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# Alternate Auralities on the American Frontier: Resounding the Indian in the American Western Film

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ALTERNATE AURALITIES ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER:  
RESOUNDING THE INDIAN IN THE AMERICAN WESTERN FILM

by

EMMA ELIZABETH NIEHAUS

B.A. University of Kentucky, 2012

A thesis submitted to the  
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This thesis entitled:  
Alternate Auralities on the American Frontier:  
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

Emma Elizabeth Niehaus (M.A. Comparative Literature)

Alternate Auralities on the American Frontier:

Resounding the Indian in the American Western Film

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Beverly Weber

The Western film presents its viewers with a supposed historical depiction of America's "Great West," set during the period of the United States' westward expansion in the nineteenth century. However, the Western film reiterates a mythologized version of the American West that relies on archetypal themes, events, and characters through the synthesis of story, image and music. This paper examines the Western's most problematic archetype, the "Indian." The Indian's liminal role in American mythology will be examined through the analysis of the aural recoding and obscuring of authentic Native American auralities according to the sonic power structures of the Euro-American soundscape, and subsequently, how this aural recoding informs the role of the "Indian" in three successful Western films from the Western's heyday, *Red River* (1948), *Broken Arrow* (1950), and *The Searchers* (1956).

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## Introduction

In 1950 Hollywood released a total of one hundred and thirty Western films to accommodate the mass demand for a genre that had been growing in popularity since the advent of synchronized sound in film and had boomed following the end of World War Two (Cawelti 89). While the spectacle of the Western film genre dazzled audiences with its courageous cowboys, daring shootouts and wild chases, the Western film's synchronized sound, chiefly its musical score, had just as significant an impact on audiences. The Western film's visual and aural presentation of a mythical version of America's past reconstituted America's hegemonic cultural narrative over and over, thus sonically marginalizing the aural of its indigenous people in order to recode Native American aural as "audible," in other words, understandable, within the Euro-American aural culture. In the following analysis, the foundations, development, and cultural significance of the Euro-American Soundscape will be examined in regards to its incorporation and aural coding of perceived Native American aural, ultimately culminating in an examination of the role of this "Native American" aural (or lack thereof) in three popular Western films from the Western genres golden age: *Red River* (1948), *Broken Arrow* (1950), and *The Searchers* (1956). These films have been chosen for both their popularity and cultural significance at the time of their release as well as for the particular method of aural coding utilized to portray "Indianness" within each's musical score.

### The Western Film's Cultural Context: History, Myth, and Popular Culture

On May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1893 the World's Columbian Exposition opened in Chicago, its theme: to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's discovery of the New World. Over the six month duration of the fair, millions of visitors were entertained by innumerable spectacles

including musical performances, technology demonstrations, and “living exhibits” consisting of American Indians reenacting their “everyday” lives (Hundorf 39). On July 12, 1893 American historian Frederic Jackson Turner delivered his paper “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” in which Turner, perhaps somewhat prematurely, declared that the American frontier was “closed” stating, “The unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line (Turner 31).” Turner drew this conclusion in part from the results of the 1890 U.S. census which revealed that American settlements, though sparsely dispersed, dotted the United States’ forty two states and seven territories (including Indian territories) all the way to the western coast.

For Turner, the “closing” of the Frontier had severe implications. He argued that the once inconceivably vast spaces of the “Great West” had been mastered. The American frontier which had been a motivation for American progress, and a site upon which to test and prove America’s fortitude for the last four hundred years, could no longer be a component in the country’s future improvements. In essence, America was and had been defined in its relation to the wilderness and without it, the country risked losing its primary proof of greatness. Turner wrote, “The peculiarity of American institutions is the fact [sic] that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people- to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life” (32). Turner’s paper did not meet with immediate renown but nonetheless conveyed an appealing version of America that ontologically required, and yet simultaneously conquered, a seemingly untamable wilderness and all of its unruly denizens.

Perhaps unsurprising in the wake of the United States Government's Indian Policy, the "Indian" that *had inhabited* the land spoken of in Turner's Frontier Thesis was a generalized "Other", lacking agency, from whom American land was rightfully acquired, an acquisition merely perceived and later documented by history as "destined" and "righteous". In point of fact, the Indian of Turner's essay was not much more than an apparition, only directly mentioned in the past tense and in regards to the dangerous opposition he posed to American development (even though the U.S. Government's "Indian Wars" would not be truly "over" for another three decades). However, the Indian was repetitively and indirectly signified throughout the entirety of Turner's essay, his image appropriated by the valiant American frontiersman. Turner explains:

The Wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips him of the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and moccasin... He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails... Little by little he transforms the wilderness ... here is a new product that is American (Turner 33).

Thus, Turner positioned America as dialectically wilderness and civilization and the American as both European and Indian all the while denying the corporeality of the Indian in the first place, striking his presence from the continuation of U.S. history. Turner voiced a paradox that had and would continue to underline American identity. The nation could not be the United States with the Indian and could not define itself as "America" without him. While not immediately successful, Turner's Frontier Thesis and its rosy idealization of the period of America's westward expansion had begun the significant shift in the American West's meaning within collective memory.

The Frontier Thesis would eventually become the most widely taught historical model of 19<sup>th</sup> century America in U.S. schools (Turner 2) The "history's" innumerable repetitions in all



facets of cultural life quickly propelled America's "Great West" and all of its diverse characters to a new level of cultural reverence. The Indian and the frontier he once occupied had passed from history into myth. In his book, *Gunfighter Nation: Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth Century America*, author Richard Slotkin defines myth as:

...stories drawn from a society's history that have acquired through persistent usage the power of symbolizing that society's ideology and of dramatizing its moral consciousness- with all the complexities and contradictions that consciousness may contain. Over time, through frequent retellings and deployments as a source of interpretive metaphors, the original mythic story is increasingly conventionalized and abstracted until it is reduced to a deeply encoded and resonant set of symbols, "icons," "keywords," or historical clichés. In this form, myth becomes a basic constituent of linguistic meaning and of the process of both personal and social "remembering" (Slotkin 5).

The Columbian Exposition had merely provided a cultural platform upon which the myth of the Great West and the supposed conquering of the Indian could be reiterated linguistically for cultural "remembering," through presentations of American "historical" scholarship and literature, like the Frontier Thesis, and materialistically through the display of Indian "artifacts" (primarily weapons) as well as the exhibition of living Indians themselves. When presented as material artifacts, as if in a museum, Native Americans not only appeared to the American public as a race of "inevitably vanishing people whose significance lay in their obvious inferiority to (white) civilization (Hundorf 27)," but also as objects of ethnographic knowledge whose worth, "was determined by their usefulness as counterpoint to the unfolding progress of the ages (28)." The objective presentation of the Indian as a vanishing Other reinforced the supposed validity of the myth of conquest, and consequently the myth of the Great West.

Rapidly, other facets of American cultural life began absorbing the myth of the Indian's conquest as well. While music was an important aspect of American culture, its contributions to the establishment of social "remembering" and national myths were widely unconsidered by a

public who privileged the objective sense of sight over the supposedly more subjective sense of hearing (Sterne 9). Therefore, Americans were insufficiently equipped to critically confront the creation and structuring of aural hierarchies in everyday life, making the effects of national music on erroneous social “remembering, like the historical clichés of the West, far more detrimental to authentic Indigenous auralities.

On December 16, 1893, only a few months following Tuner’s presentation, Antonin Dvořák, an acclaimed Bohemian nationalist composer and Artistic Director of the National Conservatory of Music, premiered his newest symphony at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The symphony had been commissioned by the New York Philharmonic five months earlier following the successful premiere and warm reception of Dvořák’s “American” String Quartet at the World’s Columbian Exposition (Tibbets 82). Dvořák’s ninth and final symphony, *The New World Symphony* as it was aptly called, met with immediate renown, lauded as an aural embodiment of the American spirit. Prior to its premiere, Dvořák had openly cited both African American spirituals and Native American songs that he had encountered traveling throughout the United States as inspiration for his aural portrayal of America (Tibbets 115). Dvořák believed that these marginalized musical traditions could form the foundations of a truly American style of composition (Tibbets 115). The symphony’s four movements Adagio, Largo, Scherzo, and Allegro con fuoco respectively featured prominent thematic material (2-3 musical themes) that was initially iterated and developed primarily through instrumental imitation throughout each movement.

While the sing-song, pentatonic melodies of the symphony’s themes were likely to have recalled the novelty of many American folk tunes and hymns to their audiences, thus removing the symphony from a strictly traditional European tonality (with dominant harmonies and

chordal mapping), their actual “Indianness” was tenuous at best. Peculiarly, in an interview the day following the symphony’s premiere, Dvořák admitted that he had not directly quoted any Native American songs but rather, used the “peculiarities” of these aural traditions to craft his themes (Tibbets 115). Unfortunately, it is probable that Dvořák’s profuse use of the pentatonic scale and certain other aural “peculiarities” in *The New World Symphony* were most likely the result of an aural mis-listening. In studying both African American spirituals and ethnomusicological transcriptions of Native American song, the pentatonic scale’s aural prominence, more so than in typical American music literature, lead the composer to believe that both Native American Song and African American spirituals were as he put it, “practically identical (Tibbets 116).” This erroneous aural analysis not only dramatically de-emphasized the aural uniqueness of both traditions but also perpetuated the common mishearing of an overly simplified American aural dichotomy: Euro- American or “Western Music” and Other.

Despite what seemed like an insignificant issue, the composer maintained that *The New World Symphony* had “native” influence including Longfellow’s “The Song of Hiawatha” which had supposedly inspired the symphony’s Scherzo movement (Tibbets 116). It follows that *The New World Symphony* was neither an accurate portrayal of Native American song nor an attempt at realistically portraying the Indian in the first place. Dvořák had literally *mis-heard*, completely failing to actually hear and differentiate the specific aural characteristics of Native American aural traditions. In lieu of being unable to hear the auralities of these musical traditions, Dvořák craftily perpetuated a process of cultural appropriation by supplanting any semblance of Indigenous musical traditions within his piece with Euro-American musical conceptualizations of the Native American. The result was an abstract Indian Other sounded in a way that was

audible and pleasing to Euro- American audiences and defined purely by Western/ Euro- American aural traditions.

The immense popularity of *The New World Symphony* both domestic and abroad had helped to solidify this aurally defined American “Indian” in mass cultural imagination. *The New World Symphony* was one of the first symphonic compositions meant to aurally signify American nationalism as well as one of the first American Nationalist compositions to achieve immense success all over the world. It comes as no surprise that *The New World Symphony* intended to evoke Native American auralty but ultimately erased it, the symphony’s genesis and existence indicating that the American musical climate had absorbed and relished the biased and ultimately confused master narrative of American history not unlike Turner’s problematic Frontier Thesis.

