

How we learn our names is written in the colour of the sky: personing in the Capitalocene

*Como aprendemos nossos nomes está escrito na cor
do céu: personificação no Capitaloceno*

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Micropolitical struggle operates as a series of processes of collective experimentation that take place right here and right now, with the intention of creating new forms of existence. Suely Rolnik, *Spheres of Insurrection* (2023: xxii)

I live each of them as a piece of me, and I choose these words with the same grave concern with which I choose to push speech into poetry, the mattering core, the forward visions of all our lives. Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982: 256)

Introduction

The summer sky is now too often the colour of turmeric. Forest fire smoke, blown in from hundreds of kilometers away, gets stuck like too-wide nets between buildings. Edmonton, Alberta, where I have lived for nearly twenty years is a city on the edge of the Canadian Boreal Forest. It is the largest part of the Taiga, the second largest forest in the world that stretches across Canada and continues across Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Russia, Mongolia, and Japan. In Canada it covers 270 million hectares between flat prairie and the treeless arctic tundra. The Boreal Forest is the homeland of more than 600 Indigenous communities,¹ most of the known fossil fuel reserves in Canada, it stores more than 208 billion tons of carbon (11% of the world's total), and along with the Amazon Rainforest is the second of the two great lungs of the world.

For the last ten years the fires in the Boreal have gotten worse. We are now experiencing zombie fires,² forest fires that continue to burn in the peat, deep inside the soil. Global warming means that there is less snow and drier seasons. Zombie fires survive the deep cold and the snow of winter and when the snow melts, they return to consume dry trees, pushed by strong spring winds. There is some concern that the regularity of fires in northern Alberta is changing forest to grassland.³ These environmental changes along with Arctic Amplification—warming happening four times faster than the rest of the planet⁴--further threatens the Boreal Forest and everything connected to it.

Since 2018, four new records for wildfire smoke have been set in Edmonton. In the summer of 2023, there were 299 “smoke hours” or the equivalent of 13

1 “What Indigenous-led conservation looks like on the ground”. <https://www.borealconservation.org/>

2 “Zombi Fires Burning in the Peat”, Ontario Nature Blog. <https://ontarionature.org/zombie-fires-blog/>

3 Burn severity and fire history in the northwestern Canadian boreal forest: drivers and ecological outcomes. Canada Wildfire. <https://www.canadawildfire.org/burn-severity>

4 Rantanen, Mike 2022. “The Arctic has warmed nearly four times faster than the globe since 1979”. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43247-022-00498-3>

full days of smoke between May and September. We have had to learn to read air quality metrics. Ten years ago, I had never heard of them, now I can tell by looking outside whether the day is a 3, 6-7, or a 10+. It is hard to describe unless you've seen it. One visitor described it as fog that smelled like campfire.⁵ In the beginning people would post photos on Facebook and Instagram comparing the city to scenes in *Blade Runner*. It was very new and very shocking. But perhaps more troubling now is that it has just become another metric of the summer weather report: temperature, precipitation, UV index, and Air Quality index. And just like that, young people are growing up with smoke days, air quality indices, zombie fires, and arctic amplification. These are one set of *Capitalocene semiotics* that are emerging alongside the audiovisual semiotics of the attention economy.⁶ Anthropocene and capitalocene are names for the dominant *figuration of the three ecologies*—biosphere-semiosphere-technosphere. Figurations are “materialist mappings of situated, embedded and embodied, social positions” (Braidotti 2014:179). The capitalocene is one-and only one-name of the three ecologies where personing happens; an ecological figuration is where we learn our names.

Biting the hand that feeds you

Environmental activism has been occurring here regionally in a variety of ways over the last decade. *Idle No More!* is an Indigenous activist movement that began in 2012, *Climate Strike* in 2019, a movement inspired by Greta Thunberg occurred here along with events in 150 countries, and the following month Extinction Rebellion blockaded a bridge in the city.⁷ In response to these activist movements, the last three provincial governments in Alberta (one left of center and two successively further right) supported the expansion of the oil and gas industry even as the fires worsened. Legislation was passed to increase government power to jail protesters and create *The Canadian Energy Center*, dubbed *The Energy War Room*. Its mandate was to investigate a league of shadowy international radical environmental organizations who they have claimed were funding domestic environmental action groups who put “ethical Canadian oil and gas” in a negative light. Unsurprisingly perhaps, no international

5 Edmonton is in the midst of its 3rd-smokiest summer. And it's not over yet. Canadian Broadcast Corporation. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/environment-canada-edmonton-air-quality-wildfire-smoke-1.7295896>

6 In *Collaborative Projections and the twin ecstasies of DIY CineWorlding* (2023), I discuss another set of semiotics in the Capitalocene having to do with inducement into the attention economy: DIY can no longer be defined by self-production in an age dominated by platform capitalism's inducement to DIY social media self-production. Instead, DIY is understood by its orientation to anti-Capitalist subjectification, its alternative anti-capitalist futurities, its Altermodern worldings. Altermodern worldings are often precarious alternatives to Modern worldings of platform capitalism.

7 <https://albertaviews.ca/disrupting-business-usual/>

environmental villains were ever found. But it distracted conversation from the international money being sunk into the expansion of oil and gas, industrial farming, forestry, and coal mining.

In reality the Energy War Room was a government funded public relations campaign to raise support for oil and gas and to demonize democratic debate on environmental impacts and climate change preparation. This makes good strategic sense for a government who gets the majority of its budget from oil and gas revenue and then buys off the public with no provincial sales tax. Government and industry public relations agencies are actively cultivating pro-industry subjectivity caricaturing environmental anti-capitalist debate as juvenile, and activism as criminal.

In the areas of the province where oil and gas development have direct environmental impacts industry spends money creating recreation facilities and parks of all kinds for the community. You can imagine what it is like to grow up taking swimming lessons and attending community theatre events in buildings emblazoned with international oil and gas company logos. Industry advertising becomes a natural and normal part of the environment. Industry does not just colonize the biosphere with its oil and gas technosphere, it also spends massive money on corporate propaganda/public relations to colonize the semiosphere. In a petrostate, thinking with the concept of *capitalocene* requires learning to bite the hand that feeds you. Imagining alternatives to it requires cultivating techniques to decolonizing the pro-industry semiosphere but without any of the money and resources that both government and industry use to colonize it.

CineWorlding (2023) my cinematic artistic research practice (research-creation in Canada), is a transdisciplinary study of the three ecologies. *Learning how to bite* means: a) theorizing how subjectivity is produced in the capitalocene (micropolitics of subjectification), b) studying emergent figurations rooted in social and ecological justice movements (micropolitical resistance occurring in DIY spaces), and c) developing relational pedagogical approaches that include but also exceed the classroom (alternative human forms [posthuman, metahuman, transhuman etc.] that are currently being experimentally lived and theorized).

