

INTRODUCTION: RAISED VOICES

The eons-old human silence on the archipelago that would become Bermuda was broken, as far as we know for the first time, about 1505. It was probably in that year that the Spanish adventurer and slaver Juan de Bermúdez, returning from one of many trips he made to the new Spanish settlements in the Caribbean, happened upon the islands. Bermuda presented to the Europeans a unique prospect. Nowhere else in the New World, from the Amazon basin to Hudson Bay, did they walk a landscape unsettled by humans before them. Far off the shores of North America, farther from the Antilles, farther still from Europe, the archipelago marked its isolation even in the restricted range of terrestrial fauna that had managed to reach it; a species of skink seems to have been the largest non-flying vertebrate native to it, competing with small amphibians, ubiquitous crabs, and flocks of migratory birds.

Once voyages to the New World became a regular occurrence – as they did with astonishing rapidity after 1492 – the discovery of Bermuda was inevitable. It lay in the midst of the return course sailors charted from the Caribbean, bathed in the green waters and temperate trade winds of the Gulf Stream. In the decades after its discovery, Spanish, Portuguese, and other seamen continued to sail near the archipelago. Some foundered on its ring of protective reefs, others navigated safely into its calm bays to rest and replenish supplies. Their visits are attested in travel accounts, in hints from European archives of settlement projects, on early Atlantic maps, and in some few traces later discovered on Bermuda itself, most famously an enigmatic carving left in a rock above the ocean on the south shore, dated 1543. The more fortunate visitors left behind pigs – a population that grew, offering easy provisions for later visitors – and went on their way.

For a hundred years, however, the Europeans did not linger on the islands. Only in 1609, with the providential delivery on the Bermudian reefs of the storm-tossed *Sea Venture* out of Plymouth, did settlement of the islands finally begin.

It is a surprising sidelight to early exploration of the New World that it took a century for settlement of Bermuda to take hold. These were years in which Europeans pursued, with aggressive and zealous force, colonizing projects from the Bolivian Andes to Canada, from rain-forested Caribbean islands to the rugged, arid hinterlands of Mexico. The delay is explained in part, no doubt, by the conditions of Bermuda itself. Its reefs were treacherous,

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and it afforded scant supplies of fresh water. Still, the islands lay along the richest trade route known to sixteenth-century Europe. Their disadvantages could not have outweighed their potential advantage as either a respite for the Spanish fleet, loaded down with New World plunder, or a well-placed hideaway for the French, Dutch, or English corsairs that increasingly preyed on it. The advantage was apparent to European rulers, and as early as 1527 a first project was afoot to settle the islands. But this and whatever projects followed came to nothing; there is no solid evidence that settlers managed to reach the islands in the sixteenth century. It is as if the Europeans, not finding the islands already populated, could not quite imagine peopling them themselves.

Instead their imaginings of Bermuda took a different turn. Through the late sixteenth century the word spread that the archipelago was enchanted, an Isle of Devils or *demoniorum insulam*. This certainly had much to do with the lack of an indigenous population. The Europeans twisted the absence of Indians on Bermuda into a haunting presence of – something else.

Early seventeenth-century reports, from the time when settlement finally began, memorialize these tales even as they debunk them. In 1603, when the galleon of Diego Ramirez ran aground on its reefs, he and his crew at first quailed at the “shrieking and din” of “the devils reported to be about Bermuda”; but they soon recognized the noise as voices of less uncanny origin: “The headlands are undermined at water level with the haunts of nocturnal birds, which remain in their caves by day . . . These birds sally forth at nightfall with such an outcry, and varying clamor, that one cannot help being afraid.”¹ In 1610 *A True Declaration of the Estate of the Colony in Virginia* could treat the hauntings as widely rumored, only summarily to disenchant them: “These Islands of the Bermudos have ever been accounted an enchanted pile of rocks, and a desert habitation of Devils; but all the Fairies of the rocks were but flocks of birds and all the devils that haunted the woods were but herds of swine.”² The next year saw the first production of *The Tempest*, set on a magic island fashioned after Bermudian reports.