The American Musical Culture’s (to be relabeled later as soundscape) acceptance of this problematic narrative was immensely more consequential than was initially evident. The uncontrollable pervasiveness of sound and especially culturally significant music in everyday life during the golden age of radio, formed invasive power structures that will be examined in more depth later in this paper. While Frederic Jackson Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History” and Antonin Dvořák’s *The New World Symphony* were two unrelated cultural manifestations, their respective efforts in galvanizing American pride shared a similar motif: the simultaneous necessity and erasure of the Native American in American history and cultural imagination. In order to be sounded in American culture the Native American had to be aurally erased not only to silence true Native American voices that contradicted the American narrative/ myth of Western progress, but also in order to aurally redefine and recode the Native American as audible to the normative Euro- American listener within the Western aural tradition thus, making Native American auralty an object of ethnographic knowledge. In other words, by

aurally coding the Native American according to the normative Euro- American soundscape, the Indian fit neatly within an aural power structure supported by and supportive of the American cultural narrative. If you don't hear it, it doesn't exist.

The positioning of both the American mythology and soundscape at the close of the nineteenth century would set the precedent for all American pop-cultural art forms to come- to culminate in the ultimate resurrection of the American Indian in the Gesamtkunstwerk of Americana- the American Western Film. While prior music, sonic, and film criticism of the Western film has explored the effect musical score has on America's cultural imagination/ remembered past , the role of native American aural<sup>1</sup> in the shaping and structuring of this mythical (sensory) environment has been minimal. A study of the facets of the American soundscape, especially its aural coding of the Native American or "Indian" within that aural environment, is essential in understanding the structuring of the Euro-American soundscape as it is utilized within the Western film.

#### The Euro- American Soundscape: Establishing Sonic Hierarchies

By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States' Indian Wars were concluding and the government had largely succeeded in its efforts to confine what was left of its native populations to reservations all the while striving to reeducate Native American children in boarding schools. Rapidly, the once vibrant and innumerable Native American languages, tribal identities, and cultural traditions were being drastically subdued, allowing American history to relegate its once powerful Indian antagonist to a thing of the past; in other words, making the Native American a generalized and subdued "other" merely a myth of conquest necessary in

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<sup>1</sup> Aurality: aural reality, sonic existence or, "The conditions that must be given for something to become recognized, labeled, and valorized as audible in the first place (Sterne 8)."

achieving the ideal America (Prats 3). Popular culture followed suit. The Native American along with the “Great West” passed into American mythology, which in turn facilitated popular culture’s resurrection of a ghostly static image of the Indian to serve over and over as the concept against which the American defined himself. However, the effigy’s manifestation in American culture and soundscape was particularly deleterious because it assumed the authority of ethnographic knowledge, making the existence of the Indian the object of its study.

In everyday life, the experience of sight is the most privileged of the senses meaning the other sensual experiences such as smell and hearing are often ignored or at least valued below sight when it comes to sensory perception, forming a sensual hierarchy. One could smell something unpleasant and choose to discount it while, conversely, to see something happen is far more likely to be considered definite information, therefore eliciting immediate reaction. Seeing is believing. There are, of course, sounds in any environment that demand attention and warrant immediate response such as ambulance sirens, fire alarms, and often music. In his essay “The Soundscape”, featured in Jonathan Sterne’s *The Sound Studies Reader*, R. Murray Schafer presents a critical vocabulary to describe specific aural occurrences within overall aural environments i.e. soundscapes defined by Schafer as, “...events heard not objects seen (Schafer 99).” While Schafer’s essay does not directly examine music’s place within a soundscape, his critical vocabulary for aural environments will facilitate a more complete understanding of the power structure of sound that accommodates the erasure and recoding of the Indian in the American musical soundscape. Therefore, musical examples will be employed to align Schafer’s *Soundscape* with this analysis.

Schafer writes that the most significant features of a Soundscape depend on three criteria that determine aural importance: individuality, numerousness, and domination (Schafer 100).

The most numerous aspects of any soundscape are *keynotes*, a term originally used to indicate the key or tonality of a musical composition. In Schafer's definition of the soundscape, a keynote is a product of climate and geography, like the sound of a waterfall or the call of certain birds. For the sake of this musical analysis, I will apply keynote as a term that describes aural products of cultural climate and geography like the progression of a diatonic scale, the sound of a violin or even lyrics sung in English. Many keynotes possess an archetypal significance for their listeners in their familiarity resulting from performative repetition even if this significance remains widely unacknowledged or unconsidered by the soundscape's listeners (Schafer 101).

*Sound signals* are the sounds in a soundscape to which people listen *consciously*. Thus, these sounds often maintain an aural dominance within the soundscape. Because they are meant to catch and hold attention, sound signals are often employed to transmit aural codes of considerable complexity to those listeners who are familiar with a soundscape and therefore, capable of interpreting its aural coding (Schafer 101). An exceedingly simple example in Euro-American music would be the transition of a major chord (C E G) to its minor counterpart (C E<sup>b</sup> G) to signal a negative shift in an initially positive musical motif. The listener's interpretation of these respective sound signals as positive versus negative is only possible because the chords utilize keynotes of one specific soundscape. The complexity of sound signals in music will be discussed in depth later for the analysis of film score.

Finally, Schafer defines the *soundmark*. A soundmark is an aural gesture unique to a specific community within an overall soundscape that potentially distinguishes that community from all others existing within the same soundscape. As an example, note the use of the fiddle in Appalachian folk melodies. In most other musical traditions, the fiddle and its articulation and timbre would not be as highly regarded. The soundscape and its keynotes, sound signals, and

soundmarks, though rooted solidly in performative tradition, are somewhat malleable, affected most significantly by mass and popular culture in which many listeners within a soundscape listen to the same series of sound signals i.e. music which may contain the soundmarks of a specific aural community.

However, a soundscape does maintain stringent parameters which can immensely limit the flexibility of its aural coding but a discussion of the Euro-American soundscape's limitations will come later. Thus, music presents itself as a particularly problematic subject for analysis because, put simply, it is both noise and sound. Noise is insidious, capable of penetrating solid walls, emanating miles from its origin, and fully immersing an individual listener. Noise is difficult to control (Schafer 9). When the volatile nature of noise is deliberately organized into coded auralities or music, sound becomes an immensely powerful component of a culture's existence, capable in some cases of controlling the emotions and even memories of that culture's individuals.

The Soundscape considered in this analysis will be labeled the Euro- American soundscape, often referred to in textbooks and classrooms by its blanket moniker, "Western Music." My analysis will consciously avoid the use of the term "Western Music" precisely because this label indicates an outdated and overly simplified dichotomy in auralities (being either western or eastern). It also suggestively privileges one of those auralities- granting the history of western music a hegemonic master narrative while making eastern music the object of ethnomusicological study. While the label "Euro-American" for the present soundscape is grossly exclusive and is built upon a history of colonization and marginalization, making it no less hegemonic than "Western Music", it best specifies the music and aural theory employed by this analysis. It will facilitate an examination of the marginalized or "Other" auralities occurring



within the Euro-American soundscape as well as how those marginalized auralities are rendered inaudible or contrary to the hegemonic soundscape.

A full outline of the theoretical foundation of the Euro- American soundscape is spatially impossible within the confines of this essay and most likely unnecessary. However, a few examples will serve as reminders to facilitate understanding of score analyses that will take place later. Some of the common keynotes of the Euro-American soundscape include the (sound of) 12 major and 12 minor (heptatonic/ diatonic) scales/ key signatures, dominant melody, subordinate harmony, consistent tempo (often sub- dividable quarter to eighth to sixteenth etc.), the instrumental families (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, and their respective timbres) as well as voice. Subsequently, synthesis/ orchestration of these keynotes form sound signals (music) and are capable of eliciting emotions and ideas within the listener tied to these aural signals. Subsequently, the ubiquitous nature and performative repetitiveness of the aspects of the soundscape train the ears of a culture to hear and interpret these sounds homogeneously. Despite the subjective nature of listening, music can elicit a similar emotion from a diverse mass of listeners (Schafer 9).

#### Soundmark to Sound Signal: Americana in Symphonic Music

In 1937, Alan Lomax, a folklorist and ethnomusicologist, recorded William Hamilton Stepp, a native of Proctor, Kentucky, playing a fiddle tune titled “Bonaparte’s Retreat.” Lomax had been dispatched to Appalachia days earlier as a folklorist for the Library of Congress’s Archive of American Folk Song Project. For the previous decade Lomax and his father, John A. Lomax, had traveled the United States recording various examples of American Folksongs. While many of Lomax’s recordings made it no further than the archive itself, Stepp’s fiddle tune was different. In association with its massive archival effort during the Great Depression, the

U.S. government sponsored numerous music appreciation and folklore radio programs aimed at reminding the downtrodden American public of the diversity and resiliency of its cultural expression. Thus, folk tunes much like William H. Stepp's "Bonaparte's Retreat" were finding their way into mainstream culture (Slotkin 281) and many of America's once hidden soundmarks were becoming popular music.

One of the first composers to capitalize on America's renewed cultural pride was Aaron Copland. Though trained in traditional and contemporary music composition, Copland recognized the value of mass appeal in music, eventually adapting his modernist style of composition into an approachable yet unique combination of diatonic melodies and simplistic textures garnished with novel American musical gestures such as the quotation of traditional folk tunes and prominent open fourth and fifth chordal structures to suggest both temporal (past) and geographic placing (vast frontier) (Grout 888). Copland was revolutionizing Symphonic Americana. In 1942, Copland premiered the second of his Americana ballets, *Rodeo*, which featured five movements each reflecting life on the American frontier (Grout 888). For *Rodeo*'s final movement titled "Hoe- down", Copland directly transcribed William H. Stepp's "Bonaparte's Retreat", embellishing it with striking dissonance and intricate counterpoint<sup>2</sup>. While the orchestral voices blend together harmonically, they are independent in rhythm and movement allowing "Hoe-Down" to maintain a very American brand of dynamism.

