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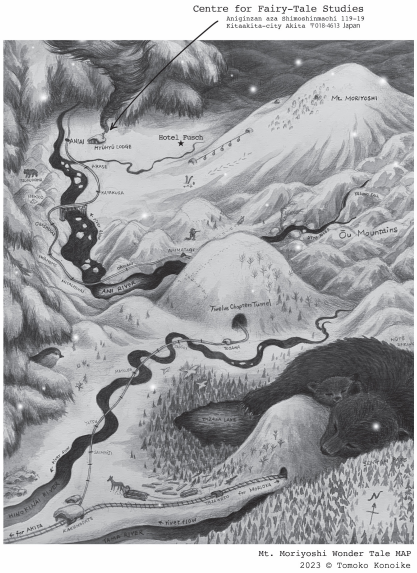

Mt. Moriyoshi Wonder Tale MAP
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Re-Storying the World for Multispecies Survival

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Performing Bureaucratic Theatre in Academic Science Fields, A Case Study: The Pheromone Trees and Coyote

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Performing Bureaucratic Theatre in Academic Science Fields, A Case Study: *The Pheromone Trees* and *Coyote*

WhiteFeather Hunter

Abstract
This essay examines a project entitled *The Pheromone Trees and Coyote* as a case study, to draw an analogy between concepts of territoriality—regarding fluid territories of highly adaptive wildlife species—and the fixed 'territories' of institutional management systems that deal with them. Coyotes, as a 'varmint' species in Canada, can be subject to violent control strategies, with little to no restrictions in place. Yet the case study, first proposed within the context of an academic research programme (situated on the opposite side of the planet and with entirely different ecological circumstances), became burdened with prerequisites—theatrically absurd certification processes and field performances, considering the open permissibility of local regulations. This paper will discuss how a remote federal 'partnership' framework of institutional governance can be seen to represent extended colonisation, where blanket restrictions on access to natural 'resources' (i.e. 'fur-bearing' animals) discount lived, hyperlocal realities of citizens and wildlife experts.

Introduction

European laws, and the philosophies they are built upon, have been methodically instituted over the past 300+ years to help colonise what are now (formerly British) Commonwealth Nations, including the UK, Canada, Australia, and other 'member' colonies across the rest of the world (Brittanica, "Commonwealth"). The consolidation of this imperialist resource appropriation and management strategy continues to be strengthened through transcontinental territorial agreements. These agreements are meant to ensure adherence, as broadly as possible, to various federal regulations that

share the same foundational principles based on 'Crown' interests (e.g., forest and wildlife management policies). This broad-brush approach to diverse lands and their inhabitants—including people and nonhuman animals, as well as environmental 'services' provided by the lands—is an overarching, systematic economic dominion where colonisation extends from delineated cultures and territories down to individual minds and bodies:

> The colonial relationship is not only physical, but psychic and cultural as well. Ideology occupies a dialectical relation to legislation, economics, and culture: it arises from and contributes to a system of exclusionary power relations. Those colonized have less access to resources as they are subordinated economically and politically; what resources they do have are tenuous as their bodies, which have become commodities… (Buckman 89).

This essay is concerned with specific manifestations of different forms of colonisation—those that transcribe themselves in the kinds of research allowed or preferred to be carried out across territories, and thus the kinds of knowledge allowed to be generated or shared. As well, the required performance gestures of researcher and research subject by colonising forces. I will first examine concepts of body colonisation, of both human and nonhuman animal bodies, within the context of academic science research hierarchies, around a research-creation project entitled *The Pheromone Trees and Coyote*. Here, body colonisation will be discussed as a tactic that links institutional performance requirements to delimited and conflicting senses of self and other, where imperialistic systems of validation and oversight invalidate hyperlocal experience and impede research activity.