It is a fact not enough remarked that the demonic presence on Bermuda was known, above all else, by its *voice*. A shadowy glimpse in the Bermudian cedar forests of what turned out to be a pig could lend credence to the hauntings, but it was first of all the shrill cries, heard even far offshore, that announced devilish presence. The identification of the source of these cries – the bird in question is the cahow, or grey-and-white petrel, now nearly extinct – finally laid to rest their otherworldly repute, but at the same time it underscored the sonic, aural, and finally vocal stimulus that gave rise to demonic imaginings in the first place. Shakespeare remembered this stimulus, in more benign form, in famous lines of his play: “Be not afeard,” Caliban says, “. . . the isle is full of noises, / Sounds and sweet airs

¹ Quoted from Henry C. Wilkinson, *The Adventurers of Bermuda: A History of the Island from Its Discovery until the Dissolution of the Somers Island Company in 1684* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 22–3.

² Quoted from Jean Kennedy, *Isle of Devils: Bermuda under the Somers Island Company, 1609–1685* (Hamilton, Bermuda: Collins, 1971), p. 26.

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that give delight and hurt not. / Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments / Will hum about mine ears; and sometimes voices . . ."

The transformation in the European imagination of cahows into devils no doubt involved many things – ancient myths of sirens, associations of euphony with heaven and cacophony with hell, and so forth. But from beneath this already heavy cultural baggage it bespoke an atavistic need: to hear voice where there was none. The Europeans' breaking of the Bermudian silence summoned an answering cry. In the absence of Indians, they heard it as extra-human.

This cry was no mere speech but instead something more, a raised voice recognized as distinct from speech in its intonation, patterned rhythmicization, and tautological excess – all features familiar from other, less raucous birdsong. Early visitors recognized the cry as non-speech, even anti-speech, in its escape from a semantic order within which its powers might have been defined and tamed. It was exactly this indistinct semanticism of the demons' calls that one of Ramirez's sailors could not abide. On hearing the cahows he cried out: "What is this devil trying to tell me? Out with it! Let's hear what it is!"

These basic features of heightened voice open out a latitudinarian space broader than the space of speech and in some ways independent of speech's particular powers. One consequence of this, to glance forward to theoretical areas I will touch upon later, is to revise the metaphysics of speech and writing Derrida analyzes, expanding it to a tripartite division of writing, speaking, and vocalization all told – in which speech plays an important but by no means encompassing role. Another consequence is to pose questions of the relevance to early experiences in the New World of Lacanian ruminations on desire that separate voice from signification and leave it to one side, so to speak, as a remainder of the signifying encounter with others.

The imagining by European visitors of demons' cries on Bermuda projected their own fantasies of encounter, and it is an important first step in the direction I wish to take in this book to realize that such fantasies coalesced especially under the impetus of raised voices. Everywhere else the Europeans went they encountered indigenous populations and did not need to fabricate voices. Instead they found themselves face to face with people not merely speaking but lifting up a vocal din in ritual, communal affirmation, massed threat, or colloquy with the divine (or demonic). The newcomers recognized in the din an activity familiar from their own societies: singing. The special powers of voices heightened in song, experienced in all the encounters (and invented on Bermuda, let us say, where they were not), resounded through the early contact period and still resonate in its record.

Yet it would not seem so, to read recent scholarly literature from many disciplines on the early New World. The inattention in this literature to the powers of heightened voice – of song, more specifically – is not absolute, to be sure, but it is widespread. It has resulted in a body of work that overlooks not only a fundamental aspect of early encounters but also an important perspective on indigenous American societies. To understand certain of these societies by listening for the voices they raised at the moment of contact is, in a phrase, the project of the book that follows.

