

# Acoustemologies in Contact

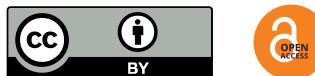
Sounding Subjects and Modes of  
Listening in Early Modernity

EDITED BY EMILY WILBOURNE AND SUZANNE G. CUSICK



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# 4. ‘Hideous Acclamations’ Captive Colonists, Forced Singing, and the Incorporation Imperatives of Mohawk Listeners

*Glenda Goodman*

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Just before dawn on 29 February 1704 the Puritan minister of Deerfield, MA awoke suddenly. The town was under attack: ‘the enemy came in like a flood upon us’, he later wrote.<sup>1</sup> They managed to ‘break open doors and windows with axes and hatchets’ and, ‘with painted faces and hideous acclamations’, stormed into the room where John Williams rested with his wife.<sup>2</sup> Struggling out of bed, Williams reached ineffectually for a weapon, fearing for his family but unable to protect them or himself. The same scene transpired throughout the town. The attack was devastating: fifty Deerfield residents dead and over one hundred taken captive.

The raiders consisted of a combined force of more than 250 Abenaki, Pennacook, French, Wendat (Huron), Mohawk, and Iroquois of the Mountain fighters, and the attack stemmed from multiple causes: for the Abenakis and Pennacooks, pushing back against aggressive English

<sup>1</sup> John Williams, *The Redeemed Captive, Returning to Zion. A Faithful History of Remarkable Occurrences in the Captivity and Deliverance of Mr. John Williams*, ed. by Edward W. Clark (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976 [1707]), p. 44. Williams’s account was widely read and repeatedly republished. Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, “‘The Redeemed Captive’ as Recurrent Seller: Politics and Publication, 1707–1853”, *New England Quarterly*, 77.3 (2004), 341–367.

<sup>2</sup> Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, p. 44.

settler colonial incursions into Native land; the French also aimed to curtail English expansion in North America (this particular attack a local expression of the War of Spanish Succession); and the Hurons of Lorette, the Mohawks of Kahnawake, and the Iroquois of the Mountain joined the raid to support their French allies and to take captives to bring back to their own communities.<sup>3</sup> Capturing Williams in particular was a primary aim because his identity as a Puritan minister made him valuable: possessing him would prove to be of great political use in the post-capture negotiations. But the causes and consequences of the attack would be sorted out later. First, the survivors of the attack were forced to travel north, wading through thick snow and fording icy rivers toward New France.

On the sixth day of their journey, a Sunday, Williams was allowed to lead the other captives—his frightened, much reduced congregation—in worship. Seeking to make sense of their trauma, he chose to read from Lamentations 1:18. ‘The Lord is righteous, for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow. My virgins and my young men are gone into captivity’.<sup>4</sup> But the captors, Mohawk Indians, interrupted the impromptu service with taunts, mocking especially the congregation’s paltry singing. As Williams later recounted, they ‘were ready some of them to upbraid us because our singing was not so loud as theirs’.<sup>5</sup> What could have been a reassuring opportunity of worshipful communal psalmody became a reminder of their vulnerability.

Williams’s account captures a fraction of the sonic terror of captivity. His and other narratives by those seized by Native Americans in Northeast North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries call attention to the use of music in conjunction with torture, detention, war, and violence more broadly. Recent work has investigated the

<sup>3</sup> On the identities of the attackers, as well as the local and imperial motivations behind the attack, see Evan Haefeli and Kevin Sweeney, *Captors and Captives: The 1704 French and Indian Raid on Deerfield* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), pp. 1–2. On the attack and its aftermath for Williams, particularly regarding his unsuccessful attempts to recover his daughter Eunice, see John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, p. 51. On Puritans’ Biblical allegorization of captivity experiences, see Andrew Newman, *Allegories of Encounter: Colonial Literacy and Indian Captivities* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), pp. 19–74.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, p. 51.

forced listening by those imprisoned by U.S. forces during the global war on terror, the traumatizing soundscapes of military actions, and the experiences of those (including children) whose lives are conditioned by the sonic fearscape that becomes mundane in situations of prolonged violence.<sup>6</sup> Scholars are no longer unaware of the fact that music and sound are complicit in doing serious harm. Whether the spectacular violence of military strikes, the anticipation and alarm stemming from the sounds of proximal fighting, the psychologically wounding songs used for torture, the wailing of the distressed, or the pompous strains of a victory march, the myriad types of weaponized sound are part of modern conflict cultures.<sup>7</sup>

Although scholars have focused largely on the soundscapes of modern war, sonic agony pervades earlier accounts of violence as well. North American colonial warfare habitually entailed auditory attacks. For instance, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) warriors were particularly feared because of their war cries, and the arrival of guns with Europeans introduced a terrifying new element to the North American soundscape. Fearsome sounds pervade the violent spectacle of the Deerfield raid, with the crashing of doors smashed in with axes, intimidating yelling and 'hideous Acclamations', the screams of the terrified residents and the utterances of the dying. Even though the availability of recording and amplification in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has resulted in a proliferation of the ways in which sound and music can thus be utilized, the damaging use of music and sound is not unique to modernity.