I have left ethnography for the transdisciplinarity of research-creation because the ethnography as the study of human culture is significantly lacking. The homo sapien sapien requires the cooperation of more than ten thousand species of microorganisms. Donna Haraway helps me understand and accept that I am not an I, I am a We, and this living requires community-across-the-biosphere, far beyond the human. While we (who are reading this) may be born biologically homo sapien sapien, these biological organisms become persons in the semiosphere-technosphere. *Person*,⁸ idea, concept, story, sign, architecture

⁸ Persons do not need to be homo sapien sapien, a corporation and a river are persons. Person is a

etc., are all semiosphere organisms that form communities (beyond the human) in their worlding. Both bodies and persons are working components/organisms, along with hardware, software, and other related organisms of the technosphere shaping personing just as surely as the semiosphere and the biosphere, and all in different ways.⁹ The three ecologies cannot be studied as human culture no matter how expanded.¹⁰ *How we learn our names is spelled in the colour of the sky* is not pretty poetry it has become a fact. Our names are spelled in the colour of turmeric.

Personing as figuration

In an effort to guard turning personing into property relations (more on this later) I want to think with Marcel Mauss who explained in a 1938 lecture that the root word of *person* is an Etruscan *per/sonare*, a mask that amplifies an actor's voice (14). A *per/sonare* does three things: 1) it is a mask that is socially and historically situated – it is a figuration (masks are made and understood to play a role), 2) it shapes a self (which is not yet formed as a person), 3) it is always a threshold that is oriented both outwards and inwards as a relational bridge between social and psychic, environmental and metabolic ecologies. A *per/sonare* is very much in line with Goffman and Butler performativity, as well as Braidotti and Haraway's figurations.

My personings have all formed in the context of climate change. How could they not. I remember the connection between my home freezer, McDonald's hamburger packaging, the ozone hole melting Antarctic icecaps, and the signing of the Montreal Protocol in 1987. A string connects home appliances, UVB radiation, fast food, global governments, and Montreal, Canada (the home of my favorite hockey team at that time), and me. The sounds of the squeaky Big Mac box and the hum of the freezer where our frozen peas were kept, both signaled environmental doom for a 13 year old. Today's heavy summer smoke, news

social and legal entity and there is no numerical limit to personing. There may be one *homo sapien sapien* but many persons.

9 Of course, bots are persons in the semiosphere and users in the technosphere though they do not exist as *homo sapien sapiens* though they do impact the biosphere because they are condensed forms of energy and contribute to the energetic draw of the technosphere and affect attention and perception in the semiosphere.

10 This formulation of three ecologies owes significantly to Felix Guattari and even though it is tempting to map the biosphere, semiosphere, technosphere onto his formulation it would not be an accurate reading of his analysis. For example, in a discussion of his ecosophy: "According to Guattari, environmental awareness does not only concern natural environments, built areas or physical territories, but also the reinvention of individual or collective 'existential territories', in accordance with the intrinsic link between humanity and the biosphere, both depending on the increasingly more complex 'technosphere' which surrounds them" (Querrien and Goffey 2018. "Schizoanalysis and Ecosophy: Scales of Hlsotry and Action" in *Schizoanalysis and Ecosophy: Reading Deleuze and Guattari*, Constantin V. Boundas eds. New York: Bloomsbury: 80). There is a great deal of blur between the biosphere, semiosphere, and technosphere and a particular modernist orientation to human individuality, sociality, and technology as distinct realms or perhaps rings of environments that constructs obstacles to a new ecology not solutions.

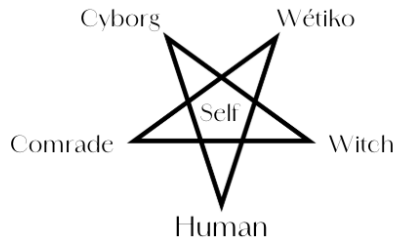
of zombie fires, air quality indices all connect back in time to those childhood fears. But so too do teenage dreams for alternative futures connect with the alternative, activist, and DIY communities I currently make films with. These films and writing are “speculative fabulations in a scholarly mode” (Haraway 2016a: 12) that connect with underground art scenes of my early university years, strings connecting to other strings: Figurations in Haraway’s SF, string figures, speculative fabulations.

Ecological personing (by proper name, role, or whatever) is a practice of revealing (always already existing) relationalities in the three ecologies. Personing are tied strings. While all personings are ecological, that it fully relational, they have differential impacts. It is not a question of being ecological or not, there is no way to not be ecological. Ecological is not a political act. All living things are ecological all the time, I am always in relation (energetically, informationally, affectively). Bateson explained in *Mind and Nature* that ecology is “what goes on in the biosphere—the world of mental process—as an interaction between these two, *structure* (or form) on the one hand and *process* (or flux) on the other, or rather as an interaction between the elements of life to which these two notions refer” (Bateson and Bateson 1987: 36). For Bateson a mental process is not owned by humans, anything that forms a system, ties strings, is a mental process because it is informational.¹¹

In this essay I want to think *personing* as part of the *process and form of artistic research* (research-creation in Canada). Artists make art and are equally made as an artist in process. Neither art nor artist are poles but branching sets of strings tied and trying to so many things (material, ideational, technological). While the artist is numerically one in the biosphere, they are multiplied in the semiosphere and technosphere. It is here that we turn to Audrey Lorde’s *biomythography* (Lorde 1982; King 2019).

Biomythography is a writerly approach to narrating micropolitical ecology. Ecological personing is micropolitical, it is the actualization of knots of relationality that remain virtual without a figuration (*per/sonare*). Narrative actualization is biographical mythology. Situating my own research-creation practice and narrating these persons draws a pentagram. It is as an image of strings with a self in the middle, where each mythology works as a *per/sonare*, orienting my biological existence as *homo sapien sapien* and personings with technosphere and semiosphere. If government and industry work to make *Human* a docile consumer complicit with the desires of a petrostate, then alternatives to Human personing are ecological micropolitics.

11 For further reading on the impacts of this line of thinkings see: Hoffmeyer, Jesper. 2008. *A Legacy for Living Systems: Gregory Bateson as Precursor to Biosemiotics*. New York: Springer Publishing.