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The inattention to heightened voice within current study of the contact period, which might be called a resistance to listening, does not reflect a scarcity of information in early European accounts of the New World. These, to the contrary, make room almost obsessively for comment, short or long, about singing, dancing, music-making, and all manner of ceremonial chants, calls, and cries. These testimonies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries regularly attain a level of detail and vividness that beckons with the prospect of hearing, if dimly, the 500-year-old song of indigenous Americans.

The resistance to listening, I have come to think, originated elsewhere, from two other causes, the one bespeaking disciplinary agendas and prerogatives of musicology, the other reaching deeper. The musicological limitation comes down to a squeeze-play, so to speak, determined by old dichotomies of oral and written cultures. Despite the considerable expansion in purview of each discipline in recent decades, ethnomusicology still concerns itself mainly with living (and often putatively unwritten) traditions, musicology overwhelmingly with the written music of the European classical tradition. There is, in addition, a third, neodisciplinary space, the study of popular music and global pop, which has as its primary object the recorded song of the last century or so. This three-way division leaves little obvious space for a music that does not survive in a living, sounding tradition, or on record or CD, or written in a performable notation.

Scholars of ancient musical traditions – of Greece or India or China, to name a few – have always fallen between the cracks of these disciplinary agendas. Scholars of premodern and early modern Europe, meanwhile, are attending more than ever before to soundscapes beyond the preserved archive of music writing. If the traces of sixteenth-century American music-making are more fragmentary and perhaps more jealous of their secrets than even the remains of these other musics, it nonetheless wants only a sustained and judicious effort of listening to hear them tell at least some of their tale.

In this effort, what do we listen for? Not, to be sure, for the moment-to-moment performative realities of long-silent musics. Though efforts have been made to reconstruct such performances, the traces on which they are based are too imprecise to enable them to be much more than the playing out of modern-day ethnic allure and ethnographic fancy. This limitation will come as a disappointment to some; they need to be alerted now to the fact that no CD of reconstituted Aztec or Inca song awaits them tucked in the back cover to this book, no transcribed music is to be read in its pages.

This impossibility of reliably reconstructing musical performance has been a basic force shaping musico-historical study of the societies I scrutinize. It has created certain recognizable categories of work. On the one side are descriptions of the general nature of music-making in these societies – the kind of culling and analysis of early Spanish or Portuguese accounts witnessed in Robert Stevenson's *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory* or Samuel Martí's *Canto, danza y música precortesianos*. It has encouraged, for another part, organological analyses of surviving musical instruments from these cultures, a materialist, archaeological orientation with a long heritage (cf. R. and M. d'Harcourt, *La Musique des Incas et ses survivances*, 1925; Martí, *Instrumentos musicales precortesianos*, 1955) recently augmented by Dale A. Olsen's *Music of El Dorado: The Ethnomusicology of Ancient South American Cultures*. And, of course, the impossibility of performative reconstruction has never stood in the

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way of ethnographic studies of music in present-day societies related to, and in some cases descended from, the societies I discuss here. Ellen B. Basso, David M. Guss, Anthony Seeger, Lawrence E. Sullivan, Greg Urban, and many other anthropologists and ethnomusicologists have had fascinating things to say about the place of music in these societies; some of these writers will be cited below.

As much as I have profited from these approaches, my own moves along different lines. In the first place, my study is resolutely historical rather than ethnographic. This may seem a strange qualification for me to start with, since I have argued in several other writings that there is little to distinguish history and ethnography at the deepest levels of method and aspiration. At more superficial levels, however, their differences in sources and approach – in the traces of others encountered as the stimulus to thought and the immediate manner of this encounter – are evident enough. (In part because of these differences, most ethnomusicologists and anthropologists have been rightly circumspect about reading much historical depth into their conclusions. Such “upstreaming,” whereby traditional societies today are seen to reflect ancient societies, was a favored method of earlier generations of scholars; I have avoided it here except in carefully delimited instances.)