Studies of music and modern violence have focused on the inescapability of sounds, and the colonial period provides numerous

6 Suzanne G. Cusick, "'You are in a place that is out of the world...': Music in the Detention Camps of the 'Global War on Terror'", *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 2.1 (2008), 1–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1752196308080012>; Steve Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/7999.001.0001>; J. Martin Daughtry, *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma and Survival in Wartime Iraq* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acpr/oso/9780199361496.001.0001>; Jim Sykes, 'Ontologies of Acoustic Endurance: Rethinking Wartime Sound and Listening', *Sound Studies*, 4.1 (2018), 35–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2018.1461049>

7 Margaret Kartomi, 'Toward a Methodology of War and Peace Studies in Ethnomusicology: The Case of Aceh, 1976–2009', *Ethnomusicology*, 54.3 (2010), 452–483, <https://doi.org/10.5406/ethnomusicology.54.3.0452>

examples of this phenomenon. This chapter focuses on a different aspect of musical coercion: not forced listening but forced singing. Unlike the psychological and physical damage that a sensory onslaught entails, non-voluntary singing introduces a different order of powerlessness: the curtailing of agency over one's voice in order to deliver a forced performance, a spectacle for the audition of others. Power, identity, violence, and skill combine potently in such performances. Music and sound mediated all manner of interactions between colonists and Native Americans, from diplomacy to trade to sacred worship to warfare, but captives' forced singing represents musical encounter *in extremis*.<sup>8</sup>

Compulsory musical performances interest me because they reveal the tenuousness of colonial power while also exposing the limits of Western music epistemologies. The recognition of Native American listeners' power initiates a new line of inquiry for scholars who are invested in understanding the sonic construction of racial difference. It does so by calling attention to scenarios in which a white colonialist hegemony cannot be assumed.<sup>9</sup> As a non-Native scholar investigating the profound cultural changes that transpired on North American soil in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, I find colonists' forced singing to be fruitful, if unusual, examples of musical enactments of identity.<sup>10</sup> To understand such encounters, I seek to uncover both the experiences

8 Captive colonists' forced singing differ in both degree and kind from the variety of ways enslaved people of African descent were forced to sing and dance. Not only were the rationales behind the forced performances different, but the longevity and pervasiveness of the forced performance repertoire enslaved people were subjected to raises it to the level of biopolitics (and is thus unlike the situationally contingent individual experiences analyzed in this chapter). See Saidiya V. Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Katrina Dyonne Thompson, *Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

9 Presumed white hegemony undergirds Jennifer Stoever's influential book, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: New York University Press, 2016), p. 18, passim. On the ambiguities of listening in colonial contexts, see Ana María Ochoa Gaultier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Columbia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

10 In positioning myself in relation to this work I endeavor to follow the recommendation from Native American and Indigenous Studies scholars to render motivations transparent and engage relationally with research subjects. See, for example, Margaret Kovach, *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations and Contexts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), pp. 113–115.

of the captive singers and their captor listeners.<sup>11</sup> Although my access to Native musical epistemologies is limited, a bilateral approach is necessary in order to avoid a sensationalized depiction of Native American customs, particularly those that involved corporeal assault. Singing was frequently accompanied by acts of physical violence, yet the aim was not merely to inflict pain, nor to do so for the purpose of extracting information or confession. Rather, the ritual practices were aimed at aiding the incorporation of captives into Mohawk society and thus was a necessary part of Indigenous survivance.<sup>12</sup>

## Captivity and Power

Both early modern Europeans and Native Americans had longstanding traditions of imprisoning and torturing people. Public punishment was part of penal systems in Europe, and pain infliction was ostensibly functional in that it accompanied interrogation. In these cases, spectacular pain stemmed from, and helped to reinforce, political power.<sup>13</sup> Indigenous practices aimed at harnessing a different kind of power: the spiritual and social power of the community.<sup>14</sup> Measured by the number and strength of its members, this power was compromised when they suffered a loss of life. Thus, Native Americans across the Northeast and into the Midwest placed a high priority on avoiding fatalities in battle. Replenishment was possible, however, by

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11 I use the designations 'captive' and 'captors' throughout this chapter, for although these are not labels that Haudenosaunee people used to denote their roles, the terms helpfully bracket a set of practices and power relations that set the conditions for the kind of singing this chapter analyzes.

12 'Survivance' is a neologism that combines survival and resistance, and speaks to Indigenous histories of surviving genocide while resisting narratives and policies aimed at marginalizing and assimilating Native peoples. Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives of Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), p. xii.

13 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995 [1977]), p. 15. According to Foucault, in the eighteenth century torture came to connect power to truth: causing pain shifted from spectacles of punishment to the utility of interrogation.

14 Daniel K. Richter, *The Ordeal of the Longhouse: The Peoples of the Iroquois League in the Era of European Colonization* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 30.

incorporating captives either through adoption or sacrifice.<sup>15</sup> In this worldview, captivity meant something fundamentally different than European imprisonment: captives were not being punished; they were undergoing rituals through which their spiritual and social resources could be incorporated into the group. Moreover, this was not done lightly. Grief played a powerful role in Haudenosaunee ontology and was attended to through mourning practices, but if a family's anguish for a killed member could not be assuaged by customs, the female elder could command the village's young men to mount a raiding party to acquire a potential replacement.<sup>16</sup>

The need for new community members escalated horrendously in the seventeenth century. With European contact, Indigenous communities suffered massive population loss due to new pathogens against which they had no defense.<sup>17</sup> Disease, plus increased competition for European trade, led to more frequent warfare, which itself was deadlier than ever because of recent access to guns. These combined factors led to a demographic crisis and spurred an unsustainable surge of captive taking in the mid-seventeenth century. Native groups attacked each other with increasing ferocity in their desperation to sustain their communities. The vicious cycle of what some scholars call 'mourning wars' subsided

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15 Ibid. pp. 32–35, 66–68. Pauline Turner Strong suggests the term 'incorporation' is more appropriate rather than 'adoption' because it better reflects the process following captivity. Strong, 'Transforming Outsiders: Captivity, Adoption, and Slavery Reconsidered', in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. by Philip Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), pp. 339–356, <https://doi.org/10.1111/b.9781405121316.2004.00002.x>. This chapter focuses on Mohawk captivity practices, but the taking of captives was widespread among Native American nations. James Axtell, 'The White Indians of Colonial America', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 32.1 (1975), 55–88, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1922594>; Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slavery in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), [https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807838174\\_rushforth](https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807838174_rushforth); Christina Snyder, *Slavery in Indian Country: The Changing Face of Captivity in Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 101–126, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00141801-2010-070>

16 Once captured, the incorporation of a potential new member into the community depended in part on the demography and deportment of the captive. Women and children were more likely to be adopted, adult men to be ritually killed, and the decision was made by the female elders. On how 'requickening', or raising the dead, sustained the lineage, clan, and village by providing spiritual power, see Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, pp. 32–35.

