, the Armouchiquois offer to guide their impersonators to an Abenaki village where the French will be able to obtain a much-needed supply of corn. Ostensibly, then, music has functioned as a universal language and has rendered the strangers firm friends.  

But sounds can be deceiving. Despite having found aspects of the encounter humorous, as we will discover, the Jesuit missionary openly considered the French participation in the exchange with the Armouchiquois to be agonistic on religious grounds. And, as we shall also discover, Biard’s recording of the auditory event contains enough information to indicate that the Armouchiquois, too, were not the all-singing all-dancing American equivalent of, say, Inga Clendinnen’s friendly indigenous Australians, who reportedly danced “hand in hand” with European strangers of the First Fleet “like children at a picnic” during a “benign...phase of the imperial process.”

Far from benign music making, conflicting *acoustemologies* or different “sonic ways of being in and knowing the world” were at the heart of what is frequently glossed over as “cultural

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1 *JR* 2: 33–35.
clash” between natives and newcomers in early seventeenth-century New France — and not just during random riverbank encounters. The Kennebec encounter typifies the perils of cross-cultural misunderstandings and power struggles in a period in which a (metaphorical and, in this instance, actual) river flowed between two cultures with no “middle ground” in sight — to use Richard White’s famous term. In this context endangered lives were the worst-case scenario, but cultural conflicts were not limited to the misheard songs of indigenous strangers on a riverbank or in the “howling wilderness.” They were, as this thesis reveals, ever-present in more mundane early encounters between the French missionaries and Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples in the following decades, too.

Placing the emphasis on these negative outcomes of cross-cultural interaction provides a counternarrative to the many studies that have followed White’s influential “middle ground” theory. White argued that while there was a rough balance of power the much-needed middle ground between two cultures in contact could be built on “mutual misunderstandings” — positive outcomes White referred to as “the virtues of misreading.” White’s own work and the large amount of scholarship it inspired proves there were times when misreading the actions of the cultural “other” produced positive rather than negative effects. However, by de-emphasising the negative outcomes too much we are in danger of losing touch with the reality that in these early years of contact there were just as many, if not more, instances where both sides offended each other deeply due to a lack of understanding of cultural others, as well as the fact that the same collision points continued beyond the French colonisation and the colonial period more generally. Reconstructing indigenous perspectives of events recorded by Europeans enables a fuller appreciation of the extent to which the vices of misreading caused conflict that maintained and potentially widened the cultural divide even as both cultures endeavoured to connect with each other.

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It must be noted, however, that White’s use of the word “misreading” does not lend itself to the study of sonorous events like the Kennebec River or rituals and, in the grander scheme, betrays the logocentrism that has long characterised academia generally. This logocentrism is itself derived from what some scholars have identified as the West’s deep-seated visual-textual preference, mentality or “noetic economy,” which media theorist Marshall McLuhan, linguist Walter J. Ong, and sound historian Richard Cullen Rath have largely attributed to the invention of the printing press. Since this “technologizing of the word,” these scholars assert, western ways of experiencing and knowing the world gradually became predominantly, though not exclusively, eye-based. The association of ‘the logos’ or ‘the Word’ with religion, civility, and intellectual pursuits further solidified the West’s placement of eye-based experiences above other modes of perception in the sensory hierarchy. “Sight-dominance” in turn led to the racist association of orality and aurality and other non-eye-based experiences with primitive and rustic peoples who lacked the technology of writing and other presumed markers of civility.

In the West’s increasingly secularised, multicultural, and multimodal society a shift in the opposite direction has occurred, the academic manifestation of which has been referred to as “the somatic turn.” Where the body had hitherto been degraded by Christianity and regarded as separate from the mind in Cartesian philosophy, there has been a recent move towards a more inclusive, holistic understanding of the human intellectual experience as being fully “embodied.” In the social sciences, sensory experiences including hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching as well as the emotions have ceased to be an “epiphenomenal accompaniment to action” and have been acknowledged as central to and even responsible for action.

Seeking evidence of human agency beyond the written word, which was historically largely the domain of educated white male elites, has greatly improved our ability to identify the

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various ways non-elites—marginalised along lines of race, class, and gender—actively made and experienced history, too. For Native Americans and First Nations peoples, who have a rich heritage in oral tradition, their ways of experiencing and knowing the world were primarily, but again not exclusively, ear-based. To appropriate sound ethnographer Steven Feld’s phrase regarding the Kaluli people in the twentieth-century Bosavi rainforest of Papua New Guinea, “acoustic knowing” or *acoustemology* was traditionally “the centrepiece” of Native American and First Nations experience. Truly accessing indigenous perspectives of cross-cultural encounters in the colonial period, therefore, requires western scholars not merely to “face east” or speak of “early Indian views” but to transcend their ocularcentrism and the visual connotations of the word “perspective” itself to get closer to knowing indigenous experiences of contact as they knew it — through sound.

Other historians have already made headway in researching indigenous soundways in colonial America. Kristin Dutcher Mann’s *The Power of Song: Music and Dance in the Mission Communities of Northern New Spain, 1590-1810*, (2010) is a comprehensive study that goes far beyond music to include the broader range of sounds aural history contributions typically encompass, to “examine the dynamics of cultural encounter” between indigenous peoples and French Catholic missionaries of both the Jesuit and Franciscan branches. Mann gives equal attention to the reconstruction of indigenous and European soundways and, while her findings on Jesuits and Franciscans in the colonial era are potentially applicable to the same religious groups in the New France context, the study is, as the title suggests, localised to indigenous peoples of New Spain.

Olivia A. Bloechl’s *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music*, (2008), by contrast, is primarily concerned with “musical encounters between early modern French and English people and indigenous people in eastern North America.” As such, Bloechl provides important insights into the musical practices of Algonquian and Iroquoian-speaking

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peoples. However, it is intended to be a musicological history rather than an aural history and, whilst acknowledging that the flow of ideas and influence moved in both directions across the Atlantic because indigenous peoples were agents of change in the western musical tradition, it is ultimately still more focused on Europeans.

Peter Charles Hoffer’s *Sensory Worlds in Early America* (2003) includes indigenous sonic practices and sounds of northeastern America and how they heard encounters with British colonists. However, due to Hoffer’s subject matter being the entire sensorium, one must search for information about sound and audition amid non-auditory sensory information. Furthermore, of the aspects covering sound only a small percentage is dedicated to indigenous perspectives, because the work uses British sources and generally favours the British experience. Hoffer’s broad sweep on both counts has at times produced oversimplified arguments about Native American and First Nations auditory cultures in an effort to accentuate the contrast between natives and newcomers.21

As the title of Richard Cullen Rath’s *How Early America Sounded* implies, Rath provided a more specialised study of sound than Hoffer, allowing for a deeper discussion of indigenous soundways. Due to the work’s focus on multiple auditory perspectives, including African slaves, a vast amount of indigenous soundways does still remain untapped and the work, like Hoffer’s, clearly centres on the British colonists. This emphasis means the British colonists’ predominantly arm’s length policy toward the indigenous peoples is echoed in the overall narrative. Granted, this is mitigated to an extent by Rath’s sampling of some of the richer ethnographic data recorded by the French who lived among Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples as explorers, traders, and missionaries, learnt their languages and studied their cultures up close. However, when the indigenous peoples are the subjects of a whole chapter, they are still part of the British colonists’ “howling wilderness” — an acoustic ecology that “by the nineteenth century” howled only in white Americans’ imagination.22 Consequently, there are marked exclusions from Rath’s discussion of indigenous sounds. The all-important indigenous percussion instruments are missing even though soundless wampum is given attention as a recording of thoughts and words akin to writing, likely because the highly structured diplomatic exchanges with which wampum was associated were the circumstances in which British colonial elites frequently encountered indigenous peoples in the region.23 Although Rath briefly describes an indigenous acoustic space called a listening

22 *HEAS*, pp.145–72, especially pp.149–50.
23 Percussion instruments are mentioned in a primary source cited in *HEAS*, p.154, but only in relation to how the English perceived them, not what they meant to the Original Peoples. In a chapter on
post, other sacred acoustic spaces such as the sweat lodge and “shaking tent” are absent.\textsuperscript{24} Contrastingly, the British colonists’ use of \textit{catacoustics} or reflected sound in their places of worship received a full chapter.\textsuperscript{25} On the whole, Rath’s text has clearly not set out to be a dedicated ethnohistorical work in the field of aural history so there remains a sense of indigenous auditory experiences being marginal to those of the British.

Thus far, then, no one has presented a dedicated study of Algonquian and Iroquoian auditory experiences and practices from pre-contact, through the early contact era, and beyond using an ethnohistorical approach. This historiographical gap is only to be expected.\textsuperscript{26} To begin with, the very act of doing ethnohistory is fraught with difficulties, not least of which is the question of whether “cultural outsiders” should present the experiences and, thus, “speak for” marginalised, historically silenced “cultural others” at all. For, while the individuals who feature in this thesis are constantly dealing with the problems of crossing cultures—encroaching upon the territory of the “other,” lacking a common language, and causing offence by being ignorant and dismissive of important traditions that sustain a community’s cultural cohesion and sovereignty—the meeting between historian and subject can be just as raw, confrontational, unbalanced and as consequential as those first interactions between natives and newcomers. And, while Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples are no strangers to the idea of an individual speaking with the voice of an entire community—this is precisely what happened in their councils when different nations met to discuss political matters—such individuals were elected by their own community, because they were exceptional orators who would represent the community’s needs accurately. Privileged western historians are neither indigenous nor elected by the indigenous community. The dominant culture has given them the power to assume the role and they do not necessarily know what a particular indigenous community needs or how what they say on their behalf, even with the best of intentions, may affect them in the long term.\textsuperscript{27} For all these reasons, some have argued non-native scholars should not write Native American history as privileged western historians have done too much talking and writing in the past and Native Americans have had to live with the instrumental sounds, Rath merely states instrumental sounds were “markers of group identity,” for Native Americans, pp.68, 161–68.

\textsuperscript{24} \textit{HEAS}, pp.58–59, 97–119.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, pp.97–119.
\textsuperscript{26} See VoS for an ethnomusicological study that culminated in an organology of Algonquian and Iroquoian soundmakers; a useful resource when employing the ethnohistorical technique of “upstreaming,” but not in itself an ethnohistory of encounters between natives and newcomers in the early seventeenth century.
consequences. The only way to correct this imbalance, these scholars argue, is not to “give” them a voice, but to stay respectfully quiet long enough to hear authentic native voices speaking for themselves.\(^{28}\) As this thesis will reveal, this listening practice is an essential part of the Algonquian and Iroquoian acoustemology, yet Linda Alcoff thinks the silent retreat method is problematic: what if non-native scholars remain silent prematurely and thereby fail to draw adequate attention to indigenous issues? Or what if doing so risks perpetuating the original “history of the winners” scenario?\(^{29}\) As Gayatri Spivak has argued, the subaltern may not yet be in a position to speak and be heard, or to know what it is they need to obtain equal footing in society, in which case they do need cultural outsiders to speak for them.\(^{30}\) There is also the view that privileged non-native historians writing on behalf of marginalised people have something unique to offer. Historians including Donald Fixico have concluded this is the case and that cross-cultural research can help bridge the gap between the dominant and marginalised elements of society. The best approach is for western scholars to be self-conscious of their privileged position and responsibilities, to work in *dialogue* with Original Peoples, and to produce multivocal narratives, as outlined by anthropologist Robin Ridington.\(^{31}\) Fixico is optimistic about the dialogic mode, even claiming that when non-natives enter into a dialogue they can cross cultures so effectively they could “think like an Indian” and subsequently speak for Native Americans with authority and cultural sensitivity.\(^{32}\)

Besides traversing the ethnographical minefield, the aural historian of early America faces other challenges. One issue is the difficulty of correctly identifying indigenous groups and then locating enough sonic data on a particular group in the record for a dedicated study to avoid generalisations about the culturally and linguistically diverse nations the invaders encountered. Under such circumstances, it is feasible that the apparent improbability of doing justice to an indigenous-centred aural history of the contact era has marginalised indigenous auditory experiences in the historiography rather than a lack of wanting to amplify those soundways. We must also contend with the sole recordings of these early encounters using the earliest and least effective sound recording technology of “writing” and *solfège* and the fact that the record lacks what is known in sound recording technology as *equalisation* and, thus, inherently favours western perspectives. Even when native auditory perceptions and practices

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\(^{28}\) VoS, p.1.


are recorded, therefore, they too only come to us via early seventeenth-century Christians whose own interpretations and agendas corrupt the integrity of the sonic data.

What likely seems to many non-specialists to be the most insurmountable issue, the problem of trying to recover long-silent sounds from mute black words on a white page, however, is more of a blessing than a curse. Though there are occasions when it would be interesting to be able to accurately state the decibel level of, say, a magnificent and complex sonic ritual like the Algonquian “shaking tent” (spirit-talking tent) ceremony, the inability to supply such precise detail on one particular occasion led one “earwitness” to describe the volume’s intensity for the reader in another aurally-informative way: by stating that not even the report of a Frenchman’s musket purposely fired to bring the rite to a premature end could be heard above the Algonquian sounds let alone cause the ritual participants to disperse in fright. On this occasion, the aural historian learns approximately how loud the rite was by comparison to another sound reproducible today while also listening in on a specific performance of the rite in time that happens to be a prime example of cultural clash, since it demonstrates the offensive sonically aggressive behaviour of a French invader.

The fact remains, though, were it even possible to have audible recordings of actual pre-contact and contact era sounds they would fall short of providing the answers aural historians seek. This is no doubt surprising to the non-specialist who may assume they know what the goal of an aural historian is: to reconstruct the sounds of a particular place and time so the audience can feel like visitors to a living history museum, hearing a long-lost soundscape of old while taking in, for example, the smells of animals in a pen close by, the sight and feel of rough homespun fabrics, and the tastes of dishes of a bygone era. Such an approach works on a certain assumption about what sound actually is; namely, that sound is something objective in the external, physical reality. This definition only takes the aural historian so far. I, instead, work with the psychoacoustic definition of sound as “something…a mind does,” which means sound is inherently subjective: vibrations of air only become “sound” in the process of being heard — not merely by those cartilaginous masses on the sides of our heads but by the whole hearing apparatus including the brain’s auditory cortex. The kind of aural history I undertake therefore is more about audition, the clinical term for hearing, than about providing a comprehensive inventory of the sounds themselves to reconstruct what R. Murray Schafer calls a soundscape and others have referred to as an “acoustic ecology” for a particular space and time. My audience will still get a sense of the range of sounds that filled the environment in the New World, a kind of soundtrack for the contact era, but if any reconstruction takes

33 MBE, p.xiv.
place it is more likely to be the reconstruction of neural pathways by tracing the origin and development of ideas about sound that collectively fused together to form two distinctive ideological frameworks within which sounds were imbued with meanings. As aural historian Mark M. Smith asserts, “For the historian, interest lies in how…sounds were perceived; the meaning different [groups] attached to certain sounds; and the weight sounds carried in shaping consciousness of self, otherness, and…identity.”34 Lacking the option to listen directly to past sounds reduces the likelihood of our own historically and culturally contingent ways of hearing impeding our ability to authentically “listen” to the sounds recorded in our textual sources.

Since sound studies are inherently scientific and interdisciplinary in their own right, the issue then becomes to what extent can the aural historian indulge in discussions of those scientific, technical aspects without pulling focus from the historical argument altogether? In this thesis, I have delved into everything from musicology and psychoacoustics to archaeoacoustics and linguistics, so early on in the project I noted a tension between the aural and historical aspects of my inquiry. When researching and writing it was all too easy to become intensely focused on the purely sonic aspects at the expense of a coherent and worthwhile historical argument. Conversely, when I focused more on the history I often felt this did not always do justice to what I had discovered about the sounds and heard experiences I was trying to convey: the history sometimes overshadowed or, at worst, rendered the sonic details unsatisfactorily simplistic. To progress at all and to best communicate my arguments about both sound and history in the style I preferred, I had to choose whether this was primarily a sound study with an historical element or primarily history with a sonic element. As an historian I chose the latter. To stay on track during the composition process, I labelled the approach “sound-centred history.” This entailed, as the label suggests, writing an historical narrative with the freedom to discuss non-sonic details regarding the historical and cultural contexts, often at great length, but always with the purpose of demonstrating what was happening sonically between the two cultures. In the process, I hope to show that sound and hearing are neither things the non-specialist should avoid nor little more than a way of “adding texture to a narrative,” but that, like race, class, and gender, one’s acoustemology is a category of difference that significantly shapes interactions between diverse peoples and, thus, makes history.35

As for the problem of a lack of *equalisation* in the historical record, challenging though it may be to achieve it is imperative we try to do so to avoid reproducing the traditional “narrative of conquest” and, thereby, choosing the victor’s side in “a battle of stories [and] storytellers.”36 When we at least attempt to listen to the traditional historical record with an Algonquian-Iroquoian ear and present what they heard, it becomes obvious that the silenced Indian and his once “howling wilderness” are just as much a part of white America’s cosmogonic myth as the “vanishing Indian.”37 For, as James Howard Cox has noted, despite being something that only ever existed “in the invaders’ imaginations,” this narrative of conquest continues to be “an omnipresent and powerful “white noise” that kills Native Americans by silencing their voices, plotting their absence from the landscape, and demanding adherence to inflexible, reductive, unattainable definitions of Indianess.”38 Far from being silenced forever, acoustically speaking the opposite is true: Original Peoples’ sounds actually got bigger, louder, and more spiritually powerful over time. The trouble is, however loud the Original Peoples are, the myth of the silenced Indian has produced a kind of selective hearing among those in the “mainstream”; a cultural deafness to indigenous soundways. A major aim of this thesis, therefore, is to make this counternarrative more audible to others; to remaster the original “master record” by turning up the volume on and increasing the clarity of those Algonquian-Iroquoian *soundways* originally drowned out—not always in reality but on the record—by western voices.39

Achieving *equalisation*, however, is hardly a simple case of turning a deaf ear to the western experiences of contact that already monopolise the master record and listening only to the indigenous soundways they record. So much remains to be done in the field of early American aural history that a failure to study the heard experiences of western informants could lead us to conclude that the literate western peoples who ventured to the New World belonged to a primarily visualist culture and the root cause of the cultural clash, therefore, was conflicting “hierarchies of the senses” resulting in struggles between ocularcentric invaders and auricularcentric natives. Western sight-dominance developed only slowly over millennia. Despite western peoples’ ever-growing penchant for the word, “the Word,” and the eye as the chief perceptive mode, literate early seventeenth-century westerners placed far greater importance on what they heard than their modern counterparts. Biard is a case in point: as

37 For more scholarly discussion on this enduring myth, see Martin Barker and Roger Sabin, *The Lasting of the Mohicans: History of an American Myth*, (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1995).
39 My use of *soundways* refers to both indigenous ways of “sounding” and ways of hearing. For a slightly different use of this term, see *HEAS*, p.2.
revealed in his account of the Kennebec episode presented in full later in this thesis, he and
his Christian contemporaries inhabited a world in which God and Satan were engaged in a
cosmic battle for dominion over the earth. The omnipresence of these forces meant God could
acoustically manifest in sacred hymns and Satan was audible as well. Hence, when the
Europeans labelled indigenous music “demonic” they were not merely expressing their strong
dislike for the clamour — they actually believed these songs were the diabolus in musica, (the
devil in music). With sound being so powerful for early modern Europeans and so central to
the Algonquian-Iroquoian 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. And when those missionaries wished to measure the success or failure of their
conversion campaigns they did so by listening to the sounds of the indigenous communities.
What, then, might natives and newcomers have misheard in their early encounters with each
other? How and why did mishearing each other’s sounds and mis-sounding in each other’s
presence contribute to what is so often glossed over with the appropriately echomimetic
phrase the “clash of cultures?” What role did sound play in colonisation? And in what ways
are these cultural collisions and auditory-based methods of gaining, asserting, imposing, or
sustaining power still audible today? We cannot ever hope to answer these questions about
conflicting soundways by studying and presenting a one-sided narrative, therefore the master
record can neither remain as it is nor can we present an indigenous-centred, aural history
counternarrative in isolation. We must first tune into r
rather than out of the “white noise” that
dominates our sole recordings of these sonic events.⁴⁰ We must listen to the voices of western
peoples and hear what they heard. Only then will we be able to identify and consciously
“listen below the [white] noise” of that imperfect master record and hear what the
Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples heard. Then we will begin to appreciate that far
from joining natives and newcomers together in an idealised, perfect universal harmony
composed and produced by “the one true God” — sound constantly came between them.
Thus, while this is not a dedicated indigenous-centred aural history, it is the first to present at
length the Algonquian and Iroquoian soundways from pre-contact through to the contact era,
with some attention also given to the long-term ramifications of and responses to the invaders’
use of sound to colonise native lands and minds.

The dual narrative adopted in this work attunes our ears to both acoustemologies; immersing
us in their alternate acoustic realities by tracing the development and basic continuity of the
acoustemologies from antiquity and then following the resultant members of these auditory

cultures into the contact era. The western and Algonquian-Iroquoian narrative threads are presented separately rather than interwoven throughout to avoid diminishing the immersion experience and the readers’ sense of each complex acoustemology’s cohesion, as well as for another important reason: to accentuate their independence. For, while a dual narrative technique can highlight similarities, in this instance it has not been employed to argue that there were points of overlap between the two groups or to proceed to discern the ways fundamental similarities were identified and became the “ground of a common perception” upon which they went on to collaboratively form a “New World” for all concerned — the implication being that this outcome was more desirable than ongoing cultural independence and the conflict it instigated.\(^4\) Instead, this dual narrative amplifies how distinct the acoustic realities of the invaders and the invaded were, are, and should continue to be for the purposes of actively maintaining the sonic sovereignty of the original inhabitants and, when necessary, facilitating neurodecolonisation where the invaders have compromised their traditions already. Importantly, the dual narrative presents both distinct experiences as subjectively “true” in a postmodern sense while implicitly revealing via the juxtaposition of the two sound-centred narratives the primary points of cultural collision.

In the process of providing a dual narrative featuring a number of encounters in which the “vices of mishearing” and mis-sounding are apparent, I do not identify a “hierarchy of the senses” being the primary issue between the French Christian invaders and the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples so much as different hierarchies of sounds. Since antiquity, for westerners there was a premium on harmonic complexity while rhythm was subordinate in music and philosophy. Acoustically, this hierarchy is still visually discernible in printed musical scores and the mere fact that “common time” exists at all because of how little rhythmic complexity has been valued within the western musical (and philosophical) tradition. In stark contrast, harmony was absent from the Algonquian-Iroquoian musical and philosophical tradition, which was just as ancient, if not more so, yet founded on complex, highly nuanced and varied rhythms. Ultimately, the dual narrative’s implicit argument is that it is because of the deeply ingrained nature of these conflicting, habitual ways of thinking and being sonically that we consistently find sound and audition at the core of misunderstandings and tensions between western and indigenous peoples since the early years of contact. Uncovering the “surprising unchangeability” of some sound-related neural pathways and behaviours that together form acoustemological frameworks “from which man and his experiences cannot liberate themselves” and which, therefore, have been highly resistant and slow to change over the

longue durée, is a notable departure from sound studies that focus on a physical, external acoustic ecology in a narrowly defined time and space known as a soundscape.\textsuperscript{42} Ironically, R. Murray Schafer, who coined the term soundscape, provides us with further evidence of the western mind’s persistent proclivity for these notions when he identifies the objective of his research as “a reaffirmation of music as a search for the harmonizing influence of sounds in the world about us. In Robert Fludd’s \textit{Utriusque Cosmi Historia},” he writes, “there is an illustration entitled “The Tuning of the World” in which the earth forms the body of an instrument across which strings are stretched and are tuned by a divine hand. We must try once again to find the secret of that tuning.”\textsuperscript{43}

I use the word “narrative” not as a synonym for “argument” but to flag for the reader that the thesis is itself frequently a “breakthrough into performance,” to appropriate Dell Hymes’s phrase.\textsuperscript{44} I have adopted the storytelling style of the “narrative history” approach, making ample use of present tense and, at times, directly addressing my intended audience in the “second person” to heighten a sense of interactivity between myself as a narrator and my audience. This seemed the most suitable approach for the actual practice of sensory history. Though reconstructing a soundscape is not my primary aim as an aural historian, as explained earlier, this style has allowed me to evoke and bring a greater sense of immediacy to sounds that ceased to resonate centuries ago if only to jolt my audience out of their own ocularcentric scholarly “ways of thinking and being,” even as they continue to read silent words on the page. I am effectively attempting to make an auditor of the reader so they listen to “The Master Record” and “The Remastered Record” as opposed to reading them, albeit with hearing apparatus they have borrowed from early seventeenth-century western and Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples.\textsuperscript{45}


The narrative history style, quite simply, also seemed the most natural means of communicating my research. As a vocalist and especially as a “folk singer” I have been a lifelong member of a western story-based oral tradition composed and orally transmitted over centuries by “folk”—“the people”—as opposed to “literate” elites, and which is alive, intertextual, and adaptable because it belongs to no one and everyone. Subsequently, every word I write on the page is merely a transcription of a vocal performance in my own mind; performed for the widest, most diverse audience of “folk” possible, as opposed to a limited niche of aural history specialists.

Switching to “storyteller mode,”46 “showing” (or sounding) rather than always explicitly “telling” my audience what happened when the two auditory cultures came into contact, is about more than doing what is most suitable and most natural, though — it is a way of being more respectful. It acknowledges the alternative yet equally valid modes of “literacy” that were and are so highly developed and valued by North America’s original inhabitants. As one team of ethnomusicologists came to appreciate during their fieldwork among the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) in the 1980s, they could ask a straightforward question and sometimes get a straightforward answer, but being quiet and actively listening created a silent space for the individual to “run with an idea” of their own and express it spontaneously in the far richer, more layered, culturally significant, and artful storyteller mode, which “aurally and kinaesthetically…transformed…the event.”47 Traditionally, historians would place the oral tradition’s creation stories and cultural stories in the ahistorical world of myth and legend, because such stories reject the concept of linear time so crucial to history and their very orality renders them living, ever-changing sources with no clear composition date or a single, identifiable composer. However, as indigenous philosophers like D’Arcy Rheault have highlighted, to continue conceiving of history as something that meets criteria based on purely western notions of time, space, and causation, even while we claim to reconstruct and tell indigenous perspectives of an event, is to perpetuate the marginalisation of indigenous ways of being and knowing in the historical record. Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers, for example, traditionally possess a cyclical notion of time and conceive of the spiritual world as a simultaneous reality. Rather than being part of a linear past, the events of the spiritual world discussed in the cultural stories are ever-present and may impinge upon the current material realm: “the eternal breaking through the temporal.”48 In this belief system, then, creation and

47 Ibid.
cultural stories are indivisible from history. A history that presents indigenous perspectives and respects what American Indian studies scholar Peter Nabokov recognises as “American Indian ways of history” must therefore be, to use Rheault’s designation, “spiritual history.”

Not surprisingly, then, as the prelude “A Tale of Two Turtles” establishes, in the present study there is a heavy use of oral tradition sources — or, at least, transcriptions of stories originally performed orally and kinaesthetically and heard and watched by captivated audiences for generations, centuries, even millennia. This emphasis is also thanks in large part to the fact that, by virtue of being performed, oral tradition relied (and relies) greatly upon providing rich, evocative polysensory details to engage audiences, which makes it a treasure trove for culturally specific sensory information. And, since it does not depend on a type of literacy available only to those with access to formal western education, oral tradition has the benefit of reaching and being the voice of so-called “illiterate” everyday people and, thus, can tell us more about how the majority of people in a culture thought and acted as opposed to the few elites. Indeed, as this thesis reveals, often these living texts of the people have actively produced as well as preserved the “habitual grooves of thinking” and being the present study seeks to recover from the deep past.

Contrary, perhaps, to expectations and conventions, as the prelude also indicates my use of creation stories and cultural stories is not restricted to the parts of the thesis featuring non-western experiences. For to consider such sources ahistorical, as they traditionally are within the discipline of history, and to hold that what passes for valid historical sources and “history” for non-western peoples would never do for literate peoples who have far more reliable, rational, written texts to consult, would be to retain—albeit in a diluted form—the old attitude that non-western peoples belonging to oral cultures are “people without history.”


broader definitions of “what history is” and what is a valid historical source for alternate groups are as useful when studying past western peoples because, the truth is, Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers were by no means alone in thinking of the material world as being acted upon and altered by ever-present spiritual forces. For the western peoples studied here the line between the spiritual and the rational, corporeal world was not yet so demarcated as to be diametrically opposed as it is now. As this thesis reveals, religion, mysticism, music, mathematics, and science, for example, were all inextricably linked for far longer than they have seemed jarringly disparate and irreconcilable to the western mind. To insist, therefore, upon using only rational, textual sources deafens us to much of the western historical experience, whereas widening the range and type of sources to be inclusive of those that not only speak of less concrete things but are themselves less concrete amplifies the “pastness” of the western past even while those sources refuse to be pinned down to a specific timeframe within it. Thus, ancient Greek origin stories as sung by epic poets about the goddess Harmonia and the instrument known as the lyre are consulted, as are legends of Orpheus and the Underworld, Pythagoras, Classical and Christian visionary texts, which were originally oral accounts, and Bible stories.\footnote{Plato, for example, wrote down his version of “The Myth of Er,” which Classics scholar F. M. Cornford believes was likely drawn from the initiatory rites performed by Orphists. Medieval visionary texts were also often transcriptions by clergymen of experiences in the spiritual world told by (illiterate) “simple peasants” like Thurkill of Essex, who had his vision in 1206. MOS, p.55; Gurevich and Shukman, Op.cit., 52.}

The use of oral tradition, however, is problematic. Some scholars working with stories from Native American and First Nations oral tradition, for example, have acknowledged that the act of constructing a single, cohesive Creation story for a specific group by consulting multiple oral tradition sources and using the elements which are common to most versions is to create something “artificial.”\footnote{\textit{NISH}, pp.18, 158–60.} They are right, of course, but they have also just described the act of writing history generally. No history is “the past” itself; it is only ever an interpretation of the past with certain elements selected by the historian (storyteller) to advance their particular thesis (narrative), while other parts are consciously omitted for the purposes of clarity or to avoid including anything that might diminish the strength of their argument, and all constructed from an historical record that was never complete in the first place. History is always a case of, “there is my version of the truth, your version of the truth, and what really happened” — the fact I am using oral tradition as historical sources does not change that. To have “let the texts speak”\footnote{Ibid.} for themselves by including rather than editing the many, sometimes contradictory, variations of the creation stories would have been a wonderful way
to make the thesis more “multivocal,” which is why I urge the reader to read the original published oral works to experience them in a slightly more direct way. Unfortunately, letting the texts speak unedited also would have been too much for the reader to contend with when the larger historical argument regarding sound and audition must remain the focus of the thesis. For this reason, I am being completely transparent about the artificiality of the creation stories presented here. Like any piece of historical writing, for better or worse, they are the products of consulting multiple published versions of the creation stories, with a selection of features and characters common to the stories of Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers alike. In truth, these orally and kinaesthetically performed stories have already been artificially fixed in a particular space and time by being forced into being fossilised words on a printed page during the collection and publication process. Oral tradition is always meant to be “alive at the level of the human voice” as N. Scott Momaday says; always in the present, timeless in both its antiquity and in its updateability, and in the potential for the storyteller to discover new truths hidden within and between the many stories within the tradition.\(^{56}\) This fossilisation of the oral tradition stories does not mean they have no value: it does mean that, just as history is not the past itself but a single interpretation of it reflecting the historian’s purpose, audience, and times, these fossilised “texts” need to be understood not as the oral tradition itself but as a particular storyteller’s telling of it at a particular moment in time — a moment that will never exist again even for that storyteller. The artificial constructions of the creation stories offered here serve the purposes of this thesis and are not definitive versions because there never will be definitive “correct” versions.\(^{57}\) Like the rest of this thesis, the creation stories I present are just part of an ongoing conversation that began not with my use of them but with a dialogue that was already occurring intertextually between the ancient voices that live in the many stories within the oral tradition I have consulted; a dialogue I have since entered and which others can now agree with, build upon, reject entirely, or actively work against.

Valuable as the “eternal” oral sources are, they “break through” a narrative constructed mainly from “temporal” textual sources. The bulk of these are ethnographic sources composed by western peoples including explorers, missionaries, ethnographers, and musicologists from contact through to the mid-twentieth century. The core of the dual narrative, however, consists of those ethnographic sources dating from the earliest years of French colonisation (roughly 1605-1650) because they are doubly useful in the present work; they record the colonists’ experiences in fine detail, making it possible to tune into “The Master Record” and understand


the effect of the western acoustemology on their initial experiences of the New World; and, by virtue of being some of the earliest sources we have of the peoples the French encountered, they capture the Algonquian-Iroquoian lifeworld/s at or soon after first contact and are widely believed to provide evidence of their pre-contact lifeways, too.\textsuperscript{58} While the French sources have been mined previously for their ethnographic and historical evidence by countless scholars, none have done so with the specific intention of creating an extended ethnohistorical study of the clashing auditory cultures in New France. I have favoured the French sources containing ethnographic information over, say, those produced by British colonists in the same period because, as previously mentioned in my historiographical discussion of Rath and Hoffer, the French—be they explorers, traders, fishermen, or missionaries—tended to be more closely involved with the original inhabitants on a daily basis than the British. Thus, Samuel de Champlain’s lengthy works detailing his exploratory voyages are a vital source as are the works of lawyer and historian Marc Lescarbot. Among the various French people who became deeply immersed in the Algonquian and Iroquoian communities for diverse reasons ranging from commerce to spiritual salvation, though, it was the Catholic missionaries who ventured to New France from 1611 who were particularly prolific when it came to detailing interactions with—as well as what they experienced and learnt about—the peoples they believed they had journeyed so far to “save.” Of these, special attention must be given to the Jesuit Relations, from which most of the episodes in the dual narrative are derived.

The Jesuit Relations were written by Jesuit missionaries while in the field and published regularly from 1611 and annually from 1632 to 1673. They did not, however, come straight from the forests of the New World to the printed page. They were made fit for publication by being edited to manage the image of the Society of Jesus as well as of the Church as a whole. We must also be mindful that the Jesuits wrote them to inform their superiors in France of progress in their mission to convert an entire country of people to Catholicism, encourage further financial support for the missions, and to contribute to the body of knowledge on the peoples and places of New France for the benefit of settlement and the efficacy of future missionary efforts. What any given missionary selected and, by contrast, left out while recording his daily experiences was governed by these purposes, as was how he may have shaped and coloured his narratives to make a certain argument, exploit a specific incident to impress upon supporters the need for their ongoing financial backing, to plead for understanding as to why there were not more conversions, and, at times, to consciously or unwittingly exaggerate successes due to the pressure he was under to achieve the aims of the mission or sensory processing errors. Nevertheless, as historian Erik R. Seeman has noted, the

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{NISH}, p.7.
multipurpose nature of the Relations also makes them more reliable. As money flowed into the missions, reports could not afford to over-accentuate the supposed savagery of New France’s original inhabitants: there had to be signs of progress or the mission would begin to seem impossible and unwise to support. On the other hand, no Jesuit could afford to overstate the victories too much otherwise popular interest—built on the notion that this was an important and pressing cause—would wane and take with it the much-needed funds for ongoing missionary work. This delicate balancing act over the long term between urging people to care enough to provide financial backing by sustaining this sense of urgency and great need whilst tempering it with some positive news occasionally meant those who wrote and published the Relations tended to provide a more realistic account of what they were experiencing.

Both the core of the dual narrative and its outer limits have been informed by contemporary sources produced by cultural insiders and outsiders. The outer limits, which gloss over the more accessible recent history of the Algonquian and Iroquoian soundways to contextualise the contact-era power struggles in a larger story that debunks the traditional narrative of conquest, draw upon studies containing details of those recent soundways. These include James S. Slotkin’s monograph containing transcriptions of interviews with mid twentieth-century Mamaceqtaw (Menomini) members of the niimi’idiwin (Powwow), Thomas Vennum Jr.’s focused study The Ojibwe Dance Drum: Its History and Construction (1982), Tara Browner’s Heartbeat of the People: Music and Dance of the Northern Pow-wow (2004), Georg Henriksen and Innu (Montagnais) hunter Kaniuektat’s I Dreamed the Animals: The Life of an Innu Hunter (2009), the Paul Buffalo trilogy edited by Timothy G. Roufs, When Everybody Called Me Gah-bay-bi-nayss, “Forever-Flying-Bird,” and Beverley Diamond et. al’s organological study Visions of Sound: Musical Instruments of First Nations Communities in Northeastern America (1994). However, these texts, further supplemented by anthropological and ethnomusicological studies by A. Irving Hallowell, Ruth Landes, Theresa S. Smith and Frances Densmore, to name only a few, often also provided direct evidence of certain traditional practices that were the same as, or similar to, those recorded in the early seventeenth century along with insights into the meaning of those practices and beliefs, making it possible to draw on the content within these recent sources while using the ethnohistorical technique of “upstreaming.” In layman’s terms, once I established the continuity of a belief or practice, or at least a clear descendence from an earlier tradition, I used the evidence and insights gleaned from these contemporary sources to reconstruct pre-

60 Ibid.
contact and contact-era Algonquian-Iroquoian ways of thinking and being sonically. More general information regarding sacred experience offered by religious historian Mircea Eliade as well as Anishinaabe-inini D’Arcy Rheault’s publications regarding the Algonquian-speaking Anishinaabeg’s philosophy and spirituality have also informed my interpretations whilst reading against the grain of early seventeenth-century primary sources.\(^{61}\)

All of these methodological choices and others outlined in the subsequent essay, “Name-Calling: Notes on Terminology,” were governed by my intention to create what I hope will be considered a respectful, multivocal, dialogic thesis. That respectful dialogue exists between myself as historian and the many voices retained in my sources, sometimes occurs between the sources themselves, especially in the case of the oral tradition performances, and now—at last—by virtue of the following dual narrative, between the duelling harmonic and rhythmic turtles.

In Part I: The Harmonic Tradition the reader’s present-day ear is attuned to the early seventeenth-century Christian colonists’ acoustemology, (their ways of being in and knowing the world sonically), to more accurately “hear” what they heard and recorded on the master record of history. Yet, to do so and, moreover, to demonstrate how something as seemingly innocuous as sound could contribute so greatly to tensions between natives and newcomers at all, Part I also impresses upon the reader how deeply ingrained those habitual grooves of thinking and being were for western peoples. To this end, I trace the long history of an ancient and unbroken obsession with “harmony” that began in ancient Greek myth and mystery cults, subsequently formed a major part of the foundation of western philosophy, and was ultimately assimilated into Christianity, early modern science, and the western musical tradition we know today. In this section the reader can, therefore, expect to encounter everything from the conception of the goddess Harmonia to the quasi-mythical Pythagoras’s discovery of the mathematical basis of harmony in music and the cosmos at large; the Pythagorean-tinged works of Plato; the polyphonic harmonious music of the heavens and the increasingly enrhythmmed “anti-music” of the Underworld in the polysensory Classical and Christian “visionary” texts; the early Church Fathers’ internal conflicts regarding pleasurable sounds and growing antagonism to rhythm; and evidence of these harmonic ways of being and thinking in early modern scientific treatises published at the same time the French were establishing permanent settlements in the New World and attempting to bring all who dwelt there into harmony with “the one true God’s” universe. As our colonial entry point into this grand narrative of western acoustemology, the chapter begins and ends with the Recollect lay

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\(^{61}\) Anishinaabe-inini means Anishinaabe man. The feminine form is Anishinaabekwe.
brother Gabriel Sagard: one of the earliest French Catholic missionaries to journey to New France and the only one of his ilk to explicitly reference this ancient harmonic tradition whilst betraying its influence on his own auditory experience of the New World. Sagard’s account, therefore, is a strong testament to and unequivocal evidence of the harmonic tradition’s persistence in the early seventeenth century and, as such, the key to understanding the acoustemological framework within which he and his fellow Christians generally experienced the Algonquin-Iroquoian sounds they heard.\(^\text{62}\) No one has applied the findings within the field devoted to the western harmonic tradition to the “New World” much less detected traces of it in Sagard’s account, if only because the available English translation of an all-important phrase in Sagard’s work completely divested it of all its harmonic cultural baggage by substituting the English synonym “concert” for “harmony.”\(^\text{63}\) By restoring “harmony” to its rightful position in Sagard’s work, I reveal the harmonic tradition’s extraordinary continuity right through to the contact era and, from there, proceed to offer episodes which demonstrate the way harmonic ways of thinking and being shaped European responses and colonial policies towards Algonquin-Iroquoian soundways.

Having attuned the reader’s ear to the western acoustemology, Part II: The Master Record invites the reader to apply this knowledge to a specific context: early seventeenth-century New France. Initially, this means listening to the French Jesuit missionaries’ contributions to the master record of history—their widely read Jesuit Relations—not with our twenty-first century ears but as though we are hearing and judging the sounds as seventeenth-century Christian missionaries would have: as sounds processed within the framework of the harmonic tradition and thus deemed to be of immensely powerful, moral, social, political and cosmic significance. In so doing we hear, as they do, the traditional narrative of conquest in the form of sensory imperialism; the French missionaries’ initial disgust at the lack of harmony in the original inhabitants’ soundways and, subsequently, the successful derhythmisation of their enrhythmed world. “The Master Record” then briefly goes beyond the context of early seventeenth-century New France to show that the efforts to colonise the New World sonically were not isolated to derhythmisation policies in the colonial era. The harmonic tradition was still prominent in the thinking of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century white American ethnographers who ventured into the field to make musical transcriptions and wax cylinder recordings of “Indian music.” The continuity of this way of


\(^{63}\) See footnote 19 on p.90 of this thesis for a fuller discussion of the mistranslation and the benefits of “restoring harmony.”
thinking and acting led to the western harmonic tradition’s imposition on people for whom harmony traditionally had no significance whatsoever, and the harmonisable parts of the original inhabitants’ voices being stolen for the benefit of white America.

The “White Noise” Interlude is in every sense of the word a true “interlude” insofar as it is clearly set apart from the narrative that precedes it and the one it precedes, yet also serves as both a conclusion for the former and an introduction to the latter. For “White Noise” is not written in the narrative style at all: it is a theoretical discussion that reflects on the nature of history’s master record, forces the reader to “hear” that record more critically than the highly persuasive master record’s narrative of successful sonic imperialism and destruction allows, and then turns the reader’s attention to sections yet to come. It outlines what culturally contingent ways of thinking and being the reader may need to divest him/herself of before trying to hear Native North America as well as what techniques will be employed to recover the Algonquian-Iroquoian audio signal from the noise-corrupted one to “remaster” the record. By this stage, it should come as no surprise to the reader when the word and concept of “harmony” is identified as a primary site of neurocolonisation; a major yet little suspected part of the colonialist mindset that persists right up to the present day. Other sonic impositions are also amplified here, too. Ultimately, the interlude identifies that while the western soundways have been imposed on the original inhabitants and their world, perhaps the greatest white noise of all is a figurative one that still masks even the strongest and most voluminous indigenous sounds due to its ability to generate a kind of selective cultural deafness in auditors: it is the narrative—the master record of history itself—which holds that the conquest of “the New World” was absolute and that indigenous soundways were silenced when the “vanishing Indians” took their distinctive sounds to their graves. Not only do those “Indians” still exist, their enrhythmed sounds and listening practices continue to develop, grow louder and more spiritually powerful, too.

Part III: The Rhythmic Tradition immerses the reader in the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers’ lifeworld/s. In this section, a combination of oral tradition, ethnographic, historical and contemporary material is presented to give the reader a foundation in the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers’ general beliefs and soundways; that is, to effectively commence reconstructing the traditional Algonquian-Iroquoian neural pathways that turn/ed objective vibrations in the external world into subjective “sounds.” Presented as a “spiritual history,” commencing with the common elements of the Creation story as told by multiple Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking storytellers from time immemorial to the present day, the narrative establishes the baseline beat of a repetitive rhythmic time-cycle of creation, destruction, and re-creation. It then discusses in more depth the philosophical beliefs embedded in the oral
tradition and how those beliefs manifested acoustically in what I call a purely sonic lingua franca that facilitated respectful, dialogic, mutually beneficial, interspecies and interdimensional communication throughout what was (and is) conceived of and experienced with the whole body as interconnected material and spiritual realities. While a variety of soundmakers or “spirit-talkers” are discussed it does not constitute a comprehensive organology of Algonquian and Iroquoian instruments; those featured have been selected for what they contribute to the larger discussion of the acoustemology and the historical narrative. In sum, I posit that the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples have a “rhythmic tradition” every bit the equivalent of the West’s “harmonic tradition” insofar as it is equally as ancient and equally as complex. To clarify, in presenting the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers’ rhythmic tradition as equivalent to the western harmonic tradition I am in no way suggesting they were or are arrested at the developmental level of the ancient Greeks, as Joseph-François Lafitau implied when he drew attention to the significance given to the turtle or tortoise in the “myths” of both cultures. I am arguing that the European colonists and the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples were both equally influenced by ancient ways of being in and knowing the world sonically at the time of their meeting and it was the antiquity of these ways of thinking— their deeply ingrained nature—that led to sound being so often at the core of cultural conflict in the early seventeenth-century and, indeed, right up to the present day.

In Part IV: The Remastered Record the chief aim is to utilise the findings of “The Rhythmic Tradition” to reconstruct and place the Algonquian and Iroquoian auditory experiences at the centre of the counternarrative. Revisiting encounters featured earlier in “The Master Record” is an effective way of demonstrating just how different the acoustemologies were and the many points at which they clashed, even when those conflicts were more subtle and part of everyday interactions rather than the usual “big” events of history, and even when our sole informants were not always aware of—and, thus, could not explicitly record—the offence they were causing themselves. In other cases, entirely new episodes are introduced in “The Remastered Record,” because significant episodes in the European narrative of conquest were and are not necessarily significant to the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples and, therefore, needed to be muted, while episodes of little or no interest to the Europeans reveal important aspects of what happened to Algonquian-Iroquoian soundways over time and needed to be “amplified.” Generally “going beyond” the original master record to deepen our understanding of all participants in these encounters is a secondary aim, so there is still some

64 A complete organology is more the aim of ethnomusicologists like Diamond et.al., Op.cit., and is far beyond the parameters of this work since even one drum type in a single nation has been known to require a long monograph, see for example, ODD.
elaboration of the French Christian missionary perspective here, too. To truly be a
counternarrative, though, “The Remastered Record” foregoes a strictly linear concept of time
and its finality of death, conquest, and destruction in favour of a cyclical one. Utilising this
alternative timeway demotes the traditional historical periodisation in which “the coming of
the Europeans” is usually as central to Algonquian-Iroquoian temporal experience as Jesus
Christ is to Christian temporal experience. Without denying the destruction of the contact era,
destruction becomes merely a phase in a constantly repeating rhythmic cycle of creation,
destruction, and re-creation pulsing throughout the oral tradition, the philosophy, and
sounding its rhythmic essence in the Algonquian-Iroquoian soundways.66 Again, to
completely tell this story, it is not enough to remain in the early seventeenth century or even
to go into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as we did in “The Master Record”
— we must keep listening from Creation right up to the present-day Powwow.

When we learn to listen actively and respectfully to the historical record, we hear a story not
merely of western conquest and destruction but also of Native North America’s sustained
sonic sovereignty and re-creation via sound-based neurodecolonisation.

66 Olivia Harris, “‘The Coming of the White People’ - Reflections on the Mythologisation of History in
Name-Calling

Notes on Terminology

Great care must be taken when deciding on the names we give to and use for others. Names do not just refer to other people, places, and things; their power does not even end with their ability to define and assign value by venerating or denigrating. For names also have the power to call and draw others towards us — or to repel. Today, the consequences of how another perceives, feels, and experiences a name they are called by are the concerns of those deemed “politically-correct, culturally-sensitive people.” Among westerners, though, this sensitivity and concern has the potential to extend only to those whom westerners deem to be sentient beings in the first place. As John Trudell, author, activist and former chairman of the American Indian Movement so eloquently stated: “We must go beyond the arrogance of human rights. We must go beyond the ignorance of civil rights. We must step into the reality of natural rights because all the natural world has a right to existence. We are only a small part of it.”¹

In a non-western world with a far more “inclusive category of personhood,”² then, name-calling takes on even greater power. As Part III: The Rhythmic Tradition reveals, among the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples, plants, trees, rocks, fishnets, architectural spaces, meteorological phenomena, deceased ancestors in the Land of the Dead, other-than-human elders from cultural stories, and basically everything else in Creation traditionally possess a spiritual element and the potential for sentience and agency.³ Thus, sounding the name of any of these diverse, sentient beings in this densely “peopled cosmos”⁴ may conjure them into the present time and space where, for good or ill, they can then act and influence

⁴ NISH, pp.43–63.
events. By reciting a myth about caribou, for example, a person can find caribou on the hunt the following day, in which case “myths are transformative and can be used to create history.” Consequently, such empowered persons must only be called intentionally with care, honour, and respect so, often, caution is taken to avoid “inviting an unwanted presence” by deliberately not sounding a name. To this end, cultural stories or “myths” about powerful other-than-human persons are traditionally told only at night in winter months when these empowered, sentient beings are likely to be too sluggish or fast asleep and unable to hear the humans speaking about them. In other seasons, these beings are discussed only using pseudonyms, for example, Innu hunters say ‘mant’ rather than the generic word for bear, ‘mashk,’ which on many occasions should be avoided, while others employ veiled “you-know-who” type references like, “the one who is down there” or “that person, that guy.”

Given the conjuring power traditionally associated with sounding a name among Native American and First Nations peoples, it is sobering to realise the most common names of these peoples have been imposed on them by others—often without care, sensitivity, or respect—while the names they give to themselves are avoided. This is not, of course, an issue isolated to the American context.

Historians studying encounters between the invaders and the invaded must always grapple with the question of what to collectively call the original inhabitants of those invaded lands. We invariably find ourselves caught in a battle between the need to provide clarity to a wide, diverse audience and the danger of over-generalising and causing offence to the people whose stories need to be told the most. For historian Inga Clendinnen, for example, this was the first and by no means “trivial” problem she needed to resolve when setting out to write her much lauded book Dancing with Strangers: The True History of the Meeting of the British First Fleet and the Aboriginal Australians, 1788:

‘Aborigine’ is anachronistic: a cultural construct crusted with later stereotypes. It also smooths away that people’s variousness, and their sheer unexpectedness.

The British called them ‘natives’ or ‘indians’ or sometimes, not always

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5 See for example JR 7:181–83.
8 Ibid.
pejoratively, ‘savages,’ which at least captures their strangeness and the intruders’ unease. I call them ‘Australians,’ which is what they undoubtedly were, just as the British were certainly other - ‘them’ against ‘we people here.’

As I commenced my research for the present work I found “Indian” to be just as unsuitable, if not more so, in the American context. It lumps all the linguistically and culturally diverse nations of the Americas into one homogeneous mass and is, as historian David J. Silverman has noted, “widely judged to be insensitive and even racist...in Canada” where “First Nations” is preferred. Yet “First Nations” is reportedly “unfamiliar” in the United States and the word “Indian” is widely used by the original inhabitants themselves in favour of “Native Americans,” despite “educators and the media” deeming the term “Native Americans” more correct, with the exception of John Demos who admits “the term feels strained, unfamiliar.”

The fact that much of my sound-centred history takes place before these national demarcations of “Canada” and the “United States” even existed but in regions that are part of both countries today, disables the possibility of favouring one of these terms over the other. And what of the Clendinnen option? Could I simply call the indigenous subjects of the present study “Americans”? What this name had in its favour was that it was streamline and honoured the original inhabitants of the Americas by implicitly arguing American history did not begin with “the coming of the white people.” After all, the argument goes, when we think in terms of the full time-frame of human history in the Americas, that history consists of thousands of years of indigenous history so the majority of “Americans” have actually been “Native Americans.” This was, evidently, the logic behind Clendinnen’s certainty that “Australians” was the most appropriate name for the original inhabitants of the place now known as “Australia,” for “Australians...is what they undoubtedly were.” I, on the other hand, was increasingly experiencing niggling doubts.

I was beginning to question the givenness of the place names “America” and “Australia” and their application to the invaded peoples of those lands. To question this at all may seem sacrilegious to some, perhaps more so in Australia where the words “Australia” and “Australian” have been invested with notions of an idealised, all-inclusive, unified yet diverse multicultural population, as articulated in the song lyrics: “We are one, but we are many...I

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am, you are, we are Australian.”¹³ Superficially it would appear this lack of differentiation is a positive step forward because it includes rather than excludes Aboriginal people in a single, unified national community. In reality, though, the dominance of these all-inclusive words “Australian” and “American” are often a source of unrest insofar as they can encroach upon the cultural sovereignty of indigenous peoples when the dominant culture is non-Aboriginal and “settler colonial systems remain intact.”¹⁴ One only has to look at the heated exchanges when anything to do with non-Aboriginal people is referred to as an Australian “first.” Historically speaking these are “Australian firsts,” because Australia as a concept, as a name, and as a place is not timeless — and neither is “America.” These toponyms are as much “anachronistic cultural constructs” as “Aborigine” seemed to be to Clendinnen. Ceremonially sticking a flag in the ground and declaring, “the Crown now owns this” takes the present and future of the land from the original inhabitants. Imposing the invaders’ foreign word on to a particular landmass and suggesting it applies since time immemorial in a real, objective way enables the invaders’ descendants and other non-Aboriginal citizens to effectively take ownership of its entire past, too.¹⁵ In the latter sections of Part II: The Master Record we see evidence of late nineteenth-century white Americans believing they were entitled to do just that: to cease feeling “like stranger[s] in [their] native land,” to become native to the place their forebears invaded by claiming the most agreeable aspects of the “olden life of [the] continent” of “North America” as their own heritage to give white people a more unique, distinct national identity as “Americans.” ¹⁶ As a descendant of British convicts, born and raised in “The Place of Eels” (Parramatta, New South Wales) where my family have lived continuously since 1801, I think it is far better to never experience the comfort of feeling “native,” to always feel (at best) like an uninvited guest in the stolen land of the Burramattagal people — it is not so easy to forget to behave respectfully then or to delude myself for one moment in thinking that as much as 65,000 years of pre-contact history is mine.¹⁷

But the greatest reason for my misgivings regarding name-calling as I embarked on my sound-centred history was, ultimately, a sonic one: what worlds are we honouring and

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¹⁶ FLGD, pp.v, xxii.
conjuring by sounding names like “America” or “Australia,” which have been monologically imposed on the invaded lands and peoples by the invaders? Like “Terra Australis,” a “southern land” imagined in antiquity and finally applied to what is now “Australia” in the early 1800s, “America” is derived from the Latin “Americus” after the Italian explorer, Amerigo Vespucci, who in the sixteenth century correctly identified as a whole “New World” what Columbus had mistaken for the east coast of Asia. Aye, there was the rub. Latin: the language of the famed conquerors the Romans, no less. The words “America,” “Australia,” “New France,” “New England,” and so on, belong to the lifeworld of western peoples; a world in which land is a physical mass that can be discovered, mapped, measured, recorded, claimed for a distant monarch, and named. Physically, these are the same spaces the original inhabitants of these lands inhabited, which is how the anachronistic imposition of these names on these lands even prior to the arrival of Europeans has been justified. As already noted, though, the original inhabitants’ worlds as they experienced them were not purely or even predominantly physical, but spiritual. True, as Part II of this thesis demonstrates, the colonists who invaded the New World were also spiritual and thus experienced the New World as both a material and spiritual reality. However, they projected their own spiritual reality on to the land; a practice reflected in the place names they imposed. In fact, they did not even restrict themselves to populating their spiritual world of “America” with their Christian beings, God, Satan, angels, and saints. They also included many of the divine beings and places of classical antiquity. In Nouvelle France, for example, the first French colony was called “Acadia”; a name that conjured Arkadia, the Greek “idyllic place” of plenty and home to classical mythical beings Hermes and Apollo — deities who would subsequently have an enormous acoustic influence of their own in the New World, as we will discover in Part I: The Harmonic Tradition and Part II: The Master Record. Once “Acadia” existed as a physical and spiritual reality, other mythical deities like the Muses and the Roman sea god Neptune were soon called to colonists’ minds and, hence, their names resounded throughout the place in the colony’s first theatrical production, Théâtre de Neptune.

Unfortunately, the solution is not as simple as opting for an equivalent indigenous name for an entire landmass when the original inhabitants are linguistically and culturally diverse, because to settle on one name would favour one group over another. In Australia, a general term that bypasses the issue of diverse Aboriginal languages is “Country,” which despite being in English refers to both the physical space and the Aboriginal cultural, psychological, spiritual connections to the landscape. Similarly, for many of “North America’s” original inhabitants oral tradition teaches that their world, Mother Earth, was created on the back of a Great Turtle. To call the land as others have and as I do here in the present study, “the place of the
Great Turtle's back,“¹⁸ therefore, is to conjure the spiritual reality of that place into the present and to replace Italian explorers like Columbus and Vespucci as well as Greco-Roman and Christian deities with other-than-human elders like the Great Turtle, Mother Earth, Grandfather Sun, Grandmother Moon, Old Toad-Woman, and the Horned Underwater Serpent.¹⁹

By referring to “the people of the Great Turtle’s back” or “the Great Turtle’s people,” I have often been able to avoid the need to speak broadly of “Native Americans” and “First Nations” peoples. I have also simply allowed the narrow parameters of my project to dictate a more specific category for the peoples I discuss. The broadest category I have permitted myself to use in the present work is the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples of the Atlantic Northeast, sometimes condensed here to Algonquian-Iroquoian. Though certainly open to future debate by other aural historians of colonial America, I have proceeded on the basis that the people who speak languages within the Algonquian and Iroquoian language families share many common rituals, cosmological beliefs and oral traditions with similar motifs and equivalent characters—namely the notion that the world has been created and re-created on the back of the Great Turtle—and all of these things together have produced a common acoustemology or auditory culture.²⁰

While I work within an Algonquian-Iroquoian acoustemological framework, the core of this thesis consists of episodes featuring French encounters with a number of different Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples between c.1605-1650 so, wherever practicable, I have identified the specific nation featured in each of those encounters. The reader should however be mindful that I am largely at the mercy of my French missionary informants’ ability to positively identify the nations they encountered in the first instance and, as “The Remastered Record” demonstrates, the Jesuits frequently got things wrong.

Sometimes the French missionaries may have been unaware of which nation they were meeting and observing at a particular moment. When the Jesuits spoke of the “Montagnais,” or the “Huron,” I am confident they were the “Montagnais” and the “Huron” as the missionaries spent so much time living among them. Less certainty is possible when the Jesuits identified standoffish groups they encountered briefly in more hostile situations; for

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example, those they called the “Armouchiquois.” On other occasions, the informant may have frustratingly opted for an overly general term, like “Iroquois,” rather than specifying which group an individual or band belonged to within that league of nations.

A lack of standardised spelling of the Algonquian and Iroquoian nations in the missionaries’ records compounds the difficulties of positively identifying a group. The French were the first people to record these words, which had only ever been spoken, so a lack of standardisation is common among the missionaries over time. In fact, even individuals were often inconsistent in their spelling. These were names they learnt by ear so it is possible a missionary was simply not as aurally sensitive as his peers and did not have a natural talent for languages, impeding his ability to accurately render these alien-sounding polysyllabic words on the page. Alternatively, changes to spelling may reflect a missionary’s progress as his language skills developed, leading him to revise how he recorded the sounds of the word on the page. Or perhaps the missionary had a hearing impairment which caused him to hear a word imperfectly in the first place: infections now treated with medication would have been untreatable in this period and could have led to permanent hearing loss. We must also bear in mind the missionaries were Francophones, for this means they did experience a kind of cultural deafness insofar as their ears were accustomed to hearing sounds that were common to their mother tongue and were less able to physically hear sounds excluded from the sonic vocabulary of their natal auditory culture.21 As Part II: The Master Record reveals, the Jesuit missionaries were aware of this culturally determined “selective hearing” themselves, noting it in both their own attempts to acquire the “sauvage” tongues as well as in the Algonquian-Iroquoian attempts to learn French. Whole phonemes simply did not exist in their respective worlds and the tongue could not reproduce what the hearing apparatus (the ear and also the brain) could not hear.

Often, it can be difficult to discern exactly which nation was involved in a particular episode simply because the missionaries had a habit of favouring the disparaging term *sauvages* [savages] even when they knew the nation’s name. Despite my ultimate goal to ensure I use the most respectful names for the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples, there is a place in this work for this derogatory term: the western half of the thesis, namely Part I: The Harmonic Tradition and Part II: The Master Record. As “The Master Record” is not a direct reproduction of extracts from the *Jesuit Relations* but my interpretation of the missionaries’ original records, I do not limit the use of the term *sauvages* to direct quotations from primary

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sources in these sections, which may be confronting to some readers. The purpose of “The Master Record” is to bring the reader as close as possible to hearing New France with the ears of seventeenth-century French missionaries. As Clendinnen likewise noted, the term “savages...captures the strangeness and the intruders’ unease.” To retain the historical authenticity of western voices I avoid censoring their highly derogatory term sauvages and even maintain its use in reconstructed elements in the first half of the narrative — all the better to highlight the extremity of their sensory experiences and their lack of respect for those they perceived to be inhabiting a genuine terrestrial hell.

Complicating matters further, the Jesuits usually learnt and recorded the exonyms of nations (what other nations called them), rather than their endonyms (what they called themselves). Exonyms are not automatically dishonourable, but in the context of seventeenth-century New France they often were because the nations who supplied the French with this information may have been the traditional enemies of the ones they named. Prime examples of derogatory exonyms are “Mohawk,” meaning “man eaters,” and “Armouchiquois,” meaning “dogs” or “dog people,” which the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) gave to their southern foes. In the latter case, these southern foes consisted of a group of nations including the Muhhekunneuw (Mohicans), Pequots, Massachusetts, Narragansetts and others. The preponderance of exonyms also raises the possibility that the French unknowingly recorded multiple names for a single nation without realising diverse names reflected their informants’ varied opinions (traditional foe or traditional ally), or different dialects rather than different groups of people. Sometimes the French created and imposed their own exonyms on many nations, too; for example, the French called the Innu the “Montagnais,” meaning Mountain people, and the Anishinaabe (Odaawa) Cheveux relevés, meaning the High Hairs, while they referred to the Wendat confederacy as “Huron,” from the Old French meaning “rustic” or “ruffian.” To make matters worse, the British assigned their own exonyms to the peoples they encountered as well, leaving us with multiple names for the same group of people.

Simply as a means of negotiating a clear path through all of this chaotic nomenclature, historians understandably still prefer to use exonyms, citing that they are at least more familiar to the wider audience. Yet, again, what price do we pay for taking the easier path? Many indigenous peoples the world over face the loss of their soundways generally and the

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22 Additions to original accounts are not merely imagined, they are constructed by integrating related ideas or attitudes from separate letters or volumes and other contemporary French sources to present a more concise version of their overall auditory perspective.
threat of language death specifically. This is not always because the languages themselves are no longer intact but because younger generations are not learning and keeping languages “alive at the level of the human voice” via everyday use or by maintaining their oral tradition.  

Recently, there have been a number of initiatives in invaded lands aiming to get native languages “shouting out from everywhere.” In Australia in 2017, for example, the annual Sydney Festival featured language classes in the Sydney CBD to “reawaken...the Aboriginal languages of Sydney”; the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) theme was also “Our Languages Matter” and offered free language workshops; and Muru View, a free, online interactive tool from the State Library of New South Wales, which presents Aboriginal place names in Australia on a Google Maps street view platform, launched. In the North American context, there are likewise countless online language resources being developed in the form of printed dictionaries, websites, YouTube tutorials, and free dictionary apps, many of which I have used to translate French transcriptions and to acquire insight into the world of meanings conjured when native speakers sound a particular word. Some of the dictionaries and language apps I have referred to throughout the course of this thesis include Delaisie Torkornoo et.al, Ainun-Mashinaikan Innu Dictionary online and Innu Dictionary App for iPhone and iPad, (version 2.2.5, 2014), and Yolanda Denny et.al, L’nu’i’sut’i, (2016) as well as The Ojibwe People’s Dictionary, https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu/, an initiative of the University of Minnesota’s Department of American Indian Studies elaborated from the earlier printed dictionary, A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe (1995), by John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm, which has also been an invaluable resource. Pepamuteiatni Nitassinat: As We Walk Across Our Land (www.innuplaces.ca), an online database of Innu place names and audio samples on an interactive Google Map, has even led to “officialization,” meaning the Innu-aimun toponyms will now be “used on maps and will have legal status in land management, property transactions, and road signage” alongside the English names of various features and places in Newfoundland and Labrador. At the same time, social media is being used effectively to

30 See Kanani Penashue, Peter Armitage et.al, Pepamuteiatni Nitassinat: As We Walk Across Our Land (www.innuplaces.ca), accessed 25 July 2017; Janet Harron, “Landmark Achievement,” Gazette,
As an ethnohistorian and an aural historian who is aware of the cultural significance of name calling as a sonic event and the urgent need for language revitalisation, I feel duty-bound to write and sound the names that honour and conjure the people and their places best: the names they have given themselves (their endonyms). Indeed, turning up the volume on the individual nations’ own names is, frankly, essential in a project aiming to “remaster the record” by turning down the volume on the white noise preventing us from hearing indigenous peoples and their sounds on their own terms. In the western half of the thesis, I present the exonym on its own to maintain the authenticity of the original “master record.” As part of the “remastering” process, in the second half of the thesis I always use the endonym but for the purposes of clarity the more familiar exonym is supplied in parentheses. The endonym always appears first as a mark of respect; for example: Lnúk (Mi’kmaq), Innu (Montagnais), Alnôbak (Abenaki), Wendat (Huron), Omâmiwinini (Algonquin), Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk), Kanonsionni (Haudenosaunee, Iroquois Confederacy), Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), Anishinaabeg (Odaawa), and so on. In many cases, not all, the direct translations of these endonyms mean “Original People,” “Real People,” or simply “human beings” — a humbling reminder to cultural outsiders who have struggled long and hard with what to call the invaded that the people themselves have known all along. By extension, wherever possible, I also use the endonyms to refer to the Original Peoples’ languages. Thus, the language of, for example, the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) is Anishinaabemowin; the Omâmiwinini (Algonquin) tongue is Omâmiwininimowin; the Innu (Montagnais) speak Innu-aimun, and the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) speak Lnuismk. Obviously, even more of the Algonquian-Iroquoian acoustic world can be amplified by showing the same respect for the names they have given to their homelands on the Great Turtle’s back. Thus, in the second half of the thesis, which is devoted to indigenous auditory perspectives, endonyms are preferred for placenames; Innu (Montagnais) land is Nitassinan (“Our Land”); Mi’kma’ki, the land of the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) is also referred to according to their districts (Unama’kik, meaning Land of Fog, (Cape Breton and Newfoundland), Eski’kewaq, meaning Skin Dressers’ Territory, Sipekne’katik’ik, meaning Wild Potato Area, and Kespukwitk (collectively most of Nova Scotia), Sikniktewaq, meaning Drainage Area, (New Brunswick), Epekwitk meaning Land Cradled in Waves (Prince Edward

Island), Piktukwaq, meaning Explosive Place (part of Mainland Nova Scotia) and Kespe’kewaq, meaning Last Land (Gaspe Peninsula of Quebec); and the northeast generally is Waabanakiing (Dawnland). If exact names for places are unknown or a specific name is not as integral to the narrative, the endonym for the people or group of peoples is used in relation to the land, for example, “Kanonsionni Country” (Iroquois Country). In so doing I hope, in time, the names that are most respectful will come to be the best known — and most frequently heard.
PART I

THE HARMONIC TRADITION

“With various-sounding golden lyre ’tis thine
To fill the world with harmony divine”

“To the Sun (Helios)”
The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus
(3rd century BCE - 2nd century CE)
A Long Journey to New France via Ancient Greece

March 18, 1623. Recollect lay brother Gabriel Sagard sets out from Paris, “in apostolic manner on foot,...with the usual baggage of the poor Recollect Fathers Minor of [the] glorious Father St. Francis” and none but Father Nicolas Viel, “an aged Preacher,” by his side.¹ To have made this journey to “the farthest frontiers” of New France eight years earlier as one of Champlain’s four pioneer missionaries would have pleased Sagard greatly, but his congregation had not elected to send him at the time.² Now, just as it was then, it is his fervent wish to draw New France’s “poor souls without the faith and in savagery...out of the darkness of unbelief” and turn them to the Lord so that “after living in conformity with [His] divine precepts until they die” they will “depart to rejoice in [Him] for eternity, together with the blessed angels in Paradise.”³

The two much needed reinforcements in the French Catholics’ holy war of spiritual conquest reach New France on June 28, 1623 and the Huron mission itself by late August. During his brief stay among the Huron, Sagard studies and records many aspects of their cultural life and environment. Nine long years elapse, though, before he collects and publishes his notes as *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons* (1632).

