

kingsbury branch

a set of essays for Bb Clarinet, Trombone,
Viola, Contrabass, and Electronic Playback

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Preface

This piece is on and is about Ndakinna, Abenaki land. This land was never ceded to European settlers through any agreement or treaty but was taken through violence and through insidious processes of erasure and replacement that continue to this day. In the 1991 land claim case *State v. Elliott*, the Vermont Supreme Court ruled that aboriginal sovereignty can be extinguished and that

extinguishment need not be accomplished by treaty or voluntary cession because the "relevant question is whether the governmental action was intended to be a revocation of Indian occupancy rights, not whether the revocation was effected by permissible means"¹

In the case of the Vermont Abenaki, the court ruled that

a century-long course of conduct may demonstrate extinguishment, even though the exact date on which Indian title is extinguished is difficult to determine... ("there are no fine spun or precise formulas for determining the end of aboriginal ownership").²

In this work, I seek to acknowledge Abenaki sovereignty through acts of careful listening, by seeking out the echoes of that centuries-long course of conduct that still resonate in the walls and woods around us, and hearing them in counterpoint to a resilient network of relations that has never been extinguished.

As a white settler currently living in this place, I focus on the traces of settler history: the ways that rural space is constructed, ways that settler worldviews etch themselves into landscape and soundscape, and the jagged edges that are produced as land is carved into property. I am seeking new understandings of my own complicity in this ongoing settler-colonial project called the United States, so that I might divest from it in careful, deliberate, and collaborative ways. The stories of Abenaki resilience, of Ndakinna as it has been and will be outside of the settler framework, these stories are not mine to tell. The Vermont Abenaki Artist Association, the

Vermont Indigenous Heritage Center, Atowi, and the Missisquoi, Nulhegan Band, Elnu, and Koasek communities hold and share this knowledge.

Stó:lō musicologist, Dylan Robinson writes about “sonic encounters between particular perceptual logics”³ and says that

To effect a decolonial crisis in the act of listening – to ask listeners to become “no longer sure of what listening is” – cannot simply entail a willful approach to kick colonial listening habits. Instead it means shifting the places, models, and structures of how we listen.⁴

Robinson examines how “writing allows certain moments of sonic experience to be heard while foreclosing others.” At the same time that this is a sonic work, it is also an act of writing. The score is intended to be read as a poetic text along with the musical performance, offering context on the sonic materials being employed and their complex histories.

In *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, Lisa Brooks describes the Abenaki word *awikhigawôgan* “the act of writing” as an ongoing process in which we are all engaged, and offers this invitation:

Because *awikhigawôgan*, like storytelling, is an interactive process, I invite the reader of this text-map to play a participatory role. Rather than tracing a single argument and forming agreement or argument, I hope you will feel free to interact, deliberate, and grapple with the images and ideas raised herein. [...] In this way, this *awikhigan* may operate as an instrument, in the Abenaki sense, which, now in your hands and working in your mind, may foster thoughts and activities that I could not have imagined.⁵

It is a practice of writing that we take part in together. I am grateful that you are reading this, that you are listening with me. I am only just learning to listen and I am sure that you hear things that I do not, that you and I are haunted by different ghosts. To acknowledge this land, its people and histories, to undertake the long work of decolonization together, we need to find new ways to listen to each other and with each other.

This piece also emerges out of countless conversations that are already ongoing. I want to express my gratitude for the friends and relations whose wisdom informs and directs this work.

I want to thank my family, Sasha, Emmett, and Bayard, with whom I am discovering the world every day. My dear colleagues Leora Gansworth, M. T. Anderson, Sean Clute, D. Edward Davis, Emerson Whitney, Muriel Shockley, H. "Herukhuti" Sharif Williams, Khalil Dalton, Toussaint St. Negritude, Suiyee Wong, Antonio Gonzalez-Walker, Petra Simmons, Mordecai Martin, and Ariel Page, all of whom have informed this work. They should not be blamed for the faults of the work below, but I credit them entirely for any missteps avoided.

I also want to thank the Vermont Arts Council for the Creation Grant that provided the means to convene people in this project, and Anne Decker, Steve Klimowski, Jesse Metzler, Elizabeth Reid, Evan Premo and TURN Music for breathing life into these soundworlds.

Performance Instructions

General:

This piece is primarily derived from manipulated field recordings.

Aside from a few aleatoric moments, the tempo is always 60 bpm, and timecodes are provided throughout the piece to allow synchronization with the pre-recorded material. Performers should strive to blend their tone with the pre-recorded sound as much as possible, emerging and receding into that texture.

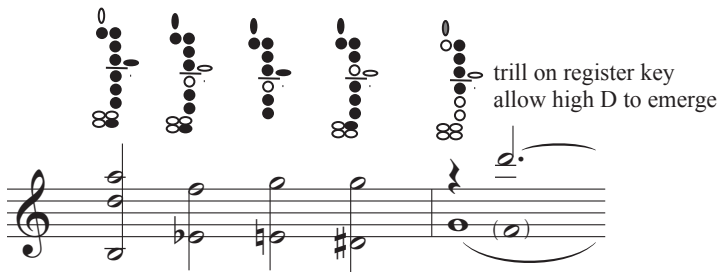
The piece is an investigation into the ways that rural space is constructed, the ways that its various boundaries can be sonified, and the possibilities of decolonization. The entire score is written as a hybrid text that offers critical engagement with the materials and compositional processes. A conducting score and instrumental parts are also provided for ease of performance, but musicians are encouraged to engage the full score.

I welcome dialogue about all aspects of the work, from the details of the instrumental writing to the underlying concepts, and sincerely hope that the piece evolves and adapts in response to these conversations.

Clarinet

There are a number of extended techniques employed, including alternate fingerings, slap tongue, singing and playing and multiphonics.

The following multiphonics are used:



The last of these multiphonics is a trill in which the higher tone emerges slowly.

In movement 4, *Japanese Knotweed*, the music should be synchronized with the tones in the pre-recorded knotweed as closely as possible.

Trombone

The trombone should use a straight mute throughout the performance to create balance with the other instruments.

The trombonist is often asked to sing and play simultaneously. Sung pitches are notated with rectangular noteheads.

Viola and Contrabass

Natural harmonics are used heavily throughout the piece. Except for the octave harmonic (where the sounding pitch and the node are the same), the desired sounding pitch is always given. The notated node is typically the lowest node, though it may be played on whichever node is most convenient.

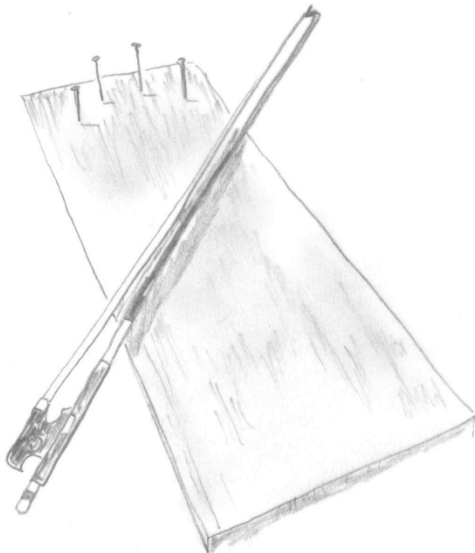
Almost all of the trills in the piece are pressure trills between harmonic pressure and the stopped pitch or between harmonic pressure and the open string. In some cases trills occur between two harmonic nodes on the same string. In all cases, the alternate pitch of the trill is provided in parentheses.

Prologue: Nail Fiddles

The rural is a periphery between something they call nature and something they don't, marked by a network of borderlines etched into the land in barbed wire, piled stone, tree lines, and old junk heaps.

This piece is an excavation of rural resonance—of the ways that these boundaries echo and hum—
throughout the watershed I inhabit.

It is also a practice of listening together.



A nail fiddle is just a board with
nails or screws sticking out
that can be played with a well-rosined bow.

The pitch is determined by the gauge of the nail
and the length allowed to resonate.
I am using 4-inch trim screws in rough-cut 1x8
spruce from Fontaine's sawmill on Route 14.