17 Neal Salisbury, "'The Indians' Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 53.3 (1996), 435–458, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2947200>

somewhat in the 1660s but did not fully lapse.<sup>18</sup> Mohawks and other nations were under urgent demographic pressure to procure and successfully assimilate new members.

The process of incorporation entailed testing captives' aptitude for integration, in part by listening to the captives sing. While auditors tuned their ears for desirable qualities (such as strength and fortitude), for the captives such performances constituted a non-voluntary audition for inclusion in an unchosen community.

Today, scholars know about these practices from oral histories, from early ethnographic writings, from anthropologists who collaborated with Haudenosaunee individuals to rework those sources, from archeological studies, and from contemporaneous European accounts. This chapter makes use of the last category: captivity narratives and published pseudo-ethnological reports on Native American customs.<sup>19</sup> A patchy historical record already hampers research into the music and sounds of colonial North America, and the sources considered in this chapter pose additional challenges.<sup>20</sup> The written sources are weighted with cultural biases, for not only were authors writing from perspectives that were unavoidably skewed by early modern ideas about savagery and civilization, but they were liable to sensationalize and exoticize accounts of Native American culture for their readers (who, it goes without saying, were almost certainly non-Native). In particular, published accounts by women or men who were taken and either redeemed or incorporated, a genre known as captivity narratives,

18 Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), p. 88; Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, eds., *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600–1800* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), p. 20; Daniel Richter, 'War and Culture: The Iroquois Experience', in *American Encounters: Natives and Newcomers From European Contact to Indian Removal, 1500–1850*, ed. by Peter C. Mancall and James H. Merrell (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 284–310.

19 On the necessary distinction between captivity narratives and 'ethnographic' information, see Yael Ben-Zvi, 'Ethnography and the Production of Foreignness in Indian Captivity Narratives', *American Indian Quarterly*, 32.1 (2008), 9–32, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aiq.2008.0007>

20 On dealing with difficult and/or missing archival sources and my own position as a non-Native scholar doing so, see Glenda Goodman, 'Joseph Johnson's Lost Gamuts: Native Hymnody, Materials of Exchange, and the Colonialist Archive', *Journal of the Society for American Music*, 13.4 (2019), 482–507, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1752196319000385>

must be read against the grain of the author's motivations. Being taken captive must have been terrifying and some authors sought authentically to represent their traumatic experiences. Yet such narratives also reflect trends in the literary marketplace in which they were published, and the fictional aspects of captivity narratives cannot be denied. Fabrication for the purposes of propaganda and self-justification abounded, and indeed fabricated details were part of what made the genre so popular during the early modern period. These narratives thematized encounters as dangerous, presenting readers with gripping accounts of exposure to Native people who were perceived as indelibly different. With vivid descriptions of ambushes, titillating details about torture, and repulsive information about cultural practices (particularly diet), this literature captivated non-Native readers by providing access to a world they could not otherwise apprehend.<sup>21</sup>

The subjugated captives and dominating captors who populated these narratives indicate a radical power imbalance that was a major component of the genre's appeal. As literature, these narratives present an inversion of expected colonial relations — and thus confirm that the more typical relations were in fact correct. Of course, those normative relations were a fantasy, one that was sustained by colonists and their metropolitan sponsors. Taken as historical sources, the captivity narratives provide modern scholars with evidence of how Native Americans vehemently and consistently maintained the cultural practices that the very sources pilloried.<sup>22</sup> Because of the dynamics of power inherent to captivity narratives, this type of source contains instances in which colonists unwillingly confront their vulnerability as intruders. Being forced to

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21 On captivity narratives' popularity and themes see Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark, eds., *Puritans Among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1981); Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola and James Arthur Levenier, *The Indian Captivity Narrative, 1550–1900* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993), pp. 10–17; Gordon M. Sayre, *Les Sauvages Américains: Representations of Native Americans in French and English Colonial Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), pp. 137–198. For a concise discussion of this literature, see Audra Simpson, 'Captivating Eunice: Membership, Colonialism, and Gendered Citizenships of Grief', *Wicazo Sa Review* (2009), 105–129 (pp. 108, 114), <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.0.0031>

22 On the scholarly study of captivity narratives as historical sources as well as literature, see Newman, *Allegories of Encounter*, pp. 9–10.

participate in unfamiliar practices heightened captives' attention; in the case of coerced singing, their discomfort perhaps made authors more likely to try to describe their musical experiences — what and how they were compelled to sing. Finally, because the captives were made to sing in particular ways, the sources indicate the musical priorities of the captors. That is, not only do these sources provide accounts of singing, they also offer us glimpses of Haudenosaunee singing and listening practices.

### Pierre-Esprit Radisson's lessons

Pierre-Esprit Radisson was in London in 1668 when he sat down to write, in English, about his youthful experiences in Native North America.<sup>23</sup> At the time of writing, Radisson had spent a decade voyaging around the St. Lawrence River Valley and the Great Lakes region as a fur trader and negotiator for the French. He was adept at fitting in with his various surroundings and was a gifted linguist — traits that made him particularly capable of adapting to the rough circumstances in which colonists in New France lived. In charmingly informal, sometimes idiosyncratic prose he laid out his multifarious experiences with Haudenosaunee, Sioux, and Cree peoples, starting with the earliest events in 1652, when he was captured, tortured, and adopted by a Mohawk family. Radisson had been young when he was taken captive, perhaps fifteen, and during his eighteen months with the Mohawk he successfully incorporated, becoming kin.<sup>24</sup>

His story began in Trois-Rivières, the French name for a meeting place frequented by Algonquian and Haudenosaunee groups where the French established a small fur trading post in 1634. There, on a morning in late May 1652, Radisson went hunting for ducks with two friends whom he soon left due to a disagreement. Venturing alone, he knew he was a trespasser on Haudenosaunee ground and was watchful for the people whom both the French and their Algonquian allies feared:

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23 Pierre-Esprit Radisson, *The Selected Writings, Volume 1: The Voyages*, ed. by Germaine Warkentin (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2012), pp. 11–12. According to Warkentin, Radisson likely learned English in when he was in New York, Boston, and London in the 1660s.