When Sagard called his work a “grand voyage” he really meant it: for, in commencing the first chapter of his account with a discussion of “the great Apollonius of Tyana,” the missionary opted to take his readers on a “long journey to the country of the Hurons” via ancient Greece.⁴ Apollonius was a miracle-performing healer and philosopher, purportedly of miraculous origin, who believed in the immortality of the soul and lived an ascetic, itinerant lifestyle to bring his teachings to the world in the first century CE. With such a profile, Apollonius of Tyana could easily be mistaken for his contemporary Jesus of Nazareth—with whom he was often compared—were it not for the fact that the Christ-like Apollonius was a Greek Neo-Pythagorean whose very name honoured the pagan lyre-playing Greek God of

¹ SLJ, p.19.
² SHC, pp.11–12; see also SLJ, p.15.
³ SLJ, pp.3–4.
⁴ Ibid, pp.15–16. For the original French, see pp.283–84.
music, poetry, medicine, prophecy, and the sun: Apollo.\textsuperscript{5} As a Neo-Pythagorean, Apollonius subscribed not to Christianity but to a centuries-old philosophical school undergoing a revival from the first century BCE to the second century CE.\textsuperscript{6} This “Neo-Pythagoreanism” was based on teachings attributed, rightly and wrongly, to Pythagoras of Samos: a notoriously enigmatic philosopher who had, since his death around five centuries earlier, become more the stuff of Greek legend than history. Apollonius, it seems, was one of many influential thinkers who ensured the ongoing influence of Pythagoreanism in the West because, as Sagard himself stated in 1632, “after all his great labours” Apollonius had “left behind him...nothing worthy of remembrance but one paltry book, containing the doctrines of the followers of Pythagoras, confused in arrangement, but ornate and polished in doctrine; and these,” noted Sagard with obvious disdain, “he pretended to have learned in the cave of [the Greek daemon or god] Trophonius.”\textsuperscript{7}

Much like Apollonius, Sagard lived an ascetic, itinerant lifestyle and travelled afar to deliver the teachings of a renowned healer, philosopher, and miracle worker to the inhabitants of a foreign land. In Sagard’s case, of course, that distant land was “Huronia,” New France. Yet, even as Sagard implied similarities existed between himself and Apollonius, explicitly acknowledged Apollonius’s “greatness,” and validated him by giving him pride of place in the opening remarks of the first chapter of \textit{Le grand voyage}, the missionary was equally anxious to outline how he, a devout Christian, was distinguishable from the heathen Pythagorean. To this end, Sagard devoted much energy to persuading his readers that Apollonius was “[i]nsatiable...in the pursuit of knowledge,” and had travelled extensively “through all the provinces in which he thought he might learn something excellent” for the unchristian purpose of “becoming more godlike among men.” Sagard, by contrast, claimed he had not visited far-flung locations “to cultivate [his] mind and become wiser...in imitation of Apollonius.” Having been “brought up in the school of the Son of God, under the rule and discipline of the Seraphic Order of St. Francis,” Sagard was adamant he had “never had so crazed a longing to acquire knowledge by travel,” because the school of the Son of God

\textsuperscript{5} “Neo-Pythagorean” refers to those who subscribed to Pythagorean doctrine during this revival centuries after Pythagoras himself lived. On Apollonius’s asceticism see Philostratus, \textit{Life of Apollonius}, 1.6–1.10, in F. C. Conybeare (trans.), \textit{The Life of Apollonius of Tyana: The Epistles of Apollonius and the Treatise of Eusebius, Volume I} (London: William Heinemann, 1912), pp.15–27. For more about the importance of asceticism in Pythagoreanism, see Iamblichus, \textit{The Life of Pythagoras}, in Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (trans. ed.) and David Fideler (ed.), \textit{The Pythagorean Sourcebook and Library}, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Phanes Press, 1988), pp.73–74. Apollo and Helios (the Sun) were originally separate beings but, over time, Apollo and Helios were conflated, hence both are referred to in this thesis as gods of the sun.

\textsuperscript{6} Philostratus, \textit{Life of Apollonius}, 1.6–1.10.

“taught the sound knowledge of the Saints, apart from which all that can be learnt is but the vain trifling of curiosity.” Neither had Sagard published his account for intellectual glory: on the contrary, he had been hesitant to do so and only the need to convince those in power to finance the essential, ongoing missionary work among “the poor souls without the faith and in savagery” in New France had cured him of his reluctance. Sagard’s solitary motivation for publishing his account was to “aid our Fathers who are already there, and try to bear thither the torch of the knowledge of God’s Son and to dispel the darkness of savagery and unbelief.”

Since Sagard was so bothered by potential comparisons with Apollonius, it raises the question of why he felt the need to mention the Pythagorean at all. He could have just as easily drawn comparisons between himself and Jesus Christ — the religious figure he actually followed and wanted to emulate. Perhaps it is because, despite his protests to the contrary, the Recollect had certainly not restricted himself to “the sound knowledge of the Saints” but was a highly literate, “curious” scholar indeed who had read both widely and deeply. Though the specific details of Sagard’s early life and education are unknown, *Le grand voyage* is riddled with quotations from numerous major classical philosophers. In addition to the early reference to Apollonius and Pythagoras, for instance, we also find Plato, Aristotle, and Pliny, all of whom were well acquainted with if not heavily influenced by Pythagorean philosophy. It seems they were not the only ones the Pythagoreans had influenced — the Pythagoreans had made deep grooves in Sagard’s thinking, too. The devout Recollect missionary’s reference to “the great Apollonius of Tyana” suggests he was conscious of this on some level and that, regardless of how internally conflicted he may have been at the prospect, this influence of Pythagoreanism was of particular significance to his experience in New France.

Pythagoreanism was not just a way of thinking and being in the world: it was an ancient, deeply ingrained, “habitual groove of thinking” and being in the world *sonically* that imbued harmonious sounds, specifically, with cosmic significance. Sagard was by no means the sole remaining vestige of this ancient Pythagorean auditory culture in his own time. For though the Church Fathers frequently expressed their own ambivalence towards sensory pleasures and concerns about music’s place in Christian worship in the faith’s early years, they did ultimately appropriate the ancient, pagan, harmonic tradition for Christianity.

Those deeply ingrained, ancient ideas about sound were powerful enough in the context of early modern Christian Europe, but they took on even greater significance when members of

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8 *SLJ*, pp.15–18.
that auditory culture ventured beyond the pale of Christendom’s soundscape and into the New World. What at first appears to be Sagard’s eccentric and unnecessary detour to ancient Greece, then, makes sense when read in the context of a sound-centred history of New France, and is, for us, an essential first step in such an exploration. Naturally enough, the present exploration of the diverse ideas that fused together and formed this ancient harmonic tradition begins with the conception of harmony itself.
Conceiving Harmony

Zeus’s daughter Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love, had “always despised” her “weakling” husband Hephaestus for his “lameness.” Thus she gave her heart to “the butcher,” Ares, the God of War, “just because he [was] good-looking and sound of limb.” The adulterers “first made love secretly” in her husband’s palace — or so they thought. In truth, their “loving embraces” did not escape the eye of Helios (the Sun), who quickly informed the crippled one of how Ares “dishonoured [his] marriage-bed.” When “the slow-moving” Hephaestus heard the bitter truth, he “went straight to his workshop with his heart full of evil plans, laid his great anvil on the block and forged a network of chains which could neither be broken nor undone” in order to bind and expose the faithless ones. “His fury with Ares inspired him as he worked.” Upon completing the snare, Hephaestus “threw the netting right round the legs of his marriage-bed. A number of further lengths were attached to the rafter overhead and hung down like fine spiders’ webs, quite invisible even to the blessed gods. It was a masterpiece of cunning work.”

When Hephaestus pretended to leave on a lengthy journey, Ares made his way into Hephaestus’s palace and then into “the great lame god’s” bed with his wife, Aphrodite, who was “a lovely creature but...the slave of her passions.” “Immediately the netting...fell around [the adulterers and] they could not move or lift a limb...[T]here was no escape.” The Sun, Helios, again acting as spy, alerted Hephaestus who “hurried home in anguish...let out a terrible yell...in the grip of fierce anger...and called aloud to all the gods,” who swiftly assembled at the entrance to the bedchamber. Upon sighting the adulterers entangled in Hephaestus’s “clever device, a fit of unquenchable laughter seized the blessed gods.” Thus, from the illicit union of Love and War, Harmonia (ἁρμονία) the Goddess of Marital Harmony and Diplomacy in War was born.

The affair of Aphrodite and Ares recounted above is adapted from the version Homer told in the Odyssey, which dates from the close of the eighth century BCE. While Homer did not

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actually mention her explicitly, other classical texts do state that the Goddess Harmonia—
whose name meant to join together in agreement, union—was the product of the Goddess of
Love’s extra-marital affair with the God of War. It was common for mythological beings to be
interchangeably anthropomorphic and symbolic according to the needs of the tale, so it seems
Harmonia and the unbreakable “network of chains” forged in the blacksmith’s workshop by
the cuckolded Hephaestus to bind the opposing forces of Love and War together were one in
the same. From the time harmony was conceived as an idea, then, the word referred generally
to positive relations between distinct entities — especially those as antithetical as Love and
War. And, if the word had a more specific meaning at all, it signified positive social
relationships.³

The ancient Greeks, however, were not wholly oblivious to Harmonia’s acoustic
manifestations. Since the Bronze Age, people in the Mediterranean-Aegean region had been
constructing and playing multi-stringed chordophones (stringed instruments), the distinct
sounds of which could likewise “join together” in a pleasing way. The earliest evidence of
such an instrument is a c.2700 BCE marble statuette of a Cycladic harper from Asia Minor,⁴
while c.1850-1700 BCE seal carvings and graffiti in Crete are the earliest to depict an
instrument resembling a three-stringed lyre.⁵ The lyre ended up being considered particularly
well suited to producing harmonious sounds, undoubtedly because the multi-stringed
instrument could be tuned to different pitches that could be made to sound with a plectrum
like a modern day guitar, hence its epithet “various-sounding golden lyre.”⁶ By mid-seventh
century BCE, the lyre’s reputation for producing beautiful harmonies grew as the number of
strings increased to seven, making a larger quantity of notes available to the lyrist. As artistic
depictions of the instrument at this time reveal, it was constructed using a tortoiseshell as a
resonator: this was “the true lyre, called chelus after the mountain tortoise.”⁷

Greek myths and legends, consequently, regularly featured the powerful effect harmonious
music could have on the bodies and spirits of mortals and gods alike. According to the
seventh century B.C.E Homeric Hymns, for example, the “new-uttered sound” of

³ It is common in mythology for divine ones to be interchangeably anthropomorphic as well as
symbolic, according to the needs of the tale. The duality of Love and War is itself very proto-
Pythagorean see MOS, p.28 for the Pythagorean “table of opposites from which [Pythagoras] was able
to derive every concept needed for a philosophy of the phenomenal world.”
⁵ Ibid., pp.5–7.
⁶ Orpheus, “To the Sun,” in Thomas Taylor (ed.), The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus: Translated from the
Greek and Demonstrated to be the Invocations which were used in the Eleusinian Mysteries, (London:
Bertram Dobell and Reeves and Turner, 1896), p.23. In this early period, harmony referred to a
pleasing succession of notes rather than the simultaneous sounding of notes.
Hermes’s seven-stringed tortoiseshell lyre calmed the furious god Apollo and caused him to “laugh for joy for the sweet throb of marvellous music went to his heart,” as “a soft longing took hold of his soul as he listened.” Sailors of ancient Greek myth famously swam to their deaths, unable to resist the allure of hearing the famed “perfect” songs of the Sirens. Not even the natural world was immune to the power of pleasant music. When Apollo gave the lyre to the mortal Orpheus, the legendary musician “by the melody of his lyre, drew rocks, woods, and wild beasts, stopt rivers in their course, and...moved [Hades] the inexorable king of [the underworld].”

Harmonious as the lyre was, all early instruments were crafted in a rustic fashion and, consequently, would have been tuned “by ear” to achieve whatever seemed to the individual musician to be a pleasant, tuneful succession or collection of notes. Thus, the potential for harmony was limited to the intervals the folk musician stumbled upon in his or her musical escapades, increasing the sense that the ability to elicit pleasing sounds from an instrument was something mysteriously gifted to particular individuals by the gods. What imbued some sounds with the power of harmony and left others powerless, as well as why the movement of the soul should be a pleasant experience at all, likewise remained a mystery.

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When a cult dedicated to the lyre-playing musician Orpheus emerged in the sixth century BCE, its members sought to solve the mystery of soul-stirring music, including why the gods had gifted humans with it in the first place. These people understood themselves to be living in a multilayered hierarchical universe: the immortal gods occupied the light-filled upper world atop the lofty Mount Olympus while mere mortals spent the afterlife in the dark depths of the earth with the god Hades and his wife Persephone. Though the ancient Greeks dreaded this land of the dead it was not a place of evil that existed solely for the incarceration and punishment of evildoers. Only with time and the influence of philosophy did the underworld become increasingly hierarchical in its own right with designated places for punishment, such as the Fields of Punishment and Tartarus, places for mediocre souls like the Fields of Asphodel, and paradisiacal places of reward like the Isles of the Blessed in Elysium. Rebirth was a reward only the exceptionally blessed in Elysium could hope for. But the Orphic cult’s members were even more ambitious: they did not just seek to obtain the greatest rewards of the underworld, they sought to bypass it entirely by purifying the divine soul so well as to become one with the gods themselves. The soul, they believed, was doomed to repeated imprisonment via *metempsychosis* or the “transmigration of souls” because mortal souls were impure and not strong like those of the gods. Temporarily moving the soul outside the body in life, therefore, allowed the mortal to briefly experience the divine state and prepared the soul by strengthening and purifying it. When the body finally did die, the Orphic soul would be strong and pure enough to escape the never-ending cycle of reincarnation and the individual’s spirit would remain disembodied — free and divine for eternity, just like “the deathless gods.” The Greeks coined a word to encapsulate this highly prized out-of-body condition that was synonymous with sacred experience: *exstasis* (ecstasy), which means “outside standing.” Desiring to be upwardly mobile in a spiritual sense and realising this altered state of ecstasy was achievable via auditory means because the gods had given them music to stir and “move” the soul, the Orphists regularly practiced “rites of [spiritual] purification by enthusiasm” using music to release “the soul from its bodily tomb.”

Many if not all of these myths, legends, and beliefs about the power of beautiful sounds and the human soul’s perfectibility would have been in the mind of Pythagoras of Samos when, according to the decidedly Hephaestus-tinged legend, he walked by some blacksmiths at work

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10 The Orphic cult existed in the same century as Pythagoras. Scholars have not established which came first or whether they definitely influenced each other. The similarities, however, reveal how widespread these ideas about the power of sound were in the early days of western civilisation.
11 *Metempsychosis*: the idea that when a living being dies the soul moves to a new body of the same or a different species, i.e. it is reincarnated.
13 *MBE*, p.xii.
one day in the sixth century BCE. Intrigued by the diverse yet pleasing combination of sounds produced by the differently sized hammers striking a single anvil, the aurally-sensitive mathematician inspected the hammers and noted they were simple ratios of each other. He began to suspect the simple but harmonious music produced by the hammers was the hammers’ mathematical ratios made audible. To test his theory, Pythagoras purportedly conducted further experiments on a single musical string or monochord and “discovered… the pitch intervals of the octave, the fourth and the fifth were,” likewise, “related in a regular ratio.” For example, when one string on a musical instrument is twice the length of another, the notes produced by those strings will be an octave apart. The ratio for the octave, therefore, is 2:1, for the perfect fifth, 2:3, and for the fourth, 3:4. In time, it became apparent these ratios and even more complex ratios could be used to construct the entire musical scale.

Pythagoras, be he man or legend, had discovered the mathematical basis of harmony. Had Pythagoras only been a mathematician, this might have been the sum total of his contribution to what later became the “western” perception of sound — but Pythagoras was also a philosopher.

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15 Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, in Thomas Taylor (trans.), *The Life of Pythagoras by Iamblichus: Translated from the Greek (abridged)*, (California, Los Angeles: Theosophical Publishing House, 1918), pp.49–54. There is considerable overlap here between the Pythagorean legend and the story of Hephaestus forging the chains that bound together the adulterers Aphrodite and Ares whose union produced “Harmonia,” suggesting motifs in the older myth of Harmonia’s conception were appropriated to tell the story of Pythagoras’s related discovery of the mathematical basis of harmony.

16 MOS, pp.35–37, 73.

17 A string instrument consisting of a single string.


21 MOS, p.22.
The Harmony of the Spheres

In life, the charismatic but mysterious Pythagoras swore his followers to secrecy and left no written record of his teachings. Consequently, after his death he took on legendary if not entirely mythical qualities and the ideas Apollonius and generations of thinkers before and after him identified as “Pythagorean” were actually a conflation of a number of philosophers’ ideas both within and without the Pythagorean school. Working with the problematic ancient sources available, in which the differences between myth, legend, and history are significantly blurred, it is perhaps impossible to disentangle those ideas and attribute them to the correct person, or to outline their development in a verifiable chronological sequence. However, as music critic Jamie James asserts, whether Pythagoreanism was the work of one man—Pythagoras the historic figure—or of a “quasi-mythical Pythagoras,” whose mysterious persona conveniently allowed him to represent centuries’ worth of early scholars and schools of thought that were reconcilable and thus conflated over time, “really does not matter” to the present study. Historically, what matters here is that the philosophy, be it pure Pythagoreanism or its later Neo-Pythagorean variety, existed and had an enormous influence on the western world in the long term.

Accepting the legend at face value, then, Pythagoras had inherited from the popular myths and legends of his age the idea that the Goddess Harmonia was generally associated with all manner of positive relations or order. Pythagoras’s philosophical predecessors, such as Anaximander, had also already begun to think in terms of heavenly spheres and attempted to account for the perfect order observable in their graceful, orderly movements through space. No great leap was required of Pythagoras, therefore, when he posited that his discovery of the mathematical basis of musical harmony proved number was the source of all harmony or order in the universe. Essentially, Pythagoras used mathematics to express in a highly

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3 *MOS*, p.22.
4 Nevertheless, ideas will be attributed to the correct historic figure (if not Pythagoras) wherever possible.
5 *MOS*, pp.37–38; Harap, Op.cit., 153–54. “...what is for us a technical principle of music was to Pythagoras the primary metaphysical fact about the world.”
articulate way what was already an “archaic and archetypal paradigm of cosmogenesis, the pattern of creation which results in the world.” This formula, as outlined by classical scholar F. M. Cornford, began with “an undifferentiated reality” or “Unity,” which the Pythagoreans called the Monad (One). “From this unity,” comes the Dyad (Two); “two opposite powers are separated out to form the world order,” marking “the beginning of multiplicity, the beginning of strife yet also the possibility of logos, the relation of one thing to another.” Then, when the two opposite extremes of the Dyad “join together” they “generate life” forming in Pythagorean terms the Triad (Harmony), just as the antithetical Goddess of Love and God of War united to produce the Goddess Harmonia in the ancient Greek myth.6

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MONAD (UNITY), DYAD (DUALITY), TRIAD (HARMONY)


Taking his idea of universal harmony to its logical extension, Pythagoras reputedly developed a theory known as the “harmony of the spheres.”7 Aristotle, who rejected the “melodious and poetical” doctrine as “absurd” around 150 years after Pythagoras lived, summarised what he believed to be the doctrine in On the Heavens (350 BCE):

[The Pythagoreans] suppose...the motion of [heavenly] bodies...must produce a noise, since on our earth the motion of bodies far inferior in size and in speed of movement has that effect. Also, when the sun and the moon, they say, and all the stars, so great in number and in size, are moving with so rapid a motion, how should they not produce a sound immensely great? Starting from this argument and from the observation that their speeds, as measured by their distances, are in the same ratios as musical concordances, they assert that the sound given forth by

7 MOS, p.38.
the circular movement of the stars is a harmony. Since, however, it appears unaccountable that we should not hear this music, they explain this by saying... the sound is in our ears from the very moment of birth and is thus indistinguishable from its contrary silence, since sound and silence are discriminated by mutual contrast. What happens to men, then, is just what happens to coppersmiths, who are so accustomed to the noise of the smithy that it makes no difference to them. 8

Aristotle’s claim that the Pythagoreans believed the planets were producing their own “most musical and gentle...sublime symphony” in the heavens, albeit inaudible to mortal ears, was a later addition to the harmony of the spheres doctrine. By the time that idea circulated, an image of Pythagoras as a kind of demi-god was under construction and nothing could more effectively prove his status as a higher being than the Neo-Pythagorean claim that “of all the inhabitants of earth...he alone apparently” had “extended his powers of hearing” and learnt to “fix...his intellect” so he could “hear and grasp...the celestial sounds,” which “produced a melody fuller and more intense than anything effected by mortal sounds.” 9

Nevertheless, even the inferior “mortal sounds” played an instrumental role in Pythagoreanism. As music critic Jamie James explains in his summary of the otherwise bewilderingly intricate philosophy:

[The Pythagoreans] distinguished three sorts of music in [their] philosophy: to use the nomenclature of a later era, musica instrumentalis, the ordinary music made by plucking a lyre, blowing a pipe, and so forth; musica humana, the continuous but unheard music made by each human organism, especially the harmonious (or inharmonious) resonance between the soul and the body; and musica mundana, the music made by the cosmos itself, which would come to be known as the music of the spheres.

To a modern person, the most salient observation to be made about these three classes of music is their enormous discrepancy in scale. Yet for the Pythagoreans,...there existed among them an essential identity: a piper and the cosmos might sound the same note. That is because to Pythagoras it was purely a matter of mathematics. There was no more of a difference among these three classes of music than there was among a triangle traced in the palm of the hand, a triangle formed by the walls of a building, and a triangle described by three stars:

9 MOS, p.73; Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, p.72.
“triangleness” is an eternal idea, and all expressions of it are essentially the same.10

There was an inherent principle of relatedness, then, in this belief that everything in existence, be it the individual human body or a musical instrument, was 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 existed meant Pythagorean theory had the capacity to spread into every area of life. And—more than happy to add “mystic” or “cult leader” to his already impressive profile—Pythagoras reportedly took steps to ensure it did.

Pythagoras set up a highly secretive academy or cult known as the Pythagorean Brotherhood at Croton, Italy c.530 BCE. At Croton, he exploited the mystical effects of *acousmatic sound* by preaching in riddles from behind a curtain known as “the Pythagorean veil” to his followers to force them to listen more intently to his teachings by eliminating the distraction of a visual element.11 The “Pythagorean veil” actually served important, additional purposes. Along with the existing intellectual veil produced by Pythagoras’s encrypted language, the curtain physically and visually demarcated the boundaries of exoteric and esoteric knowledge to differentiate between members of the highly secretive Pythagorean School: his inner circle of *mathēmatikoi* (the teachers) who had exclusive rights to learn his greater mysteries and the outer circle of his followers, the *akousmatikoi* (the listeners). Preventing the *akousmatikoi* from laying eyes upon the sounding object—their spiritual leader—ensured the outer circle had an extraordinary, awe-inspiring experience befitting the enigmatic, mystical cult, because sound is naturally experienced as an “audiovisual complex” in which sound sources are both “present and visible.”12 The Pythagorean veil, therefore, was responsible for the abnormal delivery of the teachings and for communicating their exclusivity, both of which imbued the vocal sounds of “the divine Pythagoras” with immense mystical power.13 For these Pythagoreans, biographers of Pythagoras would claim centuries later, music ceased to be

10 MOS, p.31. For more on *musica mundana, musica humana* and *musica instrumentalis* see Boethius, Anicius Manlius Severinus, “De institutione musica libri quinque,” 1: 2 in Godofredus Friedlien, Anicii Manlii Torquati Severeni Boetii De institutione arithmetica libri duo: De institutione musica libri quinque, Accredit geometria quae fertur Boetii, (Lipsiae: in Aedibus B. G. Teubneri, 1867).


13 Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, p.57. The Medieval Church achieved a similar effect and humbled the laypeople who attended church by delivering services in Latin, sometimes speaking in hushed tones, sometimes with the priest separated from the laity by a screen, or with his back to them.
solely the means by which their leader discovered the mathematical basis of all orderly relations in the universe: it became the primary way of achieving, imposing, and maintaining the great cosmic order on earth as it was in the heavens. Henceforth, the harmony of the spheres was an ideal way of life.\textsuperscript{14}

The Pythagoric life, as described by ancient biographers of Pythagoras at least, was a mystical form of holistic medicine. The mind, body, spirit, and emotions of an individual (the \textit{musica humana} in its totality) were brought “in tune” with the rest of the perfectly ordered musical universe using harmonious music produced by the \textit{musica instrumentalis} (particularly the lyre). “Since \textit{musica instrumentalis} and \textit{musica humana} were of the same essence, manifestations of the same truth,” writes Jamie James, “then by plucking the strings of a lyre one could arouse sympathetic vibrations in the human instrument.”\textsuperscript{15}

Orderly harmonious music, therefore, had medicinal powers that could remedy mental, physical, and spiritual disorders alike. To achieve optimum mental health, Pythagoras apparently “cleansed” the minds of his disciples; a practice he seemingly appropriated from the Orphists who, as previously noted, exploited music’s purgative effects for spiritual betterment: “[W]hen [Pythagoras’s] disciples were retiring to sleep,” wrote Pythagoras’s biographer Iamblichus, he prescribed “certain odes and hymns” to “liberate them from the day’s perturbations and tumults, purifying their intellective powers from the influxive and effluxive waves of corporeal nature, quieting their sleep, and rendering their dreams pleasing and prophetic.”\textsuperscript{16} Each day of the Pythagoric life likewise commenced with “songs of another kind...certain peculiar chords and modulations, produced by either simply striking the lyre, or adapting the voice.” These melodies were thought to “liberate the [disciples]...from the night’s heaviness, coma and torpor,” effectively resetting and invigorating their minds and, thus, enabling them to achieve clarity of thought and high productivity in their rigorous intellectual pursuits each day.\textsuperscript{17} Compared to the non-physical aspects of the Pythagoreans’ medicinal use of music less has been written about the way they used music to heal physical complaints, but one translation of Porphyry’s \textit{Life of Pythagoras} states that songs were sung over the location of a physical ailment, giving rise to the word “incantation.”\textsuperscript{18} In any case, the overall logic of Pythagorean doctrine indicates physical illness would have been just another example of the

\textsuperscript{14} MOS, pp.22–23.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp.25–28, 31.
\textsuperscript{16} Iamblichus, \textit{Life of Pythagoras}, pp.72–73, 84–86.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp.72, 85.
absence of order (harmony) in the *musica humana* and, as such, was ultimately considered symptomatic of an out-of-tune soul. A Pythagorean, therefore, would have believed restoring order to the mind and the spirit with music would have improved the physical malady, too.\(^{19}\)

Even the extreme aspects of a person’s temperament could be manipulated into a state more in harmony with the musical universe as part of the great “Pythagorean soul-adjustment.” In the musical therapy Iamblichus describes below, the underlying assumption is clearly “you are what you hear:”

> [Pythagoras] arranged and adjusted what might be called “preparations” and “touchings,” divinely contriving mingling of certain diatonic, chromatic and enharmonic melodies, through which he easily switched and circulated the passions of the soul in a contrary direction, whenever they had accumulated recently, irrationally, or clandestinely—such as sorrow, rage, pity, over-emulation, fear, manifold desires, angers, appetites, pride, collapse or spasms. Each of these he corrected by the rule of virtue, atempering them through appropriate melodies, as through some salutary medicine.

To prove the efficacy of this aural medicine, Iamblichus offered case studies. In one instance, a well-chosen verse of Homer’s *Odyssey* accompanied by a lyre prevented a murder from being committed. On another occasion, Pythagoras was out one night “astronomizing,” as was his wont, and came upon a Phrygian piper piping a Phrygian song “at an unseasonable hour” and within earshot of a young Tauromenian man, who was in a rage and plotting to burn down the house of his mistress after observing her leave the house of his love rival. The wise Pythagoras diagnosed the untimely sound of the Phrygian tune as the true source of the Tauromenian’s emotional inflammation and prescribed a spondaic song as an aural antidote, which the piper obediently played. “Through this,” writes Iamblichus, “the fury of the lad was immediately repressed, and he returned home in an orderly manner.” It is claimed by some of Pythagoras’s ancient biographers, centuries after he actually lived, that he subsequently came to consider the pipe an inappropriate instrument because it had “an influence towards insolence, being theatrical, and by no means liberal.” However, Greek classic scholars consider Damon of Athens—a sophist and musicologist who lived a generation or so after Pythagoras of Samos—the true brainchild of this theory that music could alter human character and behaviour so greatly it could even be deliberately used to control society. Earlier versions of the Phrygian piper and the infuriated Tauromenian tale, for instance, feature Damon rather than Pythagoras as the protagonist. But because Damon’s own work did not

\(^{19}\) Iamblichus, *Life of Pythagoras*, p.72.
survive and the Damonian teachings were so sympathetic to other ideas attributed to the mysterious yet larger-than-life Pythagoras, Damon’s *éthos theory*, as it is now known, was eventually incorporated into the Pythagorean legend as seamlessly as the blacksmith motif that had featured in the ancient myth of Hephaestus, his deceitful wife Aphrodite, her lover Ares, and the conception of their offspring Harmonia.20

Clearly, the more meaning the ancient Greeks invested in music, the warier they became of the double-sided nature of sound’s immense power. If used “improperly,” music could do as much harm as good. Increasingly, then, music needed stricter regulation. Damon, for example, reportedly banned an ancient *aerophone* (wind instrument) known as the *aulos* and either set up or recorded an existing dichotomy in Greek society between the aulos and the harmonious lyre.21 While the lyre was an ethical instrument that cultivated the virtues of moderation and equilibrium, the ancient musicologist argued, the aulos, by contrast, was emotional and relaxing to the point of being debilitating.22 Professor of English, Steven Connor also finds this positioning of the lyre above the aulos reflected—or originating—in Greek myths. When the Goddess Athena invented the aulos and began to play it, for example, the audience laughed and teased her, as the aulos was phallic in form and the resemblance was not lessened as Athena blew air into the instrument, blowing out her cheeks. Humiliated by the incident and her failure to create an awe-inspiring musical instrument, Athena threw the aulos away. The discarded instrument was then found and played by the satyr Marsyas who later participated in a musical duel with the lyre-playing Apollo. For losing the competition to Apollo and for his crimes against aurality, namely polluting the world with the inferior sounds of a pipe, Marsyas was hung from a tree and skinned alive. Revealingly, Marsyas had lost the duel because Apollo’s lyre was played with a plectrum, leaving the musician free to simultaneously sing epic poems communicating great wisdom, whereas Marsyas’s aulos required the use of the mouth and, thus, disabled the vocal apparatus. Henceforth, *aerophones* were for untutored, coarse, inarticulate rustics; *chordophones*, the instruments of virtuous, civilised intellectuals, were symbols of refinement.23

As intellectual as the lyricists Pythagoras and Damon were, the fact remains neither one recorded his ideas for posterity. If either did so, the works did not survive. The idea of a celestial world filled with perfectly harmonious, intellectually and spiritually superior music and the belief it could be replicated on earth for the betterment of mankind, however, did survive.²⁴ The credit for guaranteeing the influence of the harmonic tradition by extending the reach of the “harmony of the spheres” along with its addendum the éthos theory of music must go to another ancient philosopher beloved by the French Recollect missionary Gabriel Sagard. His name was Plato.

The Harmony of the Polis

Plato was in fine Pythagorean-Damonian form in his fourth century BCE work, Politeia (The Republic). In it, Plato openly revealed he subscribed to the notion of a macrocosmic harmony that also manifested in the microcosm of the human being (musica humana). We find Plato’s Pythagoreanism on full display again in his other works, too. In Timaeus, for instance, Plato identified music as something divinely gifted for the purpose of correcting an individual’s spiritual discord: “Melody, with its movements akin to the revolutions of the soul within us,” was “given by the Muses to him who uses their company with understanding, not for foolish pleasure, which is thought today its function,” Plato stated reproachfully, “but as an ally for the revolutions of the soul within us that has been put out of tune, to bring it back to order and consonance [harmony] with itself. Rhythm,” he added, “was granted to us to the same end.”

Plato, however, was not content to confine himself to philosophising about individual “soul adjustments.” The reflection of the macrocosmic harmony in the “intermediate mesocosm of human society” was his chief concern. This is because Plato lived in the post-Damonian world: a world in which Damon had, according to Plato himself, already persuasively argued music caused major changes at the much grander level of the polis and, thus, could be used to control people politically. While Plato’s belief in the interrelated nature of all things from the micro- through the meso- to the macrocosm merely took Pythagorean theory to its logical conclusion, therefore, extending the theory to wider society made Plato decidedly un-Pythagorean in a particularly significant respect: it caused him to abandon Pythagoras’s famed esotericism, which had only allowed the minds, bodies, and spirits of a highly exclusive, secretive community of intellectuals to be attuned to the cosmic harmony of the spheres.

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1 See especially Plato, Republic, 3: 400–04. See also Jowett, Op.cit., p.xliv for Jowett’s concise summary of Plato’s argument: “There is a music of the soul which answers to the harmony of the world; and the fairest object of a musical soul is the fair mind in the fair body. Some defect in the latter may be excused, but not in the former. True love is the daughter of temperance, and temperance is utterly opposed to the madness of bodily pleasure.”


3 Iamblichus, Life of Pythagoras, p.73.


Yet, what Pythagoras had achieved in his academy or cult at Croton—according to the legend Plato would have known at least—served as a prototype for everything Plato wanted to accomplish on a much grander scale. Whereas Pythagoras had set himself up as a proto-“philosopher-king” of a utopian community in which his musical “preparations” or “touchings” “corrected” the defects in the souls of his few chosen disciples, Plato advanced that a standardised education, among other things, had the potential to transform a whole society into an ideal city-state ruled by a philosopher-king.\textsuperscript{6} In outlining his philosophically correct education system, Plato unsurprisingly resorted to his faithful Pythagorean-Damonian ideas of souls being perfected through exposure to ethical musical instruments making only the most ethical sounds:

There remain then only the lyre and the harp for use in the city, and the shepherds may have a pipe in the country... The preferring of Apollo and his instruments to Marsyas and his instruments is not at all strange... And so, by the dog of Egypt, we have been unconsciously purging the State, which not long ago we termed luxurious.\textsuperscript{7}

Children were to be taught music, wrote Plato, so they “may not be habituated to feel joy and sorrow in a manner at variance with the law, but may rather follow the law.”\textsuperscript{8} In Plato’s Protagoras, for example, Protagoras tells Socrates the primary learning objective when instructing children to play the lyre was to “force... boys’ souls to become familiar with rhythms and harmoniae, in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action; for the life of man in every part has need of harmony and rhythm.”\textsuperscript{9} To avoid “luxuriousness” or over-civilisation and thus achieve a harmony between the opposing yet desirable qualities of civility and manliness, though, the same “gentle” youths had to be sent “to the master of gymnastic, in order that their bodies may better minister to the virtuous mind, and that they may not be compelled through bodily weakness to play the coward in war or on any other occasion.”\textsuperscript{10}


\textsuperscript{7} Plato, Republic, 3: 399–400. Furthermore, complex harmonies and rhythms were also to be eliminated during the “purification.”


\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.
Having once again emphasised the powerful role of ethical sounds, it became necessary for Plato to define exactly what constituted an ethical sound and what did not. Getting this right was imperative because, as Damon noted, the sounds of music were so inextricably linked to a society’s law and order—its *harmonia*—that “styles of music...never changed without changing the most fundamental rules of the polis.”

With this in mind, Plato concluded only a limited number of the various melodic modes then heard throughout his society were actually suitable for the ideal state. Of the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Ionian, and Aeolian modes, only the Dorian and the Phrygian gave men “harmony in words and deeds” and instilled a sense of courage within those who may be called to defend the state. “The Lydian mode [was] melancholy, expressive of sorrow and lamentation,” he wrote, and “the Ionian [had] the quality of softness and indolence and accompany[d] drunkenness.”

Nor were these melodies or their rhythms to be overly complicated, for “complexity engendered license, and...disease” of the soul. The soul was in danger of becoming diseased by sonic complexity because it was too exciting, stimulating, and pleasurable “whereas simplicity in music was the parent of temperance in the soul.” As Averoës, an Arab philosopher and commentator on Plato’s *Politeia* clarified,

...pleasure throws a sharp-minded man into a perplexity resembling a madman’s, all the more when he goes to excess...pleasure should not be mixed with the desire of the musical one; rather, he should desire only the beautiful with self-control....This is the end at which the activity of music aims.

Plato also condemned purely instrumental music, because its ethical character was indeterminable in the absence of discursive text; a logocentric argument that seemingly elaborated upon the premise of the mythical musical duel that pitted the singing Apollo’s spirit-moving, various-sounding lyre against Marsyas’s rustic, earthy, phallic aulos, which precluded a lyrical component. In sum, ethical, elegantly simple sounds cultivated a polis of sufficiently heroic and manly yet civilised, articulate intellectuals with purified spirits who could control their natural inclinations towards the physical, sensory delights of this mortal life.

Sensing the need to provide readers with an incentive to make his ideal ethical society a reality, Plato argued ethical sounds did not sound for their own sake: they resonated with a

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14 Plato, *Republic*, 3: 404e, see also 3: 399b, 3: 400e.
16 Averoës cited in Ibid.
higher social and spiritual purpose. Plato proved this by offering as a conclusion to Politeia a vision of the spiritual world’s upper regions, which only the “just souls” could aspire to enter before being reincarnated. According to Classics scholar F. M. Cornford, this visionary text, “The Myth of Er,” likely drew on the initiatory rites of Orphism: the cult that revered the lyre-playing legend Orpheus and had wielded so great an influence on Pythagorean thought. Like Orpheus, who descended to the underworld and returned to the land of the living, the protagonist in “The Myth of Er,” a recently-deceased soldier, has an out-of-body experience during which his spirit journeys if not all the way to the underworld à la Orpheus then at least as far as a place called the “Meadow” — the threshold to both the upper and lower cosmographic regions. In the Meadow, Er relates,

...those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath. And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things…they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty.

Er also saw souls judged. The “just” souls ascended to the celestial realm above for their reward, but when “[in]sufficiently punished” souls or the “unjust” souls of “incurable sinners,” such as tyrants and “great criminals,” fancied they were about to be granted access to the upper world, “the mouth [of the cavern], instead of admitting them, gave a roar.” Then, “wild men of fiery aspect, who were standing by and heard the sound, seized and carried them off.” Some were “bound head and foot and hand,” and thrown down, “flayed...with scourges, and dragged...along the road at the side, card[ed] on thorns like wool, and declared to the passers-by what were their crimes, and that they were being taken away” to be cast below for punishment. As each soul faced the cavern, therefore, “there was none like the terror which each of them felt,...lest they should hear the voice; and when there was silence, one by one they ascended with exceeding joy. These, said Er, were the penalties and retributions, and

17 MOS, p.58.
18 According to Jamie James, the myth of a journey to the underworld continued in pagan cults that existed alongside Christianity well into the fourth century CE and, as we will soon see, formed the basis of the widely read Christian visionary texts. See MOS, p.55. The theme of a disembodied spirit journeying to other cosmic realms via what historian of religions Mircea Eliade called a cosmic axis (axis mundi), is even more ancient than Orphism and is found in cultures all over the world. In Er’s case, the axis mundi is the Spindle of Necessity. Later in this thesis, we will see how the shamanic journey via the axis mundi is dealt with in the Algonquian-Iroquoian oral tradition. See Mircea Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion, Willard R. Trask (trans.), (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1959), pp.36–42.
19 Plato, Republic, 10: 615.
there were blessings as great.” When Er, himself, ascended to the heavens via a rainbow shaft of light called the Spindle of Necessity, for example, he heard the harmony of the spheres, produced in this instance by eight Sirens who sang different notes within a single octave range (the Pythagorean scale) on revolving celestial rings. He also saw souls choosing their new earthly incarnations. Er, however, was not reincarnated; he returned to his own body in the land of the living as “the messenger who would carry the report of the other world to men,” so they would “believe...the soul is immortal” and thus, by living a virtuous life, “keep to the upward way and in all things pursue justice with the help of wisdom. Then,” wrote Plato, as one who believed wholeheartedly in the Pythagorean doctrine of the interrelatedness of all things from the macrocosm of the harmonious musica universalis to the microcosm of the musica humana, “we shall be at peace with Heaven and with ourselves.”

Just as Er had stood in the Meadow and glimpsed what was offered in both the upper and lower regions of the cosmos, Plato’s “Myth of Er” likewise stood at a nexus. For, while grounded firmly in the ancient Greek mystery religions’ essentially shamanic Orphic journeys to the spiritual world as well as the classical philosophical doctrine of the harmony of the spheres, anyone even passingly familiar with Christian cosmography would recognise “The Myth of Er” also presaged the harmonic tradition’s Christian future.

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20 Plato, Republic, 10: 615–21. The specific translation for the last line is from MOS, p.55.
The Harmony of All Things

History cannot basically modify the structure of an archaic symbolism. History constantly adds new meanings, but they do not destroy the structure of the symbol.

— Mircea Eliade

Like many archaic traditions and religions, when Christianity entered the scene it offered a hierarchical, “many-storeyed,” geocentric view of the universe with a “zenithal paradise” and a “nadiral hell.” This was just another manifestation of the archaic formula of cosmogenesis, with two polar opposites the Dyad, (in this case heaven and hell), emerging from the original unity of the Monad (God’s Creation). The concept of antithetical worlds is reflected in the way these regions were depicted in the Bible; in the prelapsarian Garden of Eden, for example, a God-filled place was inevitably an orderly paradise where God, Man, and Creation harmoniously coexisted; the prophet Joel’s words in the Old Testament, by contrast, indicated that places where Satan reigned were accordingly a “desolate wilderness.”

Even so, Christianity’s most sacred text only revealed so much about what the various spiritual regions were actually like. And Christians—expected to forsake the earthly plane’s fleeting sensory pleasures to escape punishment and be worthy of heaven’s far greater, eternal sensory delights—had a voracious appetite for intricate details of their ultimate destination, hoping this knowledge would motivate them to stick to the “upward way.” To fill in the gaps, therefore, Christians looked to older “maps” to familiarise themselves with the spiritual terrain of the Christian cosmos.

Chief among the pre-Christian sources for the “otherworld” were the works of wise philosophers of antiquity. Aware that the polytheistic ancients were ignorant of the “one true God” early Christians often protested loudly against the fusion of pagan philosophy and Christian religion, yet most began life as pagans themselves and all had received a classical

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(pagan) education, so they could not ignore areas of significant overlap between pagan and Christian ideas. As we shall see, whilst making use of this pagan knowledge base, the Church Fathers had to be careful to not appear to be apostates. With regard to music, specifically, they did so by expressing an appropriate amount of inner turmoil and doubt about the dangerous sensory pleasures of earthly music by quoting Plato practically verbatim regarding the moral dangers of unethical sounds and questioning music’s place in the Church altogether. But in the long term they did willingly integrate elements of pagan wisdom into Christianity where that overlap existed, explaining the overlap and justifying their use of pre-Christian sources by conceding that while the ancient pagan philosophers like Plato, Pythagoras, and Aristotle were not endowed with divine revelation, in the course of their great intellectual pursuits they had, nevertheless, perceived God’s truth “in shadows and in mirrors.”

Appealing to ideas and motifs that already had deep cultural and historical roots aided a wider acceptance of Christianity, which had to compete with the older, pagan beliefs persisting alongside it for centuries. The persistence of those ancient pagan beliefs and rites as well as the Greek philosophers’ harmonic tradition is obvious in The Hymns of Orpheus composed between the first and fourth centuries CE. In the Orphic Hymn “To Apollo,” for example, the lyre-playing, Pythagoreanesque god Apollo “ma[de] everything bloom, and with [his] versatile lyre...harmonise[d] the poles...infus[ing] harmony into all men’s lot.” Elsewhere in The Hymns of Orpheus, the Sun (Helios), who was in this period often conflated with Apollo, was likewise credited with “fill[ing] the world with harmony divine” with his “various-sounding golden lyre.” Small wonder, then, that in the early fourth century CE, the Church Father Saint Athanasius of Alexandria resorted to the popular motif of the cosmic lyrist and solar symbolism to argue against the disorder of pagan polytheism and to convince people of the Christian God’s existence and unity. In “The Harmony of All Things,” Athanasius likened God to a master lyre player bringing harmony, order, and light to Creation from the microcosm all the way through to the macrocosm:


[T]he concordant harmony of all things, shews...the Word, its Ruler and Governor, is not many, but One. For if there were more than one Ruler of Creation, such an universal order would not be maintained, but all things would fall into confusion because of their plurality, each one biasing the whole to his own will, and striving with the other...[T]he single order and concord of the many and diverse shews...the ruler too is one. For just as though one were to hear from a distance a lyre, composed of many diverse strings, and marvel at the concord of its symphony, in that its sound is composed neither of low notes exclusively, not high nor intermediate only, but all combine their sounds in equal balance, — and would not fail to perceive from this that the lyre was not playing itself, not even being struck by more persons than one, but that there was one musician, even if he did not see him, who by his skill combined the sound of each string into the tuneful symphony, so, the order of the whole universe being perfectly harmonious...and all things making up one order, it is consistent to think...the Ruler and King of all Creation is one and not many, Who by His own light illumines and gives movement to all. ⁸

Athanasius would not have considered this image of God as master lyrist to be purely pagan due to his familiarity with the Old Testament story of King David in the Book of Samuel. In it, God withdrew his support from Saul, the first King of Israel, sent a malevolent spirit to torment him and subsequently transferred His favour to “a man after His own heart” named David: a young shepherd who also happened to be a skilled lyrist. When Saul’s servants noticed an evil spirit troubled him, they recommended—as a result of divine inspiration—that Saul command them to “seek out a man who is a skilful player on the lyre: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.” David was sent for and, like Pythagoras prescribing the aural medicine of his lyre to adjust out-of-tune souls at the Academy at Croton, “it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took the lyre, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him.” ⁹ Ultimately, it is claimed, in accordance with God’s will David replaced Saul and became the second King of the united kingdom of Israel and Judah, and went on to compose many of the psalms in the Bible’s Book of Psalms. Athanasius and other early Church Fathers, therefore, would have viewed the presence of a cosmic lyre player in the pagan beliefs as further proof there were elements of pagan myths and philosophies worth salvaging for Christian purposes to enrich their existing

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knowledge of God’s truth. Consequently, from this era of religious syncretism we find a Gaza synagogue mosaic portraying David in the guise of the legendary Greek lyrist Orpheus calming wild animals with his lyre and images of Christ himself as Orpheus “adorn[ing] the early Christian catacombs in Rome and early Christian sarcophagi.”

Nevertheless, even in this period of religious syncretism and even as some early Church Fathers explicitly referenced the harmonic tradition and conflated pagan musical beings like Orpheus and Apollo with King David and Jesus, one cannot help but think as one reads their treatises, “but you don’t really care for music, do you?” The Church Fathers’ ambivalence regarding music’s place in Christianity stemmed from their firsthand knowledge of pagan beliefs and rites as well as their familiarity with Hellenistic philosophy. Most had personally experienced the intoxicating influence of pagan music on their own pre-Christian souls and, cognisant of its power, took seriously the Damonian-Platonic concern that music had the capacity to entice the soul away from a virtuous life with its overly stimulating, physical, sensory pleasures. The pagans who lived alongside the early Christians, therefore, exerted a major influence on the development of Christianity’s sacred soundscape in their own way: their exciting, ecstatic, trance-inducing, complex music in their “orgiastic” rites provided a model for the early Christians to define their ideal soundscape against.

At first, clearly delineating a Christian soundscape that opposed the pagan one manifested in the Christian desire to exclude music from the Church entirely. This is most apparent in the second century CE works of Saint Clement of Alexandria. Originally a pagan and well versed in Hellenistic philosophy, Clement was one of the most extreme in his denunciation of anything aurally pleasing. In Clement’s Protrepticus, Orphic music was the antithesis of God’s Word or universal truth (logos) and in Paedagogus, he echoed Damon and Plato in his disgust for “the pipe” and “the flute,” which he believed should be “resigned to the shepherds...and to the superstitious...engrossed in idolatry,...being more suitable to beasts than men, and the more irrational portion of mankind.” Clearly the nascent logocentrism of Apollo and Marsyas’s mythical musical duel had fully matured when it filtered down via Plato and Clement into Christianity. Even harmonious music was suspicious to Clement: only “temperate harmonies are to be admitted...we are to banish as far as possible from our robust

13 Clement, Protrepticus (Exhortation to the Heathen), 1:1; for Clement’s views about the pipe, see Clement, Paedagogus (The Instructor), 2:4.
mind those liquid harmonies, which, through pernicious arts in the modulations of tones, train to effeminacy and scurrility.”

It is hardly surprising Clement subsequently endeavoured to supplant the pagan music with the divine *logos* altogether. He did so by calling Jesus “the New Song...which composed the entire creation into melodious order, and tuned into concert the discord of the elements, that the whole universe might be in harmony with it.” To clarify, the “New Song” was not actually a song at all: it was God’s “all-harmonious” Word. King David’s lyre, too, was for Clement primarily only a metaphor for the one truly Christian sound — the articulate praising of the Lord:

And praise Him on the lyre. By the lyre is meant the mouth struck by the Spirit, as it were by a plectrum....For man is truly a pacific instrument; while other instruments, if you investigate, you will find to be warlike, inflaming to lusts, or kindling up amours, or rousing wrath. In their wars...the Cretans [use] the lyre... The one instrument of peace, the Word alone by which we honour God, is what we employ.

At best, the lyre’s actual musical function was a secondary role Clement sometimes grudgingly permitted so long as it was used to praise and confess to the Lord and not for sensory pleasure. “[E]ven if you wish to sing and play the harp or lyre, there is no blame,” for “[y]ou shall imitate the righteous Hebrew king in his thanksgiving to God....Confess to the Lord on the harp; play to him on the psaltery of ten strings...And,” in a mathematical and thus Pythagorean vein, he rhetorically asks, “does not the ten-stringed psaltery indicate the Word Jesus, who is manifested by the element of the decad?” Here is the most blatant evidence of Clement’s intention to usurp Pythagoreanism for Christianity. A decad was “the perfect number...the basis of Pythagoras’s...mathematics” and, as such, featured in one of “the most important Pythagorean symbols” the *tetractys*: a pyramid figure consisting of ten points arranged in four rows. The first four numbers of the tetractys represented what was later known as the *musica universalis* (Unity - Monad; Power - Dyad; Harmony - Triad; Kosmos - Tetrad). “Contained within the tetractys was the mystery of how finite form—the pyramid, which is suggested by the figure of the tetractys—emerges from the infinitude of one, the

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16 Ibid, p.21.
19 MOS, p.29.
single, perfect point,” explains Jamie James, but the tetractys also contained the ratios of the harmonic musical scale (1:2, the octave, 2:3, the perfect fifth, and 3:4, the perfect fourth) and the four elements of nature (earth, air, fire, water).  

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The tetractys symbol’s progression from “the unity of one to the unity of ten” had even represented “the spiritual progress made by Pythagorean initiates in their journey through the mysteries of the Brotherhood.” Clement, then, was referring to “the Word Jesus” as the manifestation of the decad just as the Pythagoreans had supposedly conceived of the tetractys as “the spring of all our wisdom, the perennial fount and root of nature.”

Almost two centuries later, music was still a source of concern for the early Church Fathers. In the fourth century CE, Saint Augustine of Hippo famously wrote Qui cantat, bis orat (“he who sings prays twice”) and credited his own conversion to Christianity to listening to Christian music. To his God in Confessions Augustine wrote: “The tears flowed from me when I heard your hymns and canticles, for the sweet singing of your Church moved me deeply. The music surged in my ears, truth seeped into my heart, and my feelings of devotion overflowed, so that the tears streamed down.” Yet, while music had instigated Augustine’s conversion, he ultimately considered his fascination for “the pleasures of sound” a bond God needed to break to “set [him] free” from what he feared was his latent paganism. He confessed to his God, “I still find some enjoyment in the music of hymns, which are alive with your praises, when I hear them sung by well-trained, melodious voices. But,” Augustine nervously reassured his Lord lest He consider him a backslider, “I do not enjoy it so much that I cannot tear myself away. I can leave it when I wish.” Writing this, however, only appears to have exacerbated Augustine’s inner conflict. He could not ignore that music was potentially morally dangerous as well as spiritually beneficial and he openly doubted his ability to identify where the spiritual experience ended and the base, physical one began:

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22 Ibid.
But if I am not to turn a deaf ear to music, which is the setting for the words which give it life, I must allow it a position of some honour in my heart, and I find it difficult to assign it to its proper place. For sometimes I feel… I treat it with more honour than it deserves. I realise… when they are sung these sacred words stir my mind to greater religious fervour and kindle in me a more ardent flame of piety than they would if they were not sung. But I ought not to allow my mind to be paralysed by the gratification of my senses, which often leads it astray. For the senses are not content to take second place… Sometimes, too, from over-anxiety to avoid this particular trap I make the mistake of being too strict. When this happens, I have no wish but to exclude from my ears, and from the ears of the Church as well, all the melody of those lovely chants to which the Psalms of David are habitually sung.

But then, Augustine continues, “I remember the tears I shed on hearing the songs of the Church in the early days, soon after I had recovered my faith, and… I again acknowledge the great value of this practice. So,” he admitted, “I waver between the danger that lies in gratifying the senses and the benefits which, as I know from experience, can accrue from singing… Without committing myself to an irrevocable opinion,” Augustine concluded, “I am inclined to approve of the custom of singing in church, in order that by indulging the ears, weaker spirits may be inspired with feelings of devotion.”

If music was not to be eliminated from the Church entirely, though, a less dangerous type of music needed to be cultivated for Christian purposes. Like Plato before them, these early Christians endeavoured to determine which aspects of music were dangerous and which parts were salvageable for their ideal community, in their case the Church. Just as the ancient Greeks had considered the lyre an ethical instrument because it accompanied and complemented the epic poets’ wise words, Augustine resolved his uneasiness by concluding music could be pious on one condition: it never overpowered the Word. For, he wrote, “I realise… nowadays it is not the singing that moves me but the meaning of the words when they are sung in a clear voice to the most appropriate tune… but when I find the singing itself more moving than the truth which it conveys, I confess… this is a grievous sin, and at those times I would prefer not to hear the singer.” With this in mind, Augustine cited Saint Athanasius of Alexandria as a prime example of one who had already successfully navigated a safe way for the evermore logocentric Christians to employ music: by having “the singer sing

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25 Ibid.
the Psalm with such moderation of verse…it would amount to reciting rather than singing.”

As for what would constitute “the most appropriate tune,” while we do not know exactly how early Christian music sounded, it seems they may have aspired to acoustically embody the virtues of the pious life or, to use Plato’s equivalent concept “the upward way”—namely tranquillity, self-control, restraint, and humble simplicity to avoid overstimulating the senses. For example, many early Christian authors could often compare ecclesiastical community singing with that of rowing songs,” a comparison that accentuated “the rather slow evenness of chanting.” In sum, plain, unadorned, calming melodies that were as close to speech as possible whilst still being sung were the ideal.

As we would expect of a Christian vision recorded in Athanasius and Augustine’s era, then, in the early visionary text “St. Paul’s Apocalypse” (388 CE) we find the veneration of King David’s music, its conflation with a God-praising word, the survival of the ancient notion that the heavens were filled with music, and even some solar imagery. When the protagonist enters the City of Christ the heavenly beings producing the beautiful music are not Sirens, as in the earlier Platonic vision “The Myth of Er,” but “thousands of thousands of angels and archangels and the cherubim and the four-and-twenty elders uttering hymns and glorifying the Lord.”

In the middle of the city, the protagonist sees an individual standing by a high altar, noting his “face shone like the sun, and he held in his hands a psalter and a harp and sang praises, saying, ‘Alleluia.’ And his voice filled the whole city. When all who were on the towers and the gates heard him, they answered, ‘Alleluia,’ so that the foundations of the city were shaken.” When the protagonist asks an angel who this is, the angel identifies the “mighty” one as King David and the city as Jerusalem. “When Christ the king of eternity comes in the fullness of his kingdom,” the angel explains, David “will again go before him to sing his praises, and all the righteous will sing praises together, answering, ‘Alleluia.’”

Hearing this, the protagonist then asks the angel, “Lord, what is ‘Alleluia?’” to which the angel responds:

‘Alleluia’ is spoken in Hebrew,…the speech of God and the angels. Now the interpretation of ‘Alleluia’ is this: tecel cat marith macha...‘Let us bless him all together.’...[A]ll those who say ‘Alleluia’ bless God...and if any sing ‘Alleluia,’

and those who are present...and able...do not sing together, they sin in not singing...[for] whoever...does not sing together is a despiser of the word.

The emphasis on everyone singing this holy word “all together” reinforces the ideal of achieving unity, both as a pious community and with God himself, through sound. In accordance with Saint Clement and Saint Augustine’s assertions, the most important sound David made, then, was not the harmonious sounds of his lyre—here referred to as a harp—but emphatically the “all-harmonising word,” ‘Alleluia.’

Clement’s Damonian-Platonic inspired condemnation of the corrupting influences of sonic complexity in the form of intricate rhythms and “liquid harmonies” added further criteria against which suitably Christian music were defined. In ancient Greece and Rome, rattles, drums and other “primitive” instruments such as aerophones (like the aulos) had been considered ecstasy-inducing, because they were closely associated with foreign (Asiatic) earth deities such as Cybele (the Roman Magna Mater [Great Mother]) and Dionysus the god of wine, both of whom represented madness, disorder, chaos, nature, fertility, and excess. Cult members who worshipped these deities performed nocturnal orgiastic rituals in which wild howling, shouting, maniacal dancing, intoxication, feasting, frenzied drumming and piping were typical. Drums were notorious for their role in producing the ecstatic experience, the unrestrained dancing of human bodies, and for accompanying all the excess and physical pleasures of pagan orgiastic rites. As membranophones—from the Latin membrāna [skin] and the Greek phōnē [voice, sound]—the drums, which were comprised of dried animal membrane tightly stretched over a frame, were themselves a celebration and preservation of the flesh. The early Church Fathers did not fail to notice drums were literally “skins with voices.” Saint Augustine, for example, wrote “Tympanum, quod de corio fit, ad carnem pertinent [The Tympanum [hand-drum], which is made from skin, refers to the flesh].” There was a place for such instruments, noises, and deities in the pagan Greco-Roman world, but in these ancient associations with madness, flesh, and chaos were the seeds of Christian “membranophobia.”

33 Drummer for The Grateful Dead, Mickey Hart, coined this humorous term membranophobe to describe Westerners/Christians who viewed and heard drums and other percussion instruments as threats to the heavenly order they were trying to establish on earth. Mickey Hart with Jay Stevens, Drumming at the Edge of Magic: A Journey into the Spirit of Percussion, (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), p.81. “Burn Thy Drum” pp.124–28 of this thesis demonstrates how these ancient associations, beliefs and attitudes toward drums played out in the context of early seventeenth-century New France.
The onset of Christian membranophobia was, however, slow. With their characteristic ambivalence, the early Church Fathers used the relationship between drums and dead flesh to make points both for and against the instrument. Some Church Fathers, eager to explain why an instrument with such a sensual, licentious, pagan reputation was used for sacred purposes in the Bible, asserted that the dead skin fixed to a wooden frame to form a drum symbolised Christ on the cross and, thus, could also represent the mortification of the flesh; that is, Christians putting to death their own sin. In this sense, though, it is noteworthy that the drum performed a purely symbolic function, not a sonic one. At the other extreme, drums used for their true purpose—to make sound—remained synonymous with paganism as pagans still played them in early-Christian-era fertility rituals throughout the Mediterranean and Middle East, particularly women who, as professional musicians, were automatically considered “sexually available to their male audiences.” As A. W. J. Holleman notes:

It is precisely...the “beat”-character of music all over the Roman Empire that for centuries along was combated by ecclesiastical authorities East and West as endangering liturgical music and poisoning the Christian mind. It goes without saying that the exciting beat-rhythm of the pagan music was experienced as instrumental for losing one’s Christian soul and salvation. The rejection of it was related directly to the pastoral-theological rejection of the lusts of the flesh, and education in the Christian spirit started with repressions in this respect...[T]he body of Christian ecclesiastical music was [therefore] “derhythmed,” denuded of rhythm...the fundamental feature of early and real Christian music was the absence of rhythmical structure...

Thus, right up to the late sixteenth century “authoritative writers” were disinclined to classify drums as musical instruments at all. For example, though the German composer and music theorist Sebastian Virdung included a category of musical instruments entitled “those of metal and other resonant material” in his treatise Musica getuscht und angezogen (1511), he deemed the drum unworthy of inclusion:

34 See for example Exodus 15:20 in which the tympanum is used in a song of praise to God.
37 Holleman, Op.cit., pp.9–14. But this “othering” of rhythmic drums was, emphatically, gradual. At best, drums were associated with Christianity’s theological rivals (Jews and Muslims) and at worst they were the instruments of complete and utter paganism. See Molina, Op.cit., pp.169–73.
These...*Rumplefesser* (“rumbling tubs”)...are to the taste of such as cause much unrest to pious old people of the earth, to the sick and weakly, the devout in the cloisters, those who have read, study and pray. And I verily believe...the Devil must have had the devising and making of them, for there is no pleasure or anything good about them. If hammering and raising a din be music, then coopers and those who make barrels must be musicians; but that is all nonsense.39

Like all sacred music, Christian sacred music sought to produce an ecstatic or “divine” experience through an auditory-driven altered state of consciousness, but it was to be what Averoës would call “the beautiful with self control”40 — something which was inwardly felt rather than outwardly expressed by wild, vulgar, enrhythmed dancing bodies. Since the mythical times of Apollo and Hermes, harmonious sounds were known for their ability to produce this inner movement of the soul and, thus, seemed to belong more to the ether than to the earth. Music generally, therefore, was no longer the Christians’ enemy — but rhythmic music certainly was.41

Having identified rhythm as the true culprit of sonically-induced evils, the Church was able to embrace the ancient harmonic tradition more fully. Saint Augustine, for example, went on to write a treatise called *De musica*, which drew heavily upon Pythagorean teachings. The work reiterated what earlier proponents of Pythagoreanism had put forth for philosophical education. In addition to learning grammar, rhetoric and logic, (the *trivium*) students—like model Pythagoreans—“were also expected to master the four branches of mathematics: arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy (the *quadrivium*).42 “Augustine’s prestige in the Christian intellectual world, which had completely supplanted (and just as completely assimilated) the pagan intellectual tradition,” writes Jamie James, “made the *quadrivium* a fundamental part of education...that would dominate the curriculum in Europe for fourteen centuries.”43

Via a musical education that would have made Plato proud, therefore, Christians inherited the ready-made paradisiacal soundscape the ancient harmonic tradition had bequeathed to them. They accepted the general Pythagorean notion that the heavens were a place of perfect order...

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40 Averoës cited in *MOS*, p.59.
41 Western music has thus been characterised by harmonic complexity and rhythmic simplicity.
42 *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* were not Augustine’s terms. They come from the Christian philosopher Boethius a century later. For more on the trivium and quadrivium, see Blackwell, Op.cit., p.49; *MOS*, pp.71–72.
43 *MOS*, p.72.
and even the later additions to the Pythagorean doctrine, which held that this celestial order produced its own perfect harmonious music that was inaudible to lowly, earth-bound mortal ears. Like the quasi-mythical Pythagoras, who could “hear and grasp...the celestial sounds,” which “produced a melody fuller and more intense than anything effected by mortal sounds,” the pious Christian could also live in hope of one day hearing the superior music of heaven. In the Christian rendition of the heavenly symphony, such perfect music was produced by winged, golden harp-playing, seraphic psychopomps known as “angels,” who owed much to the ancient Greco-Roman wing-footed, lyre-inventing messenger god Hermes (Mercury), and the famously perfect songs of the beautiful but deadly Sirens of Homeric poetry to whom Plato had attributed the music of the revolving spheres in “The Myth of Er.”

Nevertheless, for centuries the sacred music of Christendom’s earthly regions maintained the simplicity and modesty Augustine and Athanasius recommended. When Gregorian chant, the official music of the Catholic Church, emerged in the ninth century CE, like the earlier Church music, perhaps, it seemingly endeavoured to acoustically epitomise Christian virtues. Known as plainchant, because of its lack of ornamentation and monophonic texture, Gregorian chant consisted of a single melodic line sung by multiple voices in unison. The only sonic embellishment this music did feature was melisma; multiple notes sung for each syllable of the lyrics. But even this type of vocal ornamentation ultimately expressed restraint: elongating the text via melisma had the effect of slowing down the sensory experience and thus, in combination with the chant’s minor tonality and drone effect, produced the distinctly solemn, controlled, calm, meditative mood we now typically associate with Christian sacred music. The chant’s propensity to move in small chromatic steps rather than wide leaps also meant all the melodic movement created by the ornamental melisma was contained within a limited range, so even when the singer ascended in pitch it was as though the sound was obstructed from reaching a full climax. This is because Gregorian chants did not stretch across a full octave, but fell just short of it by reaching only to a seventh, which gave the listener the sense that the sound was suppressed by the controlled voice of the singer and, of course, the composer. In 1630, a former student of one of the Jesuit colleges echoed Augustine’s ideal church music when he outlined the spiritual effects of this chant when skillfully performed:

[When...sung seriously, slowly and tastefully, it weakens the sense of the words very little, but rather impresses perfectly upon the ears and souls [of the listeners] the meaning of the underlying text, and thus moves to piety of soul those who

44 MOS, p.73; Iamblichus, The Life of Pythagoras, p.72.
understand and [are] devoutly attentive, and increases remarkably the devotion that is felt.”

There was to be no “crude shouting…unskilled voices, or…complicated intricacies of too many rhythmic devices…” in the performance of the Gregorian chant. To be able to sing long phrases of sustained notes and to retain a *legato* (smooth) movement between notes demanded a considerable degree of vocal control from the singer that only training could cultivate, demonstrating acoustically the extreme inner and outer control the pious individual aspired to in life generally. The chant’s free rhythm also heightened the sounds’ ethereal quality and, as Christians understood it, elevated the soul, bringing the individual to a state of ecstasy that was experienced internally rather than expressed outwardly in bodily movements.

As the visionary genre developed over the centuries, the paradisiacal heaven became increasingly sensual. Though the early Church Fathers had been wary of sensory pleasures, by the middle of the medieval era sensory delights beyond anything a mortal could experience on the earthly plane or imagine were exactly what the visionary promised on his return to earth to inspire piety in his fellow mortals just as Plato’s soldier Er had done previously. As the protagonists of *Drythelm’s Vision* (696 CE) and *St. Patrick’s Purgatory* (c.1153 CE) ascended the various regions of the hierarchical heavens, for example, the light surrounding them became increasingly “beautiful” and brighter, fragrances became more “wonderful” and “delicious,” sights of “bright flowery fields,” “mansions of blessed souls,” gates “adorned with precious stones” shining “brilliantly,” and angelic beings arrayed in gold and silver greeted their eyes. “[S]weet voices” producing “concerts of unequalled harmony” were also typically heard by these utterly misnamed “visionaries.”

“Choir followed choir, and all in sweet harmonious concert praised the Creator of all things,” wrote one visionary text author in 1140 CE. In *Tundale’s Vision* (1149 CE), the act of singing itself served as the reward enjoyed in heaven by some exceptionally virtuous souls, such as monks. They sat on thrones in “purple and gray, gold and silver…silk…pavilions in which they [sang] the praises of the Redeemer and of all rewards of the generous without stopping.” Within these pavilions Tundale claims to have seen and heard “strings and organs, drums and cither with organs and cymbals playing all other kinds of music harmonizing with the sweetest sounds” on

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45 As cited in Thomas D. Culley, *Jesuits and Music: A Study of the Musicians Connected with the German College in Rome During the 17th Century and of Their Activities in Northern Europe*, (Rome, Jesuit Historical Institute, St. Louis: St. Louis University, 1970), p.77.
instruments “produc[ing] sounds with no one labouring,” but it was the voices of the monks and angels that “sweetly and softly...surpass[ed] all musical instruments” and “exceeded all other sweetness.” Furthermore, the vocalists’ singing was effortless: “their lips did not seem to move nor their hands bother to rise to the musical instrument, and yet each resounded a tune at will.” Cymbals, bells, drinking vessels and gold globes hung from chains above them and “a great multitude of angels with gold wings moved” among them, “flying and rising lightly amid the floating chains.” These winged beings, too, “produced the softest and sweetest song for those listening.”