Research-Creation & Critical Biomythography

Natalie Loveless writes: “I work with research-creation, first and foremost, as an intervention into the contemporary university landscape, one that is interdisciplinary and centers feminist, queer, decolonial, and critical race theory interventions while working committedly across practice/theory lines” (2020: 225). Erin Manning’s research-creation engages Harney and Moten’s ‘study’ (Manning 2016: 27), where study is not owned by the university, by institutions. Study is about a commitment to radical love, solidarity, existential becoming: “we prepare now for what will come by entering into study. Study, a mode of thinking with others separates from the thinking that the institution requires of you” (Harney and Moten 2013: 11). Resonating with Rosamond S. King, research-creation is *radical interdisciplinarity* and “entails accepted methods of scholarly research and writing, and the other aspect is creative work, such as poetry, performance, or film” (2019: 449). For King, radical interdisciplinarity “is an articulation of activism that builds on radical women of color traditions that seek to make visible the lives, experiences, thoughts, and perspectives of people who have been othered and silenced” (Ibid.). Radical interdisciplinarity shares a great deal with research-creation and contributes a more overt activist orientation to make hearable the storying of lives disappeared by dominant power structures. And in this instance, it makes the plurality of an artist-researcher subjective forms knowable.

I have been making research-creation films for nearly twenty years and often in activist spaces. My writing about the films and about the CineWorlding-as-method in cinematic research-creation has always felt both necessary but methodologically incomplete. There was a register of writing the artist-researcher that was missing. Cinematic and research processes were not exhausted by the article, book, or film. Something that felt like a performed ‘self’ was also made

by the process. It feels like Escher's *Drawing Hands* 1948 where a hand draws a hand, where the process of research-creation was also a figuration of self. It is not self-making (autopoiesis) because it is done in a diverse community of human and non-humans, a collective making, *sympoiesis* (Haraway 2016a: 58-98).

When I read Rosamond S. King's *Critical Biomythography* (2019: 450), it was as if a missing element of research-creation appeared. *Biomythography* comes from Audrey Lorde's *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) that opens with three questions and answers. The questions open the books relationality: "To whom do I owe the power behind my voice...?", "To whom do I owe the symbols of my survival?", "To whom do I owe the woman I have become?". King notes, Lorde "did not codify an exact definition of biomythography" (450) which she believes is an intentional political choice to "leave form as an open signifier available to other writers" (450). The challenge for me in writing about cinematic research-creation has always been the other-than-Michael subjectivities that have taken form, both in the negative sense of being colonized by capital, and in the positive sense of those who have contributed to shaping new critical subjectivities in our time spent together making films. So following Lorde I ask: To whom do I owe this perspective on personing? To whom do I owe this belief in making cinema? To whom do I owe this resilience to keep asking and making?

Ben Spatz has noted research-creation has tended towards "experiments conducted by and within predominantly white institutions. In this sense they are continuous with the work of critical whiteness studies and practices including inherent ambiguity as both a deconstruction of whiteness from its margins, and a more or less self-aware reinscription of whiteness" (2024: 133). In a research-creation practice that emphasizes subjectivity-as-process just as much as it is cinematic process and form, a method that critically engages the mythology of whiteness and modernity is necessary. Critical biomythography integrates research, biography situatedness, myth's (not fiction) ability to involved "supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something. In this case, the 'something' being detailed is her own existence" (King 2019: 450). In my case there are multiple mythologies, and these critical mythologies involved friends and mentors.

Critical biomythography also helps me read the mythology of Humanism/Whiteness alongside critical interventions of socialist mythology (worker/comrade), feminist technoscience mythology (Haraway's Cyborg), the Nehiyaw (Cree) mythology of Wétiko, and the eco-feminist mythology of the Witch which all continue to roles in CineWorlding.¹² Audrey Lorde's biomythography provides a method to critically and creatively learn new ways to spell my name.

12 In CineWorlding (2023) Cyborg and Wétiko show up as conceptual personae, identities that begin to help me write my own critical biomythography in cinematic research-creation.



CineWorlding.org

Human

I was indeed one of those homo sapien sapiens who was worlded as a Human person. I was brought up in a mostly white Catholic environment, learned about Christian creation stories in school, and was enrolled in piano lessons as a young person. I learned about the history of practices of the European middle classes even though at home we had country music and Gaelic fiddle music, and in much greater proportions than the noctures that I only heard once a week in a bust-filled living room piano studio. A decade later I would learn that the world I was personed-as-Human into was also called by the Indigenous people Unama'ki. Unama'ki is one region of Mi'kma'ki. These names are much older than the French, Acadian, Gaelic, Portuguese, and English names. As I learned more about these Mi'kmaq names, I learned other stories of personing that would set off a series of consequences. For the Mi'kmaq, personing does not start with Humans. In the Kluskap stories the first Mi'kmaq family were all each born from different combinations of earth, water, fire, and wind. Sometimes it was mud and lightning, sometimes it was dew collected on a leaf, or sea foam blown into a collection of reeds. A Mi'kmaq person is fully relational with everything around them. This is true of many creation stories around the world which contain alternative cultural births, stories that person homo sapien sapiens into a relation with the earth, not as a deposit on the earth by a distant and observing god. These stories have been collected by anthropologists and their cognate disciplines like ethnomusicology, collection has been informed by property relations of modernity and ethnomusicologists are Human.

Ethnomusicology is often taught as the ethnographic study of music culture, a discipline that emerged from the joining of anthropology and music. On the one hand musicology has been limited by its focus on the study of western art music and is complicit in the construction of Whiteness¹³ its anthropological side, as Tim Ingold points out: "has much to say about the lives and times of non-western peoples, [though] it has next to nothing to say about the people of the West" (2018: 49). This has led to a kind of schizophrenia in ethnomusicology that has been difficult to confront.

13 Prof. Phillip Ewell's article "Music Theory's White Racial Frame" has been expanded into a larger project to investigate racism and sexism in Musicology and Music Theory. An overview of the project can be read here: <https://musictheoryswhiteracialframe.wordpress.com/>

As an ethnographic filmmaker of popular music, I have to note that my films that feature so-called non-white people are screened at ethnographic film festivals much more often than those about so-called white people. In a screening at a cine-ethnomusicological film event, which I discuss in detail in *CineWorlding*, more than half of the audience walked out of my screening of *WE'RE TOO LOUD*, an eco-musicological film about a second generation Hippie community being pushed out of their small island economy by encroaching gentrification. Of course, it is possible that the audience walked out because it was hot in the theatre, it was getting late, the film was boring, or perhaps considered poorly made and too long. All of these are possible. After the screening the first question I was asked was "How is this film an ethnography?". I would learn later in trying to understand this question that my film did not explain the structure of the hippie island culture. It was instead an artful immersion into a moment in the lives of these musicians, but it did not elucidate their culture. My approach has been characterized as 'pollution' by those who seek to uphold scientific ethnography. Scientific ethnography in my view maintains an objectivity (whiteness) that is fully complicit with modernity and does not withstand any contemporary philosophical or scientific scrutiny. Over the twentieth century *relationality* has been shown to be foundation to inquiry across many disciplines and objectivity is no longer a gold standard for research, nor does it explain phenomena. I reject scientific ethnography when science is defined by objectivity (whiteness), if it is defined by relationality (ecology) then I would be happy to practice it. But it seems unlikely, given the history of ethnography, that this is going to happen. As such, I have, as Tim Ingold has suggested, begun to engage in artistic research to understand social phenomena.