In the second place, I have wished to till a fertile middle ground between the most general accounts of music-making in the societies I study and the always frustrated desire to know exactly how the music went. In this middle ground we might nurture textured and unexpectedly specific accounts of uses to which song was put, of expectations for its efficacies, of the sense of world embodied in it. (This place and efficacy of song in given societal circumstances I like to call *songwork*.) We might understand these things in the light of interactions of one indigenous group with others or with the European newcomers. We might, then, savor the achievements of song in specific situations both indigenous and colonial. This is not the place for an all-out methodological analysis of this middle ground and our ways of approaching it; I hope that the essays that follow will exemplify both with sufficient clarity to make unnecessary such analysis. It needs to be said, however, that my orientation here is one that has rarely been pursued in a historical musicology of societies from which no performable music writing survives.

In sum: What we can still hear in certain songs from these societies, if we listen intently in this space between the beckoning phantasm of a reconstructed performance and the encyclopedic rehearsing of contemporary testimony, is the nuanced cultural work they were designed to accomplish. This musical force, synonymous neither with performance itself nor with the broadest views of music-making, is a *supraperformative* force, linked to societal and expressive particulars and yet audible even in the absence of specific recuperable sounds.

I mentioned above a second explanation for the resistance to listening to the raised voices of New World Indians, an explanation less caught up in parochial disciplinary distinctions than this musicological one. Singing and its musical offshoots arguably form one of three fundamental modes of human cultural expression, alongside speaking and writing (that is, plastic inscription broadly conceived). As such, and like its counterparts, singing is everywhere. But by this very ubiquity it is spread thin in our perceptions. A category always

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with us, it tends to turn transparent, hence become invisible to our gaze. (For an easy test of this transparency, pull off your shelf books taking up, passingly or more, singing and song. Rarely will you find a heading for either in their indexes. "Music," a more technical, less widespread, finally more palpable coinage, is indexed somewhat more often, but even this category tends at least to translucency.)

The frequency itself of the appearance of song in the cultural remains of the indigenous Americans has paradoxically reduced commentators almost to silence. The transparency of singing is noteworthy in scholarly analyses of even the best-known sources I will linger over in the chapters that follow: a unique eyewitness account of the Inca in celebration, the moving and fascinating song texts from sixteenth-century Mexico, Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals." Yet these again and again bespeak the songwork at stake. The cosmogonic powers of singing ripple through the Inca ritual; the Mexican *cantares* open unanticipated vistas on the immanence of the sacred in the materials of Aztec rite and in the Nahuatl language itself; and the Tupi songs Montaigne reports undo his own analysis of cannibal culture and those of his European contemporaries, suggesting very different possibilities.

Attended to in another way than has been our custom – *listened to* – such sources reveal much about special powers of singing. These powers in turn tell stories about the self- and world-making practices of the societies that deployed them. Rendering opaque the singing in such sources, then, does not merely compensate for an overdetermined scholarly inattention. It brings adjusted views of the societies all told that sang in these ways and for these purposes. In the chapters that follow it will suggest three distinct patterns, differing from one another and from European patterns, of relations among song, the material world, and metaphysics.

It must be remembered, meanwhile, that the sources I have used in this book are never pure indigenous expressions. Often they were mediated, at the moment of their production, by the novel presence of Europeans; more often still they were created by the Europeans themselves; always they are read today through the dimming, altering scrim of colonial histories and modern historiographies. Even as we attempt to hear indigenous song and all it might reveal, we need also to gauge, against the backdrop of modern historiographical agendas, the changes wrought in both song and context by the European conquerers and colonizers.