24 Radisson's birth year is unknown.

they were 'a wild nation called Iroquoites [Haudenosaunee], who for that time weare soe strong and so to be feared, that scarce any body durst stirre out either cottage or house without being taken or kild, save that he had nimble limbs to escape their fury', he told the reader.<sup>25</sup> Yet he blithely continued his hunt, only to stumble on the bodies of his two comrades on his return journey; soon thereafter he found himself surrounded by Mohawk men. They took him captive and began the journey back to their village, called Tionnontoguen, where he would be presented to a clan mother as a possible replacement for her deceased son.<sup>26</sup>

Radisson's initial experiences exemplify the Mohawk captors' interest in incorporating captives through song. They began instructing him the second day of his captivity, starting with some words in their dialect, insisting that he pronounced everything correctly. They 'tooke delight to make me speake words of their language and weare earnest that I should pronounce as they', he wrote.<sup>27</sup> They taught him the songs they sang as they embarked on each day's journey. They encouraged him to sing French songs and listened attentively to his performance. 'They tooke an exceeding delight to heare mee', Radisson claimed about his singing, describing how when he 'sunged in French' his captors 'gave eares with deepe silence'.<sup>28</sup>

Radisson's captors were preparing him for what would happen when they arrived in their village: running the gauntlet, torture, then adoption or death. Captives entered villages in a procession, staggering through a double-row gauntlet of women, men, and children who beat, kicked, and cut them until they reached the end. (The gauntlet provided grieving community members the opportunity to express rage through physical violence and taunting.) Ideally, captives were meant to sing as they entered. As the French Jesuit missionary and proto-ethnologist Joseph-François Lafitau noted of his time among the Kahnawake Mohawks from 1712 to 1717, captives sang 'their death song' while they entered the village. 'The people of the village' meet them, and 'from the

25 Radisson, *Selected Writings*, p. 115. Spelling and punctuation are original.

26 On the village's possible name see Radisson, *Selected Writings*, p. 127, note 66. Tionnontoguen was the largest and most important of the Mohawk's three main villages.

27 Radisson, *Selected Writings*, p. 122.

28 Ibid., p. 123.

moment of the encounter, they [the captives] are stopped; and, while they sing their death song, all the rest of the villagers dance around them following the cadence of their song with their redoubled *hé, hés*, which they draw from the depths of their chests'.<sup>29</sup> After the entrance, the captives' ordeal continued: they were placed on scaffolds, where they stood for several days, exposed to assaults from community members with clubs, knives, firebrands, and teeth. At night the village children would taunt and further torment the captives, who were bound and helpless. This torture continued for the duration of time required for the clan mothers and village headmen to decide who would be adopted and who killed. Captives were expected to sing their death songs with a strong voice throughout.

Fortunately for Radisson, he survived the gauntlet and was adopted into a family. As was the common practice, his new mother named him after her deceased son. Radisson was renamed Orinha, 'which signifies ledd or stone'.<sup>30</sup> (Perhaps it was a coincidence that this name's meaning was the same as Pierre — Peter, or stone.) He referred to his family as mother, father, brother, and sisters. After a six-week probationary period his mother 'inquired me whether I was *asseronyn*, a French. I answering no, saying I was *panugaga*, that is of their nation, for which shee was pleased'.<sup>31</sup> Having denied his French identity and testified to being Mohawk, he underwent a full adoption ceremony. Thenceforth he was part of the Bear clan. (He inherited his *otara*, or clan identity, from his mother, who was herself adopted; she had been born in a Huron-Wendat family, or as Radisson put it, 'shee was not borne in my fathers [sic] country, but was taken litle in the Huronits country'.<sup>32</sup>) Radisson was now functionally kin.<sup>33</sup>

29 Joseph-François Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times*, Vols. 1–2, ed. and trans. by William N. Fenton and Elizabeth L. Moore (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1974), II: 152. Many captivity narratives include accounts of the gauntlet, such as James Smith, *An Account of the Remarkable Occurrences in the Life and Travels of Col. James Smith* (Lexington, KY: Printed by John Bradford, on Main Street, 1799), p. 7; William Walton, *A Narrative of the Captivity and Sufferings of Benjamin Gilbert and His Family* (Philadelphia; reprinted London: James Phillips, 1785), pp. 28–29.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 129.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 315, note 16.

33 Not all captives whose lives were spared experienced full adoption; some were enslaved. See Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance*, pp. 18–19.

After living with his family for nearly a year Radisson seized an opportunity to run away, only to be quickly recaptured and forced to undergo the rituals of torture he had previously been spared. Radisson understood what was expected of him: he knew to sing what he called his ‘fatal song’ when undergoing torture, otherwise they would ‘make him quack like a henne’ — in other words, humiliate him. And sing he did, even as they burned him and plucked his nails. His adopted mother, whom he had betrayed but who wanted to reclaim him, encouraged him to keep singing through the torture. At the beginning of a second day of torture, Radisson wrote, ‘I was brought back againe to the scaffold [...]. They made me sing a new, but my mother came there and made hold my peace, bidding me be cheerfull and that I should not die’.<sup>34</sup> Eventually his Mohawk family successfully petitioned to have him returned to them, and he recuperated in their longhouse for a month.