I have since spent much more time in popular music spaces where, unlike in anthropological spaces, cinema production is not a common scholarly modality but one that holds great promise as popular music studies continue to develop its ethnographic approach. But as popular music does so, it would be useful to do so with engagement in contemporary anthropological thinking. Is it appropriate right now for popular music ethnography to develop when anthropologists like Tim Ingold are trying to leave ethnography behind because of its commitments to culture and race. Instead, Ingold suggests engaging in artistic research instead of ethnography. One might hear in this a proposition for an artistic research approach to the study of the Capitaloscene.

As Felix Guattari and Suely Rolnik (2008) observed *culture* "only exists in terms of markets of power, economic markers, and not in terms of production, creation, and real consumption" (21). Creating a three part typology of culture: value culture (judgement), collective soul culture (a priori), and commodity culture (ie. cultural industries) they come to the conclusion that "there is only one culture: capitalistic culture. It is a culture that is always ethnocentric and intellectocentric

(or logocentric), because it separates semiotics universes from subjective production” (33). As Ingold has noted, ethnography is out of line with the widely accepted idea that reality is fully relational.

Instead of the concepts of ethnography and culture, Ingold proposes anthropology of *ontogenesis* or *relational achievement*. A *culture* is fixed, locatable, findable and it occupies a striated space. A relational achievement is mobile, operates in smooth space, is temporary even in its ongoingness, emphasizes effort to create its momentary existence, and the effort to uphold structures to maintain its ongoingness. The concept of *culture* hides more than it illuminates.

Rolnik, in decolonial terms (2023), frames the question as micropolitical and macropolitical forms: “the struggle to transform the micropolitical principle that directs action is different than the struggle to transform power relations in the macropolitical sphere” (Rolnik 2023: xxii). Micropolitical struggle is experimental and situated “right here right now, with the intention of creating new forms of existence. This entails emancipating desire from its subjectification to the colonial-capitalist system” (Ibid.). A culture is rule bound. A relational achievement is emergent and momentary and can occur simultaneously at a variety of scales, always relationally, and for variable time periods. For Ingold anthropology is not a discipline that does ethnography it is a constantly open question about the formation of social life that requires a constant re-invention of methods and partnerships. This might proceed, Rolnik insists, by developing strategies to “dodge” the “pimp-colonial unconscious introduced by financialized and neoliberal capitalism” found in the “abduction of the creating force” (Rolnik 2023: 6). This research can be undertaken with ourselves in the development of a “kind of research involving our own subjective experience. We must look within ourselves for access points to the potency of creation...this is a work of experimentation on the self that demands constant attention” (Ibid. 7) where the “formulation of ideas” is inseparable from “process of subjectification” (Ibid. 7). Audrey Lorde’s biomythography does just this.

In modernity, when homo sapien sapien is personed as Human—is a relational achievement—it benefits from an unequal hierarchy of value between human and non-human relations that “aligns with the interests of patriarchal, colonialist, and white supremacist power” (Arons 2023: 36). In ecological action seeking to build relationality with other organism in the biosphere Human personing requires critical work. Human personing is extended into the concept of the ‘Anthropocene’ “thus obscures both the history and the future of environmental injustices” (Arons 2023: 36). As Nell Irvin Painter (2010) noted, *white people* are historically an expanding category that incorporates formerly non-white people into systems of racial privilege while keeping other non-white people out. The Anthropocene is a concept that, while attempting to name impacts on the planet, does so by eliding differences of responsibility and power. Anthropocene is an extension of the whiteness of the Human.

Comrade

When I told Mitch Podolak I wanted to go back to school to study ethnomusicology he freaked out. He leaned his large, bearded head over his kitchen table, haloed in pot smoke, and in a booming voice told me a story about a Smithsonian Institute lecture he attended. An *ethnomusicologist*, the word curdling in his mouth, talked at length about coal mining songs with a coal miner sitting off to the side of the stage. When the professor ended his description, Mitch sneared, he pointed to the coal miner to sing. Mitch, now close enough to poke me in the chest: “Is that what you fucking want to do? Use working people as goddamn examples?”. He was furious.

Mitch was turned onto folk music by Pete Seeger in the 1950s when Seeger was blacklisted in the US because of his alleged ties to communism. Seeger, no longer able to perform on big stages made money singing at Jewish summer camps, some of which were in Canada. Mitch attended one of those camps with his sister and was so impressed with Seeger, and his red socks, than upon returning home to Toronto he pawned his clarinet for a banjo. Mitch was active in the Yorkville scene during the folk revival and learning more and more about politics became an active member of the Trotskyist International. In the 60s he worked as an organizer with the Trotskyists and was sent to Winnipeg. In the 70s, when the Canadian political left fractured, he left political parties for good and focused his energy on creating music festivals. He was the founder of a model of festival organizing that has laid a foundation for music festivals in Canada ever since. I met Mitch in the early 2000s first at the Ottawa Folk Festival and then later in Winnipeg when I was working as a cultural programmer for a national Canadian Union of Public Employees conference. It was after one of these evening concerts that Mitch lashed out at me.

I asked him if I could study the creation of the Winnipeg Folk Festival. He said he'd talk to me only after I read Trotsky's *My Life* and George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*. I found both books used and read them over the summer. I reached out in the fall and with a few caveats he agreed. Though I had been active as a performer and sound technician at folk festivals for a number of years I never really knew why the older folkies treated Mitch with such reverence. I did not know his political and cultural weight.

When I met Mitch, he was pretty depressed. He felt ignored by the newer festival directors who felt his approach was too old school. Mitch also felt that the political aspirations of folk music had been replaced by a pure market orientation and that most folk music artistic directors no longer understood the political significance and history of the music form. Mitch radicalized me, he was a radicalizer. I learned to play banjo and spent the next seven or so years studying music festival organizing across the country. I spent time with Back-To-The-Landers who escaped urban life in the 60s and 70s to move into rural

western villages and small towns. With hippies who organized intentional communities, anarchists and DIY artists trying to find communities fostering and inventing alternative ways of living outside modernity, outside of Babylon in Rainbow Family vernacular. Over these years, and continuing after Mitch's death, his concern for the politics of university study has remained with me. Mitch never separated the future of the planet from the work of music festivals. Building an alternative community with an alternative history meant making alternatives to the Human. He also believed, like Seeger, that we will destroy the planet, that it is too late for Humans. The comrade was a subjectivity he learned during his Trotskyist years and a folkie is a subjectivity he connected and help me connect with which he learned from Seeger and so many others. There are limitations to both of these subjectivities. While they critiqued whiteness on some levels, they still had challenges with race, sexuality, and gender, still so many white men, heroes, and Human histories. Still too much *Anthropos*.