Copland's orchestration of "Hoedown" from *Rodeo* met with immense popularity and years later after uncountable performances, the piece and its tonal characteristics remain prominent sound signals in the American soundscape. Some of "Hoe-Down's" more significant cultural cameos include the nighttime basketball game in Spike Lee's *He got Game* (1998) and

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<sup>2</sup> Counterpoint: the orchestration of multiple instrumental (or human voices) to maintaining an independent and rhythmic contour while remaining harmonically dependent on one another (Grout 88).

the “Beef, it's what's for dinner” commercials popular in the 1990's. Much like Dvořák's *New World Symphony*, the popularity of Copland's “Hoe-Down” from *Rodeo* relied on the keynotes, signals, and even soundmarks of the Euro-American soundscape, thus making it capable of recalling American geography, temporality, archetypal Western characters and their qualities. However, the most noteworthy accomplishment of Copland's “Hoe-Down” was its ability to produce nostalgia, leaving the listener longing for the past- a past defined by the Euro American soundscape, and conveniently and completely forgetful of the indigenous soundmarks that initially confronted it, again propagating a hegemonic cultural narrative of America's “Great West”. Before an examination of aural negation of Native American auralities takes place, it is imperative that some Native American soundmarks and sound signals are examined.

#### Differing Auralities: When Two Soundscapes Meet

The portrayal of the American Indian for a European public began with the production and dissemination of colonial travel writing at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. As expected, many early colonial accounts privileged sight. The New World was above all a spectacle which was far more easily conveyed to eager readers through text. However, many firsthand accounts contain responses to aural experiences of the New World and Native American auralities. The explicit shock in these accounts exemplifies the dissonance created at the meeting of two unacculturated soundscapes, indicative of the inaudibility of one soundscape in the ear of another. In John Smith's *A Map of Virginia* (1612) Smith recounts being surprised by a Powhattan war party near the Potomac River. Smith writes, “All the woods were laid with ambuscadoes [ambushers] to the number of 3 or 400 savages, but

so strangely painted, grimed, and disguised, showing, yelling, and crying, as we rather supposed them so many divels (Smith in Bloechl 61).”

Europeans’ visual and aural association of Native American with devils is by no means uncommon in accounts of the New World. It is also no coincidence that European colonial writers often resorted to describing Native Americans as well as their rites and rituals with decidedly Christian terminology. While writers were often correct in assuming that many of the rituals they observed were in fact sacred in nature, the application of Christian nomenclature portrayed these experiences as instances of adulterated worship, simultaneously recognizable and perverse to the European reader. For example, In *A Map of Virginia*, John Smith describes a Powhatan ceremony he observed as having a “chiefe prieste” leading a call and response like song. He writes, “He maketh invocations with broken sentences by starts and strange passions, and at every pause, the rest give a short groane (Smith in Bloechl 53).” This description reveals Smith’s weak attempt to compare the aural aspects of the ritual to recognizable European aural structures like the sound signals used in a church service such as sermon and antiphonal/ responsorial singing<sup>3</sup> but in Smith’s European perspective, the “prieste” of the Indian ceremony is “strange” and impassioned. His speech is broken and his congregation responds with unintelligible groans (Bloechl 53) making it clear that a language barrier is not the only impediment to Smith’s understanding of the people and the ritual he is observing.

From the beginning, the rigid parameters of the European Soundscape prevented the European’s attempts to understand Native American sound signals both aurally and ideologically (Bloechl 54). The European’s inability and ultimately, his decision to remain deaf to Indigenous auralities was not simply a question of the immense variation of Soundscapes and signals

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<sup>3</sup> Responsorial/ Antiphonal: soloist and choir or two halves of the choir alternate singing lines of chant (Grout 56).

between differing Native American tribes. For the European listener, Native American sound signals were articulated differently (through performance) and their aural coding (their purpose, their meaning- their degree of Animism as an example) varied immensely depending on region, tribe, family, and in some cases even the individual. In short, Native American sound signals of any region, period, or type were initially inaudible and unintelligible to European ears because these signals were not of the European soundscape and could therefore not be understood according to its keynotes. This difficulty was undoubtedly another stark difference between European and “Indian” cultures that encouraged the European’s irreconcilable aversion to indigenous auralities. However, it must be observed that as listeners raised and trained within a specific and strict soundscape, Europeans had no other discourse with which to describe a soundscape wholly separate from their own and thus, the European asserted the hegemony of the European soundscape in the context of the New World and worked to erase the opposition. Learning to “hear” Native American auralities was not an option.

#### Methods of Hearing: Examples of Indigenous Auralities

The following short descriptions of varying Native American aurality in song are only three in a vast amount of diverse tribal soundscapes and sound signals. They are, however, explained in theoretical terms accordant with the Euro-American soundscape and therefore, are filtered through a Euro-American approach to music analysis and transcription, making these examples prone to possible mishearings and misinterpretations. However, within the context of this analysis, these examples serve as means of demonstrating gaps between Native American and European hearing experience and aural coding. It must also be noted that these examples are filtered through a Euro-American musical perspective. There is, of course, no way to know

precisely how or when Euro- Americans first encountered these aural traditions, but the traditions outlined below will attempt to demonstrate how indigenous auralities can be heard and potentially misheard by Euro- American ears as well as why mishearing elicited eventual silencing of indigenous auralities within the Euro-American soundscape.

The Dene or Denesuliné people of the Mackenzie river drainage system in present Alberta Canada first met Europeans in the late eighteenth century following the westward expansion of the fur trade at that time (Browner 23). Two of the dominant features of the Dene soundscape are translated by Lucy Lafferty and Elaine Keillor in their essay “Musical Expressions of the Dene” as *Love- Songs* and *Land-Songs*. The transmission of these songs is not meant to be carried out verbatim rather, subjectively. A transmitted song is often the performer’s aural reflection of the song’s story line, the time he/she (the performer) initially heard the song, as well as her/ his mental state at that time. This also means that the subjectively interpreted song of the present transmitter contains minute residual sound signals pertaining to the previous transmitter’s song as well as the transmitter before her/him etc. (Browner 26). In other words, a Dene “song” is a chain of sounds signals signified with aural gestures passed down for numerous generations. While the two genres of Dene song share similar methods of perception and transmission, they differ in performance context. *Land- Songs* can be performed to multiple listeners even though some listeners lacking knowledge of the aural background will not understand them. *Love- Songs* are usually performed privately to one other person meaning their subject matter (both linguistic and aural) is exceedingly personal and only deciphered/ audible for the transmitter and his/ her intended listener (28). To the Euro-American ear, both *Land* and *Love Songs* lack a foundational tonic note/ keynote or chordal outline adhering instead to

intervallic jumps, the range and contour of which convey meaning established through sound signal performativity (28).

The ceremonial repertory of the Mississippi Choctaw is called the *Hitla Tuluwa* considered to be the only surviving communal music that predates the Choctaw's initial contact with Europeans (Browner 71). The music's status as both communal and ceremonial dance accompaniment reflects the Choctaw belief that reality/ life lacks any demarcation between what European's would have labeled "sacred" and "secular." The songs that form what is left of the *Hitla Tuluwa* represent only a small portion of the pre – contact Choctaw aural tradition, a tradition decimated by governmental relocation efforts like "The Trail of Tears" which removed of all but 1,000 Mississippi Choctaw from the area (Browner 67). However, the remaining *Hitla Tuluwa* songs are maintained through traditional performances which take place only at night and last until dawn. One of the most revered aspects of the *Hitla Tuluwa* songs is the drum which performs a solo ostinato rhythm of eighth or sixteenth notes *between* songs in a cycle. This practice differs greatly from percussion scoring in European symphonic music in that the Choctaw drum does not serve as accompaniment but as a solo rhythmic signal between vocalized songs. The vocal music of the *Hitla Tuluwa* adheres to a strophic form in which a single musical phrase is repeated by the song leader or volleyed responsorially between the leader and other performers (73). The general range of these songs never exceeds an octave plus a fourth while their tonal structure is usually anchored by the repetition of one particular tone within what most closely resembles a whole tone sequence<sup>4</sup> (75). The European ear would have most likely interpreted the hitla tuluwa as tonally limited and redundant, unaware of the complex sonic structuring and coding they actually convey.

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<sup>4</sup> Whole tone scale: rather than the usual heptatonic/ diatonic scale consisting (in solfege) of DO Re Mi Fa Sol La Ti Do, with half steps between Mi and Sol and Ti and Do (C,D,E,F,G,A,B,C) a whole tone scale has whole steps between every note (C, D, E, F#,G#, A# C).

The Chiricahua Apache *Fire Dance* is a ceremonial dance performed in varying formats by many Apathascan- speaking groups of the Southwest (95). The dance itself is believed to have been provided to the Chiricahua Apaches by the Gahe, the four most powerful spirits of Apache religious belief responsible for health, protection, and good fortune as well as destruction. Destruction and disease would be a result of the fire song and/or its dance being carried out incorrectly, deviating from the Gahe's original instructions. This being the case, the *Fire Dance* has simultaneous medical, historical, religious, and artistic significance for the Chiricahua Apaches (Browner 97), wholly unlike European tradition which strictly segregated music into sacred and secular categories. The music of the *Fire Dance*, songs called *Gahe Biyine*, allows for the correct coordination of the dancers and provides the most explicit of the ceremony's symbolic languages. The *Gahe Biyine* consist of a heterophonic line<sup>5</sup> sung in abstract vocables by a male chorus singing in unison. These vocable sections are then alternated with sections of spoken prayer. Both sections are performed over a strophic quarter note drum rhythm (104).

Though it is impossible to tell exactly when and how the Euro- American soundscape met with Native American auralities, the varying practices of instrumentation, meaning, and performance of the Dene *Love and Land Songs*, the Choctaw *Hitla Tuluwa* and the Chiricahua Apache *Fire Dance* would have differed greatly from the musical traditions of the Euro- American soundscape. As is evident in the above examples, these differences extend deeper than "foreign" language, instruments, and sound signals. The Euro- American soundscape, which contained musical genres that were sounded at specific sonic events (concerts, church services, dances, etc.) all of which were meant to appeal to or homogenize a mass of individual listeners,

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<sup>5</sup> Heterophonic line: A line of melody changed/ embellished by a soloist or an overall group whenever it is reiterated in a piece (Grout 14).



was hard pressed to understand auralities in which sonic events maintained multiple performative significations, and subjective meanings as well as seemingly peculiar aural signals.

Being wholly outside of the Euro-American soundscape and its musical theory, these seemingly strange or Other sound signals had to be distilled down into audible signals that could maintain aural clarity within the Euro- American soundscape while remaining audibly Other or racially coded when used as aural signification of the Indian Other. This immense paring down of Native American auralty also allowed Native American aural traditions to be transcribed according to “western” musical theory and notation, stripping these unique auralities of their individual symbolic and spiritual significances and transforming them into objects of ethnographic knowledge, knowledge in purely Euro-American terms.