By the late Middle Ages the rich soundscape of the celestial paradise became even more established. The solemn, morally safe music, which lacked rhythmic or harmonic complexity and ornamentation and was monophonic or homophonic in texture, now coexisted with more complex, thickly textured polyphonic music featuring sumptuous instrumentation. Compositions containing multiple, distinct melodic lines all harmonising together were the earthly manifestation of the more richly textured soundscape of paradise Christians encountered in twelfth-century vision texts, such as Tundale’s Vision (1149 CE), Thurkill’s Vision (1206 CE), and The Monk of Evesham’s Vision, (1196 CE). In the latter text, for example, the protagonist eloquently describes the experience of polyphony in heaven:

I suddenly heard a note of wondrous sweetness, as if all the bells of the world, or everything musical, were all sounding together. In this sound there was a wonderful sweetness and a various mixture of melody, and I do not know whether I admired it most for its greatness or its sweetness.

In this description, despite the number and diversity of melodies and instruments, they do not compete with, clash, or overpower one another; they unify as one sound because each is attuned to the harmony of God’s Creation, much like the multitudes of heavenly angelic voices singing the word ‘Alleluia’ in unison to praise the one true God. In Thurkill’s Vision, too, at certain hours every day, superior spirits reportedly “heard songs from heaven, as if all kinds of music were sounding in harmonious melody. This soothed and refreshed all the inhabitants of the temple by its agreeable softness....But” less worthy spirits, “who stood in the halls outside, did not hear anything of this heavenly song.” And, of course, in the most

50 monophonic: music comprised of a single melodic line; homophonic: a melody with some basic chords for accompaniment.
51 Tundale states “Harmonious voices produced sounds truly diverse like musical song” in Brother Marcus, “Tundale’s Vision,” EG-VHH, pp.185–86.
famous visionary text, Dante Alighieri’s *Divina Commedia* (1320), which is considered “the culmination of the entire body of medieval imaginative literature on the subject of the otherworld,”⁵⁴ we find the same motif with a direct reference to the harmony of the spheres and the Pythagorean notion of a synergy between the *musica humana* and *musica universalis*: “Differing voices join to sound sweet music; so do the different orders in our life render sweet harmony among these spheres.”⁵⁵

Accordingly, from the mid-thirteenth century onwards there was a thoroughgoing “invasion” of musical angels into Christian paintings, sculptures, and architectural ornamentation.⁵⁶ In *The Virgin and Child* (c.1490–1495) [see Fig. 1.4] by Geertgen tot Sint Jans, for example, Mary holds baby Jesus and both are encircled by an angel orchestra playing a plethora of instruments to provide what musicologist Emanuel Winternitz has called, “an allegory of the loudest and richest possible sound.”⁵⁷ Winternitz argues further that the angels’ organisation into “concentric rings or ovals, sharply distinct in their function” is a blatant allusion to the revolving “celestial spheres.” Geertgen’s Pythagorean references grew more blatant still: the baby Jesus shakes a pair of jingle bells whilst looking down to an angel who returns his gaze and likewise shakes a pair of jingle bells. “The *concentus* (harmony) between the two pairs of bells,” asserts Winternitz, “reveals Christ as the leader or generator of the heavenly orchestra...represent[ing] God as prime mover of the universe, imparting the first impulse to the harmony of the spheres.”⁵⁸

Of course, Christian visionaries who journeyed to the “otherworld” did not merely return to the land of the living with tales of heaven’s sensory delights. Before those visionaries could even experience the joys of heaven and, indeed, to appreciate them all the more when they did reach paradise, their journeys to the otherworld began not with an ascent but with an Orphic descent to the underworld.

Figure 1.3: Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *De verheerlijking van Maria [The Glorification of the Virgin]*, (c.1490–1495). Courtesy of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
Never straying from the archaic formula of a mathematically ordered universe comprised of opposite extremes, Christians—who conceived of heaven as an ethereal, Edenic “garden of delight” bathed in light and filled with beautiful colours, fragrances, flavours, and harmonious music produced by golden harp-playing angel orchestras and choirs—rather inevitably presented heaven’s cosmographic antipodes as a subterranean spiritual wasteland where the very hellishness of hell was credited to the ceaseless torture of the senses. Hence, the fiery chasms of eternal damnation were conceived as being excruciatingly painful, malodorous, full of hideous sights and “disharmonic harshness and acoustic unpleasantness” comprised of physically and psychologically painful sounds that were excessive in volume, had an offensive tone, were dissonant, and incessant. Put simply, just as the nadiral hell had its antichrist, it also had its “anti-music”: a perversion of the perfect harmonious soundscape of the zenithal paradise.

Thanks to this aspect of the harmonic tradition, by the Middle Ages dissonance and the devil were so indivisible that discordant musical intervals—especially the tritone, also known as “the devil’s interval”—were purposely avoided in ecclesiastical singing. In fact, 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-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. After all, in the Middle Ages—as it had been in the classical world and, indeed, would continue to be right up to the Industrial Revolution—religion, mysticism, mathematics, music, western philosophy and science were all deeply connected thanks to the ancient harmonic tradition. Whatever the truth, by the early eighteenth century the phrase “mi contra fa est diabolus in musica” (mi against fa is the devil in music) commonly referred to the tritone and cemented the legend, paving the way for the composer Franz Liszt to make ample use of the tritone to conjure hell’s infernal acoustics for his composition Dante Sonata (1849). To this day composers of popular entertainment, conscious that the western ear has been culturally conditioned or “tuned” for centuries to hear dissonance as evil, continue to exploit the tritone specifically and inharmonious sounds generally to provide their audiences with an instantly recognisable acoustic cue that something sinister is about to occur.

However, while founded in scripture, the Christian hell’s discordant acoustic ecology did not emerge fully formed from the Bible. In the first book of the New Testament, Matthew described hell as a “furnace of fire” dominated by the sounds of “wayling and gnashing of teeth,” in this case implying physical sensory torment without actually stating it. Sparse as this description is, it does feature what would come to be the quintessential elements of hell: the roaring fire and the dreadful “degraded vocality” of all those cast out of God’s kingdom for their wickedness; namely their anguished, helpless, wordless cries and teeth-grinding. As was the case with heaven, though, Christians found they wanted and needed more gory details of hell than the Bible alone could provide, especially if they were to successfully convince people to avoid “doing iniquitie” and ending up there themselves.

Like the early Church fathers who found areas of overlap in the pagan traditions, medieval Christians detected similarities between the brief biblical descriptions of hell and the more elaborate depictions of the underworld in classical Greco-Roman visionary texts. They evidently had no qualms about mining these pagan pre-Christian sources as they unashamedly cast themselves as the Christian equivalents of Aeneas, Orpheus, and other Greco-Roman

No. 2, (Summer, 1976): 300–01. As Hammerstein notes, according to Crane’s review, despite the prohibition of “the devil’s interval,” it appeared in compositions with some frequency “from the sixteenth century right up to the point at which the “emancipation of the dissonance” neutralize[d] it.” See also Blackwell, Op.cit., p.182.

6 MOS, p.3.

heroes in their own versions of the ancient heroic descent into the underworld. In Virgil’s *Aeneid*, a classical pagan text written between 29 and 19 BCE, for example, the hero Aeneas enters the Roman underworld and finds it filled with noises akin to the Bible’s “wayling and gnashing of teeth” along with other now classic noises of hell:

From hence are heard the groans of ghosts, the pains
Of sounding lashes and of dragging chains,
The Trojan [Aeneas] stood astonish’d at their cries,
And ask’d his guide from whence those yells arise;
And what the crimes, and what the tortures were,
And loud laments that rent the liquid air.8

And between 1308 and 1321, the most famous visionary Dante Alighieri—whose guide into the underworld was the Roman poet Virgil himself—plainly echoed the words of Aeneas:

Here sighs and cries and shrieks of lamentation
echoed through the starless air of Hell;
at first these sounds resounding made me weep:
tongues confused, a language strained in anguish
with cadences of anger, shrill outcries
and raucous groans that joined with sounds of hands,
raising a whirling storm that turns itself
forever through that air of endless black,
like grains of sand swirling when a whirlwind blows.9

Later, in the *Inferno*, Dante witnessed the punishment of “carnal sinners” and again heard their “rueful wailings” along with an horrific environmental noise, which is revealed to be a cyclone of tormented spirits:

Now am I come where many a plaining voice
Smites on mine ear. Into a place I came
Where light was silent all. Bellowing there groan
A noise, as of a sea in tempest torn

8 Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book VI.
By warring winds. The stormy blast of hell
With restless fury drives the spirits on,
Whirl’d round and dash’d amain with sore annoy.
When they arrive before the ruinous sweep,
There shrieks are heard, there lamentations, moans
And blasphemies ’gainst the good Power in heaven.
...
As cranes,
Chanting their dolorous notes, traverse the sky,
Stretch’d out in long array; so I beheld
Spirits, who came loud wailing, hurried on
By their dire doom.¹⁰

The sounds of these mournful cries were wretched enough to send Dante into a near-fatal swoon: “one spirit...wail’d so sorely,” noted Dante, “that heart-struck / I, through compassion fainting, seem’d not far / From death, and like a corse fell to the ground.”¹¹ Nor was Dante the first Christian visionary to sample this motif of degraded vocality. *St. Patrick’s Purgatory* (1140 CE) records groans and “lamentations...as if from all the people in the world” dominated hell’s acoustic ecology; a stark contrast to the Monk of Evesham’s description of a heavenly sound “as if all the bells of the world, or everything musical, were all sounding together” in the celestial paradise.¹²

As evildoers, the multitude of devils, goblins, and generally monstrous, ugly creatures of the Christian hell were also continually depicted as being incapable of producing aurally pleasing sounds. In Hildegard von Bingen’s morality play, *Ordo Virtutum* (1151 CE), the Devil is the only character that speaks or, rather, yells his lines while all other characters sing in *plainchant*.¹³ The complete deprivation of the beautiful, godly sounds of heaven is all part of the punishment for those who are unworthy of God’s presence; they are denied the right to hear such harmonious, beautiful sounds and the ability to produce anything remotely resembling them, too, because God’s presence is what imbues sounds with beauty. Any attempt to make sound turns out to be never anything more than an absurd, grotesque mockery of the heavenly soundscape. One of the most blatant examples of hell’s mocking anti-music is

¹¹ Ibid., 5:131–38. Note: *corse* is an archaic word for *corpse*.
found in Dante’s *Inferno* when Dante’s guide, Virgil, heralds Satan’s arrival with a parody of “a liturgical hymn traditionally sung during Holy Week in honor of the Cross.”

To truly live up to being the antithesis of an evermore richly textured celestial soundscape, though, hell’s anti-music had to consist of more than just “degraded human and demonic vocality.” It had to be an acoustical ecology as thickly textured as the celestial polyphonic soundscape in its complex layering of sounds, yet entirely disharmonic: a perverted polyphony. Thus, the visionaries’ “demonic harmony” became what professor of Romance languages Maria Ann Rogliere has described as an acoustical ecology “completely lacking in order...a perversion of everything...conventional to music.”

To this end, in hell we find “a perverted form of instrumental music.” In *Tundale’s Vision*, sledgehammers produce percussive sounds in the course of beating souls on a great forging stone “until twenty or a thirty or a hundred souls were reduced into one mass” and still “did not perish in this way, for they desired death and they were not able to find it.” The “hammerers of hell” are likewise heard in *Thurkill’s Vision*, “cruelly [driving]...burning...hot nails into [a] wretched man...with their hammers.” This perverted instrumentation becomes more literal in Dante’s *Inferno* with body parts being vulgarly appropriated as infernal instruments. For example, Rogliere finds one sinner’s “swollen body...afflicted by dropsy appears in the form of a lute....a superior instrument associated with perfection,” yet “when his stomach is struck by another sinner, it produces the disharmonious sounds of an inferior instrument, a drum.” Here we find the solidification of a hierarchy of sounds in the *musica universalis*, which originated in the ancient notion that *chordophones*, like the lyre and harp or, as in this particular case, the lute, occupied the apex while more rustic primitive instruments were positioned at the bottom; a hierarchy that became even more fixed with the early Christian rejection of complex, stimulating, entrancing rhythms and rhythm-makers, which were associated with female pagan goddesses and earthly pleasures. Like the ecstatic, orgiastic pagan cults of the ancient western world, this wild, enrhythmed anti-music also produced a “perverted kind of dance.” The choreography featured the “writhing bodies” of

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17 Ibid.
damned souls chaotically and horribly contorting themselves in a desperate bid to escape the violent punishments inflicted on them by Satan’s minions.²⁰

By briefly shifting our focus at this point from what hell is not (harmonious) and instead focusing upon what it is, we find hell’s clamorous environment is overwhelmingly percussive and rhythmic. Whatever the source of that rhythm—whether it is demons “never ceasing...for a moment” while beating bodies as if they are drums, repeatedly cracking whip lashes,²¹ or incessantly hitting anvils with sledge hammers in smoking, burning forges, as in The Voyage of Saint Brendan—hell always has a baseline beat.²² Hell, then, is in every way a true upside down, chaotic realm where the western musical tradition, which favours harmonic complexity and places rhythm in the subordinate role, has been completely subverted.

What better way, then, to highlight the superiority of godly sounds than to pit them against the worst that Satan and his minions have to offer in “the deepest depths” of hell? The visionary, as a representative of Christianity in hell, demonstrates that the countless horrors demons inflict on the damned can be neutralised by one sound in particular: the invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ. A prime example is the Knight Owen who, in 1140, descended into hell and at first merely “turned a deaf ear” to the threats of the countless “ugly demons” who rushed towards him, “contemptuously answer[ing] them without a word”:

Indignant at being treated with contempt, the demons kindled a large fire in the hall, and seizing the knight by the arms and legs, threw him into the middle of it, dragging him with iron hooks backwards and forwards through the fire. When he first felt the torture, he called on the name of Jesus Christ saying, “Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” At Christ’s name the fire was put out, so…not a spark remained. Seeing this, the knight no longer feared them, because he saw…they were overcome by Christ’s name.

Over and over again, the demons dragged the knight to other plains of punishment, but no matter what torments they sought to inflict, the knight was able to save himself by sounding

²² Saint Brendan of Clonfert, “The Voyage of Saint Brendan,” EG-VHH, p.115. The image of the hammers beating the anvil is reminiscent, perhaps only coincidentally, of the betrayed and enraged lame Greek god Hephaestus working furiously on the snare in which to catch the adulterers Aphrodite and Ares.
Christ’s name. Seeing the knight walk unscathed through the last of the dangers the demons, in frustration, could do nothing more than shake “the air with their horrid cries.”

These Christian visionary texts were hugely influential, because they were widely read and translated into multiple languages but also because of their notable consistency. Subscribing to the notion “familiarity breeds contempt,” the visionaries and other composers repeatedly described the feared region of hell the same way to reinforce that these accounts were factual and more effectively frighten their intended audience into pious living. So we constantly find in the Christian visions “men of fiery aspect,” or some variation of them, dragging screaming sinners off to the underworld’s deepest depths for punishment just as they did in Plato’s “Myth of Er.” Even as the repertoire of infernal sounds that comprised the underworldly anti-music expanded over the centuries to include raging rivers of brimstone, “the sound of sulphur flaming,” or the roar of a cyclone of tormented spirits to make the threat of hell more real, those new auditory horrors never veered from the basic principle that hell’s acoustic ecology was the opposite extreme of the harmonious musical heavens. Via their dogged repetition of such details, the visionaries produced the powerful, instantly recognisable, and deliberately oxymoronic trope of “demonic harmony” — a trope that proved to be especially useful to those enlightened ones whose mission it was in life to spread the Word of the saviour, Jesus Christ, and thereby rescue the earth’s great multitudes of ignorant poor souls from that fiery pit of pain, noise, and woe.

23 Anonymous, “St. Patrick’s Purgatory,” *EG-VHH*, pp.138–43. For further examples of Christians invoking Christ’s name to disarm the devil see “St. Brendan’s Voyage,” *EG-VHH*, pp.119–20; Jutta Toelle, “Mission Soundscapes: Demons, Jesuits and Sounds in Antonio Ruiz de Montoya’s *Conquista Espiritual* (1639),” in Hacke and Musselwhite, Op.cit., pp.67–87. In the *Jesuit Relations*, the French missionaries also reported using the name of Christ to silence the demonic vocalisations of individuals who resisted their conversion efforts: “The greatest difficulty we have...is not that of consuming the poverty of these wretches, but that of entering into their minds, which we see manifestly possessed, for the most part, by some demon,—even to the extent that some, at our approach, sometimes howl like wolves: these, as I have proved, quickly become silent when we outwardly exorcise them per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.” *JR* 20: 39–41.


Figure 1.4: Engraved title page of Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons*, (Paris: Chez Denys Moreau, 1632), reprinted H. Emile Chevalier, (Paris: Librairie Tross, 1865). Courtesy of University of Toronto. Note the man holding a turtle shell rattle in the top left corner.
“une...harmonie de Demons”

“In the midway of this our mortal life,
I found me in a gloomy wood, astray

Gone from the path direct...

....how savage wild

That forest, how robust and rough its growth...”

On his way to Huronia in the summer of 1623, Brother Gabriel Sagard rests for a few hours in an Algonquin village located somewhere between the lands of the “Sorcerers” and the “High Hairs.” Whilst there, Sagard is intrigued by “a great noise” coming from one of the cabins. Finally his curiosity gets the better of him and he edges closer to peer through “a small chink” in the lodge. Within, “ten or twelve men, divided into two groups” are “seated on the ground [and] arranged on two sides of the cabin.” With sticks in hand, they continually strike a long, “flat piece of wood...the width of three or four fingers, lying lengthwise on the ground at their feet...to the beat of the sound of [a]...great tortoise” rattle shaken by a medicine man. All are singing “at the top of their voices...on as high a tone as they [can], thinking...the more noise they [make]...the sooner...they [will] obtain what they desire.” Several songs later the medicine man, “on all fours, yelling and howling like a mad bull,” approaches a naked child held “belly uppermost” by two women and “puff[s] at the child round about its private parts” with curative intent. Afterwards, the “uproar and ritual” resumes “with so much ardour” it seems the men will surely “split their throats.” To the astonished Frenchman, still standing with his eyes pressed to the side of the cabin and his ears drinking in the din, it is a veritable “harmony of Demons.”

With these words, “une...harmonie de Demons,” Sagard has cast himself as a visionary hero, New France as an earthly outpost of hell where “the spirit of darkness” reigns, and its indigenous peoples as the poor, lost, relentlessly tormented souls of the unsaved, “ever sunk

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1 The sorcerers, recorded as ‘Epicerinys,’ were the Nipissing. The High Hairs or ‘Cheveaux Relevés’ were the Odaawa / Ottawa. Both are part of the larger group known as the Anishinaabeg, as are the Algonquins (Omâmiwinini).
2 *SLJ*, pp.65–66, p.307 for the original French. See also the later edition *SHC*, p.198. I have integrated all three versions of the episode to give the fullest description and most accurate translation.
in the thick darkness of their unbelief.”

But just as it was for Aeneas and Dante as they stood at the gates of hell, shocked by the first strains of hell’s infamous, sorrow-inducing anti-music that reached their ears, the demonic harmony Sagard hears in the Algonquin healing ceremony is nothing compared to the sensory nightmares New France still has in store for him and other Christians to come. Awaiting them in this terrestrial hell are deeper circles of suffering where far greater polysensory tortures to rival the most “inhuman” tortures described in the fiery “Inferno” sections of visionary texts can be witnessed and, for the extremely unfortunate, directly experienced.

For Sagard, the anti-music of New France’s infernal sensescape specifically reaches its full, hideous crescendo in the ritualised torture of captives, widely practiced by the sauvage nations of the northeast. When the Huron Confederacy or their traditional foes the Iroquois Confederacy take enemies captive, Sagard will inform his French Christian readers almost a decade later, they subject them to “cruel...modes of torture” as they slowly put them to death over days and sometimes even weeks at a time. They begin by “tearing out their nails and cutting off the three principal fingers,” which are “employed in drawing the bow,” then “strip off all the skin of the head with the hair, and afterwards apply fire to it and hot ashes, or...drip upon it melted gum.” Other times they are satisfied with “making them walk with naked body and feet through a great number of fires kindled for the purpose from one end to the other of a large lodge” while the villagers line up and hit the captive’s body with a burning brand as they pass. They then tie the prisoner to a stake and “with red-hot tomahawks rub his thighs from the top down, and thus little by little...burn...the poor wretch.” They “add to his excruciating sufferings” by applying “fire to the top of his fingers and of his private parts. Then they pierce the arms near the wrist and with sticks draw the nerves and wrench them out forcibly.” All the while, the captive not only endures this “with incredible firmness” but continually chants “a very sad and mournful song” and makes “a thousand threats against the executioners and against their entire nation” while the whole village of captors jeer and hurl insults at him. Only female captives, who are rarely subjected to this, while being tortured to death. The men never cry out “no matter what torture they are made to endure for fear of being thought effeminate and lacking in courage,” although, Sagard concedes, there are times when even they are “constrained to utter loud cries which the compulsion of the torture draws from the pit of their stomachs.” When the prisoner is “about to give up the ghost” he is “taken out of the lodge to end his life on a scaffold made ready for the purpose.” There he is decapitated and “his belly...opened” after which “all the little children” of the village get “some small fragment of bowel which they hang on the end of a stick” and carry

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3 SLJ, p.3.
“in triumph through the whole...village as an emblem of victory.” After being “disembowelled and prepared” the body is cooked “in a large kettle” and eaten by all the people at a communal feast “with jollity and rejoicing.”

It is a scene torn straight from the pages of a medieval visionary text: a fact that was undoubtedly not lost on Sagard’s seventeenth-century Christian readers. Even the singing captive is a strange, eerie mockery of visionaries like the Knight Owen who invoked the name of Jesus Christ to disarm the devils that would torture him. Understandably, therefore, Sagard cannot resist the temptation to demonstrate that while the brave captive can sonically defy the sauvage earth-bound demons with his death-song, a Christian in the same circumstances would be able to draw upon vastly superior powers and stop the satanically-inspired violence altogether.

Sagard finds a contemporary equivalent of the Christian Knight Owen in the French interpreter Étienne Brûlé. According to Sagard, Brûlé is a morally corrupt, vicious, womanising, untrustworthy man who has admitted to the missionary that the Benedicite (grace at table) is the only Christian prayer he knows after living with the sauvages since his youth and speaking and dressing as they do. Like the sinful Knight Owen, though, as a Christian even this degenerate sinner Brûlé is a worthy recipient of God’s divine protection. As Sagard asserts: “God has been known to work even greater miracles for even worse people.” Thus, the arena of captivity hosts a battle not between captor and captive so much as between the forces of good and evil. Accordingly, once the tortures begin with Brûlé’s beard being ripped from his face, a sauvage reaches out to remove an Agnus Dei the “evil-liver” Brûlé supposedly wears around his neck and, like the Knight Owen in hell, Brûlé utters the name Jesus Christ while warning his captors they will die instantaneously should they make any such attempt. The instant the sauvage persists in his attempt to take the Agnus Dei “thunder begins to peal with such fury, lightning, and noise that” the Seneca, claims Sagard, think they have “come to their last day, and all in terror let him go, fearing to perish themselves for having tried to put this Christian to death and rob him of his reliquary.” For Sagard and Champlain, who also recounted the miraculous event, the Agnus Dei—a holy disc

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4 SLJ, pp.161–62.
5 CW-V, pp.131–32; on Brûlé’s “sauvage” dress, see CW-IV, p.138.
7 Ibid; Sagard’s report of Brûlé as an “evil-liver” is recorded in CW-V, pp.131–32.
8 SLJ, p.162. Brûlé supposedly told his story to Sagard and Champlain directly. For Champlain’s version, see CW-III, pp.222–24. The Jesuit Jean de Brébeuf is the only other contemporary who recorded details of Brûlé’s life and death. Brûlé never left any account of his own to confirm or refute the versions told by his more religious reporters. See footnote 20 on p.158 of this thesis for a discussion of how the Tsonontowane’á:ka (Seneca) would have actually heard this thunder.
consecrated by the Pope—disarmed the sauvage as effectively as Christ’s name being invoked in hell, insofar as the heathen touching the sacred object triggered a terrifying, evil-neutralising acoustic response. The furious thunder, both Sagard and Champlain imply, was the enraged voice of the Christian God intervening to protect a member of his flock, repelling the Seneca sauvages as surely as holy water would exorcise a demon. God, however, must have lost His voice soon after. What Sagard could not have known when he first published his narrative complete with this visionaryesque scene in 1632 was that around June the following year Brûlé, who had escaped this fate among the Seneca, would be killed and reportedly eaten by the Bear clan of the Huron: the people who had previously accepted him as one of their own for two decades.

Sagard’s stylistic crossovers into the visionary genre—his use of the demonic harmony trope, the gory details of polysensory torture, and the Brûlé miracle—were not exceptional. Traditionally, the line between visionary and travel literature had never been clearly demarcated as not all texts belonging to the Christian visionary tradition involved a separation of the soul from the body or a descent into a subterranean hell: some visions openly doubled as travel literature. The tenth-century text Navagatio Brendani (St. Brendan’s Voyage) is a prime example. Purportedly, it was a record of an actual sixth-century journey within the earthly plane—specifically on the Atlantic Ocean—yet while on this journey to find the Garden of Eden Saint Brendan and his fellow travellers accessed parts of hell and encountered screaming demons as well as sea monsters and angelic singing birds as if they were all part of the terrestrial reality. For, though the multiple spiritual layers of the Christian cosmos were defined and solidified in the Middle Ages with the addition of “purgatory,” it seems they were also rather porous. Christians conceived of the earth as a contested space within the Christian cosmos where good and evil were constantly battling for supremacy and regions were either conquered for God’s Christendom or Satan’s hell. While the New World was a real place on earth and Sagard’s account of his “grand voyage” was part of what modern readers would think of as the non-fiction “travel literature” genre, therefore, to Sagard and other Christians who travelled there it was a place devoid of God and, thus, automatically a region ruled by Satan: a bonafide earthly outpost of hell. Like Saint Brendan, Christians

9 The Agnus Dei is a disc of wax impressed with the figure of a lamb (a symbol of Jesus Christ) and blessed by the Pope. Because the Agnus Dei is consecrated it is regarded, like holy water, as a “Sacramental.” It is a decidedly Christian accessory to Brûlé’s otherwise entirely raiment sauvage so there is, perhaps, good reason to be skeptical that there was any Agnus Dei involved in the real encounter at all.
11 Ibid., p.xiii.
entered this terrestrial hell just as surely as the visionaries who descended into the underworld before them. For Sagard and other Christians of this era, then, the sauvages’ noises in New France were not merely hellish — they were the infernal acoustics of hell.

As a Recollect, Sagard was also more likely to explicitly use the visionary genre and its associated tropes to express his polysensory experiences in the New World than his fellow Catholic missionaries in other orders. The Recollects were a branch of the Order of Friars Minor (Franciscans), also known as “The Seraphic Order” because a seraph (angel) had appeared to the Franciscans’ founder, Saint Francis of Assisi, while he was in a state of ecstasy. The Franciscans were, subsequently, rather partial to “the mystic trend...given to miracles and visions,” and approached “the supernatural in highly poetical images, through words and pictures and through musical sounds.”13 The authors and publishers of medieval visions distributed these texts as a call to action; to motivate their Christian readers to avoid earthly sensory pleasures, which led to sinful behaviours and eternal suffering in hell, and to instead make themselves worthy of the eternal sensory delights of heaven, which surpassed even the greatest earth could offer. In using the same motifs and techniques as visionaries by providing rich sensory details of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and seeing hell directly on earth, Sagard would have produced within his readers a heightened sense of fear and urgency for the purposes of calling them to support those who were attempting to spiritually conquer the New World for Christendom.

Unlike the Recollects, who as Franciscans were so in tune with all sensory aspects of the Christian spiritual experience, the Jesuits commenced as a religious order in 1540 in a state of musical deprivation. From the outset, the Jesuits’ raison d’être was to provide “whoever desires to serve as a soldier of God” with the opportunity to do so where that service was most needed: in the world’s most remote unchristian regions. To ensure the Society would be an “active” order the Jesuits’ founder, Ignatius of Loyola, included in its original Constitutions “legislation which restricted the musical activity of its members”; singing the Divine Office in choir was prohibited and the Jesuits were not permitted to have musical instruments in their residences either.14 Sacrificing these “minute practices of devotion” of communal “matins and prayers” allowed the Jesuits to channel all their time and energy into their primary purpose—converting souls to Christianity—and gave rise to the popular saying Jesuita non cantat (Jesuits do not sing), to which was reportedly added “for birds of prey never do” in


acknowledgement of the Jesuits’ image as militaristic conquerors of souls for Christendom.\textsuperscript{15} When anti-Jesuitical sentiment rose, though, writes the eighteenth-century mathematician, physicist, philosopher and music theorist Jean Le Rond d’Alembert, “It was seriously made a crime in some Jansenist pamphlets, not to assemble like so many other monks...As if a religious society (whose first duty is to be useful) had nothing better to do than to chant over heavily bad Latin several hours in the day.”\textsuperscript{16} Jesuita non cantat was then, rather inevitably, used against the Jesuits by their many detractors.

Yet by the time Sagard published both editions of his account in the 1630s, the Recollects had been excluded from the missionary efforts in New France and the Jesuits had been given full control in their stead. In writing his accounts, therefore, Sagard aimed not only to rouse people’s fears about the New World being hell on earth and to provide the optimistic message that it was possible to conquer it (with their support); his objective was also to demonstrate that gaining power over New France’s infernal soundscape was crucial to conquering this territory for Christendom and that the Recollects specifically were most capable of the conquest. The Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune had included in his widely read 1634 Relation vast amounts of information about the Montagnais’s supposedly diabolical sounds along with the various ways he was trying to combat the satanic noise in the field. On behalf of the Recollects now excluded from this active duty in New France, therefore, Sagard sought to prove exactly how the more suitable Recollects would gain dominion over the anti-music of New France, if given another chance.

Sagard had previously included in his first edition, \textit{Le grand voyage} (1632), a number of Acadian Mi’kmaq chants the French lawyer Marc Lescarbot recorded in 1606. Lescarbot had recorded these chants using the system of sound transcription known as solfège: written syllables, do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, that represent notes of the musical scale so the pitch of each note of a melody can be recorded as written text rather than notation on a musical staff. [Fig. 1.6]. Among these chants was one that, to Lescarbot’s ear, seemingly featured the word alleluia: “I listened closely to this word, alleluyah, repeated many times; and could make nothing else of it,” wrote Lescarbot. Knowing this was a superstitious chant sung by a heathen and assuming the “word means with them what it signifies in Hebrew, which is, praise ye the Lord,” Lescarbot concluded the song was “in praise of the devil” — a parody of heavenly hymns in praise of the one true God.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

Sagard had been happy enough in 1632 to simply reproduce Lescarbot’s solfège transcriptions. When he was elaborating on the work for his second edition, *Histoire du Canada* (1636), though, Sagard took this classic piece of anti-music and other New World chants and did what a true Christian heir of the ancient harmonic tradition would do when serious about proving it is possible to impose a Christian soundscape on a Satanic one and thus establish order and harmony “on earth as it is in the heavens” — he arranged the monophonic, derhythmed, Devil-worshipping chants in four-part “harmonie.”[18] [Fig. 1.7]

In spite of Sagard’s efforts to make his inspired auditory vision of derhythmed, harmonised sauvage sounds visible on the page, the Recollects were unable to return to New France for decades leaving the amusical Jesuits on the frontline of all the major, early sonic battles with the Devil and the focus of much of this sound-centred history. The fact remains though that, while the Jesuits definitely shared Sagard’s sensory experiences in New France, they really did hear the same way, and even often said the same things about the diabolical

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[18] While no introductory text explains the harmonised melodies in Sagard’s second edition, the larger context of Sagard’s comments about harmony and his overall awareness of and dedication to the harmonic tradition point to this being the most likely motivation for the harmonised melodies.
sounds they heard, quite simply — Sagard said it better. For the Franciscan “mystic trend” meant the Recollect could openly use a trope that crystallised in four small words how the New World’s “sauvages” were positioned not merely within the Christian cosmography but within the ancient, pre-Christian *musica universalis*. In other words, Sagard was demonstrating far more than his religiosity or even his penchant for the Christian visionary genre when he spoke of demonic harmony. The reference, when understood in the wider context of Sagard’s earlier comments about “the great Apollonius of Tyana” and Pythagoras as well as his references to Pythagorean devotees Plato and Pliny, reveals exactly how deeply ingrained this ancient, habitual groove of thinking about harmonic sound, civility, morality and the cosmic order was for the Christians who ventured into the New World and met the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples and, thus, reveals how something as seemingly innocuous as sound could so often be at the core of conflict during intercultural encounters of the contact era.19

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19 Despite the importance of the word “harmony,” it seems the possibility modern readers would struggle to comprehend the paradoxical “demonic harmony” reference prompted translator H. H. Langton to render Sagard’s original French text *et sembloit un sabat et une vraye confusion et harmonie de Demons* as “a witches’ Sabbath, a regular hubbub and concert of demons.” Langton’s 1939 English translation is engaging and technically accurate—“concert” refers to an agreeably combined action and, thus, is a synonym for “harmony” or “accord”—while his inventive addition of
By Sagard’s day, the western reverence for, as well as the meanings invested in, harmonious sounds had made harmony “omnipresent” in the “experiences and aesthetics” of these Christian heirs to the Pythagorean soundways — so much so they even heard its absence. Indeed, just a few years before Sagard’s long journey to the country of the Hurons in 1623, intellectuals were still subscribing to the Pythagorean notion of the harmony of the spheres. In 1619, the German mathematician, astronomer, and astrologer Johannes Kepler published *Harmonices Mundi* (The Harmony of the World) and between 1617 and 1621 Robert Fludd, an English physician, mathematician and cosmologist, published *Utriusque cosmi maioris scilicet et minoris metaphysica, physica atque technica historia: in duo volumina secundum cosmi differentiam divisa*, in which he argued harmony existed in everything in Creation, from the macrocosm (the universe) right through to the microcosm (man). The text included a section entitled “*De Musica Mundana*” (Mundane Music / The Music of the World) and featured an engraving by Johann Theodor de Bry depicting the earth as a Pythagorean monochord being tuned by the divine hand of God. If the name and the style of engraving seem familiar, it is because Johann’s father, Theodor de Bry, engraved the images for the 1590 edition of Thomas Hariot’s *A Briefe and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia*, (1588); a text featuring images of the Algonquian-speaking Powhatan. This De Bry family link to both Pythagoreanism and the Powhatan in the earliest years of the European colonial ventures in the New World is particularly poignant. It highlights the continuity of the harmonic tradition and, therefore, its relevance to the colonial project, but also the important differences. The Europeans who went to the New World in this period were not merely trying to bring a small Pythagorean cult, or even a Platonic Republic into perfect harmony with the harmony of the spheres or *musica universalis*. As the titles of Kepler and Fludd’s works attest, by then the European Christian colonists intended to tune the whole world in accordance with the mathematically perfect heavenly music and, as God’s great instruments, they were going to use His “all-harmonising” Word to do it.

So when Brother Gabriel Sagard set out for New France “in apostolic manner on foot” in 1623, there is no doubt “the usual baggage of the poor Recollect Fathers Minor of [the] “witches” to “Sabbath” (the day of rest and worship in Abrahamic religions) captures the equivalent juxtaposition and irony of Sagard’s demonic harmony. But, whatever Langton’s rationale for excluding the word “harmony,” no less than an entire ancient harmonic tradition was lost in his translation and, even more significantly, the ties between this phrase “*une...harmonie de Demons*” and Sagard’s earlier references to Apollonius and Pythagoras. Restoring the word *harmonie* to its rightful position allows Sagard’s demonic harmony reference to be understood not just as a nod to the visionary genre but also in the context of his earlier comments about “the great Apollonius of Tyana” and Pythagoras along with his references to Pythagorean devotees Plato and Pliny. It reveals the hold this ancient, habitual groove of thinking about sound, civility, morality and the cosmic order had on French Christians as they ventured into the New World and encountered the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples.

glorious Father St. Francis” he carried included the cumbersome “cultural baggage” of the ancient harmonic tradition. By removing themselves from their harmonious native acoustic ecology and becoming immersed in the Algonquian-Iroquoian enrhythmed world, Sagard and his fellow Europeans found themselves in an alternate acoustic reality beyond the pale of Christendom. There, all their aural expectations were unmet and their yearning for those familiar but altogether absent sounds only intensified the loftiest ideals of their harmonic tradition. Though no one in the Old World would have found Sagard’s account wanting if he had neglected to discuss Apollonius and Pythagoras explicitly in a travel account about early seventeenth-century New France, then, Sagard’s personal experiences in that land where his ears searched in vain for harmony left the well-read missionary unable to ignore the Pythagorean legacy. In short, by featuring Apollonius and Pythagoras in his account of his long journey to the country of the Hurons, Sagard betrayed his awareness (and has simultaneously alerted us to the fact) that he and his fellow European colonists were, acoustemologically speaking, just like “the great Apollonius” — Christ-like but fundamentally Pythagorean.

A fuller discussion of Pythagorean theories underpinning this tradition was beyond the parameters of this thesis (and, indeed, the mathematical ability of its author). A vast field is devoted to the study of Pythagoras, his philosophy, and his influence on western science, music, and philosophy, and religion that covers the ideas attributed to him and his successors in depth. This thesis offers only a brief overview of the major players to give a sense of the continuity of that harmonic tradition in the lead up to the European Christian colonial ventures in the New World. For a more detailed discussion of this history, see Jamie James’s previously cited text and Joscelyn Godwin, *Harmonies of Heaven and Earth: The Spiritual Dimension of Music from Antiquity to the Avant-Garde*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997). For collections of primary evidence of Pythagoreanism throughout the ages, see Guthrie and Fideler, Op.cit.; Godwin, *Harmony of the Spheres*, Op.cit.
“Yet...there should come a day among the mountains and the brooks that run from them in Port Royal that they, the Muses, should have the power to grow more gentle and should answer in more polished language to the music of Apollo...”

Mark Lescarbot

_The Theatre of Neptune in New France_

(1606)
One of God’s Great Instruments

May 22, 1611. By the Grâce de Dieu Jesuit missionaries Father Pierre Biard and Father Énemond Massé are delivered unto Port Royal, Acadia. Ages and ages hence, no one will be sure if this place was named after Arkadia (Ἀρκαδία “idyllic place”) in ancient Greece where the god Hermes invented the lyre, whether the name came from the local Lunismk suffix -akadie meaning “place of abundance,” or indeed if Acadia was an intercultural fusion of the two homophonous and semantically similar words. What is certain, though, is that to its most recent arrivals l’Acadie is far from an idyllic paradise.

In fact, to Biard and Massé New France as a whole is a region of hell itself on earth. “[T]his new land, first discovered in the last century...by our countrymen, a twin land with ours,” is “subject to the same influences, lying in the same latitude, and having the same climate,” writes Biard. Yet it is a Godless place and in His absence “Satan’s malevolence” has come to reign supreme and made it “only a horrible wilderness.” Biard is not just talking about the physical wilderness of the land, he is also referring to a spiritual wilderness in which the people themselves are “a great field of ill-begotten wild plants...given up to ravens, owls, and infernal cuckoos, and to be the cursed prey of spiritual foxes, bears, boars, and dragons.” Nevertheless, Biard sees himself as “one of God’s great instruments,” sent to this new world to make a paradisiacal “Garden out of the wilderness” that will “preach piety” to its inhabitants by “subjugat[ing] satanic Monsters, and...introduc[ing] the order and discipline of heaven upon earth.” He has faith that the seeds of the holy gospel he scatters will one day produce a plentiful “harvest of souls.” Perhaps then Acadia, the idyllic place of abundance, will live up to its name.

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1 Grâce de Dieu was the ship they sailed on to reach Acadia, France’s first successful settlement in the New World. The Habitation at Port-Royal (est.1605) was the capital of Acadia until the British destroyed it in 1613.
4 The garden symbol is highly significant in the Judeo-Christian tradition; the “Garden of Eden” in the Book of Genesis, the “Garden of God” (Ezekiel 28:13), and the “Garden of the Lord” (Isaiah 51:3). It is associated with “the beginning,...mythical times” when “man lived at peace with the animals and understood their speech.” See also Mircea Eliade, Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.99; Alister E. McGrath, A Brief History of Heaven, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), pp.39–74.
The eager missionary almost immediately begins to nurture “a vine” the secular priest Jessé Fléché planted previously in the would-be garden of Acadia.5 On receiving word of five “Christian Savages” at Île Saint-Jean6 Biard goes there and diligently erects crosses in front of the neophytes’ “wigwams” while solemnly chanting a Salve Regina:

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.7

They say the “Jesuits do not sing,” but in more recent years music has become increasingly important in the approximately 400 Jesuit colleges established across Europe, including the Germanicum in Rome and Collège de la Trinité de Lyon in France where Biard himself was lately professor of theology until his assignment to the Acadian mission.8 And here, in this “New France,” singing and the active duty of this particular “Soldier of Christ” are already indivisible. But if Biard is convinced he is chanting in a tiny patch of Christian paradise where the “mourning and weeping” of the unsaved is heard no more, he soon realises his mistake.

5 These conversions took place a year earlier in 1610. Biard had arrived in late May 1611 and by June 10, when he wrote an account of his journey and arrival in Acadia to one of his superiors, the erection of the crosses and singing of the Salve had already transpired.
6 Île Saint-Jean (Port Saint John) is present-day Prince Edward Island.
7 Trans: Hail, holy Queen, Mother of Mercy, / Our life, our sweetness and our hope. / To you do we cry, / Poor banished children of Eve; / To you do we send up our sighs, / Mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. / Turn then, most gracious advocate, / Your eyes of mercy toward us; / And after this our exile, / Show us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus. / O clement, O loving, / O sweet Virgin Mary.
Île Saint-Jean’s so-called “Christian Savages” are in fact the unripe fruits of a mass conversion hastily carried out in 1610 by “the Patriarch” Fléché. These conversions had been ordered by the Acadian authorities in the hopes that news of numerous conversions would convince the French Court it was unnecessary to send the Jesuits to Acadia after all, because the Huguenots, who are numerous in Acadia, despise the Jesuits. Given the motive for these conversions, quantity had been valued over quality: Fléché had not required the “sauvages” to grasp even the most basic concepts of the faith prior to baptism. Subsequently, Biard finds “the first fruit[s] of this heathen nation” do not know the sign of the cross or their baptismal names and that “there is scarcely any change in them after their baptism. The same savagery and the same manners, or but little different, the same customs, ceremonies, usages, fashions, and vices remain.” Among the persistent objectionable practices are burial rites involving the slaughter of dogs, abandoning, starving, throwing water over, and burying sick people “half alive” to hasten their death, as well as burning their belongings. All these abominable acts are performed to a fittingly hellish accompaniment of “howling and shouting...horrible cries...sorceries, and invocations to the evil spirit....And a terrible thing are their Naenias [funeral dirges],” notes Biard, “which continue day and night, sometimes lasting a whole week.”

Incessant, “degraded vocality” is of course precisely what the missionary expects to hear in this world of woe ruled by Satan. For, writes Biard paraphrasing the biblical prophet Joel, “if we...look behind...the infernal destroyer...Lucifer, and upon the places where he has exercised his intolerable cruelties, we shall find only destruction and solitude, cries and lamentations, only desolation and the shadow of death.”

Among these “Christian Savages” is Henri Membertou, chief of the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq), whom Biard refers to as “the first fruit of this heathen nation” in a letter to Reverend Father Christopher Baltazar, Provincial of France dated 10 June 1611. JR 1:165–67. Lescarbot attempted to excuse the hasty baptisms, saying while it was correct to baptise the 21 members of Chief Membertou’s family because they were “resident at Port Royal” and had been instructed, the others baptised lived in more remote locations and did not have such guidance yet Fléché had no choice but to baptise the rest because “he was importuned by the savages, who would have felt themselves scorned had he refused.” Lescarbot, History of New France III, Op.cit., pp.42–43. Lescarbot appears to suggest it was members of the latter group Biard encountered at Île Saint-Jean. However, Biard later demonstrates Membertou and his family members also lacked a proper grasp of Christianity and retained their traditional funerary rites etc.

As a devout Catholic Monsieur Jean de Poutrincourt, the commander of Acadia, “firmly resolved to oppose these ceremonies” and even resorted to arming his men to retrieve the body of a “Christian Savage” with force to ensure he received a proper Christian burial, see JR 1:167–69. Although Poutrincourt was a Catholic, he sympathised with his Huguenot peers and shared their hatred for the Jesuits. Poutrincourt’s son, Biencourt, was also anti-Jesuit.

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10 JR 1: 46.
12 Ibid,163–65. Lescarbot attempted to excuse the hasty baptisms, saying while it was correct to baptise the 21 members of Chief Membertou’s family because they were “resident at Port Royal” and had been instructed, the others baptised lived in more remote locations and did not have such guidance yet Fléché had no choice but to baptise the rest because “he was importuned by the savages, who would have felt themselves scorned had he refused.” Lescarbot, History of New France III, Op.cit., pp.42–43. Lescarbot appears to suggest it was members of the latter group Biard encountered at Île Saint-Jean. However, Biard later demonstrates Membertou and his family members also lacked a proper grasp of Christianity and retained their traditional funerary rites etc.
13 JR 1:165–67; JR 3:125–29. As a devout Catholic Monsieur Jean de Poutrincourt, the commander of Acadia, “firmly resolved to oppose these ceremonies” and even resorted to arming his men to retrieve the body of a “Christian Savage” with force to ensure he received a proper Christian burial, see JR 1:167–69. Although Poutrincourt was a Catholic, he sympathised with his Huguenot peers and shared their hatred for the Jesuits. Poutrincourt’s son, Biencourt, was also anti-Jesuit.
texts and art have also reinforced and augmented this Christian notion of hell’s infernal acoustics and other sensory horrors. Being culturally conditioned to expect New France to sound diabolical, though, is one thing: knowing how to supplant Acadia’s inarticulate, mournful “cries and lamentations” with God’s Word is quite another.

In truth, Biard and Massé do not even know how to begin. Their bewilderment is not helped by the fact that these two Jesuits, who ought to be venturing out among the sauvages to conduct their missionary work, find themselves preoccupied with playing the “Curate” to the Port-Royalists instead, because “there are no other priests in these quarters” to perform such duties.16 Their days are filled with all the “minute practices of devotion” the Jesuits’ founder Ignatius of Loyola had once legislated against so his soldiers of Christ could devote all their time to their missions.17 Biard and Massé “say mass every day,...solemnly sing it Sundays and holidays, together with Vespers, and frequently the procession...offer public prayers morning and evening...exhort, console, administer the sacraments, [and] bury the dead.” But the sauvages hardly ever see or hear any of this as they are only “occasionally present” at these Christian services “when some of them happen to be at the port.”18 And when they are at the settlement, they are less likely to be influenced by the sacred sounds of Christian worship than by the virtually heathen French seafarers with whom they converse regularly using a “neither French nor Savage” Basque-Algonquian pidgin.19 In this environment, pidgin words for fish, whale, trader, stick, cabin, and trade items like bread, cake, shirt, bracelets, as well as ircay (penis) and castaigne (vagina) are regularly spoken and heard.20 Yet words that preach piety or express any spiritual notions or feeling — these are conspicuously absent from the pidgin that clearly exists purely for the purpose of meeting base needs and wants common to both parties: those of a commercial and sexual nature.21

20 These and other pidgin words with a clear Euskara (Basque) etymology were recorded in vocabulary lists by Jacques Cartier and Marc Lescarbot. For the word ’penis,’ Lescarbot records ircay, like the Basque irkaiz, meaning “smile, laugh,” and carcaria, which closely resembles the Basque words karkail(a), “laughter,” and “loutish, ungainly,” while Cartier’s 1534 vocabulary list records castaigne for ‘vagina,’ which is very similar to words the Basques sometimes used for ‘vagina’: gaztaina / gastaña.
The Jesuits themselves make their situation even more challenging by resolving “not to baptise any adults unless they [are] previously well catechised” to avoid more meaningless conversions like those carried out by Fléché even though, as Biard acknowledges, “to catechise we must first know the language.”22 With limited exposure to their prospective converts or free time there is little chance of the Jesuits acquiring the local languages, which in their own right present Europeans with many additional challenges. Not only do the original inhabitants of Acadia “live with no knowledge of the true God,”23 they speak languages without linguistic relations elsewhere in the known world so there are no existing dictionaries and grammars available for the purpose of a quick study.24 Biard’s early attempts to learn their languages lead to his realisation that there appears to be no equivalence whatsoever with Latin or French:

...these Savages have no formulated Religion, government, towns, nor trades, so the words and proper phrases for all those things are lacking; Holy, Blessed, Angel, Grace, Mystery, Sacrament, Temptation, Faith, Law, Prudence, Subjection, Authority, etc. Where will you get all these things...they lack? Or, how will you do without them? ... O God, with what ease we make our plans in France!25

Even the Vice-Admiral of Acadia Charles de Biencourt, “who understands the savage tongue better than any one else here” and often serves as interpreter, finds as soon as the Jesuits “begin to talk about God he feels as Moses did,—his mind is bewildered, his throat dry, his tongue tied,” for “they have no words to describe things which they have never seen or even conceived.” Not surprisingly, the sauvages prove to be unwilling teachers, because, as Biard’s description of such lessons makes clear, not understanding and not being understood is rather tedious for those who do not share the Jesuits’ noble motives for engaging in such a time-consuming activity:

also because they had “a purely intellectual interest for a different culture.” If the well-travelled Basque fishermen traders sometimes rose above their earthly cares in conversations with Icelanders circa 1700, their early seventeenth-century Basque and French seafaring counterparts could well have had a similar curiosity and have spoken of more spiritual matters when they encountered the Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples as ‘cultural others’ in New France during the 1500s and 1600s, despite Biard’s statements to the contrary. As a marginalised, disliked member of the Port Royal community, Biard would not have had the opportunity to grasp the full complexity of the French seafarers’ relationships with the original inhabitants.

22 JR 2: 7–9.
...as they neither know our language nor we theirs...we are compelled to make a thousand gesticulations and signs to express to them our ideas, and thus to draw from them the names of some of the things which cannot be pointed out to them...To think, to forget, to remember, to doubt; to know these four words, you will be obliged to amuse our gentlemen for a whole afternoon at least by playing the clown.

On the rare occasions the sauvages do deign to teach the Jesuits their languages, therefore, “instead of teaching” they often resort to ridiculing the missionaries. They “palm...off...indecent words,” which their unsuspecting pupils then go about “innocently preaching for beautiful sentences from the Gospels,” thereby rendering the Jesuits auditory pollutants in the unchristian environs they have come to purify.26

Unable to make any advancement in acquiring the indigenous languages, Biard’s uncomprehending ears are increasingly more sensitive to the Devil’s acoustic manifestations in this God-forsaken world. Frustrated by his inability to speak to and persuade the people he wishes to liberate from Satan’s power—yet still unwilling to admit defeat in his mission to make a garden of this wilderness—the evermore desperate Biard has no choice but to set aside the Word and do battle with Satan on the evil one’s terms: on a field of sound.

*Jesuita non cantat:* but in this “lacimarum valle,” New France, they must and they do.27

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27 *Jesuita non cantat* (Jesuits do not sing) and *lacimarum valle* (valley of tears) from the earlier extended quotation of the *Salve Regina.*
In late October, five months after his arrival in Acadia, Biard finds himself aboard a French barque exploring the coast from Port-Royal to Kinibéqui along with an unrecorded number of French colonists. Officially, the journey led by Biencourt has a dual purpose: to “have news” of their English rivals, who “want to be considered masters” of the coastal trading network, and to buy “Armouchiquois corn.” Of these two aims, the acquisition of corn is the most urgent. Surrounded only by non-corn-growing hunter-gatherers and doubtful that aid for their fledgling colony will be forthcoming from France, the Port-Royalists are faced with the reality they may all “die of hunger” in the fast approaching winter months. No less than 35 out of a total of 79 men perished under similar circumstances at Île Sainte-Croix just a few years earlier in the winter of 1604-05. Their only hope of avoiding the same fate and the colony’s very future rests entirely upon whether they acquire some “Armouchiquois corn.” As a great godly instrument, though, the Jesuit is accompanying Biencourt and his men on this particular trip for his own less worldly reasons; namely, providing “spiritual aid to Biencourt and his people...” and observing the local nations’ “disposition...to receive the holy gospel.”

On October 28, the Frenchmen reach the mouth of the Kennebec River where three years earlier the English Popham Colony had built and abandoned a fort in the space of fourteen months. The French thoroughly explore the fort and Biencourt briefly considers it might be worth appropriating for his own colony’s purposes. But on October 30, finding the fort to be less advantageously positioned than he initially believed, Biencourt and company decide to depart and continue explorations upriver, presumably to the settlement of the Norridgewock.

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1 JR 3: 29–33.
2 Ibid, 217–19.
3 Île Sainte-Croix was an earlier attempt at a settlement.
4 JR 3: 29–33; 217–19. It is interesting Biard states he was offering “spiritual aid” to Biencourt’s men. Huguenot ministers had travelled to Acadia with the Calvinist De Monts for the purpose of providing “spiritual aid” to the largely Huguenot population of the French settlement in Acadia. As Catholics, the Jesuits were there solely to instruct the “savages” because the French court wanted them to be instructed in the faith of Rome. The Jesuits’ attempts to do so were continually thwarted by Biencourt and others because of the Jesuits’ unpopularity among the Huguenots who despised them.
5 Also known as the Sagadahoc Colony. The fort was called Fort St. George.
Figure 2.1: “figures des montagnais” and “figure des sauvages almouchicois,” detail from Samuel de Champlain, Carte géographique de la Nouvelle France (1612). Courtesy of the National Library of France. A Jerusalem artichoke is depicted between the Armouchiquois man and the woman. Corn and Jerusalem artichokes reportedly still grow on the earlier Nanrantsouak village site “Old Norridgewock” at present-day Old Point, Madison, Maine.

on the western shore of the upper Kennebec where these “Armouchiquois” “till the soil and put away stores of grain.”

The French advance “three good leagues” before dropping anchor and waiting for the tide when strangers in the form of twenty-four Armouchiquois men suddenly appear. They are heading straight for them. As the six Armouchiquois canoes draw closer to the French barque, however, they approach with unexpected caution, going “through a thousand manoeuvres and ceremonies…” like a “flock of birds which want...to go into a hemp-field but fear...the scarecrow,” giving the equally wary Frenchmen time to arrange their weapons and the

6 JR 2:163–65; JR 3: 207–09. As Biard speaks here of journeying “upriver” (the Kennebec) to obtain corn, it seems the “Armouchiquois corn” was that grown by the Algonquian-speaking, semi-sedentary Nanrantsouak (Norridgewock) “people of the still water between the rapids” who lived in a village on the upper Kennebec River in the Kennebec Valley on what was then the border of Acadia and New England. In addition to maize, the Nanrantsouak cultivated beans and squash there. The present day location of this “Old Norridgewock” site is on the western bank of the Kennebec River (Old Point, Madison, Maine: coordinates 44.762692, -69.888708). Directly across on the eastern shore is the site of the later village called by the English “Norridgewock” where Jesuit Father Sébastien Râle took charge of the Wabanaki mission in 1694 and established a school. There had been a small number of Christian converts at Norridgewock and occasional missionary visits from 1642. See Kerry Hardy, Notes on a Lost Flute: A Field Guide to the Wabanaki, (Camden, ME: Down East Books, 2009), p.43.
Towards nightfall the Armouchiquois make camp on the riverbank, just beyond the aim of the French cannon. All night, the wind carries the sounds of their “continual haranguing, singing and dancing” to the Frenchmen’s ears. “Such is the kind of life all these people lead when they are together...” notes Biard. After five months in New France, he has heard quite enough of the sauvages constantly singing and drumming at all hours of the night and day to dismiss the Armouchiquois’s vocal hijinks as more of their usual “invocations to the devil.” For the Armouchiquois’s wild, loud, monophonic, and rhythmic vocalisations contrast in every way to the controlled, sustained, harmonious sounds of pious Christian songs of worship. There is no doubt this is the infamous anti-music of hell, a parody of the perfectly harmonious soundscape of heaven: “une...harmonie de Demons.”

Thus, ever the soldier of Christ, Biard encourages his countrymen to wage a sonic war “to oppose the power of this cursed tyrant,” Lucifer, by singing “some sacred Hymns, as the Salve, the Ave Maris Stella, and others.” There is a precedent for this tactic. In the medieval visionary tales the sound of the sacred name of Jesus Christ being uttered by a true believer in hell vanquishes all satanic foes and saves the visionary from the hideous sensory assaults Satan’s minions inflict upon his or her everlasting soul. In New France, Biard assumes sacred Christian songs will likewise disarm the devil in the Armouchiquois’s so-called music. On the Kennebec River, though, the sacred sounds of Christianity do not overpower the demon-possessed Armouchiquois. Instead, the French exhaust all their sacred songs and even their secular musical repertoire and still the Armouchiquois go on singing. To Biard, it is an indication of how great a hold Satan has upon their poor lost souls. So the Frenchmen continue their sonic war on the “cursed tyrant” by mimicking the Armouchiquois’s anti-music, as if to say, “We mock you, Satan!” Only then do the Armouchiquois fall silent — temporarily. For when the French pause, the Armouchiquois resume their singing. The “two choirs”—one godly, the other satanic—continue singing at each other in this call-and-response fashion throughout the night. It seems to Biard the Armouchiquois have found some meaning in the Frenchmen’s senseless noises beyond the intended message of mockery,

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7 JR 2: 33–35.
8 Ibid, 35–37.
9 “une...harmonie de demons” is how Biard’s contemporary, Sagard, would later describe an Algonquian healing ritual he witnessed in the early 1620s but it eloquently sums up how all the missionaries characterised the satanically inspired sounds of the indigenous peoples in this period. SLJ, p.307. On “anti-music,” see Sanguineti, Op.cit., 69–79.
10 JR 2: 35–37.
causing him to take pleasure in his countrymen’s “natural” talent for mimicry. The fact the Armouchiquois’s diabolical tunes could be this easily and convincingly reproduced with nonsensical noise is so pleasing, perhaps, because it confirms his belief that the Armouchiquois’s sacred songs are broken hallelujahs to a false god, signifying nothing.\(^\text{12}\)

The following morning, October 31, the French recommence their journey upriver but they do not do so alone — the Armouchiquois are travelling right along with them. The Armouchiquois advise the starving French colonists that if they want any “piousquemin (corn), it would be better and easier” to take a certain route toward the country of the Abenaki sagamore Meteourmite, “who would furnish [them] with all [they] want...,” rather than continuing up river where they would encounter “great difficulty and risk.” The Armouchiquois even offer themselves as guides with a number of them going ahead, others behind, and some travelling along in the French barque for this purpose. However, the easier and less hazardous route quickly proves otherwise. The Armouchiquois lead the French barque into a lake of only one fathom of water at which point the guides swiftly and surreptitiously abandon their followers.\(^\text{13}\)

Biencourt’s men recover by retracing their path but they are angry and fearful after the Armouchiquois’s apparent treachery. Later on, therefore, when the Abenaki sagamore Meteourmite and a number of his men come to meet the French and begin to follow the barque, the anxious Frenchmen urge their leader to “kill them all.” Superficially, this is not an imprudent course of action, since the Armouchiquois traitors likely informed Meteourmite of the Frenchmen’s presence. Biencourt instead decides to trust Meteourmite and takes his advice regarding the best route to his village. Further difficulties, which at times appear life threatening, are encountered on this journey causing the men to cry out in distress that they are all lost and reinforcing their doubts about Meteourmite’s trustworthiness.\(^\text{14}\)

Ultimately, Biencourt and company arrive at Meteourmite’s village unharmed. They are received as a welcome trading opportunity, because the sagamore recognises them as the type of newcomers who “neither kill...nor beat the Savages...but receive...them at [their] table and

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\(^\text{13}\) JR 2: 35-39. Biencourt had reportedly acquired some of the local indigenous language/s by this stage. Typically when the Jesuits reported conversations with indigenous people, though, the conversations were not the wordy affairs the Jesuits’ records suggest, see JR 7: 85–89. *Sagamore* is how Europeans heard and recorded *saqamaw* [chief, sachem, leader, captain].

often ma[k]e tabagie [feasts] with them, and br[ing] them a great many nice things from France.” In other words, Meteourmite knows they are not Englishmen.

Nevertheless, three months later Biard cannot shake the feeling that the Armouchiquois had intended to cause the French harm. With the benefit of hindsight and information provided by Meteourmite, the missionary theorises in a letter to his superior, the Reverend Father Provincial at Paris, that the Armouchiquois had deliberately led the French into the lake as a trap. Worse still, Biard asserts, the Armouchiquois seemingly plotted to further “ensnare” the French by sending them to acquire corn not only from someone with virtually nothing more than a few skins to trade, but also one “whom they knew to be the enemy of the English.” Meteourmite had, after all, openly admitted to harbouring deep hostility for the English of the abandoned Popham Colony once they began to mistreat his people by beating them, driving them from their tables with blows from a club and setting dogs on them. In response, Meteourmite had claimed during his conversation with Biencourt, his Abenaki warriors killed eleven Englishmen prompting the English to abandon the fort and the Popham Colony venture overall. For Biard, therefore, the fact Biencourt’s men were not Englishmen did not lessen the maliciousness of the Armouchiquois’s plan. The Armouchiquois, he concludes, knew precisely how much Meteourmite despised the English and had probably been banking on him being, like themselves, “an enemy of all foreigners.”

Never once, though, does the missionary consider the Armouchiquois’s sounds on the riverbank to be relevant when building his case of treachery against them. After all, singing is an activity performed for the limited purposes of worship or leisure and, at the time of writing his letter, Biard is still thoroughly convinced the Armouchiquois’s sounds were produced in worship of their false god. Thus, for the missionary the sonic elements of the Kennebec River encounter remain, at best, peripheral in an episode that has Armouchiquoian treachery at its centre.

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15 JR 2: 43–45.
It has been 22 years since Father Biard and Father Massé first arrived in Acadia. “Some are astonished” therefore “that they hear nothing about the conversion of Savages during the many years...we have been in New France,” writes Father Paul le Jeune from the Jesuit residence at Quebec to the French provincial of the Order in Paris.¹ Le Jeune is exasperated by the unrealistic expectations of his countrymen — and with good reason. The Jesuits have not actually been in New France battling to win souls that entire time, though it has not been for lack of wanting or trying to be.

The Acadian mission of 1611 had failed miserably. Opposition, hostility, and downright sabotage of the Jesuits’ work due to ongoing anti-Jesuitical sentiment among the Acadians frustrated the missionaries’ attempts to learn the languages and cultivate a sensescapbefitting a Christian paradise. The French seafarers, for instance, who “form[ed] the greater part of [the Port-Royal] parishioners,” were “quite deficient in any spiritual feeling,” according to Biard. They had “no sign of religion beyond their oaths and blasphemies, nor any knowledge of God beyond the simplest conceptions...clouded with licentiousness and the cavilings and revilings of heretics...” Their “abandonment to evil-speaking (or cursing)” was “as great or greater than their insolence in showing their contempt”— unflattering descriptions, yet by no means unwarranted. Far from being pious and altruistic, the seafarers used a Basque-Algonquian pidgin to converse with the locals that undermined the missionaries’ aims given that the language had only come into being at all to facilitate commercial and sexual interactions. To the Jesuits’ chagrin, the foul-mouthed, evil-speaking French seafarers also taught the prospective Christian converts, either directly or via modelling, to “hurl vulgar, vile and shameless epithets at our people in the French language” — indigenous behaviour positively reinforced by the French sailors with “a great deal of laughter and amusement,” making it all the more difficult for the missionaries to quell.²

¹ The French Provincial of the Order in Paris was Reverend Father Barthelemy Jacquinot. JR 5: 189–91.
² JR 2: 5–9. The Basque-Algonquian pidgin was typical, as it consisted of words that served the immediate purposes of its original Basque and Algonquian speakers and the French seafarers who joined the community, too. Biard does not record the “vulgar, vile and shameless epithets” and insults the locals hurled at them. While the fishermen taught the locals to hurl the insults in French rather than the pidgin, we can get a sense of what they might have been like with reference to “insults of the “fuck
Suspicious of the unpopular Jesuits and increasingly hostile towards them, Biencourt had also prohibited Biard and Massé from operating outside Port-Royal; an order that prevented the Jesuits from undertaking the missionary work they were in Acadia to perform. Even when the French courtier Marquise de Guercheville subsequently sent René Le Coq de La Saussaye with two more Jesuits in tow to relocate Biard and Massé to a new mission settlement, Saint-Sauveur at Mount Desert Island, all came to nought. For in July 1613—a mere two months after Saint-Sauveur’s founding—the English Captain Sir Samuel Argall destroyed the new mission and all other traces of French settlement along the coast, including Port-Royal. Father Gilbert du Thet died in the attack while Father Biard, taken prisoner by the English, narrowly escaped being hanged only to find himself at the mercy of a terrible storm at sea. Despite these close calls, Biard, Massé, and Father Jacques Quentin all returned to France by April 1614 safe and well, but they had failed in their mission.

In the wake of the botched mission in Acadia Samuel de Champlain, “The Father of New France” and founder of the City of Quebec, had speedily made plans for a new team of missionaries to take on the challenge among the more sedentary peoples he had observed around the St. Lawrence River. Champlain had seen enough, though, to know that Jesuits would not do. He required “good friars, with zeal and affection for the glory of God” who would venture into these Godless lands and willingly “live…and…die for His holy name” in an attempt “to plant there the faith…” and “to note and see whether some good fruit could not be gathered there.” He found all he was looking for in the Recollects, who were not as controversial as the Jesuits and were particularly suited to being pioneer missionaries as they demanded nothing but “perpetual poverty” and sought “nothing but heaven…it being inconsistent with the rule of [their] Order to have any other ambition than God’s glory, having offered to suffer and endure for the glory of God all necessities, pains, and toils which may present themselves.” Fathers Denis Jamet, Jean d’Olbeau, and Joseph le Caron as well as lay brother Pacifique du Plessis were the four Recollects “moved by a holy zeal; and they burned to make the voyage, through God’s grace,…to see if they could produce some good fruit.” On 25 May 1615, they arrived at Tadoussac and thereby became the first “to plant…the standard of Jesus Christ” in the province of Quebec. The Recollects then divided to conquer indigenous souls; Joseph le Caron was bound for Huronia, to be “the first to announce through His holy favour…the name of God” to the Huron and to establish a mission there; Denis Jamet focused on the Montagnais near Tadoussac, while Jean d’Olbeau and Pacifique du Plessis remained at

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you!” type” such as “eat asshole shit,” and “(go) fuck a horse” in the Basque-Icelandic pidgin studied by Miglio. See Miglio, Op.cit., 10.

3 The two Jesuits were Father Gilbert du Thet and Father Jacques Quentin.
Later, in the summer of 1623, two more members of their order briefly joined these Recollects in their efforts: Brother Gabriel Sagard and Father Nicolas Viel. However the Recollects, realising the magnitude of the task before them, soon looked to others to assist them in converting the inhabitants of New France to Catholicism, and extended an invitation to the Jesuits.

It was only in April 1625, therefore, that the Jesuits set foot again in New France. Father Biard was not among them, having died two years earlier in France, but Father Massé did return to the spiritual wilderness, this time with the Superior of the Missions of the Canadas Father Charles Lallemant and Father Jean de Brébeuf, later followed by Father Anne de la Nouë and Father Philibert Noyrot. When Lallemant became Champlain’s spiritual advisor in 1626, control of all the New France missions was, controversially, transferred from the Recollects to the Jesuits.

Amid all the noises that confronted the Jesuit missionaries in this period, Father Lallemant managed to tune into one small utterance that was recognisable and pure music to his European Christian ears. “They call the Sun Jesus,” he informed his brother, Jérôme, in a letter dated August 1, 1626. “It is believed…the Basques, who formerly frequented these places, introduced this name. It thus happens that when we offer Prayers, it seems to them…we address our Prayers to the Sun, as they do.” Lallemant did not bother to mention these particular sauvages pronounced the word “Jesus” a little differently—with a /g/ like the ‘g’ in the English word “garden” rather than the /j/ sound of “Jesus,”—because he and his countrymen were accustomed to hearing “repetition with a difference” when engaging in this kind of cross-cultural communication. As one Jesuit later noted:

The Montagnais [Innu] have not so many letters in their Alphabet as we have in ours; they confound B and P, and also C, G, and K…They do not have the letters F, L, consonant V, X, and Z. They use R instead of L, saying Monsieur du Pressi for Monsieur du Plessi, they utter the sound of P instead of consonant V, Monsieur Olipier instead of Monsieur Olivier…Father Brébeuf tells me…the Hurons [Wendat] have no M, at which I am astonished, for this letter seems to me almost natural, so extensively is it used.