Radisson’s narrative reveals two key instances in which music played a pivotal role. The first occurred on the journey to the village, when his captors taught him their songs and listened closely to him singing. This pedagogical instance allowed the captors to assess his viability for assimilation as well as his spiritual and physical fortitude. The second occurred on entering the village (the second time), when he sang his ‘fatal song’ during the torture.<sup>35</sup> In this instance of audition or trial, Radisson demonstrated what he had been taught and was carefully listened to by the elder women in order to determine whether he could be (re)incorporated.

The label ‘pedagogy’ might seem at odds with the terror and pain that accompanied Radisson’s earliest days as a captive, but in fact other sources confirm that Native captors endeavored to teach European captives the correct ways to behave. John Williams, for instance, had to be shown how to use snow shoes, while others had to learn how to eat unfamiliar foods, to follow protocols of stealth or celebration depending on who was met on the trail, and how to conform to new rules of etiquette. Given the ceremonial role music played in the ritual of torture and incorporation, it is no wonder captors sought to instruct their neophytes. For his part, Radisson proved himself to be quite teachable, not only in music but other areas as well. The second day of his initial

34 Radisson, *Selected Writings*, pp. 134, 139, 141.

35 On death songs see Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 152–159.

capture, for instance, he described that the men encouraged him to 'be cheerfull or merry', and although Radisson was still traumatized from the capture ('my part I was both deafe and dumb', he wrote) he rallied and presented 'att least of a smiling countenance, and constraine my aversion and feare to an assurance'. His willingness to be affable indicated he had a pleasing temperament, encouraging his captors to believe him to be a promising candidate for adoption. They began treating him better, and the next day he was 'more and more getting familiarity with them, that I had the liberty to goe from cottage, having one or two by mee'. With greater physical freedom came more lessons, as his captors taught him Mohawk words, showed him how to row without over-exerting himself, and gave him other lessons. In short, in myriad ways the early days of Radisson's captivity entailed near-constant learning, his captors serving as teachers.

Radisson was attentive to what pleased his captors and anticipated their interest in hearing him sing. As he put it, 'They tooke a fancy to teach mee to sing; and as I had allready a beginning of their hoping, it was an easy thing for me to learn', noting that this was especially the case because he had heard the singing of 'our Algongins', meaning French-allied Native Americans.<sup>36</sup> Imitating that style, perhaps in vocal timbre, rhythm, or melodic contour, Radisson performed well enough. His musical adaptability, added to his capacity to sing his own songs on command (as recounted above), endeared him to the Mohawks. Indeed, Radisson received unusually kind treatment; it was more common for captors to initiate captives into their new roles through physical assaults. As one captive wrote about a Seneca war party, the warriors 'stopped each his prisoner and made him sing, and cutt off their fingers, and slasht their bodys with a knife'.<sup>37</sup> Once Radisson proved himself to be an amenable student, the Mohawk men who had taken him were lenient.

Radisson's narrative reveals that singing played a pivotal role in key moments of his captivity, and his successful performance ensured his survival. On the trail and in the village, his acuity in deducing his captors' desires enabled him to adapt, personally and musically, to their expectations. Not all captives were able to summon such flexibility; Radisson's case shows the payoff of doing so. For their part, the Mohawks

<sup>36</sup> Radisson, *Selected Writings*, p. 123.

<sup>37</sup> Wentworth Greenhalgh, a New Yorker, made this report about an encounter in 1677. Quoted in Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, pp. 66–67.

who captured him, those who tortured him, and those who took him as kin, provided feedback with which Radisson was able to improve. They emphasized the importance of accurate pronunciation, made sure he possessed an adequate repertoire of songs, and encouraged him to summon the physical strength and will to keep singing under severe physical duress. Although coerced, Radisson's audition for his Mohawk family was also collaborative.

### Torture, Mockery, and Death Songs

The graphic accounts of torture in captivity narratives were written to engross and horrify non-Native readers, not to capture the nuance of complex cultural traditions. Sensational descriptions of torture in the Jesuit *Relations*, for instance, clearly attest to the underlying motives of such accounts, as missionaries wrote explicitly of their wish for martyrdom.<sup>38</sup> Radisson's narrative also elaborates all manner of maiming, cutting, and burning, which he recounted in gory detail and a tone that is nearly gleeful, as if he wished to dismay and fascinate his reader.<sup>39</sup> Undergoing torture, he scarcely managed to deal with the pain and struggled to keep singing: 'they plucked 4 nails out of my fingers, and made me sing, though I had no mind att that time. I became speechlesse oftentimes'. Each day 'they made me sing a new', even as his injuries mounted.<sup>40</sup> Such accounts can be jarring for modern readers, but the torture served a purpose: to assess whether a captive was a good candidate for incorporation.

Who knows how Radisson actually performed and whether he was capable of singing his own French songs strongly and without

38 Emma Anderson, 'Blood, Fire, and "Baptism": Three Perspectives on the Death of Jean de Brebeuf, Seventeenth-Century Jesuit "Martyr"', in *Native Americans, Christianity, and the Reshaping of the American Religious Landscape*, ed. by Joel W. Martin and Mark A. Nicholas (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), pp. 125–158, [https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807899663\\_martin](https://doi.org/10.5149/9780807899663_martin); Paul Perron, 'Isaac Jogues: From Martyrdom to Sainthood', in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500–1800*, ed. by Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 153–168.

39 With the exception of the short passage quoted in this paragraph, I am choosing not to reproduce Radisson's description here in order to avoid replicating the sensationalizing tendency of the primary sources. I thank Olivia Bloechl for encouraging my impulse to be circumspect on this subject.