Like the soundboard of a piano, the wood
amplifies the vibrations of the screws.

Each performer has a board with four screws, tuned as followed:

(not transposing)

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

Play the pitches ad libitum within the marked time

0:30

1:20

2:05

(switch to B♭ Clarinet)

Repeat each cell three times

(switch to Viola)

Repeat each cell three times

A nail fiddle sounds because the fasteners are loose
and can be made to vibrate.

In drawing sound out of these rural spaces
perhaps I am also trying to unfasten,

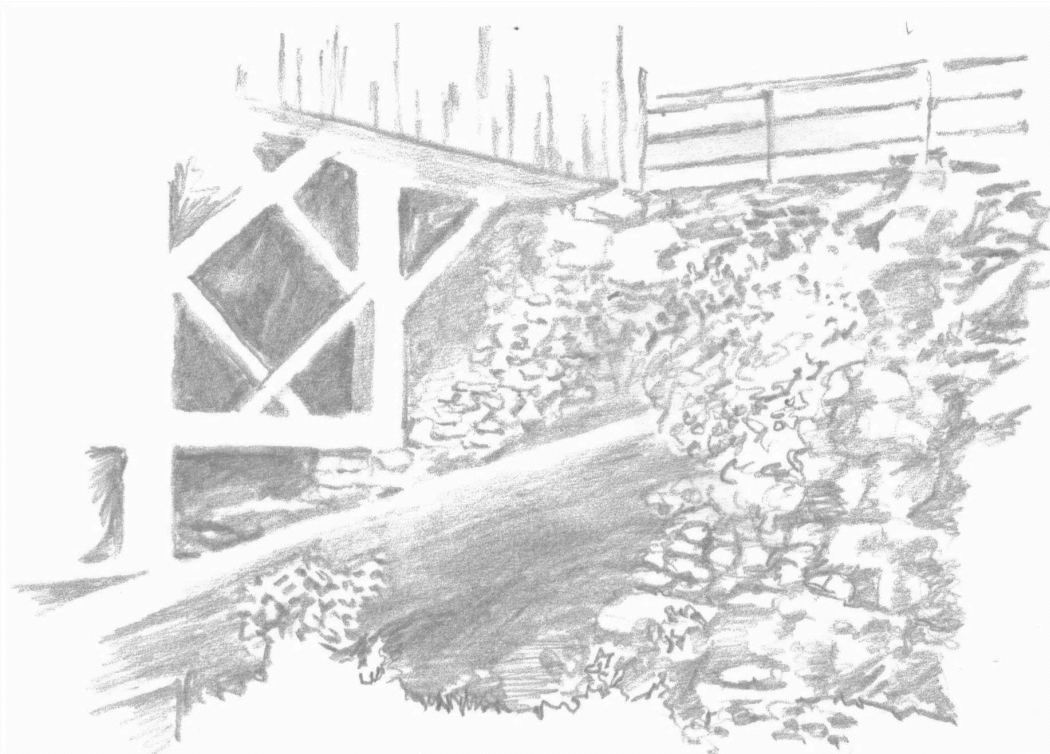
to pull apart the certainty
that stakes a claim.

1. Robinson Sawmill

The dam has been pieced together over the years and is leaking.
A persistent trickle sculpts the stone, carving into the metamorphic folds:

gray phyllites interlayered with
punky, brown weathering, sandy marble,⁶

singing through the gaps Joel's hands left behind.



I begin my cartography at this point of contact and erosion,
here in the seep.

3:40

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

Mapping waterways, Cecilia Chen writes of an encounter with the

often-unexpected communities
convened by unruly waters [...] articulated by space and time.⁷

We convene by these leaking waters to listen together.

3:48

trill on register key
allow high D to emerge

B♭ Cl.

Vla.

harmonic trill

III

p

pp

mp

p

*I replay the field recording again and again, four seconds at a time,
picking pitches out of the current and laying them down on lines.
A map makes land legible for extraction.
A score makes song into object:
discrete and fungible units
of dried material.*

*But the bones of the ears of my people are ossified,
and I am unable to hear song without the prosthetic of page.*

4:00

10

B \flat Cl.

mp *p*

pressure trill between stopped note and artificial harmonic

Vla.

mp *p*

The millpond is high in the headwaters. It was known locally as the “thunderstorm mill” since it relied on the runoff of heavy rain.

4:12

12

B \flat Cl.

p

5

3

3

5

trill

surfacing, with warmth

Vla.

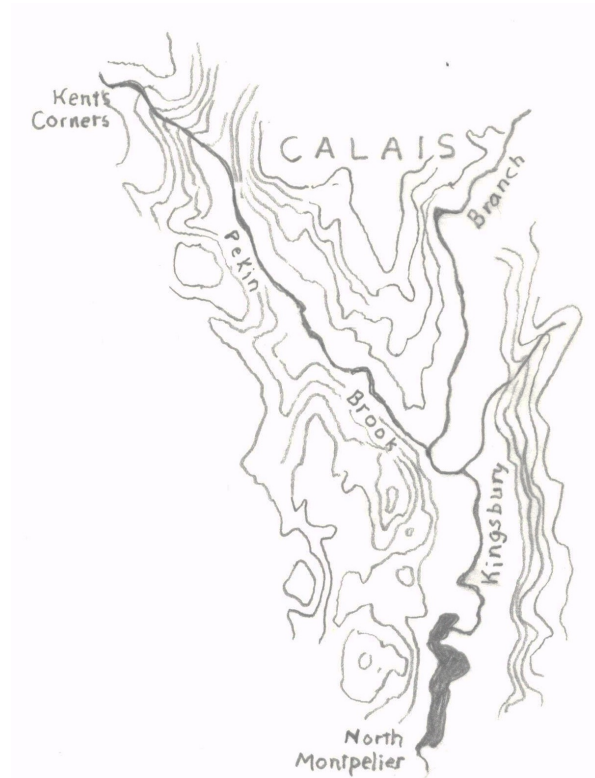
mp *mf* *p*

From here it flows
down Pekin Brook
to meet the Kingsbury Branch,

and passes through
a concrete dam at North
Montpelier Pond before
joining the Winooski.

The Winooski pours into
Lake Champlain,
Betobakw, which empties
to the north.

The only straight lines are the
walls, built perpendicular
to the current's flow.



4:32

16

B♭ Cl.

p

mp

pp

Vla.

mf

mp

Musical score for B♭ Clarinet and Viola. The B♭ Clarinet part (treble clef) begins at measure 16 with a piano (*p*) dynamic, featuring triplets and a quintuplet. The Viola part (bass clef) starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, followed by a mezzo-piano (*mp*) section. Both parts include dynamic markings and articulation symbols like slurs and accents.

4:48

20

B \flat Cl.

pp

mp

Vla.

p

mp

I try to listen like rock hears water, to let each repetition carve its form



*The bowl it leaves is not the shape of the current though;
but of my ear's metamorphic strata—
what is durable, what crumbles.*

The sound erodes the gray phyllites to reveal the garnet and brown weathering

5:08

25

B♭ Cl.

p

Vla.

p

The musical score consists of two staves. The top staff is for the B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.) and the bottom staff is for the Viola (Vla.). Both parts begin at measure 25. The B♭ Clarinet part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B♭). It starts with a piano (p) dynamic and features a melodic line with slurs. The Viola part is written in bass clef and provides a harmonic accompaniment with eighth and sixteenth notes. A time signature of 5:08 is indicated in a box at the top left. A triplet of eighth notes is marked in the final measure of the B♭ Clarinet part.

A sign on the property outlines the Steps to Restoring a Historic Treasure:

Repair the Millpond Dam

The dam has been pieced together over the years and is leaking. When the pond is dredged we will be able to inspect the dam and make necessary repairs.

Rebuild the Penstock

The penstock—which carries the water from the pond to the mill’s turbine—is old and leaks and the valves which open and close it are no longer working. We need to replace the entire mechanism.

5:20

28

B \flat Cl.

Vla.