Responding to global warming is not just a question of the environment, it is an ecological issue that includes personing. Ecology is not the study of nature it is "the science of interrelation and interdependence between organisms and between organisms and their environment" (Bateson and Bateson 1987: 207-208). Anthropocene has been proposed as a geological timescale to recognize *Human* impact on the planet, a proposal that was denied by the International Union of Geological Sciences. However, in their decision they also recognized that it will "remain an invaluable descriptor in human-environment interactions".¹⁴ The chair of the committee, Prof. Jan Zalasiewicz of the University of Leicester, who voted in favor of the concept, stated that "the Anthropocene will confusingly continue to represent widely different concepts. This has been a missed opportunity to recognize and endorse a clear and simple reality, that our planet left its natural functioning state, sharply and irrevocably, in the mid-20th century".¹⁵ And while often climate change is usually what one thinks about in terms of the Anthropocene it is only one of eight planetary boundaries "that are crucial to maintaining an earth-system environment in which humanity can safely exist" (Foster et al. 2010: 14). But in the context of the three ecologies (biosphere, semiosphere, technosphere) the failure of the anthropocene might help open space for new critical approaches.

Wendy Arons writes that *Anthropocene* is "both misleading and obfuscatory" ... and "both the arguments it supports and the politics and solutions proposed in its name tend to replicate the very problems that the term seeks to illuminate" (2023: 35). Central to the problem of the Anthropocene (and perhaps Anthropology) is the *Anthropos*. The *Anthropos* is said to be the ancient Greek word for human,

¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2024/mar/22/geologists-reject-declaration-of-anthropocene-epoch>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

but Human is a 15th century concept that has flourished in modernity. The universalizing Anthropos-Human proposes a collective personing. However, the history of Modernity is full of examples personing being withheld on the basis of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability—limits produced, as Foucault illustrated, which define Modernity/Whiteness itself. The Human in Modernity obscures the difference between the homo sapien sapien (biological birth) and Human, a second cultural birth. Modernity has proposed that all homo sapien sapiens are also Humans, but this is the universalizing slight of hand that allows all persons to be equally included in causing the Anthropocene.

In 2016, in research with Mitch about activist music festivals I wrote about the hidden inequality in the Anthropocene by describing it as *Predatory*:

Predatory anthropocene began a world war in the 1950s. There are no frontlines, and parades will not make a difference. We are not fighting one particular thing, or even a group of people. It is a vast machine eating the Earth. It is not a thing separate from us. Predatory anthropocene is a collective subjectivity excreted during the expansions of global capitalism. It is, or rather, we are consuming the resources of the Earth, creating massive impacts on Earth systems, fueling and being fueled by fears and desires. Predatory anthropocene is creating misery all over the world. We see it every day in news footage of war, disease, hunger, and poverty. Too many of us see these things while sitting safely at home: wars against youth, against women, against indigenous people, against people of color, against the environment, against our hope for solidarity, and against collective imaginaries for a better future. Many experience the impact of these wars directly; many more are experiencing decreased quality of life, social cohesion, access to affordable child care and education, and income security, along with increased debt, anxiety about society, and concern about the future of our species. (vii)

With predatory anthropocene I was attempting to bring attention to the inequalities within global capitalist circuits and to better understand collective action in folk music, which has been calling out environmental issues and the need for new forms of anti-capitalist *folk music* and anti-racism (highland school for instance) collectivity since the 1930s (itself a continuation a 19th century anarchist and communist anticapitalism). While anarchist critique of ownership courses through these movements, it still struggled with articulating critical attention to Whiteness and its political alternatives. The obfuscation of the Anthropos leads to two levels of injustice. The first is that all Humans, that is all people, have contributed to, and must take responsibility for the Anthropocene. European anarchism and communism have responded to this by attempting to create alternative social subjectivities like worker, comrade, and folkie which try to bring attention to differences in power relations. But these movements had difficulty recognizing the need to address race, gender, and sexuality even

though they could have made Olympe de Gouges required reading. Though in fairness it took me years before I felt I could and should read Audre Lorde

While these (worker, comrade, folkie) contenders for subjectification contributed an alternative to the universalizing modern Human (Whiteness) it faltered address in two ways. The first was with race, gender, and sexuality and the second (connected to the first), the valuing of individuality. In Modernity all Humans are ontologically individual. Problems are caused by individuals and solutions require individual action:

The notion of the “Anthropocene” also has the drawback that it can be readily aligned with the discourse of individualism; that is, its universalizing of responsibility for changes to the earth’s climate also, paradoxically, plays into campaigns that suggest that solutions lie in (collectivized) individual actions, such as recycling, using energy-efficient light bulbs, or adopting a plant-based diet. This is a discourse that has all too frequently been mustered as a diversionary tactic by capitalist entities anxious to forestall profit-threatening environmental regulations, as in the 1970s “Keep America Beautiful” antipollution ad campaign, in which a Native American (played by an Italian American actor) paddled down a polluted river with a tear in his eye while a somber voice intoned “People start pollution. People can stop it.” That advertising campaign was, in fact, sponsored by the soft drink bottling industry, which sought to combat environmentalists’ attempts to pass legislation curtailing the use of disposable bottles. (Arons 2023: 36)

The concept of Capitalocene better articulates what I was trying to achieve with predatory anthropocene. Capitalocene “directs attention to the socioeconomic system that enabled the large-scale transformation of the earth through equally large-scale exploitation of ‘cheap’ natural and human resources” and is “the nexus between capitalism and colonialism” (Arons 2023: 37). As Harney and Moten express this connection: “the first odious vessel produced by and for logistics is not the slave ship, but the body—flesh conceptualized—which bears the individual-in-subjection” (2021:14). While anarchist movements critiqued property, they were not sufficiently radical to overturn the foundation of property relations, the self-possessed individual as property. In the “Theft of the Assemblage” in *All Incomplete* Harney and Moten write:

Enlightenment interiority emerged from this *emplotment* of time and space – to borrow from Hayden White – this separation from what is shared. But interiority is only for the owning mind. Because what allows this mind to take possession of itself is its ability to grasp property, which is something it now posits as beyond itself. It takes what it is taken from for what it needs to create itself, and not just needs but compulsively, interminably, voraciously seeks without end. In other words, the emplotment of time and space in the mind takes place through the emplotment of time and space on earth, in a conversation of emptiness into world, and is simultaneously taken as a fulfillment of mind, its interior appointment in and of what can

now be conceptualized as body. (15)

Human, Individuality, Capital, Whiteness is a tangle called Modernity. Exclusion from Whiteness and Humanness, what economists call *externalities*, makes a resource by denying value. It does not possess value as self-possessed property, and it is therefore not a person. While some critical scholars have pointed out that modernity does not include nonhuman persons, they overlook the nonhuman organizing principle of modernity's transformation into capitalocene: corporations-as-persons. Corporations, like nonhuman persons, operate beyond the legal confines of human persons and use human persons as component parts of their livingness. Their ethics and morality are capital. Validating a decision is based on economic return, not logic or morality. The Human persons who make up part of the body for this nonhuman person are empowered with the right to act for the production of profit. Nearly anything, as we have learned from history, is available to be converted into capital. And their ecological negative impacts on the three ecologies are beyond their concern (externalities). This logic cannot be separated from whiteness.