### The Indian in The Hollywood Film Score: Orchestrating the Other

The Advent of commercial film in the early twentieth century provided the Western genre with the medium it needed to become a high cultural art form (artfulness and cultural renown). Film allowed the Western genre to utilize a higher level of realism that again required the Eurocentric privileging of sight, “seeing is believing.” According to Walter Benjamin this desire for visual realism was a defining characteristic of the twentieth century which desired distant cultural entities to be, “closer spatially and humanly...overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction (Benjamin in Rony 9)”. In its filmic form, the Western not only presented its audience with a visually realistic manifestation of beloved archetypal characters and settings, but afforded the viewer a reflection of humanness and the opportunity to identify with these characters. Thus, the Western not only maintained its supposed

“historical authenticity” but also presented the story of the Great West as if it were no longer in the past but an integral part of the present. In 1903, *The Great Train Robbery*, produced by the Edison Company showed in movie houses all over America, quickly achieving immense commercial success which not only cemented the Western as a filmic genre but also prompted the production of numerous silent Westerns within the next decade (Slotkin 231). Shortly after the beginning of the Great Depression, the genre experienced a significant lull most likely the result of plummeting national morale. However, by 1938, the Hollywood studio system initiated a revival of the genre in response to the invigorated sense of national pride in the wake of various governmental reforms such as the New Deal. The rebirth of American cultural appreciation in the form of folk song archival efforts and music appreciation radio programs, like those mentioned before, also renewed America’s appreciation of its past, allowing the story of the “Great West” to be read once again as a success story (Slotkin 278).

By the time the Western genre experienced its renaissance, Hollywood had already employed its new ability to synchronize sound to cultivate an effective practice of musically scoring film. This approach to scoring largely owed its existence to the scoring practices of middle to late European romantic opera. Much like opera, the classic Hollywood film score functioned on three primary visual/ aural syntheses. The first increased the ratio of non-diegetic music to dialogue in the film. Non-diegetic music was meant to accompany action (and dialogue) on the screen, above all functioning as a discreet, almost “inaudible” emotional guide for the viewer (Grout 862). The second rule maintained that non-diegetic music should strictly adhere to action on screen, a practice nick named “Mickey-Mousing”<sup>6</sup> after its prominent use in early

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<sup>6</sup> An example of Mickey- Mousing: A dog slips on a banana peel, the motion of the dogs slip is accompanied by a slide whistle.

sound cartoons. Thirdly and most importantly, the film score employed the Wagnerian leitmotif<sup>7</sup> to form aural metaphors for the narrative's most important people, places, and ideas (Burkholder 863).

Leitmotivic scoring provided Hollywood films with inconspicuous and intelligent aural narration capable of both guiding viewers through the film's plot and suggesting unseen conflicts, power structures, and emotions at work below the film's manifest content. Synchronized music would also enhance the shared experience of viewing a movie by eliciting a uniform emotional response to the image from the audience, therefore achieving what Fatimah Tobing Rony in her work *The Third Eye: Race Cinema and Ethnographic Spectacle* aptly describes as, "a high degree of ideological control...a privileged locus for the investigation of the coming together of the nineteenth century obsession with the past, and the twentieth century desire to make visible and comprehensible the difference of cultural 'Others' (Rony 9)." The first film often credited with solidifying leitmotivic scoring in Hollywood cinema was RKO's *King Kong*, which premiered in the spring of 1933, and almost instantly became a success (Cooke 87). *King Kong*'s score was composed by Max Steiner, an Austrian immigrant who used his traditional European music education to bring the aural language of famous composers such as Debussy, Wagner, and Strauss to film scoring (Grout 863).

Aside from its decided Europeanness, *King Kong*'s score presented audiences with other familiar aural devices: the Euro-American approach to scoring the "Other." The indigenous people of Skull Island (where Kong originates) as well as Kong himself were both visually and aurally portrayed as what Fatimah Tobing Rony calls, "The Taxidermic Monster" which results from a purely fantastical idea brought to life in order to enhance the inherent "realness" and

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<sup>7</sup> Leitmotif: A brief musical phrase (originally in opera) that aurally accompanies the first mention of an idea or appearance of a place, person or object on stage (Grout 695). Subsequent reiterations of a Leitmotif recall the Leitmotif's initial on-stage subject and/or signal developments in that subject.

therefore, horror upon which a film insists. In other words, *King Kong* embodied a hyperbolized ethnographic film meant to exhibit humans and Kong in ethnographic exposition making the Skull Island Natives as well as Kong ethnographiable rather than historifiable “Others” (Rony 15).

Unsurprisingly, Steiner’s scoring of Kong and the Skull Islanders relied on an aural formula for scoring Otherness that had existed for the past century in opera, theater and eventually instrumental accompaniment for silent films: open fourth and fifth intervals, melodies with prominent falling thirds, and the ever recognizable tom tom beat on a bass drum. These “” aural cues were not only used by various composers predating and following Steiner, but the cues themselves could remain relatively unchanged aurally and still represent a plethora of “Others” including the Chinese, Indians, Native Americans, and even aliens from outer space (Slowik 197). These “exotic” aural cues aided the film in presenting the Skull Islanders as beings out of place and time who appear as real and emotionally stimulating objects merely for aural and visual consumption, encouraging a fascinating cannibalism<sup>8</sup> resulting from the audience’s simultaneous objectification and realistic horror at the existence of the Skull Islanders (Rony 10). Equipped with these tried and true aural and visual guidelines for signaling the ethnographiable Other, the Western film proceeded into its golden age as a superior American cultural art form.

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<sup>8</sup> Fascinating cannibalism (viewer’s pleasure in consuming ethnographic image in film): “the mixture of fascination and horror at the “ethnographic” occasions: the “cannibalism” is not that of the people who are labeled savages, but that of the consumers of the images of the bodies... of native peoples offered up by popular media and science (Rony 10).

## The Indian in the Western: Film Analyses

### *Red River*

Director Howard Hawks' began his career as a screenwriter turned director for Paramount pictures in the 1920s. By the time Hawks began directing Western films, he had already been lauded for such successes as *Scarface* (1932), *His Girl Friday* (1940), and *The Big Sleep* (1946). *Red River* (1948) was the first of the director's five Westerns films and ranks eleventh in the list of most successful Westerns (inflation adjusted) of all time (Cawelti 206). *Red River*, starring John Wayne and Montgomery Clift, relates a story of the first cattle drive to successfully complete the Chisolm trail from Texas to Kansas. The cattle drive is headed by the irascible and unwaveringly determined Tom Dunson (Wayne) who has dedicated almost two decades of labor toward raising the Red River D cattle herd and, "...enough beef to feed a whole nation...to make them strong... to make them grow," at the ranch he settles along the Rio Grande in Texas. Dunson's determination pays off and his herd grows to over 10,000 head. However, the destruction of the southern economy in the wake of the Civil War has rendered Dunson's beef nearly worthless unless he can drive the herd to a northern railhead for sale, his preferred railhead being in Missouri over a thousand miles north. As the herd progresses slowly northward, dissention grows between Dunson and his men following a rumor that Abilene, Kansas, over 200 miles closer, may be the home of a newly constructed railhead. It is not long before Dunson's recalcitrant determination and predisposition for violence clash with his hired hands including his right hand man and partner, Matthew Garth (Clift).

While the interrelational struggles between Dunson and his men in the midst of a cattle drive fraught with perils (stampedes, river crossings, and border gangs) serves as *Red River's* primary conflict, the film's prologue, set in 1851 before Dunson has settled his ranch, seems to

present an entirely different conflict: the cowboy's fight against the Indians. Through a series of surprisingly brief dialogues and a trite fight scene, the Comanche Indians are presented as what initially would seem to be the sole force impeding the cattleman's progress. They are wasteful, violent, and lucky for Dunson, predictable. However, the brevity of the Indian's role in the film is highly suspicious considering that the prologue spans only twenty minutes and the Indians play no role beyond minimal plot device in the rest of the film. When considered in conjunction with its filmic image and script, Dimitri Tiomkin's scoring/ soundsignals for *Red River*, in particular the title credits and prologue scenes, will be analyzed for both their aural coding of the film's protagonists and its Indian antagonists in order understand precisely what role the Indian plays and subsequently, why the Comanche is erased from the film following the prologue. When image, dialogue, and music are considered simultaneously, the Indian's brief appearance and subsequent absence becomes clear.

*Red River's* title credits begin with a heroic fanfare introductory sound signal voiced in the French horns which immediately anchors the piece's keynote in A flat major. The fanfare quickly gives way to a rousing rustic male chorus singing in English, which continues the A flat major sound signal, in common time. The tune, titled "Settle Down", was written by Tiomkin for *Red River* specifically. With its simple rhythm, conventional chord progression, and lilting sing song quality, "Settle Down" not only provides the viewer with pleasant title music but informs the audience of the characters/ demographic of the proceeding film- Cowboys (aka white American males). The stark heroic maleness of the title credits is unwavering, leaving no room for any aural contradiction of the cowboy's superiority in gender, race, or objective, a contradiction that could have possibly been achieved by even slightly varying sound signals within the title credits for instance, a temporary shift from A flat major to A flat minor, or the

incorporation of an “Other” theme that would break the chorus’s song. However, Tiomkin does not aurally hint at an Indian, or danger of any kind for that matter, because, put simply, he does not have to.

The Western genre’s appropriation of historical narrative for dramatic effect affords *Red River* and its score narrative authority in positing that its story and characters are based on actual accounts of the frontier when in reality, they are simply a reiterated myth (Prats 2). The audience knows the outcome of the cowboys and Indians story because it has already actually happened in “history,” but that by no means deters audiences from enjoying a new reiteration of a beloved national myth (Slotkin 280), a “history” that by all accounts contains a (myth of) conquest- the Cowboy wins, no questions asked (Prats 3). Even more importantly, the aural coding of this conquest suggests an emotional response aimed at homogenizing the audience’s pride in this fact. The audience is reminded through sound signals that the cowboy’s heroic maleness is familiar (predictable chord progressions, folk tune-esque quality), righteous (solid major key, lilting easy melody), and reliable (steady simple rhythm, “settle down” lyrics, lack of conflicting sound signals). The subsequent reiterations of the “Settle Down” theme throughout the rest of the film’s score are meant to signal moments of success for the cowboy. The Indian or the antagonist, on the other hand, is left aurally unmentioned in the credits and therefore, forgotten, erasing any power his representational sound signal/ thematic material might have wielded over the “Settle Down” Cowboy theme. The Indian is silenced before he is even sounded. Thus, within the first two minutes of the film, Tiomkin has trained the audience to recall a positive emotion in response to this aural coding of the cowboy and will elicit this same reaction whenever this thematic material is reiterated throughout the film.