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5 Both Charles and Jérôme Lallemant (also spelt Lalemant, L’Alement) were Jesuit missionaries. At the time of this letter Jérôme was still in France but would later go to New France as a missionary, too.
7 JR 7: 27–29.
The Jesuits, therefore, habitually disregarded these small instances of imperfect speaking as an inevitable part of second language acquisition, especially since they were self-conscious of their own imperfect pronunciation of the *sauvage* words they were trying to learn at the same time. However imperfectly it may have been pronounced, to Lallemant what mattered was that the word “Jesus” was on the lips of those who ordinarily “have intercourse with the Devil.” Nor did Lallemant or other Jesuits dwell on the fact that the *sauvages* thought the sun was Jesus himself rather than a symbol: this was merely further confirmation that the Basque fishermen had somehow impressed upon these people a basic understanding of the Christian symbolism of Jesus as the *Sol Justitiae* (Sun of Justice) [Figs. 2.2 and 2.3]; a motif which had its roots in the ancient, pre-Christian theology of the near East, the Greco-Roman sun deity Apollo / Helios, and the popular pagan Roman solar god *Sol Invictus*. It was, after all, an epithet for Jesus still regularly used by Christians, including Lallemant’s predecessor Father Pierre Biard who, in 1616, highlighted all of Christ’s solar qualities thus:

> For truly, whoever will cast his eyes over all the vast circumference of the earth, and will consider the nations thereof which are illuminated by the Sun of justice, our Savior Jesus Christ; bedewed with his blood and precious Sacrament; nourished by his grace and word; animated and gladdened by his spirit; enlightened and governed by his divine Offices, honored by his utterances and actual presence...will have great reason to cry out, ‘Beyond the infernal destroyer and, Where he does extend, the earth is a Garden of delight,’ where all blessings, even temporal and worldly happiness, follow the people...11

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8 In second language acquisition speakers often experience difficulty acquiring the correct pronunciation or the appropriate accent because they cannot vocally produce what they have not heard properly in the first place. The hearing apparatus—not merely the antennae-like ears scanning the environment for acoustic data but also the part of the brain known as *auditory cortex*—may mishear sounds when they are anomalous to those with which the listener is familiar, because neural pathways or “habitual grooves of thinking” are created through exposure to an individual’s natal auditory culture during peak neuroplasticity and these habitual grooves or neural pathways turn up the volume on “some aspects of the physical and mental world” and turn down the volume on others. The brain is selective in this way to maximise efficiency; less energy is expended by becoming attuned to sonic frequencies that feature most in the environment whilst tuning out others. This produces a kind of culturally-induced hearing impairment or selective hearing that leads to imperfect speaking, because the second-language speaker’s hearing apparatus is tuned to a completely different sound system. For “habitual grooves of thinking” see Mesthrie et. al., Op. cit., p.7.


11 *JR* 3: 29–31; *JR* 12: 29–31; *JR* 16: 205–07. The sun of justice motif is explicitly referenced in the *JR* volumes three times by two different missionaries and is undoubtedly referred to implicitly in those documents many more times.
Figure 2.2: One the earliest images of the Christian *Sol Iustitiae* depicting Christ with a sun face demonstrates the amalgamation of Christianity and pre-Christian symbolism as the inclusion of the lion hearkens back to Ancient Greek astrology’s location of the house of the sun in the Leo constellation. Albert Dürer, *Sol Iustitiae*, (1499) © The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) licence.
Figure 2.3: Detail of the Augustinian monk Antonio de la Calancha’s title page for *Crónica moralizada de la orden de San Agustín en el Perú* (Barcelona: Pedro Lacavalleria, en la calle de la Libreria, 1638) in which the sun contains facial features and is encircled with the words *Sol Justitiae Xpus Deus Noster* meaning “Sun of Justice Jesus Our God.”
Hearing the *sauvages* saying “Jesus” was a sign that a small seed of Christianity planted long ago by the Basques could survive in the spiritual wilderness and would yet grow into Biard’s paradisiacal “Garden of delight.” Lallemant was never more desperate to believe this than at the time he wrote his letter to his brother. In the same correspondence, he complained, “the scarcity of words they have to explain our mysteries, never having had any form of divine worship, will tax our wits.” But again, the Devil’s influence over prospective converts and the language barrier were not to be the Jesuits’ only problems.

In May 1628, just as he was “beginning to make himself understood” by the *sauvages*, Father Brébeuf and his fellow missionaries were captured by the English. And when the Jesuits tried to return to Canada in 1629 they were shipwrecked; an ordeal in which two of their missionaries drowned. Not until the English returned Acadia and Quebec to France in March 1632 with the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye did the Jesuits have another chance to reactivate the mission. Father Paul le Jeune took the role of Superior of the Jesuits of Quebec and Brébeuf, Massé, and fellow Jesuits Ambroise Davost and Antoine Daniel reached New France to join him in 1633.

At the time he complains about unrealistic expectations of the missionaries in his letter to his superior in France in 1633, therefore, Father Paul le Jeune has had as little as one year, perhaps much less, to overcome the obstacles that defeated Biard, Massé, Lallemant, Brébeuf and others before him. To lower expectations about what is achievable in the initial stages of establishing a paradisiacal garden in the spiritual wilderness, he explains:

> It is necessary to clear, till, and sow before harvesting. Who of the Religious who have been here have ever known perfectly the language of any tribe in these countries? *Fides ex auditu*, faith enters by the ear. How can a mute preach the Gospel?14

Far from great conquerors transforming the infernal soundscape of New France with God’s Word, Le Jeune and his fellow missionaries are, literally, “mute.” Though Le Jeune often records wordy discussions with the *sauvages* in the *Relations* he sends back to France, the parts of the interactions actually involving an exchange of meaningful information are soundless. He and his fellow Jesuits speak to the *sauvages* “almost entirely by [our]

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14 Ibid.
hands…by signs,…making each other understand more through [our] eyes and hands than through [our] lips.”

By the following year, Le Jeune begins making headway in “learn[ing] to talk” but, even then, it is clear he is not overly fluent. Le Jeune confesses that on one occasion the Montagnais asked him “to make a speech in Montagnese…as they wanted to laugh; for I pronounce the Savage as a German pronounces French. Wishing to please them,” he writes, “I began to talk, and they burst out laughing, well pleased to make sport of me…I said to them…I was a child, and…children made their fathers laugh with their stammering.” A mute cannot preach the gospel, nor can a stammering child hope to explain those mysteries well enough to convert people to a foreign belief system. In the meantime, the powers that be in the Old World expect news of successful conversions.

Fortunately for the missionaries, while the biblical phrase Fides ex auditu (faith enters by the ear) highlights what prevents them from achieving their aims it also provides a partial solution. Just as Biard realised the need to battle Satan sonically when words failed him in Acadia, Le Jeune and his fellow Jesuits begin to understand in the 1630s that the sounds of Christian European lifeways, if not the Word, can reach the sauvages’ ears much sooner and can condition them to be more receptive to the faith when the missionaries do finally become skilled enough to communicate it. After all, Le Jeune notes, in Old France it is not the Word alone that “preach[es] piety to you” but everything the senses behold in Europe’s civilised environment including, “the great multitude and the good example of Christians, the solemnity of the Feasts,” and “the majesty of the Churches so magnificently adorned…” All together these Old World polysensory experiences keep a Christian “beyond the danger of falling” for they are like “so many powerful voices which cry to you without ceasing, respice, et fac similiter [look, and copy].”

In the early years, therefore, filling indigenous ears with the everyday sounds of European civilisation and Christian worship forms an initial stage of the conversion process. When a clock is introduced into the sensescape of the village of Ihonitiria where Father Brébeuf is based, for example, the sounds of the striking clock alter the behaviour of the Huron living there. The clock does not mean the Huron suddenly cease to “eat at all hours,” or howl, dance, and drum less frequently. Indeed, they even hear the clock itself as “some living thing,…” which they call “the Captain of the Day,…for they cannot imagine how it sounds of itself.”

16 JR 7: 91–93.
But they do learn from the missionaries that the number of strikes mean different things and provide acoustic cues for certain behaviours, which brings the Huron residing in the village of Ihonatiria into greater synchrony with the missionaries, whose days are more rigidly structured around particular meal and prayer times. For example,

We told them two things…they have remembered very well; one,…when it sounded four o’clock of the afternoon, during winter, it was saying, “Go out, go away that we may close the door,,” for immediately they arose, and went out. The other, that at midday it said, yo eiouahaoua,…“Come, put on the kettle;” and this speech is better remembered than the other, for some of these spongers never fail to come at that hour, to get a share of our Sagamité.18

However much Brébeuf grumbles about these “spongers,” the benefits of this sonically-engineered behaviour probably do not escape him, for this is someone who has only recently battled hard to engage the Huron and learn their language. Now, the clock’s reliable acoustic promise of food renders his prospective converts more accessible, inasmuch as their presence is more predictably regular, which increases opportunities for language acquisition as well as religious instruction.

The Jesuits also encourage their prospective converts to recite prayers and hymns, believing that the practice of uttering the sounds without fully comprehending their meaning is an important step towards conversion. The Jesuit Father Julien Perrault reports:

[T]hey listen to us so willingly concerning the mysteries of our Faith, and repeat after us, whether they understand it or not, all that we declare to them…I am very willing…they should do all these things in the beginning from a natural simplicity, which causes them to imitate all they see, rather than from any greater consideration; because in time they may be helped by it, and they will not be the first, who come to practice by choice that to which by casual encounter they have become accustomed.19

Facilitating “casual encounters” with Christian sights and sounds is now the Jesuits’ policy while they continue to learn the languages and begin to translate Christian prayers into the sauvage tongues. For all the perceived and actual benefits of the new policy, though, “imitation” without “understanding” will produce another problem altogether for the Jesuits.

19 Ibid, 161–63.
Figure 2.4: The Reverend Father Paul le Jeune, Society of Jesus (1591-1664). René Lochon, “Le Révérend Père Paul Le Jeune de la Compagnie de Jésus,” (1665). Courtesy of Bibliothèque et Archives Canada (Library and Archives Canada).
“Jesus does not agree well with Belial”

...what harmony hath Christ with Belial?

or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?

— Saint Paul

The Sorcerer enters the cabin “as if in a fury, singing, crying and howling, making his drum rattle with all his might.” All the other sauvages present “howl as loudly as he” while producing “a horrible din with their sticks, striking upon whatever [is] before them,” for nothing is unworthy of appropriation as a soundmaker for such rites — not even their humble bark plates turned upside down. The Sorcerer, an utter charlatan, strikes a thousand attitudes and with his eyes rolling about in his head cries out “at the top of his voice” only to suddenly stop short “as if frightened.” He pretends to cry then bursts into laughter “like a wanton devil” and sings “without rules and without measure.” Then comes his chaotic medley of animalistic vocalisations; hissing like a serpent, howling like a wolf and screeching “like an owl or a night hawk.” All this he does to the accompaniment of frantic drumming on an instrument called a chichigouan, which is “the size of a tambourine,...and is composed...of two skins stretched tightly over it on both sides.” This drumming is strange to behold, because he does “not strike [his drum], as do...Europeans” but blows upon it, then blows towards the fire, draws the drum under his chin and shakes and turns it upon his stomach, “turn[ing] and shak[ing] it, to...rattle...some little pebbles or stones” which have been “put inside [the instrument]...to make more noise.” The Sorcerer closes his mouth with the back of one hand, and then with the other, before striking his drum “so hard upon the ground” you would swear his aim is “to break the drum to pieces.” He continues “turning it from one side to the other,” before “running around the fire several times” and theatrically exiting the cabin, howling and bellowing all the way. “I leave you to imagine this beautiful music,” Father Le Jeune later writes to a fellow Jesuit in France with all the sarcasm of Sagard’s “harmonie de Demons.”

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1 King James Bible, 2 Corinthians 6:15. The Latin vulgate version reads: “quae autem conventio Christi ad Belial aut quae pars fidelis cum infidel.” Conventio translates directly to “agreement,” but the synonyms “concord” and “harmony” have both been used in other English translations of this passage. See also JR 6: 225–27.

2 JR 6: 185–87. See also VoS, p.46 for a modern example of an old kettle turned upside down to accompany a dance troupe at a Maratime Wabanaki gathering to replace a forgotten drum.

3 In other volumes of JR the name of this instrument is spelt chichikoué.

4 JR 6: 183–89.
In truth, the “wretched” Sorcerer’s cries and the sound of his drum are for Le Jeune the worst of all the polysensory tortures he “suffers” whilst wintering with the *sauvages* in 1633. For though the missionary experiences famine followed by sinfully gluttonous feasts, the *sauvages*’ “impurities,” illness, snow, rain, as well as the “martyrdom” of eye-watering smoke, the ever-present dogs and people in the close quarters of the cabins, it is the Sorcerer’s incessant “uproar” that nearly makes him “lose [his] mind.” “[E]very day—toward nightfall, and very often toward midnight, and at other times during the day—[the Sorcerer]...brings [everyone] together...in a cold that freezes everything” and “acts like a madman...during not one nor two hours, but three or four in succession.” Though Le Jeune admits Christians heartily complain in France if a Mass exceeds half an hour once a week, these people—young, old, male and female—“promptly betake themselves to this Witches’ Sabbath” with no regard for their own exhaustion from the trials of the day, to witness the Sorcerer doing “a thousand foolish acts of a lunatic or of one bewitched...to cure himself...of a pain in the loins;...an infirmity resulting from his licentiousness and excesses, for he is vile to the last degree.” This is by no means an unusual reason for the “foolishness, nonsense, absurdity, noise, and din.” The end goal of every noise these Montagnais (Innu) produce is either to cure disease, find food or celebrate its consumption at “eat-all feasts” at which nothing but bones are left — even if it means the *sauvages*’ stomachs are hideously bloated right up to their necks like the infamously misshapen gluttons of hell whose swollen bellies double as drums, or that they give “full liberty to their stomachs and bellies, to utter whatever sounds they please” leaving the cabins filled with the loathsome stench of flatulence. One winter among these Montagnais is quite enough to reveal every drumbeat, shake, rattle and howl resonates for what any Christian should consider the lowest purpose of all: the preservation of the flesh.⁵

The stage is rather inevitably set, therefore, for a series of conflicts between the medicine people, who produce enrhythmed howls to a body-saving Devil, and the missionaries, who sing harmonious hymns and utter solemn prayers to a soul-saving Creator. However, Le Jeune is not in an ideal position for engaging in open sonic warfare with the Sorcerer or any other noisy, unsaved sinners who “do not know what it is to combine chords to compose a sweet harmony” but sing “heavy,...sombre and unpleasant” superstitious songs comprised of meaningless “barbarous words.”⁶ In the winter of 1633, he is the barely-tolerated guest of this band of Montagnais as they move around in search of game; moreover, he is entirely dependent on them to teach him their language and for his survival. The Montagnais, by contrast, do not need the missionary at all.

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Le Jeune knows all too well that his situation with the *sauvages* is precarious. Indeed, the only reason he has had to resort to wintering with them is because his bilingual Innu teacher, Pierre Antoine Pastedechouan, left him. Had Pastedechouan stayed, Le Jeune could have “made considerable progress” in learning the language “in a few months” without going to the extreme of following his reluctant tutor into the woods. But Pastedechouan, who was taken by the Recollects as a child and baptised and educated in France, reverted to his *sauvage* ways upon returning to his own people. In the process, he became alienated from and averse to helping the Christians, earning him the nicknames “the Apostate,” “the Renegade,” the “excommunicate,” and “the atheist.” It is frustrating to Le Jeune that Pastedechouan has been given the rare gift of both languages as well as God’s truth and yet has rejected it — not only for himself but on behalf of all his people whose eternal souls could have been saved by hearing the holy Word directly from his mouth.7 Apostate, brother, and assistant to the Sorcerer though he may be, Pastedechouan is still Le Jeune’s best chance to learn the language, so the missionary must not give him or his kindred further cause to dislike him.

At first, therefore, Le Jeune takes a passive approach to battling the Sorcerer. To prove to the Sorcerer he is “not at all astonished at” his ear-splitting “devilish acts,” Le Jeune quietly carries on “in [his] usual way,” nonchalantly reading, writing, and saying his “little prayers” throughout the Sorcerer’s performances — all behaviours that defiantly re-engage the missionary with the divine *logos* (the Word) in the thick of the anti-music and anti-Word of the Sorcerer’s beastly cries and drumming. The missionary even makes a show of retiring and resting “as peacefully through [the Sorcerer’s] orgies, as [he] would have done in a profound silence.” As the season wears on and as his nerves become increasingly frayed by lack of sleep, lack of food, sickness and severe cold, though, Le Jeune changes tack. After all, the Apostate has often been “possessed of a mute devil,” flatly refusing to act as teacher and interpreter and, worse, has blasphemed and actively attempted to turn his Innu relations against the Christian God whenever Le Jeune tried to preach to them, which has only emboldened the Sorcerer’s opposition to the missionary.8

Realising he is unable to lose what he never actually had—the Apostate’s cooperation—Le Jeune becomes more willing to engage in what he calls “open warfare” by taking a combative approach to the Sorcerer’s aurally displeasing bedevilments and his false god: the “Manitou.”9 The missionary gets his chance to begin discrediting the Manitou one night when a

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7 *JR* 6: 117–19. Pastedechouan had already proven his ability to do so. Manitouchatche (La Nasse), had been a great sorcerer but had “received from [the Apostate’s] infected lips the truths of Heaven, [and] found Heaven, leaving Hell as the heritage of this renegade, unless God shows him great mercy.”


Montagnais woman cries out “in terror” that she has heard the Manitou nearby. Seeing the camp sent into a state of alarm and that “every one, filled with fear,” is “maintain[ing] a profound silence,” Le Jeune destroys the silence by laughing heartily, rising to his feet and in the sauvage tongue “call[ing]...the Manitou.” He cries “in a loud voice, “I [am] not afraid,...[the Manitou] would not dare come where I [am].”’’ The Montagnais, astonished by this act of mockery, ask him if he is not afraid of the Manitou, to which the missionary responds that he is not afraid of a hundred of them. If you “believe and obey him who made all,” Le Jeune assures them, “the Manitou w[ill] have no power over you...if you believe in God, the Devil will flee from you.” When Le Jeune becomes “very sick” soon after, the Sorcerer in turn seizes the opportunity to reclaim the superiority of his Manitou, saying reproachfully, “the Manitou has made [you and others] sick....for mock[ing] [him]....he has revenged himself upon [you] for [your] pride.” In response to the Sorcerer’s attempt to render a missionary a Manitou-fearing sauvage, Le Jeune tells him it is “not the Manitou or devil that has caused this sickness.” Then, “in a loud voice” and using what he can of the Sorcerer’s own language, Le Jeune again calls and challenges the Manitou: “Come, Manitou; come, demon; murder me if thou hast the power, I defy thee, I mock thee, I do not fear thee; thou hast no power over those who believe and love God; come and kill me if thy hands are free; thou art more afraid of me than I am of thee.” Having audibly invoked the Manitou and successfully mocked him more than once without any major consequences, Le Jeune becomes more brazen about undermining other Montagnais rituals he witnesses.10

On another occasion, for instance, Le Jeune sees a few Montagnais men erecting a tent in the middle of the cabin he is occupying. When the little tent is covered, all the fires in the outer cabin are extinguished and a juggler enters the tent alone to consult some “Genii of light” who are “acquainted with future events.” The juggler begins to “moan softly, as if complaining” and shakes his tent “without violence.” Then,

becoming animated little by little, he commence[s] to whistle, in a hollow tone, and as if it came from afar; then to talk as if in a bottle; to cry like the owls of these countries....then to howl and sing, constantly varying the tones; ending by these syllables, ho ho, hi hi, guigui, nioüé, and other similar sounds, disguising his voice [like]...those puppets which showmen exhibit in France. Sometimes he sp[eaks] Montagnais, sometimes Algonquian, retaining always the Algonquian intonation, which, like the Provençal, is vivacious.

10 JR 7: 83–89, 179–83.
As diverse as these noises and voices the juggler counterfeits may be, Le Jeune notes, they are also vocalisations he has heard from other sorcerers many times before in their efforts to help the Devil deceive these “poor ignorant people.” These jugglers, Le Jeune records, pretend to use their powers of divination whilst inside the tent to consult the spirits on a variety of important matters and then inform the *sauvages* assembled around the outside of the tent about the location of game, the outcome of war, prognosticate about illness, provide a weather forecast, and converse with the dead and people living great distances away. Thus, despite the Montagnais having forbidden the missionary to speak during the rite, the sceptical Le Jeune later admits, “as I had not vowed obedience to them, I did not fail to intrude a little word into the proceedings.” Le Jeune’s audible interruptions have no substance as far as advancing the Christian cause; it is enough his intrusions contaminate the ritual in defiance of the Montagnais order for reverential silence. Yet, while all the usual uproar is occurring, even Le Jeune cannot fail to be intrigued by the novel spectacle of the rite’s shaking edifice, which becomes increasingly animated until the juggler falls “into so violent an ecstasy” Le Jeune is convinced he will “break everything to pieces.” He shakes the tent from within “with so much force and violence,” the Jesuit is “astonished at a man having so much strength; for after he had once begun to shake it, he did not stop until the consultation was over, which lasted about three hours.” Like Champlain before him and numerous non-native witnesses of this rite for centuries to come, the ritual’s sounds are of little consequence. All Le Jeune really wants to know is how the deceivers’ visual “shaking tent” “trick” is achieved.11

This “martyrdom” of wintering with the *sauvages*, however, does present Le Jeune with greater opportunities to weaken Satan’s influence by using the few words he has acquired to begin communicating God’s truth to the Montagnais. Upon speaking of God one day in a cabin, the Montagnais ask him what God is, and he tells them: “he who can do everything, and who...made the Sky and earth.” Following this revelation, Le Jeune hears his audience saying to each other knowingly, “Atahocan, Atahocan, it is Atahocan.” Not only do some of the *sauvages* of New France call the sun Jesus, then, Le Jeune can now also report the happy news to his superiors in France that he has heard the Montagnais referring to their own “supreme creator” or “high god” named Atahocan “who made all things.” To Le Jeune, this is the crucial equivalence between the European and *sauvage* languages and belief systems that has eluded the missionaries in New France for more than two decades.12

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12 JR 5: 151–53; JR 6: 135–37, and 155–57 for alternate spelling *Atachocam*. 

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However, the desired religious syncretism that the equivalence between the Christian God and Atahocan seemingly makes possible is quite different to the type that—to the missionaries’ horror—begins to manifest acoustically in this period. When Le Jeune’s fellow Jesuit, Father Pierre Chastellain, approaches the bark cabin of one his sick pupils in Huronia in 1636, for example, he is disappointed to hear the racket of the village “juggler.” Previously, the sick man had said to Chastellain, “Nikanis, my good friend, let us think of the soul; baptize me; as to the body, I see clearly…it must die.” Such a concern for the soul had made Chastellain sure the faith had taken root in the soul of this Huron but he withheld the blessing so the sick man would desire it more ardently. The deferral of his baptism instead turned the dying man’s attention from eternal life back to earthly life. Reason suggested he would need the healing powers of a sorcerer to bring him back from the brink of death long enough to receive Chastellain’s soul-saving blessing. So, the “patient allowed himself to be blown upon, to follow the custom of his Ancestors.” However, the combination of Christianity and sauvage rituals was not to be tolerated in one who had hitherto shown such dedication to the faith: “[Chastellain]…very severely…reproached…the sick man for having had recourse to any one else but God [and] the Charlatan for having intruded with his drumming upon a person who already believed in Jesus Christ.”

On a separate occasion, Le Jeune recites the hymn *Veni Creator* over the body of a sick infant only to return and discover in his place a medicine man “howling immoderately” and “beating upon and whirling around” a chichigouan. Where there has only recently been the sounds of the hymn *Veni Creator* there is now the racket of a charlatan beating “the tambourine in the child’s ears” and blowing “upon his head, with a whistling sound made between his teeth” while the other sauvages observe a “great silence” in the cabin. “[T]o cure this little boy of a fever,” Le Jeune resentfully writes later on, the juggler “made enough noise to give one to a healthy man.”

Reducing Christian lifeways to sensory practices that prospective converts can “imitate” without really “understanding” has led them to hear Christian sounds, like *Veni Creator*, within their traditional acoustemological framework. Put simply, the people consider Christian rites and soundways to be an *addition* to rather than a *substitute* for their own medicinal, body-saving sounds. While Father Pierre Biard was once briefly amused at hearing the French and the Armouchiquois singing across the Kennebec River “like two choirs which had a thorough understanding with each other,” to those now listening daily for sonic evidence of Satan’s conquest, the sound of would-be Christians using both Christianity and sauvage rites for sauvage purposes—as though there is no qualitative difference between the

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medicine people’s enrhythmed howls to the body-saving Devil and the Jesuits’ harmonious hymns to the soul-saving Creator—is worse than the absence or rejection of Christianity altogether.\(^{15}\) Rather than hearing the two acoustemologies “harmonising” with each other, the missionaries hear a cacophonous battle between the powers of good and evil; a sentiment Father Paul le Jeune captures perfectly when he paraphrases his namesake Saint Paul: “They acted exactly like the Philistines who wished to join together the Ark and Dagon. JESUS does not agree well with Belial.”\(^{16}\) Unlike the religious syncretism that is a missionary initiative and, thus, helps to establish the Christian faith, this sauvage-driven religious syncretism assimilates some Christian notions into what essentially remains a cohesive sauvage way of being in and knowing the world. Hearing this unwelcome sonic and religious fusion and the continued dominance of the sauvage ways, the Jesuits realise they must establish a foundation for Christianity, not in collaboration with the sauvages but “on the ruins of [their] idolatry.”\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\) \textit{JR} 53: 283–85.
The drum is at the centre of the sauvages’ false religion. It is ever-present at their ecstatic, flesh-preserving rites and it is only fitting that it should be; the drum itself is a membranophone, from the Latin membrāna [skin] and the Greek phōnē [voice, sound]. As Christians, the Jesuits are the drum’s natural enemies, for they are “membranophobes” twice over.¹ They fear membrāna or flesh generally for its ability to lead them into temptation, and they have a deep-seated aversion to drums because these skins with diabolical voices tell the unsaved the only thing that matters is satisfying the base needs of the corporeal form.² Yet, thus far, the Jesuits’ attempts to ruin sauvage idolatry have only included haphazard attacks on the sauvages’ beliefs; interrupting sauvage rites by praying throughout them, singing hymns over the top of them, verbally mocking and challenging the sauvages’ demons, and questioning their beliefs with a minimal grasp of the languages. During his winter with the Montagnais when he is driven to madness by the constant racket of the Sorcerer’s drum, though, Le Jeune finally identifies a more specific target to bear the brunt of his religious opposition.

The missionary strikes at the beating heart of the sauvages’ flesh-loving faith: not to make the drum sound, as they do, but to silence it once and for all. He does so softly at first by bargaining with the man who has aurally offended him so relentlessly over the winter and, at times, has even made death threats “in jest” against Le Jeune: the Sorcerer, Carigonan.³ Though both men clearly consider each other a threat, Le Jeune knows Carigonan is a person of high status among his people—they call him Khimouchouminau (our sire and our master). As such, he would be a valuable asset to Christianity if only the Jesuit can successfully recruit him to the one true God’s cause. Le Jeune also knows the Sorcerer has made all this noise to heal himself of his persistent pain in the loins and cunningly uses Carigonan’s desperate need for a cure to his advantage. He approaches the Sorcerer, expresses “a great deal of affection for him” and “heap[s] praises upon him, as bait to draw him into the nets of truth,” saying, “if

² For Christian leaders, the drum was a negative symbol of the flesh and worldly things, but on the other hand could also more positively represent Christ stretched on the Cross. See Molina, Op.cit., pp.54–55.  
³ Carigonan, also spelt Carigouan, was “surnamed by the French the Married Man, because he made a great deal of the fact…he was married.” JR 7: 67–69.
a mind as capable of great things as [yours is] should know God...all the Savages, influenced by [your] example, would like to know him also.” Having sufficiently stroked his ego, Le Jeune then begins to take shots at the Sorcerer’s drum religion in his clumsy “Montagnese”:

I am surprised…a man of judgment could not realize…there [is] little connection between this uproar and health. When thou hast screamed and beaten thy drum with all thy might, what good does it do except to make thy head dizzy? No Savage is sick whose ears [are] not deaf[ened] with this drum, to keep him from dying; yet hast thou ever seen it dispel death?

Confident he has gained some ground with so rational an argument, Le Jeune feels safe to make what the Sorcerer will no doubt find to be a reasonable proposal. He tells Carigonan to give his drum medicine one last try; he even encourages him to enlist his whole community to sing for this purpose and, once he has done everything he can to recover his health, “if thou art not cured in that time,” Le Jeune tells him, “confess…thy din, howls and songs cannot restore thee to health” and completely abstain from the drum medicine whilst trialling Christian prayer. “Ask of the God whom I adore that he give thee knowledge of himself; reflect and believe…thy soul must pass to a life other than this” and “endeavour to interest thyself in its welfare as thou dost in the welfare of thy body.” In the event God sees fit to eliminate the disease after the utterance of such Christian supplications, Le Jeune tells the Sorcerer he will be obligated to draw his people together and “say to them that the God of the Christians is the true God, that they must believe in him and obey him.” But that is not all: “in their presence,” the missionary stipulates, “thou wilt burn thy drum.”

The Sorcerer “opens his ears” to the Jesuit’s proposal, but he also begins to negotiate new terms. Like other sauvages the Jesuits have encountered who mistakenly believe Jesus and Belial can harmonise, Carigonan wishes to make an arrangement that will “join together the Ark and Dagon.” He tells Le Jeune to ask his Christian god to cure him while he continues to drum; Le Jeune refuses, because under such an arrangement the Sorcerer would, of course, attribute his miraculous recovery to the supposedly medicinal sounds of his drum and not give credit where it is actually due. Carigonan protests he will not misdirect the credit but is also adamant that the Christian God would have to cure him before he would believe in him. Le Jeune warns the Sorcerer against bargaining with God this way, telling him: “if he does not give thee health of the body, he will give thee health of the soul, which is of incomparably higher value.” With this last comment, whatever power the Jesuit was beginning to gain over

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4 JR 7: 129–35.
5 JR 9: 51–53.
this flesh-loving beater of drums is suddenly broken: “Do not speak to me about the soul...that is something...I give myself no anxiety about,” states Carigonan frankly. “It is this (showing his flesh) that I love, it is the body I cherish; as to the soul, I do not see it, let happen to it what will.” Knowing he has lost, a flabbergasted Le Jeune casts off all his previous composure:

Hast thou any reason? Thou speakest like a brute, dogs love only their bodies; he who has made the Sun to shine upon thee, has he not prepared something better for thy soul than for the soul of a dog? If thou lovest only the body, thou wilt lose both thy body and thy soul. If a brute could talk, it would talk about nothing but its body and its flesh; hast thou nothing above the brute, which is made to serve thee? Dost thou love only flesh and blood? Thy soul, is it only the soul of a dog, that thou dost treat it with such contempt?

Le Jeune’s impassioned harangue has no effect, the Sorcerer is steadfast: “If thou restores my health, I will do what thou wishest.” In other words, Carigonan is only interested in using the sounds of Christian prayers for sauvage purposes. Seeing that the Sorcerer was incapable of “rais[ing] his thoughts above earth” Le Jeune gave up on the “haughty...poor wretch...who thought he was obliging God by believing in him.” As for Carigonan, he never did willingly make a burnt offering of his drum as a mark of his devotion to the one true God.6

The pact Le Jeune attempted and failed to make with the Sorcerer, however, did provide a rough template for what subsequently became the Jesuits’ policy of derhythmisation. The membranophobic Jesuit missionaries not only adopted Le Jeune’s tactic, they made a drum sacrifice a compulsory prerequisite for conversion. In the 1640s, a decade after Le Jeune’s attempt to convince Carigonan to destroy his own drum, the Jesuit Father Barthelemy Vimont demanded that would-be converts of the Atticamege nation destroy or at least surrender their drums to be eligible for baptism.7 “The most certain mark of his good will...anyone wished to give,” stated Vimont, “was to bring his drum to the fathers who were teaching them; several did so at the beginning of winter, and rendered themselves capable of being enrolled in the number of the children of God.” Vimont would also relay an instance of an Atticamege making a public display of throwing his drum away and of another one who buried his drum in the snow to prove his worthiness for baptism, while a third individual traded two drums for a rosary. One neophyte’s conversion zeal was so immense, Vimont reported, it even sparked an acute case of membranophobia. Upon seeing “a drum made on the French pattern” the

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6 JR 7: 133–35.
7 Alternate spellings: Atikamegouékhi in other early French documents and the endonym Atikamekw.
neophyte tore it to pieces, saying, “I know well that [it] is not bad; but yet I must not keep it, for fear of causing the others to remember their drums and forbidden superstitions.”

Drum burning was obviously widely practiced by the Jesuits, because news of this requirement was quite dispersed. In 1643, “a small tribe...from far inland” came to the Mission of the Holy Cross at Tadoussac and evidently had prior knowledge of the need to burn drums to prove their worthiness of baptism. When a particularly “good Neophyte...animated with zeal for the salvation of these people” pointed to a picture of a damned soul in chains with the flames of hell surrounding and burning him and said, “It is a Magician, a beater of drums, such as most of you are,” the inland tribe’s Captain declared: “It is true that formerly I engaged in such practices, but I have cast them off. I have burned my drum and all the instruments...I used. I love prayer, and...wish to be instructed with my people.”

Others found equally sacrilegious ways of destroying their drums in their conversion zeal. In feasts, throwing carcasses to the dogs was an immense insult to the animal beings who had given themselves as food to their human grandchildren, so when a reformed sorcerer wished to prove his commitment to Christianity, yet still evidently favoured the theatricality of his once frequent ritual performances, he broke his drum and added further insult to injury by casting it among some nearby canines:

[Wabiriniwich]...while still a Catechumen,...intended to play a witty little trick [on Father Buteux] at the burial of his drum, so he begged the Father to come and see him....As the Father was approaching the cabin, this Charlatan took his drum, and exciting himself after the manner of the Jugglers, he made it resound so loudly...the Father, hearing it far away, stopped suddenly....the Father asked who was beating the drum. “It is...one named Wabiriniwich, who is breathing upon some sick person, and singing to him,” said...a Savage. The Father, hearing him name his Catechumen, turned away thoroughly indignant, imagining that this man had deceived him. The Savage invited him to enter, but the Father would not listen to him. The poor Catechumen, seeing that, too broke his drum, broke it into pieces, and threw it to his dogs. “I wished,” said he, “to entertain the Father, and make him an eyewitness of the value...I set upon my drum, by giving it to the

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9 JR 26: 141–43.
dogs in his presence; but although he would not enter, it shall nevertheless be
cast into eternal oblivion.”

Father Buteux was “really pleased at having been piously deceived by this good Neophyte.”
Afterwards, Wabiriniwich announced his resolution “to abandon forever our old customs,” to
“no longer have any voice for the superstitious chants,” and promised that his “drum no
longer has any sound,” and his “mouth no longer has any breath to deceive the sick; for all
these follies cannot restore their health.” Father Buteux then baptised him with the good
Christian name of “Paul,” thus making him the namesake of the saint who had been so
outraged by the “joining together”—the harmonising—of Christ and Belial. 11

When the Jesuits listened to their surrounds between the 1630s and 1650s, therefore, they
heard a marked decrease in the “demonic harmony” of wild drumming and chanting that had
once dominated the environment. In 1648, the Jesuit Jérôme Lallemant credited this altered
soundscape to “[t]he smallpox that caused such havoc nine years ago [which] did good to
some souls, while afflicting their bodies.” “Formerly,” Lallemant wrote, “one heard nothing
but drums, cries, and yells; one saw nothing but feasts and sweats in the cabins where the sick
lay.” But, the devastating diseases imported by the Europeans led many to lose faith in their
drums and to offer them up as burnt sacrifices to the Christian God. “Now,” wrote Father
Lallemant, “one hardly knows, in the places where the Christians reside, what has become of
all those songs and noises...those howlings, those cries, those commotions which they raised
about their sick, because most of the people loudly protested...they would have recourse to
God.” 12

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11 JR 20: 285–89
A Garden in the Wilderness

At the same time the Jesuits were denuding the soundscape of infernal rhythmic noises, they began filling up some of the silences left by the burnt drums with Christian prayers and hymns translated into the “sauvage” tongues. This chiefly happened at seminaries the Jesuits established for Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking children whom the missionaries considered to be “young plants” from which “good fruits” could be expected, as they were much easier to convert than the adults who were, by contrast, “ill-begotten wild plants” that had already taken root.¹

A mere three years after wintering with the Montagnais, Le Jeune could report “the sweet consolation” of hearing some of those young seminarists “sing[ing] publicly...the Apostles’ creed in their own language” at the French chapel at Quebec in 1637. There was, however, a still more pleasing sound at the seminary:

Our French sing a Strophe of [the Apostles’ Creed] in our own language, then the Seminarists [sing] another in Huron, and then all together sing a third, each using his own language, in excellent harmony. They like this so well...they make this holy and sacred song resound everywhere. I have heard the French, the Montagnex, and the Hurons all sing together the articles of our belief; and although they used three languages, they harmonized so nicely...it was a great pleasure to hear them. ²

This was nothing like the “two choirs” of Armouchiquois and French strangers singing together on the Kennebec River in 1611, “as though they had a complete understanding with each other” when, in fact, there had been no harmony or understanding between them at all. What the Jesuits heard in this idyllic polyphony was more akin to the medieval visionaries’ innumerable heavenly hosts singing “Alleluia” in unison and heaven’s “note of wondrous sweetness,” like “all the bells of the world, or everything musical...all sounding together” beautifully, despite the “various mixture of melody...”³ The diversity of tongues singing harmoniously in praise of the one true God in what seemed to be slowly becoming a

² JR 12: 65–67. The language was presumably Latin rather than French as it was a religious song.
paradisiacal garden in the wilderness was, for the Jesuits, the long awaited acoustic evidence that the great cosmic lyrist was bringing the many strings of His cosmic tortoise-shell lyre into one perfect, divine, universal harmony.

As we continue to listen to the master record beyond the Jesuit Relations, though, it tells us that, in the long run, secular rather than sacred sounds drowned out the “devilish” sauvage noises and made a garden of the North American spiritual wilderness.\(^4\) According to author James Fenimore Cooper, for instance, where there had once been a “dark and dreary wood” the industrious British settlers had set their “[p]loughs in motion” and established “green wheat fields…spotted with dark and charred stumps that had, in the preceding season, supported some of the proudest trees of the forest.”\(^5\) And by the early 1800s, “[e]verywhere the sound of the axe [wa]s heard opening” what remained of “the forest to the sun,” while “[t]he busy hum of ten thousand wheels fill[ed]” the seaports “and the sound of the spindle and loom succeed[ed] the yell of the savage or the screech of the night owl in the late wilderness of the interior.”\(^6\) Later in the nineteenth century some other uncivilised sounds—also native to America—had needed silencing: the sounds of southern slavery.\(^7\) Yet not even this established institution and way of life could prevent the progress of modern civilisation in “the land of the free.” The Civil War (1861—1865) ensured that the northern sounds of ethical, free, civilised, modern industry permanently silenced the southern soundscape’s anti-music comprised of cracking whip lashes, dragging chains, and the wretched cries and lamentations of enslaved, tortured souls on earth.\(^8\) Only one frontier then remained: The West. The fact that the westerly land of North America was still “Indian Territory” was a mere detail: after all, as late nineteenth-century historians would imply, American history was just “one long Indian war” the civilised whites were clearly predestined to win.\(^9\) The conquest of the continent—that holy errand into “the vast and howling wilderness” which had commenced over two centuries earlier on the east coast with missionaries’ hymns and prayers and British settlers’ axes and ploughs—reached its glorious crescendo in the bloody Indian Wars and the

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westward expansion of the railroads. Indeed, as one reporter lyrically declared, “The first toot of the whistle of the…Railroad’s first locomotive, speeding through the Indian Territory in 1875…pronounced sentence of death on the red man’s isolation…It was civilization marching on.”

In the nineteenth century’s final decades, however, this rhetoric of complete annihilation, with its images of a grand yet doomed rugged wilderness and vanishing Indians, contributed to a growing sense of nostalgia and anxiety among the victorious white conquerors. The thing that had defined them as uniquely American—their antagonistic relationship with this wild landscape and its native inhabitants—was about to be lost forever if all traces of the conquered world were destroyed or its remnants were allowed to disappear entirely. The popular contemporary notion of cultural evolution only exacerbated these concerns: “Indians” were no longer simply savage “others,” they were earlier versions of the “civilised” white Americans who were positioned at the opposite end of the cultural evolutionary scale. The “vanishing Indians” therefore provided the white conquerors with a rare but strictly limited opportunity for scientific study into human development. The same theory, however, also raised fears of cultural devolution: the notion that as Americans reached the pinnacle of civilisation they were increasingly at risk of “over-civilisation”; a state in which a marked distinction between the sexes was lost and manifested in neurasthenia; a nervous condition associated with modern urban life. Over-civilised “neurasthenic” females were too masculine, while soft, effeminate over-civilised men needed to balance out their civility by getting in touch with their primitive nature; something men had previously been able to do simply out of necessity so long as there was another battle to fight in that “one long Indian war.” Once the Indians were “conquered,” medical professionals advised neurasthenic American men to actively seek out such experiences for manhood maintenance; going on jaunts in the great outdoors dressed in Indian skins or bodybuilding. Boy scouts were also established for young boys in this period as a preventative against the effects of too much

12 HoP, pp.4-7; see, too, Renato Rosaldo, Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989), pp.68–87 who has called this “imperialistic nostalgia” which Browner has further defined as “a melancholy longing by a people or culture for what they have destroyed.” Browner, “‘Breathing the Indian Spirit,” Op.cit., 265–66.
13 Browner, “‘Breathing the Indian Spirit,” Op.cit., 270-71, 274–75; FLSS, p.120.
14 See Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., “The Soldier’s Faith,” in Oliver Wendell Holmes, Speeches, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1896), pp.56–66 for a Memorial Day speech delivered in 1895 celebrating the martial spirit as an antidote to the ennervating, luxurious, over-civilising effects of modern, commercial life. He also idealises motherhood to maintain the distinction between the sexes.
civility. In this way, nineteenth-century Americans were still closely adhering to Plato’s ideal male citizen; a kind of “scholar warrior” who required gymnastic training in combination with robust musical sounds that would cultivate physically capable, courageous men—should the polis require manly types to defend it—to balance out the civilising effects of harmonious sounds, which stimulated the intellect and soul.

In the spirit of preservation and “science,” therefore, white Americans took steps to keep some of “the olden life upon this continent.” Manageable parts of the wilderness were safely cordoned off in national parks to be enjoyed by naturalists keen to (temporarily) return to their earlier primitive state; the few remnants of the forests’ “vanishing Indians” were likewise contained on reservations where it was thought they would either eventually die out or submit to being assimilated into the “superior” white civilisation; even the Indians’ “devilish” sonic inventions did not escape this policy of capture and containment but were caught by song-catchers such as Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Frances Densmore on wax cylinder recordings for white America’s posterity.

Some of those “Indian melodies” emanate from a phonograph in 1893, but they do not resound in all their former glory. There, above the eerily distant sounds, is a rather irksome noise. Whirring. Crackling. Popping. It is the sound of the phonograph’s machinery at work and the wax cylinder record itself eroding from wear. Still, Alice Cunningham Fletcher reminds herself, for all its shortcomings the phonograph is a giant leap forward from the only sound recording technology previously available: silent words, solfege transcriptions, and soundless musical notes on a page. In any case, the ethnologist soon tunes out all of the phonograph’s static noise to hear only what is worthy of her attention: the music.

As the Indian melodies reverberate in her ears, Fletcher’s mind drifts back to a time when it had not been so simple for her to listen “below the noise.” Like the early French missionaries, the ethnologist had “heard little or nothing of Indian music” at their dances and festivals in her initial attempts to listen to their ancient sounds. Indeed, what she had heard was the exact opposite of music: “a screaming downward movement…gashed and torn by the vehemently beaten drum.” Though Fletcher “from habit as a student had endeavoured to divest [herself] of preconceived ideas, and to rise above prejudice and distaste,” there had been no escaping that this “sound was distressing” and, much to the delight of her scientific curiosity, neither could she ignore that as the only member of her race present “this distress” had been “peculiarly [her] own.” The “Indians” had thoroughly enjoyed what was so aurally offensive to her: “[I]t

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16 FLOM, p.7.
17 Ibid; FLGD, p.xxii.
was not rational that human beings should scream for hours, looking and acting as did these Indians before me, and the sounds they made not mean something more than mere noise.” Convinced something was “eluding [her] ears,” Fletcher had been compelled to discover and capture it. Yet Fletcher had failed to get any closer to that elusive “something” in the Indian noise until she succumbed to illness during her investigations in the field. Confined to a sickbed for months, Fletcher found herself “ministered to in part by Indian friends,” who sang for her when requested. “They sang softly because I was weak, and there was no drum…” Without the loud drums and unbridled, untrained vocalisations that “so overlaid the little song[s] that [their] very existence was not even suspected,” Fletcher had at last been able to acquire an appreciation for the music that once distressed her. And so, just as it was for the wounded healers among the “Indians” she studied who were typically only granted wisdom after surviving a personal trial, it was during Fletcher’s convalescence “that the distraction of noise and confusion of [musicological] theories were dispelled. For, without the loud drums and wild, untrained vocalisations “the sweetness, the beauty and meaning of these songs were revealed” and she heard only what she deemed “worth study and record”: the melodies.\textsuperscript{18}

Since her ears were first “opened” during her great sickness Fletcher had never “fail[ed] to catch the hidden melody” — not even amid the “tumultuous din” of Indian songs performed in their traditional manner. For whenever the ethnologist had found herself in such “confusing…conditions,” she mentally denuded the songs of their acoustic unpleasantness; listening “below [the] noise” of the drums and the Indians’ “manner of singing” just as “one must listen to the phonograph, ignoring the sound of the machinery before the registered tones of the voice are caught.”\textsuperscript{19}

“Casual hearers” listening to songs performed traditionally, however, lacked both the perseverance and the sophisticated aural skills required to master Fletcher’s difficult technique of listening “below the noise,” making the phonograph’s greatest strength —that it captured the actual sounds—its greatest weakness, too. As Fletcher’s colleague John Comfort Fillmore noted, “Indian music” is so full of “overbearing noise,” it is not always easy to extract the real kernel from the rough husk which surrounds it, and those who go to hear Indian music out of mere curiosity with no desire to penetrate to the core of it may very well find their surface impressions unfavourable. They are looking for what is not there; and what is there of real

\textsuperscript{18} FLOM, pp.7–8; FLGD, p.4.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
merit is not to be found without seeking....To them it is mere barbaric noise; “all sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Recording such sounds did not eliminate this problem, as listeners still had to contend with the “rough husk” of the vocalists’ distinctively “Indian” vocal embellishments and “mannerisms” that Fletcher, as a rule, encouraged “members of [her] own race” to “ignore.”

For example,

the continual slurring of the voice from one tone to another produces upon us the impression of out-of-tune singing. Then, the custom of singing out of doors, to the accompaniment of the drum, and against the various noises of the camp, and the ever-restless wind, tending to strain the voice and robbing it of sweetness, increases the difficulty of distinguishing the music concealed within the noise,—a difficulty still further aggravated by the habit of pulsating the voice, creating a rhythm within the rhythm of the song.

As Fletcher and Fillmore explained to the readers they presumed to be exclusively white, not only did these stylistic nuances or “peculiarities” make it “difficult for one of our race to intelligently hear their songs or to truthfully transcribe them,” such mannerisms were not even intended by the original Indian performer; they were merely “unconscious inaccuracies” and deviations from the musical norm brought on by a “lack of ear training due to the absence of a standard pitch.” In other words, Fletcher and Fillmore implied, all the sonic features that made the Indians’ vocalisations distinctive were due to their supposed racial and cultural inferiority.

Realising simply recording the sounds as they were traditionally performed was not enough to make her intended white audience hear what she heard, therefore, Fletcher removed the “rough husk” for them by selecting which sonic aspects to feature on the wax cylinder recordings and which ones to silence or, at least diminish. The first target was, of course, the loud rhythmic drumbeats for which Fletcher had professed no great love, even though Fletcher’s colleague John Comfort Fillmore openly admitted this was “by far the most elaborately developed element of the Indian music” — so developed, in fact,

21 FLOM, pp.7, 152.
22 FLSS, pp.117–18.
…civilized music has not surpassed it, at least in the point of combining dissimilar rhythms. Indeed, I suspect…a great majority of conservatory students the world over might have a good deal of difficulty in learning to do what is to the Indians an every-day matter. And if white students of music had to pass an examination in taking down Indian rhythms from hearing them, I fear a good many would come to grief.24

In the context of the late nineteenth century, though, this acknowledgement of rhythmic sophistication was a backhanded compliment. The same year Fletcher and Fillmore’s collaborative work *Omaha Music* was published, Richard Wallaschek built on German conductor Hans von Bülow’s claim, “In the beginning was rhythm,” and stated in his book *Primitive Music: An Inquiry into the Origin and Development of Music, Songs, Instruments, Dances, and Pantomimes of Savage Races*, (1893), “the difference between people with or without harmonic music is not a historical but a racial one.”25 Under the influence of the popular cultural evolution theory, Fletcher, Fillmore and company were incapable of recognising the rhythmic sophistication that impressed them and far exceeded western rhythms actually disproved that the “Indian” music was “primitive” and, as such, an inferior form of western “music.”26 If these “savage” sounds and the people who produced them were ever to be civilised, and if the sounds were, thus, to be rendered pleasing to the already civilised and appropriately less enrhythmed western auditors, the rhythmical element had to be reduced. In any case, the volume of the drums tended to overwhelm the limited capabilities of the phonographic technology. Consequently, Fletcher went some way towards derhythming the Indian songs she recorded by either omitting them on certain recordings or making the voice more prominent and the drumbeat a mere faint background noise.27 And by transcribing the “Indian melodies” into European musical notation to be reproduced on the westerners’

27 Frances Densmore likewise requested that her singers produce their rhythmic accompaniment with “a chalk box filled with paper to pound on” so it would not “overpower [the] voice and cause overmodulation on the wax cylinder.” Others who attempted to record songs were expected to substitute their drums with “a pan or pail.” See *ODD*, p.34.
preferred percussion instrument, the *pianoforte*, Fletcher silenced the drum and the Indian singer’s enrhythmed voice, too.\(^{28}\)

Like their colonial predecessors, however, Fletcher and Fillmore’s ears continued to search for something more in the derhythmed, monophonic melodies: *harmony*. To this end, upon disembodying and isolating the Indian melodies Fletcher began to hear what she called “a ‘natural harmonic sense’ in the Indian.” “I first detected this feeling for harmony while rendering to the Indians their melodies upon an instrument,” she recalled: “the song played as an unsupported solo did not satisfy my memory of their unison singing,” for, though Indian singing is monophonic in texture and, thus, always sung in unison, “the natural soprano, contralto, tenor, and bass” voice types “move...along in octaves” and these “different qualities of tone...br[ing] out the overtones and produce...harmonic effects” so when two or three hundred voices sing together, it is “difficult to realise...all [are] singing in unison.” \(^{29}\) Again, though, this “natural harmonic sense” in the Indian music was not something the average listener could detect.

Channelling Sagard, Fletcher imposed an harmonic layer onto the Indians’ monophonic tunes. Lest she be accused of “importing...Aryan ideas into the music of alien races” Fletcher justified enhancing the Indians’ innate harmonic sense in this way by conducting scientific experiments. These experiments, Fletcher argued, revealed that the plain melodies did not “sound natural” to the Indians either, but when Fletcher added “a simple harmony” her ear was “content and the Indians were satisfied,” also. For Fillmore, an expert who had previously published *New Lessons in Harmony: To Which is Added the Nature of Harmony* (1887), the Indians’ preference for hearing their melodies harmonised was likewise indisputable proof of “a latent harmonic sense,” which “unconsciously” informed “their choice of melody tones.” After successfully reproducing Fletcher’s results by harmonising a number of “Indian melodies” himself using only the “natural harmonies implied in the melodies” and finding “whatever chords were natural and satisfactory to [him were] equally so to them,” Fillmore concluded “the sense of harmony is an innate endowment of human nature, that it is the same for the trained musician and for the untrained primitive man, the difference being purely one of development.” In other words, Indian music, with its almost imperceptible harmony, along with its “greater resemblance to the yelps and howls of wild beasts” and even its rhythmic complexity, was acoustic evidence that gave further credence to the popular contemporary notion that Indians were arrested at the earliest stage of human development. “Indians”

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\(^{29}\) *FLOM*, p.10; *FLSS*, p.116.
occupied the same space as white people—though this space was constantly and rapidly decreasing—but not the same time. For while “these people, when they are singing at least,” may appear to “have more in common with the lower animals than with us,” Fillmore wrote, their latent harmony was “the ground of a common perception.”

There were a number of benefits to establishing the missing “harmonic” link between white Americans and the “lost” ancient Americans of the past. In the first place, the denial of coevality implied in the identification of the Indians’ so-called “latent harmonic sense” justified their subjugation as earlier, “inferior” versions of white Americans. By imposing a harmonic layer on their derhythmed sounds, Fletcher and Fillmore were doing their bit to make “the untutored savage” sound whiter and, in so doing, accelerating the process of civilisation and assimilation of the surviving Indians. The supposed commonality also created the myth of a continuous harmonious soundscape that legitimised white Americans’ claims to be native to a land that was not their own. Doomed as Fletcher believed her “Indian friends” to be due to the unrelenting march of modern civilisation, she was aware they had always known this land deeply and had belonged in it since time immemorial whereas she, a member of the race who had invaded and lately conquered the continent, was an “alien…a stranger in [her] native land.” America’s “flora and fauna had no fond, familiar place amid my mental imagery,” she admitted, “nor did any thought of human aspiration or love give to its hills and valleys the charm of personal companionship.” Having successfully heard the Indian music “below the noise,” however, Fletcher suddenly found herself “alone in a strange, silent country” no more:

I had learned to hear the echoes of a time when every living thing upon this land and even the varied overshadowing skies had its voice, a voice…attentively heard and devoutly heeded by the ancient people of America. Henceforth, to me the plants, the trees, the clouds and all things had become vocal with human hopes, fears and supplications.

When I realized how much closer because of this change I had been drawn to our land, how much greater had become my enjoyment of nature, the desire arose to find some way…I could…make audible to others the voice I had heard, and thereby restore to our hills and valleys their lost human element.

It is plain enough: as victorious conquerors, Fletcher and her fellow white Americans of the late nineteenth century believed they had a right to feel at home in what their forebears called “the New World” and “America.” To do so, they set out to take possession not just of the continent’s present and future but of its entire past and sensorium: “the Indians’ Old World.” By thus appropriating the valuable elements of “Indian” culture, history, and heritage they formed the basis of a unique, distinctive, “national” character for white America. “Impelled by this purpose,” writes Fletcher, “I have arranged these…native songs in order that our young people”—that is “our” young white people—“may recognize, enjoy and share in the spirit of the olden life upon this continent. Fletcher voiced her hopes that what she called the “wild flowers of song,” which “had not yet come under the transforming hand of the gardener,” would now lie within the orderly garden of modern America thanks to her harmonisations and, thus, “might help to vibrate the chords that belong to a common humanity.” Vibrating the chords of a common humanity—whether consciously made or merely the product of her indoctrination in the western musical tradition, Fletcher’s reference to the divine monochord or the cosmic lyre motif bringing everything into universal harmony is unmistakeable.  

Safely captured and contained in wax, often denuded of their “diabolical” “primitive” rhythms in the recording process and, to complete the sonic conquest, harmonised in silent black and white western musical notation so they could be reproduced in the safety of white people’s parlours on their preferred percussion instrument: the, notably tuneable, pianoforte. The stolen sounds were now to be the white people’s heritage—but only the parts of those sounds in which the white Americans could hear their Pythagorean selves.


33 Browner writes in “Breathing the Indian Spirit,” Op.cit., 261, Indianist composer Edward Macdowell suggested “Native melodies were perhaps similar to those his…ancestors might have sung many centuries earlier” and Theodore Baker reinforced these beliefs “by matching the Native melodies he transcribed with the period of Aristoxenos (ca. 350 B.C.), concluding, “According to the statement of the Greek theoretician [Aristoxenos], the Lydian, Phrygian, and Dorian modes were those constructed first by the Greeks; with the exception of the later modes, these oldest modes of the Greeks correspond strikingly with those of the North American Indians.”
INTERLUDE

“What does it mean to be Indian?
I press the mute button on the remote control
so that everyone can hear the answer.”

Sherman Alexie
White Man Can’t Drum
(1992)
White Noise

All you have heard thus far is white noise; a constant audio signal from purely western sources that has persistently and uniformly drowned out Algonquian-Iroquoian “sonic ways of being in and knowing the world” on the master record of history.¹ It is both a literal white noise that masks indigenous ways of hearing sounds on the historical record as well as a metaphorical white noise resulting from the entire web of beliefs and “habitual grooves of thinking” that give meaning to sounds.² While this audio signal dominating the master record is evidently highly meaningful to western auditors, on the Great Turtle’s back it is random and relationless and will, therefore, only impede your efforts to hear the sounds made by the Original Peoples as they heard (and hear) them.

But how do we recover the Original Peoples’ signal from the noise-corrupted one? By fully immersing ourselves in the colonists’ acoustic world, as we have already done, identifying what is and is not white noise, then stealing and adapting Fletcher’s technique of “listening below [that] noise, much as one must listen to the phonograph,” and turning up the volume on indigenous sounds and soundways. There is a certain amount of poetic justice in our use of Fletcher’s technique to denoise the master record, because while Fletcher considered the drums and “Indians’ manner of singing” to be “noise” we are using her technique in reverse; recovering the sonic ways of being and knowing she deemed to be “noise” from the master record of history while turning down the volume on the noisy, “white” parts of the signal she considered valuable.

The most obvious white noise we can identify after “listening” to the master record is, of course, harmony. Acoustically speaking, traditionally there is no harmony (or disharmony) on the Great Turtle’s back, much less a Pythagorean obsession that produces a complex

¹ The technical definition of white noise is a continuous sound containing a wide range of frequencies of uniform intensity often used to mask or obliterate undesirable sounds. For a fuller discussion using the “white noise” analogy applied to the colonists and the colonised in the North American context and how Native American authors have “liberated our imaginations from colonial narratives” see Cox, Op.cit.
philosophical and social conception of it. From this point forward, therefore, the Original Peoples’ sounds cannot continue to be defined within a “membranophobic,” harmonic framework as anti-musical “demonic harmony,” not least of all because that acoustic interpretation was intended as an insult by western auditors, was a major part of the colonisation project, and tells us nothing about the Original Peoples’ experiences of their own acoustic worlds.

Transcending the western preoccupation with harmony is of course difficult because, as Parts I and II have revealed, it is a deeply ingrained way of thinking that has stood the test of time over millennia and, thus, has had ample opportunity to permeate numerous aspects of western lifeways, thought, and expression in Indo-European languages. And because, as we will soon discover, there is an emphatically basic equivalence between the cultures in terms of conceptualising and achieving unity through sound within the microcosm of the human mind, body and spirit, the mesocosm of society, and with the macrocosmic universe, even Anglophonic colonised Original Peoples of the Great Turtle’s back today typically use the loaded word “harmony” to articulate their traditional acoustemology when speaking English, for they are as “imprisoned in English” and as prone to unwittingly accepting and perpetuating the distortions of the English language as any western Anglophone. The word “harmony,” then, is nothing less than a primary site of “neuro-colonization.” Given that the preceding history has revealed how much a part of the colonialist mindset “harmony” was from the outset, it is essential to be cognisant of how culturally contingent western notions of harmony are, how loaded with cultural baggage the word “harmony” is, and for western scholars particularly to consciously avoid the continued imposition of harmonic ways of thinking, being, and speaking while articulating the Original Peoples’ acoustemology. As Part III demonstrates, there is a more culturally relevant way of expressing in English the Algonquian-Iroquoian ways of achieving unity through sound that reveals a belief system every bit as complex, well integrated, and cohesive as the one we have already tuned into in Parts I and II.

Another “literal” form of white noise on the master record that is a high priority target for noise reduction is the dominance of exonyms—names imposed on Original Peoples and places by cultural outsiders, in this case European colonists and other indigenous nations—as well as

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the general derogatory, homogeneous term “sauvages.” In Parts I and II the word “sauvage” and exonyms appeared in direct primary source quotations and were maintained throughout the narrative to give a faithful representation of the dominance of these terms in the western mind and on the master record of history. In Parts III and IV, using endonyms is part of the remastering process. Since the connections between these endonyms and exonyms are not widely known, muting the exonyms entirely would cause confusion and weaken the overall thesis so, henceforth, the exonyms do appear but only in a subordinate position in parentheses.

Denoising the master record also requires us to shift from the western preoccupation with thinking about sound spatially—as something tied to the physical, external reality—in favour of the psychoacoustic definition of sound as an internal event: “something…a mind does.” This shift disrupts the popular and still widely believed narrative of the American cosmogonic myth of a simultaneously territorial and sonic conquest over the world of the Great Turtle’s back. The underlying assumption of this mythical “narrative of conquest” is that power is exclusively measurable in the domain of physical, external space. There is no clearer evidence of this than the rhetoric of the sounds of modern civilisation silencing the “howling wilderness,” as though whoever fills a place with their particular collection of sounds owns it and effectively dominates and even destroys the previous auditory culture. This oversimplifies auditory experiences by fixating too much on the domination of external space and not enough on audition and the agency this automatically provides to the auditor. As Ann Axtmann states, “power” as conceived by Native North Americans “is internal within...individuals and communities.” Even in the earliest stages of the missionaries’ attempts to colonise the acoustic world of the Great Turtle’s back, those who outwardly sounded as though they had been conquered because they sang Christian hymns and uttered Christian prayers continued to hear those sounds with “indigenous ears” and to use them for indigenous purposes. Over time, as “The Remastered Record” will reveal, the survival of indigenous soundways and, thus, the Original Peoples’ sonic sovereignty has likewise been less about the continuity of indigenous ways of sounding and more properly predicated on the persistence of indigenous ways of hearing because, in the event that the sounds themselves are silenced or even made extinct as a direct result of sensory imperialism, indigenous ways of sounding can be—and are being—recreated by Original Peoples from those traditional modes of listening and sonic knowing.

5 MBE, p.xiv.
6 Axtmann, Op.cit., 15. Axtmann goes on to quote Michel Foucault, who states “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere.”
7 A number of scholars are currently researching “sonic sovereignty.” Beth H. Piatote is investigating how Native American authors have used sound to “contest settler-colonial incursion and
There are other “habitual grooves” of western thinking you may need to divest yourself of to more effectively listen to and hear the world of the Great Turtle’s back. For instance, the Christian notions of “good and evil” and “angelic and demonic” are entirely alien concepts here where all power is neutral insofar as it always has the dual-capacity to create and destroy. As we are about to discover, even protective, benevolent beings can accidentally cause harm to humans or use their power negatively as a result of not receiving adequate respect from those they protect. Misfortune does not stem from a single “evil” source, like the Christian “Satan,” but from any empowered being whose power has manifested excessively and, thus, caused chaos in what is a highly interconnected and delicately balanced lifeworld.

The western conception of time as a linear construct is likewise meaningless, since time on the Great Turtle’s back is cyclical. Linear time is also inherently pessimistic about the future of indigenous lifeways, because in the context of a linear framework where death and destruction marks the end, the destruction caused by colonisation in the contact era automatically implies that the traditional pre-contact lifeworld has no future. While the destructive events of the contact era are not downplayed, foregoing the conventional periodisation of American history—pre-contact, contact, and post-contact—in favour of the Algonquian-Iroquoian repetitive time cycle of creation, destruction, and re-creation places Europeans on the peripheries of indigenous historical experiences. The period of destruction is only one of many in the much longer spiritual history of the place of Great Turtle’s back and, in that cycle, no cataclysmic event is ever insurmountable.

The logocentric assumption that “literacy” refers exclusively to the ability to read and write text also has no utility in the world of the Great Turtle’s back. In this lifeworld, other modes of literacy are prized; namely the ear-based literacies of oralacy and aurality, even though westerners have undervalued them as “primitive” and “pre-modern” until more recent times.

affirm...indigenous politics and aesthetics.” This research has culminated in a public lecture entitled “Sonic Sovereignty in D’Arcy McNickle’s The Surrounded,” delivered at Brown University November 11, 2016. Dustin Tahmahkera is also analysing “sonic representations of the Comanche Nation.” He likens LRAD cannons being used to silence protestors at Standing Rock protesting against the Dakota Access Pipeline as well as the noise of artillery testing at Fort Sill, Oklahoma near the Sacred Comanche site Mt. Scott to “sonic duels.” They are, then, modern day versions of the sonic battles featured throughout this dual narrative and perfect examples of the continued lack of respectful dialogue between the invaders and the invaded. See Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley, “On Sonic Sovereignty,” Thinking In Community: Official Blog of the Humanities Institute at the University of Texas at Austin, (February 15, 2017), http://sites.utexas.edu/humanitiesinstitute/2017/02/15/on-sonic-sovereignty/, accessed 3 July 2017.

9 NISH, p.106.
when literacy has come to be thought of in a plural sense as “literacies,” or collectively and interdependently as “multimodal literacy.”

On a related note, the idea of nature (the primitive state) being opposed to culture (modern civilisation) will be of no service as you seek to listen to the place of the Great Turtle’s back. However natural and universal this way of thinking may seem, it is merely one of many “dualistic concepts” resulting from the westerners’ “metaphysical habit of thought.”

It is time for us to listen “below the (white) noise” and turn up the volume on a world in which nature and culture do not exist; where time is not linear but a cyclical construct; where conventional history is myth while that which is usually called “myth” is often a more reliable means of interpreting events that have been and are yet to come; where the “literate” newcomers are, in fact, illiterate compared to the peoples of the Great Turtle’s back — a world of plural as well as singular beings whose spiritual power is neither good nor evil but neutral, fluid, transformable and transferrable to other entities in and between simultaneously physical and spiritual realities.

PART III

THE RHYTHMIC TRADITION

From the beginning of the world has the sound of my voice been heard;

From the ends of the earth is the sound of my coming heard;

From the ends of the earth do I come with the sound of my rattles, sha!

“Nanabushu Slays Toad-Woman, the Healer of the Manitous”

Ojibwa Texts

(1917-1919)
Creation

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.”¹ 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.” But long before these earthly ones or even Mother Earth herself existed, the most elderly of the elders were created in the Sky World: Grandfather Sun and Grandmother Moon.²

Eventually it came to pass that a beautiful woman living on Grandmother Moon cut down an immense tree and fell through a hole in its stump. The tree had stood at the cosmic centre, so in falling through the stump the woman had actually fallen through the axis mundi (world axis), which penetrated and connected all layers of the vast cosmos.³ She fell for a long time. Below her, there was nothing but a primordial sludge beneath unfathomably deep waters and above those waters, only sky. Turtle looked up and, upon seeing this falling Sky Woman was heavily pregnant, alerted the other aquatic and winged creatures who determined that the deep-divers among them needed to swim to the bottom of the water, bring up some soil and place it on Turtle’s back, while the winged ones were to fly to the falling Sky Woman and carry her safely to her landing place.

The strongest aquatic animals did their best to help Sky Woman by plunging into the deep water for the precious soil, but none succeeded. When Muskrat offered to try, therefore, the

³ A standard feature of ancient cosmographies, the axis mundi takes on many symbolic forms; a pole or pillar, a mountain, a column of tobacco smoke, drumbeats which penetrate cosmic layers, a ladder, or stairway but is most often an enormous “World Tree” standing at the centre of the world with roots stretching far into the deepest layers of the Earth World, a trunk in the flat-Earth realm, and branches reaching into the Sky World’s highest layers. See Eliade, Sacred and Profane, Op.cit., pp.36–42.
other creatures laughed, for what chance did the smallest of the aquatic creatures have when
the stronger, larger ones had failed? Undeterred, Muskrat began his journey to the watery
depths. Later, when Muskrat’s body floated back to the top it seemed all hope was lost —
until he regained consciousness and opened his little paw revealing a tiny bit of soil.