Underlying this project is a transgression of boundaries between art and science via bioartistic experimentation; as such, it incorporates, "life and living beings both as a medium and as subject matter," in order to investigate ethical nuances of human-animal interactions, on the scales of global geopolitics to personal biochemistry (Zurr and Catts 1). Foundational bioartists/researchers, Ionat Zurr and Oron Catts, pinpointed two decades ago that, "Bioart raises a profound array of ethical considerations in regard to the extent of the manipulation of living systems that range from interventions at the molecular level to the ecosystem and anything (living) in between." They explained that uses of bioart to examine ethical issues include dissecting notions of "humans as a separated and privileged life form, a perception inherited in the West from the Judo-Christian and Classical worldviews" (Zurr and Catts 2). It is this hierarchical privileging of humans over animals (as well

as other humans), moral separation and regulation thereof that this essay addresses, to offer an experiential perspective of what I consider to be disembodied institutional policies and procedures.

The Pheromone Trees and Coyote was proposed as a bioartistic 'experiment' in subtle interspecies interaction, between humans—mostly me—and free-range Eastern coyotes, using an open-sourced method of DIY human hormone extraction from urine (Maggic "Open Source Estrogen"). The applications of this body fluid extract will be discussed as part of an artificially escalated, bureaucratic problem encased within dislocated concepts of animal research ethics. The 'experiment' was initiated by first simply noticing what was present all around me, inadvertently engaging in non-invasive wildlife tracking ('spoor' methods such as observing scat, pawprints and kill sites) and later, infrared trail camera capture. These observations and the project that developed from them were towards understanding wildlife behaviour in chemically complex colonial landscapes. The (in the end, independently conducted) project's final output was the creation of new media art documentation, to communicate some of the intricacies of culturally and ecologically complicated human-animal relationships.

The brief exercises took place near the infamously toxic Canadian Forces Base Gagetown (est. 1958, now known as the 5th Canadian Division Support Base Gagetown), a massive parcel of densely forested land that has been laden, for decades, with hormone-disrupting 'forever' chemical substances. *The Pheromone Trees and Coyote* will be examined as a case study to draw an analogy between concepts of territoriality—regarding fluid territories of highly adaptive wildlife species around human activity—as well as the fixed 'territories' of institutional management systems that deal with these species and individuals interested in them. This analogy is presented in terms of various performative actions carried out by the author/artist, as well as foreign bureaucratic performance requirements overlaid on a situation that did not require them within the locality in which the activity took place.

Coyotes, as a 'varmint' species in Canada, can be subject to violent control strategies, with little to no restrictions in place. Yet the case study project, first proposed within the context of a university research programme (situated on the opposite side of the planet and with different ecological circumstances), became burdened with prerequisites—theatrically absurd certification processes and field performances, especially when considering the open permissibility of local regulations. I will unpack some of these processes to discuss how a remote federal 'partnership' framework of institutional governance can be seen to represent extended colonisation,

where blanket restrictions on access to resources (e.g., 'fur-bearing' animals) discount lived, hyperlocal realities of citizens and authorized wildlife management experts. *The Pheromone Trees and Coyote* necessarily became an abbreviated, independent artistic intervention, conducted outside of academic frameworks and during personal time—ultimately, a delineation of culpability that institutionally and philosophically outlines official human (researcher) relationships with all others.

Bodies in the Field

In April 2020, due to the onset of the SARS Cov-2 pandemic and the crises that rapidly ensued, I was forced to leave Australia and move back to my country of citizenship (Canada) to endure the first wave of lockdowns—and my own first infection with the virus. International student researchers such as I were publicly told by then-Australian Prime Minster, Scott Morrison, to, "go home" (Ross "Time to Go Home"). Likewise, Canadian Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, beckoned Canadian citizens the world over, saying, "It's time for you to come home," before airlines shut down indefinitely (Government of Canada 2020). "Home" of course meant my own *territory*, including a nationally-funded healthcare system and other federal (and familial) support during the pandemic—not the new home I'd settled into for the duration of my doctoral candidacy. To "go home" I was required to suspend my doctorate, since the university would no longer be liable for insuring travel outside of Western Australia, against newly instituted federal and state travel advisories. These advisories were applicable to all government employees, including funded university researchers. This example first serves to introduce the concept of body colonisation within federal/institutional frameworks, across shifting notions of territoriality and the sometimes-contradictory restrictions that apply. In this case, the contradiction was in being officially advised to immediately leave one federal territory (and continent) for another, while being told that I couldn't leave without being penalised due to new federal/state territorial legislation.