40 Radisson, *Selected Writings*, p. 141.

flinching. Such ideal performances were likely rare. But his account does confirm that captives were expected to sing a particular genre of music: death songs ('fatal songs'). These were songs that confirmed one's identity: 'ancestors' songs' that were imbued with an individual's spiritual power.<sup>41</sup> Lafitau described this repertoire as melodically and rhythmically flexible, with long phrases that cadenced at the end of statements — musical parameters that allowed the singer to improvise lyrics. Those lyrics were defiant, conveying bravery and invoking one's community. According to Lafitau, captives 'sing of their high deeds against their tyrants. They try to intimidate them by threats. They call their friends to help to avenge them'.<sup>42</sup> Another source described how a Haudenosaunee prisoner maintained control over his voice: 'While they were torturing him, he continued singing, that he was a Warrior brave and without Fear; that the most cruel Death could not shake his Courage; that the most cruel Torment should not draw an indecent Expression from him'.<sup>43</sup> Taunting the torturers was a key part of the death song. 'They insult their tormentors as if they did not know their business. They tell them in what way it is necessary to burn, to make the pain more acute', wrote Lafitau. The captive might even recount how he previously tortured his captors' own kin: 'They [the captive] enter into the most exact details of all that they have made them [the kinsman] suffer'.<sup>44</sup>

The physical control and mental fortitude needed to transform cries of pain into mocking songs would be nothing short of virtuosic. Captors made use of ridicule as one of the modes of torture, particularly if the captive failed to perform adequately. Radisson referred to such a practice when he described captives being forced to make humiliating sounds ('quack like a hen') if they could not bring themselves to sing. More broadly, mockery and goading were integral to Native American strategies of antagonism. English colonist Roger Williams, living with the Wampanoag and Narragansett Indians in southern New England, offered typical mocking phrases and dialogues in his *Key to*

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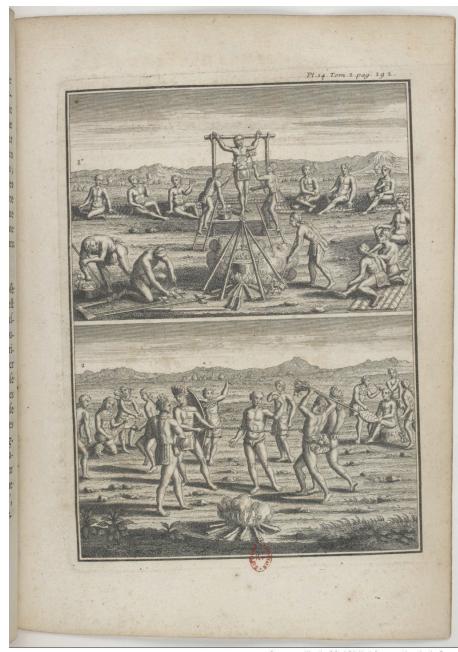
41 Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians*, II: 159.

42 Ibid., II: 160.

43 Cadwallader Colden, *The History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada* (London: Printed for T. Osborne, 1747), p. 136.

44 Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians*, II: 160.

*the Language of America* (1643). ‘Are you afraid? Why feare you? I feare none’. And later on, he included the phrases ‘A scorner or mocker. He scornes me’.<sup>45</sup> Lafitau described the importance of maintaining one’s composure while withstanding taunts, including when the ridicule was in jest. At Kahnawake, he wrote, the Mohawks ‘make fun of each other with marvellous success’ in order to resolve tensions and grudges. This took the shape of a game: one individual would dance around, sing at, and ridicule his target with ‘a surprising abundance of fine irony, witty sallies, amusing pleasantries, biting puns and ingenious plays on words’ while the target ‘obeys unresistingly’ and never takes offense.<sup>46</sup>



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 4.1 Plate 14 from Joseph-François Lafitau, *Moeurs des Sauvages Américains, Compares aux Moeurs des Premiers Temps*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Saugrain l’ainé, 1724): ‘Tortures of captives in North America’. In the upper half of the plate the engraving shows the captive’s mouth is open, indicating that he is singing. Image courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Public Domain, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b86029431/f339.item>

45 Roger Williams, *A Key to the Language of America* (London: Printed by Gregory Dexter, 1643), p. 178.

46 Lafitau, *Customs of the American Indians*, I: 322.

Mocking accompanied deadly attacks and could substitute for physical violence. For instance, in early August 1676, during King Philip's War, the English colonists of Brookfield, MA were trapped in their church by an attacking force of Nipmuck Indians. For two days the Nipmucks bombarded the captives with arrows and with sound, as one of those present subsequently reported: the attackers were 'shotting and shouting [...] and blaspheming', 'reproaching us [...] and] scoffing at our prayers'. The attackers even stood outside the church and 'mocked saying, *Come and pray, and sing psalms*', then went further by mimicking English psalmody: they 'in contempt made a hideous noise *somewhat resembling singing*'.<sup>47</sup> Similar to how the Mohawk captors mocked John Williams and his captive congregation in 1704, the Nipmucks understood the power of demoralizing their enemy by targeting their sacred music.

Taunting captives was both an accompaniment to and an effective substitute for the infliction of physical pain. Captive colonists and missionaries were unnerved by the mockery; loins girded for physical punishment but receiving the verbal abuse instead, their identities were assaulted and they struggled to mount a meaningful defense. Being harangued was relatively benign, compared to extracted fingernails and other afflictions. But insults, flung at captives as they sang, weakened resolve and could signal to captives their singing's failure. As captive colonists struggled to comprehend the cause and stave off the consequence of mocking, they came to understand that the laughter was deadly serious.