Harney and Moten remind us that the notion of self-possession is a property relation that leads to the threat of loss, of losing oneself; modernity makes the maintenance of self an issue of loss prevention and therefore a protection of private property. This is difficult to hear, that self-possession treats oneself as one's own property: "In this double loss of sharing – given in owning and in the imposition of being-owned – that the most deadly, planet-threatening, disease of the species-being emerges: whiteness. And it is for this reason that we can say logistics is the white science...establishing the spacetime of possession and self-possession in ownership...a stomping of the world out of earthly existence and into racial capitalist human being" (2021: 17). This is the problem with the Anthropos, it is an extension of the property regime of Whiteness/individualism that is complexly complicit with Human, Capital and Race employment: "space is counted in order to be occupied" (Deleuze and Guattari 2010: 18). Conservatives do not like to hear this, but Whiteness is the beginning of their much-hated *Identity Politics*. While it would be enough if Anthropocene suffers alone from the above problems, but it is also not supported by the scientific community. Capitaloscene on the contrary, is supported by geological evidence "that capitalism and colonialism marked the beginning of a new world-system not only in a socio-politico-economic sense but also on a global biogeochemical scale" (Arons 2023: 37). Capitaloscene proposes a starting point for rethinking anthropology, and its cognate disciplines, in its reorientation to a related regime of ownership: culture.

The concept of *Capitaloscene* first emerged from Green Marxism recognizing that "Capital is the systematic force organizing social production and driving industrialism to intensify the exploitation of nature. Given the logic of capital

and its basic operations, the rift in the carbon cycle and global climate change are intrinsically tied to capitalism. In fact, the continued existence of capitalism guarantees the continuation of these events” (Foster et al. 2010: 138). Donna Haraway agrees that “the Anthropos did not do this fracking thing” (2016: 47) and that “if we could only have one word for these SF times, surely it must be the Capitalocene” (2016: 47.) For Haraway though, the Capitalocene still has too much of the Marxist narrative (too white and patriarchal). Capitalocene can provide a starting point for alternative (anti-capitalist) futures, but for Haraway it must go further than the Marxist imaginary: “the Capitaloscene is terran; it does not have to be the last biodiverse geological epoch that includes our species too. There are so many good stories yet to tell, so many netbags yet to string, and not just by human beings” (49). These good stories need new characters and storylines that do not center conflict and masculinist heroics.

Cyborg

I first read the Cyborg Manifesto on a bus heading to school. Sitting in a classroom it made no sense to me. Its prose felt obtuse, and I was frustrated. Haraway’s *cyborg figures*

inhabit a mutated time-space regime that I call technobiopower. Intersecting with-and sometimes displacing-the development, fulfillment, and containment proper to figural realism, the temporal modality pertaining to cyborgs is condensation, fusion, and implosion. This is more the temporality of the science-fictional wormhole, that spatial anomaly that casts travelers into unexpected regions of space, than of the birth passages of the biopolitical body. The implosion of the technical, organic, political, economic, oneiric, and textual that is evident in the material-semiotic practices and entities in late-twentieth-century technoscience informs my practice of figuration. (1997: 12).

What is figuration? How does SF (speculative fabulation) cast travelers into unexpected regions? And then slowly it grew in me over the years. Figurations are the names of living, shifting, matrixes of interdependence. Speculative fabulations provide alternative figurations that can be lived in, and in their living relationalities are met. Figurations, both as concept and in their living, slowly loosened my grasp on my Human commitments. With each of the films that I made that were increasingly somewhere between fact and fiction I intuited more about speculative fabulations, these experimental figurations of living beyond the capitalocene.

But this took time. It required accepting the whiteness, patriarchy, and individualism in both the comrade and the *activist* cinema production that I was attempting. In the beginning I was the filmmaker. In time the I became harder to hold onto and the relationality and film forms changed. It took time to let

go of the connection to the white male comrade, the masculine image of the radical, the resonance of anger and the desire to fight, to have a standoff against macropolitical power. The dialectic is delicious. It was only as I felt myself splitting up, of trying to find a way to let go of the image of whiteness, its masculinity, its obsession with direct conflict that I began to feel for the edges of the cyborg. Its edges were not as hard as the cyborg SF that I grew up with, it was not Robocop it was something else. It was a cyborg of relationality.

The Cyborg manifesto is an “ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism” (2016b). Haraway’s cyborg is a critical biomythography of “technoscience [that] extravagantly exceeds the distinction between science and technology as well as those between nature and society, subjects and objects, and the natural and the artifactual that structured the imaginary time called modernity” (1997:3). The *imaginary time called modernity* has, it turns out, quite a grip on figuration and speculative fabulation. Gilles Deleuze’s *control society* and Mark Fisher’s *capitalist realism*, and more recently Acid Horizon’s *Anti-Oculus* are part of modern figuration that supports the ongoing shape of white and masculine subjectification even as it functions as critique. Haraway’s braiding of cyborg SF with feminist Marxism is a creative alternative to the too-often totalizing (too male and too Human) narratives of critical theory and postmodernism.

Worldings are not evasions, they are critical-creative practices of terraforming—making new worlds. Contributing to new worldings produced worm holes that brought me back to my create practices, being a musician, composer, learning to make film, learning to write, photography. And in each practice, I began to recognize art-making’s process as a growing together with technology. The cyborg myth rearranged my biography and taught me to feel for another narrative of creative practice, to the ones that I owed. This new narrative where technologies provided access to the already existing webs of relationality that when narrated move from virtual to actual webs. Virtual webs of relationality are real, they are just not yet actualized. Speculative fabulation is storying the virtual webs into actuality, speculative fabulation illuminates virtual webs of relationality, alternative figurations. The radicality of biomythography is in the storying, the storying worlds. Virtual relational webs take specific form, figuration. Speculative fabulation does not invent relationality, it illuminates.