Conducted under these circumstances, the case study provided in this paper is meant as a useful example of academic bureaucratic overreach, where disembodied concepts of ethics begin to move towards the nature of cultural taboo versus being grounded in objectivity and evidence. As I will show, this involves an abstraction of bodies and experience that can dislocate researchers from their research and alienate them from the institutions they work within, in an extended form of body colonisation.

The mass, urgent movement of bodies through airports and borders across the globe to their designated home territories was like a worldwide roundup of chattel, with every*body* accounted for and then penned in isolation from one another. As part of a personal lockdown management and health recovery strategy, when the movement of my body was restricted to within the walls of my urban condo, I made the choice to relocate to a rural location in Atlantic Canada. The (affordable) relic of a hideaway I secured as a new home would grant me some freedom to spend time outdoors across an expanse of private land, to roam relatively unhindered no matter what phase of lockdown followed. This specific location and its importance will be detailed next. My relocation coincided with being offered a period of 'offshore enrollment' by The University of Western Australia that allowed me to continue with my doctoral studies from where I was, but without access to campus resources on the other side of the planet. Thus, my research, which is centred around biotechnological art production through use of my own body materials,[1] adapted and continued amongst a new peer set: pine trees, boreal wildlife, and a few humans.

The new location I lived and worked within, Upper Hampstead, New Brunswick, is a community ecology of postcolonial imbroglio—a complex set of overlapping circumstances that have unfolded over the last few centuries. The historically infamous Base Gagetown buttresses Elm Hill, which is one of the earliest Black settlements in Canada (est. 1806). Elm Hill recedes amongst swathes of tree lot monocultures in an otherwise pastoral landscape, a site of significant economic downturn and scant populace versus the thriving community it once was (Moore 2019; Rickards 2010). Located along the Wolastoqey-named Lake Otnabog, next to the islet-studded Saint John River, Elm Hill traverses a single, pothole-pockmarked dirt and gravel road. This road (Elm Hill Road) meets a bumpy back road (Upper Hampstead Road) that forks off from rural Route 102, and this obscure crossroads is where I resided temporarily—in a tiny locality (a property, really) named McAlpines.[2]

The *Mac*Alpines (Peter MacAlpine and Elizabeth (Watters)) were Scottish loyalists who emigrated from New York and settled in the area in the 1780s.[3] Families such as the MacAlpines were soon after joined by Black loyalists who escaped the US and settled Elm Hill (Queens County Heritage "Loyalist of the Day"; Spray 58-65). The 483-acre (195 hectare) MacAlpine property line meets Elm Hill Road to the southwest, traversing half its length. This parcel was purchased by a German family in the 1970s, who planted it with monocultures of Eastern white pine.[4,5] There is an abandoned, rodent-infested Baptist church and accompanying graveyard carved out from the plot,

where the MacAlpine settler family tombstone declares their "graves unknown"—presumably unmarked on the property somewhere. A neighbouring ranch sits to the south and the Saint John River (the Wolastoq, in Wolastoqiyik language) borders to the east, varying as a seasonal floodplain. Base Gagetown dominates to the west, beginning at Route 102. McAlpines is minimally populated, outside of the graveyard. The over 100-year-old, half-renovated farmhouse I rented had been mostly unoccupied for 20 years. It sits across a crumbling asphalt and beer can littered road from the decrepit church, and down a long dirt driveway through a pine monoculture plot. The only living residents within immediate sight (mostly out of sight) include select groups of resilient wildlife. Neighbouring summer cottages and some year-round houses dot along the Upper Hampstead Road, but typically the only human activity within hearing range was that of Base Gagetown.

