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“Like a Roaring Lion”: The Overland Trail as a Sonic Conquest

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Journal of American History, Volume 96, Issue 1, 1 June 2009, Pages 19–43,
<https://doi.org/10.2307/27694730>

Published: 01 June 2009

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In the opening paragraph of *Life Among the Piutes: Their Wrongs and Claims* (1883), the Paiute leader Sarah Winnemucca Hopkins compared the coming of the whites into her homeland to “a lion, yes, ... a roaring lion.” A small

child when Euro-Americans first invaded her people's land near present-day Humboldt Lake in Nevada in the 1840s, Hopkins never forgot the onslaught. In her narrative and on-stage presentations to northeastern reformers during the mid-1880s, Hopkins detailed the environmental and social devastation wrought by Euro-American conquerors, including the depletion of game, homicides, sexual assaults, and other physical violence. Yet her opening observation suggests that indigenous peoples also experienced invasion as a sonic conquest. The phrase "roaring lion" alludes not only to the aural volume of conquest but also to the biblical passage that describes the devil as a roaring lion. Mary Peabody Mann, the...

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Online ISSN 1945-2314

Print ISSN 0021-8723

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