The film itself opens with a placard stating that the story to be told is, “A story of one of the great cattle herds of the world... the story of the Red River D,” again playing on the historical authenticity afforded by the genre. At this moment, the score iterates the second of its most prominent aural themes which will be referred to as the “Kai-Yay” theme within this analysis. While the Kai-Yay theme is iterated several times prior, it fully manifests in the score at the start of the cattle drive- another male chorus singing “Kai Yay”, a musical imitation the excited cries of the ranch hands as they begin goading the cattle. As it is used in the film, the Kai-Yay theme represents the cattleman/ cowboy, more specifically the cowboy’s work ethic and perseverance. Every reiteration of the Kai Yay theme accompanies action regarding cattle or the duties of the cowboy, aurally implying a sense of pride that the cowboy has in his work. The music also encourages the audience to share in this feeling of pride.

The first actual shot of *Red River* focuses on a wagon train which the audience soon learns is headed west to California. Unsurprisingly, the score accompanies the wagon train with another jaunty folk song- like sound signal continuing the A flat major keynote from the title credits. The tune is voiced in the evocatively humble clarinets and later imitated in the violins. It also features directly quoted excerpts of the tune “Turkey in the Straw” voiced in the banjo, an instrument decisively orchestrated in order to temporally situate the scene as well as suggest the humble perseverance of the pioneers in the wagon train. The first mention of Indians occurs moments later as Tom and his friend Nadine Groot, played by Walter Brennan, prepare to leave the wagon train and strike out on their own for Texas. The Colonel leading the train (Lane Chandler), in an effort to stop them states, “You know this is Indian country. You may be walking right into trouble. For two days past from this day we’ve seen smoke and signs... they’re around somewhere, I can feel them. As far as you’re concerned the Comanches are



welcome to you, but not to your bull and your cow. We need the beginnings of herds in California.” Contrary to expectation, Dunson responds to this warning with what is best described as nonchalance, not even acknowledging any threat has been mentioned- instead he states, ‘You’re right about one thing: the beginning of herds but I’m starting my own herd. I’ve watched the land south of here... good for beef. So I am going south where it is.” Dunson, the cowboy, is too brave and too determined to worry about this potential Indian problem. As this exchange takes place, it is important to note that it is not only Dunson who refuses to acknowledge the colonel’s warning. Throughout this dialogue, the score has maintained the same lulling A flat major folk tune melody in the strings despite the dialogue’s ominous subject matter. Like Dunson, the aural coding (or lack thereof) at this moment refuses to acknowledge the possibility of Indians, especially Indians posing a legitimate threat to the cowboy. The score provides the audience neither aural foreshadowing of the coming of the Indian nor an emotional suggestion of fear or anticipation at the potential threat the Indian might pose. Therefore, the audience has no reason to worry about the Indian either which further aligns the collective with Dunson’s perspective. As a result, the only “Indian” of this scene exists by word of mouth only, lacking any actual corporeal or aural reality (sound signals that represent him) , rendering him powerless within this “historical” narrative. He is erased before he even appears meaning his aural presence has no effect on the Euro-American sound signals emanated by the orchestra.

The first “sighting” of the Indian in *Red River* is what author Armando Prats labels as visual synecdoche in his book *Invisible Natives: Myth and Identity in the American Western*. Synecdoche in the visual context means the Indian’s presence is evident through various representational signs meaning his appearance is in fact imminent but his physical body is still

virtually absent (Prats 24). Hours after Dunson and Groot have left the wagon train they look back to see a looming cloud of smoke in the distance- the first visual synecdoche for the Indian. As the audience shares Dunson's gaze toward the smoke, the score immediately codes the smoke by sounding a downward spiraling half step sound signal orchestrated in the strings. Groot comments, "That's too big to be a signal smoke aint it? That's just about where the wagon train would be." The smoke is audibly negative- minor second intervals descending, as well as audibly "Other," with heavy percussive low brass and bass drum moving in a brisk triple meter. The Indian Other is implied by this contrived visual referent, the smoke signal. Aurally, this Indian sound signal is audibly different, imposing aural Otherness because it is the first aural disruption of the A flat major keynotes that have preceded it. This "Indian," sound signal is signifying both the physical and ideological disruption the Indian presence has caused for the settlers while simultaneously refusing to grant the Indian any semblance of aurality.

Groot then asks, "Why do the Indians always want to be burning up good wagons?" Groot's remark regarding the waste of good wagons tersely summarizes the conflict at hand: The Indians are wasteful and violent and that costs the white man valuable resources that were meant to aid his progress westward. Even more indicative of the white man's single minded determination for progress is the fact that Groot chides the Indians for wasting wagons and material goods rather than wasting lives. Later, it becomes evident that the Indians have killed the people in the wagon train including Dunson's betrothed though she is never directly referred to again. This persistent dwelling on the wastefulness of the Indians again places the cowboy in sharp juxtaposition to his Indian counterpart. The cowboy is a facilitator of progress, the narrative of progress being a common motif that American "history" and consequently the Western genre have in common. The Indian burns up good wagons. The white man uses them to

positively transform the West, marking an essential problematic difference between cowboy and Indian which positively adds to the Cowboys character and makes the Indian the embodiment of negation (Rony 11).

It is not surprising that Dunson chooses not to return to the burning wagon train to help, opting instead to make camp for the night in order to await the Indian attack that he and Groot are now expecting. The fact that the two men expect the attack attests to another key characteristic of the Indian portrayed in *Red River*: he is predictable. Both Groot and Dunson mysteriously possess a knowledge of Indian ways that further obviates any harm the Indian could cause, again, rendering the Indian impotent before he is even present. This knowledge again reflects the narrative of progress in that it portrays the Indians as static objects of ethnographic knowledge, unchanging over time, an occurrence in ethnographic film that Tobing Rony summarizes as, “The exotic is always already known (Rony 6).” This makes the Indian easily defeatable by the clever white man determined to improve his and his country’s station. As they sit in the darkness, Groot and Dunson become aware of the Indians’ presence through a synecdoche widely used in most Indian Westerns: the bird call, which is employed by Dunson and Groot’s attackers as a feeble attempt to aurally blend into the natural soundscape surrounding the camp (crickets, bull frogs etc.) while simultaneously maintaining means of communication. Unfortunately for the Indians, their “secret” bird calls speak as loudly as words to Groot and Dunson who are not only fully aware that the Indians are poised for attack but are also able to size up the number of attackers based on the number of different bird calls used. In other words, the Indians are incapable of achieving the element of surprise because they (their methods of attack, battle practices, and “secret” languages) are already objects of knowledge to the seasoned cowboys.

The tranquility of the night is shattered when the Indians descend upon Groot and Dunson's camp, whooping and shouting (whooping being another expected sound mark of the Indian expected by the audience.) For the first time, Tiomkin scores a barrage of brief and confused Other sound signals, the first of which involves a simplistic yet rapid dotted sixteenth note rhythm theme/ keynote comprised of the blaring repetition of only three notes: F sharp, G sharp, and A in the brass over a D natural tremolo, creating audible dissonance as well as prominent "Other intervals" in the strings (fourths and fifths). Immediately, Dunson fells two warriors with his gun however, as the third rushes toward him, his gun jams. It is important to note that even though the Indians are filmed in almost head on shots, only their bodies, never their faces, are distinguishable to the audience, allowing these bodies to be anonymous, genericized and easily forgotten in the aural chaos. Tiomkin orchestrates another Other theme (B, A#, D, B) repeated on a steady eighth note rhythm sounded simultaneously with the first, thus creating a hectic texture of voices as Dunson and his attacker plunge into a pond. As they struggle in the water, Groot tosses Dunson a knife which Dunson quickly turns against the Indian. As Dunson maneuvers the knife closer to his attacker, the orchestra repeats a diminished fifth interval in the French horn created by alternating D sharp and A, the dissonance of which increases the tension perceived by the audience. It cannot be forgotten, however, that the audience has already been told how this fight plays out. It is only the emotional response to the music that perpetuates the momentary tension. Finally, Dunson successfully stabs his attacker, the motion of his arm repeatedly stabbing his submerged enemy accompanied by an alternating minor second interval sound signal of F sharp and F. When it becomes clear that Dunson has killed the Indian, a muted trumpet quickly reiterates the horn fanfare signal of the Kai-Yay theme

which vanquishes the tonal strangeness of the Other themes and reestablishes a recognizable key all while conveniently labeling Dunson's victory (murder of the Indian) as righteous.

After this initial attack, the Indian threat seems to be suspended for a majority of the film. Much later, Garth and the other cattlemen rescue another wagon train from Indians but this instance is brief and merely a setting to establish the film's love triangle. As expected, the Indian attackers, again Comanches, are never seen up close, the majority of the scene being shot from within the barricade of covered wagons where the settlers are taking shelter. Again, it is only the visual symbols (the arrows) of the Indian that make the Indian somewhat "present" in this scene. Ultimately, this visual and aural lack of Indian (ambiguous and faceless if his body is ever up close and personal) is no more than a reiteration of history. The Indian was once a threat on the frontier but a minimal one. The American had far more pressing matters to attend to- like raising a herd that, "will feed a whole nation, beef that will make them strong." By portraying the Indian in a purely symbolic and generic way with synecdoche and brief muddled thematic material, *Red River* presents an Indian that not only lacks authenticity but also an Indian that is easily ethnographically objectified proving no match for America determination. He is inaudible before he is even heard making his erasure all the more inevitable.

### *Broken Arrow*

Unlike the erasure of the Indian in Hawks' *Red River*, director Delmer Daves' 1950 Western *Broken Arrow*, starring Jimmy Stewart, represented Hollywood's attempt to counteract the slanderous image of the Native American that it had championed for so long. While not as well patronized as *Red River*, *Broken Arrow* ranks twenty fifth in the list of the most successful

Westerns of all time (Cawelti 206) and was the most successful of Delmer Daves' nine Western films (Aleiss 90). Daves, too, had worked as a Hollywood screenwriter with MGM pictures before being hired to direct *Destination Tokyo* with Warner Brothers in 1942 (Aleiss 90). *Broken Arrow*, which takes place in 1870 in Arizona, tells the story of Thomas Jeffords (Stewart), an ex-union soldier and gold prospector who befriends the infamous Chiricahua Apache leader Cochise (Jeff Chandler) in hopes of encouraging a peace treaty that will end the bloody sixty year war between the Apaches and the U.S. government. At the time of its release, *Broken Arrow* was heralded as one of the first Western films to portray Native Americans in an accurate and sympathetic light.