III
IV

mp

5:28

*As I rehydrate the pitches
I found in the water,*

*the clarinet's mouthpiece
becomes a penstock*

The musical score for 5:28 features two staves. The upper staff, in treble clef, contains a melody with three triplet markings (indicated by '3' over a bracket) and dynamic markings of *pp* (pianissimo) and *p* (piano). The lower staff, in bass clef, provides accompaniment with notes and rests, also marked with *pp* and *p*. A wavy line above the lower staff indicates a sustained or tremolo effect.

*a place where breath is harnessed
and made available to the machinery of the instrument,
to the production of sound*

5:36

The musical score for 5:36 is for Bb Clarinet (Bb Cl.) and Viola (Vla.). The Bb Cl. staff (treble clef) shows a melody starting at measure 32 with triplet markings and a *p* dynamic. The Vla. staff (bass clef) has a lower line with notes and rests, also marked with *p*. A wavy line above the Bb Cl. staff indicates a sustained or tremolo effect.

A thing that leaks

5:44

34

B♭ Cl.

Vla.

mp

mp

p

The dam is a site of slow, ongoing confrontation
between “necessary repairs”
and the insurgent trickle.

6:04

38

B♭ Cl.

Vla.

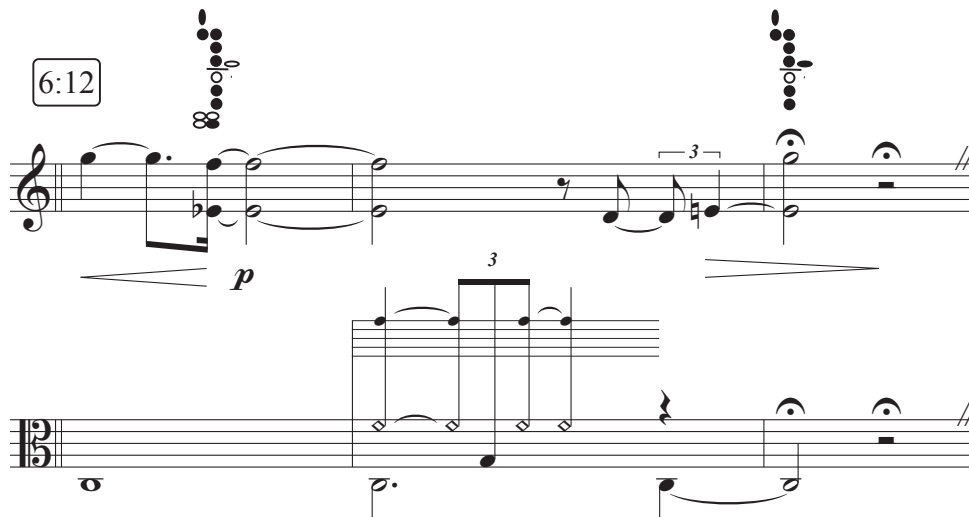
pp

p

In *The Common Pot*, Abenaki Scholar Lisa Brooks writes that

When Europeans arrived on the Algonquian coast, they entered into this Native space:

a network of relations and waterways containing many different groups of people as well as animal, plant and rock beings that was sustained through the constant transformative 'being' of its inhabitants.⁸



6:24

42

3

B♭ Cl.

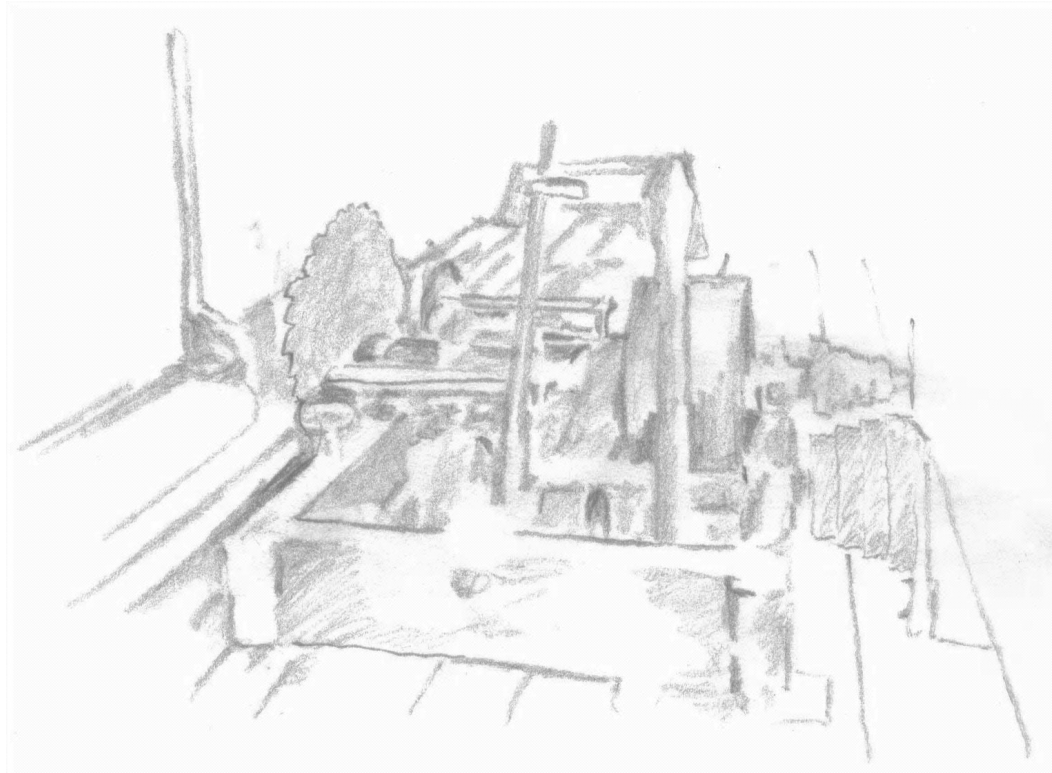
pp

Vla.


mp > p

No observation is passive, innocent.

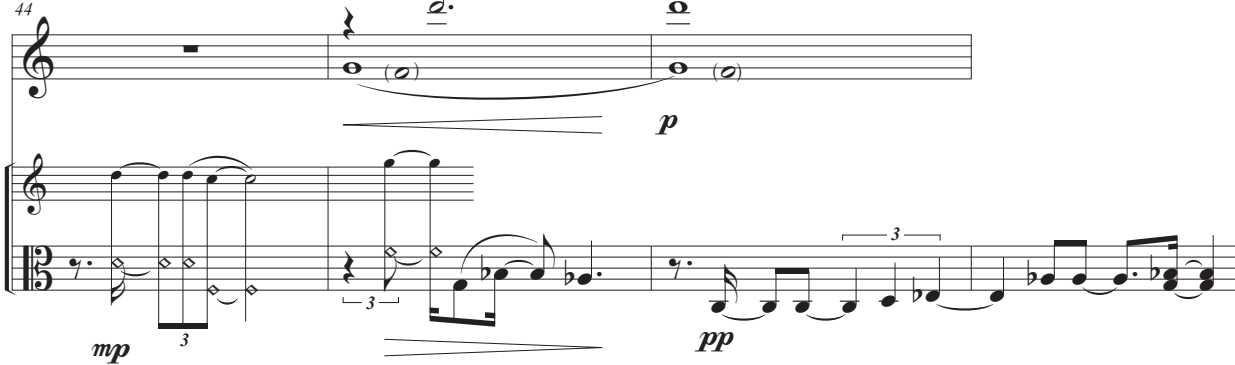
Each act of listening forms a relation within a network of relations.



6:32



trill on register key
allow high D to emerge



We convene by unruly waters, to listen together,
 to these singing gaps where runoff from
 a silted pond enacts its slow resistance,
 its patient work

6:48

Musical score for 6:48. The score is written for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score features several triplet markings (3) and a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic marking. The bottom staff has a long, sustained note with a *pp* marking. Above the top staff, there are three diagrams showing fingerings for the right hand, each with a '0' above the first finger and a '3' above the third finger.

I try to listen like rock hears water, but my ears keep damming up,
piling walls to harness the runoff

to power the spinning machinery of architecture and form.