In CineWorlding I became the cyborgrapher, tentatively storying the emerging technobio hybridity of my living. These cameras, harddrives, lenses, softwares, films are part of me, part of us, and connect us together into assemblages that do things. Haraway’s cyborg manifesto narrates us out of Marxism, it stories an alternative to the comrade—not a progression beyond, beyond is linear and keeps us anchored to modernity’s figurations. Cyborgrapher is an activist figuration in another way, a storyteller of worldings that exist and may exist. These figurations use the affordances of cinema, its colour and sound intensities, its movement

and duration. These are ways of thinking, cinema-thinking that contribute to new models of storytelling. But if we look too closely at the films, we miss that the activism is not just the objects on the screen, it is the transformation of Human and Comrade into Cyborg. Cyborg is a capacity. Critical biomythography allowed me to recognize Haraway's cyborg and our speculative fabulations beyond the single authorial body of Humanism and the Comrade. We are already a we, and as we began to feel this expansive relationality, the relational achievement of bodies and machines, cyborg figurations, we began recognizing ourselves separate from the figuration of the capitalocene. Capital is a cyborg figuration; it is an organization of the biosphere-semiosphere-technosphere. Speculative fabulation reorganizes capitalist figuration (capitaloscene) and introduces other possible forms. And we noticed something else, a haunting of Whiteness and colonization. We began to recognize in this web of relationality another subjectivity hiding inside Modernity-Whiteness-Private Property, a spectral figuration: Wétiko.

Wétiko

In 2010 I had just begun a postdoc and Dr. David Lertzman from the University of Calgary hired me as filmmaker to work on a project that would become *Pimachihowan* (2016). His larger project, the *Environment Indigenous Energy Interface* grew out of his interest in finding ways for Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Western Science to contribute to ecosystem-based management in industry (Lertzman 2010). Lertzman recognized that western science is learned in university, but Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) was “acquired through deep cultural immersion and training over time, often in remote locations” (2010: 109). He had partnered with (now chief) Conroy Sewepagaham from Little Red River Cree Nation. We met with Sewepagaham in Edmonton, Alberta and at Lertzman's home outside Canmore, Alberta a number of times. We were really not getting anywhere with the documentary about the Canadian constitutional requirements for industry to consult and accommodate Indigenous people in industrial developments on Indigenous land. During the conversations Lertzman would refer to locations at Little Red and he and Sewepagaham would discuss process of introducing industry people to the land. Lertzman would refer regularly to TEK, Sewepagaham would discuss the similarities between Nehiyaw (Cree) ways of knowing and systems theory. I was mostly quiet and trying to figure out how to make a film with all of this complexity. In the end Lertzman suggested that I travel to Little Red River and spend some time “on the land” with Sewepagaham.

Driving mostly north, the trip took about thirteen hours from Edmonton to Little Red River, located a little less than one hundred kilometers from the Northwest Territories. In the summer it does not get dark for very long and in the winter the days are extremely short. On this summer visit Sewepagaham and I spent

our days driving around the territory “seeing with my own eyes” the land and hearing its stories. The place where his grandfather canoed out to sign Treaty 8 with the Canadian government agents in 1899, the place where his ancestors signed peace with the neighboring Dene, the powwow grounds, the small barge that ferries people across the narrow part of the Peace River. At the end of the tour, we climbed a hill and from this vantage point we were able to see the entire territory, *okâwîmâwaskiy*, mother earth.

I did not understand then that I was being introduced to a new figuration. It was not a relationality between human and nonhuman, but a wholism of relational personing that does not start by taking personhood away from nonhuman relatives:

the Cree concept of the self is oriented towards wholism by nurturing a wholistic self that coexists in the world with other life largely through the structuring processes of *superpositionality* and *resonance*. It is through these processes that the self is able to be part of a whole *and* the whole. The capacity to tap into these processes are shared among all living things by virtue of their being comprised, in part, with a *spiritual* domain. (Walker 2021: 93)

Over the course of the following five years, I would learn lessons from Lertzman and Sewepagaham about Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Nehiyaw relationality. The film *Pimachihowan* (2016) would become a profound teacher (MacDonald 2023: 189-2010). Sewepagaham’s fire teaching about relationality continues to propose a new relational figuration.

Toward the end of the trip Sewepagaham’s truck got stuck in deep mud. I would find out years later that it was not actually stuck, that he performed its stuckness to create a reason for us to walk the ten or so kilometers home. Armed with a rifle we began to make our way home along the mostly straight and grey graveled road. We walked and talked for a long time. The sun was coming down toward the horizon but would not fully descend for very long. It was late June. The air buzzed with large flies and even larger dragonflies. We walked for hours without anyone driving by.

Eventually, a small truck drove by but to my surprise it did not even slow down. Leaving us in a cloud of dust laughing and a little bit stunned, we continued on our way. Twenty or so minutes later the truck returned with the driver hollering in *nēhiyawēwin*. Sewepagaham laughing, approached his cousins truck and we all climbed in the open back. The drive home did not take long. Sewepagaham would tell me later that his cousin thought we were *wétiko*, white skin cannibal spirits. We all laughed at the mistake.

Five or so years later I was invited to make a film at Kainai, in Blackfoot territory called *Elders’ Room* (2019) with critical pedagogy professor Shirley Steinberg. On the first weekend of filming I drove around the Kainai traditional territory listening to a traditional welcome song. Before I began making the film, or even meeting

any of the elders, youth, teachers, or guidance counselors we would be filming, I introduced myself to the land. This is what I learned from Conroy. With the song looped I let the land direct the filming in what would become an audiovisual land acknowledgement that followed the textual land acknowledgement in the film. I had indeed learned a great deal with Lertzman and Sewepagaham, I was a different kind of filmmaker and practiced a different modality of figuration.

I arrived at Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump Museum and explained the project to the museum staff asking if I could film the exhibits. They agreed. It was during the filming of one exhibit in particular that returned me to that night with Sewepagaham. Behind glass a small mountain of buffalo skulls next to a picture of white bearded men with rifles who stood in front of a massive mountain of buffalo skulls and bones. I knew about the colonial massacre of buffalo, but I had never seen these photos, and never while standing next to actual bones, on the actual land where they were massacred. The goal of the massacre was to wipe out the keystone species that the many Indigenous nations who lived nomadically on the prairies relied. It was the reflection of my bearded face with a camera on my shoulder next to the bearded face of the colonial rifle holding murderers that shook me. Was it really a mistake when they thought I was wétiko? Or was it a recognition of something that I had been avoiding. A history of colonial madness that still exists in this society, that I play some role in perpetuating, perhaps wétiko is a figuration in me. Is there space in King's biomythography for a haunting?