Unfortunately, despite its best efforts, *Broken Arrow* not only fails to avoid many of the condemnatory aural and visual symbols used to portray Native Americans but also attempts to pass a fabricated historical account as its narrative and moral backbone when in reality, the film relies on a culturally muddled and white-washed Indian Other to form its narrative and incite its audience's sympathy. Hugo Friedhofer's decisively "Indian" sounding score is essential to the portrayal of the Apaches in *Broken Arrow* as well as to encouraging the audience's sympathy for them. However, in an analysis of this score, it will become clear that *Broken Arrow* is only successful in this objective because it aurally presents a Euro-American definition of an ideal Indian. When placed within the film's supposed "historical" context, the treatment of the Indian in *Broken Arrow* is arguably more deleterious than his erasure in *Red River*.

A proper analysis of *Broken Arrow*'s score would not be complete without at least brief mention of its title credits. As seen in the analysis of *Red River* and later in this paper with the credits for *The Searchers*, a film's title credits are meant to serve as the initial aural statement of the film's most significant themes and motifs. In the scoring for *Broken Arrow*'s title credits,

composer Hugo Friedhofer adheres to sound signals that are audibly “Other” however, it cannot be forgotten that because they are perceived as audibly “Other” to the Euro- American audience, that means they are mostly, if not completely, beholden unto the keynotes of the Euro-American soundscape and are not actually Other at all. While there is no actual Native American auralty within these title credits, Friedhofer has meticulously orchestrated sound signals that convey a “benign” or “benevolent Other, rather than a threatening or malicious Other. These benevolent signals include the score’s avoidance of percussion and rapid rhythmic gestures, a tonal range that spans well over an octave in each voice, and the outlining of a diatonic key in the melody with emphasis placed on open fourth and fifth intervals rather than minor dissonances (like the minor second interval mentioned earlier). In avoiding negative keynotes in the title credits, Friedhofer crafts a title credit sequence that tells the audience of the film’s strictly “Indian” subject matter and signals that this “Indian” is not to be feared but rather, respected.

The film opens with a vista of the Arizona desert, Jeffords riding through on his Appaloosa horse. As Jeffords begins his monologue, the audience hears a solo clarinet. The clarinet melody outlines a series of perfect fourth interval jump- the perfect fourth being a particularly operative sound signal here- it is not called “perfect” for nothing having been named for its particularly pleasing quality to the “western” ear. Not only does this interval seem to mimic the tranquil openness of the shot, it also aurally codes Jeffords. He is solo, unique, and above all good: the perfect American. The clarinet solo encourages the audience to trust Jeffords which is particularly important given that in order for the proceeding narrative to work, the film desperately requires the audience’s suspension of disbelief (because in truth, the actual story of Jeffords and Cochise is not what the film presents). This is made evident when Jeffords states, “What I have to tell happened exactly as you’ll see it. The only change will be that when the

Apaches speak, they will speak in our language.” Within the span of two sentences Jeffords has revealed the film’s master plan as well as its theoretical demise. The audience is lead to believe that the film they are about to watch is true and historically accurate which is an incredible statement in the first place given that this is a Hollywood movie. On top of this, the “history” of this story does not actually involve any Indian language. The voice of the Indian is literally “our language” the hegemonic language, English, which in turn relegates this supposed “historical” Indian portrayal to a white idealization of “Indian” at best.

The perfect fourth clarinet solo continues throughout Jeffords’ monologue until Jeffords states, “The Story started when I saw some buzzards circling in the sky.” At this moment the score abruptly switches from the pleasant clarinet melody to a reiteration of thematic material initially signaled in the title credits (C, G, B flat, C on a simple quarter, eighth, eighth, quarter note rhythm in the low brass, which will henceforth be labeled the Indian theme, often aurally synonymous with Cochise because of its noble/ stately quality). Jeffords states that from the buzzards, he knows, “something or somebody was getting ready to die. I figured it was a hurt deer or a rabbit or a snake.” Even though Jeffords has yet to see what is dying, the score has already told the audience whose death it is that the buzzards are waiting on: the Indian’s. Sure enough, as Jeffords peers over the cliff, the score reiterates the same Indian theme again in the low brass just as the audience spies the dying Indian. However, instead of seeing a strong, noble, and empowered Indian as the theme suggests, the audience witnesses an injured Indian boy struggling through the canyon. Even though the Indian boy is literally crawling, unable to walk due to his injuries, Jeffords continues to pontificate about the scene at hand stating, “His kind [the boy’s] was more dangerous than a snake. He was an Apache.” This is a particularly interesting moment shared by dialogue, image and score because the three clearly disagree, while



the score, in accordance with Jeffords, suggests an able bodied, powerful Indian; the body actually seen is that of a weak and defenseless Indian boy. This dissention between image and sound signals could very well be a clever aural trick for avoiding what could at this point in the film be a premature portrayal of a fully empowered Indian body. For now, the film must establish Jeffords' heroism and goodwill toward the Indian; the film is more about Jeffords than any Indian, after all.

Jeffords briefly looks around before he spurs his horse into the canyon toward the boy. As he descends, the orchestra drops out leaving only the piano repeating a simplistic D natural sound signal. The sounding of D natural has not been heard since the film began because its tonal exclusion has allowed the perfect fourth intervals in the clarinet melody and the perfect fifth intervals created in the Indian theme. It is sounded at this precise moment to defy aural expectation (much like Jeffords is doing). It also disrupts the previous and now familiar sound signals of open intervals and thick orchestral texture leaving only the piano to convey vulnerability and tension, whose vulnerability it is, is uncertain. What will happen after Jeffords reaches the boy? Surprisingly, the orchestra does not answer this question. Jeffords offers the boy water and even when the Apache boy attempts to stab Jeffords, the orchestra remains silent. This silence achieves an important effect: The Indian boy is aurally undefined, coded neither positive or negative which also means he lacks any power worth aural commentary and he is easily overpowered by Jeffords.

The scene cuts to Jeffords treating the boy's wounds. The orchestra has joined back in accompanying the scene with the familiar Indian theme imitated in several different solo instruments (horn, clarinet, and violin), except now the sound signal for "Indian" seems to be displaced, making it unclear as to which character it is defining. Though the Apache boy is

present in the scene, it is Jeffords who seems to receive the aural commendation of the noble Indian theme for treating the boy's wounds (even though the boy is an Apache). Jeffords' narration briefly commends the boy for not crying out in pain as buck shot is dug out of his back but Jeffords also commends his own bravery for maintaining a camp fire in the midst of Apache country in order to nurse the boy, begging the question, whose "bravery" is truly greater in the scene? The score's precise visual referent is ambiguous making it a possibility that the Indian theme is defining Jeffords as much as or more than the actual Indian boy. This aural ambiguity occurs over and over again throughout *Broken Arrow* as a means of blurring lines between white man and Indian. By making both similarly definable aurally, both are equally evocative of sympathy. Unfortunately, in bringing white man and Indian closer together aurally, morally, and visually (even so far as white people playing Indians- Jeff Chandler as Cochise) this ambiguous scoring method tattles on *Broken Arrow*'s weakness. The film ascribes whiteness or Anglo-American values onto the Apaches, specifically Cochise, to whom Jeffords grows very close as the film continues in order to win audience sympathy (Aleiss 91).

Later, after Jeffords has been granted a meeting with Cochise and proven his goodwill toward the Chiricahua's, Cochise invites Jeffords on a walk through the village where Jeffords is privy to the performance of an Apache ceremony. The ceremony depicted is in fact a portion of the puberty rite (much like the fire dance described earlier) performed for Apache girls and includes traditional ceremonial costumes, music, and dancing (Aleiss 91). As Cochise and Jeffords leave the ceremony, Jeffords inquires after the dance's meaning and Cochise explains the ceremony depicts the spirits of good and evil dancing. "Not everyone can do it. If it is done wrong they will be angry up there." Strangely this answer does not seem like a full explanation but it is enough to remind Jeffords of his training (with Juan his apache teacher earlier in the

film) who states, “I think this must be the dance that comes before the sunrise ceremony for a young girl.” In pleasant surprise, Cochise responds, “You know about it?” and Jeffords answers, “A little bit. Without words it tells me things.” Jeffords’ final utterance is particularly telling of the cultural ambiguation occurring in this film. Despite having asked about the meaning of the dance in the first place it is Jeffords who reveals to the audience what the purpose of the dance actually is, knowledge he seems to credit on a musical brand of spiritual intuition “Without words it tells me things” as if this is not something his Indian guide, Juan, taught him. This spiritual connection Jeffords apparently shares with the Apache aural rituals not only positions Jeffords on par with the Apaches (“He thinks like an Apache”) but also places him in the powerful position of being a white man who *knows* Apache ways again, proving his superiority by placing the Apaches in the position of ethnographiable objects and Jeffords as the historifiable white man (Rony 7). He can think and be like an Apache but retain the authority of the white hero.

On top of this, Jeffords has voiced a gross misconception about the sound signals he is hearing. He says, “without words it tells me things,” as if this collection of sound signals sounded in the puberty ritual lacked the precision of a verbal language, an assumption made simply because these aural gestures sound like a series of indistinct vocables and chant that a listener can only understand spiritually like the Indians supposedly do. What seems like a lack of words to Jeffords and the Euro-American audience is actually a complex and precise aural language that is inaudible within the Euro-American soundscape and therefore must be ascribed a spiritual quality to justify its seeming simplicity to the Euro-American listener. However, Jeffords’ spiritual understanding is what Cochise, the actual Apache, verbally appreciates as, “Very different from other whites.” This moment not only demonstrates the power Jeffords’

“knowledge” of the Apaches wields but also provides yet another moment in the film aimed at praising this very western/ American form of knowledge. Cochise likes that the white man “knows” him.

This scene’s secondary significance is the fact that it is a prelude to the film’s most important cultural ambiguation: the marriage of Jeffords to the Apache maiden Sonseeahray. Cochise explains to Jeffords that the ceremony is in honor of a girl who is, “in the holiest time of her life. For these four days she becomes white painted lady, mother of life. She is very old for this ceremony. It is very special.” It is precisely because Sonseeahray is in this pure and holy state that she can be presented as a love interest and possible wife for Jeffords. Her youth and purity make her morally and culturally malleable (Pratts 197). In their first meeting, Sonseeahray’s purity is portrayed with the voicing of a C sharp major theme (C#, F, A sharp) insistently repeated in in the strings and flutes, a common sound signal employed by film composers to evoke female sentimentality and often, to portray feelings of tenderness and love. In every subsequent meeting that takes place between Sonseeahray and Jeffords, their dialogue is accompanied by similar slurring, high pitched gestures voiced solely in the strings and flute. Therefore, the aural coding used to define Sonseeahray avoids sounding Other and codes her as it would any white female character rather than absolute Other, making the idea of her being Jeffords love object palatable as well as believable to the audience (Pratts 186).