7:08

Musical score for 7:08. The score is written for two staves. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The score features several triplet markings (3) and a *ppp* (pianississimo) dynamic marking. The bottom staff has a long, sustained note with a *ppp* marking. Above the top staff, there are four diagrams showing fingerings for the right hand, each with a '0' above the first finger and a '3' above the third finger. A text instruction "decrease bow speed and pressure, shift into white noise" is written above the bottom staff.

2. The Old West Church Bell

From Robinson Sawmill, on special occasions, you can hear the bell of the Old West Church.

In his work on soundscapes, R. Murray Schafer writes:

Wherever missionaries took Christianity, the church bell was soon to follow, acoustically demarking the civilization of the parish from the wilderness beyond its earshot.⁹



Throughout Britain's colonial projects, missionaries cited William Cowper's verse:

The sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard;
Never sigh'd at the sound of a knell,
Or smiled when a sabbath
appear'd.¹⁰

Not only can a bell dominate
the soundscape with its volume

but with its regularity.

7:54 8:12 8:36

56

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

The performers join in the sounding of bells.

Play ad libitum from the set of pitches given,
matching the approximate volume and envelope
of the recorded church bells.

9:00

III

p

9:12

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

Beyond its religious significance, the church bell synchronizes a community within a shared experience of time.

Whether marking out hours or ceremonious days, it imposes meter on the soundscape.

*Pitch is also a function of time
I slow down the sound of the bell three times
tuning the bell to the pitches I heard in the stream
by acting upon its relationship to time*

9:36

68

trill on register key
allow high D to emerge

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

p

p

p

sing

In *Beyond Settler Time*, Mark Rifkin points out that

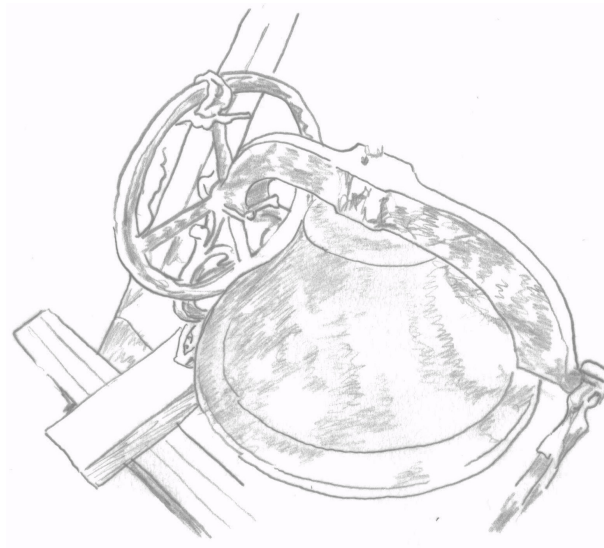
the insistence that Native people(s) occupy a singular present with non-natives... that shared, unified "now" ... seems to eerily resemble the representation of Indigenous populations and territories as necessarily part of the United States.¹¹

He advocates instead for "varied temporal formations that have their own rhythms [...] that emerge immanently out of... shifting sets of relationships."¹²

Even this bell resists a unified experience of the past.

It was never a “church-going bell,” but was a school bell, added to the belfry of the Old West Church in 1972.

It has only sounded in re-enactment of past ritual.



9:48



10:00

Play ad libitum from the set of pitches given, matching the volume and envelope of the recorded church bells.



3. The Flanders Ballad Collection

In 1930, Helen Hartness Flanders began recording folk songs

collecting and editing such material and making it available for
the usual singer, historian and literary scholar¹³

as part of the Committee on
Traditions and Ideals of the
Vermont Commission on
Country Life.

The musical score is for four instruments: B♭ Cl., Tbn., Vla., and D.B. The time signature is 4/4. The tempo marking is 10:45. The score is written in 4/4 time. The B♭ Cl. part is in treble clef, Tbn. in bass clef, Vla. in bass clef, and D.B. in bass clef. The B♭ Cl. part has a double bar line at the end. The Tbn. part has a double bar line at the end. The Vla. part has a double bar line at the end. The D.B. part has a double bar line at the end. The score includes dynamic markings: *mf* for B♭ Cl., Tbn., and Vla., and *p* for D.B. The score also includes a crescendo and decrescendo marking for the D.B. part.

11:05

B \flat Cl. *mf*

Tbn. *mf*

Vla. *mf*

p *mf*

Answering A Wish
 I stopped at a sign-board marked
 End of the Year;
 I had travelled through shadows
 and rain.
 Just beyond was a wonderful,
 glorious land,
 'Twas the Land of Beginning
 Again.
 I paused as I entered, and one
 backward glance
 Showed my many mistakes all
 too plain;
 And I thanked God devoutly for
 another chance
 In the Land of Beginning Again.
 A chance to be kinder, more
 thoughtful, sincere,
 To think less of self, be less vain;
 A chance to help others through-
 out the new year,
 In the Land of Beginning Again.
 So with hope born anew, and a
 prayer in my heart
 That my efforts would not be in
 vain,
 I entered that wonderful, glor-
 ious land,
 The Land of Beginning Again.
 —Reprinted from an old news-
 paper.

A map makes land legible for extraction.

A collection makes song into object:
 a unique discovery to be
 organized and made available.



And where did you learn it Mrs. Daniels?

Can't remember.

You learned it from—

I read it from—

You've know it for a long time.

A note to performers:

As Myra Daniels begins to sing, the pitches you play are collected from the past, analyzed digitally, and resynthesized.

Where possible, adjust your intonation by ear, each time you play—aligning to a microtonality that resists legibility.

11:25

B \flat Cl. *mp*

Tbn. *mp*

Vla. *mp*

D.B. *p* *mp*

In 1931, the commission reported on the “devoted labor by Mrs. Flanders in an unexplored country where she was forced to do pioneer work against many obstacles of a difficult type.”¹⁴



As Marimba Ani notes, “pioneer work” is a part of a larger project:

The colonial pattern was repeated again and again [...] the idea being that he deserved to be ‘rewarded’ for his pioneering spirit and his willingness to ‘settle’ ‘untamed’ lands (e.g., lands previously inhabited by the cultural other).¹⁵

But a song learned off the page was already available
the river valleys of Vermont were already mapped

There is no land of beginning again,
waiting to be cultivated and tamed by pioneers.

11:53

88

B \flat Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp

mf

p

mp

p

mf

mf

mp

mf

mp

harmonic trill

III

12:21

95

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp

p

mp

p

mp

p

mf

mp

p

Drawing from the Halq'eméylem word for white settler,
xwelitem, "starving person,"

Dylan Robinson offers the term *hungry listening*
 to name "settler colonial forms of perception"¹⁶

"which gathers and instrumentalizes content that is heard."¹⁷

I analyze the audio of Myra Daniels' song,

*A moment in time captured in wax,
transferred to magnetic tape,
reduced to arrays of numbers,*

*frequencies,
transcribed and arranged*

a digitized ghost

12:45

101

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

mp *p*

*I become aware of my own
hunger
I hear myself speaking over
Myra Daniels*

*harvesting the resonance
of her voice
to be milled into
discrete and fungible units,
materials for building.*

13:15

107

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp

mp

mp

mp



13:30

mp

mp

mp

mp

Maybe I need to start over
to go back upstream,
and keep listening
in the headwaters.

But there is no
land of beginning again

In contrast to “hungry listening,” Robinson offers the term
xwélalà:m, listening that

is not predicated on use value or the drive to accumulate knowledge...

a form of attention in which we are attentive not only to sound but to the fullest
range of sensory experience that connects us to place.¹⁸



If we're going to be "kinder,
more thoughtful, sincere"
we have to do it where we stand

where we gather,
convened by unruly waters.

13:45

14:00

0

p

p

p

14:15

The image displays a musical score for the song 'The Rose Tree'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system shows the vocal line starting with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#), and the piano line starting with a bass clef and the same key signature. The second system continues the vocal line with a treble clef and the piano line with a bass clef. The third system shows the vocal line with a treble clef and the piano line with a bass clef. The piano accompaniment includes various musical notations such as chords, single notes, and rests, with a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) appearing in each system.