Altogether these are complex matters leading to unexpected places: to the fealty structures sustaining Inca rulership, the economics of cannibalism, the intricacies of Nahuatl grammar, the differential politics and psychology of colonized and colonizers. The strand connecting all these discussions, however, is the fundamental role of singing as a constitutive element in the making of both indigenous and colonial worlds. It is in this latter sense that I intend the gerund of my title. I have of course wished to pay detailed, varied attention to an activity of peoples of the Americas, a nominative practice pertaining to their societies: the singing *of*, belonging to, the New World. At the same time the gerund exercises its verbal function, for the kinds of singing I describe are also acts of world- and self-making. Through them Americans and the Americas were sung – shaped, molded, even created – both before and after European contact. Through them indigenous powers were unfolded that continued to make the world in non- (or anti-) European ways even in the bleakest moments of conquest

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and early colonization. Students of many varieties of premodern song, especially in Native North American and indigenous Australian societies, will recognize this world-constituting power. I have long urged that we uncover its disguised persistence in modern worlds as well. It is a primary – perhaps *the* primary – way in which song and by extension music continue to be one of our fundamental expressive capacities.

One more word, finally, about the “New World.” I do not use this handy phrase without an awareness of its Eurocentric dangers (i.e., new to whom?). The care with which I have lingered over indigenous traces should make this clear. I use it instead to mark out a time and place where to some a world could seem new even as, for others, it reached back to moments of divine creation – a time and place marked, more dramatically than most, by a border separating a before from an after. Our difficulty in seeing back past this border does not lessen our obligation to try. By the same token, our nuanced appreciation of the politics of representing others should not dislodge, from the heart of the humanities, the imaginative empathy involved in such representation.

The chapters of the book were conceived as separate essays toward the effort of listening described above, but this does not render them independent of one another. The first two, in particular, form a prolegomenon for the third, a lengthy interpretation of sixteenth-century Nahuatl songs. At the same time I have hoped with chapters 1–2 to clear the ideological ground, so to speak, for chapters 4 and 5, occupied respectively with Brazilian and Peruvian matters. Chapter 6, finally, takes as its subject the ever fraught colonial mediation of song, attempting to bring to general account and even theorize some sonic effects of the early meetings of Europeans and Americans; these meetings, at the same time, run as a more or less explicit subtext through all the earlier chapters.

Chapters 1 and 2 rework material published in two earlier essays, “Unlearning the Aztec Cantares,” in *Subject and Object in Renaissance Culture*, edited by Margreta de Grazia, Maureen Quilligan, and Peter Stallybrass (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 260–86, and “Ideologies of Aztec Song,” in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48 (1995), pp. 343–79; the first part of chapter 4, on Montaigne, was published in an earlier version as “Montaigne’s Cannibals’ Songs” in the journal *repercussions* 7–8 (1999–2000), pp. 209–35. I am grateful to the publishers of these volumes for permission to rework these materials here. The generous support of a MacArthur Fellowship extended into the early formulation of this project and certainly facilitated it. The aid of the series editors of *New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism*, Jeffrey Kallberg, Ruth Solie, and Anthony Newcomb, and of the Music Editor for Cambridge University Press, Victoria Cooper, was welcome and opportune. In hunting down illustrations Elaine Bernstein offered an expertise I appreciate and know well from other projects.

I am grateful also to many colleagues and students who have helped me more directly in conceiving and writing these essays. The Colonial Dialogues seminar at the University of Pennsylvania deserves preeminent mention here, having for the last decade provided a welcoming haven for this work. Among its members special thanks go to Nancy Farriss, Ann Farnsworth-Alvear, Tom Cummins, and Greg Urban. Cummins, Farriss, and also Gordon Brotherston read the manuscript through and offered invaluable comments on it. Many

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students heard much about these ideas over the years and helped me to sharpen them; four who wrote venturesome PhD dissertations with me that intersected with agendas here are Jose Buenconsejo (writing on the Philippines), Olivia Bloechl (Native North America), Paja Faudree (Mexico), and Ruth Rosenberg (Corsica). Finally, Juliet Fleming offered unflagging encouragement and focusing conversation across the last years of this project. Without the second, it would have amounted to much less; without the first, it might never have coalesced into a book at all. To her, and to my children Julia, Laura, and Dave, this book is lovingly dedicated.