### John Williams's Ordeal

It is little wonder that the Mohawk captors ridiculed John Williams and the fragmented Deerfield congregation's psalm singing during their icy trail-side sabbath service in 1704. The survivors likely sang with

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Wheeler, *A Thankfull Remembrance of Gods Mercy to Several Persons at Quabaug or Brookfield* (Cambridge, MA: Samuel Green, 1676), p. 7. Emphasis in original. Fuller analysis of this incident in Glenda Goodman, "'But They Differ from Us in Sound': Indian Psalmody and the Soundscape of Colonialism, 1651–75', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 69.4 (2012), 793–822, <https://doi.org/10.5309/willmaryquar.69.4.0793>. On other examples of mocking, including, unusually, French colonists imitating Armouchiquois Indians' singing, see Michaela Ann Cameron, 'Singing with Strangers in Seventeenth-Century New France', in *Empire of the Senses: Sensory Practices of Colonialism in Early America*, ed. by Daniela Hacke and Paul Musselwhite (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), pp. 88–112, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004340640\\_005](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004340640_005)

quavering voices, sounding weak and thin, buffeted by wind amid leafless winter trees, with little resonance on the ice-crusted snow. For the Puritan captives, singing psalms was supposed to provide emotional and spiritual sustenance, but instead it underscored the precariousness of their circumstances. Added to this was the distinctive manner of rural English psalmody: although ostensibly Puritans sang psalm texts to plain tunes in unison (signifying both the congregation's intention to glorify God and their spiritual unity as a community), by the early eighteenth century a turgid and individualistic performance practice had emerged. Congregations sang psalms at a very slow tempo, often taking two or three breaths with each note. They diverged from each other's phrasing and added improvised embellishments to the melody.<sup>48</sup> To the listening captors, this frayed performance conveyed discordance rather than unity, chaos instead of strength; it was highly unsatisfactory.

However, despite describing being mocked while singing, John Williams emphasized the freedom for worship they experienced under the Mohawks. This is because he wished to contrast it with what awaited them in Quebec: Jesuit missionaries. Among the Mohawks, he wrote, 'we had this revival in our bondage; to joyn together in the Worship of God', that is, the opportunity to worship together. Whereas 'When we arrived in *New France* we were forbiden Praying one with another, or joining together in the Service of God'.<sup>49</sup> The Mohawk captors may have threatened, slain, and mocked them, but they did not prevent worship. Indeed, in Williams's telling, the Mohawks were incorporated into a Babylonian allegory of captivity, playing the role of biblical captors. When recounting how the Mohawks criticized the captives' singing for not being strong enough, Williams ventriloquized them with words from Psalm 137: 'The Enemy who said to us, *Sing us one of Zions Songs*'.<sup>50</sup>

48 Nicholas Temperley, 'The Old Way of Singing: Its Origins and Development', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 34.3 (1981), 511–544, <https://doi.org/10.2307/831191>. This performance practice was not without its benefits, chief among those the way it allowed individuals to access the affective power of sacred singing. See Glenda Goodman, "'The Tears I Shed at the Songs of Thy Church": Seventeenth-Century Musical Piety in the English Atlantic World', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 65.3 (2012), 691–725, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2012.65.3.691>.

49 Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, pp. 51–52.

50 Ibid., p. 51. On Williams's use of Psalm 137, not only as a typological interpretation of captivity but also a credible representation of the historical events, see Newman,

The geopolitical and religious conflicts of early modern imperialism frame Williams's narrative. What transpired, and how he chose to tell his story, was grounded in the competition between French and English forces, overlaid with opposing Catholic and Protestant doctrines (and their musical expressions). In this framing, the Mohawk captors were presented as participants in a broader cross-confessional and inter-imperial contest (rather than agents acting in their own interest). Eventually, aware of his role as a pawn in a larger sectarian-imperial game, Williams ceased to fear for his life, and hence his accounts of Mohawk actions lack any attempt to understand what the Mohawks were interested in achieving. Unlike Radisson, Williams did not see the need to anticipate how his captors would want to hear him sing. Instead, Williams wrote his narrative as an anti-Catholic polemic, and thus his musical descriptions emphasize cross-confessional differences. Confrontations with Jesuit priests fill his account of his months in New France: he sparred with them verbally and resisted their relentless attempts to have him betray his Puritan faith. In Williams's narrative the true enemies trying to incorporate him were not his Mohawk captors but the Jesuits.<sup>51</sup>

Yet Williams's position as a captive compromised his ability to resist; like Radisson, he found that some amount of compliance was unavoidable. For instance, Williams met two Jesuit priests at Fort Francis, north of Montreal along the St. Lawrence River, who pressured him to worship with them. The priests warned him that his Mohawk captor would certainly force him to attend Mass, and claimed that it was best simply to go; after all, 'if [the priests] were in New England themselves, they would go into the churches to see their ways of worship'.<sup>52</sup> Williams later claimed that he coldly declined their invitations, citing his desire to avoid the 'idolatrous superstitions' of Catholic worship.<sup>53</sup> But eventually his ability to do so was no longer within his control. In a dramatic section of his narrative, Williams described how his Mohawk 'master' dragged

*Allegories of Encounter*, pp. 55–56.

51 Indeed, Williams's seven-year-old daughter Eunice was adopted by a Kahnawake Mohawk family and fully assimilated. His ten-year-old son Stephen was adopted by a Pennacook family, but retained his cultural identity and was eventually returned. Haefeli and Sweeney, *Captors and Captives*, p. 155.