4. Japanese Knotweed Distribution

The Robinson millpond empties East into Pekin Brook,
named after wheat sent back by a missionary.

Japanese knotweed now lines the edge of waterways
throughout this basin.

15:10

117

B♭ Cl.

pp *mf p* *pp*

15:20

119

slap tongue

mp p *p* *mf p* *mp* *pp*

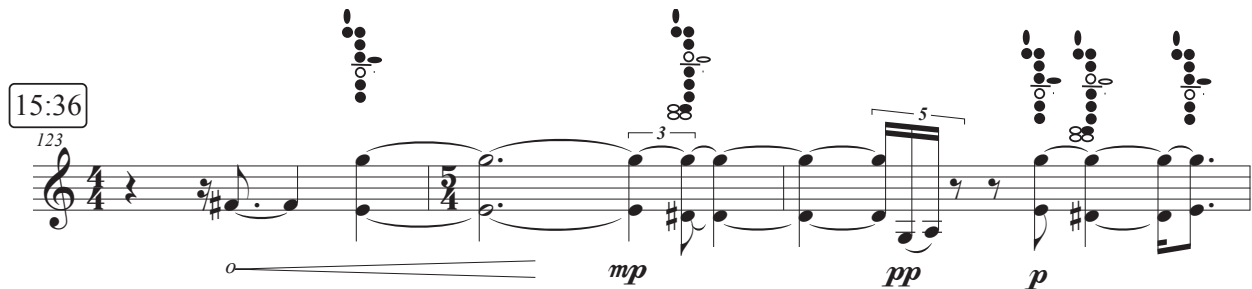
sing

The musical score is for a B♭ Clarinet part, spanning measures 117 to 124. It is written in 3/4 time. The score includes various dynamics such as *pp* (pianissimo), *mf* (mezzo-forte), *p* (piano), *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). There are also articulations like 'slap tongue' and 'sing'. Fingerings (1-5) and slurs are indicated throughout the piece. The score is divided into two systems, with the first system starting at measure 117 and the second system starting at measure 119. The first system ends at measure 122, and the second system ends at measure 124. The score is written on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (B♭).

At my own house, it pushes in from the road. Its rhizomes have reached
the vernal brook and pioneers have begun to travel downstream.

State departments of environmental conservation offer recommendations for management and eradication.

They tell the story of an ornamental brought
to project the image of the rural
the country estate,

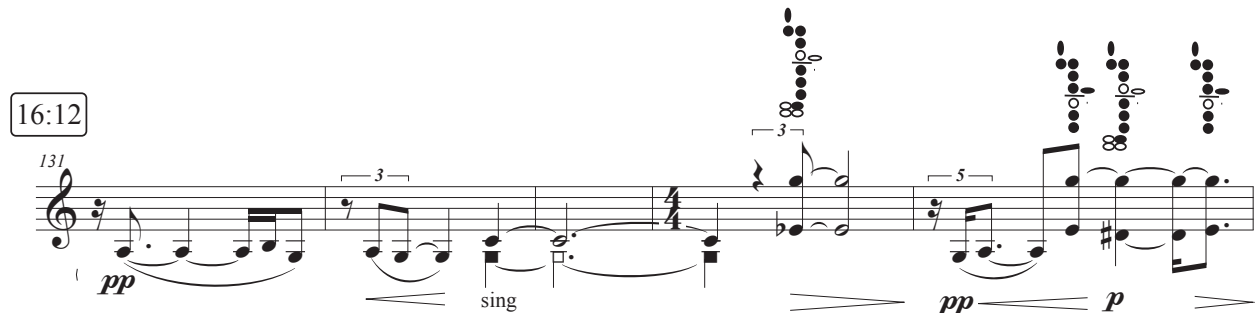


that escaped cultivation¹⁹ and
crowded out the surrounding ecology:

Knotweed thrives in disturbed areas
and once established can spread rapidly,
creating monoculture stands that
threaten native plant communities.²⁰



Two winters ago, a friend and I made an installation:
 we cut 300 dry stalks and hung them in a gallery, a giant knotweed wind chime
 you could walk through, feeling the pitch of each stalk against your face.



When we started the project, we were thinking about the narratives of invasion
 being used to justify a border wall,



the quiet complicity of
 gardeners fighting
 their own trench warfare

to defend a virginal state
 of nature against an
 aggressive foreign threat.

16:30

136

p

pp

But kneeling in the mud
sawing down one stalk after another,

It became clear that this wasn't a piece about immigration, that
the threat of knotweed has nothing to with where it is from,

but what it does when it gets here.

16:42

141

mp

p

p

pp

16:58

145

B \flat Cl. *3* sing

Tbn. straight mute sing *5* *5* *3*

Vla. *p* *5*

D.B. III II *p*

I was stacking the bones of a companion species,
 a fellow colonizer in this project of settling,
 of spreading rapidly and thriving in disturbed areas.

Our rhizomes are intertwined, and even as I cut him back—
 attempting to out-compete his monoculture with my own,
 he is rendered capable.²¹

Among my people there is a story.
 It is sung as the *Twa Sisters* in the British Isles or
 told as the *Der singende Knochen* by the Brothers Grimm.

17:14



149


Tbn.


Vla.


D.B.





Two siblings compete.
 One kills the other, and claims the prize,
 leaving the body adrift or abandoned.

17:30

153

B \flat Cl.

p *mp* *mp* *p*

Tbn.

mp *mp* *p*

Vla.

p *mp* *mp* *p*

17:46

157

B \flat Cl.

mp *p* *mp* *p*

Tbn.

mp *p* *mp*

Vla.

mp *p* *mp*

D.B.

p *mp*

Years later, a wandering musician
fashions an instrument from the remains.
and when it is played, these singing bones recount the crime.

Moving through these dry stalks, hearing
them bristle against my face,

I realize that I am both musician and murderer.
I need to hear the story retold,

to remember that we are brothers,
to remember that I killed him,

to remind myself why.



18:02

161

B \flat Cl.

Vla.

D.B.

p *mp* *p*

p *mp*

p *mp*

II

18:26

The musical score consists of four staves. The first staff is for B♭ Cl. (B-flat Clarinet) in treble clef, starting at measure 167. It features a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, then a quarter note, and another triplet of eighth notes. The dynamic markings are *mp* (mezzo-piano) and *p* (piano). The second staff is for Tbn. (Trombone) in bass clef, featuring a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, and then a quarter note. The dynamic markings are *p* and *p*. The third staff is for Vla. (Violoncello) in bass clef, featuring a triplet of eighth notes, followed by a half note, then a quarter note, and another triplet of eighth notes. The dynamic markings are *mp* and *p*. The fourth staff is for D.B. (Double Bass) in bass clef, featuring a half note and then a quarter note. The dynamic marking is *p*.

Discussing the removal of invasive albizia trees in her native Hawai'i, Mary Tuti Baker writes:

The land itself demands that we respect the mana (divine power) of all plants growing in the forest, including [...] invasive species²²

Respect is not incompatible with removal.

I listen to these singing bones
to remind myself that
Something can be beautiful
and still need to be
uprooted,

18:41

171

B♭ Cl.

p *pp* *p* *mp*

Vla.

p *mp*

D.B.

p *mp*

The musical score consists of three staves. The top staff is for B♭ Clarinet (B♭ Cl.) in treble clef, starting at measure 171. It begins with a piano (p) dynamic, followed by a triplet of eighth notes, a piano-piano (pp) dynamic, and then a piano (p) dynamic leading to a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The middle staff is for Viola (Vla.) in alto clef, starting with a piano (p) dynamic and a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The bottom staff is for Double Bass (D.B.) in bass clef, starting with a piano (p) dynamic and a mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

that harvesting song from these stalks
is a way of being in relation
while releasing them from the land

18:59

177

B \flat Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp

mp

mp

mp

*I take the melody I transcribed from the waters that
escaped the cultivation of Robinson's dam*

*I slow it down like the church bells, dropping the pitch
and put it in counterpoint with the tones from knotweed stalks.*

I'm trying to piece together duets that have always been there.

because I know what it is like
to thrive in disturbed places

But I am still learning
to listen.