Like the earth-diving Muskrat himself, the soil was small but destined for great things. As
soon as the soil was placed on Turtle’s back, the winds from the Four Sacred Directions blew
and the soil grew to the size of an island, providing Sky Woman with a place to land without
injury. Thus Sky Woman became Mother Earth. To honour the Great Turtle’s sacrifice,
Mother Earth empowered all land and sea turtles with the ability to transcend space and time
and to transform from “a physical to an incorporeal nature.” The ever-truthful, amphibious
Turtle used these transcendental powers to move along the axis mundi carrying messages
between every material and spiritual region of what was now a vast, multilayered, geocentric
cosmos with a zenithal Sky World consisting of four layers above, a nadiral Earth World also
consisting of four subterranean layers below, all floating in and surrounded by the primordial
Aquatic World. [Fig. 3.1]

Not long after her arrival on Turtle’s soil-covered shell, Mother Earth gave birth to
Nourishment. As a result, the first plants began to grow and their seeds of life were spread to
the Four Sacred Directions of the Earth-island by singing birds. Insects, crawling things, and
the four-leggeds then came into being. Nevertheless, the Earth World remained incomplete.
Nourishment, like her mother, grew to be extraordinarily beautiful — so beautiful, in fact, that
the West Wind fell in love with her and together they conceived a half-spirit, half-human
child. All nations eventually came from this Original Man who was himself the product of all
elements of Creation. To acknowledge this kinship, Original Man and his descendants
referred—and continue to refer—to their fellow beings as “all our relations” and “people,”
regardless of the other-than-human persons’ forms. People, animals, plant life, earthly and
meteorological phenomena, even built objects — all were and are inalienable parts of
Creation and potentially alive, sentient, and agentive.

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5 Regarding the Turtle as the “spirit that never lied,” see Alexander Henry, Travels and Adventures in
Canada and the Indian Territories, between the years 1760 and 1770, (New York: I. Riley, 1809),
7 Humans, then, writes Theresa S. Smith, “are not understood to stand radically outside of the natural
world. They stand within a world of interconnecting relationships, a cosmos populated by a variety of
personalities who sometimes cooperate and sometimes engage in conflict.” NISH, p.75.
Figure 3.1: A graphic representation of the Medicine Wheel’s seven cardinal directions, the cosmic regions of Mother Earth (Below), Father Sky (Above), the vertical axis mundi (world axis) running through the centre connecting all cosmic layers, and the horizontal axis, the “flat-Earth,” across the centre. Reprinted with the author’s permission from D’Arcy Rheault, Ishpeming’ Enzaabid, Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin (The Way of a Good Life): An Examination of Anishinaabe Philosophy, Ethics and Traditional Knowledge, (Peterborough, Ontario: Debwewin Press, 1999), p.162.
As the last to be created in Creation’s family, Original Man was the youngest of all the beings and relatively powerless, so he relied heavily on his wise elders to “live well,” that is, to live a long life, with good health, and freedom from misfortune on the Earth-island.\(^8\) Aware of his vulnerability and dependence on those who were wiser and more powerful, Original Man nurtured good relationships with his elders founded on respect, negotiation, and reciprocity so they would continue to help him throughout his life. By always remembering that relations with other persons are “reciprocal” and “negotiated” through “meaningful conversation... rather than authoritarian and monologic,” Original Man found the way to live in synchrony with all his relations and, thereby, maintained the delicate balance of power in Creation.\(^9\) Of all the mutually beneficial relationships he built, one of the strongest was the one Original Man enjoyed with a great hunter who supplied him with much game and warmth and who received companionship, shelter, and fire from him in return: the Wolf.\(^10\)

Also in this cosmos, though, was (and is) one who refused/s to live in synchrony with the rest of Creation. This ineffable one who lives “down there” in the deepest, primordial layers of earth and water is a mysterious, unpredictable, hidden and plural being who puts the whirl in whirlpools, upsets watercraft without warning, produces quicksand and sinkholes, gives the rapids their lethality, causes the floodwaters to rise, and drowns humans simply because he has the power and the desire to do so.\(^11\) It was for this reason alone, and through no fault of

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\(^10\) OT-I, pp.73–89.

Original Man or his beloved Wolf, that this being known as the Horned Underwater Serpent, chief of the Underwater beings, decided to wreak havoc in their perfectly balanced, synergistic relationship by capturing and murdering the Wolf. In so doing, the Underwater Serpent set off a chain of events in the “interconnected reality” of Creation that allowed his own imbalance and asynchrony to overwhelm the precarious balance and life-rhythms that had, until then, sustained life on the Earth-island.


12 Alternate names for the Serpent: Great Lynx, Great Snake, Underwater Panther, Mishebeweshu, Mishibijiw, Mishi-ginebig (Anishinaabeg), Awanyu (Tewa), Misi-kinepikw (Cree), Misi-kinepikwa (Shawnee), Misi-ginebig (Oji-Cree), Pita-skog (Abenaki), Siniti lapitta (Choctaw), Unktehi / Unktehila / ūmphēgila (Dakota), Olubit (Natchez), Uktena (Aniyvwiyaʔi, Cherokee), Jipijka’m (Lniuk, Mi’kmaq).

Destruction

Seeking vengeance for the murder of his close relative, the Wolf, Original Man contrived a clever plan to kill the Horned Underwater Serpent. Original Man only succeeded in wounding him severely, but even this success came at a price. In retribution the other Underwater beings made the floodwaters rise so high all over the Earth-island, Original Man was forced to take refuge in a tree.

When the waters subsided, Original Man came down from the tree and it was then he encountered Old Toad-Woman hopping through the woods, collecting bast while singing with her turtle-shell rattle conspicuously hanging from her side. Despite being amphibious the Old Toad was fiercely loyal to the Underwater beings and, to her detriment, made no secret of their alliance. When Original Man asked her why she was collecting bast (a plant fibre), the loose-lipped Old Toad boasted that she and the other Underwater beings needed it to make some twine with which to ensnare one known as “Original Man.” And, upon being asked about her rattle, she also revealed it was something she was about to use along with her song to heal the wounds Original Man had inflicted on none other than the Horned Underwater Serpent.

After tricking Old Toad-Woman into teaching him this medicinal song and how to use the turtle-shell rattle, Original Man clubbed her to death, flayed her, wore her skin and hopped through the woods singing her medicine song with her turtle-shell rattle hanging from his side. In accordance with the excessive power and general imbalance of the Horned Underwater Serpent, the Aquatic world’s medicine is likewise the most powerful and its acquisition exacts a terrible price, such as the death of a person’s whole family. Having stolen the turtle-shell rattle and healing song by trickery rather than being gifted it through negotiation, then, Original Man had already done enough to ignite the Underwater beings’ wrath for a second time — but he was only just getting started.¹

¹ This is not intended to cast aspersions on Original Man’s conduct here. Though reciprocity, respect, and negotiation through dialogue is required for good relations, especially between humans and their other-than-human elders, the Horned Underwater Serpent does not negotiate predictably or fairly; “his ways are opaque.” Other-than-human persons usually only ask to be respected and given gifts like tobacco for their spiritual aid, whereas the Horned Underwater Serpent expects human souls in...
Hopping along, clothed in Old Toad-Woman’s skin, Original Man easily obtained access to the abode in which his nemesis, the Horned Underwater Serpent, was awaiting Old Toad-Woman’s doctoring. Though some other Underwater beings spied a little of Original Man’s human skin through the tear he had made in Toad-Woman’s skin, they were too late to save the Horned Underwater Serpent. With his otherwise perfect impersonation of Old Toad-Woman in which he did not miss a beat in his reproduction of her enrhythmed healing sounds, Original Man had lulled them all into a false sense of security long enough to succeed in delivering the mortal blows to Wolf’s murderer.

When the Underwater beings made the floodwaters rise again to avenge their chief’s death, not even the treetops would be high enough to provide Original Man and the other Earth-dwellers safe haven. Indeed, “[f]rightful was the roar of the water that came pursuing” Original Man as he ran.¹

¹ “Nanabushu Slays Old Toad-Woman,” in OT-I, p.151.

² exchange for power and he does not offer it out of a desire to help his “grandchildren” but for his own gain. For this reason, Theresa S. Smith notes, the Horned Underwater Serpent is not even referred to as “grandfather” by the Anishinaabeg, as he does not behave like a loving grandfather. NISH, pp.97, 100–01, 120, 178.

² “Nanabushu Slays Old Toad-Woman,” in OT-I, p.151.
Re-creation

Few living things survived the Great Flood. Only one big log offered the survivors any respite. The animals took turns in resting there, along with Original Man. Fortunately, as a half-spirit Original Man was not entirely without wisdom. Indeed, as his encounter with Old Toad-Woman proved, Original Man’s spiritual element meant he was wise enough to play the trickster; creatively finding solutions to problems that came his way. In time, he would pass on to his human descendants all the wisdom he had acquired—both legitimately and by cunning trickery—during his direct encounters with his other-than-human elders.

After some time upon the log, therefore, the wise, spiritual side of Original Man prevailed: he would swim to the aquatic world’s nethermost region and grab a handful of soil to make a new Earth. When he resurfaced, however, he was out of breath and could not speak. The water was too deep and he could not “swim fast enough or hold [his] breath long enough to make it to the bottom.”¹ Loon, Hell-Diver, Mink, Otter and Turtle each tried to complete the task, to no avail. So when little Muskrat offered to attempt the seemingly impossible, all condescendingly laughed at his proposal — all except Original Man who, instead, encouraged him to take on the heroic role of Earth-diver.

Much time passed before Muskrat resurfaced “more dead than alive.” On close inspection, Original Man spied little grains of earth closed up tight in Muskrat’s tiny paws and another small grain in his mouth and proceeded to blow on the unlikely earth-diver to give him some of his own spirit, until little Muskrat came back to life.² Turtle then swam forward and said: “Use my back to bear the weight of this piece of earth...[so] we can make a new Earth.”³ Original Man, the son of Nourishment and the West Wind, blew on the little Earth and the winds from the Four Sacred Directions likewise began to blow. The morsel of soil on Turtle’s back grew while Original Man sang and the animals danced in a circle to infuse this creative act with their unified spiritual power. Finally, the small piece of earth was a huge island once more: “the place of the Great Turtle’s back.”⁴

Despite being killed by Original Man, the plural being known as the Horned Underwater Serpent will always exist, because while he is certainly possessed of a malevolent will, this chief of the Underwater beings is not strictly evil and he is necessary for, in this cosmos, all power is neutral — even destruction creates as well as destroys. It is only when the Horned Underwater Serpent’s great power is not kept in check that he has the ability to overwhelm the Earth-island’s vulnerable humans. But since the Underwater Serpent is incapable of restricting his power himself, it must be kept in balance with the rest of Creation by another party. Even Original Man, whose personal power was greater than the most powerful medicine people among his human descendants, could not defeat the Horned Underwater Serpent without losing the entire world in the process, so Original Man’s even less empowered human descendants are clearly incapable of filling this role. Protection, therefore, must come from more powerful other-than-human persons whose vantage point allows them to easily observe the otherwise unpredictable Underwater Serpent’s attacks and whose power is sufficient to counter him: the other-than-human Sky persons.

Grandfather Sun and Grandmother Moon share the role of keeping a constant, watchful eye over Creation in their circadian rhythmic walk across the sky. Grandfather Sun rises in the east and walks each day before disappearing in the west where the Land of the Dead is located; Grandmother Moon fulfils this caretaker role by night. But it is the giant Thunderbirds who take the active role in protecting the humans and other earth-bound ones, especially in summer when the Horned Underwater Serpent is most troublesome because he is not trapped under ice. The Thunderbirds herald their coming by sounding their voices so the humans have plenty of warning to take cover lest they be inadvertently hit by the lightning the Thunderbirds use to strike and kill the Horned Underwater Serpent and other underground and underwater persons. It is solely this alliance between the Sky beings and the humans that prevents the Earth-island from being swallowed up by the Aquatic World again.

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5 Diaz-Granados, “Picture Cave,” Op.cit., pp.209–10. Evil, as Christians conceive it, does not exist in this lifeworld. *NISH*, pp.106, 129–30 asserts, “While there is a general attitude...which assigns good qualities to the heavens and places evil in the waters, it is in no way a strictly dualistic system....Thunderbirds sometimes attack humans and...the Underwater manitouk are, on occasion, sought for their medicinal powers...[T]he battles between [them] are not experienced as contests between good and evil, light and dark, right and wrong, but between the forces of balance and imbalance, as embodied in powerful...mutually dependent persons....Far from a simple vertical clash between the powers of sky and water, the relationship...[is] dialectical...a continual movement between two contradictory symbols.” On the necessity of having knowledge of the “good side” and “dark side of life...to walk in balance,” see VoS, p.38.

6 *NISH*, p.66.

Living Well

Like their ancestor Original Man, human beings are not automatically entitled to protection from more empowered ones but must continually “live well” by behaving in such a way as to be worthy of their elders’ guardianship. This is because humans are part of rather than separate from Creation and, as such, have a major effect on and are responsible for its continued orderliness, even if the only contributions they can make in this regard are living moderately and being respectful in word and deed to all their relations, including fellow humans but, especially, their other-than-human protectors.¹

“Living well” means a commitment to the ideal of “respectful” interaction and, in human-to-human interactions, is apparent in the particular reverence traditionally shown to the spoken word. Words are sacred, for they have never been reduced to lifeless, mute lines on a page. They “do not only describe the world” in an abstract way, they are exclusively “power-driven” sonic events that “actively create and shape” it. “To speak,” therefore, is to use one’s own personal power, to acoustically “make manifest one’s spirit.”² Thus, Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers demonstrate respect for the immense power of words via strict adherence to a set of conventions. Like the Crane, who is in some nations a symbol of leadership and eloquence because his distinctive call carries across earth and water and is “as infrequent as it [is] unique,” they do not “deprecate” the value of their messages “by too frequent speech.”³ Instead, they think over and meditate upon words in silence for a lengthy period and, when they are finally uttered, they are elaborate, eloquent compositions containing “an infinity of Metaphors, of various circumlocutions and other rhetorical methods.”⁴ This highly developed oral literacy, or oralacy as it is technically known, and the absence of the written word has led cultural outsiders to label the people of the Great Turtle’s back as members of an “oral culture.” But oralacy is only half the story.

³ Johnston, Op.cit., p.61; VoS, p.25. For the same reasons the Loon is also known for leadership and eloquence.
If vocalising expends personal power and acoustically “makes manifest one’s spirit,” then to show adequate respect for the personal power expended by a fellow being one must also be, like the infrequently speaking Crane, adept in the practice of “active listening.” Like the “rests” musical composers use, which have measurable sonic values and are as powerful as the loudest musical sound because of the dynamic contrasts they produce, silence is not just “an absence of speech” for the Great Turtle’s people “but...something that has communicative meaning alongside speech...a form of negative politeness — not imposing on others.”

Father Paul le Jeune, for example, noted “[a] Sagamore, or Captain, dining in our room one day, wished to say something; and, not finding an opportunity, because [we] were all talking at the same time, at last prayed the company to give him a little time to talk in his turn, and all alone, as he did.” At council, too, orators listened patiently and closely to summarise the matter at hand as well as all previous speakers’ statements before adding his own advice in an extempore composition, and he had to do all this without the slightest stumble, which was a rarity and swiftly mocked as the mark of a bashful woman. Even in everyday interactions, speaking over the top of another person or talking too loudly was and is condemned. Today, writes Robin Ridington,

Native Americans often experience the discourse of non-Indians as insistently pushing toward monologue. They resent being interrupted by people who do not recognize the moments of silence that punctuate a speaker’s narrative. They are surprised at what appears to be a lack of respect for the sharing that brings a story into being....Respect operates at every level of conversation. Listening and speaking are of equal importance.

Everyone listens patiently out of respect for the spiritual power expended when a speaker voices knowledge gifted to him or her by the elder beings over the course of a lifetime, but also because they recognise that they may obtain this knowledge themselves through active listening practices. The Algonquian-speaking Anishinaabeg even have a word for the aural

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6 JR 5: 25–27.
8 JR 27: 261–63.
acquisition of wisdom: *bzindamowin* (learning from listening). It is this deep commitment to respectful communication that cultivates a high level of *auralacy* (aural literacy), which in turn is responsible for the noted oratory prowess of the Great Turtle’s people, since one cannot reproduce utterances of a high quality (both in terms of sonic and oratorical value and wisdom) without having actively listened to and deeply heard such utterances in the first place. As an “oral culture,” then, this is above all an “aural culture” and a “silent culture,” because there can be no oral proficiency without there first being *auralacy* (aural literacy) and without either of these requisites for effective communication there can be no respectful relationships.

Due to the highly “inclusive category of personhood” on the Great Turtle’s back, the same conventions of politeness apply to humans’ interactions with their other-than-human elders. Their “personhood” means that if sufficient respect is not demonstrated, other-than-human persons can choose to withdraw their support from their human dependents or “grandchildren” as easily as a disgruntled, offended human can. If a human wants or needs something from an other-than-human elder, for instance if s/he wants to secure their lifelong guardianship, or wants to know the location of game, or to be healed of a physical malady, the human must call the elder respectfully; this means they must conjure them by the sounding of their names and using familial honorifics like “Grandfather,” “Grandmother,” “Mother,” and “Father,” just as Original Man always did. They should also provide gifts, usually tobacco, and they should humble themselves by suffering a little via fasting, social isolation, or sensory deprivation, to prove they are truly in need and are willing to sacrifice to gain what they desire. In the event a person recklessly calls an other-than-human person by sounding their name when they are not in great need of their help, and particularly if a person calls on them repeatedly out of a greedy desire for excessive spiritual power, the elder may prove unwilling to respond to their calls again and, worse, may punish the overreacher for attempting to live out of synchrony and disrupting the balance of power in Creation, as was the case with “He who over-Dreamed” and over-fasted and was turned into a robin. Or, if a person burns the skin of a squirrel in front of some fishnets in a lodge, for example, the fishnets can potentially tell the master of the fish persons that those who have generously given their bodies and

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15 *OT-II*, pp.307–09.
power to humans for sustenance are carelessly treated, causing the fish to no longer allow themselves to be caught in future either.\textsuperscript{16}

It was, however, far easier for Original Man to develop strong relationships with the diverse personalities of Creation that were “reciprocal” and “negotiated” through “meaningful conversation”\textsuperscript{17} than it is for his human descendants. Original Man was more closely descended from Mother Earth via her daughter Nourishment and, consequently, had little difficulty in understanding the speech of the diverse other-than-human persons of Creation or being understood by them. Indeed, in the distant past, animals and humans all spoke one language but over time they became mutually unintelligible.\textsuperscript{18} Only a select few of Original Man’s descendants, known as “the ones who talk to spirits” and “medicine people,” have been gifted with anything approaching his fluency in the spirits’ diverse languages. The majority—who must still somehow forge strong personal relationships with other-than-human elders for the bare necessities of daily life—have lost the ability to understand and communicate directly and intelligibly with all the spirits.

One way the people of the Great Turtle’s back do their best to adhere to the protocols of respectful communication with “all [their] relations,” despite their lack of fluency, is by actively listening to the sounds in their environment. There are no meaningless sounds on the Great Turtle’s back — only sounds that are not always understood by human auditors. When thunderclaps reverberate unusually in quick succession throughout the Sky World on a summer afternoon, for instance, an old Anishinaabe man asks his wife: “Did you hear what was said?” “No, I didn’t catch it,” she replies.\textsuperscript{19} Though they have not comprehended its content on this occasion, the elderly couple have heard the speech of one of the giant Thunderbirds in the Sky World and, knowing the Thunderbirds are particularly protective of their human grandchildren on earth, they likely conclude they have been delivered a warning.\textsuperscript{20} It matters not that the Thunderbirds make their speeches with the flapping of their

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\textsuperscript{16} SLJ, p.187; Henriksen, Op.cit., pp.53–55, 59–60. “In Innu-aimun we would say, nakatuenimushu, meaning ‘they want to protect themselves.’ If you don’t respect a fish, or porcupine, they won’t give anything in return.”
\textsuperscript{20} This information throws a very different light on the Brûlé episode detailed by Sagard and Champlain. While the Tsonontowane’á:ka (Seneca) would have heard and reacted to thunder as a vocal warning, they would not have heard it as one intentionally threatening them on Brûlé’s behalf but as the Thunderbirds protecting the Tsonontowane’á:ka (Seneca) by telling them they were about to fight the Horned Underwater Serpent or warning them to get out of the way lest they become collateral damage. See NISH, pp.66, 70–71.
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wings rather than by making thunderous cries with their voices: this is a world in which the categories of “voice” and “speech” are much broader to be more inclusive of diverse species’ anatomical differences and/or preferred method of audible communication. Every sound without an obvious human source, therefore, is the voice of a living, breathing, moving, thinking, emoting relative who is either communicating directly with their human dependents or is simply overheard speaking to a fellow other-than-human person. Their vocal productions, therefore, are unfailingly treated with respect by human beings via engaged listening and offerings of tobacco, the smoke of which serves as a ritual axis, (an *axis mundi*), carrying human words communicating needs and wants upwards through the multilayered cosmos to the Thunderbirds. The extent of this active listening and extreme aural sensitivity is apparent in the Anishinaabeg’s ability to identify eight different Thunderbirds whose individual names describe the unique thunderous sounds they produce; in the sixteen different winds named by the Innu (Montagnais); the variety of terms used by the Iiyuu (Naskapi) to describe subtly different sounds of water; and the Nēhiyaw (Cree) hunter’s ability to extract from the sounds of geese information regarding height, wind direction, and relative positions to the hunter.21

Learning to listen closely to sounds, which may or may not be messages from wise elders warning their poor, helpless human grandchildren of future calamity unless they change their ways, is essential for the acquisition of wisdom and for day-to-day survival. For example, hooting and especially cackling or screeching owls, according to Anishinaabe medicine person Forever-Flying-Bird, “means bad news...a bad, bad warning”:

The Indians don’t like to hear that....It means death!...If an Old Indian hears a screech owl, they sometimes talk with a Spiritual Man...the Spiritual will say, “You may have to give out something. Put a gift out. Or you may have to fast. Or you may have to do this. You may have to suffer a little bit,...showing…you’re trying to avoid it.” Then it clears up....

If you get ahead of it, then you can avoid it, by using the Indian method...There’s always a meditation…you can use… There is some way to avoid that message. Those that understand the signs should try to have a feast over it, and talk it over, and get the message to go away. The sign is just a warning. If you recognise that warning, it may help you. But sometimes you get such a short notice, you don’t have time to get there...So the best thing to do is to take interest to those warnings all along. If you don’t understand a warning have somebody reinterpret

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21 *NISH*, pp.69–70, 72–75, 120; *VoS*, pp.61, 67–68, 71.
that, like some of them old timers. That way you can avoid problems, most generally.

Howling dogs, wolves and coyotes, and foxes that cry and “holler like a person” “Gah-gah-kah-kay-yah-ah-kah-way-ga...Bah-uu wuu. Wuu. Wu. Wu” so “it sounds just like [they are] talking,” are also heard as ominous messages. Others, like the robin, tell humans it is going to rain but some hear his speech as a bad omen and feel a sense of great foreboding, saying he speaks like a human and brings bad news because he was once a human being, specifically “He who over-fastened,” who was turned into a robin to punish his father for driving him to excess in his pursuit for power. Whistling is also the telltale sound made by ghosts and is among the “anomalous phenomena” reportedly heard by local inhabitants and a minority of European visitors of the otherwise eerily inaudible aurorae of “The Northern Lights” (Aurora Borealis), which many Original Peoples of Waabanakiing believe is either the luminous dance of spirits in the Land of the Dead where perpetual drumming and singing are heard or reflections of the spirits playing ball. In 1856, Hudson’s Bay Company fur trader Alexander Ross reported that the “Red River Indians” (western Cree) used to “fire shots at the Aurora Borealis to keep ghosts at bay.”

Like the abnormal thunderclap utterances the elderly Anishinaabeg couple heard from the Thunderbirds, it is usually when sonic messages sound atypical in some way or are spoken by other-than-human persons in extraordinary circumstances that they are heard as urgent warnings for human auditors. It is not enough, then, to learn the other-than-human speech, one must also be sensitive to expression and know how to contextualise these diverse sounds. On a particular occasion in the springtime when an owl made a “bad” screeching noise, “Chuk-kouk-kuk-kuk,” for example, the knowledgeable “old timers” reassured a young Forever-Flying-Bird: “Don’t worry about it. The birds are active now. They’re mating in the spring. It’s just a mating time, or maybe they have their own problems. That’s nothing now...Just forget it.” In this instance, the screeching owl’s purely sonic speech also had to be interpreted within the macro-rhythmic context of the seasonal cycle. Nevertheless, because the average human does not have as much wisdom as the “old timers” to independently interpret

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the multiple layers of meaning accurately, most of the Great Turtle’s people cultivate a hypersensitivity to the diverse methods of communication the other-than-human persons employ and, by default, hear other-than-human sounds as potential warnings unless they are told otherwise.

When it comes to survival, though, extreme aural sensitivity to the elders’ warnings can only do so much: one must also be able to ask the elders for life’s necessities. How, then, does an Algonquian or Iroquoian speaker carry on a respectful, reciprocal, “meaningful conversation”\textsuperscript{24} with, say, thunder, fish, or tree elders to negotiate what she or he needs to survive on this precarious Earth-island? Wordlessly. Soundfully. For as powerful as words obviously are to the people of the Great Turtle’s back, their power derives from the fact that they are sonic. Words are only the human dialect of a far greater lingua franca spoken in this densely “peopled”\textsuperscript{25} cosmos by humans and other-than-human persons alike: a universal spirit language of pure sound.

\textsuperscript{25} NISH, p.43.
Spirit-Talking

Only extraordinary individuals within a community are gifted in a vision or a dream with the wisdom of how to fluently converse with other-than-human elders. The person gifted in this way is the most powerful of the medicine people and is called, in the Algonquian languages at least, *jiisaakiwinini*: “the one who talks to spirits.”¹ Like all knowledge, this wisdom comes solely after the individual has humbled him or herself sufficiently, made great sacrifices either via self-inflicted suffering such as extreme fasting and isolation, or by miraculously surviving a major health crisis in youth as a result of self-healing. Thus, these exceptional individuals seek long periods of social withdrawal, practice intense listening to their environment, and even sensory deprivation to ponder at length over what they learn from listening or, indeed, from their fully embodied experience of Creation.² These activities endow the individual with the extreme *auralacy* required to hear and accurately interpret the speech of other-than-human persons and the *oralacy* to speak directly and intelligibly to them in the multitude of other-than-human tongues. Even so, while these extraordinary people have greater spiritual strength than the average person and are the most fluent spirit-talkers, they are not the sole human “speakers” of the sonic lingua franca.

As we have already discovered, traditionally the Great Turtle’s people have, out of necessity, practiced a level of “democratized shamanism.”³ For while the spirit-talkers communicate with numerous other-than-human elders to help with major issues in a community—predictions of war, the location of game, or to speak directly with the departed in the Land of the Dead—the day-to-day business of surviving in the world requires all individuals to nurture a good personal relationship with the other-than-human persons founded on respect, negotiation, and reciprocity. For many of the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples, a lifelong, personal relationship with a guardian other-than-human elder is initially forged during a

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² Grim, Op.cit., pp.168–79. See VoS, p.52 in which it is stated, “Nature is sometimes described as an Indian equivalent of “books” since one learns to “read” the forest and environment for one’s survivial. All the teachings intended by the Creator for the people are there.”

vision fast at adolescence when young people withdraw from their community and, in their state of vulnerability and great need, ask an elder to take pity on them.\textsuperscript{4} Isolated from the community with nothing to protect them, the individual is forced to draw upon his or her most basic personal resources to survive.

Take everything away from a person and they still have the oldest and most readily available soundmaker with which they may attract and secure the aid of an other-than-human elder: the voice. Each individual person on the Great Turtle’s back, therefore, has his or her own song “that another dare not sing lest he give offense,”\textsuperscript{5} for so much of the singer’s spirit is invested in the song, which usually comes to the singer in a dream as a gift from their personal other-than-human guardian.\textsuperscript{6} The oral testimony of Kaniuekutat, a twentieth-century Innu (Montagnais) hunter, confirms his father possessed and successfully used his private song to conjure and convince the animal spirits to offer their lives to their poor, helpless human grandchildren:

Once in the summer, I was with my parents, and I was only a young boy. We didn’t have anything to eat....One night my father started to sing his traditional song. I didn’t know why he sang it in the night. The next morning it was a very nice day. The lake where we camped was calm. We hadn’t paddled very far when we saw a caribou, and there we stopped. Since I was just a young boy, I began to wonder why those things happen. We didn’t have anything yesterday, now there was caribou. Then I began to think, ‘maybe that is why my father was singing last night.’ I didn’t ask why we got caribou that day, and he didn’t tell me....He sang that song to get his caribou the next day, to support and feed us....As long as there was caribou around, my father could sing his hunting song and get his caribou the next day. Even if there was no caribou around, he could still do things to get porcupine, partridge and fish.

\textsuperscript{4} On the Anishinaabe vision fast, see Paul Bourgeois, “Odewegewin: An Ojibwe Epistemology” (Major Paper (draft), York University, March 31, 1998) TMs [photocopy], 3 cited in Rheault, Op.cit., pp.67–68. Note: \textit{odewegewin} means “the way of the drum” and refers to what Bourgeois presents as a drum-centred lifeway. The Innu (Montagnais) reportedly do not practice the vision quest, but their dreams do perform a similar function in terms of forging a strong relationship with the environment. See VoS, p.27.


\textsuperscript{6} \textit{CM-I}, pp.126, 133; \textit{CM-II}, p.40.
Kaniuekutat’s father was not a medicine person or “one who talks to spirits” for, “[a] person does not have to be a shaman to do those things. If he is really sorry to see his children hungry and suffering, he has power to do something to find wild animals.”

The power of a personal song, therefore, rests largely in its ability to successfully communicate not strength but helplessness, respect, and humility in a purely sonic dialogue between the human and their prospective other-than-human guardians. To this end, such powerful songs typically take the form of monophonic melodies that can be chanted a capella—without any other instrumental accompaniment—and, due to their spiritual nature, contain little or no lyrical content, utilising instead non-lexical vocables such as hah/ah, hoh/oh, wah, yoh, yah, yeh, leh and hem. Writing about the Algonquian-speaking Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) in the late nineteenth century, Frances Densmore described these vocables as, throaty sounds, which differentiate the tones but cannot be expressed in letters. It is said..., “one must have an Indian throat to sing the songs properly.” A[n Anishinaabe] does not move the lips in giving these vocables, but seems to produce them by a contraction of the glottis; the tone lengths are, however, entirely distinct and rarely vary in the repetitions of the song.

Just as the limitations of a simple “twelve-bar blues” structure in Blues music paradoxically provides a musician with freedom to improvise and achieve complexity in other sonic elements, though, this simplicity or complete absence of lyrics and harmony in Algonquian-Iroquoian chants allows other types of meaningful acoustic complexity to flourish. For example, the diversity of vocal tone colours that had seemed full of pathos and “grave,... heavy...[and] sombre” to the Jesuits’ ears actually reflect singers’ emotions and, thus, sonically communicate that the singers are helpless children humbly soliciting the aid of their wise other-than-human elders. To use the words of Kaniuekutat, these tones adequately show a person “is really sorry” about being unable to provide for him/herself and family. Imitations of animal calls and acoustic representations of animals’ physical movements may also call a specific animal spirit to the person more effectively. We find evidence of this in the following description by Alice Cunningham Fletcher although, it should be noted, her nineteenth-century description of Omaha vocal techniques falls outside the Algonquian-

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8 JR 5: 25–29. For more on vocables, see HEAS, pp.150–52.
Iroquoian parameters of the present study and is laced with Fletcher’s attitude of assumed cultural superiority:

[T]he Indian...uses various kinds of tremolo in his attempts at expression. For instance, a man, when accepting the gift of a horse, will render his song of thanks as if he were singing it while riding the animal; his notes will be broken and jarred in pitch, as if by the galloping of the horse. Or, as in the Mekasee songs, the warrior will so manage his voice as to convey the picture of the wolf trotting or loping over the prairie. Then again, the expression of emotions of mystery, or dread, seems to require the notes to be broken.12

As Fletcher’s description reveals, rhythmic complexity is also able to come to the fore thanks to the music’s textural and lyrical simplicity.13 Along with the use of accents, syncopation, and the hypnotic rhythmic cycle created by the unbroken repetition of short chants, “vibrato” or “tremolo.”—a rapid variation of pitch and/or volume that produces “a rhythm within the rhythm” of a song—is employed. Tremolo was and remains a prominent, distinctive, and highly esteemed element of Native American and First Nations vocal technique but not merely because of its expressive qualities.14 For, even in the smallest “ritualised motions of the voice,”13 the power of rhythmic elements goes well beyond their ability to endow wordless sounds with emotional meaning.

In the same way sounding a name can call the person named into reality, enrhythmed sounds reference and, thus, conjure into the present space and time the life-rhythm that has continuously pulsed throughout Creation since the beginning of all things. As the sound of life itself in a world where spiritual power is transferrable, audible rhythm is life-giving and life-sustaining — in a word, it is “medicinal.”16 These curative properties are not merely intellectually known on the Great Turtle’s back, they are palpably experienced by rhythmists and auditors alike. In a process known as auditory driving, exogenous repetitive rhythmic patterns and cycles can overwhelm neural oscillations or “brainwaves” in the central nervous system and produce altered states of consciousness including trances or ecstatic “out of body” experiences in which physical sensations and awareness are temporarily suspended and transcended.17 Musicians in a band often report experiencing this auditory-driven entrainment

12 FLOM, p.152.
13 Ibid., pp.66–68; FLSS, p.119.
15 MBE, p.308.
as the feeling of “locking up” with each other; that is, a point when playing instruments becomes automatic and everyone falls into perfect synchrony like clocks enslaved to an unseen, distant master clock in a vast, ever-ticking clock network. For the people of the Great Turtle’s back that feeling was and is sacred. It is the feeling that one has transcended one’s individual, conscious, corporeal existence and been assimilated into and synchronised with a unified, orderly, spiritual whole—a feeling which reinforces the belief that everything in Creation is related and animated by the same life force. Understandably, the great significance the Original Peoples assign to rhythm corresponds with their mastery of rhythm: “I know of no greater rhythmic difficulties anywhere in our [western] modern music than these [people] have completely at command in their everyday music,” declared John Comfort Fillmore. “It seems to be as natural and easy for them to beat two and sing three, and that too in all sorts of syncopation and complex combinations as though they had received the most thorough rhythmical training to be had in any conservatory in the world.”

Since synchrony is the acoustic manifestation of “living well,” it follows that illness is a state of dysrhythmia in which the individual and his/her internal rhythms have fallen out of synchrony with the other-than-human beings and larger macrorhythms of Creation. Perhaps the individual has failed to respect their guardian other-than-human elders by asking too much from them, or they have angered a fellow human being who has enough spiritual power to attack them with magic in response, (justifiably or otherwise). These causes must be correctly identified and avenged and the ailing person must be brought back into synchrony with his or her environment once more for the restoration of their health. Thanks to the phenomenon of auditory-driven entrainment, audible rhythms do have the ability to produce and maintain a “therapeutic field” or “curative atmosphere” around the patient insofar as they can potentially induce an altered state of consciousness and, thus, have an anaesthetising effect on the listener-patient by making them, at least temporarily, insensible to their pain.

The traditional knowledge of music’s healing properties is identifiable in western science in the form of neurologic music therapy (NMT), in which music’s effects on the brain are exploited for non-musical purposes; namely its application to impaired cognition, sensory perception, psychological health, communication, social skills, and to treat major neurological dysfunctions including Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, Alzheimer’s, Multiple Sclerosis, stroke,

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20 Fillmore, FLOM, pp.67–68.
21 NISH, pp.105–06.
22 The underlying cause of physical symptoms of pain, for example, may be the result of an obsessive (and thus excessive) brooding over a personal loss. See Grim, Op.cit., pp.109–10.
23 Ibid.
and autism.\textsuperscript{24} For the Great Turtle’s people, a conjuring and powerful amplification of the creative life-rhythm via the production of loud rhythmic sounds, which concentrate creative power where needed, can override the person’s internal dysrhythmia and render their entire being at one with the cosmos again.

Nevertheless, the repetitive rhythmic cycle of a lone voice chanting a medicinal song is not always sufficient to produce the desired healing effect. Historically, even the most renowned medicine people were the first to admit if they were unable to access the spiritual realm on a particular occasion.\textsuperscript{25} The exceptionality of the experience is what made and continues to make it so highly valued. Sounds only acquire this special power if produced in a certain way and in certain conditions. Complex ritual conditions developed over time to decrease the outcome’s variability via the precise repetition of previously successful attempts to achieve the state. When the attempt to achieve the altered state still fails, the failure is the result of some minor flaw in the preparations or performance of the ritual and, subsequently, in the ritual conditions. As Le Jeune recorded in 1637:

[The] medicine man...usually makes three demands when he comes to treat a sick person. The dogs must not howl, for his cures are only made in silence; he only applies his remedies in a place apart, and he will often make you carry a poor patient into the woods; and the Sky must be clear. When [the medicine man] was asked why his remedy had not taken effect, it was found...he had not been given all...he demanded,—above all, a pipe of red stone and a pouch for his tobacco.\textsuperscript{26}

Alternatively, the bad medicine making the person sick may be too strong to be overridden, or the elders do not feel respected enough via tobacco offerings etc., to bestow any help on the sick person.

It is always possible that the elders, who may be in remote regions of the vast, multilayered cosmos, simply fail to hear the calls for help in the first place. The rational solution to the latter problem is to make the calls for help louder; so much so, that ritual participants may not even hear, for example, the loud report of a Frenchman’s arquebus above their own songs and pitiful cries for spiritual aid.\textsuperscript{27} Though there is still no guarantee merely loud sounds will achieve the ritual aims, past experiences of successful auditory-driven entrainment taught the

\textsuperscript{25} JR 9: 239–41.
\textsuperscript{26} JR 13: 29–33.
\textsuperscript{27} JR 5: 155–57.
people of the Great Turtle’s back that typically loud enrhythmed sounds were the most effective. This is because loud sounds are more likely to overwhelm the listener by altering the listener’s internal life-rhythms including the brainwaves, breathing, and heart rate. The body is programmed to adapt to its immediate environment in this way, because the alternative—resistance—requires the expenditure of more energy, which is not conducive to long-term survival.

When necessity requires it, then, the audible rhythms of healing chants are made more voluminous. One way to do so is by including more people in the healing ritual, just as Original Man and all his relations had communally sung and danced in a circle to invest more spiritual power into the small Earth-island during its re-creation. Historically, the volume and, hence, the efficacy and power of enrhythmed vocalised chants have also been enhanced via the use of simple idiophones. Every man, woman, and child sings and augments the rhythm’s strength by rhythmically hitting any object at hand to maximise the ritual’s collective volume and, thus, make the call for other-than-human aid more audible. In early seventeenth-century records, for example, sticks were beaten together and even mundane objects like upturned eating dishes were repurposed to accentuate the rhythm of a spiritual song during sacred rites. The long flat piece of wood communally beaten with sticks in the Omāmiwinini (Algonquin) healing ceremony Sagard spied through the chink in a lodge wall in the mid-1620s also belonged to this class of instruments. Other idiophones used to intensify the power of the collectively-generated enrhythmed call for spiritual assistance include “tinkling objects” known as “jingles.” In the pre-contact and contact era, inherently percussive objects that were plentiful in the local environment, such as pieces of hammered copper in the Great Lakes “the sound of [which] is really ringing,” and resources ritually acquired or left over from activities associated with daily human survival, such as shells, animal teeth, or bone, deer hooves, and deer and buffalo dewclaws, were recognised as spirit-talkers in their own right to be respectfully and resourcefully repurposed rather than carelessly wasted. To enlist their voices, both male and female individuals attached numerous small percussive objects to their clothing forming decorative fringes on buckskin shirts, leggings, garters, moccasins, dance shawls and headdresses that came to life acoustically whenever the wearer of the adorned clothing moved. The jingling sounds produced were especially pleasing when the

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28 See Demos, Unredeemed Captive, Op.cit., p.33 in which Algonquian or Iroquoian speakers “upbraided” the white colonists for not singing as loudly as them.
29 MBE, pp.304–08.
31 VoS, p.87.
individuals danced in synchrony with enrhythmed chants or other sources of percussive beats.32

The turtle-shell rattle Original Man stole from Old Toad-Woman is another sacred, rhythmic instrument the “ones who talk to spirits” (medicine people) use exclusively in rites to enhance overall volume and spiritual power.33 [Fig. 3.3 and Fig. 1:5] According to Lafitau in 1724, the rattle is,

a turtle, dried and cleaned out without damaging the head, tail, paws and skin (of this animal), which form a unit with the two scales [plastron and carapace], with the result that the turtle appears to be whole. The void…of this turtle is filled with grains of their wampum and a stick such as the Brazilians use for their maraca is inserted in it. It is used for the same purpose.34

Called by the Iroquoian speakers asatouen and the Algonquian speakers chichikoué or zhiishiigwan, the latter is particularly notable for its onomatopoeic quality, as the repetitious chi-chi / zhii-shii syllables capture on the paralinguistic level the timbre and perhaps even a sense of the response rate of the rattling sound produced when the instrument is shaken. This rhythm-maker is highly regarded for a number of reasons. Just as naming a being also conjures them, this instrument’s imitation of the very first sound of Creation, “the sound of things spinning and being put together,” and its onomatopoeic name conjure or acoustically make manifest the first creative sound that summoned life in the present reality.35 By being made from the body of a turtle, too, the instrument is the whole Earth-island in miniature, a fact reflected in the articulation of its purpose being “to shake the earth.”36 Its construction from a turtle also means the rattle is especially effective for calling the other-than-human elders into a sacred ceremony, as it is infused with the transcendental and communicative powers of the cosmic emissary, the Great Turtle.37 In the Jesuit Relations, Le Jeune recorded

34 Chicikoue has a variety of alternate spellings including chichigouan, zhizhigouan, cici’gwan. Lafitau, Customs of the American Indians I, Op.cit., p.153. For a recent source describing the turtle shell rattle’s construction, see Lone Eagle, “Turtle Shell Rattles,” Boys’ Life, (Feb 1954), p.69.
35 For another source supporting this interpretation with reference to cultural insiders’ testimony, see VoS, pp. 68–69.
36 Ibid., p.86.
37 On onomatopoeia as word-symbols acoustically imitating the powerful environmental sounds they symbolise and describe see Peter F. Ostwald, The Semiotics of Human Sound, (The Hague, Paris:
in 1633–1634 that certain “Genii of light, or...of the air” called Khichikouai who are “acquainted with future events” enter a ritual tent used for divination. The Innu (Montagnais) also informed Le Jeune at the same time, “it was not the juggler who spoke” during the shaking tent rite, “but these Khichikouai.” Read aloud, the word Khichikouai is phonetically almost identical to the word Le Jeune records for the rattle and rattle-drum elsewhere: chichikoué (shishikun / shishikunat in modern Innu-Aimun and zhiishiigwan in modern Anishinaabemowin). It seems, then, that the Innu were actually telling Le Jeune the rattle was speaking the spirit language to call other-than-human beings into the tent.  

38 In more recent times the Anishinaabeg and Śa’wano’ki (Shawnee), for just two examples, are documented referring to instrumentalists as “singers” when speaking English; this supports the argument that, for the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking peoples, all sound-makers were and are as envoiced as the human singer’s voice and literally speak, call, or “sing” out to the other-than-human beings of Creation using the sonic lingua franca. In other words, in a world of inclusive personhood and, by extension, inclusive definitions of vocality and speech, there is no differentiation between the human voice, the dancing body, and musical instruments — all belong to the category of spirit-talker or “singer” and enter into a dialogic exchange with other empowered persons, human and otherwise.  

There were and are other types of Algonquian and Iroquoian rattles that are called chichikoué / zhiishiigwan (Algonquian) and asatouen (Iroquoian) but are not created with the turtle’s


body. Lafitau described one of these among the Wendat (Huron Confederacy) as “a round or pear-shaped gourd,” however the size and shape of such rattles vary because the materials are “found” and “gathered from the land” after being “offered” or “gifted” by the other-than-humans to the human creating the instrument rather than “taken,” which implies a lack of respectful negotiation and consent. Thus, traditionally, diverse materials have been used to form the resonator of such rattles, including plant and animal resources such as wood from tree stumps and animal horns. The resonant objects deposited within the resonator are equally varied with smaller resonant objects creating a quieter sound when they collide together, and larger objects creating a louder rattle. There are recorded cases of rattles lacking “rattlers” altogether, their inaudibility to human ears marking their messages as being unusually powerful and exclusively for other-than-human ears. Gourd rattles are capable of more than dynamic contrasts, though; the Anishinaabeg loosen rattle handles so they can be turned to the four sacred cardinal directions, each of which produces a distinct tonal quality.

At least as early as the 1630s, the Algonquian-speakers’ word *chichigouan* (a variant spelling of *chichikoué / zhiishiigwan*) has traditionally also applied to what is best described as a rattledrum. Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune provides us with primary evidence of this instrument and performance practice in the 1630s:

> As to this drum, it is the size of a tambourine, and is composed of a circle three or four finger-lengths in diameter, and of two skins stretched tightly over it on both sides; they put inside some little pebbles or stones,…to make more noise; the diameter of the largest drums is of the size of two palms or thereabout; [the Innu (Montagnais)] call it *chichigouan*, and the verb *nipagahiman* means, “I make this drum sound.” They do not strike it, as do our Europeans, but…turn and shake it, to make the stones rattle inside; they strike it upon the ground, sometimes its edge and sometimes its face…[A]n old man told me…someone had dreamed…it was a good thing to have, and thus it came into use.

The word rattledrum is, therefore, most appropriate because this particular spirit-talker is a small handheld frame drum and, thus, technically a *membranophone*, yet also contains resonant objects and is turned and struck on the ground, as well as shaken — like a rattle (an *idiophone*) [Fig. 3.4].

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42 *VoS*, pp.84–85.
Regardless of the specific type of rhythm-maker the people of the Great Turtle’s back employed to talk to spirits, all of these instruments were older than any living human person and were constructed from the bodies of empowered other-than-human elders, (trees, plants, animals), who had allowed their own immense personal power to be transferred into a new form to help their less empowered human grandchildren live well on the Earth-island. It does not seem too far beyond the realms of probability to posit, therefore, that the present-day reverence shown to later and larger drums was founded in pre-contact and contact era tradition and, thus, applies to their early seventeenth-century counterparts, too. At the very least, we should be mindful of the likelihood that contact-era people of the Great Turtle’s back bestowed the familial honorific “grandfathers” on their instruments; that they may have also treated these rhythm-making instruments as people who needed sustenance, shelter, comfort, light, company and conversation; that great care was taken to shield these grandfathers from

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behaviour that was insufficiently respectful, especially any violent behaviour, because the neutral power these grandfathers possessed was so strong none could afford that power to be unleashed on them for negative rather than positive reasons.\textsuperscript{45} In other words, the human relationship to his or her instrument would have been—as it now is—a relationship based on reciprocity, negotiation, and respect and it was essential that these good relations were maintained, because in rituals the rhythm-makers became \textit{axes mundi}; connecting the otherwise helpless human beings to more empowered beings throughout Creation.

Even with these powerful grandfathers in their hands and their voices lifted in a communal medicine song, though, there were times when the enrhythmed sounds were still not loud enough to penetrate throughout the multiple layers of the vast cosmos and “establish contact with the personalistic powers in the universe.”\textsuperscript{46} There was, however, another way the people of the Great Turtle’s back increased the volume of the medicinal sounds and amplified the spiritual dimension of Creation — by using resonators.\textsuperscript{47}


\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, pp.78–79 for rhythm-makers as a “ritual axis.” See Landes, \textit{Ojibwa Religion,} Op.cit., pp.101–02, 104 for oral tradition in which the drum is both an old man and a tree (i.e. the world tree); a dual form enabling the soundmaker to penetrate all layers of earth and sky.

\textsuperscript{47} As D’Arcy Rheault asserts, “Ceremony is one of many occasions when humans become in-tune to the spiritual aspect of Creation; thus they are able to ‘perceive’ sacred objects as the actual living beings...they are.” Rheault, Op.cit., pp.114–17. See also Grim, Op.cit., p.81 for more on “the breakthrough of spiritual energies into the present flat-earth and the human order” once “invoked through the symbols of the cosmology.”
The infinite space of Creation is a poor resonator. In the open air, sounds diffuse in all
directions, rapidly fading into oblivion because they find nothing to bounce up against;
nothing that reflects rather than absorbs sound. Initially, therefore, other-than-human beings,
such as thunder, earthquakes, wind, waterfalls, and rain, had a monopoly on the power
required to create awe-inspiring, even terrifying, sensory experiences, because their sounds
alone could effortlessly reverberate throughout every layer of Creation.¹ Eventually, the
earliest people of the Great Turtle’s back harnessed some of this power themselves by
fashioning sound-makers from animal skins, shells, bones, plant material, rocks, and even
using their own bodies as instruments by developing “ritualised motions of the voice,”²
stamping their feet, clapping their hands, and sewing onto their clothing percussive objects
sourced from the local environment that audibly jingled or rattled when they moved to the
beat of the music, making their dancing bodies quite literally part of the song’s
instrumentation.³

The Original Peoples soon realised, though, the dancing body was far more than a sound
maker or “spirit-talker”: it was also a “resonator for auditory experience.”⁴ Dancers of the
Great Turtle’s back are resonators because they make sounds bigger than they are — not only
by enhancing the collective volume of the sounds themselves via the use of jingles but by
moving their bodies in synchrony with the exogenous rhythms of rattles, drums, and chants.
By, thus, “kinaesthetically representing” the sounds—that is, reproducing the rhythmic
patterns—in their musculatures they accentuate and deepen the sonic effects because they are
heard and felt.⁵ For this reason, the Original Peoples’ sacred rituals have traditionally
combined auditory driving with the kinaesthetic driving technique of “exhaustive dancing”
and exhaustively playing percussion instruments, which can cause “physical exhaustion,
vertigo, hyperventilation, and other physiological conditions that may alter consciousness.”⁶

Often, such rites also feature other potentially trance-inducing modes; visual driving via, for

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¹ Ostwald, Op.cit., p.22. ¹
² MBE, p.308. ²
⁴ MBE, p.326. My italics. ⁴
⁵ Ibid. ⁵
⁶ Scott R. Hutson, “The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures,” Anthropological
Quarterly, Vol. 73, No. 1 (Jan., 2000): 40. ⁶
example, the stimulation of fast-paced fiery displays, intense focus on a flickering flame or, by contrast, the complete deprivation of light; *olfactory driving* via the burning of tobacco or sweetgrass; and *gustatory driving* via ritual fasting or the consumption of hallucinogenic plant matter. In their own right, each technique potentially deepens entrainment with an exogenous rhythm so the likelihood of entrainment is only increased when they are used in combination. Under such ritual conditions, participants have more than just an auditory experience, therefore, they have a complex, fully embodied, or “intersensorial” experience. Powerful as the dancing body was and is for deepening the effects of sound, the ancient people of the Great Turtle’s back soon discovered ways to amplify their actual sounds, too.

The Original Peoples increased their sounds to overwhelming, consciousness-altering volumes by exploiting the amplificatory capacity of enclosed spaces. These spaces became “extensions” of sonic instruments and, thus, are the largest sonic artefacts in their instrumentarium. For though enclosed spaces do not necessarily produce sounds of their own, they do act as acoustic cavity resonators: “reusing[ing] the sound” by reflecting it back to auditors’ ears, like a sound box on a string instrument “selectively enhanc[ing] or absorb[ing] various frequencies.” “Take the [space] away,” writes musicologist Robert Jourdain, “and the sounds of instruments are reduced to a shadow of our expectations.” As a child learning to play drums on a drumpad, for example, musician and author Mickey Hart’s closet fast became his favourite practice spot after he accidentally discovered it was a resonator that amplified “the hollow thud of the pad” and “stimulated a feeling of lightness, happiness, timelessness” within him (entrainment) — something he did not reliably experience outside the enclosed environment. Similarly, the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers came to recognise that the spaces in which they performed their sacred sounds constituted a major variable they could manipulate to create optimum conditions for altering consciousness: an experience they deemed to be the amplification of their own—and the wider world’s—spiritual rather than physical reality.

The earliest of these acoustic spaces were pre-existing, such as semi-enclosed or subterranean caves, rather than purpose-built. However, because these ancient auditoriums are naturally occurring and probably served as multipurpose, multisensory arenas—just as event spaces do today—these large ancient sound artefacts are also the least detectable. By keeping the

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multipurpose nature of such spaces in mind, twentieth-century archaeologists studying caves decorated with visual art asked themselves: what made a particular cave, above others, art-worthy in the first place? They advanced the theory that the choice of cave and even the precise location of the artwork within it were decisions chiefly dictated by good acoustics. Not content to simply assume people who lived thousands of years ago exploited what is, to present-day auditors, the “obvious” sonority of cavernous spaces, though, acoustic archaeologists tested the theory by exploring decorated prehistoric caves in southwestern France with their voices, carefully mapping their resonance by systematically and slowly moving through each cave, singing notes spanning a three-octave range, and meticulously recording results. They also whistled and used harmonics to cover notes of a higher pitch than the human voice so the entire sonic range they tested totalled approximately five octaves and covered non-vocal “green” sounds that feasibly could have been used in these spaces thousands of years ago. All “points of resonance” were recorded along with the notes that produced the effect and were visually represented on a map of the cave’s interior. These “points of resonance” on the visual resonance maps consistently corresponded to cave art (within one metre of resonance points). Comparisons between data collected from the caves revealed less resonant caves were also less decorative. In fact, some minimalistic cave art only seems to have existed at all to mark a point of a cave as particularly resonant as, visually, it was not an ideal placement for art since the space available for its display was inadequate.

in the western world today “technology” is not “optimized to perform its purpose” either. The first electronic digital programmable computer, named “Colossus,” was a weapon of war yet we also make visual art and music on computers. Archaeomusicologists using iconographic evidence have proven hunters and warriors likewise realised the acoustic potential of their weaponry; making a bow and arrow into a single-stringed mouthbow, as among the Nēhiyaw (Cree), or a shield into a percussion instrument. Cajsa S. Lund, “Prehistoric Soundscapes in Scandinavia,” in Frans Mossberg, (ed.), Sounds of History: Report no. 6 from Listening Lund: Sound Environment Centre at Lund University, (Sweden: Lund University, 2008) pp.12–15 and Buffy Sainte-Marie, Peter Greenwood (ed.) and John Marino, The Buffy Sainte-Marie Songbook, (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1971), pp.182–84.


11 Fragmentary evidence indicates prehistoric Europeans fashioned sonic instruments out of bones, wood and other perishable plant matter. It is likely this was the case in the North American context thousands of years ago, too. On “green music,” i.e. soundmakers created from degradable plant matter, see Lund, Op.cit., p.15.

A close relationship between rock art and the sonority of sites has been consistently established each time the theory linking sonorous spaces and rock art has been applied outside of Europe, as far afield as India, Africa, and Australia, as well as to different periods. The link between sound and rock art is strengthened further by scholarly findings that the Newe (Shoshoni) of North America and other indigenous peoples worldwide have traditionally believed spirits could be heard chiselling images of themselves into the rock art, regardless of the human intervention involved during the artworks’ creation. These discoveries are all the more intriguing when we consider there is no shortage of decorated caves and rock faces in the North American context. Archaeologist Jan F. Simek has found numerous caves on the Cumberland Plateau in North America’s southeast decorated with seven-hundred-year-old Mississippian charcoal pictographs featuring “transformational” other-than-human persons including birds and the amphibious Turtle and Serpent. “All of [them] have religious connotations, and collectively...form compositions whose theme is the passage to the underworld….To them...the Cumberland Plateau was itself a great mound — the universe expressed in three dimensions.” Like the archaeoacousticians studying European rock art in caves before him, Simek has stated it is clear “these people were making choices about which [caves] they chose for their art,” because there are caves all over the plateau but not all of them are decorated with these sacred images. Nevertheless, to date, the application of the theory that those choices may have been governed by the desire to exploit acoustic “sweet spots” has been limited to the west coast in the North American context. More archaeoacoustic studies of the numerous decorated rock and cave sites on the east coast, including ringing rocks, need to be conducted to obtain solid data on the role of sound in the Hopewellian and Mississippian cultures of the pre-Columbian era.


know while the sounds once made in and/or around them are irretrievable, the acoustics of decorated, cavernous spaces remain and the existing archaeological research\(^\text{18}\) points to the high probability that the Great Turtle’s people have a long tradition of intentionally choosing and using places, first and foremost even, for their ability to make “a small noise...sound like thunder.”\(^\text{19}\)

In time, the Original Peoples did more than exploit the sonorous spaces they happened upon in Creation and began replicating those powers of amplification and mysterious other-than-human distortion in the design and construction of their own architectural spaces. These structures, consciously designed with acoustic effect in mind, include sweat lodges, longhouses, the spirit-talking tent and, later, the Powwow Dance Hall, for a few major examples. Like Creation’s pre-existing, multipurpose cavernous auditoriums, though, these purpose-built architectural spaces are typically unrecognised for the large, powerful, and highly sacred acoustic spaces they most certainly are.\(^\text{20}\)

To recognise the intentionally-designed acoustic spaces on the Great Turtle’s back, we must first recognise their architecture. To this day, architecture is not typically associated with the Original Peoples because westerners have oversimplified the complex relationship between the “Indian” and the natural world.\(^\text{21}\) When it was most politically viable, westerners accentuated and romanticised the indigenous affinity with nature. They nurtured the image of the Indian in the “howling wilderness,” at the edge of the lake, or a mere speck in the shadows of awe-inspiring mountains to juxtapose their supposed lack of cultural development with sturdy, permanent architectural spaces and, thereby, justify displacing them from their forested lands to make way for an “extensive republic, studded with cities, towns, and prosperous farms…and filled with all the blessings of liberty, civilization, and religion.”\(^\text{22}\)


\(^\text{19}\) Jonathan Carver and John Parker, (ed.), \textit{The Journals of Jonathan Carver and Related Documents, 1766–1770}, (Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society, 1976) pp.91–93. This text is the original and more reliable version of Carver’s travels. \textit{Travels Through the Interior} was an abridged version.


\(^\text{22}\) Andrew Jackson, “Message of the President of the United States, to both Houses of Congress,” Appendix to the \textit{Register of Debates in Congress}, 21\(^\text{st}\) Congress – Second Session (December 7, 1830), p.x.

This reduced Native Americans to primarily nature-dwellers and nature-worshippers whose abodes were, at best, semi-permanent: whatever design they contained was driven by the immediate necessity for shelter as opposed to sacred symbolism. Consequently, drawing largely on British sources, sound historians of early America have so far presented the British colonists’ notion of “the howling wilderness”\textsuperscript{23} as the primary space in which Algonquian-Iroquoian sounds resonated and gained significance and have neglected to feature the most important Algonquian-Iroquoian sacred acoustic spaces as the equivalent of the intentional \textit{catacoustics} of the British colonists’ meeting houses and churches. At worst, this has resulted in the perpetuation of the notion that nature was so important to the “Indians” that man-made structures were “artificial” compared to the natural wilderness they held dear and if they were significant at all, this was “exceptional.” As Peter Charles Hoffer asserts:

> Indians believed…almost everything important took place outside the artificial space of buildings, in nature, where the spirit world and the everyday world came together. The Indians lived, danced, sang, worshiped, and tended their gardens in these open spaces. There were exceptions – mausoleums for the dead, sweat lodges for purification, and council fires within the chief’s wigwam – but these were exceptions.\textsuperscript{24}

The dichotomies of nature versus culture and the material versus the spiritual apparent in Hoffer’s statement are little more than white cultural constructs — “habitual grooves of thinking” western scholars fail to avoid when articulating non-western beliefs in European languages. Westerners cast themselves as separate from nature, struggling to gain mastery over it so their subsequent creations are called “man-made” and “artificial” — the product and victory of culture rather than nature. Native Americans, represented as “at one with nature,” are consequently not acknowledged as having “architecture” as westerners know it but merely as having temporary or semi-permanent abodes fulfilling the basic human need for shelter. As we have seen, though, as animists the Original Peoples traditionally consider themselves part of nature, not separate from it, and conceive of the spiritual element of Creation as something that infuses every part of the physical realm. Nor do they share the westerners’ concept of cause and effect so, like the rock artists hearing the spirits chiselling themselves into rock, their involvement in the construction of an object or architectural structure does not make the “man-made” creation of a structure artificial, any less sacred or mysterious, or less alive with

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{HEAS}, pp.145–72.

\textsuperscript{24} Hoffer, \textit{Op.cit.}, pp.59–60. My italics. I have italicised this phrase to highlight the contradiction in Hoffer’s argument: the spiritual and everyday worlds need not “come together” in nature in a world where “there was no separation between the material and the spiritual, the human and the not-human; each infused the other.”
other-than-human beings than anything else “found” in Creation. In fact, the spirits that animate resources prior to people using them to create an architectural structure are believed to endure the transformative process of construction and to continue to infuse the spiritual element of the material space. This is because in this world, the power of life does not cease when the physical being dies — it is merely transferred. Put simply, “man-made” objects and structures remain natural, living, sentient beings in the Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking world.

If anything, Algonquian-Iroquoian architectural spaces are more powerful and more sacred than the “natural” landscape, because they involve the unification and centralisation of multiple and diverse other-than-human beings who have gifted themselves to the creative project as well as the creative energy of the human architect-builder. Reinforcing this argument further is the evidence that, like the Cumberland Plateau mound, which Simek posits was the Mississippian “universe in three dimensions,” later Algonquian-Iroquoian sacred architectural spaces are also (intentionally-designed) microcosms of the universe. For example, the dome shape of the sweat lodge, a wiigwaam used for physical and spiritual purification, symbolises the earth while its four rings made of saplings symbolise the four layers of the Sky and subterranean Earth worlds. Several doorways in the structure represent the cardinal directions through which spirits can enter from all parts of Creation. Within, a central pit symbolises Mother Earth’s womb and contains ritually-gathered rocks heated by a sacred fire, which provides the cleansing heat for the sweat and the associated spiritual rebirth. Without, the eastern doorway is the path of life which leads to the sacred fireplace. The fire itself serves as an axis mundi as it is the place where offerings of tobacco are burnt and from whence human prayers are carried to the other-than-humans via the rising smoke. Other structures, like the Algonquian spirit-talking tent, the Midewiwin lodge, and the Lenni Lenape (Delaware) Gamwing (“Big House”), also architecturally manifest the various layers of the immense many-storied cosmos, the cardinal directions, and the axis mundi. The words “symbolise” and “represent” are not used in the western sense; these structures are the universe in miniature with all its power concentrated into a small, confined, human-sized space. Upon entering these physical spaces, which conjure the spiritual element of Creation,
then, the Great Turtle’s people literally enter and stand at the spiritual centre of their universe where they encounter the other-than-human elders.

It stands to reason, then, that by sounding within these highly sacred architectural spaces, the Great Turtle’s people can more effectively communicate with their elders there—where the physical elements are quietened and the spiritual aspects of the self and the wider enrhythmed world are all amplified—than in any other place on the flat-Earth. The small, darkened, confined, enclosed dome-shaped sweat lodge, for example, intensifies the heat of the sacred rocks, creating a sauna effect. The deprivation of or, at least, reduction in light also has a profound effect on the ritual participants’ consciousness and overall sense of space and time during the rite, which can last several hours. As Darcy Rheault writes:

My experience during...many Sweat Lodge Ceremonies has revealed to me a sense of disappearing into nothingness, an existential emptiness. When I sit in a Sweat Lodge…I experience a sense of expansion. Generally, a Sweat Lodge is only four or five feet tall, but sitting in that hot and moist darkness I have a sense that the Lodge expands and me with it. I can best describe it as sitting in the whole of the universe. Initially, I feel gigantic; but after a while, I lose [sic] any perspective of space and time. It is a peculiar feeling to exit the Lodge and ‘return’ in a sense to the realm of space-time.30

The continual forceful drumbeats and enrhythmed chants become all the more hypnotic in that hot, dark atmosphere and are confined to the small lodge, which makes them so loud they reverberate in the ritual participant’s ribcage like an imposter heartbeat, ricocheting around the bodily cavities and repeatedly crashing against bone, muscle and tissue. The individual’s internal orchestra initially competes with this auditory invasion but the breath and heart rate as well as brainwaves ultimately surrender to being overwhelmed and controlled by the persistently forceful exogenous sounds through the process of entrainment.31 When this synchronisation of all Creation is achieved through the medicinal rhythmic sounds, the people know the other-than-humans and their departed ancestors have entered and joined them at the cosmic centre “to hear the people, but also to respond to them.” In the state of entrainment, it becomes possible for the humans to hear spiritual voices which may be harder to perceive outside the ritual space resonator. These voices, though, are not “limited to the spoken word,”

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31 SLOT, p.15; MBE, pp.xi–xiii.
Rheault clarifies: they are voices “that can also enter the mind and the spirit, [and] it is also possible to see and touch the spirit; to visualize the source of the knowledge as it is shared.”

Nevertheless, the acoustic space deemed the most powerful, the Algonquian spirit-talking tent, is also the smallest and probably the least resonant, acoustically speaking, although the sound effects are figuratively amplified in another way. Rather than originating in its ability to actually amplify sound, the spirit-talking tent’s sonic exceptionalism and great power derives from its *acousmatic situation*. The term *acousmatic* refers to “unseen sounds,” that is, sounds emanating from an invisible source, and comes from the ancient Greek *akousmatikoi* (the listeners); the name given to the outer-circle of Pythagoreans in the sixth century BCE after their mystical leader, Pythagoras, lectured cryptic messages to them from behind a veil. The Pythagorean veil clearly demarcated insiders and outsiders and by being less accessible to the majority elevated considerably what was already perceived as the high spiritual value of messages communicated from behind the veil, thereby inspiring awe within the outer-circle of “listeners” both for “the divine Pythagoras” and his teachings.

The Algonquian spirit-talking tent’s *acousmatic situation* also created a perception of power by giving the impression of exclusivity. Like the Pythagorean veil, the Algonquian spirit-talking tent’s cover as well as the tent’s small size clearly communicated that entry into this ritual space was strictly for the rare and highly fluent “one who talks to spirits.” “An ordinary person could not talk to the animals in the shaking tent, only a shaman” who had repeatedly withdrawn from society, fasted, and had been gifted with the skill of divination and fluency in the other-than-humans’ purely sonic spirit-language, clarified the twentieth-century Innu (Montagnais) hunter Kaniuekutat. This made him/her a person who was both feared and revered, for the ability to “talk to the spirits” directly in the spirit-talking tent is “the strongest power there is.” Indeed, the spirit-talker (*jiisakiwinini*) was the highest and most powerful degree one could attain in the *Midewiwin*, the Anishinaabeg secret medicine society of a later era, which had its roots in pre-contact healing practices and roles. Though the average Algonquian speaker performed rituals daily to obtain life’s necessities they did not achieve the same degree of wisdom or level of proficiency in spiritual communication as medicine people whose time and energy was completely devoted to such study and practice. Nor did s/he have

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36 Ibid; *NISH*, p.109.
Figure 3.5: An Anishinaabe shaman and the uncovered frame of a spirit-talking tent ("shaking tent" or "conjuring lodge"). Photograph of Mr. John King of the Sand lake Community, St. Croix Band, Chippewa. Photographer: Robert Ritzenhaler, Milwaukee Public Museum Negative # 9530-36. Courtesy of Milwaukee Public Museum.
the spiritual strength to transcend the material world to spiritually journey to the *axis mundi* and directly confer with ancient, superior, spiritual elders. Instead, these everyday Algonquians congregated around the tent during the ritual and heard what was, to their ears, the largely inarticulate speech of their other-than-human elders:

> Through the myths and through their dreams and hunting songs the members of the audience all had their experiences of being in contact with the spirits and most frequently with the animal spirits. Hearing…the spirits talk in the [spirit-talking] tent confirmed and added intensity and depth to their own personal experience. The shaman and the audience constituted a community of understanding and lived experience, and made the shaking tent a central institution in Innu religion.\(^{37}\)

Personally understanding the sounds was unnecessary. Knowing and believing the sounds contained something powerfully meaningful and that one with specialised knowledge and extraordinary abilities bestowed by other-than-human persons could comprehend and interpret these sonic messages mattered most for the Algonquian outer-circle. The spirit-talker was such a person; a trustworthy go-between who could represent the Algonquians at the spirit council at the cosmic centre and act as interpreter for spirits and humans alike, while those who attended the rite were chiefly listeners; denied the possibility of seeing their spiritual superior during the rite with only limited access to the exoteric knowledge they could hear through a physical barrier and the additional intellectual veil of incomprehensible communication.