Haraway's cyborg allowed me to get some distance from the Human and the Comrade and these figurations allowed me to understand Sewepagaham's teachings, one of which was wétiko. Was I indeed possessed by wétiko? I noticed that the rest of the museum experience shielded me from the cannibalistic Whiteness of wétiko's colonial madness. Was this shielding an expression of *White Fragility* (DiAngelo 2016) that stemmed from a fear of facing haunted toxic masculinity (Connell 2005, Kirby 2019), wétiko's insatiable hunger that made species extinction and attempted genocide possible? Killing to make space on the land, to own the land. Whiteness as a colonial psychosis, a social "disease of exploitation, Imperialism, and Terrorism" (Forbes 2008). Wétiko is a Nehiyaw story that preexists colonization. It is not just a name for whiteness, but it does usefully name a figuration of colonial desire. For Nehiyawak (Nehiyaw people) the recognition of wétiko possession requires community action. What will I do with this knowledge of my haunting? Is the government and industry's colonization of the semiosphere, capitalocene a figuration of wétiko?

Decoloniality is a question about how colonial history lives in the present, in *our* bodies. It lives both in my personal family history, of Gaelic and Acadian people, Scottish and French families dislocated during the 16th-18th century preparation for colonial invasion, the creation of colonial foot soldiers through the systematic dislocation of poor people from their homes and histories. In eastern Canada,

where my families settled, their continued dislocation from their villages and attempts at independence and their ultimate incorporation into Whiteness in the industrialization of the 20th century. Now I am in the Canadian west, living on the edge of the Boreal Forest and being invited to recognize the haunting of Wétiko. Do I look at this invitation as a gift, to learn something more and more deeply about what I have inherited. The challenge I face with Whiteness, a history of family trauma disappeared by the settler-indigenous binary as if all white skinned people are White. None-the-less I have become White and have inherited colonial tools and privilege. Wétiko is an opportunity to call-in decolonial family, to remake kinship ties across species division, and in doing so, working to heal the haunting. This means perhaps learning new ways to tell stories. Decoloniality is not just in macropolitics, the decolonizing of institutions and their forms (including pedagogy and knowledge systems), it is also the micropolitics of my names. Practicing new ways to spell my name, namings to deconstruct Whiteness, namings that shine light into the shadows where Wétiko hides. Namings that are spells.

Witch

Namings. Dr. David Lertzman also spelled his name Daveed. Lertzman was a business professor, Daveed was a bard for an eco-feminist wiccan coven that gathered just outside Bellingham, Washington at Mela's home. Mela, the priestess. Daveed, the bard. I met them both when my then-wife visited Mela, her goddess mother for summer solstice. Tall mixed cedar and popular trees surrounded a lush green field. The house was tucked away in a small suburb. Mela had moved here years earlier from California to be closer to seasons. She had known Starhawk and practiced the spiral dance in the Reclaiming Movement. Mela learned that

we cannot reshape consciousness by force or through fear, for to do so would only reinforce what we are trying to change. We must bring about change through nonviolence, physical and spiritual. We are called to take a radical leap of faith, to believe that people, given the opening to dream of new possibilities, with tools and vision will create a living future. (Starhawk 1979/1999: 23)

Mela believed that this was possible and gathered her community around her in Washington State to create her own coven.

Daveed was introduced to Mela during his PhD work in the late 1980s. Throughout the 1990s he became the bard of the community. For Daveed, Goddess worship was an alternative to modernity, a practice of re-enchanting the world. Aware of the threat of extractivism from Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge he contributed original sacred songs and maintained a boundary between what he

learned from Indigenous community and the rituals invented and practiced. For Daveed, earth magic was something that was practiced in ancient Europe and accessible not through historical study necessarily, but through the invention of practices to actualize the relationalities that are already there. The figuration of Goddess worship would be informed by what he learned from Indigenous elders, but he was certain that we must invent our own traditions.

I arrived in the early 2000s having just completed my MA. I arrived as a comrade and Daveed and I connected around Mitch. David had grown up in Winnipeg, where Mitch was a major figure, and David had been a blues musician there. He understood my orientation to the comrade and to music and he, Daveed, helped me see an alternative approach. Over a first long chat around the dying solstice fire we connected around the idea of an ecological musicology that would not see the land as a context but as a contributor. We talked about music and magic and began a long-term friendship and collaboration.

Daveed believed powerfully in the Goddess, not as an entity but as a figuration of relationality. He shared with me the way the Goddess could prepare us for our service work to decoloniality of Indigenous-Settler relations, but also our understandings of masculinity, sexuality, and creativity. He had read Starhawk's *The Spiral Dance* quite closely finding in it ways of thinking through the work he was doing as Dr. Lertzman. For Starhawk, as for Daveed:

the rediscovery of the ancient matrifocal civilizations has given us a deep sense of pride in woman's ability to create and sustain culture. It has exposed the falsehoods of patriarchal history, and given us models of female strength and authority. Once again in today's world, we recognize the Goddess—ancient and primeval; the first of deities; patroness of the Stone Age hunt and of the first sowers of seeds; under whose guidance the herds were tamed, the healing herbs first discovered; in whose image the first works of art were created; for whom the standing stones were raised; who was the inspiration of song and poetry. She is the bridge, on which we can cross the chasms within ourselves, which were created by our social conditioning, and reconnect with our lost potentials. (Starhawk 1979/99: 103)

I struggled with the idea of the Goddess and the God. I felt that even though Starhawk said many times in *The Spiral Dance* that these figurations are not meant to divide the cosmos along sex roles, it is hard to break with Human and Comrade thinking. But what I did learn in the coven, and especially from Daveed, is the power of ritual practice in everyday life. The ways that enchanting the world can contribute to decolonizing Whiteness and Modernity, and the ways that both Daveed and David Lertzman could both exist simultaneously, shifting back and forth as needed, sometimes even in the middle of a conversation. Each of us in our too-short time together changed many times. We were the closet of friends and confidants, and sometimes locked in bitter dispute. Very few people

could make me as angry as Daveed could, and few people are as compassionate and open to the world as he was.

Conclusion

With Daveed I did indeed become some kind of witch. Over the years we spent together I began to see my filmmaking as a relational practice, a cyborg figuration that through enchanting the world could become a spell to open up subjectivity in ways other than those prescribed by Whiteness and Modernity, in ways that could become sensitive to actualizing relationalities, to thinking ecology and magic, and now hauntings as relational forms. Actualizing the virtualities of relationality is a life-long process. Artmaking and artistic research can be a spell against coloniality. The casting of spells, the creativity of the comrade, the generosity of the Goddess, the call to healing community made by recognizing the presence of Wétiko, all of these things are how I spell my name outside the Human. Critical biomythography is the narration of these subjectivities emerging alongside my ritual practice of CineWorlding. It is an actualizing of the virtualities that continue to contribute to this emerging artistic research practice. As the Human's certainly fades into the blurriness of relationality we might find there a practice that helps us see ourselves ecologically. In seeing ourselves ecologically we can begin to recognize the capitalocene figurations that use Human subjectivity as its operators. As we learn this lesson, we can turn to art to invent new practices, new relational subjectivities, new ways to spell our names. We will know if we learn new names from the colour of the sky.

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