19:14

182

B♭ Cl.

p

Tbn.

p

Vla.

p

D.B.

p

57

5. The Vermont Commission on Country Life

There is a lot at stake in the stories our songs tell,
in the choice to gather and instrumentalize.

19:45
187

Tbn. straight mute

D.B.

mp

p *mp*

I II

Helen Hartness Flanders began recording folk songs as part of the
Committee on Traditions and Ideals
of the Vermont Commission on Country Life.

Referencing the days
of singing schools
and shape note songs,

the commission's report,
tells us that

19:55

lowered B is
always 60 Hz

Community music has immense social power.

It harmonizes men as well as voices. [...]
It is the art which most directly realizes unity
through harmonious cooperation.²³

20:08

194

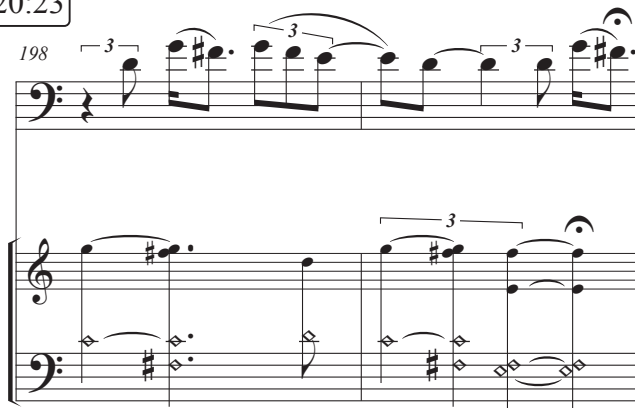
Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith recounts a conversation in which African American historian Bernice Reagon Johnson

"described her own community as one held together by song rather than by territory."²⁴

20:10



20:23



A collection of songs
draws a map that
marks the shifting
perimeters of a
people

20:30

musical score for piano (p) in 4/4 time, featuring a vocal line (sing) and piano accompaniment.

Myra Daniels and her brother,
Elmer George sang:
lullabies,
murder ballads,
work songs,
local history,
bawdy tunes from the lumber
camps,
ancient English folksongs, with
melodies that had never been
recorded

When the folklorist, Alan Lomax, came up from Texas
to meet Helen Hartness Flanders,

she brought him to Calais to record Myra Daniels and Elmer George.

20:43

musical score for piano (mp) in 4/4 time, featuring a vocal line (203) and piano accompaniment (harmonic trill).

20:52

musical score for piano (mp) in 3/4 time, featuring a vocal line and piano accompaniment.

Flanders was furious that he
used these recordings, and
future recordings of Elmer
George

without crediting her as the
original collector

21:00

207

21:12

She wrote to his boss.

21:24

213

21:43

219

mf *p*

mf *p*

II
III
III
IV

And Lomax wrote back to his supervisor at the Library of Congress:

"Some long lonesome day I'm gonna scalp that Flanders gal.
I can understand now why the Mohawks and other savages
always ravaged the pioneer women."²⁵

22:02

225

I
II
II
III
I
II
II
III
I
II



*I really didn't want to include that
quote at all,*

*to invoke or re-inscribe
its violence.*

*But maybe we need to hear
the conversations behind the
closed doors of the Library
of Congress*

*to understand the stories
these collections tell.*

22:19

229

22:43

We also need to hear, that the
Vermont Commission on Country Life,
where Helen Hartness Flanders
began her work,

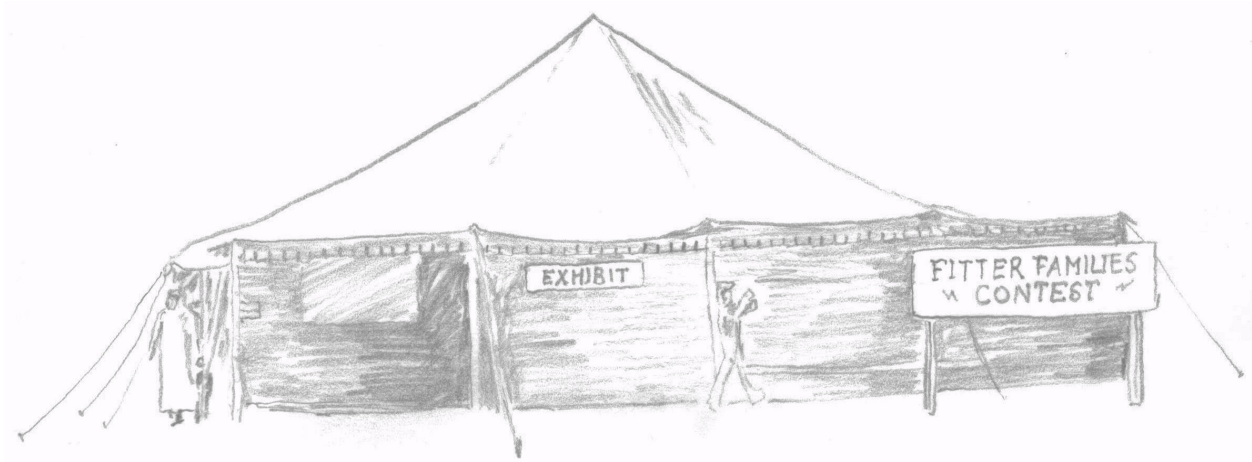
was born of the
Vermont Eugenics Study.

22:48

The first page of the commission's report,
Rural Vermont: A Program For The Future reads:

The work in Eugenics led to the conviction that a comprehensive survey of the
factors influencing life in Vermont was essential to the understanding of the
human forces which make for progress in the state.

Thus, the center of interest from the beginning was in the people²⁶



23:20

242

sing

mp

mp

II
III

II I

Michael Davidson examines the tacit role that eugenics plays in notions of past and future:

If eugenics imagined a future of better babies and healthy families, it also constructed a past to which those deformed and disabled bodies could now be consigned... those deemed lower (and earlier) on some Darwinian evolutionary scale²⁷



For Henry Perkins, who spearheaded the commission, rural futurity required

the culture and genetics of
those mythic pioneers,
to be preserved from
the inherited traits of:

pauperism,

insanity,

criminality,

dependency, and

feeble-mindedness

23:44



23:50



6. The Scope of Haunting

Ghosts stand vigil at another boundary line,
disrupting *that shared, unified "now."*

24:32

254

B \flat Cl.

air

pitch

air

p

pp

sing through trombone

Tbn.

pp

m. s. p. slow bowing almost pitchless sound

raise finger, allowing the open string to speak, to stutter

Vla.

p

m. s. p. slow bowing

D.B.

Ghosts resist efforts to erase past violence and produce homogenous futures. As Arthur F. Redding writes:

just as ghosts trouble the boundary between life and death...These ghosts emerge at and often as the very disjunctures between a hypermodern and rationalist Western social order, on the one hand, and the displaced but thriving remnants of peasant or urban folk cultures, which "modernization" so often aims to stifle, dismiss, and subdue.²⁸

Rural space is haunted.

The image displays a musical score for four instruments: B♭ Cl., Tbn., Vla., and D.B. The score is divided into two systems, each with a time signature of 25:02 and 25:32 respectively. The B♭ Cl. part features a melodic line with a five-measure rest and a five-measure phrase, marked with *p* and *pp*. The Tbn. part has a three-measure phrase marked with *pp*. The Vla. part has a five-measure phrase marked with *p*. The D.B. part has a five-measure phrase marked with *p*. The score includes various musical notations such as rests, notes, and dynamic markings. Performance instructions are provided for the D.B. part: "m. s. p. slow bowing almost pitchless sound" and "raise finger, allowing the open string to speak, to stutter".

25:02

B♭ Cl.

258

p

pp

Tbn.

pp

Vla.

p

m. s. p.
slow bowing
almost pitchless sound

D.B.

p raise finger, allowing the
open string to speak, to stutter

25:32

mp

mp

mp

mp

25:44

B♭ Cl.

trill on register key
allow high D to emerge

Tbn.