For the Algonquians, the spirit-talking tent’s acousmatic situation was also responsible for endowing the ritual with mystery and eeriness, which confirmed its spiritual status. Like reverberation in a cavernous space, the distortion or abnormal quality of sounds heard emanating from invisible sources automatically qualified them as other-than-human.\(^{38}\) The acousmatic situation created by the covered architectural space of the shaking tent, the darkness resulting from the nocturnal timing of the rite, and the elimination of light sources compromised visibility and, thus, contributed to the acousmatic situation necessary for the experience to be awe-inspiring and spiritual. Of course, the listeners’ eyes would have habituated to the darkness reasonably well enough to enjoy the bonus feature—the spectacle

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\(^{38}\) Jonathan Carver reports audio-visual phenomena consisting of “some frightfull appearances of lights shining at a distance and strange sounds” in Wakan Tibi (Carver’s Cave) in Saint Paul, Minnesota, led the Bdewákanthunywaŋ (Mdewakanton Sioux) to conclude this was the dwelling of mysterious, powerful spiritual beings, hence their name for the site “house of spirits” or “the Dwelling of the Great Spirit.” See Carver, Op.cit., pp.91–93.
Figure 3.6: The spirit-talking tent, also known as the “shaking tent” or “conjuring lodge.” Albert Ernest Jenks, “Ceremony: Midewiwin Society Initiation, Medicine Man’s Conjuring Lodge, Canvas-Covered Frame with Pine Tree and String of Bells Made for Sick Candidate 1899.” Courtesy of the National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution [Photo Lot 24 SPC E Canada Chippewa BAE No #00250800].
of the shaking and swaying edifice as well as the fiery sparks that issued from the top—so, technically, the rite as a whole was an audiovisual event. But, crucially, the intense shaking did not cause the sounds heard in the ritual, other than the jingling and rattling bells sometimes tied to the outside of the edifice.\(^\text{39}\) Given the independence of the visual and sonic aspects of this rite, the sounds themselves were not processed in an intersensorial way therefore the rite’s visual elements should not distract us from the reality that this ritual was fundamentally an acousmatic experience for those in attendance. The sounds were powerful because they were disembodied and the covered tent was the thing that disembodied them.

In an age of radios, films containing non-diegetic sound, mobile telecommunication devices, and mp3s it may be difficult to think of sounds as magical and mysterious simply because they are disembodied. However commonplace modern technologies render such experiences, though, they are in fact unnatural; sound is naturally experienced as an audiovisual complex in which the sound and its source are both “present and visible.”\(^\text{40}\) Indeed, westerners’ disenchantment with unseen sounds is only a recent development. As media historian Jonathan Sterne’s work has demonstrated, the death-obsessed Victorians, for example, viewed their sonic inventions as having supernaturally communicative potential. Such beliefs were a logical extension of the abnormal acousmatic situations their inventions had already made possible; the telephone made physically absent, living human voices audible, then the phonograph made voices that were physically absent and eternally silenced by death resound again on wax cylinder recordings. And as recently as 1925, two years before Hollywood successfully fused the disembodied sounds of a gramophone with moving images in its first “talkie,” one writer speculated the radio might one day tune into and respond to ethereal vibrations including the voices of the dead, which he supposed vibrated “at a slower rate” than those of the living.\(^\text{41}\)

The spirit-talking tent was to the Algonquians all that the Pythagoreans’ veil and the Victorians’ sonic inventions were to them and more. It was nothing less than the axis mundi or centre of the Algonquians’ multi-layered universe: the multi-directional portal between the horizontal “flat-earth”\(^\text{42}\) of humans and the vertical dimension of the powerful other-than-human elders’ subterranean Earth, Aquatic, and Sky worlds.\(^\text{43}\) In other words, the spirit-

\(^{40}\) Chion et.al., Op.cit., p.11.
talking tent was a telephone line to the deceased in the Land of the Dead; a radio calling out to other-than-human elders of the cosmos like modern-day radio signals sent to potential extra-terrestrial intelligent life in outer space; a teleportation device that transported the diviner out of Creation’s material dimension and into the spiritual centre of the cosmos; and a shaking Magic 8 Ball crossed with Google.44

All the architectural spaces in which rich sonic rites were performed throughout the day and night on the Great Turtle’s back, therefore, were not merely shelters from the heat, the icy wind, rain, and snow. They were major parts of the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples’ information and communications technology that connected them to a vast universe of empowered beings. Like the various spirit-talkers, (the voice, the rattle, the rattle drum, the dancing body), the architectural aspect of this information and communications technology even had the added benefit of being mobile: the resonant spaces could be constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed at will and, thus, produced a repetitive rhythmic cycle of their own, which marked them as being part of—not separate from—the larger, “natural,” enrhythmed world of Creation.

44 For disembodied voices being likened to telephonic communication and radio, see Lisa Philips Valentine, Making It Their Own: Severn Ojibwe Communicative Practices, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), p.61 and SLOT, pp.23–24.
An Enrhythmed World

Rhythm clearly was and is as “omnipresent in the experiences and aesthetics” of Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers as the Pythagorean-based “notion of harmony” was and is in the West. Like western harmony, Algonquian-Iroquoian rhythmic synchrony is “both a grand metaphor for natural sonic relations, the ways tones combine together in time, as well as for social relations, for people” and other-than-human people “doing things in concert,” that is, living respectfully together.¹

Not only was a percussive rhythmic sound the very first sound, it was the first thing to exist at all in Creation and summoned everything else into being. And when “life” answered that call it did so rhythmically in the form of a steady heartbeat: a rhythm expressed in everything from the circadian and seasonal movements of the oldest and largest other-than-human beings to the heartbeat of the smallest animal. Indeed, as oral tradition tells us, all of Creation’s beings synchronised with that basic life rhythm and in so doing contributed to the world’s ongoing functionality. Even when rhythmic synchrony was and is lost altogether, this state of affairs is comprehended rhythmically: a dysrhythmia that is a part of a larger, inaudible macrorhythmic cycle of creation, destruction and re-creation.²

Synchronous rhythmic sounds are, therefore, the acoustic manifestation of “living well.” And, since living well in rhythmic synchrony with Creation is by no means a simple affair for the relatively powerless, pitiful humans of the Great Turtle’s back, exceptional individuals are gifted with the power of spirit-talking, while rhythm-makers and enrhythmed, spiritually powerful songs are also gifted to the people in visions and dreams so everyone can contribute to and benefit from Creation’s positive, healing power. By producing rhythmic sounds, the Original Peoples speak the enrhythmed sonic lingua franca to call to the elders and demonstrate a sincere effort to “live well” by attempting to achieve rhythmic synchrony with all of their relations. The loud and/or powerful sounds produced by and in the Algonquian-Iroquoian sonic artefacts 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. As such, the chanting voice, the beaten and shaken percussion instrument, the

dancing body and acoustic spaces that amplify either the sounds themselves or the experience of the sounds were and are all actually *axes mundi* or “cosmic centres”: indigenous telecommunication and sometimes even teleportation devices connecting Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers to all other empowered beings in a vast cosmological network.

There is certainly, then, a rough, basic equivalence between the harmonic and rhythmic traditions highlighted here via the dual presentation of the two traditions. Doing so has undoubtedly gone some way towards making western auditors today more aurally sensitive and respectful towards an equally rich, complex, and fully integrated rhythmic tradition. But, a rough equivalence is as far as it goes, because the fact remains: there is neither heavenly harmony nor any devilish disharmony on the place of the Great Turtle’s back.

Indeed, as we pick up our narrative once more in the early seventeenth century—this time with the volume turned up on the Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples’ soundways—the polyphonic nature of the newcomers’ soundways will prove to be utterly alien. And, even to the extent that their music’s similarity to birdsong will often be aesthetically pleasing, there will also be something inherently offensive about it; something which will only be apparent to the people of the Great Turtle’s back when they detect the same layering of voices in the newcomers’ speech, too. Many voices communicating all at once in a bid to be heard and never leaving silences for others to speak in a dialogue: the complete subversion of all the sonic protocols of polite society and, thus, irreconcilable—“out of synchrony”—with the rest of Creation. It is the dysrhythmic soundtrack of the period of Destruction itself.
PART IV

THE REMASTERED RECORD

Tell you a story; it’s a true one
And I’ll tell it like you understand.
And I ain’t gonna talk like some history man.

Buffy Sainte-Marie
Soldier Blue
(1971)
The Great Flood

The period of Destruction began, as it always did, with a great flood — but not precisely as it had before. For one thing, this time the Horned Underwater Serpent had been less hasty to exact his revenge on his nemesis Original Man. He had deliberated at length about how best to undo the world Original Man and his other-than-human relations had re-created long ago. After all, the Underwater Serpent now had the added difficulty of unleashing chaos without alerting the earthly ones’ protectors in the Sky World. Ever mysterious, hidden, unpredictable, the Underwater Serpent had at last succeeded in designing a way to bring imbalance and asynchrony to the Earth-island without the interfering Thunderbirds discovering and thwarting his plan to drown the world.

The Horned Underwater Serpent still used his weapon of choice — water. Quite ingeniously, however, he did so only indirectly. He sent a great flood of people by permitting them safe passage across the great salt water.¹ And not just any people: these humans proved to be more like the Horned Serpent himself in their disinclination to live respectfully with the people of the Great Turtle’s back and other parts of Creation. Better still, they had come armed with the power of those who ordinarily protected the Great Turtle’s people from the Underwater Serpent’s attacks: the Thunderbirds. Together, the flood of people, their thundersticks (firearms), devastating diseases, and adversative behaviour towards the people of the Great Turtle’s back would slowly but surely destroy and submerge Original Man’s Earth-island, sending it back from whence it came — far below the primordial waters.

Ordinarily the descendants of Original Man knew to be wary of the Horned Underwater Serpent’s domain, but sometimes they were careless. Such was the case when a few of them gathered at the water’s edge at Kespukwitk (Land’s End) and focused all their attention on the strange aquatic spectacle before them — oblivious to the floodwaters that came not with a “frightful roar” but clothed in human disguise and rising slowly and imperceptibly all around them.²

¹ Contact-era petroglyphs linking serpent figures and ships in this region confirm the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) associated the Underwater Serpent with Europeans. Lenik, Op.cit., pp.21–22.
² “Nanabushu Slays Old Toad-Woman,” OT-I, p.151.
Sounds of Power

Kespukwitk (Land’s End), November 14, 1606. Membertou, the saqamaw and puoin\(^1\) of Mi’kma’ki, his family and some of his people gather on the riverbank outside “Port Royal Habitation.” Many Frenchmen are seated in a shallop and canoes “upon the waves” of the harbour in readiness for the inaugural performance of a ritual the French colonists call “l’Ordre de Bon Temps.”\(^2\) The opening of the ceremony, Le Théâtre de Neptune, is a “jovial spectacle” composed by French lawyer Marc Lescarbot to welcome home the Frenchmen upon their return from their exploration of what they call “Armouchiquois country.” But the colonists also hope the subsequent feast will provide enough mirth and sustenance to stave off the death, scurvy, and hunger, which claimed 35 French lives at their failed Saint-Croix settlement the previous winter.\(^3\)

The Order of Good Cheer ritual commences right as explorer Samuel de Champlain, the Governor of Acadia Sieur de Poutrincourt, and others prepare to land, so they instantly become participants in (rather than merely spectators of) the ritual. Leading the rite is a grey-haired man with a long beard, clothed in a blue robe and buskins. He begins by calling out in a commanding voice:

\[
\text{Arrête, Sagamos, arrête toy ici,}
\]
\[
\text{Et écoutes un Dieu qui a de toy souci...}
\]
\[
\text{Neptune c’est mõ nom, Neptune l’un des Dieux}
\]
\[
\text{Qui a plus de pouvoir souz la voute des cieux.}
\]

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\(^2\) Marc Lescarbot and Harriette Taber Richardson (trans.), *The Theatre of Neptune in New France,* (Boston: The Riverside Press, 1927), pp.xvii–xviii.

Translation:

Stop, Captain, stop here and listen to a God who has a concern...
Neptune is my dread name, Neptune, Sea-lord am I,
Most powerful of Gods, beneath the vaulting sky.

As most of this speech is in French, Membertou and the other Lnûk (Mi’kmaq) present do not understand everything he says in his oration but certainly do recognise “Sagamos,” the French pronunciation of their own word saqamaw meaning “Captain” or “Chief.” They have also been given “good beginnings of the knowledge of God” at the Habitation, so they likely recognise Dieu (God) as the word the French use to refer to an other-than-human person who created all things and provides them with “favorable assistance.”

This blue-robed individual, then, speaks with the voice of the French people’s “most powerful” other-than-human person: the sea-dwelling Dieu named “Neptune.” Though always careful to remain hidden—this time behind the name of a Classical Roman sea deity—it seems the other-than-human sea-dwelling chief, the Horned Underwater Serpent, has been unable to resist the urge to amuse himself by dropping veiled hints for his intended victims, the Original Peoples, about his presence and involvement in the impending destruction of their world.

The bright, piercing voice of a spirit-talking instrument the French call a trompette heralds the conclusion of the bearded, grey-haired one’s oration and a second Frenchman begins to address a man impersonating the Governor of Acadia, Sieur de Poutrincourt. In amongst the sounds of his speech, the Lnûk (Mi’kmaq) also hear another familiar word: the (Basque) trade word Adesquides (friend). Frenchmen dressed as Lnûk (Mi’kmaq) men, one of whom is presumably impersonating Membertou himself, then present gifts to the man posing as the captain of Acadia, Sieur de Poutrincourt, whilst dutifully declaring their devotion and subservience to France in rhyming French couplets that the real Lnûk in attendance are incapable of understanding or delivering in reality. Unbeknown to Membertou, therefore, the French colonists’ performance is as much a ceremonial declaration of ownership of Mi’kmaki and subjugation of its original inhabitants, the Lnûk, as the planting of a French flag in the soil or a Christian cross.

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6 trompette (trumpet) spelt trompete in Lescarbot’s original French version, p.5.
After these speeches, the Frenchmen on the water sing a plea to their Dieu, Neptune, with their numerous voices sounding altogether as if “imitat[ing] the warbling of birds,”\(^9\) that is, *en Musique à quatre parties* (in four-part harmony):

\[
\begin{align*}
Vray Neptune donne nous \\
Contre tes flots assurance, \\
Et fay que nous pui ssions tous \\
Un jour nous revoir en France.
\end{align*}
\]

Translation:

Against thy floods, great God Neptune
Give us assurance,
And grant us all, as your high boon,
That we may meet again in France.

This multilayered sound, in which many voices all sound at once and compete to be heard by their other-than-human Neptune, is followed by an incredible display of acoustic power as the

\(^9\) *JR* 6: 181–83. The Innu (Montagnais) were recorded as stating the French sounded like birds when they sang.
brilliant *trompetes* pierce the sky and booming cannons seem to “break...forth on all sides” with “innumerable echoes” bouncing “back against one another” from the surrounding hills “for a quarter of an hour.” A joyous, wine-fuelled feast follows at the Habitation with Membertou as a guest. Much to the *sagamaw’s* approval the feast element of this rite, *l’Ordre de Bon Temps*, is performed on a weekly basis at the Habitation for the next four months.\(^\text{10}\)

Just as they sang all their different tunes over the top of one other (in “*harmonie*”) the French “talk all together...cry[ing] out [like] ducks and geese,”\(^\text{11}\) at these grand ritual feasts and in every day interactions, too. While they show no respect for others in this regard, their immense sonic powers and unique trade items give them much in common with and much to offer Membertou’s people. Thus, it is only natural that a man of Membertou’s calibre is drawn to these newcomers. He knows *puoin* [power] when he sees and hears it. After all, Membertou combines the role of grand *sagamaw* of all seven districts of Mi’kma’ki with that of a great *puoin* and, as such, possesses significant social, political, and spiritual power — no one achieves such status by accident. Membertou has actively sought this power and has undoubtedly, as a rule, constantly looked for new ways to gain more whilst maintaining what he already has. Even the newcomers’ strange customs, therefore, likely appear to the leader Membertou as previously unthought of pathways to power, making the old *sagamaw-puoin* more willing than his countrymen to adopt some of the newcomers’ idiosyncrasies. For example, Membertou later sports a “beard...like a Frenchman,” even though “scarcely any of the other...” Algonquian- and Iroquoian-speaking men “have hair upon the chin” because they see facial hair as “ugly,” “deformed,” and think it “weakens intelligence.”\(^\text{12}\) Indeed, the Wendat (Huron) use the word *Sascoinronte* [“Bearded”] as an insult and in the near future other nations will show their contempt for these unseemly growths by tearing them off white captives as a grand opening to their tortures.\(^\text{13}\) Since a mere desire to emulate the French

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\(^{11}\) LeClerq, Op.cit., p.311; *HEAS*, p.152. For more evidence of Algonquians and Iroquoians practicing active listening and refusing to talk over another see *JR* 5: 25–27.

\(^{12}\) *JR* 2: 21–23; *JR* 3: 71–73; *SLJ*, pp.137–38: “A savage one day seeing a Frenchman with a beard turned to his companions and said as if in wonder and amazement, “O, what an ugly man! Is it possible...any woman would look favourably on such a man,” himself being one of the ugliest savages in his district, and therefore it was very charming of him to despise the man with the beard!... [Af]ter [an] interpreter spent two years among the [Epicerinys] they, thinking they were paying him a compliment, said to him: Well, now...you are beginning to speak our language well, if you had no beard you would have almost as much intelligence as such and such a people, naming one...they considered much less intelligent than themselves, and the French still less intelligent than that people. Thus these good folk judge us to be very unintelligent by comparison with themselves.” See also James Rosier cited in Colin G. Calloway (ed.), *Dawnland Encounters: Indians and Europeans in Northern New England* (Hanover and London; University Press of New England, 1991), p.39.

\(^{13}\) *JR* 3: 71–73. Etienne Brûlé’s beard was torn off in the first of his tortures when taken captive by the Tsonontowane’á:ka (Seneca) of the Kanonsionni (Iroquois Confederacy), as was that of the Jesuit
fashion at the Habitation would hardly be enough to compel a powerful leader like Membertou to flout such an established, widespread cultural norm by bearding up, it seems more reasonable that he imitates not all Frenchmen but a specific Frenchman who wore “la barbe longues & chenuës”— the commanding, blue-robed puoin who spoke with the voice of the Dieu, “Neptune,” in that powerful, impressive, aquatic ritual with the blaring trompetes and cannons. A power-beard is not all Membertou will purloin from the rituals the newcomers perform in his presence.

When the bewhiskered grand saqamaw-puoin conducts a ritual to communicate with his own other-than-humans, some of the sounds he has heard repeatedly in French rituals make their way into his songs. One such song is “Tameja alleluyah”:

\[\text{Tameja alleluyah, tameja douveni, hau, hau, hé hé.}\]

Among the fresh sounds of power Membertou has added to his vast sonic vocabulary is the Hebrew word Alleluia and the Latin word veni, as heard in the Christian hymn “Veni Creator Spiritus” (“Come Creator Spirit”), or the related French word de venir (to become), which was also part of Neptune’s opening dialogue in the Théâtre de Neptune. Membertou has clearly used newcomers’ sounds of power to improve the efficacy of his hunting ritual, but he has likely also done so to keep the balance of power in his favour, because in using the newcomers’ sounds he ensures he has all the powers they possess as well as all of his own.

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Fathers Isaac Jogues, Jean de Brébeuf, and René Goupil. For further evidence of the Innu (Montagnais) using these facial-hair insults on Le Jeune during the winter of 1633 and 1634 see JR 7: 59–63 in which Le Jeune reports: “Believe me, if I have brought back no other fruits from the Savages, I have at least learned many of the insulting words of their language. They were saying to me at every turn, eca titou, eca titou nama khitirinisin, “Shut up, shut up, thou hast no sense.” Achineou, “He is proud;” Moucacetchiou, “He plays the parasite;” sasegua, “He is haughty;” cou attimou, “He looks like a Dog;” cou mascoua, “He looks like a Bear;” cou ouaboc hou ouictoui, “He is bearded like a Hare;” attimonou oukhimou, “He is Captain of the Dogs...”

14 Translation: “a long and hoary (i.e. greyish-white) beard.” Lescarbot and Richardson (trans.), Op.cit., p.3.

15 Sung to the tune of: Sol sol sol fa fa, re re re ,fa ,fa ,sol sol sol ,fa ,fa ,re re. Lescarbot, History of New France III, Op.cit., p.106; SLJ, p.120. I state Membertou did definitely incorporate these Christian sounds into his own chants in light of Ruth Holmes Whitehead’s findings that Lescarbot’s transcriptions were accurate. While it is always best to question the accuracy of sound transcriptions because the recorder’s aural literacy may not have been well developed, Whitehead proves Lescarbot was aurally sensitive and an accurate transcriber by noting that “egrigna,” which he transcribed in another chant, was still in use in twentieth-century Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) chants. See Ruth Holmes Whitehead, The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts from Micmac History 1500–1950, (Halifax: Nimbus, 1991).


17 This statement assumes Lescarbot’s recording of Membertou’s hunting ritual song is accurate; refer to my summary of Whitehead’s findings in footnote 17. Lescarbot and Richardson (trans.), Op.cit., p.5.
Membertou’s willingness to use the newcomers’ sounds of power for Lnûk (Mi’kmaq) purposes makes him desirous to acquire even more. Though Membertou’s French adesquides (friends) are forced to leave the Habitation at Kespukwitk in Mi’kma’ki in 1607, therefore, upon their return in 1610 Membertou becomes the first of his people to be baptised a Christian by “the Patriarch” Jessé Fléché. In the process Membertou gains the name of the grand saqamaw of Old France, “Henri,” and many new sounds of power for his repertoire. Post-baptism, though, the Christian power-sounds continue to be merely an addition to rather than a total replacement for the traditional soundways of “Henri Membertou” and his family, leaving the overall acoustemological framework within which these new “Christians” operate unchanged. On hearing the line, “Nui en caraco nae iquein esmoi ciscoi,” (“Give us this day our daily bread”) whilst learning the Pater Noster in his own language, for example, Membertou is quick to point out to Father Biard, one of the new black-robed “Jesuits” who have recently arrived in Kespukwitk, “if I did not ask...for anything but bread, I would be without moose-meat or fish.” And in the spring, when Membertou and his family are “suffering much from hunger,” the saqamaw “remember[s] he [is] a Christian” and says a prayer, after which “he [goes] to the river and f[inds] all the smelts he want[s].” There is really no difference between the Christian Membertou and the two humans who in the distant times of this land were “in great distress” because they were “within two finger-lengths for want of food” and were advised by the other-than-humans “to sing...[to] be relieved; and so it happened, for when they had sung, they found something to eat.” In both cases the petitioners made audible pleas to other-than-human beings who, the petitioners hoped, would answer the call and be predisposed to be merciful on the poor, dependent, helpless humans by leading them to game.18

Being “Christian” means little more to Membertou than having a larger repertoire of sounds with which he can more fluently speak the spirit-language and obtain from the other-than-humans of Creation the things that are important to him as an Lnu (Mi’kmaw) man. His way of being in and knowing his world is unaltered. This way of hearing and using the Pater Noster as an audible call for spiritual aid in the hunt eventually proves to be so widespread and pervasive that, later, the Black Robes will subtly alter their translations of the prayer to the more general request Donne nous aujourd’hui notre nourriture comme tousiours (“Give us today our food, as always,”) in a bid to ensure Christianity’s relevance in the lives of their prospective converts. [Fig. 4.2]

18 JR 1: 163–67; JR 6: 183–85. Twenty members of Membertou’s family were also baptised by “the Patriarch” on 24 June 1610, St. John’s the Baptist Day. All were given a name of a member of the French royal family. For the list of names see Lescarbot, History of New France III, Op.cit., pp.37–41.
The continuity of indigenous ways of hearing and sounding despite the importation of Christianity and its sounds into the environment of Mi’kma’ki is not just evident in the converts’ life-sustaining activities, it is also apparent in the way they die. In the winter, the elderly saqamaw Membertou becomes gravely ill with what some of his fellow puoinaq diagnose as a “mortal malady,” so he readies himself — not to die like a Christian but to “play the swan and die in music,” as is the custom of his people. Donning his “beautiful otter robe,” Membertou begins, “like the swan…chanting his own death-song” while his kindred cease to feed him, “because they are accustomed to abandon altogether those whom their [puoinaq] have once judged incurable.” If he lingers on, they will throw “a great many pails of water...over him to hasten his death, and” if necessary he will be “buried half alive.” When Monsieur de Poutrincourt arrives, he does not join in the farewell of his Lnu (Mi’kmaw) friend; he “remonstrate[s] with him” that refusing to eat is unchristian and if he eats he will recover his health, which Membertou promptly does.19

Even so, when the saqamaw’s son Actaudinech later appears on the brink of death the sick man sings his death-song and delivers “his funeral oration” while Membertou and his Christian kin begin to farewell him in their traditional way. They make their “usual adieus and lamentations,” slaughter some dogs, and begin to prepare for the feast and the “singing and dancing,” at which stage the Black Robe Father Biard violates the sanctity of this rite by entering with some interpreters. The Black Robe strongly objects to their “way of doing things,” telling them “the farewells and a moderate display of mourning, and even the tabagie,” are permissible, “but...the slaughter of the dogs, and the songs and dances over a dying person, and what [is] much worse leaving him to die alone, displease[s] me very much.” The Black Robe requests that Membertou and his family bring Actaudinech, whom he calls Paul, to the “Port Royal” settlement. Membertou gives his word, but Actaudinech is not brought to the settlement for another two days, after he has already been farewelld in the traditional way with songs, dances, and feasting — the stage when his kindred would have deserted him anyway, believing him to already be far advanced in his journey to the Land of the Dead.20

19 JR 1: 165–69; William Shakespeare, Othello, The Moor of Venice, 5.2: 288–89. For more on the custom of abandoning the sick see JR 2: 13–15. I have reproduced, with some modification, parts of this paragraph from my earlier Honours thesis, Cameron, “Neither French Nor Savage” Op.cit., p.54. 20 JR 2: 13–19. Actaudinech, also spelt Actodin, had been baptised “Paul” after Pope Paul. The French Jesuits constantly used the word tabagie for “feast” in the Relations. I suspect tabagie does not mean “Feast,” but that the French might have first heard this word in the context of a feast to refer to a “story” told as part of the rite. Though my search has not been exhaustive, thus far I have not found a word for “Feast” in modern-day Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) resembling tabagie relating to a “feast day” - the only words relating to feast are pestie’wung (feast day) and mijjaqan (meal). Tabagie bears a striking similarity to words meaning “story” in other Algonquian dialects; the Anishinaabemowin word dibaaajimowin an
A man subsequently stands at the bedside of Actaudinech, makes a vocal appeal to a higher power for assistance and places upon the sick man’s body a fragment of bone from the remains of a revered member of his people. A miraculous recovery follows. Such rituals are the speciality of spirit-talkers like Membertou. Whenever dark “malevolent beings” take up residence in patients’ bodies, he and other spirit-talking Lnúk puoinaq fast, chant, and rattle “most vociferously” while placing four leg bones of large birds onto infected areas and “violent[ly] writhe and contort” themselves “in their endeavours” to suck out the evil, swallowing both the bones and the malicious presence in the process and, finally, expelling all “with violent retchings.” But this is not a Lnú (Mi’kmaw) puoin (medicine person, spirit-talk) performing the bone-swallowing ritual recorded and reviled by Jesuits as ineffectual rites resulting from diabolical influence and deception to keep the “sauvages” ignorant of God. On this occasion, the vocalised appeal is a vow; the higher power is “the one true God”; the bone is one of the holy “precious relics of the glorified Saint Lawrence archbishop of Dublin in Ireland”; and the man performing this rite is a French soul-saving Jesuit: Father Biard. Small wonder that the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers will continue to mistake the miraculous bones, vows, prayers and hymns of the Jesuits for the charms, appeals, songs, and drums used by their puoinaq to call upon other-than-human elders for aid and to exorcise the darkness residing in diseased bodies.21

After the miraculous recovery of the son he had given up as “a citizen of the other world,” even the Christian Membertou considers the Black Robes healers of the body not just the soul. When Membertou finds he is ailing once again himself, for instance, he asks to be taken to the Black Robes immediately, hoping they will cure him with their audible pleas to their Dieu, too. He is waited on by the Black Robes and sleeps in one of their beds in their narrow cabin for six days, to no avail. “So, seeing…his life [is] drawing to a close,” he begins to fulfil the traditional sonic requirements of the terminally ill by delivering his final oration and states his wish to be buried “among the ancient tombs of his family.” This request, however, invites the
disapproval of the French. Ultimately, therefore, Membertou dies “a Christian death” in Father Biard’s arms on September 18, 1611 and is buried in the Christian cemetery at the Port Royal settlement. But in this—as in so many other ways—Membertou is, for the most part, exceptional.22

Though Membertou and his family were the “first” they will prove to be virtually the only real “fruits” of these initial missionary efforts in Kespukwitk and greater Mi’kma’ki.23 In as little as two years’ time, the English will destroy the settlement and all other traces of the French along the coast, forcing the French to abandon the venture at this location and leaving the people of Mi’kma’ki without any missionary intervention for years. When their time comes, therefore, the majority of the Lnúk people who called Membertou their saqamaw will don their beautiful otter robes and sing their way out of this world to the accompaniment of dog slaughter, feasting, dancing, and the songs of their ancestors still ringing in their ears.

Before the English captain Samuel Argall’s trail of destruction brings an end to the Port Royal settlement and the first attempt to establish a mission, however, a number of French colonists, including Father Biard, will be targeted for destruction — not by the English, but as a consequence of the English presence in this region. And, once again, sounds of power will be at the heart of the encounter; for, as the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers’ printless, paperless existence imbues words and sounds with more power it stands to reason that, for better or worse, that power is wielded in more intense ways than it is in print cultures.24 In the same culture in which we find immense respect and curative sonic powers, therefore, we also find the equal and opposite extremes of sound-based ritual insult and destruction.

Singing with Strangers

What the Waabanaki Heard

June 1605: Pemaquid, *Waabanakiing,* (Dawnland). ¹ Some strangers offer a small group of Algonquian-speaking Patuxet Waabanaki men “pease and bread...and shew...them trifles to exchange.”² Assuming they have thus “banisht feare,” the newcomers promptly take the five Patuxet men captive and sail off with them to a distant land (England).³ One of those Patuxet, a local chief named Nahanada, returns home with more of these strangers in 1606.⁴ Skidwarres, also one of the captives, returns in 1607 with still more of these newcomers who quickly build a large structure near the *sagadahoc* (mouth) of the glistening *kinipekw* (snake) that slithers through 170 miles of *Waabanakiing.*⁵

The returned captives discourage their people from approaching the strangers for the purposes of entering into a trading partnership, “instantly carry[ing] them away, and...not suffer[ing] them to come neere any more.” Those who take their advice actively hide trade goods or promise and even sometimes pretend to help the colonists without following through, either

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¹ Pemaquid, meaning “It is situated far out,” is the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) name for present-day Bristol in Lincoln County, Maine and Waabanakiing (Dawnland) is the region comprised of present day northeastern New England and the Canadian “Maritimes.”

² The strangers were English explorers led by Captain George Weymouth.


⁴ i.e. Martin Pring’s exploratory voyage.

⁵ The large structure was Fort St. George and the people who built it were the English of the Popham Colony, also known as the Sagadahoc Colony, the first English settlement in New England. The snake is the Kennebec River. *Kinipekw* has been recorded as the “Eastern Abenaki” word for “bay” or “large body of still water,” which is correct but, due to the synonymy between serpents and water, *kinipekw* is also a word signifying “snake” in many Algonquian languages. E.g., The Anishinaabemowin word for “snake” or “serpent” is *ginebig* and, as we will see in “Wishful Hearing” on pp.222–27 of this thesis, ‘g’ and ‘k’ are often interchangeable as are ‘b’ and ‘p’ so *ginebig* and *kinipekw* are actually more similar than they may first appear. See also Lake Kenabee in Polk County, Wisconsin, which is recorded as being likely from the Algonquian Anishinaabemowin word *ginebig* for ‘snake’ and Kennebecasis River, a tributary of the Saint John River in New Brunswick, Canada meaning “little snake.” See William Bright, *Native American Placenames of the United States,* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004), p.212; Maine Historical Society, Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Volume IV, (Portland: Published for the Society 1856, r.p. Maryland: Heritage Books, 1995), p.190; Stephen D. Peet, *Myths and Symbols or Aboriginal Religions in America,* (Chicago: Office of the American Antiquarian, 1905), p.59.
by not meeting as arranged or suddenly disappearing. This aloofness is something these particular Waabanaki can afford. As semi-sedentary agriculturalists living in well-defended villages where they cultivate corn, beans, and squash, and with considerable, longstanding trade interests along the coast trading their corn with northern and eastern neighbours who cannot or choose not to grow their own, the various groups who qualify as semi-sedentary, corn-growing Waabanaki (labelled “Armouchiquois” by the French)—such as the Waabanaki peoples of the sagadahoc and the Nanrantsouak (Norridgewock) band of the upper kinipekw—have little incentive to forge any new trade alliances with strangers they now know they cannot trust. But this is not true of all the people of Waabanakiing (Dawnland)—a vast region lying east of what the Kanonsionni (Iroquois) call Kaniá:tare tsı kahnhokà: ronte (Lake Champlain) and stretching from the Merrimack River valley to beyond Mi’kma’ki in the north. Despite being closely connected, the Waabanaki are a number of autonomous groups and lead markedly different lifestyles. For instance, though the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) and many other Waabanaki groups living along the kinipekw (snake) have experimented with maize agriculture in recent times, as the last to attempt this mode of life they were also the first to discard it when they found trade with the newcomers could adequately support their traditional hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

Yet the “Armouchiquois’s” avoidance of the newcomers seems less a case of apathy resulting from their greater self-sufficiency and more a case of them seriously taking heed of the returned captives’ warnings. Their own trading partner the Alnôbak (Abenaki) saqamaw Meteourmite, for instance, avows that unlike himself the “Armouchiquois” are “afraid” of their strange new neighbours and for this reason strictly refrain from trading and mingling with them; a practice which prevents them from being “reduced by disease[s]” that are diminishing the populations of those who “traffic” with the newcomers. In fact, Meteourmite swears the xenophobic “Armouchiquois” even resort to more aggressive actions against the newcomers; namely performing shamanic rituals designed to kill the newcomers’ captain at a distance. If true, it clearly makes no difference to the “Armouchiquois” that the captain of the


7 The Lnúk (Mi’kmaq), most of the Wolastoqiıyik (Etchemin), the Alnôbak (Abenaki) and other nations in the Maritimes were among the non-corn-growing, migratory, subsistence based hunter-gatherers of the northeast who relied heavily on European trade in the contact era. See Hardy, Notes on a Lost Flute, Op.cit., p.73 and especially pp.69-74 for “Stalking Corn,” which provides a brief overview of debates around who cultivated corn in this region and who did not. See also David Demeritt, “Agriculture, Climate, and Cultural Adaptation in the Prehistoric Northeast,” Archaeology of Eastern North America, Vol. 19 (Fall, 1991): 183–202.

8 JR 2: 43–45; JR 3: 103–05.
English Popham Colony, George Popham, is “a very honest man who [gets] along remarkably well” with Meteourmite and many of his allies: the “Armouchiquois” wish to eliminate this uninvited and unwanted alien threat. When the good captain subsequently dies in the harsh winter of February 1608—a mere six months after the newcomers’ arrival—Meteourmite is, understandably, thoroughly convinced his death is the result of Armouchiquoian “magic.”

Things rapidly deteriorate between Meteourmite’s people and the English newcomers when Popham is replaced by his twenty-five-year-old second-in-command: Raleigh Gilbert. Under Gilbert, the Popham colonists have increasingly more hostile interactions with Meteourmite’s neighbour and ally, Sabenoa. And, according to Meteourmite, the English mistreat his own people by beating them, driving them from their tables with blows from a club and setting dogs on them — all of which is consistent with records detailing English treatment of Algonquian-speaking peoples elsewhere in this period.

Given their indifference to and outright enmity for the strangers, the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) likely only learn of the strangers’ sudden departure in 1608 via Meteourmite. His version of events features his warriors ambushing and murdering eleven Popham colonists, forcing the English to abandon their colony. While this is likely little more than a boast, what matters is that Meteourmite is willing to take credit for having expelled the English in his communications with the French and, thus, likely does so when communicating with his indigenous trading partners, which includes the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois). Without access to any alternate version—least of all one from the English perspective—the “Armouchiquois” probably believe it and undoubtedly applaud it.

Just over three years later, twenty-four Waabanaki identified only as “Armouchiquois” are travelling on the kiniipekw (snake / Kennebec River), no doubt with customary silence, trepidation, and copious offerings of tobacco to attempt to appease the Horned Underwater Serpent ever-lurking beneath the surface in readiness to steal and drown unsuspecting

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9 *JR* 2: 43–45. The cause of George Popham’s death in early 1608 is unknown and, aside from Meteourmite’s claim, has never been attributed to indigenous actions, magical or otherwise.


12 Historians largely discount Meteourmite’s claim; the evidence indicates the colony was abandoned for multiple other reasons and official Popham Colony death figures do not reflect the loss of 11 Englishmen. See Cave, Op.cit., 625, 627–28, 639–40. Meteourmite was clearly aware of the English and French rivalry and was likely trying to ingratiate himself with the French, whom he preferred, by claiming responsibility for driving their rivals out of the region.
humans. Perhaps these men know and at this moment recall a Dawnland story—or some variation of it—in which Original Man spied the Underwater Serpent “at a long distance, as it lay on the surface of the dark water” in Waabanakiing and, ultimately, with the help of a watchful Sky being, vanquished him:

Upon nearing the monster, it raised its head and began to run out its firelike tongue rapidly at him; by this action [Original Man] was well aware…this was a…deadly enemy; so he steered his canoe directly for the monster and the serpent reared up in a fearful manner and seemed ready to crush the canoe and the man, but at that moment...“Red headed wood pecker” flew between the man and the serpent and danced in the air for awhile, seemed undecided which way to fly until it saw the serpent make for the man, then the bird flew toward the man and lit upon the bow end of the canoe and said to him, “Be quick and take your bow and shoot the arrow at the smallest part of the reptile’s body,” and [Original Man] obeyed the bird and shot the arrow but it only rebounded without doing the intended execution, and the bird flew, picked up and brought back the arrow, saying, “Aim nearer the tail,” the arrow went again only to rebound as before. Six times this was repeated and six times met with the same results, but on the seventh, the bird flew in advance of the arrow and with its beak pointed…where to aim, [Original Man] obeyed and sent the arrow swiftly to the spot very near the end of the tail...[breaking] the serpent’s back bone, which caused him to recoil in death...

[U]pon looking around [Original Man] beheld that the whole sea was in blood, and the body of the serpent just slain laying on the surface, its head toward the land, and many times seventy smaller reptiles coming out of its mouth, all heading for the land. [Wood-pecker] said, “Let them go in peace, they can never grow large enough to do you harm as along as they stay on the land...”

The other-than-human who lives “down there,” of course, is not the only potentially “deadly enemy” these Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) must be mindful of as they traverse the kinipekw (snake / Kennebec River).

The Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) reserve an equal quantity of wariness for malevolent human beings too as they travel along the river in their canoes. As is the common practice in this

region, a couple of the men likely journey ahead of the group as scouts to “reconnoitre for two or three leagues...along the river...to see if there is any mark or sign to indicate...their enemies have passed, or their friends.”

It is possible then that, like Original Man spying the deadly serpent from a distance, the scouts—entirely unseen—observe a group of strangers (the French) moving around the abandoned fort and its surrounds at the mouth of the kinipekw in late October 1611, days before they will finally make their own presence known and songs heard. Their arm’s length policy and subsequent lack of engagement in trade with any newcomers means they probably struggle to differentiate between Frenchmen and Englishmen either by the sound of their languages or their appearance. European newcomers seen from afar, sojourning for days at a fort that Englishmen had built and inhabited only a few years earlier could easily be mistaken for Englishmen returning to their former abode. So, when these strangers leave the fort, travel upriver, and drop their anchor, the twenty-four “Armouchiquois” men seize the opportunity to approach their presumed enemy. Like the Red headed wood pecker, though, they do not rush to action: they size the enemy up instead and linger indecisively.

The Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) then make camp on the riverbank in close proximity to their foe and begin to sing. As they sing, they begin to move their bodies in synchrony with their rhythmic chants, amplifying the rhythm of their chants by feeling the rhythmic sounds simultaneously in their bodies. The Algonquian-Iroquoian medicine people use the same acoustic power of chant, rhythmic percussion, and vigorous dance movements to reach the altered state of ecstasy. In that trance state the healer’s spirit is transported by the rhythm beyond the material reality to confer with other-than-human elders directly and to retrieve information and curative power; spiritual power the healer subsequently transfers to the patient through hypnotic rhythmic sound. The Waabanaki men now use this power upon themselves for a markedly different purpose. Singing and dancing rhythmically altogether, each man feels his mind, body, and spirit being taken over by the rhythmic sounds and it is not long before all twenty-four are in a semi-trance state — sounding and moving automatically as one unified being. But the Waabanaki have not just synchronised with each other — the rhythm that has mastered them all is a sacred, higher power: the power of Creation. This feeling of entrainment, then, tells the Waabanaki their elders are with them. While the Waabanaki have entrained with each other and with the elders of Creation, though,

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15 *MBE*, pp.46–47.
17 For a recent description of the effect of such rhythms while participating in exhaustive dancing and/or drumming, see *SLOT*, pp.14–15; Hart and Stevens, Op.cit., pp.62, 136, 140.
recent events indicate they are most certainly not singing and dancing with the intention of entraining with the strangers on board the barque.

Roughly two years earlier, the French explorer Samuel de Champlain led an exploratory voyage through Kanonsionni country. To solidify a new French-Algonquin alliance, Champlain agreed to accompany an Omâmiwinini (Algonquin) war party, which included the Innu (Montagnais), Wendat (Huron Confederacy) and others to a battle with their traditional foe, the Kanonsionni (Iroquois Confederacy). At the end of a twenty-eight day journey into enemy territory, the war party reached a place called Ticonderoga where they met members of the Kanonsionni who were, likewise, “coming to make war.” Upon sighting each other, both sides “began to make loud cries” and readied their arms. The Kanonsionni set themselves up on shore while Champlain’s allies “withdrew toward the water.” The warring parties then parleyed; for, as prepared as both sides were, neither was prepared to rush headlong into battle. Together they determined they would wait for daylight to differentiate friend from foe. In the hours before the sun rose over Ticonderoga and heralded the opening of the battle, however, the age-old enemies did something else together — they sang. “While we waited,” wrote Champlain, “the whole night was passed in dances and songs, as much on one side as on the other, with endless insults, and other talk, such as the little courage they had, their feebleness and inability to make resistance against their arms, and that when day came they should feel it to their ruin.” Champlain noted his indigenous allies were “not lacking in retort,” and “after plenty of singing, dancing, and parleying with one another, daylight came...,” and so did a history-making battle.18

Engaging in a “symbolic oral surrogate” of war was evidently a widespread pre-war ritual.19 A mere seven months before the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) performance on the riverbank, the Algonquian-speaking Powhatan treated the English to similar sonic assaults at Jamestown, Virginia. Hostilities had worsened significantly between the two communities since Jamestown was established in 1607, due to the Englishmen’s habitual lack of respect for their Powhatan allies, which saw colonists invading Powhatan villages and taking food.20 It was in this tense climate Captain John Smith and William Strachey noted the Powhatan practice of singing a “kynd of angry song against us, in their homely rhymes, which concludeth with a kynd of Petition unto their Okeus and to all the host of their idolls, to plague the Tassantasses [the English] and their posterities.” On March 29, 1611, the rhythmic hand-beating and foot-

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stamping Powhatan singers likely sang one such “scorneful song” from their position in the forest surrounding the English garrison prior to a battle with the English, as the record states the English officer on duty at the time had “rashly charged the [Powhatan] with his entire force of about twenty men,” in response to “the Indians’ taunt[s].” On that occasion, the “scorneful song” precipitated the early demise of every last one of those Englishmen.21

Like the Algonquian-Iroquoian warriors at Ticonderoga and the Powhatan at Jamestown, the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) are evidently also using acoustically-derived power or medicine as a stimulant to ready their minds, bodies, and spirits for battle.22 They are exploiting the physical and psychological effects of music to help them entrain with each other so they move as one via rhythmic movements, drumming and vocalisations; a sense of unity that will benefit them in a coordinated physical battle against the strangers.23 The collective sound they produce calls their other-than-human elders to aid them and makes their combined force audible to themselves—boosting their morale—and audible to their enemy, causing intimidation. If loud enough, the group’s sound will drown out their enemy’s attempt to harness the spirit-calling, unifying acoustic powers for themselves, giving the group the upper hand over the enemy in the battle proper. Thus, the Waabanaki’s vocalisations also include “harangues,” which are undoubtedly similar to the aggressively delivered insults Champlain heard at Ticonderoga and William Strachey heard from the Powhatans at Jamestown — namely accusations of unmanliness and the auditory assault of yells, whoops, insults, and derisive laughter the Algonquian-Iroquoian peoples use to try to break the death-songs of captives they ritually torture to death.24 Boasts are also a typical element of this pre-war ritual, therefore it is reasonably safe to say that, even when lyrical content is limited, boastful lyrics such as, “I make him bite the dust / the [enemy] / when I see him,” are also indicative of what the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) warriors hurl across the river in 1611.25

25 These lyrics are from war-songs belonging to Odjĭb’we, a late nineteenth-century Algonquian-speaking Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) warrior. CM-II, p.70.
An already tense situation is inflamed further still, when the strangers in the barque respond by singing with gusto over the top of the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) war songs and harangues. In the Algonquian-Iroquoian world, in which all vocalisations are agonised over and meditated upon in silence at great length before they are ever heard, active listening practices are a way respect is shown for the spiritual power expended during vocalisation.  

To speak, sing, or shout over another, therefore, is an unequivocal insult. Things get even more heated when the strangers cease singing their own songs and, instead, attempt to sing the Waabanaki’s war songs. Songs are personal: they are invested with the singer’s spirit and are never sung by anyone other than the individual, (or in this case nation), to whom the song has been gifted in a dream. Thus, in war, when causing major offense is a major goal, Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers “strike up a tune that belongs to their enemies,…to aggravate them.”  

The strangers in the barque, who up until now had been quiet, have confirmed for the Waabanaki that they are their adversaries. Both sides engage in a “symbolic oral surrogate” of war, singing and haranguing backwards and forwards at each other throughout the night.

Granted, a thoroughgoing battle akin to that seen at Ticonderoga does not eventuate, perhaps because the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) feel outnumbered or are concerned about the strangers’ destructive weaponry. Nevertheless, an attack does come the following morning, as it so often does among the nations of the region: beneath a veil of friendship, “for they always make the greatest show of affection when they are the most treacherous.”

Playing on the ever-starving newcomers’ need for corn, the warriors feign friendship by offering themselves as guides. The strangers prove willing to believe this ruse; after all, if anyone is in a position to supply them with “Armouchiquois corn” it is the corn-growing “Armouchiquois” whose land, “below the forty-third parallel, toward the Southwest,” is a veritable Rubicon insofar as a combination of climatic factors and cultural choices have made it the northernmost boundary for maize agriculture and the more sedentary lifestyle it supports. Having won their confidence, the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) guide the unsuspecting strangers into a lake and suddenly disappear, just like so many other Waabanaki in this region have done since the returned Patuxet Waabanaki captives advised against

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trading with newcomers. While the strangers struggle to escape the lake, the “Armouchiquois” make their way to a community of Alnôbak (Abenaki); one of a number of non-corn-growing, migratory, subsistence-based, hunter-gatherer northeastern nations who rely heavily on trading what they forage with other indigenous groups and Europeans. They inform the Alnôbak (Abenaki) saqamaw of the whereabouts of those they believe to be hungry Englishmen, prompting the saqamaw to arrange for warriors to accompany him to the strangers’ barque. But not for the purpose of helping them or supplying them with corn — he has none. For the saqamaw is Meteourmite: the selfsame person who boasts that he and his warriors have recently murdered eleven Englishmen and driven them entirely from their midst in recent years. “[B]y the help of Meteourmite,” the saqamaw who is willing to be reckless with the lives of his people by trading with the diseased newcomers and engaging in open warfare with them, the self-preservationists the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) think they will “make an easy conquest” of these presumed Englishmen without suffering any casualties of their own. The warriors disappear, confident they have sent the interlopers to certain death.

Upon first reading the Jesuit missionary Father Biard’s account of his Kennebec River experiences it is tempting to conclude, as Biard himself did, that the songs performed by the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) on the riverbank were ancillary to the entire episode. Biard misheard the songs as just another example of the spontaneous incantations the sauvages sang to the devil with great regularity. They became worthy of record solely because Biard had taken this particular opportunity to wage his holy war against evil by counteracting the devilish chants with sacred Christian songs. He had no inkling, even months later when he suspected the Waabanaki of having set a trap for the French, that the Waabanaki had been more literally waging a sonic war of their own, for he did not realise he was hearing them calling on their other-than-human elders for aid or hurling ritual insults in a widely practiced and recognisable pre-war ritual. Of all the sounds in the Algonquian-Iroquoian sonic lingua franca, these ritual insults were clearly the ones vulnerable newcomers could least afford to mishear. To ears that knew what such sounds signified, the performance on the riverbank would have provided an audible warning of the disingenuous “help” that followed. But because the Waabanaki’s inaccurate identification of the strangers as Englishmen foiled their treacherous plans, the initially tense and highly dangerous episode was rendered anticlimactic. In the absence of a lethal or at least violent denouement, the true significance of these particular indigenous sounds and of sound generally in this early cultural encounter was obscured.

Turning up the volume on the Waabanaki auditory perspectives, though, has enabled us to understand what Biard himself never did about the Kennebec River encounter. We discover the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois), too, had no idea what the Frenchmen’s sacred sounds actually meant. They persisted in hearing the imported sounds of non-natives within their own acoustemological framework and expected the aliens in their midst to know and adhere to the strict sonic protocols of the Algonquian-Iroquoian enrhythmed world; a world in which sound was profoundly spiritual and powerfully medicinal and an audible (and inaudible) show of respect was of the utmost importance. The result was that the singing strangers on the barque seemed to know exactly what they were doing by singing back, over the top, and in imitation of the Waabanaki on the riverbank: performing the sonic surrogate of war in the lead up to an actual attack. In light of these findings, we are left to marvel at the Frenchmen’s sheer luck in being able to escape their aquatic encounter with the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) with their lives.

We now turn our attention away from the xenophobic Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) to tune into the powerful sounds that accompanied the actions of those who, by contrast, sought to dominate trade with Europeans: the Kanonsionni “People of the Longhouse” (Iroquois Confederacy).
Death-Songs

That a great and powerful sound should have been so closely associated with death was not in the least bit unusual to the Kanonsionni’s Kanien’kehá:ka (Mohawk), the People of the Flint. After all, every summer the Kanien’kehá:ka hear the booming, cracking, rolling, echoing voices of the Thunderbirds accompanying the fatal flashing blows these Thunderers deal to the Horned Underwater Serpent before feasting on his flesh. And countless times the Kanien’kehá:ka have heard their war captives singing death-songs: the captives’ voices never ringing out more loudly and clearly and with such spiritual power than when their physical existence was being obliterated by Kanonsionni (Iroquois) hands.¹ So common is this linking of awe-inspiring sound and death, in fact, every Kanonsionni warrior has his own great and powerful death-song lest he, too, finds himself bound to a post in the land of his enemy dying in music while his captors “kill him by inches.”² That the Kanien’kehá:ka should have heard another powerful sound like the thunders produced by the Thunderbirds and seen it instantaneously kill two of their Kanonsionni chiefs at a distance, as if by magic, however, had come as a shock. So startled had they been by this sudden divergence from the norms of warfare in what otherwise appeared to be a typical, ritualised battle with their traditional enemies at Kaniá:tare tsì kahnkohà:ronte (Lake Champlain) in 1609, the Kanien’kehá:ka had dropped their shields and fled.³

In the years that followed, though, the People of the Flint ceased to run from what turned out to be the newcomers’ “thunderstick” (firearm) and instead familiarised themselves with and took possession of its powerful deathbringing sound.⁴ They did so by defeating their trade

² JR 4: 197–201.
³ The Battle of Ticonderoga in 1609 where Samuel de Champlain killed three Kanien’kehá:ka warriors with an arquebus in a battle in which he allied himself to a war party of Omâniwinini (Algonquin), Wendat (Huron Confederacy) and Innu (Montagnais). See CW-II, pp.95–100. See also p.207 of this thesis.
⁴ According to David J. Silverman, Op.cit., many Original Peoples equated the power of firearms with the Thunderbird; e.g. “the term “thunderstick” is a direct translation from the Narragansett word for gun, pęskunk.” Paradoxically, he notes, guns were associated just as often with the Horned Underwater Serpent or Panther—the Lakota term mazawakan is “a compound of the words for metal (maza) and lightning (wakan)”—because “The Thunderbird and Horned Underwater Serpent were locked in everlasting contention, but together…formed a binary that kept their opposite, yet complementary, forces in balance…. [B]ullets and gun barrels evoked the…serpent’s metallic scales. The flint of a gun’s firing mechanism was another substance used by the…serpent to defend himself from the Thunderbird…. The Indians’ preferences led Europeans and Americans to manufacture trade
competitors, the Muhhekunneuw (Mohican), which allowed the Kanien’kehá:ka to monopolise trade with the Dutch at a place the latter called “Fort Oranje.”

There, the Dutch traders had no qualms about furnishing the Kanien’kehá:ka with firearms in exchange for beaver pelts despite the official Dutch policy, which prohibited putting weaponry in the hands of the native population.

For the Kanien’kehá:ka, overhunting their beaver elders to meet the newcomers’ demands for furs ought to have been too high a price to pay for the thundersticks. After all, they risked offending not only the beaver elders but all of their other-than-human elders with such a blatant lack of respect and greed. Yet, by the time they began taking too much from their beaver elders, they were already in crisis mode. Neither their overhunting nor their need for firearms had caused this period of dysrhythmia but were, instead, products of the dysrhythmia the newcomers had unwittingly triggered on the Great Turtle’s back by importing diseases against which the Kanien’kehá:ka and other nations had no immunity.

Though the Great Turtle’s back had evidently never been a perfect world in which no one died from illness and everyone always respected each other and never fought, it was imperfect yet functional because of its inbuilt checks and balances in the rhythmic cycle of creation, destruction, and re-creation. Like other Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers of the east, for example, the Kanonsionni traditionally dealt with the loss of life within their communities via the “mourning war”: a custom that stabilised population figures by replacing the dead via the ritualised adoption or execution of captives from an enemy nation. Before the newcomers arrived with their devastating diseases, the performance of this custom had been less frequent and the amount of lives to be compensated fewer. And, because the aim of warfare precipitated by mourning was to recreate a depleted community by increasing its population, the emphasis had been on the demonstration of bravery and efficiency in successfully taking captives without incurring casualties. Traditionally, enemies had also met in battle as technological equals; thus, the deciding factors in the outcome of a war may have been a bigger war party, or if not a higher quantity then a higher quality of warriors who were

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5 Fort Orange was the first permanent Dutch settlement in New Netherland, present-day Albany, New York.

However, due to the relatedness of all things, every aspect of life on the place of the Great Turtle’s back had been thrown out of synchrony by the great flood of European people, diseases, trade, and weaponry.\footnote{Demos, *Unredeemed Captive*, Op.cit., p.5 describes this as a “finely calibrated relationship to Nature.”} The decimation of the Kanonsionni population from European diseases like smallpox meant far more captives needed to be taken from their traditional enemies and more often — and the best way to achieve this revised aim whilst retaining the old requirement of minimising casualties was to use more lethal weaponry. The fact that the Kanien’kehá:ka and Kanonsionni generally had greater access to that highly lethal weaponry than their traditional foes only exacerbated the dysrhythmia in their world by giving them an unprecedented technological advantage. All power, good or bad, had to be balanced for everything and everyone to be in synchrony. Even the benevolent Thunderbirds’ power, therefore, was offset by their nemesis, the Horned Underwater Serpent.\footnote{See *NISH*, for the Underwater Horned Serpent and his relationship to the Thunderers.} These thundersticks, which put the Thunderers’ sonic power in Kanonsionni hands, did not have an equal and opposite force to balance their power because the Kanonsionni’s ancient enemies—the Omâmiwinini (Algonquin), Innu (Montagnais) and Wendat (Huron Confederacy)—had not gained firearms as well, despite being allied to the French. Like other European powers, the official policy of the French was to keep weapons out of native hands but only the French had succeeded in upholding this policy, mainly because of a geographic barrier that made it impossible for their native allies to reach Fort Orange and procure arms: Kanonsionni country. Nevertheless, even for the Kanonsionni, in the grand scheme their technological advantage was superficial. By introducing lethal firearms into a devastated world that could only be recreated by reducing the enemy’s collective spiritual power, the Europeans had rendered the Kanonsionni as dependent on firearms as they had traditionally been on their other-than-human elders. This dependency prompted the Kanonsionni to wage wars with their traditional enemies for the purposes of mourning and with new enemies, too, for economic reasons; namely to encroach on other nations’ traditional lands to continue supplying Europeans with furs and thereby maintain access to thundersticks, which inevitably led to further deaths and additional mourning wars. Even as the Kanonsionni clung to their traditional solutions, therefore, the variables Europeans introduced caused a vicious cycle of more destruction with...
no proportionate re-creation. In spite of their seeming advantages, then, the Kanonsionni still suffered major losses to disease and war and continued to look, as they had always done, to their traditional foes as the appropriate targets for destruction whenever they felt the need to replenish their own spiritual power.  

All this, then, has brought one of the Kanonsionni’s chiefs to the land and the scaffold of his sworn enemy, the Innu (Montagnais), in 1632. For the past couple of years his people have regularly attacked the Innu and Omàmiwinini to try to gain power over their lands in the brief absence of their ally, the French. But the French have recently returned to the place of the Great Turtle’s back and in the Kanonsionni’s latest battle with the Innu it was the Innu who were victorious. In their moment of victory they had seized the chief along with eight more of his countrymen and commenced the unmistakeable ritual of captivity by tearing the captives’ fingernails off with their teeth to prevent them untying themselves. The chief—who had taken many an Innu captive himself in his day—had likewise performed the role expected of him: he had stoically chanted the death-song gifted to him long ago in a dream. Soon the chief had felt the medicinal effects of his death-song’s repetitive cycle and his own rhythmic footsteps on Mother Earth — that familiar sense of weightlessness as his spirit journeyed outside of his body. It was a feeling he had experienced many times when listening to the chanting and drumming of the great medicine people of his nation. Whatever else his captors would go on to do to his physical being did not matter, for though his body was making its way to his captors’ village in Quebec in this world, his spirit was already beginning to walk along the Path of Souls to the Land of the Dead.  

11 In 1629, the English had a temporary victory over the French and, in the latter’s absence, the Kanonsionni’s Kanien’keh:ka exploited the situation by regularly attacking the Omàmiwinini (Algonquin) and Innu (Montagnais) to gain control in the north; actions which are considered to be the beginning of the Beaver Wars (1641–1701). By the time the Kanonsionni chief was captured and tortured to death in June and July of 1632, however, the French had returned to New France. See Spencer Tucker (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of North American Indian Wars, 1607–1890: A Political, Social, and Military History*, (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2011), p.13.  
13 The Iroquoian-speaking Kanonsionni (Iroquois Confederacy) believed the dead travelled along the Path of Souls (the Milky Way) to reach the Land of the Dead located in the west where the sun set. Many Algonquian-speakers also held this belief. For example, the Innu (Montagnais), wrote Le Jeune in the 1630s, “call the Milky Way Tshipai meshkenau, the path of souls, because they think…the souls raise themselves through this way in going to that great village [of the Spirits].” *JR* 6: 173–81. *Tshipai meshkanau* in modern Innu-aimun: *Tchipai*, meaning “corpse, dead body, skeleton, deceased, dead person, ghost,” while *meshkenau* in modern parlance carries the meanings “street, road, path, trail, track, route.” See Torknornoo, *Aimun-Mashinakian Innu Dictionary*, Op.cit., accessed 13 August 2015. The Anishinaabeg also held this belief as they have an equivalent word for the spirits’ path in their language Anishinaabemowin: *Jibekana*. Johann Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami: Wanderings Around Lake Superior*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1860), p.213. Twentieth-century Anishinaabeg reported the Path of Souls was a “quiet trail” where “time had no meaning,…silence held the soul-spirits [in]…their final dream.” See Johnston, Op.cit., pp.105–07. For a discussion of how widely the belief in the “Path of Souls” was see George E. Lankford, “The “Path of Souls”: Some Death Imagery in the Southeastern
On arrival in the enemy’s village, he had gloried in demonstrating the immensity of his spirit by singing his death-song and dancing around a fire to the accompaniment of his captors’ hand-clapping, thigh-beating, and vocalisations, “a-ah, a-ah, a-ah.” The medicinal power of his chant made him impervious to the pain the little girls and women of the village attempted to cause as they “blew and drove the flame” in his direction to burn him. When his Innu captors declared they would spare him and his fellow captives to negotiate peace with his people he did not call his spirit back to himself: he only let it pause on its journey along the Path of Souls to the Land of the Dead lest the peace treaty should not occur. And it was just as well because, as it happened, some brandy was all it took to evaporate any hope of peace. The Innu man guarding the prisoners had traded some beaver pelts with the English for the brandy and, in his subsequent drunken stupor, commanded his brother to unceremoniously kill one of the Kanonsionni captives. The English Captain still could have provided gifts in exchange for the Kanonsionni lives but, despite knowing the excruciating tortures awaiting the prisoners, he dismissively informed the Innu they could do with their captives “what they pleased.”

Thus the chief stands bound to a post: his fingers cut off completely now, his arms tied together at the wrists with a cord. His Innu captors tell him he is to die and the chief boastfully retorts: “Good, I am very much-pleased; I have taken a great many of the [Innu], my friends will take still more of them, and they will avenge my death.” He then eulogises himself with all the eloquence expected of so great a chief, “informing his captors of his prowess, saying farewell to his relatives, to his friends and to the allies of his tribe.” Last but by no means least, he bids farewell to “the Flemish Captain who goes to trade for furs in the country of the [Kanonsionni] by the Northern Sea.” It is a genuine farewell to a man who, as a trading partner, is as close to the chief as his own kin, but it also doubles as an insult: an irritating reminder to his captors that, unlike his own mighty people, they do not enjoy such a close relationship with the Dutch traders who provide the coveted thundersticks. His captors respond by pulling hard at both ends of the cord binding his wrists until it enters into his flesh and breaks his bones. Having witnessed this particular mode of torture being inflicted upon many Innu captives in his own land the chief knows most captives cannot help crying out horribly at this point, but the Innu fail to draw an involuntary cry from him.

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\(^{14}\) JR 5: 47–51.

\(^{15}\) Ibid, 53–55.
His death-song is working its magic again. He is at one with his chant’s rhythm, but he must focus intensely to maintain this synchrony, especially now. The men, women, and young girls of the village alike begin to “apply hot and flaming brands to those portions of [his] body which are the most sensitive, to the ribs, thighs, chest, and...[his] private parts.” Then, they “prick...them with awls, bit[e] them with savage glee, [and] lay...open [his] flesh with knives” while whooping, yelling, and laughing derisively. The jeering captors commit this auditory assault to completely subvert all the protocols of polite society in which respectful listening is essential and he, the singing captive, likewise participates in this sonic warfare by defiantly singing over instead of listening to their acoustic insults. Yet, there is another reason for all their noise. Unlike the many Europeans who have witnessed this ritual before and become too preoccupied with the sense of extreme pain to perceive the power of the song, the captors know the chief does not sing in spite of the horrendous injuries they inflict but, rather, that he does not feel as much pain because of his death-song. He has accessed power typically only within the reach of medicine people and, in so doing, has essentially assumed the role of self-healer: singing to prevent or at least dull the sensation of physical pain. The Innu captors, therefore, grow increasingly desperate to break the powerful, entrancing rhythm of his song and nullify the efficacy of its sonic medicine so he can feel the pain they are going to such trouble to inflict upon his person. So, the chief goes on singing.

Unsuccessful so far in breaking their captive, the Innu proceed to the next phase of the ritualised torture. They cut the upper part of his forehead with a knife and raise his scalp, throw hot sand upon the exposed part, then pierce his arms at the wrists with sharp sticks, and pull the nerves out through the holes. Over many hours, they roast, and burn him on all sides, too, thrusting “glowing brands and red-hot hatchets” into the “most fleshy parts.” No matter what his captors do, though, they cannot elicit a cry from the chief — they do not break his song. As he sings, the chief sees them place a large kettle on the fire and knows that soon his mortal remains will be boiling in that very kettle — but not yet. The Innu are nowhere near satisfied; nor would the chief have been if the situation were reversed with him performing the role of captor and one of these Innu playing the singing captive. The chief is not surprised, then, when—to prolong his torture—they untie him so he can run to the nearby river “to refresh himself” before recapturing him and making him “endure the fire...another

16 On death-songs as a way of “continuing to make war” on the enemy see: HEAS, pp.156–58; Fulford, Op.cit., pp.142, 145.
17 Irish trader James Adair saw and heard this auditory assault of captives in the eighteenth century, recording “[n]ot a soul, of whatever age or sex, manifests the least pity during the prisoner’s tortures: the women sing with religious joy, all the while they are torturing the devoted victim, and peals of laughter resound through the crowded theatre.” Adair, Op.cit., p.391.
time.” He withstands these horrific tortures because he knows the grief that has driven his captors to the mourning war rite in the first place; the many lost lives they are seeking to avenge. His ability to acoustically manifest his spiritual strength through the death-song will satisfy his captors’ blood lust and protect his loved ones. His incredible show of bravery will convince them they are succeeding in robbing his people of no ordinary man but a warrior and a chief who possesses extraordinary spiritual power. “Blackened, completely scorched, and the grease melt[ing] and ooz[ing] out of his body,” the ever-singing chief is more spirit than body now — a disembodied voice singing to them from the spirit world. He can already hear the drums in the Land of the Dead growing louder and louder at his approach, but the merciless Innu release the mortal remains suspended in this world once again for the joy of recapturing and roasting him a third time.20

The great chief is already dancing to his ancestors’ ceaseless drumming, rattling and singing in the Land of the Dead when the Innu open his chest, tear out his heart, roast it on the coals and give it to the young men and little children to eat so they can absorb—for themselves and for their nation—the spiritual power and courage he has undeniably made manifest in sound. Some of the young men make “an incision in the upper part of their necks” to mingle his blood with their own “so they can never be surprised by the enemy,...however secret...their approach...may be.” Piece by piece, the rest of the Kanonsionni chief’s body is boiled in the kettle and the villagers, young and old, consume him so they, too, can transfer every bit of his exemplary spiritual power to themselves just as the hunter transfers the power of his captured prey to himself and his kindred by converting the animal to food. After so much death and destruction, the Innu community’s re-creation is complete.21

For the Innu, though, the satisfaction from their great war feast soon gives way to dread. They now live in wretched anticipation of the day the Kanonsionni will come with their thundersticks flashing and thundering to recapture the chief’s stolen spiritual power by taking them captive and making them sing their death-songs, knowing full well they will have neither their own Thunderers nor the power of the Horned Underwater Serpent to prevent it.


Wishful Hearing

Nitassinan (Our land). Each day the distinctive rustling voice of Takuatshin (autumn) is heard more frequently and more clearly. The Innu (Montagnais) cannot tell exactly what is being said — perhaps Takuatshin is not even speaking to them but to another. Regardless, the people listen closely to Takuatshin’s speech and know what it means for them. Pipun (winter) will soon arrive with “cold winds, ice, and snows” to “lay waste” to everything Shikuan (spring) and Nipin (summer) have created. It is time for the Innu to split into their small kinship-based bands and journey deep into the woods of Nitassinan in search of other-than-humans willing to offer themselves as food for their human grandchildren. “In the early snows” they will “seek the Beaver in the small rivers, and Porcupines upon the land,” and at akua-pipun (the height of winter) “when the deep snows come” and the cold makes the trees split and crack with the same audible ferocity as a Frenchman’s thunderstick, they will pursue the Moose, Elk, and Caribou. The people will never stay in one place too long lest they offend their elders by asking too much of them. Temporary lodges will be built by the women so the band can leave well before the other-than-humans become scarce. The women will rebuild these structures in a new location, repeating a full rhythmic cycle of creation, destruction, and re-creation.

Around 45 men, women and children comprise this band. Among them are four brothers: Mestigoît, “a brave hunter,” Carigonan, the most powerful Innu medicine person; Pastedechouan, who was taken to France as a child, learnt to speak their language, and knows

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1 The Innu are the indigenous inhabitants of Nitassinan, which stretches from the St. Lawrence River’s north shore to the mushuau (“Barren Grounds” or tundra) around Ungava Bay. Henriksen, Op.cit., p.6. Champlain referred to the southern Innu as Montagnais / Montagnez / Montagnets (“mountain people” or “mountaineers”) and the Jesuit missionaries at Tadoussac used the name “Montagnais” to refer specifically to the fur-trading southern-Innu of the Saguenay basin. Over time, the French applied the name to other groups within the Nitassinan homelands. See José Mailhot, “Beyond Everyone’s Horizon Stand the Naskapi,” Ethnohistory, Vol. 33, No. 4, (Autumn, 1986): 392.