52 Williams, *Redeemed Captive*, p. 60.

53 *Ibid.*

him to Mass by force, just as the priests had warned. Williams had never heard a Catholic Mass before, and what he observed, he claimed later, was 'a great confusion, instead of Gospel Order'. Williams grimly noted the ceaseless chanting as 'many others were at the same time saying over their Pater Nosters, and Ave Mary, by tale from their Capelit, or Beads on a String'. One priest was 'singing Prayers among the Indians at the same time'.<sup>54</sup> For Williams, the elaborate liturgy, the polyphonic music, and the overabundance of priestly noises were far from Puritan 'Gospel Order', which privileged congregational comprehension. Compared to the simplicity and comprehensibility of Puritan worship, the Catholic Mass was an ungodly pageant, the music aimed at seducing rather than inspiring sincere experiences of faith. Williams depicted his encounters with the Jesuits as ordeals in which he was tested and prevailed. His captivity narrative functioned both as a historical account and as an allegory for Puritans' tribulations in the dangerous 'New World' they were trying to convert into a true, pure Christian territory. Unlike Radisson, who faced death and was saved by incorporation, Williams's corporeal life was at not stake (as a highly valued captive it was very unlikely anyone would put him to death), but his soul was. For a Puritan minister, this meant the stakes were high.<sup>55</sup>

Christian attempts at assimilation through cross-confessional conversion stand in contrast to Haudenosaunee interests in incorporation. Although both modes share a foundational premise — the need to garner spiritual and communal strength (broadly conceived) through the gathering of new members — the method and meaning behind the desired identity transformation were different. The Haudenosaunee practice of incorporating captives was a necessary survival strategy in the face of a severe demographic crisis, whereas the harvesting of souls by either Catholics or Protestants was competitive and acquisitive. Both Williams and his Jesuit enemies had well-developed reasons for wishing to populate the so-called New World with their brand of Christianity, and for both sides the reasons were of the utmost seriousness; but neither had experienced communal trauma the way Native groups had

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54 Ibid., p. 61.

55 This compares to modern torture techniques whereby captives are subjected to music and other stimuli that call into question their faith and identity. Cusick, "You are in a place that is out of the world...", pp. 13, 17.

in the face of disease and warfare. Williams could afford to ignore his captors' prompts to sing because he was focused on a different battle.

## The Stakes of Raised Voices

Mohawk auditors' responses to captive colonists' singing illustrate their cultural prerogatives. Their listening was attuned for a Haudenosaunee vocal aesthetic and performance style, their evaluation guided by an underlying musical ontology in which individuals' songs were indicators of identity and genealogy. The conjoining of song, voice, and identity was not foreign for those of non-Native descent; but unlike a contemporaneous European epistemology of music that located subjectivity in the voice, the Indigenous epistemology guiding the reception of captive song was not oriented toward revealing the singer's interiority.<sup>56</sup> Traits of strength or weakness, determination or timidity, were exposed through song and how one endured the torture; indelible, personal subjectivity was not. The only way to absorb large numbers of non-Haudenosaunee — including Radisson's Huron-born mother — was to accept a pragmatically malleable model of identity that allowed for superficial incorporation.<sup>57</sup> Thus, although keyed to the captive's identification, forced singing nevertheless left room for psychological recuperation after the fact (although they would not have recognized it with such modern terms). Captors did not aim for identity annihilation; rather, they listened to whether the captives could sustain a defiant demeanor while capitulating to the demands to sing.

The balance of compliance and resistance was a key modality of captive singing, one that captive colonists, unfamiliar with the underlying Indigenous epistemology at work, would have been hard pressed to understand. Radisson and Williams's accounts reveal that for

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<sup>56</sup> On European ideas about voice and subjectivity see, for example, Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical Song: An Essay on Opera* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400866700>; Martha Feldman, et al., 'Colloquy: Why Voice Now?', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68.3 (2015), 653–685, <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2015.68.3.653>. A useful overview of scholarship on voice (including non-Western conceptions) can be found in Amanda Weidman, 'Anthropology and Voice', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 43 (2014), 37–51, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-anthro-102313-030050>

<sup>57</sup> Richter, *Ordeal of the Longhouse*, p. 72.

non-Native captives, singing was conditioned by fear, pain, and outrage. No matter how well coached by captors, forced singing was inexplicable and thus dismaying. I speculate that the coercion would have felt punitive to such captives. *Make it stop* — surely this imperative was at the forefront of captives' minds. The fact that the singing, combined with the physical torment, was the means to a larger end would have been beyond their ability to understand. Indeed, being forced to keep singing for no discernable purpose may have subverted the Haudenosaunee listeners' aims: rather than accessing psychological and physical fortitude, singers may have given up, resorting to singing meaningless syllables, babbling with raised voices in order further to avoid what they experienced as punishment. As Radisson wrote, he kept singing even when he was out of his mind and speechless. What kind of identity was revealed through such a performance? And what of when a voice raised in song transformed into a shriek? Certainly many captives would have been incapable of coaxing their pained utterances into musical contours. European sources about Indigenous peoples routinely emphasized their 'frightening, unassuageable otherness', as Gary Tomlinson puts it.<sup>58</sup> In scenarios of forced singing, captive colonists confronted their own otherness. Alienated from their vocalizations, their acclamations became hideous.

Recognition of this alienation offers music scholars a new position from which to consider music and colonialism. Once we are aware of forced singing's place in the early American soundscape — including the processes of pedagogy, audition, assessment, and incorporation it heralded — some of the durable frameworks for analyzing intercultural encounters become less useful. Forced singing, for instance, challenges the utility of placing Native and non-Native peoples on either end of an Other-Self polarity. It subverts the assumption that Native utterances were inexplicable by reversing the vector of sound and listening. Finally, it reorients the fundamental purpose of engaging with sound and music, moving away from the customary musicological interest in how Europeans interpreted and negotiated colonialism. Another

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58 Gary Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World: Indigenous Voice in the Era of European Contact* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 176. Also see Olivia A. Bloechl, *Native American Song at the Frontiers of Early Modern Music* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

example from Tomlinson illustrates this position, in which he concludes that '[a] history of European colonialism could be written as the story of negotiations of the space between speaking and singing'.<sup>59</sup> This formulation can now be rearranged: a history of Native American survivance could be written as the story of negotiations of the space between learning and changing, shrieking and singing — a space that could be occupied by Indigenous listeners and European singers.

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59 Tomlinson, *The Singing of the New World*, p. 196.