Vla.

normal bow position
normal bow speed

D.B.

The musical score consists of four staves. The B♭ Clarinet staff (top) has a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. It features a trill on the register key with the instruction 'trill on register key allow high D to emerge'. The Trombone staff (second) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The Viola staff (third) has a C-clef on the fourth line and a key signature of one flat. It includes the instruction 'normal bow position normal bow speed'. The Double Bass staff (bottom) has a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. Dynamics include *p*, *pp*, and *mp*. A time signature of 4/4 is indicated in the Viola staff. A time stamp '25:44' is in a box to the left of the Viola staff.

Eve Tuck and C. Ree describe settler colonialism as “the management of those who have been made killable, once and future ghosts.” They write:

Haunting doesn’t hope to change people’s perceptions, nor does it hope for reconciliation. Haunting lies precisely in its refusal to stop. Alien (to settlers) and generative for (ghosts), this refusal to stop is its own form of resolving.

For ghosts, the haunting is the resolving, it is not what needs to be resolved.²⁹

What songs can we bring forth from their bones?

73

26:17

mf p

mp

mp

pp



The Kingsbury Branch flows into the Winooski
at Cate Farm, just west of Goddard College.

William Martin Jr., whose farm became Goddard's campus
claimed Susannah Martin as a distant relative.

He bought the timbers from Ipswich courthouse,
where she had been imprisoned for witchcraft
and sentenced to death,
and he built a garden house from them

26:24

270

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

p

mf

mp

p

III II

II 3 III

I (♭♯)

(♭♯)

(♭♯)

In general I avoid the place.
 I do not know if ghosts travel in rafters,
 but I do not doubt that the garden house is haunted.

The timbers are fastened to hand-carved corbels,
 a cow, a ram, a pig, and a goat.
 celebrating the farm's success in scientific breeding,
 and at the same time projecting the rural imaginary
 of a historic English cottage.

The space calls out to be haunted, to have its gaps
 inhabited by "relentless remembering and reminding."³⁰

I don't know if Susannah Martin
is there, but I think
I would have liked her.

Cotton Mather reported that
she laughed at her accusers,

and when the magistrate
asked why, she responded:

"Well I may at such folly?"³¹



26:42

273

B \flat Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

III

pp

p

pp

p

pp

mp

76

26:57

276

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

p *mp* *p* *pp*

p *mp* *p* *pp*

p *mp* *p*

mp *p*

*I sit in front of the Tudor fireplace
and try to describe my project to her.*

*I play her excerpts of the melodies I have derived
from my recordings of water and plants.*

*I ask her if we can work together on a movement together,
but I also explain that I will not be able to hear her answer,*

That I am still learning to listen.

In his piece *I am sitting in a room*, Alvin Lucier records the sound of his speaking voice.³²

He plays that recording into the room and records it again, repeating this process until the echo has consumed the sound in a shimmering chord unique to the room's interior.

27:17

280

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

p

p

p

p

I play my recording of water rupturing the Robinson dam until the walls have absorbed it entirely.

*I return to my original transcriptions
of these unruly waters,*

*and put them in counterpoint
with this haunted chord.*

*I even play Myra Daniels' voice
into space and let the walls
sing it back to me.*

*The lines blur between
listening
composing
and ceremony*

27:29

283

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

27:39

285

air

pitch

-air

B♭ Cl.

p

pp

sing through trombone

Tbn.

pp

m. s. p. slow bowing almost pitchless sound

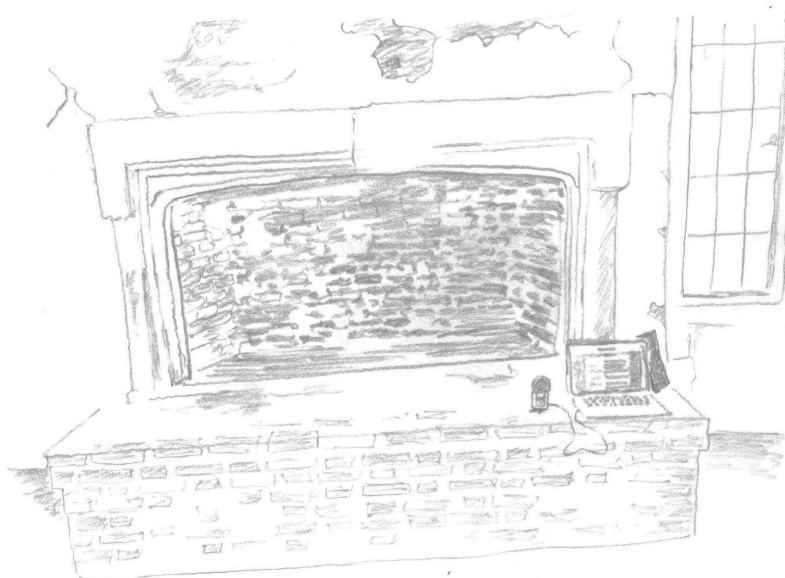
raise finger, allowing the open string to speak, to stutter

Vla.

p

m. s. p. slow bowing

D.B.



28:04

289

B♭ Cl.

pp

mp

291

Tbn.

p

Vla.

p

mp

D.B.

p

mp

The musical score is for four instruments: B♭ Clarinet, Trombone, Viola, and Double Bass. It is in 4/4 time. The B♭ Clarinet part starts at measure 289 with a trill on G4, followed by a slur over A4, B4, and C5, then a half note D5. The Trombone part enters at measure 291 with a trill on G2, followed by a slur over A2, B2, and C3, then a half note D3. The Viola part enters at measure 289 with a trill on G3, followed by a slur over A3, B3, and C4, then a half note D4. The Double Bass part enters at measure 291 with a trill on G1, followed by a slur over A1, B1, and C2, then a half note D2. The score includes dynamic markings (pp, mp, p, mp) and articulation (trills, slurs, and accents).

*It is in the garden house,
as I begin to share these songs with ghosts,

that they cease to be materials I have extracted
and become a way of being together

of being in relationship across our incommensurable difference.*

29:29

300

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

mp *mf* *mp* *p*

mp *mf* *p*

p

I did not grow up with ceremony.

*I grew up with legibility,
a world available to, definition, abstraction, and extraction
to the pioneering work of science and
the future-oriented arc of progress.*

*As I listen across these boundaries though,
I am learning that they are not lines to illuminate*

but points of contact where conversation has always already begun.

29:49

305

B \flat Cl. *p* *mp*

Tbn. *p* *mp*

Vla. *p* *mp*

D.B. *p* *mp*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 305 through 310. The B♭ Clarinet part (treble clef) starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4, then a half note G4. In measure 308, it has a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5) and a quarter note G4. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F5, E5, D5) and a quarter note C5. The Trombone part (bass clef) starts with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3 and B3, then a half note G3. In measure 308, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F3, E3, D3) and a quarter note C3. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B2, A2, G2) and a quarter note F2. The Viola part (alto clef) starts with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3 and B3, then a half note G3. In measure 308, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F3, E3, D3) and a quarter note C3. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B2, A2, G2) and a quarter note F2. The Double Bass part (bass clef) starts with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2 and B2, then a half note G2. In measure 308, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F2, E2, D2) and a quarter note C2. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B1, A1, G1) and a quarter note F1. Dynamics are *p* for measures 305-307 and *mp* for measures 308-310.

30:01

308

B \flat Cl. *p*

Tbn. *p*

Vla. *p*

D.B. *p*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 308 through 313. The B♭ Clarinet part (treble clef) starts with a half note G4, followed by quarter notes A4 and B4, then a half note G4. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (A4, B4, C5) and a quarter note G4. In measure 310, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F5, E5, D5) and a quarter note C5. The Trombone part (bass clef) starts with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3 and B3, then a half note G3. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F3, E3, D3) and a quarter note C3. In measure 310, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B2, A2, G2) and a quarter note F2. The Viola part (alto clef) starts with a half note G3, followed by quarter notes A3 and B3, then a half note G3. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F3, E3, D3) and a quarter note C3. In measure 310, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B2, A2, G2) and a quarter note F2. The Double Bass part (bass clef) starts with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2 and B2, then a half note G2. In measure 309, it has a triplet of eighth notes (F2, E2, D2) and a quarter note C2. In measure 310, it has a triplet of eighth notes (B1, A1, G1) and a quarter note F1. Dynamics are *p* for measures 308-313.