A word concerning some technical matters: Of the various names used for indigenous inhabitants of central Mexico, *Aztec* is the most common but the one with the least indigenous authority. It is customarily applied these days to the tributary empire that spread its influence out from the capital of Tenochtitlan through the fifteenth century. The local nation that ruled this empire, which had migrated into central Mexico from the north two centuries earlier, knew itself as the *Mexica*. The language of the Mexica, and hence the lingua franca of their dominion, was Nahuatl; they and indigenous speakers (or singers) of Nahuatl in general are often called *Nahuas*.

The orthography of indigenous New World languages has a complex history half a millennium old. For both Nahuatl and Quechua, the two languages most met with here, I have employed a modernized version of Franciscan hispanized spelling. This is easily legible for readers of Romance languages, with only a couple of unexpected pronunciation twists in Nahuatl: *x* is pronounced *sh*, and *tl* is pronounced as in *atlas* (it does not add a syllable to the end of a word). Nahuatl accent falls on the penultimate syllable. Thus *xochicuicatl* yields something like *shoo-chee-kwee-cahtl*.

This modernized Franciscan orthography is relatively well standardized for Nahuatl, but not for Quechua, where it is displaced in some recent writings by a more phonetic, less hispanized spelling. I have compromised, as most writers do, on a common-usage orthography that varies to embrace the most familiar forms of different words and is therefore somewhat inconsistent. Thus I use *huaca*, not *waka*, *quipu*, not *kipu*, and Guaman Poma, not Waman Puma, but *taki*, not *taqui*. I hope that the inconsistency of orthography is compensated for by the recognizability of individual words across many of the studies that employ them.

All citations from primary sources retain original spellings. Except where I note otherwise, all translations are my own.

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1

Unlearning the Aztec *cantares*

By now, scholars have moved far to restore the writing of pre-Columbian America; not so its singing.

Recent developments in archaeological, codicological, and anthropological interpretation, abetted by an upsurge in attention to indigenous America in the years before and after the Columbian quincentenary of 1992, have brought us to a fuller comprehension than ever before of the varieties of expression and conception encoded in American scripts. Scholars have reread familiar but insufficiently grasped indigenous texts, and they have recognized and begun to interpret traces rarely before thought by Europeans to be writing at all. They have shown much-traveled dichotomies of nonliterate versus literate or oral versus written societies to be based on limited judgments of what constitutes meaningful script. They have broken down long-held Western biases that extol the flexibility and semantic richness of phonetic above all other writing. And, most provocatively, they have uncovered orders of meaning that do not coincide with European notions of time, space, and human movements through them.¹

¹ Perhaps the most challenging and synoptic among recent readings of American scripts is Gordon Brotherston's *Book of the Fourth World: Reading the Native Americas through Their Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); more technical, less venturesome, but of consummate interest is Joyce Marcus, *Mesoamerican Writing Systems: Propaganda, Myth, and History in Four Ancient Civilizations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992). Other important essays are collected in Elizabeth Hill Boone and Walter D. Mignolo, eds., *Writing without Words: Alternative Literacies in Mesoamerica and the Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994). For a newly deepened view of Andean writing, see two provocative works on the Inca knotted *quipu*: Gary Urton, *Signs of the Inka Khipu: Binary Coding in the Andean Knotted-String Records* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003), and Frank Salomon, *The Cord Keepers: Khipus and Cultural Life in a Peruvian Village* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). I will return to the *quipu* and in particular to Salomon's work in chap. 5. For indigenous writing in colonial Mexico, and for much else as well, Serge Gruzinski, *La Colonisation de l'imaginaire: Sociétés indigènes et occidentalisation dans le Mexique espagnol, XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988, trans. Eileen Corrigan as *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th–18th Centuries* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993]); and James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992). With a few exceptions, notably two articles in *Writing without Words* (Mark B. King's "Hearing the Echoes of Verbal Art in Mixtec Writing" [pp. 102–36] and John Monaghan's "The Text in the Body, the Body in the Text: The Embodied Sign in Mixtec Writing" [pp. 87–101]), all these studies pay at most fleeting attention to song.