It can be no surprise that it is The Chiricahua Apaches who lose the most when their peace treaty with the U.S. government goes awry. Dialogue during the Apache leaders’ meeting reveals that not only does the peace treaty significantly limit Apache land, it also confines the Apaches to the practice of raising cattle and selling cattle back to the American government (who provided the cattle in the first place). Geronimo makes it clear that, “It is not the Apache

way to be grandmothers to cattle.” But Cochise insists on the merits of the American way. Cochise proves his whiteness again at the close of the film when he insists that Sonseeahray’s murder at the hand of the white ambusher must be ignored because peace will not, “Come easily.” Cochise, however, will not suffer an Apache to break the treaty though the whites have already broken it. *Broken Arrow*’s attempt to respect the Native American is achieved both visually, verbally, and aurally through a superimposition of white American values and forms of ethnographic knowledge onto the Apaches, obscuring the tribe’s cultural authenticity and indigenous auralty just as thoroughly as any anti-Indian Western does.

### *The Searchers*

*The Searchers* (1956) was director John Ford’s thirty fourth Western film and by far his most successful. It ranks seventeenth in the list of most successful Western films of all time and has maintained a high position on the American Film Institute’s list of the One Hundred Greatest Films of All Time (Currently ranked twelfth). The story begins in the year 1868 when Ethan Edwards, played by John Wayne, returns home to his brother Aaron’s Texas homestead after being away for many years, some of which were spent as a Confederate soldier in the Civil War. The remaining three years are merely hinted at as being too unsavory to explicitly discuss. Shortly after Ethan’s return, the Edwards’ homestead is destroyed by Comanche Indians who kill Ethan’s brother, sister in-law, and nephew and abduct his two young nieces Lucy and Debbie. The search from which the film takes its title begins when Ethan, his adopted nephew Martin, and several neighboring farmers set out into the wilderness to find and save the Edwards girls from their Comanche captors. Eventually, Lucy is found raped and murdered leaving Martin and Ethan to continue the search for Debbie with merely blind hope of her eventual retrieval.

The score for *The Searchers*, composed by Max Steiner, follows the formulaic scoring for classic Hollywood films outlined earlier in this paper. However, this seemingly predictable approach to scoring still allows for many problematic contradictions between image and sound signal. Steiner's scoring for *The Searchers* title credits begins with an aggressive blaring, densely textured brass piece in a modal keynote with a heavy repetitive striking of a bass drum in the common time eighth note figure sounded over and over again in countless Westerns (four eighths, accent on the first of the eighth). This orchestration creates a quintessential Indian sound signal which immediately accosts the audience and aurally foreshadows the film's malicious antagonist. However, after less than a minute of this "Indian theme," the score abruptly breaks into a pleasant, crooning, cowboy song in A major. It is no coincidence that this sound signal, wholly unlike the Indian theme, is immediately audible as familiar and cheerful (major keynote) containing many gestures reminiscent of American folk music. Much like Tiomkin's "Settle Down", Steiner's cowboy song titled "The Searchers," written by Stan Jones, later quoted by Steiner in the main score (Scheuer 156), features sung verses and chorus meant to evoke the civilized and dutiful Cowboy hero who "wanders and roams and turns his back on home." In this sequence, the credits have established that the cowboy's restless wandering is prior to the presence of the Indian in the first place. Because the Indian exists, the cowboy must dutifully turn his back on home. Therefore, without even watching the movie, the viewer is told that the Indian presence represented by the "Indian theme" will be overcome, silenced or conquered within the story, as is expected by the audience and foretold by history.

However, the stark boundaries of these seemingly irreconcilable identities are continuously questioned by Ethan Edwards's Otherness which the score often codes as explicitly "Indian" (according to the white man's definition of the term) through the same aural signals for

Other employed to portray the Comanches. This duplicitous approach to sound signaling was occasionally employed by composers of Western Film score to sonically signal any force opposing American progress and values (Scheuer 156). The script is forthcoming when it comes to Ethan's savageness, daring the audience to liken Ethan to the antagonistic Indian archetype he tirelessly pursues. Ethan is irascible, violent, sadistic and above all, incredibly "knowledgeable" about Comanche beliefs, lifestyle, and battle tactics. Ethan's possession of this knowledge remains completely unquestioned by the film's characters and, of course, works in Ethan's favor. Because he "knows" the Comanches, he is able to successfully track them and eventually, defeat their evil leader. However, the ethnographic knowledge that objectifies the Comanche also assists the film's narrative and score in Othering Ethan himself.

Almost in an attempt to deny his own Otherness, Ethan is especially disgusted by the film's most liminal characters: Martin Pawley, his adopted one eighth Cherokee nephew (raised by Martha and Aaron) and eventually, Debbie. The years Debbie has spent with the Comanches have, according to Ethan, made her more Indian than white. As the search progresses, both narrative and score make it clear that the differences between white and Indian are not necessarily so numerous. Thus, the aural coding of Steiner's score is often duplicitous or ambiguous in its visual referents in order to present this conflict. Again, it is important to recall that this coding is purely beholden unto the keynotes and sound signals of the Euro-American soundscape which in turn reflects the fact that even if the white hero is coded Indian, that Indian is defined on purely Euro-American terms. The analysis of specific scenes will clarify the actual function of this seemingly complicated aural code is in fact to situate the aural narration of *The Searchers* as purely Ethan-centric. Therefore, it can be concluded that the "Indian" and "Indianness" presented by Steiner's score for *The Searchers* is not meant to portray an actual

Indian Other at all but rather, the score is meant to define Ethan and the white hero's understanding of what Indian or "Otherness" is. Again, this objective is achieved using a ethnographiable and static image of the Indian to provide a template for all the things the white man is not.

A demonstrable example of this sound signal confusion indicating white perspective occurs during the buffalo shooting scene. The scene begins with Martin's narration (actually a letter written to Laurie Jorgensen), "We were headed north through buffalo country when something happened that I aint got straight in my own mind yet. On this day we sighted a small herd. We needed some meat so we circled around and come up on 'em a'foot." As Martin recounts the beginning of this incident the orchestra is sounding another explicitly Indian theme, this time with an eighth note bass drum sound signal (every other eighth accented) reminiscent of the tom tom beat used to score King Kong. The melody is initially iterated in the brass and immediately imitated in the strings (G#, D#, C#, B, G#- eighth, eighth tied to eight sixteenth, sixteenth, half ) over a pulsing G# eighth note in the low brass (downbeat accented) followed by the repetition of descending sixteenth notes an octave higher in the strings. As this theme occurs, the only image the audience sees is that of the buffalo herd. Because the Indian is absent, it must be assumed that the purpose of this sound signal is to aurally define the Buffalo as what Ethan understands as an extension of the Indian. They are strong, numerous, and seemingly unperturbed as the white men approach- they resist Ethan's white authority/ power. In other words, the buffalo are another visual synecdoche for the Indian, a connection which is strengthened by aural coding.

The buffalo theme is abruptly cut off when Ethan fires his gun killing a single buffalo. Immediately the herd flees, and only the pounding of their hoof beats is heard as Ethan continues



to fire randomly into the herd. Martin protests, “Ethan that don’t make no sense!” at which Ethan screams, “Pound their empty bellies! That’s the sense it makes, you blanket head! At least they won’t feed any Comanche this winter.” Ethan’s disturbed frame of mind- the wastefulness and hatred - is most likely what Martin confesses he cannot get straight in his mind. Ethan’s statement confirms what the score has already asserted. For Ethan, the buffalo are an extension, a synecdoche of the Indian and by killing them he also kills The Indians he hates. Therefore, it cannot be denied that the synthesis of the score’s “Indian theme” with the buffalo was meant not only as an aural signal of the Indian but to aurally define the buffalo in accordance with how Ethan understands them.

As Ethan shouts this final sentence “At least they won’t feed any Comanches this winter,” Martin’s attention is caught by music in the distance- a diegetic trumpet sounding a cavalry charge. Martin shouts at Ethan to stop and listen several times before Ethan finally pauses. The cavalry charge’s sonic intervention at this particular moment is significant on many levels. Firstly, this trumpeting is a diegetic sound signal, created by a source within the film indicating the sound is somehow significant to the film’s plot or characters. Secondly, this cavalry charge is an important military soundmark within the American soundscape. The trumpet transmits an aural code that conveys military presence and therefore, law and order, asserting the aural dominance of this soundmark in the overall wild (and music-less) landscape in which Martin and Ethan find themselves. The dominance of this diegetic soundmark reminds the audience of the power structures inherent to the Euro- American soundscape by successfully halting Ethan’s savage murder of the buffalo, reminding him of the task at hand- find Debbie, even if it is to put her out of her misery.

Debbie's rescue is of particular importance in analyzing the score for *The Searchers* in that it demonstrates the conflicting ideas regarding whiteness and Indianness with which Ethan struggles. Prior to her rescue and for the majority of the film Ethan has made it clear that even if Scar's group were found, Debbie could never be recovered. Her life, and above all, likely sexual relations with, the Comanches have rendered her more Indian than white which Ethan regards as something that will forever bar her from white society. Just moments before the raid on Scar's camp, Ethan expresses his hope of Debbie's accidental murder rationalizing that, "Living with Comanches aint bein' alive." Yet, what seems to be an irrevocable hatred of Debbie's supposed Indianness abruptly changes when Ethan finally has his chance to kill her.