30:13

311

B♭ Cl. *p*

Tbn. *p*

Vla. *p*

D.B. *p*

30:32

315

B♭ Cl. *mp* *pp*

Tbn. *mp* *p* *pp*

Vla. *mp* *p* *pp*

D.B. *p* *pp*

Eve Tuck and C. Ree write that

Decolonization must mean attending to ghosts, and arresting widespread denial of the violence done to them.³⁴

But in the same breath, they remind us that “at some point, we are going to have to talk about returning stolen land.”

30:53

320

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

p

p

p

p

Even as I re-imagine
counterpoint as a
mode of ceremony,

I must remember Purcell’s *Faerie Queen*, a celebration of magic and enchantment,
premiered the same day that Susannah Martin was arrested for witchcraft.

31:07

323

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

31:22

326

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

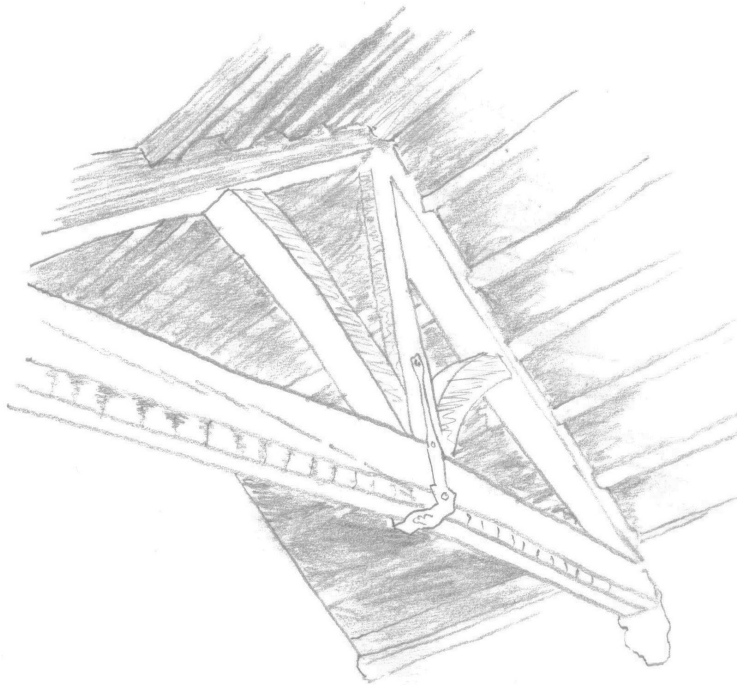
D.B.

pp

pp

pp

pp



"Mercy is a temporary pause in haunting, requiring a giver and a receiver. The house goes quiet again, but only for a time.

Haunting can be deferred, delayed, and disseminated, but with some crimes of humanity—the violence of colonization—there is no putting to rest."³⁵

- Eve Tuck and C. Ree

31:37

330

B♭ Cl.

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

32:00

334

B♭ Cl.

p

pp

Tbn.

pp

Vla.

m. s. p.
slow bowing
almost pitchless sound

p

I
II

D.B.


p

raise finger, allowing the
open string to speak, to stutter

Epilogue: Returning Home

The performers return to the nail fiddles, which have been tuned, by hand, to pitches fished out of the water's song. As the piece fades out, they draw the last of these notes out of the metal and wood, and let them loose to flow back into the Winooski.

Each performer has a board with four screws, tuned as followed:



B♭ Cl. (not transposing)

Tbn.

Vla.

D.B.

Maybe we will talk a little, share stories.
Then we will return home.

My hope is that we go home
with slightly keener and
more patient ears,
that we are more attentive to humming waters,
singing bones, and haunted walls,

that we can hear what they are asking of us,
even if their songs are unsettling.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write that decolonization is
not about reconciliation, but about an ethic of
incommensurability,
about relinquishing settler futurity.³⁶

The homes we return to are the product of many dams and mills,
of pioneer work against many obstacles of a difficult type,

and once established they can spread rapidly,
creating monoculture stands that threaten.



Walking distance from the Robinson Sawmill
is the homesite of the "first permanent settler of Calais."

Granite posts, metal chains, and
a concrete rectangle mark the site,
But behind them, the old foundation has been reduced
to an unremarkable divet, overgrown with invasive periwinkle

After a good rain, you can close your eyes
and hear the water spilling over the dam
in the distance.

¹ *State v. Elliott*, 616 A. 2d 210 - Vt: Supreme Court 1992

² *Ibid.*

³ Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2020), 2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵ Lisa Tanya Brooks, *The common pot: The recovery of Native space in the Northeast*, (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008), xxv.

⁶ Abigail Ruksznis, Jonathan Kim, Keith Klepeis, and Laura Webb, "INTEGRATION OF STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS, EMI AND GPR SURVEYS, AND HYDROGEOLOGY IN THE PLAINFIELD QUADRANGLE, CENTRAL VERMONT," (2012).

⁷ Cecilia Chen, "Mapping waters: thinking with watery places" in *Thinking with water*, ed. Cecilia Chen, Janine MacLeod, and Astrida Neimanis, (McGill-Queen's Press, 2013), 276.

⁸ Brooks, *The Common Pot*, 3.

⁹ R. Murray Schafer, *The soundscape: Our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*, (Simon and Schuster, 1993), 55.

¹⁰ Giordano Nanni, *The colonisation of time: Ritual, routine and resistance in the British Empire*, (Manchester University Press, 2017), 165.

¹¹ Mark Rifkin, *Beyond settler time: Temporal sovereignty and indigenous self-determination*, (Duke University Press, 2017), 1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹³ Vermont Commission on Country Life, *Rural Vermont: A Program for the Future*, (Free Press, 1931), 378.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 374.

¹⁵ Marimba Ani, *Yurugu: An African-centered critique of European cultural thought*, (Africa World, 1994), 411.

¹⁶ Robinson, *Hungry Listening*, 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

¹⁹ Minnesota Dept. of Agriculture, "Knotweeds," 2020.

²⁰ NY Invasive Species Clearinghouse, "Polygonum cuspidatum," 2013.

²¹ The concept of "rendering capable" is explored in Donna Haraway's *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene* (2016).

²² Mary Tuti Baker, "Waiwai (Abundance) and Indigenous Futures," in the *Routledge Handbook of Postcolonial Politics*, (Routledge, 2018), 28.

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- ²³ Vermont Commission on Country Life, *Rural Vermont*, 129.
- ²⁴ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*, (Zed Books Ltd., 2021), 129.
- ²⁵ Paul Heller, *The Calais calamity and other tales of wonder and woe*, (2014), 213.
- ²⁶ Vermont Commission on Country Life, *Rural Vermont*, 1.
- ²⁷ Michael Davidson, *Invalid Modernism: Disability and the Missing Body of the Aesthetic*, (Oxford Univ. Press, 2019), 106.
- ²⁸ Arthur F. Redding, *Haints: American Ghosts, Millennial Passions, and Contemporary Gothic Fictions*, (Univ. of Alabama Press, 2011), 6.
- ²⁹ Eve Tuck and C. Ree, "A glossary of haunting," *Handbook of autoethnography* (2013), 642.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* 642.
- ³¹ Rebecca Beatrice Brooks, "The Witchcraft Trial of Susannah Martin" February 14, 2012. historyofmassachusetts.org
- ³² Alvin Lucier, "I am sitting in a room." 1969.
- ³³ Shawn Wilson, *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*, (Fernwood Publishing, 2008), 11.
- ³⁴ Tuck and Ree. "A glossary of haunting," 647.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.* 648.
- ³⁶ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. "Decolonization is not a metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, no. 1 (2012).