2 JR 6: 159–63. The JR only record the Innu recognising “two progenitors of the seasons” (Nipinioukhe and Pipounoukhe). Modern Innu-aimun, however, includes words for all four seasons so I have included those words as well as the modern spelling for pipun and nipin above with reference to Torkornoo, Aimun-Mashinaikan Innu Dictionary, Op.cit., accessed 19 February 2017. Though the modern Innu-aimun dictionary records these words as “inanimate nouns,” the original JR recording states otherwise. See also Johnston, Op.cit., pp.28–30.

something of their “Christian” beliefs; and, lastly, Sasousmat. A Black Robe named Father Le Jeune has also ventured into the woods to learn from Pastedechouan how to speak Innu-aimun. The Innu have allowed the Black Robe to join them out of no great love for him or his mission to learn their language and teach them his beliefs. After all, the Innu already know how to speak the special trade language the newcomers understand and find it is quite sufficient when it comes to obtaining all they desire from the French. They have permitted the Black Robe’s inclusion in the band simply because he brought with him a barrel of sea biscuit, a sack of flour, some corn, prunes, parsnips and, at their insistence, a little barrel of wine, not to mention the present of more food he has promised his host, Mestigoit, upon his safe return.

There are many occasions over the subsequent months when members of the band question whether the extra food has been worth putting up with the noise pollution the Black Robe produces. They have to contend with his arguments with his reluctant language teacher Pastedechouan and the medicine person Carigonan, his frequent interruptions to sacred rituals, which jeopardise the health of many band members, and the way he shouts in an attempt to make himself understood when he is trying to speak Innu-aimun. Sometimes, though, the Black Robe’s childish stammering and mispronunciations are a source of entertainment for the Innu who ask him to give an oration at one of their feasts and then burst into raucous laughter at his attempt. When they really wish to have a joke at his expense, they teach him words he would consider “rude” instead of those he wishes to use in what he calls his “prayers” to his personal other-than-human. At other times, they think the Black Robe seems intelligent and will, therefore, soon acquire their language. Indeed, he already seems to know some atanukana (creation stories), which always contain great wisdom.

Pipun is the time for atanukana (creation stories). For when it is cold, and especially at nighttime, many other-than-humans are trapped under ice, “hibernating” or, at least, “sluggish.” They are less likely, therefore, to hear they are being “talked about or, worse, made fun of” by their highly dependent human grandchildren, who in listening to these stories about how their world has come to be learn how to live well within it. So, though the hour of the day is not the most auspicious for atanukana, the Black Robe at least has the season correct when he

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4 “Carigonan...was the most famous sorcerer, or manitousiou,….of all the country.” manitoushiu, as it is spelt in modern Innu-aimun, is an animate intransitive verb (vai) meaning “s/he uses her/his mental and spiritual power.” Torkornoo, Aimun-Mashinaikan Innu Dictionary, Op.cit., accessed 19 February 2017.


begins to tell them one day in his broken Innu-aimun, God is “he who can do everything, and who...made the Sky and earth.” The Innu immediately say to one another, “Atanukan, atanukan, it is atanukan.” But, as his generally laughable pronunciation of Innu-aimun indicates, Le Jeune does not have a good ear, so this new word enters his vocabulary as Atahocan and later morphs into Atahocam. Le Jeune compounds the error by misinterpreting the meaning of their utterance: he believes he has heard the Innu saying they have a high god or supreme creator named Atahocan / Atahocam “who made all things.”

Le Jeune desperately wants to hear evidence that the seeds of Christianity he and his fellow missionaries are planting will bear fruit and that there is some equivalence between the two belief systems that will make the communication of the faith possible. Of course, in saying “It is atanukan” the Innu have not identified their equivalent being to the Christian God; they have merely classified the genre of the story the Jesuit is telling or informed each other that, in spite of the inordinate hour of the day, it is “story time.” The newcomers are by no means alone, though, when it comes to experiencing earslips brought on by a strong case of wishful hearing.

When a great “mortality” sweeps through the Omâmiwinini (Algonquin) nation a few years later, the survivors can only speculate about the cause. Some note a correlation between the sharp increase to their morbidity and mortality rates and the coming of the Europeans, as well as the fact that “those who united” with the newcomers directly were also the first to succumb. The Black Robes, specifically, seem to be harbingers of death as most of the people on whom they perform their “baptism” ritual perish soon after. Others argue the contrary: that the “Black Robes” specifically must know “something which preserves” the French, because many French people had also died previously, but “since [the Black Robes] have been with the[m], the French die no more.” Such thinking prompts an array of reactions within the

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7 JR 7: 297–99.
8 Innu-aimun speakers (and other speakers of the Algonquian languages), recognise two genres of stories; atanukana: creation stories (i.e. “myths” and legends) and tipatshiminun (story), as in tipatshiminunutu (people tell real-life stories, recount events, tell news). While this distinction bears some similarity to the western categories of “myth” versus “factual history” these classifications are not exact equivalents. The Innu interpretation of the encounter I offer above is supported by evidence of a later conversation Le Jeune had with an Innu (Montagnais) medicine man who, when asked about the creator of the world stated that his people “did not know who was the first Author of the world, - that it was perhaps Atahocham [sic], but that was not certain; that they only spoke of Atahocam [sic] as one speaks of a thing so far distant that nothing sure can be known about it; and, in fact,” Le Jeune confirmed, “the word “Nitatahokan” in their language means, “I relate a fable, I am telling an old story invented for amusement.” Even in light of this information, Le Jeune did not relinquish his notion that the Innu (Montagnais) had a high god or “supreme creator.” In other dialects of the Algonquian language family, such as Anishinaabemowin, the modern word for a story about creation is aadizookaan, the plural form being aadizookaanag / aadizookaanak and in the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) language the word is a’tugwaqan (singular) and a’tugwaqann (plural), pronounced aa-du-gwa-hgan. See Haberlin et. al., Mi’gmaq-Mi’kmaw Online, https://www.mikmaqonline.org/ accessed 18 June 2017. Search for “story” in the English language box to listen to the pronunciation of this word; note its similarity to what the French thought they heard “Atahocan.”
Omâmiwinini community; a few decide to send their children to the Jesuits for instruction in Christianity thinking it will preserve their lives, only to realise their mistake later on; others conclude items belonging to the Black Robes are sacred talismans that will provide immunity, whether they are obtained with the Jesuits’ permission or via theft.9

The wise Omâmiwinini (Algonquin) chief has a theory of his own. He and his people have heard that the man the newcomers call the “Governor of New France,” Monsieur Charles de Montmagny, is “a great friend of the Sun,” kìzis: the masculine other-than-human in the sky world with the dual power to sustain life as well as destroy it. He has also recently heard that Montmagny sometimes sends “letters which prevent one from dying”: an immense power over life and death, which “the Captain of the French” has evidently been gifted due to the close, personal relationship he has nurtured with kìzis. Perhaps the newcomers’ unique power to capture speech on pages is what has caused them to be favoured by the sun. Thoroughly convinced he has identified a person who can save his people, the Omâmiwinini chief sets out on a quest to see this “grand personage” at Quebec and to ask him for some of the life-giving letters. When he gains an audience with the French “Captain,” he asks why his own people are “becoming visibly depopulated, and [the French], on the contrary, live...so long.” “It must be...that thou knowest some secret for preserving thy people, and that thou hast an intimate acquaintance with the Manitou,” that is, the sun. The Governor responds by sending the Omâmiwinini chief and some of his people to the Black Robe Father Le Jeune, promising if they do what the missionary tells them to do, “they would learn the secret of preserving their nation, and of diminishing the number of deaths.”10

Upon the arrival of the Omâmiwinininiwak (Algonquins), Le Jeune proceeds to make them “a little speech” in Innu-aimun “on the greatness of god, on his power and goodness.” He tells them “it [is God] who maintain[s] us, that he wishe[s] to preserve all the nations of the earth; and...if they [are] willing to believe in him and obey him, he [will] love them as he loves [the French]; that he forb[ids] murder, theft, and lewdness, - in short,...he hate[s] all that is bad, and love[s] all that is good.” One of the Omâmiwinini present consecutively interprets this speech from Innu-aimun into Omâmiwininìmowin after which the Omâmiwinininiwak

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10 Ibid, 179–87. A fortnight before the chief set out for Quebec to see Montmagny, the Governor had attempted to send letters to the Omâmiwinini (Algonquin) tribe, the Iroquet, to prevent them from putting their Kanonsionni (Iroquois) captives to death, but the letters arrived too late. It seems this may be the origin of the idea that the Captain of the French could “prevent a person from dying, at least soon” with letters. “Algonquian” refers to a family of languages and culture, whereas “Algonquin” refers to a particular nation.
“approve...the word of Jesus Christ, and answer...they would gladly be near [the Black Robes], to be able to hear it more frequently.”

Nevertheless, the word of “Jesus the Son of God” is not what the Omâmiwininiwak hear — they hear the word of their own other-than-human: kìzìs, the sun. Accustomed to an acoustic ecology in which neighbouring nations speak related, often mutually intelligible yet slightly different-sounding languages, the Omâmiwinini ear does not fixate on the Francophones’ pronunciation of the Algonquian speakers’ word for “sun” with a /j/ instead of a /k/ but disregards such minute differences to tune into broader phonological similarities. Indeed, the French pronunciation is not even unheard of in the Algonquian-speaking world, as the French say it almost the same way as the nearby Alnôbak (Abenaki), who pronounce it gìzos, and the Anishinaabe (Ojibwe), who say gìzìs (with the /g/ pronounced like the ‘g’ in the English word “garden” rather than the /j/ sound of “Jesus”).

11 JR 12: 179–87. Consecutive interpreting is when the interpreter waits for the speaker to finish a large section of speech before interpreting that information into the target language. This differs from simultaneous interpreting, which involves translating a sentence into the target language whilst listening to the next sentence. Consecutive interpreting is typically prone to a loss of detail as it relies on memorisation based on one hearing. However, the Algonquin and Iroquoian speakers were members of an ‘oral’ and, therefore, ‘aural’ culture that required people to have highly developed aural literacy. Indigenous councils are a prime example of how skilled the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers were at listening to the speech of another individual and repeating the major points of that person’s speech before commencing their own.

12 Regarding the variations on the Algonquian words for sun, e.g. kìzìs and gìzìs etc., with reference to Table 1, the voiced consonant ‘g’ and the voiceless consonant ‘k’ are interchangeable in Algonquian languages as they sound almost the same on account of both consonants being velar stops, alternatively known as plosives; i.e. sounds articulated with the back of the tongue against the soft palate (velum). Thus, the Lenape kìsìux, Maliseet-Passamaquoddy kìsìuh, Algonquin kìzìs, and Potawatomi kìzev are also closer to ‘Jesus’ than a cursory glance at their written forms might suggest, while the -ux, -uhs, -is and -es endings of these words are also relatively consistent with the second syllable to ‘Jesus,’ as the vowels are all followed by sibilance ranging from the simple ‘-s’ to the more complex ‘-x’ and aspirated ‘-hs.’ The occurrence of the ‘p’ sound at the start of the sun-words in Atikamekw kìchikaw pìsimuw, Cree pìsim, Innu-Aimun pìshum and Naskapi pìsim may seem a large departure from the ‘g’ and ‘k’ variants but, like ‘g’ and ‘k,’ ‘p,’ is also a plosive. The point of difference is the ‘p’ is a plosive of the voiceless bilabial variety, which has a forward placement on the lips compared to the back of the tongue and soft palate in ‘g’ and ‘k.’ What are, in sonic terms, actually minor variations in the pronunciation of this particular word reflects a pattern of phonological shifts that, over time, differentiated one language/dialect and accent from another within the larger Algonquian language family. For example, ‘k’ words in one language may have consistently become ‘p’ words in another, but the internal structure of the word remained similar if not exactly the same and may have ensured continued mutual intelligibility between many of the languages/dialects. If we move further afield to the Algonquian-speakers of the Plains, whose languages are not mutually intelligible with those of the Eastern and Central Algonquian speakers, there are different sounds in place of the Eastern and Central Algonquian ‘g,’ ‘k’ and ‘p’ words, but even in the least recognisable forms there are still similarities to ‘Jesus.’ Among the Arapaho and Gros Ventre ‘g,’ ‘k,’ and ‘p’ have been replaced with the voiceless glottal transition or aspirate ‘h’ to form hìsis. Note, like ‘Jesus,’ the word’s internal structure still consists of the most common long ‘ee’ sound (like the vowel sound in ‘feet’), with variants throughout the Algonquian languages on this sound rendered as i, i, ì, ìi, and é (in Cheyenne) and the least similar ú (in Mi’kmaq). The ‘ee’ sound and its variants are followed soon, if not immediately, by a sibilant phoneme z, s, or š (the latter is pronounced ‘sh’ as in ‘shape’) and then another vowel sound, a, e, i, ìi, o, ó, oo, u, or uh. Even the seeming outliers nàkìset (Mi’kmaq, pronounced na-goo-set), kìshooxkw (Munsee), kíilhswa (Illinois-Miami), ki’omma (Blackfoot) and ése’he (Cheyenne) roughly conform to
Table 1: Algonquian sun and moon words. Adapted from “Algic Word Sets” published on http://native-languages.org/ with reference to other Algonquian language dictionaries, see Bibliography.

The French have likewise grown accustomed to hearing “repetition with a difference”\(^{13}\) in the colonial context, so when they hear the Algonquian speakers saying *giizis* and *kìzis*, they theorise that Basque fishermen introduced the Hebrew word “Jesus” during a bit of casual evangelising in the sixteenth century — but they are wrong. This is a case of “chance resemblance” in which the Hebrew word “Jesus” and the Algonquian words for sun are not only extremely homophonous but, coincidentally, also share a significant amount of semantic and symbolic overlap.\(^{14}\)

All of the Algonquian sun-words—even those that are not mutually intelligible and are from as far afield as the Plains, [Table 1]—are the grandchildren of a 2500- to 3000-year-old Proto-Algonquian elder: *ki·šeʔθwa.*\(^{15}\) There is semantic evidence that the first syllable *ki·-* is a


Proto-Algonquian root meaning, “complete, mature, create, perfect” and also denotes masculinity. For example, the *ki-š- syllable appears in “common verb forms such as *ki-šihe-wa (he completes him), *ki-šihta-wa (he completes it), *ki-šikiwa (he matures),” *ki-šikenwi (it matures, grows to completion),” and in the word for ‘day / sky,’ *ki-šekwi. Embedded within the phonemic and syllabic units of the Proto-Algonquian *ki-šeʔθwa and its grandchildren, therefore, are connotations of life, creation, growth, and masculinity that have only been enhanced by the atanukana (creation stories) the Algonquian speakers have been telling about the sun since time immemorial.

Like Jesus and the Christian God, the sun in the Algonquian speakers’ atanukana is almost always male, while the moon is female. Centuries from the Omâmiwininí chief’s time of great mortality, the storytellers will still say the Sun-man and Moon-woman alternate walking across the sky by day and night, sharing the responsibility of watching over the earth. This gendering of the sun and the moon and the parental feelings they have for the earth and its beings logically extend to the stories the people tell about solar and lunar eclipses. The Innu (Montagnais), for example, say the sun is married to the moon and when a lunar eclipse occurs it is because the moon holds their “son in her arms, which prevent[s] her brightness from being seen,” whereas a solar eclipse happens when the sun sometimes holds their son in his arms. In answer to a Black Robe’s question of, “why the son of the Sun and of the Moon is not bright like his parents, but black and gloomy,” the Innu (Montagnais) state that the son visits earth occasionally and that—not unlike the Black Robes who are always at the bedsides of the sick and the dying—this gloomy son causes people to die, highlighting the duality of power. Death and destruction are a necessary and inexorable part of life and creation, because power is a neutral force that both creates and destroys.

The idea of the life-giving and life-taking sun is reinforced, too, by the notion among many Algonquian speakers that the village of the dead is located where the sun sets. The Innu (Montagnais), for instance, say the earth is “entirely flat” with its ends “cut off”

phonological resemblance to ‘Jesus’ is clear once you are aware of the g-k variable and the tendency for more complex sounds, such as the sibilant sound š, glottal stop ʔ and fricative θ to have morphed into simpler sounds, for example ‘s’ or ‘z,’ or to have been dropped entirely by some Algonquian speakers as early as the seventeenth-century; see, for example, the loss of the third syllable -θwa in most cases.
16 This statement is based on historical linguist John Hewson’s close analysis of each syllable of the Proto-Algonquian ‘sun’ word (and variants) proposed by linguist Mary R. Haas.
17 For this belief and a related notion regarding solar and lunar eclipses as representing the union of Sun-man and Moon-woman see Benton-Banai, Op.cit., pp.16, 18, 37–39.
19 Fire, which in twentieth-century Anishinaabeg cultural stories is said to have originated in the sun, is another natural element in which this dual capacity for creation and destruction is apparent. Benton-Banai, Op.cit., p.17.
perpendicularly” and the spirits of the deceased go to the earth’s westernmost end to spend their afterlife in a village located there where the sun sets. To get to this place, the dead are buried with their heads facing the west, “in order that the soul may know the place whither it is to go.” The souls then rise up and walk the Path of Souls (the Milky Way). Once in the village the souls pass the time dancing, but if they fall off the precipice into the water they immediately change into fish. “The...souls eat and drink...they marry, and...the children who die here are children in that end of the world, and grow up just as they would have done in the country where they were born.” This paradisiacal village of the dead also features in the Anishinaabeg *aadizookaanag* (creation stories). For the latter, the rising and setting sun’s circadian cycle reinforces that Sun-man’s daily sky walk is the same as a human being’s own macro-journey from birth to death, which is replicated on a micro scale in the nightly “half-death” of sleep and the daily renewal of life at dawn. The 1630s Omâmiwininiwak (Algonquins) likely have similar beliefs, which further explains the Omâmiwinini chief’s notion that *kìzìs*, the sun, is somehow connected to, or at least capable of preventing, the great mortality decimating his people.20

The sun’s creative, fatherly, and heavenly associations, the homophony of the Hebrew word “Jesus” with the Algonquian sun-words, Le Jeune’s oration emphasising “maintenance” and “preservation,” and the way the Christian God provides this equally to all nations on earth — none of these things would rid the Omâmiwinini chief of his belief that the being the French refer to as “Jesus” and his own people call *kìzìs* are one in the same. When the French tell stories about Jesus they are merely gifting the Algonquian speakers with cultural stories their own storytellers have not previously told them about their grandfather, the sun *kìzìs*. A virtue of mishearing “Jesus” is that the Omâmiwininiwak and other nations who find themselves inexplicably suffering from disease and death gain a sense they can actively do something at a time when they are otherwise powerless against the imported diseases ravaging their communities: they can learn and perform the chants and vocalisations the black-robed spirit-talkers called “Jesuits” teach them, hoping these sounds will save them, too. But it is the salvation of the corporeal body they seek via the vocalisation of Christian prayers and songs — not of the everlasting soul.

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20 *JR* 12: 25–31; *JR* 6: 173–81. An alternate Innu (Montagnais) story recorded in 1637 states the sun was the heart of a woman who was responsible for the death of living beings. It is the only story the author has encountered in which the sun is not male. The variant communicates in this instance that death is a part of life. On daily renewal see Johnston, Op.cit., p.136. This significance was and is represented architecturally, too, with the door of the sweat lodge always constructed to face the setting sun. Later, Midewiwin Lodges were also constructed in line with the path of the sun.
After decades of listening to the newcomers’ orations about the greatness and superiority of the heavenly other-than-human they call “Jesus” and “God,” the Algonquian speakers create a new name in their own language to adequately reflect the even more elevated status of the sun they already revere. To do so, they use the old root forms of the Proto-Algonquian word for the “sun,” signifying life, creation, light, growth, and masculinity: in short, fusing together all the areas of semantic and symbolic overlap between their grandfather in the sky, kìzis, Jesus, and “he who made all,” God. The Lnúk (Mi’kmaq), for example, give their creator the name Kisu·lkw, “the TA [i.e. transitive verb with an animate object] kisu·lkw “he creates us” (from Proto-Algonquian *ki:šiθankw the conjunct form of the verb).” Other Algonquian speakers call him Kitchi Manitou, in which the soft sibilant š in *ki-š- shifts only slightly to the harder sibilant sound [ʃ]; a voiceless palate-alveolar affricate pronounced like the ‘ch’ in the English word ‘chair.’ Often, though, as a result of the frequently apparent ‘g’ and ‘k’ variability, Kitchi Manitou is enunciated and written as Gitchi Manidoo. Even the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) Kisu·lkw is articulated and often rendered Gisoolg, making the connection between the sun gizos / giizis etc., and the later supreme creator figure Gitchi Manidoo (Great Spirit) more pronounced. And while Gitchi Manidoo does translate literally into English as “Great (gitchi) Spirit (manidoo) and superficially appears to be the product of the Christian God “who made all” being imposed by spiritual conquerors upon the Algonquian speakers, the close phonemic and syllabic analysis confirms deeper, ancient references to the solar entity *ki-šeʔθwa of the pre-contact world of the Great Turtle’s back are embedded in the modern Algonquian name for the supreme creator.21

In short, the Innu with whom Father Le Jeune wintered in 1633 and 1634 were not referring to a high god, least of all one called Atahocan, and the Omàmiwininiwak were not praying to the same Jesus the French knew. To “wishfully hearing” Christian ears, the Algonquian speakers of the 1630s and thereafter might have begun to sound more Christian as they addressed Christian prayers and songs to the sun “Jesus” and “the Great Spirit,” but the Algonquian speakers were clearly still hearing with Algonquian ears.

21 Nichols and Nyholm, Op.cit. p.54. Further evidence of the phonological and semantic connection between the creator and the sun can be found in the first word of the modern Attikamekw name for “sun,” kichikaw pisimw, which has slightly modified the Proto-Algonquian root *ki-š- in a similar fashion to “Kitchi Manitou.”
Duelling Spirit-Talkers

For weeks, all day and all night, Carigonan the greatest Innu spirit-talker\(^1\) has called with the voice of Grandfather Drum and made his own vocal appeals to his personal other-than-human guardians to take pity and heal him of a relentless pain in the loins, yet no relief from his long-term malady has come. This can only mean one thing: his disease has been caused by the bad medicine of a fellow spirit-talker of considerable power. As the most fluent spirit-talkers, diviners and healers like Carigonan are the most powerful humans but also the most likely to fall victim to bad medicine conjured by a similarly empowered rival who covets the other one’s power.\(^2\) Carigonan soon identifies his attacker as one with whom he has “had some trouble”: a rival spirit-talker who “threatened [Carigonan] with death” a few years earlier and lives over a hundred leagues away near the land the Lnúk (Mi’kmaq) call *Kespe’kewaq* (Gaspé).\(^3\)

So Carigonan begins to plot how he will kill his rival in a ritual duel before his foe’s bad medicine succeeds in killing him. Time is short. He has already “suffered so long” with the malignant power inside of him he is certain it is “going to consume him in two days, if he [does] not prevent the stroke by his art.” He asks the Black Robe, Father Le Jeune, if he has “some powder that kills men.” Instead of helping, the irritating Black Robe asks, “Why?” “Where is the man you wish to kill?” then proceeds to tell him his own other-than-human person “forbids murder.” Preparations for the imminent murder of course continue regardless of these senseless objections, because Carigonan must kill or be killed. Pastedechouan, Carigonan’s brother, thinks it may be better to remove the Black Robe from the rite, so he informs Le Jeune he will “have the headache” as usual from all the loud drumming and singing that is about to accompany the murder and recommends he “go off into one of the other cabins near by.” No sooner than he hears of this arrangement Carigonan opposes it: “There will be no harm in his seeing what we do.” Bearing witness to this powerful

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\(^1\) Carigonan made this claim himself. On the other hand, it is not him but another medicine person who performs “the strongest power” there is; the spirit-talking tent ritual. Some medicine people were stronger than others; it depended on how much spiritual power they had within themselves and could access and this was demonstrated by how many spirits they could call directly to them. See Henriksen, Op.cit., pp.63–66.


\(^3\) *JR* 6: 193–99.
“bearwalking” ritual in which his spirit travels afar to attack his enemy, might make the doubting “Captain of the Dogs,” (the Black Robe) finally acknowledge and respect the immense power Carigonan possesses.4

Carigonan beats his drum to transport his spirit beyond the physical reality while all summoned to the ritual sing along as loudly as possible to assist him on his journey. The drumbeats begin to take over his body and he feels a sense of weightlessness, as though he is drumming automatically. Finally, Carigonan reaches the spiritual realm on the strength of these rhythmic drumbeats and chants. He “takes...two very sharply-pointed...stakes; then, point[s]” to where he can now plainly see his intended victim, declares, “Here is his head” and with all his might drives [in] the stakes.” The other ritual participants cannot see the intended victim themselves. They do not possess the power to spiritually travel as far as Carigonan and so have remained in their usual state seeing only the world’s material aspects; namely, the spirit-talkers driving his stakes into the ground “toward the place” where he has just declared his rival’s head is located. To the constant sound of more drumming, “songs and other noises,” Pastedechouan “makes a tolerably deep ditch in the ground” with the stakes and presents Carigonan with a sword and poniard. Thus armed, Carigonan “descends into the ditch,” and with great fury and rage strikes “heavy blows” with the weapons then places in the ditch a charm “composed of little pieces of wood,...iron-arrow points, pieces of broken knives, bits of iron bent like a fishhook...wrapped in a piece of leather,” “and redoubles his sword-cuts” as the drumming and communal calls to the other-than-humans reach a loud climax. When the sword and poniard are again drawn from the ditch, the assembly see plainly they are “covered with blood.” Carigonan dramatically throws the bloody murder weapons down before the witnesses and the ditch is hurriedly covered up. The great Innu spirit-talker announces that the one who sought to kill him has himself been struck and will soon die: “[Did you] not hear...his cries?” he asks. All say “no” with the exception of two young men, whose spirits must have been strong enough to spiritually travel at least some of the way with Carigonan. They confirm “they have heard some very dull sounds, and as if far away”—as far away as Kespe’kewaq (Gaspé).5

Turning towards the Black Robe, Carigonan “begins to laugh,” certain he has succeeded in destroying not one but two rivals in one ritualised murderous blow. For in publicly killing his distant rival in Kespe’kewaq (Gaspé) he has also discredited the rival in his own cabin: the black-robed spirit-talker who openly covets Carigonan’s power. There is no doubt about it: he has, after all, been focusing his attention on tending to the sick people of Carigonan’s

5 Ibid.
community, constantly talks directly to other-than-human persons, and claims to know how
the world was created. “See this Black Robe, who comes here to tell us…we must not kill any
one? Look, what is that?” he asks Le Jeune probingly as he points to the bloody instrument
with which he has just smote a far worthier opponent. It is intended as a threat: if this is what
he can do to a spirit-talker so far away, imagine what he can do to a Black Robe in his own
\textit{wiigiwaam}. The Black Robe tries to tell the assembly it is just the blood of “some Moose or
other animal,” but the Innu people collectively laugh at such foolishness and assure him it is
the blood of the spirit-talker of \textit{Kespe'kewaq} (Gaspé). The Black Robe may have knowledge
of some things; however, it is clear he knows nothing of the powerful bear-walking spirit-
talkers of this land.\footnote{JR 6: 193–99.}

By challenging the Black Robe publicly Carigonan has effectively pulled Le Jeune into the
Earth-island’s old tradition of duelling spirit-talkers — confident, no doubt, he will continue
to be victorious. But what Carigonan does not know is that publicly duelling with spirit-
talkers suits the Black Robes’ aims all too well and will, thereafter, characterise encounters
between these two groups vying for ultimate authority over the spiritual lives of the people of
the Great Turtle’s back. Previously the Black Robe had only competed with the spirit-talker
Carigonan by inserting himself at the bedsides of the sick and making a show of talking to his
own other-than-human whenever he “made his prayers” and chanted his Christian songs.
Following Carigonan’s openly adversative and threatening behaviour, however, Le Jeune
begins to blatantly encroach on the role of spirit-talker. He publicly calls the Innu people’s
other-than-humans, inviting them to kill him if they have the power to do so, and asserts he
does not fear them: he defies and mocks them. Typically, though, Le Jeune’s preferred
duelling method is the sonic contamination of Innu (Montagnais) rites.

As the Innu discover one evening, thenceforth nothing is too sacred for the Black Robe’s
noise pollution, not even “the strongest power there is”: the spirit-talking tent.\footnote{Buffâlo, “Spiritual Doctoring,” \textit{PBT-II}, n.p.} The wisdom of
where to find the materials and how to construct this powerful tent has been gifted to the “one
who talks to spirits” in a dream. In accordance with those instructions, the spirit-talker has
ensured the appropriate materials have been gathered from the land with the consent of the
other-than-humans living within the resources. These beings have willingly offered their lives
to be repurposed and transferred into the form of a divination tent, because they know the
poor, young, and foolish humans depend upon this structure to obtain the guidance of their
wise elders in Creation for their survival. Towards nightfall, some ritual helpers stick the
poles of birch and spruce saplings over a foot deep into the ground in the form of a circle at
the centre of a cabin. Hoops of saplings are fastened to the top and bottom of the poles to hold them in place. The structure’s earth floor is covered with “freshly cut spruce boughs” [Fig. 3.5] while robes, moose-skins, or pieces of bark cover the framework entirely with the exception of a small opening at the top. Bells and rattles “of caribou and deer hooves, or cups of lead shot” are hung outside the small barrel-shaped structure. [Fig. 3.6] The completed building is the cosmos in miniature and, just like the larger Creation, it is alive with the combined, creative energies of human gatherers, builders and the animal, plant, and tree spirits, all of whom are powerful in their own right but together form the nexus of Creation’s immense spiritual power. The fires in the outer-cabin are extinguished and the brands are thrown outside. In the darkness of the cabin, members of the community sit quietly around the outside of the tent and listen.8

The “[one] who talks to spirits” lifts the tent’s covering and enters alone, even though four or five adults could stand upright inside this elongated wiigiwaam.9 Once ensconced inside, the lone spirit-talker lies flat and motionless on the tent’s floor of spruce boughs and begins to faintly moan, “as if complaining.”10 Such pathetic sounds are a means of humbly soliciting the help of the Great Turtle. The spirit-talker uses a potent combination of exhaustive dancing, rhythmic drumming and chanting to journey to the spiritual realm. But soon, the auditory-driven trance state he is expending so much personal power to achieve—and which sometimes eludes him even when all the ritual conditions are perfectly observed—is under threat.11 He feels his spirit being dragged back to its corporeal form in the physical world of Creation by a distant, foreign-sounding voice: “Have pity on this poor juggler, who [is] killing himself in this tent,” and “Cry louder, for the Genii [have] gone to sleep!” It is not the voice of an other-than-human: it is the rude Black Robe who had been forbidden to speak for the duration of these important proceedings, which are always a matter of life and death. He hears audience

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8 Nabokov and Easton, Op.cit., p.70. Early seventeenth-century accounts typically report these tents were constructed inside a larger cabin, although some say they were constructed “isolated and apart” or in the woods. See SLJ, p.64 and JR 9: 237–39. In the early twentieth century, Frances Densmore stated she knew of the tent being constructed in the attic of a house although she had seen it built outdoors. Densmore, “Explanation of a Trick,” Op.cit., 313. Blankets were also used and, in later times, the usual material for the enclosure was canvas. For references to coverings see CW-II, pp.86–87; JR 12: 15–17; Hoffman, “The Mide’wiwin,” p.252. Barnouw, Op.cit., p.268; John M. Cooper, “The Shaking Tent Among Plains and Forest Algonquians,” Primitive Man, Vol. 17, No.3/4 (Jul. - Oct., 1944): 78. Sometimes the shaking tent had a conical-shape and other times the poles were not fastened together at the top, as in Fig.3.6. JR 6: 161–63; Cooper, “Shaking Tent,” Op.cit., 65.

9 The dome-shape replicated the shape of the sun, the moon, and the ball of earth from which the Earth-island was created. As for the column-shape, Eliade’s research regarding the axis mundi shows the axis most often takes the form of a column or pillar because it connects the earth and sky. Even in urban society, we find many examples of towers acting as centrepoints and the zenith. Such a position provides a panoramic view of our environment we normally would not have.


members outside the tent urging the Black Robe and each other to “listen, listen!” The spirit-talkers do their best to ignore the noise pollution, which will disrupt the rhythmic patterns transporting his spirit beyond the material realm of Creation. When he does successfully reach the spiritual center of Creation, spirits enter the tent from the opening in the top of the structure and the tent begins to shake as a result of their motion; it does so “without violence” at first, but the shaking is enough to cause the bells and rattles hanging on the outside of the structure to percussively resound in response. Then the whistling sound made by spirits of the dead is heard “in a hollow tone…and as if from afar” followed by a cacophony of voices; one voice sounds as though it is trapped in a bottle, the cries of owls are heard, barking dogs, howling wolves, hissing, “screams and sobs, as of despair, anguish and the sharpest pain.” However, even with the line of communication open between him and the other-than-humans who have heard his call and been drawn from the remote regions of the multilayered universe to the cosmic center, the Black Robe continues to run interference with his audible interruptions. This seriously tests the spirit-talkers’ spiritual strength while he struggles to reach one other-than-human elder in particular.12

The tent becomes increasingly more animated, swaying and shaking with the “irregular and gyratory power of a whirlwind” and with so much “force and violence” it is “sometimes bent even to the ground,” and seems it will break to pieces or be “levelled with the ground.” These intense convulsions continue for the duration of the hours-long séance during which fiery sparks sporadically fly from the opening in the top of the tent. All the while, the spirit-talkers shake a rattledrum, howls, and utters “fearful cries” in a big clear voice, “constantly varying the tones” singing vocables like “ho ho, hi hi, guigui, nioué,” and contorts and writhes around in “so violent an ecstasy…the earth trembles” under the spirit-talkers’ “leaps and bounds.” On occasion the audience responds to the spirit-talkers’ vocalisations with “Ho, ho, ho” the same guttural “aspiration from the depths of their chests” they use in councils to communally acknowledge the vocal performance of an orator. Broken Innu-Aimun and Omâniwininimowin mixed with unknown but recognisably human tongues are also audible within the tent. Then a “perfect silence” descends.13

A low, feeble, “whinnying” sound, “like the whine of a young puppy,” issues from the shaking edifice. Outside the tent the seated audience cry out “listen, listen!” Recognising the sound of the whining voice the audience clap their hands for joy, exclaim it is “the Great

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Turtle; the spirit that never lies,” bid Turtle to enter and ask him to call his companions. As an amphibious creature, confined to neither earth nor water, the Great Turtle possesses transcendental powers, making him the ideal emissary to find and call the other-than-human elders from the outermost regions of the Algonquians’ vast multilayered cosmos to gather at the cosmic centre. The Great Turtle departs to perform this errand while Carigonan stands outside the tent acting as the spirit-talker’s assistant, drumming and singing to maintain the entrancing rhythm when his fellow spirit-talker journeys so far into the spirit realm he can no longer sustain his own rhythmic drumming and chanting that has facilitated the spiritual journey in the first place. If that rhythm is broken by anything—including the Black Robe calling out—the spirit-talker’s spirit will immediately return to his corporeal form. Outside, some of the young men begin to dance. Their kinaesthetic movements amplify the rhythm’s acoustic power by reproducing it in their musculatures and increasing the spiritual energy communally invested in the ritual.  

“At last, after a thousand cries and howls, after a thousand songs, after having danced and thoroughly shaken this fine edifice,” the desired other-than-human elders enter the tent where a consultation commences. The spirit-talker acts as an interpreter between the spirits and the uncomprehending humans congregated outside the tent, posing questions of personal and communal importance regarding future events; prognoses for ailing family members, the location of game, the movements of the nation’s enemies, and the outcome of war. Inquiries regarding departed loved ones are also made during this rite; for example, whether the deceased like the Land of the Dead. Sometimes the voices of the dead themselves as well as those who live at a great distance are heard emanating from the tent. Each time the spirit-talker asks a question of the Sky spirits the tent shakes and the spirit-talker relays their answer.  

No thanks to the saboteur in their midst, when the rite concludes hours later it is a success. Prognoses for sick individuals in the community have been given, predictions of snowfall

15 JR 6: 163–67; Alexander Henry, Op.cit., p.172. When an Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) spirit-talking tent diviner made contact with a recently deceased young girl, her spirit told the diviner to tell her loved ones, “I am happy. It is always bright like day where I live...There are pretty flowers where I live, it’s like a great garden...There are great singers there, too.” Hallowell, “Spirits of the Dead,” Op.cit., 44. For a collection of a number of different accounts of the spirit-talking tent ritual practiced by Algonquian-speaking peoples over a vast geographic region, see Vine Deloria Jr., The World We Used to Live In: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men, (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2006), pp.83–106.
made, and the quantity and general location of elk and moose revealed by the other-than-humans via their trusty interpreter: the spirit-talker. It is a testament to this particular spirit-talker’s personal power that he has been able to hear the diverse voices of the wise other-than-humans above the disruptive noise of the stammering Black Robe and to interpret their idiosyncratic ways of speaking the sonic lingua franca to the listeners assembled outside the spirit-talking tent back in the material realm.

For the Black Robe outside the tent, the experience of the same rite could not have been more different. Le Jeune almost immediately disregarded the ritual’s sonic element as mere ventriloquism and the juggleries of a “charlatan.” Having dismissed the sonic element and publicly duelled with the spirit-talker via frequent interruptions and mockery, Le Jeune proceeded to narrowly focus his sensory processing abilities to work out the sheer mechanics of how these “charlatans” deceive the people with their visual “shaking tent” trick so he could expose their fraudulent behaviour, win the people’s trust, and ultimately convert the “sauvages” to Christianity. Though Le Jeune deliberately yelled out with the intention of contaminating the rite because it was clearly of religious significance to the Innu, it is also true he could not grasp exactly how damaging this pollution of the ritual’s sacred acoustic ecology was to both the spirit-talking ritual and to his own attempts to bring the Innu (Montagnais) within the bounds of Christendom. To accurately assess the potential damage caused by his sonic intrusions, the Black Robe would have first needed to acknowledge that the exhaustive dancing, drumming, and chanting genuinely produced a powerful experience within the spirit-talker and his audience. This was something Le Jeune could not perceive because, like many European observers of this particular ritual before and after him, his experience of the spirit-talking tent ritual was ocularcentric. In short, while the Innu primarily heard a spiritual conversation between the elders of Creation and a human spirit-talker, the Black Robe primarily saw a shaking tent and nothing more than a deceptive “tent-shaker.”

16 By contrast, as Landes, Op.cit., p.121, notes during her observations of the Midewiwin Sweat Lodge ritual, she wanted to ask a ritual participant about a ritual circuit they were witnessing, but “could not…because the priestly account could never be interrupted for such queries, which amounted to personal intrusions. The Ojibwa novice would never interrupt at all, and I can only marvel at the old man’s patience in tolerating the many queries I did put.”

17 i.e. an auditory-driven altered state of consciousness or “ecstatic” out-of-body experience, which the Innu believe to be sacred and essential for the order of Creation, the well being of their community, and individual health. Henriksen, Op.cit., p.22 also writes about the “intensity” and “realness of their experience”: “Through his performance, through his drumming and singing, the shaman probably entered a psychosomatic state where he intensely experienced the…spirits’…arrival…[A]n…old…Saulteaux Indian shaman…who had converted to Christianity, said to [A. Irving] Hallowell…he had not deceived him when he told of his shamanic experiences.” Hallowell, Role of Conjuring, Op.cit., p.74.
Le Jeune was neither the first nor would he be the last European to experience the spirit-talking tent primarily in a visual rather than aural way. In 1609, French explorer Samuel de Champlain fixated on the uncanny sight of the small lodge swaying and shaking violently, and theorised about how the shaking tent effect was achieved: “The [Algonquians] told me often that the shaking of the cabin that I saw was caused by the devil and not by the man inside, although I observed the contrary;...it was the [soothsayer] who seized one of the props of the cabin and made it move so.” And three hundred years after Le Jeune’s “eyewitness” account of the “shaking tent rite,” in the dusk of a July evening at an isolated Anishinaabeg village in Grand Portage, Minnesota in 1930, American anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Frances Densmore will encounter “a strange sight in a grove of trees” — a “tall, slender tipi...swaying...with the regularity of a pendulum, back and forth, back and forth,” despite the stillness of the air. After a while, the tipi will stand “motionless, a slender white figure in the shadow of the trees” before shaking “violently,” as if “attacked by a convulsion.” This spectacle will build to a climax when the covering at the top of the tipi streams “outward as though the structure might be blown to pieces” and then abruptly stop. Just as suddenly as it stops, the tipi will move again “back and forth, back and forth.” Though Densmore will be famous for writing on “American Indian” music, her subsequent article about the polysensory ritual will largely focus on what she has seen rather than what she heard, because her ultimate purpose will be to explain how the “Indian jugglers” perform what she revealingly calls their visual “trick.”

Back in the 1600s, these vastly different sensory experiences of the same ritual exacerbate an already adversative relationship between the Jesuit missionaries and spirit-talkers. At the ritual’s close, the Black Robe has an even greater contempt for the “tent-shakers” and the Innu themselves cannot be anything less than deeply offended by the lack of respect shown for the life-and-death conversations between their spirit-talker and the elders of Creation; conversations they have heard with their own ears in the most powerful ritual in their world and at a time of great sickness and scarcity of food when they need their elders the most. Only a sworn enemy would dare to be so destructive.

Inevitably, though, the duels between the rival indigenous and Christian spirit-talkers occur most often at the bedsides of the sick and the dying. This conflict is “inevitable” in the 1630s and onwards, because the imported diseases decimating the Algonquian and Iroquoian nations in this period cause both the healing medicine of the spirit-talkers to be in high demand and

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the Black Robes to gravitate towards the most urgent candidates for conversion — those closest to death.

These battles between the native body-saving spirit-talkers and the Christian soul-saving spirit-talkers are by nature sonic clashes, as the native healers use rhythmic drum-based aural medicine to cure and achieve homeostasis in their patients and expect respectful silence for the duration of their sacred ceremonies.\(^\text{20}\) The Wendat (Huron) admit “no one into their lodges when they are chanting over a sick person or when the words inaugurating a feast have been uttered,” lest the interruptions undermine the sonic power of these sacred rites. With such standards in place, the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers therefore recognise the solemnity of Christian sounds and show great respect for their power by keeping “strict silence” even when they do not understand the words. If the Wendat (Huron), for example, approach a French lodge and find prayers underway, “they [a]re patient or they [go] away quietly,...aware [the Christians] ought not to be distracted...and that to insist on entering [is] accounted uncivil even among themselves and a hindrance to the good effects of prayer.”\(^\text{21}\) When the situation is reversed, though, their quiet, respectful behaviour and recognition of sacred performances is not reciprocated.

Hearing the Wendat (Huron) drumming and chanting over a sick person in a bark cabin instead prompts the Black Robe Father Pierre Chastellain to unceremoniously burst into the proceedings and scold the ritual participants. Chastellain does not consider himself the intruder; to Chastellain it is the “Charlatan” who has “intruded with his drumming upon a person who already believe[s] in Jesus Christ.”\(^\text{22}\) Undoubtedly feeling offended by the disturbance caused by Chastellain the “cackling goose,”\(^\text{23}\) and believing the missionary’s interruptions have neutralised the efficacy of the medicinal sounds anyway, the Wendat (Huron) present argue that Chastellain’s disapproval of the medicine man’s efforts to restore the sick man’s body is nonsensical. In the true spirit of respect for others’ contributions in the sonic lingua franca and the practice of democratic shamanism generally, the office of healer is not exclusive to one individual. Indeed, on another occasion, after treating a feverish infant with his own drum medicine an indigenous medical practitioner seeks a second opinion — that of the Black Robe Le Jeune.\(^\text{24}\) Healing is to be achieved by any means available, be it


\(^{21}\) SLJ, pp.173–74. See JR 5: 233–35 for an Innu (Montagnais) preventing Father Le Jeune from accessing a cabin during the bone-swallowing rite performance and telling him to “go away.”

\(^{22}\) JR 9: 49–57.


\(^{24}\) JR 5: 235–37.
through the collaboration of multiple medicine people or even the combined acoustic efforts of an entire community. So the attempt to monopolise a patient when the Black Robe has not succeeded in banishing the illness himself is viewed by the sick man’s kindred as absurd and foolhardy. “Two persons are not too many to cure so bad a disease,” they protest: “Do thy part, and let him do his.” The fact the ritual has been performed in this instance specifically to prolong the patient’s life long enough to receive the baptism Chastellain has previously deferred “to make [the sick man] desire it more ardently” only adds to the Wendats’ frustration at the missionary’s demands to abandon their medicinal sounds.25

Not even these acoustic outrages compare, though, to the Black Robes’ greatest crimes against Algonquian-Iroquoian aurality.

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“If a mind as capable of great things as [yours is], should know God,...all the Savages, influenced by [your] example, would like to know him also.” At last the Black Robe Le Jeune has acknowledged the immense “power,...authority and...influence” Carigonan has “over the minds of his fellow [Innu].” Carigonan confirms the Black Robe is correct in thinking so, for in his youth he was given the name Khimouchouminau, “our sire and our master,” and ever since then “everything [has been] done according to his opinion,...all follow...his advice.” While Carigonan has not lost faith in his leadership qualities, his faith in his sonic connection to the other-than-human elders is another matter.¹

“Hast thou ever seen [thy drum] dispel death?” the Black Robe asks interrogatingly. The Black Robe has timed this attack well: Carigonan is particularly vulnerable because he has recently watched his own wife and children die in spite of his drumming, and no matter how often or how long he joins his vocal cries with the enrhythmed voice of his drum he cannot heal himself of his malady either. It used to be that the sound of his drum’s voice in this earthly reality was simultaneously heard in the spiritual one, but no longer: somehow the connection has been broken and the messages of this helpless child of Creation cease to reach the ears of his elders, or else the elders have been offended by him somehow and have, consequently, withdrawn their support. If they have indeed closed their ears to Carigonan, perhaps it is time he opened his own ears to the Black Robe’s discourse and learnt his version of “spirit-talking.” The sounds of these “prayers,” as he calls them, may be able to get through to the elders if the old sacred sounds cannot.²

Sensing he finally has a willing ear, the Black Robe proposes Carigonan give his drum medicine one last try, to “do all thou canst to recover thy health” for ten whole days. If there is still no recovery, then “confess that thy din, howls, and songs cannot restore thee to health” and “give up thy drum and all these wild noises” for another ten days and ask the Christian God, instead, “to give thee knowledge of himself.” If all this is done, the Black Robe promises, he will also pray to God on Carigonan’s behalf, asking the “all-powerful” other-

¹ JR 7: 127–35.
than-human he adores to bestow upon Carigonan “health of body and health of soul.” As the Black Robe continues to set out the terms of the deal, he makes two stipulations; the first is that Carigonan must learn the Black Robe’s prayers, which Carigonan is likely willing to do, as a spirit-talk can only be made more powerful by expanding his sonic repertoire; the second stipulation, however, is nothing short of alarming: Carigonan must assemble the same people who have long called him their “sire and master” and listened to his sage advice, and before them he must burn his drum, renounce it and “all the other silly stuff” he has used in his rituals, and tell them “that the God of the Christians is the true God.”

He does not know it, but in pressuring Carigonan to burn his drum the Black Robe has actually told Carigonan to commit what is probably the unprecedented offence of burning his grandfather. “Grandfather Drum” is a sentient, other-than-human elder possessing great power and, while his loud, commanding voice is apparently no longer heard or listened to by the other-than-humans, Carigonan’s Grandfather Drum is not visibly broken in any way, which means Grandfather may have simply withdrawn his support after being carelessly insulted in some way, perhaps not even by Carigonan personally. It is imperative Carigonan continues to demonstrate respect for him, therefore, not only to potentially regain his support but because his power is immense and, like all power or medicine, it is also neutral. At this stage, Grandfather simply prefers inaction; he is not helping but he is not actively harming Carigonan either. If Carigonan or the Innu people generally have already offended the elders of Creation somehow and they have withdrawn their support and power, then roasting Grandfather Drum as though he is no better than an enemy captive will only add further insult to any earlier injurious actions and potentially unleash Grandfather’s immense power upon Carigonan and all his people in a negative way.

Carigonan, then, had been right about the Black Robe in the first place: he “has no sense.” He is rude, completely lacking in aurallac and oralac, he seeks to silence their soundways altogether and replace them with his own rather than entering into a spiritual conversation, and his ignorance about the power of sound and soundmakers in the Innu world makes him dangerous. A less wise and even more desperate person than the ailing Carigonan may have been inclined to act on the advice of this ignorant, reckless person; foolishly burning his or her drum and leaving themselves vulnerable to the “bad luck” that comes from mistreating their Grandfathers.

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3 JR 7: 127–35.
4 ODD, p.61; SLOT, p.61.
5 JR 6: 171–73; ODD, p.62.
Nevertheless, Carigonan does want to try the Black Robe’s sounds of power, his “prayers,” in case there is some medicine in those foreign sounds. Thus, Carigonan does his best to renegotiate the terms: he attempts to divert the Black Robe’s attention from Grandfather Drum, telling him to “begin first, go away and pray, and tell thy God to cure me, for with that we must begin.” The Black Robe refuses, arguing if Carigonan uses the drum and the prayers simultaneously he will attribute any miraculous recovery to his drum rather than to the Christian God. “If thou curest me I shall not attribute my health to my drum nor to my songs...I have sung and done all I could...” The Black Robe is unconvinced: “We must not make bargains with [God], nor prescribe to him the conditions upon which he [is] to act, saying “Let him cure me first, and then I will believe in him.” The spirit-talkers have reached an impasse: the black-robed one will not proceed without the drum’s destruction and Carigonan will not burn his grandfather.6

Thereafter, Carigonan resumes his mockery of the Black Robe and his unreasonable other-than-human by scoffing at the Black Robe’s words and by making “impious speeches.” The missionary will later claim Carigonan did so, no matter how much he warned him “he would not continue much longer with this impertinence, for God was powerful enough to burn and cast him into hell, if he kept on with his blasphemies.” But, of course, when Le Jeune writes what he expects his reader to gullibly receive as his prophetic words, he already knows the fate that has befallen the long-suffering Carigonan.7

Before the year 1634 expired Carigonan, the greatest of the Innu spirit-talkers, the man who refused to burn his Grandfather Drum, perished in flames himself — presumably with his cherished Grandfather Drum close by. “Carigonan,” writes his spirit-talking rival the Black Robe Le Jeune in his Relation of 1635, had been “dreadfully scorched, roasted and burned” to death “when his cabin” mysteriously “took fire”; an unexplained inferno for which Le Jeune does not fail to give credit to his “all-powerful” righteous Lord’s capacity for divine retribution.8 By contrast, centuries later at least one historian will claim that one of Carigonan’s own people had actually set the cabin alight for the greater good of the Innu community as they could not survive long in the advancing winter with the burden of caring

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6 JR 7: 127–35.
7 Ibid, 297–301.
8 Elsie McLeod Jury, writing for the Dictionary of Canadian Biography asserts: “Carigouan (Carigonan) was burned alive when his cabin was set on fire by one of his own people to relieve himself of the burden of the then sick medicine-man.” Even Le Jeune admits he does not know how the fire began if only to better impress upon his reader that the mysterious origin of the fire was a divine act; a fitting punishment for Carigonan’s mockery of the one true God. See Elsie McLeod Jury, “Carigouan (Carigonan),” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, (1966–2017) http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/carigouan_1E.html accessed 4 August 2017.
for the now incurable spirit-talker. Though there does not appear to be any direct evidence to corroborate this theory, the missionaries did frequently record the practice of despatching incurable patients among this particular group of Innu as well as farther afield. For example, Carigonan’s own sick wife had already been euthanised with a blow from a tomahawk; a violent end which may at first glance seem inhumane in its violence but could, rather, reflect her loved ones’ desire to end her suffering quickly since the alternative was to abandon her to die slowly in the woods alone. The Lnúk (Mi’kmaq), too, sometimes doused sick people in freezing cold water to hasten their death. On the other hand, Carigonan’s death by fire may just be all a bit too convenient for Le Jeune, still smarting from Carigonan’s flat refusal to burn his drum. Given his determination to depict Carigonan as a sorcerer whom God had cast into the fiery pits of hell, other Jesuits’ tactics to frighten medicine people into conversion by evoking the classic visionary text imagery of “sorcerers” chained up in a fiery hell for eternity, and the absence of any other record to verify the circumstances of Carigonan’s death, there is sufficient cause to doubt Carigonan died in an inferno at all.

In any case, so great was Carigonan’s wickedness, Le Jeune claims, it had not only damned him but simultaneously condemned most of the Innu (Montagnais) who had been present and complicit in Carigonan’s mistreatment of the Jesuit and blasphemy over the winter. They, too, had all since died “a lamentable death” at the hands of the offended Christian God who Le Jeune casts as a thunderer, letting “his thunderbolts fall” upon each of them. Since it does not fit Le Jeune’s argument, he does not bother to mention that Sasousmat, the first of the four brothers to die on January 1634, was actually a good Catholic. And, if there was any other-than-human cause for the death of Carigonan’s other brother Mestigoït, it was certainly not a thunderer. Mestigoït, who had “sneered in company with some of the Savages, at the prayers [Le Jeune] had made them say in the time of [the band’s] great need” in the winter of 1633–34 had reportedly fallen ill over a year later and lost his faculties “so that he ran hither and thither like a madman [and] found himself upon the shore of the great river [St. Lawrence], at low tide.” When the tide rose, so did the one who is ever ready to claim the lives of unwary humans with his drowning waters: the Thunderbirds’ nemesis, the Horned Underwater Serpent.9

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9 JR 7: 297–301. Perhaps his “mad” ravings attracted unwanted attention; as Smith notes, “silence is appropriate when one ventures into [the Horned Underwater Serpent]’s world” as “it is unwise to draw attention to oneself” when near or travelling upon bodies of water. NISH, p.120. Mestigoït’s demise is very similar to the story recorded by Andrew Blackbird of a child being stolen by the Serpent when its unwary parents left it on the Serpent’s doorstep by lying the baby near the water. The story is cited in NISH, pp.120–21. For the original story see Andrew J. Blackbird, History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan, (Ypsilanti, Michigan: The Ypsilantian Job Printing House, 1887, r.p. Petrosky, Michigan: The Little Traverse Regional Historical Society Inc., 1977), pp.82–84. For more on the
For “a little while,” writes Le Jeune, “the stamp of the Christian” on “the Apostate” Pastedechouan “arrested divine justice,” even though it had not spared his fellow Christian brother, Sasousmat. As Le Jeune tells it, by 1636, however, finally convinced the Apostate would continue to renounce Christianity, the Christian God cast his thunderbolts at Pastedechouan as well and “turned him to ashes.” In a winter when the Innu were successful in hunting an unusually high number of Elk, Pastedechouan had “died...of hunger, abandoned in the woods like a dog...without any earthly help.” Dying from starvation when his people had so much Elk seems to Pastedechouan’s former language pupil, Le Jeune, a fitting punishment for one who lived with abundant knowledge that could have saved the souls of his fellow Innu (Montagnais) yet so often refused to give “a piece of the bread of the word of God” to them. Even so, writes Le Jeune, again adopting the classic visionary text imagery, “if it were in my power to free him from the irons and chains” of hell “in which perhaps he now is, I would release him, that I might procure for him, in exchange for the wrongs he has done me, the greatest blessing that can be obtained for a reasonable creature, eternal salvation.”

Though Le Jeune could undoubtedly audiate his former language teacher’s tormented cries and hell’s infernal acoustics at the mere thought of him, in reality Pastedechouan died the way he did, not because of his sinful rejection of Christianity but because of his acquaintance with the Christian God. Right when Pastedechouan ought to have been going on his vision fast alone in the woods to forge a personal connection with the other-than-human elders and to learn how to hunt he had been taken to France to be raised and educated in French, Latin, and theology instead. By the time Pastedechouan returned to the place of the Great Turtle’s back he had forgotten his own tongue and Innu lifeways. As an interpreter Pastedechouan was, like the amphibious Great Turtle, a messenger, a go-between — always between worlds and never fully a part of either one. While his brothers had lived he had supporters who were willing to sustain him as their dependent and whose high social status prevented fellow Innu from ostracising their younger brother as a bicultural “other.” When they died they took all his human and other-than-human social capital with them. His transitional powers, then, were ultimately his weakness. Occupying a liminal position between Innu and French cultures led members of both groups to regard him with suspicion and finally to reject him. When he sought out the Black Robes “to be reconciled to the Church” they, too, doubted his good will since he had come to them in winter when the Innu typically had less food, and turned him

Underwater Serpent, see NISH, pp.95–125, especially 115–16, 134–35. Traditionally, people offer tobacco and food to the Horned Underwater Serpent hoping this act of propitiation will lead him to ignore them when they enter his aquatic realm, although “no gift or sign of respect can bend [the Serpent’s] will if it is fixed.” For primary evidence of the relationship between the Thunderbirds and the Serpent, see JR 12: 23–27.

away.\textsuperscript{11} Despite all his education and his baptism, the Black Robes looked upon Pastedechouan no differently than they did his unbaptised brother “the Sorcerer”; as one willing to do anything for the preservation of his flesh, and having no genuine concern for his eternal soul.\textsuperscript{12} In actuality, when Pastedechouan died in the frozen woods alone, aged 28, with no song to call the other-than-human persons to give up their lives to sustain his own, he was a baptised Catholic who knew far better and feared much more than any other Innu hastily baptised on their death-bed the polysensory horrors potentially awaiting his eternal soul in the fiery chasms of the Christian hell.

Where the Black Robe Le Jeune had failed with Carigonan, Pastedechouan, and Mestigoït and other members of their band, however, his black-robed successors experienced a modicum of success among other nations, insofar as they found other medicine people more willing than Carigonan to burn their grandfathers. However, on at least one occasion the missionaries also reported accepting a drum’s snow burial as a sure sign of the prospective convert’s “worthiness for baptism.” The Black Robe in question clearly viewed the act of burying the drum in the snow to be a degradation befitting such an infernal anti-music maker and as being equivalent to drum burning, but the one who buried the drum in the snow did not subscribe to the same notion. Burying a drum in the snow is, after all, quite different to setting it alight and not solely because of the extreme differences in temperature; there is, for one thing, the greater reversibility of a snow burial compared to the utter destruction of a drum torching. Burial was the traditional, “honorific disposal” of this sacred, incredibly powerful other-than-human person, perhaps because it sent Grandfather Drum back to Mother Earth where his spiritual power could be transferred from his form to other persons in Creation.\textsuperscript{13} The snow burial, specifically, might have also temporarily sent Grandfather Drum to sleep and deactivated his power, allowing the person to discard him without fear of retribution since traditionally the ice and snow of winter even deactivated the Horned Underwater Serpent’s extremely strong spiritual power. The snow burial, then, is not evidence of yet another “sauvage” merrily casting off the devil’s tools in favour of Christianity — quite the contrary.

\textsuperscript{11} JR 7: 301–03.
\textsuperscript{13} Thomas Vennum Jr. cites evidence recorded by Robert E. Ritzethaler that burial was “a traditional Ojibwa method for disposing of medicine paraphernalia when no successor was in line to assume responsibility for [ongoing] care.” Robert E. Ritzenthaler fieldnotes, 1940–41; expense-account books, spiral-bound notebooks, photographs, etc. Archives of the Anthropology Department, Milwaukee Public Museum cited in ODD, p.136. Compare the snow burial of Grandfather Drum to the ritualised disposal of objects used in traditional sacred rites among the twentieth-century Anishinaabe Midewiwin in Landes, \textit{Ojibwa Religion}, Op.cit., p.125. See also ODD, p.151.
It is proof this individual retained his traditional beliefs in the drum’s power enough to negotiate a way to avoid igniting the wrath of Grandfather Drum and the withdrawal of other-than-human guardians whilst simultaneously placating the Black Robes with the appearance of a drum sacrifice, thus allowing the individual to gain supplementary medicinal objects and sounds associated with Christianity for his healing repertoire — namely a rosary, prayers, and hymns.¹⁴

Notwithstanding the Black Robes’ boasts of having conquered the soundscape of New France in their Relations written for their superiors and interested readers among the general population of Old France, neither scorching flames nor freezing snows silenced all the drums nor those whose mystically bestowed role it was to make these grandfathers “speak.” Even the Black Robes themselves acknowledged the silences in the once drum-filled soundscape were as much a consequence of severe depopulation from imported diseases as the product of a thoroughgoing derhythmisation policy. On the other hand, it is also true that some of those silences were filled by Christian sacred sounds when the survivors of the epidemics grew desperate enough to abandon their traditional aural medicine for the Christian brand of spirit-talking.

But the spaces the Black Robes claimed as their own gardens in the wilderness, spaces they referred to as “missions,” were also derhythmised for reasons other than disease and a wildly successful policy of sonic imperialism: one of those reasons was passive resistance. The Black Robes briefly mention resisters to their attempted sonic imperialism who made compelling arguments against their missionary activities. One highly influential spirit-talker declared to his countrymen, “on several occasions last winter, the Manitou who governs the birds, the fishes, and the animals...promised me...I should take some, if I obeyed him; and, in fact, so long as I consulted him in our [spirit-talking tents], and so long as I sang and beat my drum, my traps for Bears, for Beavers, and for other animals, never failed me.” By contrast, the spirit-talker pointed out, those of his nation who “died of hunger and disease” did so “because they amused themselves with certain words or certain prayers [the Black Robes] taught them; that, moreover, he had seen the place where the souls of the baptized and of the unbaptized go, and...it is neither Heaven nor the pit, but a place toward the setting Sun, where they meet together.”¹⁵ Others argued the French presence reduced the power of their medicinal sounds, which had served the people of the Great Turtle’s back so well prior to contact with

¹⁴ See Michael D. McNally, Ojibwe Singers: Hymns, Grief, and a Native Culture in Motion, (Minnesota: Minnesota Historical Society, 2009), p.116 for a discussion of late nineteenth-century Ojibwe hymn-singers who also performed notably derhythmmed hymns.

¹⁵ JR 33: 23–25.
Europeans and, thus, removed their sacred sounds and soundmakers out of the missions and the presence of the offenders. Out of French earshot, the Original People could maintain the integrity of their enrhythmed rites and their sonic sovereignty generally by eliminating the possibility of constant, discourteous intrusions. Thus, following the example of their other-than-human elders who withdrew from those who did not demonstrate respect by making a concerted effort to live in synchrony with them, these Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers did not stop singing, dancing and drumming altogether, but they did actively choose not to sing their most powerful, sacred songs with the ill-mannered strangers anymore.

The Way of the Drum

For four days, Tailfeather Woman hid beneath the lily pads of a lake, close to where her four sons and the rest of her band lay slain. Out of sheer desperation she, the lone survivor, had taken refuge there in the life-taking and life-giving water element while white soldiers massacred her people.¹ So pitiful was her situation, the Great Spirit (the interconnected spiritual reality of Creation) blew the lily pads with his breath (the four sacred winds) so she could breathe and briefly raise her head above the surface to see if the danger had passed. The Great Spirit, too, surveyed the devastation and determined that the long period of destruction should, indeed, pass—for Tailfeather Woman and for all the people of the Great Turtle’s back.

Ever since the first waves of the Great Flood of white people, the Original Peoples had ceased to live in synchrony with all their relations. Tailfeather Woman’s people the Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux) and the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), for example, were descendants of Original Man yet these brothers and sisters were bitter enemies. Their enmity, initially driven by the desire to dominate trade with the newcomers and sustained by blood revenge, continued long after the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) used weapons they received from French allies to drive the Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux) from their ancestral home around Lake Superior in the mid-seventeenth century. Even when the white American soldiers targeted their people in the late nineteenth century, still the Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux) and the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) “would immediately fight...[and] kill each other,” whenever they crossed paths.²

¹ According to oral tradition, Tailfeather Woman’s people were a band of the Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux, also known as Minnesota or Eastern Sioux). There is much scholarly debate over whether this story from the oral tradition is based on an actual battle between the American soldiers and the Sioux. B.G. Armstrong and T.P. Wentworth, Early Life Among the Indians: Reminiscences from the Life of Benjamin G. Armstrong, (Ashland, Wisconsin: Press of A.W Bowron, 1892), pp.156–60 claims to have interviewed a Sioux woman in the spring of 1878 in Ashland Wisconsin whose account was the same as that of Tailfeather Woman. According to Truman Michelson, “Final Notes on the Central Algonquian Dream Dance,” American Anthropologist, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Jul.–Sep., 1926): 574, one of the scholars debating the story’s historicity: “The Bureau of American Ethnology has been informed by the Adjutant General of the U.S.A…the records do not show…any engagement between Custer and the Indians in May of that year.” “However,” writes James S. Slotkin, “the account says ‘about May,’ and many battles are reported between March and June 1876.”
But “the meeting of [earth] and [water],...the meeting of [natives] and [newcomers], creates as well as destroys.”

Hence, according to the Great Spirit’s will, the devastation Tailfeather Woman’s people and others suffered in the late nineteenth century due to the latest wave of white people also served as the impetus for the creation of a new yet traditional way of being on this island for all the Original Peoples. It did so, primarily, by revealing to Tailfeather Woman how greatly the Original Peoples erred by persisting in killing their own brothers and sisters when they were already suffering such great losses to the white invaders. It was time to recreate their world in such a way that diverse persons—human and otherwise—could all live in synchrony with each other.

To achieve synchrony between all the Original Peoples, with the newcomers, and with all the other-than-human persons on a large, intertribal, intercultural, and cosmic scale, however, they were going to need a bigger drum. Hitherto, spirit-talking instruments like rattles and small drums had only been powerful enough to bring a solo medicine person and his/her patient into synchrony with the other-than-humans of the multilayered cosmos or, at most, summoned enough creative power through enrhythmed sound to achieve social cohesion between a single village community and the spiritual element of the universe. The Great Spirit saw he had given the Original Peoples “nothing [more than this] in the way of power” and this had made them pitifully vulnerable. Thus, said a voice to Tailfeather Woman during her time of sanctuary in the lake, “There is only one thing for you to do.” When the lily pads blew over again, Tailfeather Woman looked to see from whence the voice had come, but found no one. “The sound was all she made out”:

“You must tell your people to...put away the small drum they have always used and make a larger one...[They must] stop their war and pipe dances and practice on this new drum. The small drum [is] no longer large enough to keep away the bad spirit...[that is making you] people harm and kill one another...[and] talk

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4 According to Thomas Vennum Jr., “various dates—roughly between 1860 and 1890—are ascribed to Tailfeather Woman’s vision, [but] Ojibwa and Menominee readily admit to not knowing the exact time or place of the event.” ODD, p.45.
5 As “Death-Songs” in Part IV of this thesis demonstrates, intertribal warfare escalated during the time of destruction; mourning wars instigated by deaths from imported diseases, economically-motivated warfare between nations competing with each other to dominate trade with Europeans, and involvement in conflicts between rival European nations all contributed to high mortality rates. Nations that considered themselves descendants of one Original Man, separated only by language, resorted to killing each other. The Očhéthi Šakówiŋ (Sioux / Seven Fires Council) and Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) are just one example of nations who became bitter enemies. By killing each other, they—and other nations who behaved in a similar fashion—weakened the place of the Great Turtle’s back as a whole. See SLOT, p.14 for a brief summary of the “ethical doctrine...of the Powwow...which stresses peace and brotherhood among the formerly warring Indians.”
6 SLOT, p.19.
about [or] treat [each other]...in a bad way. Tell my children [to] stop doing this! This is not good!...

If one of you is somewhere and you see another, you should think of him or her as being the same as your own brother or sister. Do the same when you meet with different tribes. [You] should pity one another, be good to...[and] help each other as you live...If anyone has some possession, it should not be taken from where they might otherwise find it, for it will make things hard for your fellow men if you steal something from them...

This is how I want you to be, my children...It will be the only way you are going to stop the soldiers from killing your people.”

The Great Spirit gave Tailfeather Woman the big Drum in a vision and called all the other-than-human persons of Creation to put good, powerful medicine into it. Then he taught her how the people should act respectfully towards the Drum and how to sing the songs and perform the dances. He gave her peaceful songs to teach to the people like the Meeting Song and Shake Hands Songs and said, once she finished teaching her own people how to live a good life in accordance with the Drum she would need to pass on his teachings to all the other tribes to establish good and respectful relationships between all the Original Peoples.

Tailfeather Woman rose up from beneath the lake’s surface carrying with her the new drumways that would build a bigger, stronger and more powerful island than had existed before on the Great Turtle’s back. First, she took the teachings to a neighbouring band of her own nation and told them what had happened to her and the fate of her slaughtered people. These Isâŋyathi (Santee Sioux) people readily received the teachings and made the Drum of Tailfeather Woman’s vision a reality. They resolved to honour the Great Spirit’s wishes and pass on the Drum’s good medicine to other tribes. In the true spirit of the teachings, they began not with their closest allies but with their greatest foe: the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe).