In the end, it is Martin, disguised as a Comanche, who kills Scar in order to free Debbie. As Debbie and Martin flee the Comanche camp, now decimated by Ethan's search party and the U.S. Cavalry, Ethan, who has just hatefully scalped Scar's corpse, spots Debbie's escape. Despite Martin's attempt to stop him, Ethan follows Debbie in hot pursuit. At this moment, the audience has every reason to believe Ethan still desires to kill this supposed "Comanche Squaw" as he has planned for the past hour and a half of the film. Yet, as Debbie and Ethan get further from the camp, the score aurally signals their spatial displacement from Indianness. The Indian coded music that accompanied Ethan as he scalped Scar has stopped, replaced by a scurrying chase theme, a clipping triple meter evocative of a horse galloping, accentuated by a persistent snare drum and trilling woodwinds. As Debbie tumbles down the hillside, Ethan galloping right behind her, the ambiguous chase sound signal breaks into the familiar title credits/hero theme in the French horns- "What makes a man to wander?" in an abbreviated rhythm. This theme has not been reiterated for over an hour of film time and is stated here as if to suggest the end goal of Ethan's chase is not what the audience and Martin expect. The hero theme is suggesting an

unexpected return of Ethan's heroism. As Debbie finally falls to the ground, the strings spiral in a foreboding descending half step sound signal coming to rest on an agonizingly tenuous solo A in the cellos. Ethan jerks Debbie upward, looking directly into her face. At this moment, the audience is fully expecting the reiteration of an Indian theme to summarize Ethan's hatred but instead, in one single motion the cellos, still holding the low A, slur up the octave and begin Martha's theme, a sound signal initially sounded when Ethan returned home to the homestead at the beginning of the film. Martha's Theme/ the Home theme consists of an almost direct quoting of the American folk song titled "Lorena" included by Steiner to appease Ford's demand for period music in the film for the sake of authenticity (Scheuer 161). Ethan's sudden change of heart, though not sufficiently explained by dialogue, has been curtly explained with only two aural gestures. Ethan regains his heroic purpose (Hero Theme) and is unable to kill Debbie because she reminds him of his beloved Martha and the comforts of home (Home Theme/ Martha theme) ultimately proving that the score has in fact been signaling Ethan's personal misconceptions of whiteness versus Indianness the whole time.

Max Steiner's score for *The Searchers* is not meant to portray authentic Native American auralty at all. Instead, it serves as an aural code that defines the white man's understanding and misconceptions of Indian. Therefore, it must be concluded that any moment in the latter half of *The Searchers* in which Debbie seems to be aurally signaled is not meant as an aural coding of Debbie as Indian Other rather, the sound signals conveying Indian Other represent Ethan's superimposition of "Indianness" onto Debbie. Furthermore, if this is the case, the entirety of Steiner's score for *The Searchers* must be understood as an aural definition of Ethan's understanding of himself in relation to the film's Others. In conclusion, yet again we find no authentic Indian auralty in *The Searchers* rather an appropriation of what is perceived as

“Indian” auralty as a means of defining and subjugating the Native American as is most convenient for the film’s audience of Euro-American soundscape listeners.

### Conclusion

Patronizingly, the white man in the “this is my gun cleaning hat” says, “Now listen up. These are our seats now and there ain’t a damn thing you can do about it so why don’t you and super-injun there find yourselves someplace else to have a powwow. OK?” Astonished, Victor Joseph and Thomas Builds-the-Fire, both Coeur D’Alene Indians, leave what were once their bus seats and head toward the back of the bus to far more vacant and far less desirable space. This scene, from the film *Smoke Signals* (1998), written by Sherman Alexie and directed by Chris Eyre, is aimed at metaphorically staging one of the United States’ most problematic historical dilemmas, a dilemma conveniently left out of almost all American “history”. The white men take Thomas and Victor’s seats offering no reasoning whatsoever for their actions other than the seats are “now theirs,” thus displacing Thomas and Victor irrevocably. However, the seemingly historical déjà vu quality of this scene is disrupted by the scene’s diegetic and non-diegetic music. The particular arrangement and performance of the scene’s sound signals effectively demonstrates only one of the many possible ways Native American auralty can resonate within and effectively recode the Euro-American Soundscape thus, affecting American popular culture as a whole.

The bus- seat- scene in *Smoke Signals* can be read in two distinct aural movements, distinguished by two separate sound signals, the song titled “All My Relations” performed by the group Ulali and “John Wayne’s Teeth” performed by Victor and Thomas and subsequently by the Eaglebear Singers. After Thomas and Victor are denied their original seats, the soundtrack

takes up the song “All My Relations” by Ulali, the Native American women’s a cappella group. Two keynotes, or recognizable aural aspects, of this piece stand out to the listener immediately. The song features *women’s voices* singing *vocables* not words. Arguably, these two keynotes, are meaningful soundsignals in and of themselves, but their aural meaning cannot be fully understood until the listener realizes *which* sound signal or tune the women are actually singing. The tune for “All My Relations” originated as the Irish folk tune “Gary Owen” which secured its place in American history as General George Armstrong Custer’s preferred battle march for the 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. Since its militaristic beginnings, “Gary Owen” has been resounded countless times in innumerable Western films, including Ford’s *The Searchers*, as a sound signal most often accompanying heroic cavalry charges or military marches and generally indicative of the United States’ militaristic authority.

If regarded merely for its historical significance, “Gary Owen’s” sounding at this particular moment in *Smoke Signals* would seem like a conflicting aural gesture between film and sound, as if the music were likening this scene to one of Custer’s (White America’s) victories. And indeed, if it were a traditional arrangement of “Gary Owen” this soundsignal would be a gratuitous reminder of America’s “historical” hegemony being carried out yet again, this time on Thomas and Victor. However, because “Gary Owen” is performed by women’s voices singing in vocables, the tune and its relationship with the action on screen function quite differently. The fact that human voices directly produce this soundsignal immediately disrupts the tune’s militaristic coding by excluding any instrumentational keynotes that could possibly signal the military such as trumpet, fife, or penny whistle. The sound of human voices, Ulali’s female voices in particular, not only humanizes the tune, as this keynote is exceedingly effective

in evoking human emotion, but also overthrows the typical white male coding “Gary Owen” traditionally maintains.

Above all, using the keynote of the human voice within the Euro- American soundscape predisposes listeners to expect lyrical significance conveyed by the singer(s). However, rather than the expected English lyrics that pervade *Smoke Signal*'s soundtrack prior to this moment, Ulali sings in vocables, soundmarks that are often indicative of Native American aurality. Thus, Ulali's arrangement of “Gary Owen” appropriates and almost completely recodes the original sound signal in a way that superimposes Native American aurality back onto the Euro- American soundscape. Therefore, this doubly- coded sound signal effectively resounds keynotes of authentic Native American aurality simultaneously with soundsignals of the Euro- American soundscape, making both auralities distinctly audible to Euro-American *and* Native American listener.

When Ulali's double sound signal “All My Relations” is considered with the action on screen, Thomas and Victor's displacement cannot be considered as merely a reminder of history or even a defeat but rather as an aural foreshadowing of the next part of the scene, Thomas and Victor's aural reassertion back onto the bus with their chant “John Wayne's Teeth.” Just as Ulali used the sound signal for “Gary Owen” as an opportunity to resound Native American aurality within a soundscape that attempts to silence the Native American, Thomas and Victor use their displacement as an opportunity to reassert their presence and their culture.

The second aural movement of the bus scene is preceded by Thomas and Victor's brief discussion about “Cowboys.” After they have been forced to relocate to the back of the bus, Thomas states, “Man the cowboys always win... What about John Wayne? Man, he was about the toughest cowboy of them all innit?” Victor, who disagrees with Thomas's statement in

general replies, “You know in all those movies, you never saw John Wayne’s teeth? Not once. I think there’s something wrong when you don’t see a guy’s teeth.” This comment prompts Victor to start patting a steady rhythm on his leg to which he sings a satirical chant. Thomas sings along: “John Wayne’s teeth, hey yah- John Wayne’s teeth hey yah, hey yah hey yah hey- Are they false? Are they real? Are they plastic are they steel?” Thomas and Victor sing louder, finally causing everyone on the bus to turn and look at them. Thomas and Victor are no longer out of sight out of mind. However, their song has done far more than simply remind the bus’s passengers of their presence. Thomas and Victor’s song has both aurally questioned American culture and staged a symbolic aural reassertion of Native American culture back into a seemingly exclusive “Euro- American” culture.

According to the nuance of Thomas and Victor’s sound signal, what is truly “wrong” about not ever seeing John Wayne’s teeth is not necessarily that John Wayne appears emotionless and therefore unrealistic, but rather, that trivial characteristics such as stoicism are enough to propel an actor to the status of a cultural icon capable of controlling people’s conceptualizations of “Nation” and “history”. Above all, Thomas and Victor’s chant aurally questions the means of America’s cultural production in a language that maintains keynotes of Native American aural quality, with the vocables “Hey Yah” and the songs chant quality, but still transmits a message in English, a language that the bus’s white passengers and film’s viewers can understand. The chant makes John Wayne seem silly, the object of a joke rather than a cultural icon, and this profound statement is made by Thomas and Victor, two Coeur D’Alene Indians, who in this circumstance possess both the authority of this criticism as well as aural dominance as they loudly chant the criticism for all the passengers to hear.

While the role of authentic Native American auralty within the development of the Euro-American Soundscape is an exceedingly important aspect in understanding the foundations of American culture, a relative dearth of pre-existing research in this field made an exposition and analysis of this subject particularly difficult while at the same time, signaling a cultural necessity for this discourse. While this paper is aimed at presenting the aural origins and reiterations of the mythologized “Indian” in the Euro- American Soundscape, I present the analysis of this brief scene in *Smoke Signals* containing Ulali’s “All My Relations and “John Wayne’s Teeth,” as a demonstration of an approach to sounding Native American auralty in American popular culture that, I feel, has been gaining cultural prominence since the age of the Western film came to a close in the mid-1970s (Slotkin 627). I believe this approach is capable of recoding the current Euro-American soundscape into a soundscape that is simultaneously considerate of multiple and diverse auralities beyond simply Native American and Euro- American. In short, the double coding demonstrated by songs like “All My Relations” and John Wayne’s Teeth” in *Smoke Signals* could be capable of achieving a truly and inclusively “American Soundscape.”

Resounding Native American auralty in the Euro-American soundscape involves both the recoding of preexisting keynotes and soundsignals of the Euro- American soundscape to be aurally considerate of indigenous auralty as well as the reassertion of authentic indigenous auralty (diverse Native American soundsignals and soundmarks) as equally audible sound signals and soundmarks for listeners of both the Euro- American and Native American soundscapes. “All My Relations” and “John Wayne’s Teeth” exemplify a means of sounding both soundscapes simultaneously in a way that does not allow for one soundscape to achieve aural hegemony over the other. Instead, this inchoate yet developing coexistence between the Native American and Euro- American soundscapes affords the listener the opportunity to (for



lack of a better phrase) hear better. The aural conversation of these two soundscapes instills in the listener a means for critically analyzing sonic hierarchies and American cultural hegemony, a method of active listening that can lead to the elimination of “differentiations” between soundscapes that occlude trans-soundscape hearing and instead, allow for an inclusive and truly American Soundscape.

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