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In the meantime American voices have remained largely silent. Of the singing that was so often associated with the inscribed traces of American cultures we hear little. As I have noted in my Introduction, this is not because the legacy of native American song is meager. To the contrary, it assumes many forms: portrayals in pre-contact and early colonial picture codices of humans and gods singing and playing instruments; preserved instruments themselves, now mostly sitting mute in museum collections; countless reports of indigenous singing, dancing, and ceremony, some rivaling modern-day ethnographies in care and detail; even substantial bodies of song texts recorded in alphabetized native languages.

In the midst of such riches, what forces – beyond the considerable difficulties, encountered likewise in many other musicological endeavors, of reconstructing historical soundscapes whose clamor has long since faded – keep us from hearing native singing throughout the Americas? The essays in this book aim to listen for this song and at the same time to engage the historiographic quandaries such listening provokes.

If, to set out on this path, we begin with writing rather than singing, this is for two reasons. The remnants of American soundscapes from the sixteenth century survive, as I have indicated, in large part as written traces, pictographic or alphabetic. Some measure of these sources must be taken as part of the act of listening. More generally, the natures of these inscribed traces from the New World have stimulated, in the realm of recent humanistic theory, significant challenges to Eurocentric habits of thought ingrained over five centuries. Read in a certain manner, these traces delimit the boundaries of a soundscape and bring into question the habits that have deafened us to it.

This suggests, meanwhile, several reasons why we start by revisiting Jacques Derrida's critique of *logocentrism*, the hoary ideology in which the powers of writing all told were circumscribed while the prestige of alphabetic writing in particular was guaranteed. First, some few scholars of New World writing have seized upon this critique, which marks the emergence of a poststructuralism from its structuralist antecedents, in order to encounter anew, and with invigorating results, American scripts.² Second, Derrida's analysis of

² For three studies whose reliance on poststructuralist insights is explicit, see Brotherston, *Book of the Fourth World*; and Elizabeth Hill Boone, "Introduction: Writing and Recording Knowledge" and Walter D. Mignolo, "Afterword: Writing and Recorded Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Situations," both in *Writing without Words*, ed. Boone and Mignolo, pp. 3–26 and 293–313 respectively. For an earlier overview see also Gordon Brotherston's "Towards a Grammatology of America: Lévi-Strauss, Derrida and the Native New World Text," in *Literature, Politics and Theory: Papers from the Essex Conference 1976–84*, ed. Francis Barker, Peter Hulme, Margaret Iversen, and Diana Loxley (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 190–209. Mignolo's poststructuralism is, at least, ambivalent. He rejects Brotherston's call for a grammatology of New World writing, ascribing to Brotherston – mistakenly, I think – the advocacy of Derrida as a "model" for understanding American writing and the view that Derrida's "thesis . . . is . . . automatically relevant to account for Mesoamerican and Andean writing practices before the conquest" (p. 303). In my reading Brotherston instead guardedly advocates Derridean argument as a starting point for critique of our general, Europe-inflected notions of the relations between writing and speech; with this use of Derrida Mignolo has no quarrel (see p. 304). Mignolo's idea of "rereading Derrida's grammatology from the experience of the Americas" (p. 303) would be more feasible in a situation where the hegemony of Western language ideologies did not weigh heavily on us. Since, in my view (and clearly enough in Mignolo's as well), it remains burdensome, we need to bring analytic strategies for exposing its hidden structures together with careful study of native American traces. On these parallel paths I set out below, with a reconceptualization of song in mind.