As the Isâŋyathi (Santee Sioux) marched along the trail to the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) village carrying the precious Drum, they walked in the footsteps of ancestors and close relations.

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8 SLOT, pp.35–36.
9 ODD, p.70.
captured by the Anishinaabeg after countless battles fought over centuries. Those warrior ancestors had sung their death-songs as they marched; their descendents sang songs of peace. When they arrived, they sang the Meeting Song to their Anishinaabeg brothers and sisters and those who had been enemies for centuries shook hands. All the hatred that had passed between them faded away. Many hours were spent singing and dancing together in perfect synchrony to the loud, powerful drumbeats so the Anishinaabeg would receive the Drum teachings exactly as the Great Spirit first explained them to Tailfeather Woman. When they were pounding this Drum on the earth here, the main one [i.e., the Drum] above,...start[ed] to play up there too, where the Great Spirit is” so he could hear them there. He could even hear everything in their hearts as they were singing, because they were talking into and through the Drum to him, “just like a radio” or a telephone.10

From the time the Anishinaabeg were gifted the Drum, which they generically call dewe’igan, they showed respect for the Drum’s age, wisdom, and sacred power. One way they did so was by addressing the spirit-talking instrument as gimishoomisinaan (our grandfather). Like other honorific familial titles on this island, “Grandfather” was not merely bestowed ceremonially. The Drum, an other-than-human person, appeared as and metamorphosed into an old man in dreams and visions gifted to Anishinaabe individuals over the succeeding years and attendance at Drum meetings was even thought of and referred to colloquially as “going to talk with grandfather.” The Anishinaabeg also treated Grandfather Drum “like a [human] person.”11 To this end, as a part of building and maintaining a respectful, personal relationship based on negotiation and reciprocity, they offered Grandfather Drum food, human company, gifts such as a constant supply of fresh tobacco, clothing, a lamp and a bed. This understanding of gimishoomisinaan as a person with seemingly mundane human needs should not be oversimplified: the Drum was offered actual food but to “feast a drum” does not

10 SLOT, pp.20–21, 23–24, 37.
11 ODD, pp.13, pp.61–62, 197–98; SLOT, pp.36–37; Landes, Ojibwa Religion, Op.cit., pp.101–02, 104; see also Concrete Blonde, “Hey Coyote,” recorded by Concrete Blonde on Mojave [CD] (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Eleven Thirty Records, 2004) in which an oral testimony about the Drum is sampled, a partial transcript of the sample is reproduced here: “I haven’t been able to be there...to hear ‘em, like I used to go dance all the time. Y’know all the time I was listening to it and...you know what they’re saying because you’re right there. And all the times...you go and you’re ‘round that Drum, that Drum talks to you. It tells you things. But, I haven’t been around it for a while, so...that’s what bothers me at times, you know? ‘Cause I feel like I’m losing it, it’s all going away...” The Dance Drum was not exclusively addressed as “Grandfather.” Among the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe), writes Frank Speck, Naskapi Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), pp.176–77, the “water drum” was also a Grandfather who could “speak to him who understands [the Drum’s] language when it is beaten. It talks, but all do not understand. When it is beaten by one whose soul is strong, it reveals what is going to happen. Sometimes during sleep the drum will address itself to the soul of a man and urge him to rouse himself and consult its meaning by attacking it with his drumstick. Whereupon it utters forth its message, to be grasped, if possible, by the imagination of the spectator.”
literally mean to put food inside the instrument. According to Dan Jones, an Anishinaabemowin instructor at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, “feasting a drum” as a sacred person is “a spiritual happening.” The ritual feast is sonically transferred to *gimishoomisinaan* through a “verbal address,” for in audibly speaking this gift of the feast the humans “conjure up the spiritual aspects” of the corporeal feast, which they eat themselves on behalf of the sacred person: Grandfather Drum.12

Care was also taken to remove *gimishoomisinaan* from the presence of “objectionable people,” human and otherwise, who might expose him to harm and abuse. Just as it was traditionally taboo to allow dogs to eat any morsel of a ritual feast as this contaminated the feast by offending the other-than-humans who willingly offered their life to be transformed into human food, other-than-human persons such as cats and dogs and human children alike were not permitted to “bother the Drum” while it was in a person’s care. Nor was the Drum to touch the ground. The Anishinaabeg Drum members believed it was imperative to demonstrate respect for “Grandfather Drum” to this degree, because they understood his power was great and, so, Grandfather Drum had the choice and the ability to help or harm, according to his will. Living well generally was, therefore, compulsory for Drum members. This entailed treating fellow members and all Original Peoples with respect and kindness because they are “one person,” abstaining from alcohol, gambling and other vices that exacerbated the white man’s oppression of the Original Peoples, and always “maintain[ing] decorum in [Grandfather Drum’s] presence. People [were] never [to] vent anger over some matter or otherwise “act foolish” in front of [him].” The “Quitting Song” was composed and performed in the event that anyone behaved dishonourably around Grandfather Drum. Even a lack of accuracy while performing on the Drum may have been misconstrued as a lack of care and respect. Since human error was unavoidable, special ritualistic dances were created in which the singer (that is, the drummer) rose and “danced off” the error to neutralise the negative effects of making the Drum speak out of turn by drumming out of synchrony. In so doing, the singer (drummer) acknowledged the mistake, kinaesthetically brought everything back into synchrony, and communicated “no intentional slight to the drum ha[d] been committed.” Offenses committed directly against the Drum were, therefore, absolutely prohibited. Speaking of the Dance Drum, for example, one twentieth-century Anishinaabe man stated:

This religion is half good. The other way, [if] a person wants to make fun of it, he gets bad luck on that. We got to use that Drum in a good way. Like if I go to work, and make fun of that Drum, I throw it away, someplace, like that, you know; if I don’t treat it right, something will come up to me.

Cautionary tales abound of individuals who suffered personal disaster for intentionally harming Grandfather Drum. When a man “angrily pounded the Drum with his fist,” records Thomas Vennum, Jr., the next day a car accident left him permanently “crippled,” and when a Keshena woman set about destroying her husband’s Drum with an axe, “her brother died immediately afterward.” The swiftness of the repercussions left no doubt in Drum-members’ minds as to the cause of these individuals’ misfortunes. Though such accounts relate to the Dance Drum, this ancient, traditional notion of power’s neutrality and the inherent personal dangers of failing to show adequate respect and fear for power certainly illuminates how foolish and reckless the Black Robes must have seemed when they demanded seventeenth-century Algonquians and Iroquoians make burnt offerings of their drums to “the one true God.”

The reality is, though, no matter how much Grandfather Drum was spiritually sustained by the respect and offerings of the Great Turtle’s people, like all that physically exists within the space-time of the flat-Earth, his physical form was not exempt from deterioration and destruction. When Grandfather Drum’s drumhead did finally break from long use, the mid twentieth-century Anishinaabeg peoples would crowd around the broken Grandfather Drum “to be imbued with the beneficial “power” released” from him in the same way captors traditionally crowded around and even consumed the broken body of a brave singing captive in former times. For the same reason, they incorporated a piece of the broken drumhead into the new Drum so the essential spirit and power of the Drum would be transferred to its re-created corporeal form. The unsalvageable physical remains of the broken Grandfather Drum were disposed of the way all sacred medicinal paraphernalia was traditionally released when broken or no one could “assume responsibility” for its care — with an honourable burial. It was a tradition apparently already in use when the seventeenth-century custodian of a rattledrum gave his spirit-talking instrument the dignity of a snow burial instead of a Black Robe torching.14

13 See Ritzenthaler’s fieldnotes on the ceremonial Drum Dance as practiced on Lac Court Oreilles Reservation in the early 1940s cited in ODD, p.267. See also the statement of Garland Augustine, who was at the time the Micmac drum keeper of the Birch Creek drum of Big Cove, New Brunswick, cited in VoS, p.31; SLOT, pp.43, 70; ODD, p.62.
The Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) and Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux) both continued to pass the Drum Dance or “Powwow” on to other nations, east and west. Subsequently, there were instances when the pounding drums at these increasingly larger-scale intertribal gatherings caused a “scare” among the Catholics who witnessed these events, as devout Powwow member Payitiwekeset ([The Thunderer] Comes with Noise [of Thunder]) also known as Johnny Matchokamow states regarding the Wisconsin Scare of 1878:

You know how this Catholic people are; they kind of always be against something in the Indian way. And some...men, they went and told that agency, ‘Them people are doing something over there [i.e., having a Drum Dance]. I think they’re going to start up a war or something.’...Them soldiers come on the reservation and they were going to march over...And they pretty near had some trouble over that Powwow...

Anglican missionaries, it seems, were just as perturbed as the Catholics. In 1897, Reverend Joseph Gilfillan echoed Sagard’s words from centuries earlier when he described the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) of White Earth Reservation bringing out “the big drum” and “singing around it so loud that their voices could be heard, it would seem, for miles” prompting the Christianised “Indians” of White Earth to “discard...the garments of civilization which they had lately put on, and [to] paint...themselves once more as wild men...whooping and dancing around the drum,...and having a veritable orgy which made night and day hideous for weeks.” For the most part, though, the Original Peoples felt the Great Spirit’s promise had largely come to fruition; that the white people had put down their arms and made peace terms with them because they, too, had heard the sound of the Drum and realised the Original Peoples were now peace loving.¹⁵

In truth, as we are about to discover, Tailfeather Woman’s Drum did not bring an abrupt end to the period of destruction. In fact, in terms of encroachment on sonic sovereignty in particular and cultural sovereignty generally, the worst was yet to come. But Tailfeather Woman’s Drum was, henceforth, just as the Great Spirit intended, a power the Original Peoples could use to offset existing and ongoing threats to their lifeways: a Thunderbird with which to counteract the hidden, destructive activities of the Horned Underwater Serpent.¹⁶


Old Toad-Woman Reborn

She chooses her vantage point and observes the Original Peoples for a long time. At first she is oblivious to the power in their sounds as they sing, dance, and drum. But valuable, powerful things are always well hidden and she is particularly adept at patiently observing and studying her targets until that which is hidden is revealed. Something of value is “eluding [her] ears”—of that she is certain—and she is determined to know what it is. In this world, though, wisdom comes at a price: like an archetypal “wounded healer,” one must suffer to truly understand and to be worthy of receiving wisdom, and suffer she does. Her subsequent malady is so severe she is bedridden for months among the Original Peoples who take pity on her in her weakened state and sing to her softly, sans drum, in their efforts to heal her. It is then that she feels the derhythmed melodies drawing her closer to her native land and realises they will have the same transformative power over the other members of “her race”: the descendants of those whom the Horned Underwater Serpent first granted safe passage across the Atlantic Ocean centuries earlier and are, therefore, like her: “strangers in [their] native land.” The sounds, then, hold an altogether different power for her than they do for the Original Peoples themselves, but it is power nonetheless and its neutrality means she can use it to make up for the sense of belonging and unique national identity her own imposter race lacks — if she can capture it.¹

Capturing the continent’s ancient voice is a matter of urgency, because her own people have proclaimed the Great Turtle’s people are members of a “vanishing race,” soon to be entirely drowned out—along with all vestiges of their olden world—by modern civilisation. However, the cunning woman realises, modern technology is on her side. Just like the turtle-shell rattle, which had not required the turtle’s body to be alive for his voice to resonate with all its former powers of interdimensional communication, the phonograph invented only a few years earlier


Note: I use the feminine third-person singular pronoun “she” throughout this section. In the Algonquian-Iroquoian lifeworld/s metamorphosis or “shape-shifting” is common, as is “plurality” and Old Toad-Woman specifically is said to metamorphose in the oral tradition; see Wright, Op.cit., p.53. I have therefore presented Old Toad-Woman here as both of the famed song catchers Alice Cunningham Fletcher and Frances Densmore, drawing on primary evidence from the ethnographic fieldwork of both women as though Old Toad-Woman continued/s to act in this world in the guise of multiple others.
in 1877 has no further use for the doomed bodies of the Great Turtle’s people beyond the initial recording session. The phonograph extracts and preserves the voice and even makes it sing again at the listener’s will and pleasure according to the listener’s purpose, long after the vocalist’s death. The song-catcher needs only to record as many of these melodies as she can with this sound recording technology before the last remnants of this dying culture take their precious melodies to their graves.\(^2\)

For the Original Peoples participating in the song-catching sessions from 1895 onwards, something altogether different is true. They believe that in the act of giving their entire repertoire of songs a supposedly eternal life on wax cylinders they will likely send their own corporeal forms to early graves. Singing expends personal power: it transfers life from the singer to other entities. As the Innu (Montagnais) hunter Kaniuekutat asserts:

> When I sing, I don’t sing all the songs I have. I have many traditional songs, but I’m afraid to use them. I don’t have enough power to sing all of them. Maybe later, I will. If I sing all of my songs, I will have less power in the future. A person has to be careful with how many songs he sings, because his songs are part of his life. That’s why I don’t sing all of them. I have to save them for future use. When I saved a baby’s life, I gave him part of my life, so a part of my life is missing. It’s gone to the baby’s life. This is how it works. When you cure a sick person, you give him part of your life.

To enter into respectful, reciprocal conversations with the other-than-human persons is to call them only when absolutely necessary, too. But when the Original Peoples sing their songs into the phonograph, they do not do so to genuinely call for aid in the hunt, in war, or healing acts. Summoning the other-than-human persons when their help is not desperately needed or to acquire more than an individual has any right to expect is to invite their disapproval and risk their withdrawal. Alternatively, the other-than-humans may answer to the phonograph machine’s calls for help and not the real-life singer’s calls, or the song-catcher could potentially use the stolen voice to impersonate the original singer to attract spiritual aid from an other-than-human with whom she has fostered no personal relationship whatsoever. It is a basic tenet that misuse of a gifted song in any of these ways (and more) may render it ineffectual. For the same reasons, the public recitation of spiritual knowledge in the form of dreams, visions, and songs is avoided as much as possible. In some circumstances, spirit-talkers or “medicine people” cannot avoid publicly reciting some of their sacred knowledge in

their healing rites, but they mitigate the spiritual power’s potential dissipation by making it as unintelligible to auditors as possible, via mumbling or producing inaudibly soft or rapid speech. Singers often add extra syllables to sonically pixelate the lyrics of personal sacred songs while drumbeats and the extreme volume of shaking turtle rattles can also serve to obscure any secret incantatory, lyrical content.\(^3\)

In spite of all this, to satisfy her own scientific and nationalistic objectives she expects the vocalists to perform as many songs as they possess and, often, more than once each due to the hit-and-miss nature of the recording process. Subsequently, “[a]fter the recording of [“Odjĭb’we’s Dream Song”] on the phonograph,” for example, “the aged warrior [Odjĭb’we] bowed his head and said tremulously… he feared he would not live long, as he had given away his most sacred possession.” She continues to take his and others’ sounds anyway. Though slain by Original Man long ago, Old Toad-Woman, the first to steal the turtle’s voice and power to use at her own will and pleasure for the benefit of her fellow Underwater persons, is evidently alive and well and playing her part again in the ever-repeating rhythmic cycle of creation, destruction, and re-creation. In her guise as Alice Cunningham Fletcher and, later, as Frances Densmore, the shape-shifting Old Toad-Woman has disembodied the voices from what she presumes to be the doomed bodies of her “Indian” captives, denuded them of their “noisy” rhythms, and captured and contained them on wax cylinder recordings so her own (enemy) nation can grow spiritually strong on their power.\(^4\)


\(^4\) CM-II, p.67. This was Densmore rather than Fletcher – see note at beginning of this section regarding conflation of these women. Anishinaabe Larry Aitken, “Larry Aitken Speaks About Frances Densmore,” (Grand Rapids, Minnesota, 2014), *Ojibwe Digital Archive: The Gibagadinamaagoom Project*, accessed 12 November 2017, describes Densmore’s salesperson-like ability to “beguile” songs out of Original Peoples by complimenting them on their voices but feels her manner of collecting materials was better than other more “scientifically” trained collectors who put their own interpretation on what they collected and did a disservice to the content in the process. While the Old Toad-Woman characterisation may seem a better fit for Fletcher alone, who had pseudo-scientific and nationalistic motives for taking indigenous sounds, then, there was still something Toad-Womanesque in the way Densmore “beguiled” songs out of the Great Turtle’s people and her continued collection of songs despite knowing Odjĭb’we believed he would die due to her success in convincing him to give away his most sacred possession, his “Dream Song.” Furthermore, Michelle Wick Patterson, “She Always Said, “I Heard an Indian Drum,”” in Joan M. Jensen and Michelle Wick Patterson (eds.), *Travels with Frances Densmore: Her Life, Work, and Legacy in Native American Studies* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2015), p.34 has noted that, like Fletcher, Densmore had a sense of ownership of the sounds for the dominant white culture: “In what passed for concerned sympathy at the time,” writes Patterson, “Densmore remarked that Native Americans were condemned to the “slow torture of degeneracy and final extinction,” but…retained their “captive song.” This music, which non-Indians had captured, now belonged to all and, she implied, must be studied and understood before it was too late.” On stolen sounds see Hopi anthropologist Wendy Rose cited in Browner, “Breathing the Indian Spirit,” Op.cit., 280–81, in which Rose likens the sound recording technology to the soul-stealing camera in the old stereotype of the “savage” being afraid that a camera will steal his soul.
Figure 4.3: Ethnologist Frances Densmore [left] and Piikáni (Piegan, Blackfoot) chief, Mountain Chief [right], making a phonographic record at Smithsonian, February 9, 1916. “Piegan Indian, Mountain Chief, listening to recording with ethnologist Frances Densmore,” (1916).

Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, [LC-DIG-pmsca-51096].
As expert as Old Toad-Woman is at stealing voices, she is also well known for stealing children. As the Anishinaabeg storytellers relate, a young couple welcomed the arrival of a son and, one day, when the father was absent from their home for an extended period “on the hunt for game” and the young mother was likewise dutifully performing her many tasks she hung from the limb of a tree the lovingly decorated cradleboard in which her little son was strapped while she “speedily” went off a short distance either to gather firewood. “At that moment the face of [Old Toad-Woman] peered through the bushes” and beheld the beautiful child in his stunningly embellished cradleboard. As soon as the baby’s mother was out of sight Toad-Woman “quickly darted out,” snatched the infant—cradleboard and all—and took him to her abode where two of her own “black, small and ugly” sons were waiting in their comparatively “dirty and homely” cradleboards. Upon returning to the bough of the tree, the boy’s mother began a frantic search and, realising the terrible truth—that her precious son was lost—“set up a loud lamentation,” “bitterly wept,” and laid down at the entrance to the lodge they had all lately shared, moaning as her profound grief overwhelmed her. When her husband learnt what had transpired and failed to find his son he deserted his miserable wife. Years passed. The beautiful babe grew into a strong, handsome hunter who knew only Old Toad-Woman as his mother, while his real and once beautiful mother, “through brooding over her misfortune” and from a scarcity of food “grew thin and wrinkled.” Eventually, the grief-stricken woman crossed over into the nearby valley in search of food and made a new home near that of Old Toad-Woman and her stolen child. The young hunter spied the pitiful, starving stranger near his home. Wishing to “live well” and take pity on her the same way he hoped the more empowered other-than-human persons would continue to take pity on him whenever he set out for the hunt, he informed Old Toad-Woman of his intention to help the wretched woman. “Oh, don’t have anything to do with that old...wrinkled face,” said Old Toad-Woman who subsequently deigned to throw from afar some deer brisket to the one she thought of as “a mischievous old hag” and told her to be grateful for it (but not before she had urinated on the meat). Still, the young hunter felt inexplicably drawn to the poor woman and longed to help her, so a few days later he set out to share some of the deer gifted to him on his latest hunt. Upon offering it to her he was immediately recognised:

“Oh, my dear boy, come in and do not shun me, for I am your mother....That you may know I am telling the truth...ask the Toad-Woman to show you the [cradleboard] in which she carried you when a babe. Then ask her to show you the [ones] belonging to her other children...You will see how much more beautiful and nicer yours is, which will prove...you are...not descended from a toad woman.”
Though the cunning Old Toad rationalised he had a more attractive cradleboard because he was “better looking” than his brothers and needed “something better,” this only reminded the young hunter of the obvious physical differences between him and his siblings. Convinced the Old Toad was indeed a horrid child-snatcher, the young man told his false mother to go and pick up a deer he had lately killed. To avenge what she had done to his real family, he waited until she was out of sight then caught his “brothers,” now numbering 18, strung them on a pole, hung them high up in the crotch of a tree in front of Old Toad-Woman’s lodge, absconded with his true mother and began the search for his father. When Toad-Woman finally returned, she became enraged and unstrung her children, “but their backs were so bent and their hips so twisted… all they could do was… hop around and turn somersaults.” Once the whole ugly truth was revealed she, too, metamorphosed into her true Toad form, “hop[ping] and jump[ing] around in the dirt, like her children.”

5 Old Toad-Woman is not the only one with a penchant for stealing children. “That guy... down there” has also been known to take particular pleasure in stealing children from their unwary parents — such are the ways of the Underwater people. 6 When an Anishinaabekwe (Odaawa / Ottawa woman) was washing some clothing in a lake, so the Anishinaabeg tale goes, she set her child down, safely tied up in its cradleboard, “very near the edge of the water [so] it might watch its mother while at work.” Realising she had left something inside her wiigiwaam close by and ran off to retrieve it, oblivious that she had unwittingly invited disaster by effectively leaving her child on the Horned Underwater Serpent’s “doorstep.” 7 Moments later the water monster rose and dragged the baby deep underwater through a subaquatic door into his labyrinthine subterranean passages, which twisted and turned all the way to a cavern beneath the highest hillock in the woman’s village. A few days later, a couple sitting on the hill heard the infant’s cries emanating from the ground directly beneath them. Though a spirit-talking tent ceremony was performed and the underwater passageway subsequently located, by the time the people dug down to the cavern only “the dead form of the child was discovered.”

8 When a prophetic vision gifted to a great medicine man “long ago” warned the Original Peoples of child-stealing serpents who were coming to take their children, therefore, it would have been entirely in keeping with all they knew of the Serpent’s ways. As the oral tradition

7 NISH, p.121.
8 See Blackbird, Op.cit., pp.82–84; NISH, pp.120–21 and pp.134–35 for another tale told by Norval Morriseau in which the Thunderers kill the Horned Underwater Serpent (Mishebeshu) after he steals a baby, cradle and all, from the shores of Lake Superior. Again, the baby does not survive, but thanks to the Thunderers’ intervention neither does Mishebeshu.
relates: “Long ago there was a medicine man sitting there at the sacred pipe and the tobacco was talking but nobody could understand. So another medicine man grabbed some medicine and put it in his ear. Once that medicine was in his ear, he could understand everything. The vision was that a man was gonna come; and that he was gonna have serpents in his arms; and that these serpents represented two governments; and that this beast was gonna steal the children.”

Oral tradition also teaches that the Horned Underwater Serpent and Old Toad-Woman have always worked in league. We see this in Toad-Woman’s willingness to do whatever the Great Serpent requires; be it gathering bast with which to ensnare Original Man, healing wounds the Serpent receives as a result of his attacks on earthly beings, and, it seems, in lending her assistance in their mutual interest: child-snatching. It is not surprising, then, that Old Toad-Woman pops up in her guise as Alice Cunningham Fletcher on the payroll of her friend Captain Richard Henry Pratt’s school in its early years, the Carlisle Indian School: the first Indian boarding school in the United States and the model on which the rest will be based. Her task for “a mere pittance”: to accompany young students of Carlisle in Pennsylvania back to their families and homes in South Dakota—neither of which they have seen for three years—and, whilst there, to take more children away from their families, their wider communities and, ultimately, their entire lifeworld, to be enrolled at Carlisle. With Fletcher’s phonographic recordings and arrangements, the aim is to extract the harmonisable “Pythagorean” element of the doomed Indian’s voice. At Carlisle, as it is in the equivalent Canadian residential school system, the goal is to “kill the Indian” part of the child to “save the man,” that is, the part of the male or female child deemed harmonisable or assimilable into white civilisation. To “kill the Indian” they isolate them from their family and community, cut their hair, impose a new white name on them, forbid their ancestral languages, songs, dances, and religion—in short, their whole acoustemology—and sadistically punish any reversions to these soundways so the child associates their traditions with immense pain. At the same time, they effectively “whitewash” them by immersing them exclusively in white lifeways.

While the system does succeed in doing great damage to the lifeways it seeks to destroy, particularly causing long-term effects to the traditional acoustemology such as language loss, it still fails in its aim to fully colonise the children’s minds. They do not emerge from these schools as the full-fledged white men and women the authorities expect them to be. In truth,

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with the trauma of the forced removal from their families and communities and the alienation from their traditional lifeways compounded by physical, sexual, and psychological abuse widely suffered by students, the boarding school system’s true legacy is the creation of thousands upon thousands of Pastedechouans and a vicious, intergenerational cycle of destruction.11

Zoar, northern Wisconsin: 1949. The feeble light of a lone kerosene lamp burns in a Mamaceqtaw (Menomini) Dance Hall and poses no threat to the darkness dominating the space. With the sense of sight thus diminished other senses are heightened. Something pierces through and challenges the darkness: a drumbeat, “simple” yet performed with “great variation and nuance,” starts pianissimo and with the combined full force of eight grown men gradually develops into a mighty fortissimo that “makes the whole room” and all the people within it vibrate in “extraordinary” synchrony, “no matter how the tempo and magnitude of the beat” varies. The participants in the rite are “welded into a collective unity” by entraining—becoming “one with the music”—and experience being “carried away by the rhythm”: drumming, singing, and vigorously dancing “almost automatically until exhausted.” “I never had such a sense of rhythm penetrating me,” confessed social anthropologist and ethnohistorian James S. Slotkin in his field diary afterwards. “The drumbeat pervades the place.” Notwithstanding the impressively forceful, thunderous consciousness-altering beats Slotkin has heard and felt, though, Tailfeather Woman’s Drum Dance is for him a prime example of “cultural decay”: the Powwow, he prophesies, will be “overwhelmed by the relentless advance of the white man’s ways.”

The Drum Dance’s original aim, after all, was to transfer it to the other nations and unite the Original Peoples. And, while the Isáŋyathi (Santee Sioux) and the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) have passed the Drum and accompanying dance on to the other bands of their people and, thence, to other nations including these Mamaceqtaw as directed, it is also true that the Original Peoples offered the new drumways have not always been willing or able to accept the gift.

Competition and pressure from other belief systems—both native derived and Christian—have inhibited the Drum’s transfer on reservations. When the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) set out to give the Hoocąągra (Ho-Chunk / Winnebago) the new drumways, for instance, they found

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1 Mamaceqtaw, pronounced ma-ma-chay-taw and meaning “the people,” is the nation’s endonym. Menomini also spelt Menominee, meaning “wild rice people,” is an exonym originally used by the Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe) to describe them to Europeans. SLOT, pp.14–15. Note: pianissimo means the drum is played very quietly, from Italian piano meaning soft, while fortissimo means the drum is played very loudly, from Italian forte meaning loud.
these people, like so many others, already “saturated with religions” and, thus, only prepared to adopt it as a secular dance. Consequently, drums literally “go to pieces” among the Hooçaqågra, who “dismantle” them to repurpose their materials such as their beadwork. And even among the mid-twentieth-century Mamaceqtaw (Menomini) where the sacred rite has already been willingly received and has an active Drum community, Mamaceqtaw people who might have otherwise become members of the Drum Dance religion are increasingly attracted to Peyotism; an “individualistic and contemplative” religion compared to the Powwow’s emphasis on social cohesion through sound. Given the “rapid shift in world view and mood” Slotkin observes between these two religions, which he subsequently considers to be irreconcilable, it is understandable the Mamaceqtaw (Menomini) Drum members “disapprove of the few Powwow people who also belong to the...Peyote Rite.” While they “disapprove” of dual membership of both Peyotism and the Dance Drum, however, the Mamaceqtaw (Menomini) outright prohibit members of the Catholic Church from becoming Drum members. This ban further diminishes the potential Drum membership since the activities of Catholic missionaries on the reservations are finally paying off and increasingly attracting converts. The prohibition is essential, however, as the latest Catholic missionaries replicate their aggressive early seventeenth-century derhythmisation policy and their converts become just as passionately opposed to the traditional religion and rites. In this context, therefore, an indoor setting for the rites in purpose-built “Dance Halls” is not always due to participants preferring the enclosed space for amplification purposes, though their power as resonators is noteworthy. Often events are scheduled in secret and conducted indoors to protect the Drum from the missionaries and neophytes who, like their seventeenth-century counterparts, are likely to say offensive things against Grandfather Drum in his presence and intrude upon rites to stop the participants performing what they believe to be “public displays of heathenism.”

The “Indian boarding schools” established decades earlier also take their toll on the maintenance of the Drum religion and movement. The younger generations who have been alienated from their own culture and lost the ability to speak their languages have, inevitably, not been engaging in or even learning their traditional lifeways. While disinterest in the traditions would have been destructive enough, white teachers expect their former students to actively become instruments of the “whitewashing” process upon their return to their communities. The younger people’s denunciations of the traditions generally and the Drum religion specifically not only contributes to its decline, it undermines the traditional status of elders who would ordinarily be respected rather than challenged by young people, causing a breakdown in relationships, social order, and preventing the Drum’s transfer.

2 ODD, pp.139, 143–44; SLOT, p.14.
intergenerationally as well as intertribally. Subsequently, dwindling Drum membership gets so bad, Slotkin is even called upon to step in as a drummer at times during his fieldwork.3

As further evidence of “cultural decay,” Slotkin cites “a marked discrepancy between the ideal and the actual.” Elements of the rites are being forgotten, performed incorrectly, or even consciously abandoned; drums sit disused or, worse, are misused by being sold via “furtive transactions...for spending money” to both white private collectors and museums. Indeed, the raison d’être of Slotkin’s monograph, as per the Drum members’ request who feel the Powwow “has been going down,” is to be “a handbook of the Menomini Powwow religion, written for the use of its members” since “[t]here are few elders left, and even these have forgotten many religious details...[and] their knowledge,” the spiritual power of their wisdom, “has not been transmitted in any detail to the next generation.” It is a sentiment somewhat echoed by Thomas Vennum, Jr., who, among other reasons for the Drum Dance’s “decline,” suggests peoples’ reluctance to accept Drums in the first place also simply comes down to the considerable expenditure of time and money it takes to (a) create and maintain the Drum, especially as associated traditions such as beadwork give way to white society’s economic and social pressures of work and school, and (b) to transfer the religion to others, which always involves ritual gift-giving of too great a volume to be sustained, particularly during the Great Depression of the mid-twentieth century.4

It is understandable that Slotkin and Vennum hear these powerfully voluminous enrhythmed sounds decaying before their very ears. Their hearing is, after all, heavily influenced by the late nineteenth-century rhetoric of vanishing, silenced Indians. And their awareness of the all too real and relentless threats to the Original Peoples’ soundways in this period, as well as the elders’ own statements that the Powwow is “going down” and “it’s all going away,” only reinforces their sense of the imminent loss of these soundways.5

But are these sounds really the death-songs of the traditional auditory culture, ringing out most voluminously as they are about to die? Even if we accept they are, to an indigenous ear

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4 SLOT, pp.9–10, 14–16, see p.16 where Johnny Matchokamow states “the Potawatomi don’t have no dances no more. Especially in Wabeno; they got Drums, but they don’t use it.” ODD, pp.50 and pp.136-42 on the sale of drums. Vennum adds a number of other reasons for the decline of the Drum Dance to the list; too many individuals took on the role of “prophet” and added their own revelations to those of Tailfeather Woman, altering the religion and rite and weakening the “general social position of the Drum Dance.” Rather than unifying all nations under the same organised Drum religion, as intended, groups followed different prophets each with their own idiosyncratic version of the religion, which led to “cultism.” On the other hand, Original Peoples do not experience and celebrate the modern Powwow exactly the same way; this diversity is celebrated. On “generational ties” and transfer of power see Axtmann, Op.cit., 8.
death-songs are paradoxically also sounds of life being transferred to another form. For transformation in the form of cultural change and shift does not automatically signal an absolute end or “death” in this world in the way it usually does in the linear world of the western psyche. This is not a static auditory culture but a living auditory culture and change—even apparently destructive change—is all a necessary part of the creative process and the way the culture continues to remain responsive and relevant in the present. 6

Yet again, it seems, we find “the eternal breaking through the temporal” and imbuing the events of the material reality with meaning. 7 For this era of the decline of Tailfeather Woman’s Drum religion calls to mind the Earth-diver episode in the Re-creation story when the Earth-dwellers’ last hope, the muskrat, floats to the surface after his mission to retrieve a grain of earth with which to remake the world. As it turns out, the seemingly “decaying” enrhythmed sounds of the Great Turtle’s back are the seemingly lifeless little muskrat—merely awaiting resuscitation.

Thus, Original Man draws a deep breath and exhales to give forth a part of his spiritual power—a part of his own life—to “the decaying.” Soon, other “breaths,…lives,…spirits,” and voices will mingle with his to augment this creative power. Together, with their enrhythmed dancing bodies moving in synchrony in an unbroken circle, they will remake what has been almost, but not entirely, destroyed. 8

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6 For the same reason, I do not use the word “tradition” as a synonym for “pre-contact,” because authentically “traditional” and “indigenous” lifeways are not exclusive to the pre-contact era. For more on this see, VoS, p.50.
Turtle Island

“Southern California”: January 1969. Drums are set up. A fire is started. Native American activists gather around the fire “and for most of the night” sing “the pantribal songs called forty-nines.” Throughout the night, “breaths,…lives,…spirits” and voices mingle as “conversations circle…around the idea of a native-inspired cultural and ecological renaissance for all of North America.” It is at this point that a man who says his work is “to be a messenger” refers to the continent instead as “Turtle Island” — “[it is] the term the people [are] coming to, a new name to help us build the future of North America.” A “Beat poet” at the gathering asks him, “whom or where [has this name “Turtle Island”] come from?” to which the messenger responds: “There are many creation myths with Turtle, East Coast and West Coast. But also you can just hear it.”

Within a year Gary Snyder, the Beat poet who had witnessed firsthand the act of re-creation that night, observed the spread of the term “Turtle Island” in newsletters and various communications produced by the Original Peoples. In his Pulitzer Prize-winning book of poetry, *Turtle Island* (1974), Snyder himself popularised the “old/new name for the continent,” which is “based on many creation myths of the people who have been living here for millennia, and reapplied by some of them to “North America.” “[S]peak of the “United States,” and you are talking two centuries of basically English-speaking affairs; speak of “America” and you invoke five centuries of Euro-American schemes in the Western Hemisphere; speak of “Turtle Island,” writes Snyder, “and a vast past, an open future, and all the life communities of plants, humans, and critters come into focus.” For to speak is never “a casual affair.” Words, whether they are the kind humans alone speak and understand or those spoken in the more inclusive sense within the purely sonic lingua franca, “not only

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describe the world, but actively create and shape it.”⁴ Names are never just signs but contain the essence and, thus, are the things they name.⁵ In the case of “Turtle Island,” then, the name is the material and spiritual world itself; an oppressed cosmography or “sacred geography” that has been “officially” (and, thus, legally) submerged beneath voices speaking and maps bearing placenames and demarcations imposed upon the land by European invaders.⁶ While the linking of those European names with cartography’s precise measurements of purely physical terrain may give the impression “North America” is more real than “Turtle Island” and may even give some of the Original Peoples’ themselves the feeling that their lifeworld/s have been completely destroyed, both North America and Turtle Island are mindscapes: culturally constructed, subjective realities that exist in human minds and spirits.⁷ As such, in the end it is the successful colonisation or decolonisation of the mind that determines whether or not Turtle Island rises from below the floodwaters again.⁸

Like the Original Peoples who have traditionally conjured whoever they name, therefore, the activists and anyone else who has since uttered the name “Turtle Island” have conjured the ancient world of the Great Turtle’s back into present consciousness.⁹ For, in sounding their world and thereby clearly differentiating it and asserting its independence from the one imposed upon them, they have made it more difficult for the wider non-indigenous population to go on retaining their settler “colonialist” mindset, too. Where non-native peoples had hitherto only been able to tune into the monologic name, hearing, knowing, and speaking the name “Turtle Island” aloud in place of “North America” or, at the very least, employing a dual naming policy forces them to be more aurally sensitive to the simultaneous realities of Turtle Island and North America and, subsequently, to be more cognisant of alternate ways of being and knowing and the possibility of a mutually respectful dialogue between the two.¹⁰ From the first, though, Turtle Island’s re-emergence from the murky depths of North America has not solely relied upon sounding its name, important as that is. After all, the diverse

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⁵ NISH, p.68.
⁸ For more on neurocolonisation and neurodecolonisation, see Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird, Op.cit., p.65.
⁹ Snyder does not explicitly name the activists; they were likely American Indian Movement members, whose group was established months earlier in July 1968. On the power of uttered words to create and re-create worlds see Wong, Op.cit., p.19 and Mann, Op.cit., pp.19–20.
peoples of oral tradition—human and otherwise—sang, danced, and drummed together to amalgamate their creative energies and make the grain of earth on the Turtle’s back grow to a size large enough to support life. So, too, did the activists on that night in January 1969 sing, dance, drum, as well as utter the name “Turtle Island” to begin, yet again, the process of decolonising and recreating their enrhythmed world through sound. They could do so because, in spite of all the talk of “cultural decay,” the Original Peoples had already retrieved enough of their traditional soundways for the purposes of re-creation.

Though it would deeply trouble the early French missionaries of New France were they alive today to hear it for themselves, voluminous, enrhythmed, generative sounds remain at the centre of the modern Powwow as a defiantly beating heart. At these intertribal events, which regularly draw together Original Peoples and cultural outsiders alike from all across the United States and Canada, for example, a shaker (rattle) still summons life and is followed by a pounding “boom boom—boom boom—boom boom: the sound of life coming.” The Powwow Drum’s creative life-rhythm is also reinforced and amplified by numerous, vigorous, dancing bodies performing dances consisting of movements and practices that are the descendants of older, traditional dances of precolonial and colonial dance societies “passed down through centuries of generational sharing.” Today, for instance, female Jingle Dress Dancers wear regalia embellished with metal cone jingles that “tinkle at every motion,” and thereby “sing out to the spirits when the dancers lift their feet in time with the drum.” Should a person in the tribal or intertribal community of the powwow personally require healing or seek it for a loved one, they need only supply the Jingle Dress Dancer with a gift of tobacco and make “a whispered request” that the dancer enlist the voices of her jingles to call for healing on the sick person’s behalf via this old/new form of “democratized shamanism.” While the Jingle Dress Dance itself is an early twentieth-century creation originating from a vision gifted to a man of the Whitefish Bay Ojibwe community to cure his daughter, Maggie White, of her prolonged illness, the “soft jingling” enrhythmed voices of these modern-day metallic cones made from tin cut from Copenhagen snuff containers are descendants of the earlier jingles of pre-contact Turtle Island. They are as medicinally powerful as they ever were, since the modern jingles, which must number 365 and are attached one per day and everyday of a year-long berry fast, have been made spiritually powerful through the dancer’s fasting and her humble petitions for spiritual aid each and every time she attached a jingle.11

Due to the low-profile, “hidden,” internal nature of the spiritual Powwow experience, it has been easy for some commentators to view Powwows with disdain for being too commercial or too “Pan-Indian” and, thus, as further evidence of “cultural decay.” However, as northern Powwow historian Tara Browner has noted, such cynicism is due to such individuals observing only the Powwow’s physical reality. For the Powwow participant who is also a cultural insider, for example, the Powwow space is never perceived as merely a physical reality but something enveloped by “a protective layer of spirits”:

Through that belief [the native Powwow participant] bridges the invisible membrane between physical (seen) and spiritual (unseen) realms. Many Indians speak about ancestors being present at pow-wows and dancing along with them, joining worlds with a drumbeat sounding simultaneously in both. Dancing in a great circle, they unite as one people to the beat of the drum. Songs are cyclic and represent the continuity of time and life itself.

Drums are ceremonially smudged with tobacco offerings and while some “traders” do sell commercially manufactured items, others are literally “traders” who trade items of spiritual value for items of comparable spiritual value rather than for financial profit. Even the competitive aspect of the Powwow, which sees dancers judged against each other and the awarding of cash prizes, has a spiritual component: the best dancers are the ones who can most effectively kinesthetically entrain their stylistically appropriate yet improvised movements with the powerful, varied, and nuanced drumbeats of songs, even when those songs are unknown to the dancer. It is, then, an opportunity to demonstrate one’s capacity for “living well” in synchrony with all others. Regardless of what secular activities may simultaneously occur at the modern-day Powwow events, it is this spiritual reality internally experienced by native participants—how they experience the Powwow and, by extension, their traditional world of “Turtle Island” in their own minds—that matters most when it comes to the continuity and enrichment of their acoustemology.12

Though the Powwow Drum is bigger, louder, and different in its form than its pre-contact and early seventeenth-century counterparts, then, little has changed in terms of Grandfather Drum’s role as an axis mundi, its medicinal properties, the augmentation of its power, or how it is cared for and respected. Rhythmic instrumentation, singing or “spirit-talking” in the all-

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12 HoP, pp.98 and p.142 for Browner’s interview with “Shannon” a Powwow dancer who reveals her highly developed auralacy. Shannon understands acoustic cues in songs she has never heard and these allow her to “dance for the music the way it is playing presently,” without any predetermined choreography. On the commercial and generally secular social activities, see Axtmann, Op.cit., 7, 13. VoS, p.47.
inclusive sonic lingua franca via the use of vocables, dancing, the effort to achieve significant volume and thereby more effectively produce a powerful effect that is both heard and felt by auditors and facilitates entrainment in a symbolic, clearly defined space — all of this is consistent with pre-contact and contact era soundways. 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 where it concentrates their collective spiritual power, which can protect the Original Peoples from hostile cultural outsiders and can also achieve individual and communal healing. When tracing the enrhythmed sounds across time and assessing to what extent they are still achieving what they were always meant to, we find the Original Peoples coming together with the Drum at their centre, successfully turning up the volume on the life-rhythm of Creation better than ever, in spite of everything that has been done to drown out their world. One Powwow participant has eloquently summed up the Pan-Indian phenomenon’s power to assert, strengthen, reclaim and, where necessary, entirely recreate the Original Peoples’ sovereignty through sound by stating: “The rhythm of the drum has made it possible for us to sustain our identity during difficult periods. We still have much to relearn; much to put right, but with the help of the drums we shall rebuild, preserve and celebrate our traditions.”

Beyond their drumways, the Original Peoples continue to strengthen the voice of Turtle Island through their concerted efforts to revitalise their languages and oral tradition. Many native languages have been significantly damaged, endangered, or have been lost altogether in the period of “Destruction” due to deadly epidemics, official policies within boarding schools and non-inclusive practices in the education system generally as well as in wider society. Like the sounding of the toponym “Turtle Island,” keeping languages and oral tradition “alive at the level of the human voice” is vital to making the world of Turtle Island audible again, as is the officialisation of local indigenous placenames. Since sound is “something…a mind does,” though, it is perhaps even more important to retain indigenous ways of hearing and thinking sonically than it is to retain indigenous ways of sounding, because even if complete destruction of the sounds of an auditory culture occurs leading to the loss of ancient rituals and language death, indigenous listening practices can be used to recreate what has been lost.

For example, in South Australia, the Pitjantjatjara and Anadgarinja languages consist of “onomatopoeic words” indicating things were named in their environment based on the sounds they produce. For their southerly neighbours the Kaurna, whose language has, by contrast, become extinct this characteristic is a vital piece of information about indigenous auditory practices in their region enabling them to begin recreating their dead language using authentically indigenous “echolocative dialogue.” Many of the languages featured in this thesis have also been notably onomatopoeic, meaning any linguistic damage incurred can likewise be healed by sourcing “a phonologically-grounded semantics in the natural environment.”

For a story that began with Old Toad-Woman’s theft of the turtle’s voice and which dramatically crescendoed with her return in the guise of nineteenth-century ethnographers stealing the voice of the Great Turtle’s people with the latest sound recording technology, it is entirely fitting it should end with their descendants recognising the recording technology’s enormous potential to serve them as incredibly powerful “good medicine.” Just as Original Man recognised the medicinal power Old Toad-Woman wielded with her turtle-shell rattle and stole it from her to be an instrument of healing for his own people, the Original Peoples stole the sound recording technology from the invaders. Unlike the invaders who used the technology to capture the sounds of a dying, doomed culture for their own nation-building purposes, though, the Original Peoples use the technology to sound—and _re-sound_—the languages, songs, and stories of their living cultures, thereby revitalising and amplifying what had been drowned out, guaranteeing their sounds will be passed on to the generations to come. By making ample use of apps, social media and interactive, multimodal websites, and insisting on their participation in both performance and production positions across mainstream media platforms, these “digital natives” have “virtually” spread these sounds all across Turtle Island like the re-creation story’s singing birds spreading seeds of new life.

Clearly, the Turtle Islanders had listened well to the accumulated wisdom of their ancestors and learnt that the Underwater persons’ medicine is the most potent of all and is not inherently bad or destructive: like all power, it is neutral and can be used for the purposes of renewal. As the skin-shedding Horned Underwater Serpent himself has been known to say: “Even though the little ones pass into the realms of spirits, they shall, by clinging to me and using my strength, recover consciousness.”

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Conclusion

When the Innu (Montagnais) first saw a French ship they beheld a “moving island.” “[T]hey did not know what to say of the great sails which made it go; their astonishment was redoubled in seeing a number of men on deck.”¹ In the face of such unfamiliarity, they deferred to custom: the women began to prepare houses for the strange guests while four canoes of Innu men ventured to the moving island to invite the strangers to enjoy their hospitality. “But neither side understood the other.” So the French, too, deferred to custom and gave the Innu wine and a barrel of biscuits as gifts, which the Innu brought back to shore and examined: “finding no taste in it, they threw it into the water,” concluding that the “ouemichtigouchiou, a man who works in wood, or who is in a canoe or vessel of wood…drank blood and ate wood.”²

This Innu account of the French invasion of Nitassinan was preserved in oral tradition, orally transmitted by an elderly Innu woman to her grandson—none other than Pastedechouan—and recounted by the young convert to the Jesuit Father Paul le Jeune in 1633. Its image of the “moving island” and its rare cultural outsider’s account of westerners call to mind a strikingly similar moment, not in history but in a story much celebrated in the western literary tradition.

In the story, a weary lone traveller arrives on a desolate island and, just as he is overwhelmed by his hopeless situation, he notices a great shadow and glancing upwards sees in the sky above him a large floating island “inhabited by men.” The island in the air can “raise or sink, or [be] put into progressive motion, as [the island’s inhabitants] pleased…” the traveller later learns, “by means of [a] loadstone” and, “[b]y [an] oblique motion…, [can be] conveyed to different parts of the monarch’s dominions.” Upon arriving on this island “Laputa,” the traveller finds it is peopled by individuals obsessed with mathematics, music, and astronomy — so much so, they hover above the earth, which they have forsaken along with all “worldly” things to be closer to the heavens they deem superior; their ears have been “adapted to hear “the music of the spheres””; one of their eyes is permanently turned introspectively while the other is ever fixed upon “the zenith”; and though they at first do not understand each other, the traveller is conveniently a competent linguist, so he soon finds even “their phraseology” depends greatly upon that of “science and music.” From the few phrases he masters he

² Ibid.
concludes with the greatest conviction, “Imagination, fancy, and invention, they are wholly strangers to nor have any words in their language, by which those ideas can be expressed, the whole compass of their thoughts and mind being shut up within the two forementioned sciences.” Despite conceptualising and expressing everything in mathematical and musical terms solely and spending hours incessantly and noisily playing instruments in concert with the harmony of the spheres, the Laputians have what the visitor humorously describes as an “altogether unaccountable” interest in “matters of state.” Still searching for an explanation, the visitor thinks they may “suppose that because the smallest circle has as many degrees as the largest, therefore the regulation and management of the world require no more abilities than the handling and turning of a globe.” To better “regulate” and “manage” the world, the Laputians are therefore inclined to imperialistically impose their floating, harmony-filled world on to the lands they exploit and above which they threateningly hover and, when they are resisted, even resort to “letting the island drop directly upon the…heads [of those below], …mak[ing] a universal destruction.”

Had the Innu storyteller chosen to continue her story the day she told it to her grandson, it is easy to believe she could have gone on to say in Innu-aimun all that the fictional chronicler said of the Laputians. The fictional chronicler is, of course, Lemuel Gulliver; the story, Jonathan Swift’s classic colonial text and satire of travellers’ tales, *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726); and the Laputians, caricatures of the Neo-Pythagoreans whose philosophy underpins western culture — not, then, the foreigners or even the fictional beings they may at first appear to be. For Gulliver himself is a westerner, but by virtue of travelling so far from his own land and people he is able to adopt the position of cultural outsider as effectively as the real-life Innu and, with the heightened sensitivity this provides, perceives the oddness rather than the normality and “givenness” of the western harmonic tradition as well as many other ideas and practices of his natal culture. The real-life early seventeenth-century French missionaries who ventured to “New France,” on the other hand, had apparently not travelled far enough or long enough to have gained Gulliver’s sense of perspective. Father Le Jeune, the Jesuit who received the Innu account via Pastedechouan in 1633, for instance, was every bit as willing as the semi-fictional Laputians of Swift’s future satire to assume the correctness of imperialistically imposing his harmonic world onto Turtle Island. Not only did the French missionaries scorn worldly things and think only of heaven and the eternal soul, they also detested the Turtle Islanders’ lack of harmony and “scarcity of words,” while Le Jeune,

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5 JR 4: 217–19.
specifically, was even partial to the Innu notion that the French had the wherewithal to move an island. Three years after recording the Innu account, Le Jeune recalled his experience of assisting in the divine service in New France and hearing “little children speaking the Christian language in another world…[and] the praises of the great God… sung aloud and publicly…in the midst of a barbarous people… for the first time,” and rather fancied “a well-regulated Church, where God is served with love and respect, had crossed the sea.” To Le Jeune, French ships conveying missionaries of the one true God were effectively isles of Christendom that had floated across the Atlantic, harmonious Pythagorean soundscape and all, to be superimposed on the world that was already there: “As often as we present to the God of Heaven the adorable sacrifice of the Altar, in some new place,” he wrote in 1636, “it seems to us that we banish therefrom the demons, and…take possession of these lands in the name of Jesus Christ our sovereign Lord and Master, whom we wish to see reigning fully in the hearts of our French and in the belief of our Sauvages.”

In lieu of the Innu storyteller’s own full account of the proclivities of the moving island’s wood-eating, blood-drinking inhabitants and the destruction they subsequently wrought, Stealing the Turtle’s Voice has told the story of what happened when the remnants of an ancient Greek harmony-revering cult invaded the enrhythmed world of Turtle Island and imposed their harmonic world upon the Great Turtle’s people.

The argument that the Christian western invaders of Turtle Island were acoustemologically heathen Pythagoreans by cultural inheritance may still strike many as absurd — if only because it rests on the assumption that soundways could be sustained over millennia, which would appear to fly in the face of what sensory history purports to do. After all, the very historicity of the senses has relied upon a notion everyone agrees with: that the way people perceived the world in the past was different and in an almost constant state of flux. One only needs to pause and consider the breakneck speed with which “popular music” has changed over the past century and in which it is possible to associate certain genres and sounds with a particular era to appreciate how imprudent it would be to attempt to argue otherwise. It is why studies of soundscapes, which are essentially soundtracks to natural or urban environments, reconstruct long lost acoustic ecologies that were specific to a particular group of people (be they defined by, for example, race, class, or gender) and to a narrowly defined space and time. For those ambitious enough to attempt to examine an even longer or more distant period of time, say, a few centuries, it is reasonable to assume there has been a high

6 JR 9: 145–49.
quantity of changes as well as more significant changes to the sounds we produce and the way we hear them, and to begin to focus on when, how, and why those changes occurred.

Nevertheless, the past is a complex interplay of continuity and change; moreover, aural historians increasingly do not deal with sound as an exterior event but as an interior one. By shifting focus to continuities whilst also defining sound as an internal event, “something…a mind does” rather than merely a neutral vibration in the external environment, this thesis has demonstrated it was the sonic ways of thinking and being which did not change at all or were extremely slow to change that put sound at the centre of the action, shaped events, and made history. ⁸

In the western and Algonquian-Iroquoian cultures alike, ideas about sound were established in ancient “myths” and cultural stories, were preserved and passed on in their languages and oral traditions and, subsequently, shaped beliefs about the nature and structure of the cosmos as a space in which order was achievable — be it within the individual, the local community, wider society, the whole world, or even the entire universe. The sacred music Father Pierre Biard and his men sang that night in late October 1611 on the Kennebec River and the sounds their successors sounded thereafter to combat what they considered to be indigenous “demonic” noise were not merely the result of their Christian religiosity, then; they were products of an ancient, pre-Christian “harmonic tradition” in the West. In that harmonic tradition, ethereal, soul-stirring, harmonious music produced on mathematically precise, tuneable string instruments that did not overpower or disable the voice and, therefore, emphasised the Word were “ethical” and ideal. By the Christian era, diverse yet controlled, pious, angelic voices all brought into euphony by God’s Word also characterised the acoustic ecology of the heavenly paradise. Excluded from this ancient harmonic tradition over time were body-moving rhythms produced on unmelodious membranophones like drums and enervating aerophones such as pipes, which were associated with inarticulate rustics and wild, ecstasy-inducing rites where over-indulgence in earthly delights was typical. Fascinating, complex, exciting and hypnotic rhythms alike were, thus, deemed antithetical to the idealised heavenly soundscape and increasingly discouraged as unethical sounds that would inhibit the spiritual elevation of the earthly ones. Since the Algonquians and Iroquoians inhabited an equally ancient enrhythmed world in which, according to western observers, “wild,” wordless singing, dancing, drumming, “gluttonous” feasting, and other sensory pleasures were sacred and essential to everyday survival, the clash of these two auditory cultures was inevitable.

⁸ For another work arguing in favour of historians turning their focus to the interiority of the senses (the historicity of perception), as opposed to how the world we perceive changed, see Hacke and Musselwhite “Introduction,” Op.cit., p.4. MBE, p.xiv.
Mishearing the enrhythmed Algonquian-Iroquoian world’s sounds as demonic noise meant the invaders never stopped waging the sonic war Biard began on the Kennebec River. They continued to aurally offend indigenous listeners in all the same ways; in their aggressive efforts to silence “the devil” in the indigenous sounds with a policy of derhythmisation; by compromising the efficacy of indigenous peoples’ powerful curative sounds with frequent intrusions on and loud objections to body-saving healing rites; and by lacking the auralacy required to honour indigenous practices of respectful conversation between beings. This pattern of behaviour was the antithesis of the reciprocal, dialogic, negotiated relationships that defined polite Algonquian-Iroquoian society: it aligned, instead, with the sonic behaviours reserved for sworn enemies. The Turtle Islanders, by contrast, had a predisposition to listen closely and assimilate foreign sounds into their sonic lingua franca and had, therefore, respected the invaders’ sounds as if they were their own, even when they were not afforded the same courtesy.

In light of all this, we cannot subscribe to the notion of a “hierarchy of the senses,” which holds that westerners favoured the eye over the ear in these early encounters. This was not a simple case of the European Christians’ eye-based culture clashing with the Algonquian-Iroquoian ear-based one. No amount of burgeoning culturally-conditioned ocularcentrism could make the French Catholic missionaries deaf to what they believed to be the presence of Satan in indigenous sounds nor did it make them less reliant on the power of their own sacred, godly sounds to vanquish the diabolical presence they believed had taken hold in the New World in God’s absence. In fact, other than in the case of the spirit-talking tent, the French Jesuit missionaries did not favour the visual sense in the New World anymore than the (utterly misnamed) medieval “visionaries” journeying into the nadiral hell and up to the zenithal paradise of heaven experienced those spiritual regions in a purely visual way. The New World’s spiritual and physical wilderness provided extreme polysensory experiences and to gain power over that world those experiences had to be combated in an equally polysensory way. In addition to actual sonic battles with hostile parties like the Waabanaki (Armouchiquois) and the medicine people, early seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries combatted the spiritual wilderness by representing the New World environment in immense polysensory detail for much the same reasons the medieval visionaries represented the sensescapes of heaven and hell as extreme, polysensory environments: as a call to action. For the visionaries, that call to action was a call to their readers to fear the sensory assaults of hell

enough to forego fleeting, earthly sensual pleasures in their daily lives for the chance to access the eternal, heavenly sensory delights that were beyond mortal reckoning. For the missionaries, the call to action was to make the similarities between the New World and the Christian hell so obvious that powerful people of means would be frightened at the prospect of a bonafide hell on earth and driven to financially aid further missionary endeavours to conquer and transform the spiritual wilderness into a “Garden of delight.” As Champlain the “Father of New France” himself so eloquently put it:

The most illustrious palms and laurels…kings and princes can win in this world are contempt for temporal blessings and the desire to gain the spiritual. They cannot do this more profitably than by converting, through their labour and piety, to the Catholic, apostolic and Roman religion, an infinite number of savages, who live without faith, without law, with no knowledge of the true God. 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.

Recording the Original Peoples’ supposedly satanically-inspired sounds and sending those recordings back to the Old World was, therefore, an essential part of the French imperial project to make a Catholic paradise on earth in an era of intense rivalry between Catholics and members of what they considered “the pretended religion,” the Huguenots (Protestants), and between the French and British empires.11

In short, long-held preferences for and highly-charged beliefs about harmony and rhythm, which became the foundations for two different ideal ways of life, set the stage for conflict between the two acoustic worlds long before darkness descended on the Kennebec River in late October 1611 and the Waabanaki and French engaged in that sonic battle. Had the westerners’ and Turtle Islanders’ respective soundways not been so deeply ingrained over time, there would not have been sufficient opportunity for those ideas to have permeated so many aspects of their highly interconnected lifeworlds or for their acoustemological frameworks to have solidified, making it less likely that sound would have been such a point of continual contention, colonisation and neurocolonisation when those two acoustic worlds at last met.

This sensitivity to the deeper structures of sonic ways of thinking and being over time means much of the content covered in this thesis will be applicable in further sound-centred research

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beyond the context of early seventeenth-century New France. Content relating to the history of the western acoustemology in Part I: The Harmonic Tradition can be a foundation for research on western auditors elsewhere in the “New World” and other colonial contexts, too, even while highlighting nuances that arose due to imperial, national, linguistic, religious, local, and other variables. Part III: The Rhythmic Tradition will also be applicable to other Original Peoples of Turtle Island, but only after stringent investigation as this thesis has by no means constituted a comprehensive historical study of Native American and First Nations soundways. The Algonquian-Iroquoian auditory culture studied here may indeed prove to be bigger if, in future, this research is applied to studies inclusive of Algonquian- or Iroquoian-speaking nations outside the Atlantic Northeast. Since, as previously noted, Original Peoples all over “this island” tell stories about Turtle and the earth’s creation, this acoustemological framework could extend to those who are “people of the Great Turtle’s back” yet are neither Algonquian nor Iroquoian speakers. Conversely, further research examining the Algonquian and Iroquoian speakers separately will test the acoustemological framework I have offered and will undoubtedly reveal acoustemological differences between these language families, while examinations of nation-specific soundways over time would uncover even more nuanced acoustemologies. More generally, a greater emphasis on continuity over time in the broader field of sensory history could yield important new information about cultural encounters.

The thesis has also offered a new complex narrative option for those writing histories of cross-cultural encounters in early America. For decades historians have been calling for histories of “Indian-white relations” to be less simplistic, linear, and teleological, so our narratives will cease to fall into one of two basic categories: stories of destructive cultural change or survival through persistence. Richard White’s *The Middle Ground*, for example, opened up a third possibility: that there was a grain of truth in what Richard Slotkin dubbed the white American myth of “regeneration through violence.” White’s *Middle Ground* was therefore a narrative operating on the assumption that “the meeting between whites and Indians,” could “create…as well as destroy…” *Stealing the Turtle’s Voice* has likewise held that destruction begets re-creation and does not deny that in the field of “early American” sound studies “middle sounds” did occur: I have explored some elsewhere as well as in this thesis; for example, the Algonquian-Basque pidgin. On the other hand, while stories of total

sonic conquest are mythical and stories of sonic persistence deal only with things that were not destroyed, stories of what we might call “middle sounds” require the involvement of white peoples in the re-creation process and, therefore, remain Eurocentric because they assume the invaders were automatically somehow involved in all regenerative acts.13 As the ethnomusicologists Diamond et. al. assert:

For some, the area between Native and non-Native cultures is a “fertile, liminal ground where new meanings germinate and where common experiences in different contexts can provoke new bonds.” For others, the image of the double-row wampum belt depicting parallel histories which maintain their own course, never overlapping, is fundamental.14

With this “parallel histories” idea in mind, I have offered a fourth type of complex dual narrative: one in which Original Peoples recreate something new from grains of ancient traditions in the wake of the destructive Great Flood of the contact era — not in collaboration with the invaders but in spite of them.

Focusing on the interiority of sonic events has enabled the composition of such an indigenous-centred “remastered record” within the preceding dual narrative; amplifying the Turtle Islanders’ continual efforts to independently recreate, assert, and maintain their sonic sovereignty. Because by no longer conceiving of sound as something solely in the external environment and sound-based power or sovereignty as something that therefore rests purely on and is measurable by spatial domination, we are more cognisant of alternative types of sonically-derived power in play — and at stake.

We have certainly learnt here that, contrary to the popular mainstream myth, the French did not conquer the soundscape of New France entirely or succeed in filling it with all their orderly, Christian, harmonious sounds. At best, they could claim “a garden in the wilderness” in which the “one true God’s” *musica universalis* was audible. Acoustically, the Turtle Islanders’ sounds got bigger, louder, spiritually more powerful and more capable of large-scale social cohesion over time, and new traditions created by members of this living culture retain an enormous amount of continuity with the pre-contact and contact era soundways. By


thinking beyond the audible productions of Turtle Islanders and whether they do or do not dominate a space, though, we have also learnt that acoustemology is as much, if not more, about hearing as it is about sounding, because the primary site of conquest and colonisation for the missionaries was always the interior world of individual Turtle Islanders: their minds and their eternal souls. And, as we have discovered, the extent to which the Original Peoples were, in this sense, actually brought out of the “wilderness” and into the harmonious, orderly “garden” is questionable. As there had been on the Kennebec River in 1611, there was mimicry in the communities missionaries infiltrated; only it was the Algonquian and Iroquoian peoples demonstrating their aptitude for imitation when they reproduced the Christians’ soul-saving sounds. To the missionaries’ chagrin, however, like Frenchmen unwittingly echoing Waabanaki war songs, the Original Peoples often did so with little to no understanding of what those Christian sounds really meant to their original composers and with no thought of giving up their own sacred chants either. They were like “two choirs” singing together, but they were still strangers. Others outright rejected Christian attempts to imperialistically impose their harmonic world on them and withdrew to protect and continue their traditions unmolested, while even the best neophytes typically treated Christian sonic rites as additional aural medicine rather than a substitute for their own. Essentially, the latter “converts” continued to hear imported sounds with indigenous rather than Christian ears. To this day, Theresa S. Smith notes, Christian Anishinaabeg, for example, still do not inhabit the same lifeworld as the western Christians but one that remains fundamentally Anishinaabeg.  

In later periods when the invaders’ sensory domination was such that Turtle Islanders’ sounds were drowned out, forcibly silenced, stolen by the invaders for their own gain and in some cases destroyed, how the Turtle Islanders heard and thought sonically about and within their world proved much harder for the invaders to alter. As one twentieth-century Anishinaabe admitted when discussing how he coped with pressure to abandon his traditional soundways: “Sometimes I’m singing in my heart.” This continuity in Algonquian-Iroquoian audition is a form of sustained sonic sovereignty and, as it turns out, perhaps even more powerful and more important than the maintenance of audible soundways, because traditional listening practices and sonic ways of knowing can be used to generate new yet traditional sonic practices, too. Contrary to the assumption that listeners are inherently “passive,” therefore, the preceding history has brought attention to the power Turtle Island auditors had (and have) to actively maintain and recreate the integrity of their acoustemology under severe pressure to stop sounding “sauvage.”

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15 *NISH*, pp.35–36.  
16 *ODD*, p.144.
In sum, the preceding dual narrative reveals a constant transfer of power through sound. It began outside of time altogether, in the eternal world of “myth,” among other-than-human beings who recognised, coveted, and finally devised ways to steal the sonic power of the turtle’s voice for themselves. They did so by fashioning the turtle into instruments they could control to suit their own varied purposes. The result of destroying the lives of the two turtles was ultimately creative, because both acts produced the turtle-shell lyre and the turtle-shell rattle from which two acoustemologies and, subsequently, two distinct acoustic worlds originated. Ever since, the turtle’s sonically-derived power has been willingly and unwillingly transferred countless times; the power initially stolen was unwillingly taken from Old Toad-Woman by Original Man, while the turtle power Hermes first stole was willingly gifted by Hermes to his brother Apollo who in turn “re-gifted” it to Orpheus and western peoples. Original Man, too, willingly gifted the turtle-shell rattle he stole from Old Toad-Woman to the Original Peoples of Turtle Island for healing, after which the spirit-talkers used it to call more spiritual power to them and to transfer the good medicine thus conjured to the sick by rattling, drumming, chanting, dancing, and blowing. The sonic transfer of power did not only happen between individual beings of human and other-than-human extraction: it was routinely transferred between nations, be it by stealing captives’ voices via the death-song during the drawn-out ritual of torture or, by contrast, the gifting of a drum. And when the two acoustic worlds that owed their being to Old Toad-Woman’s turtle-shell rattle and Hermes’s turtle-shell lyre finally came into contact on Turtle Island (North America), the transfer of sonic power also occurred between two distinct worlds. Even then, there were times when sounds were transferred between the harmonic and rhythmic worlds in a spirit of giving. But turtles can be aggressive and territorial, so the drive to simply steal the voice of the other proved stronger. Those who inhabited the harmonic turtle’s world sought to steal the sonically-derived power possessed by the inhabitants of the enrhythmed turtle’s world in a number of ways; by destructively diminishing the Turtle Islanders’ vocal power via derhythmisation policies, imposing their harmonic ways of thinking and being upon them, intercepting and preventing the intergenerational transfer of the rhythm-centred acoustemology, and even literally stealing their voices with the help of recording technology to augment the power of their own harmonic world. While the harmonists prematurely proclaimed a decisive victory in the late nineteenth century, Turtle Island’s rhythmists never stopped using sound to protect and defend themselves against this aggressive colonisation and neurocolonisation. To decolone their hearts, minds, bodies, voices, spirits, and world at large they have recreated and continue to recreate, as often as necessary, the aspects of their acoustic world that were destroyed and are slowly but surely stealing back, Original Man-style, much of what the invaders have taken from them.
Finally, not all scholars subscribe to the notion of a “usable past.” However, ethnohistorians are less able to ignore the inherently political nature of all history. Our focus on the histories of marginalised peoples is, after all, an overt political action borne from our awareness that the decision to select purely elitist sources and to construct elitist narratives is, of course, equally as political, albeit normalised and disguised by the assumptions of “scholarly tradition.” With all this in mind, if the “narrative of conquest” found on “The Master Record” has been an “abuse of history” then it is hoped “The Remastered Record” has at least offered something more “usable” to the Turtle Islanders in that it has attempted to be more culturally relevant, recognisable, and respectful, more optimistic and uplifting and a contribution to neurodecolonisation and, thus, cultural revitalisation. Clearly, these steps are essential if the colonialism of the contact era depicted in the dual narrative is to be avoided in ongoing relations between the newcomers and the Original Peoples. Then, the powerful voice of the Great Turtle’s people will cease to be stolen from them and they will be able to engage in a respectful, equal dialogue with those who came, harmonic world and all, to dwell on what always has been and always will be an enrhythmed Turtle Island.

Our hearts are full...our minds are good
Our ancestors come and give us strength
They say stand tall...sing and dance
Never forget who you are or where you come from

Ulali
Mahk Ichii
(1994)
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**Recordings**


Concrete Blonde “Hey Coyote,” recorded by Concrete Blonde on *Mojave* [CD] (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Eleven Thirty Records, 2004).


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Ulali, “Mahk Jchi,” recorded by Ulali on *Mahk Jchi* [CD] (Hartford, CT: Corn, Beans, & Squash Music, 1994).


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**Multimedia**

*Apps, Interactive Maps, Databases, Social Media*


St Joseph’s Indian School videos, *Facebook*,


Torkornoo, Delasie, *Innu Dictionary App for iPhone and iPad*, (version 2.2.5, 2014),

**Art Object**

*Vessel rattle (kanyáhte’ ká’nowa’)*

Seneca people

19th century

Object Place: New York State, United States

Turtle Shell, elm wood

Length 43.3 cm, width 17.5 cm, thickness 6.5 cm (length 17 1/16 in., width 6 7/8 in., thickness 2 9/16 in.)

Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection

17.2233

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