When I first arrived at McAlpines, daily ballistics exercises thundered heavily over the land, completely quieting the few audible birds, and creating what felt like an eery, dystopian dreamscape. Base Gagetown is the second largest military base in Canada, at 1,100 square kilometres (Government of Canada "5th Canadian Division Support Base Georgetown"). Its infamy comes from once serving as a secret playground for US military testing of Agent Orange, a devastatingly toxic dioxin herbicide used in the Vietnam War as a chemical warfare agent (Brewster "Ex-Soldier"). Much has been written about the studied effects of dioxin exposure on humans and wildlife, including endocrine (hormonal) disruption and birth defects/stillbirth, neurotoxicity, other life-threatening diseases and organ dysfunction (Eisler 23-26). As a native New Brunswicker, who grew up with friends from the Gagetown area (affected *in utero* by exposure to Agent Orange), my experiences of the effects of dioxin exposure ring close to home. Agent Orange is not, however, the only chemical profile of the base; Base Gagetown is contaminated with numerous persistent chemical agents, and on the radar as part of the $4.54 billion Federal Contaminated Sites Action Plan (Government of Canada "Action Plan"). During the latter period of my stay, portions of the base were shut down for bioremediation and the overall stillness of the landscape, with its inhospitable softwoods,[6] became deafening.

In this set of postcolonial capitalist circumstances: vegetal monocultures, military compound toxicity and marginalised human populations, who or what thrives? These difficult factors seemed to favour the presence of highly adaptable wildlife, including deer and snowshoe hares and hence, their natural predators. Over the autumn and winter months, while black bears slept under earth and snow cover, Eastern coyotes roamed freely

in McAlpines, scooping up the critters that scurried amongst the pines. Their eyes initially blazed a glowing white at me, lined up in spooky pairs along the tree line—reflections of my car headlights at night as I pulled into the yard after grocery shopping in the nearest (far away) town. When coyote territories become established in pockets of human neglect and then new humans come along, what are the ways in which the wild canids respond? Might they be intimidated and go away, become intrigued and move in closer, or simply co-exist unchanged? Conversely, do they establish territories around rural human habitations intentionally? These behavioural questions became the crux of a deeper philosophical inquiry and bioartistic investigation, detailed in the sections that follow.

A Political Animal

When I heard coyotes howling together in the dark, just outside the McAlpines farmhouse—further away, then closer, then just past—they transitioned into a myth-like community of night-dwellers, keeping company with owls, badgers, bobcats, and other nocturnal beings. Their breathy, shadowy invisibility titillates us species unable to see in the dark. I was interested in learning more about their habits and wondered if I, too, had intrigued them in some way—and what would that mean? I determined that it was in my best interests to better understand their behaviour as I traversed an invisible boundary, between space that is human and that which is nonhuman (wild) animal.

Also at this time, I participated in an online biohacking workshop with artist, Mary Maggic (Second Nature Lab "Hacking the Molecular").[7] I learned a kitchen technique for eluting biochemical components of my own collected urine—specifically, pheromones, or hormones extracted from body substances. Following Maggic's protocols, I brewed a strong potion, stooping over the woodstove like a folkloric witch to bubble it down. The acrid aroma of heated urea, ammonia and whatever else my urine contained filled the farmhouse kitchen and no doubt escaped its drafty walls, out into the stands of pine. This process, and the workshop discussions fed into my concept development around interrelating more conscientiously with the wild canid co-residents of McAlpines. What if I engaged in coyote communication strategies, through personal scent marking? Would possible disruption by chemicals from the military base impair their abilities to sense messages in my biochemistry, whatever those might be? Or, could they interpret xenoestrogens from my own biological material, sniffing out volatile chemicals in my urine like trained odour-detection canines? (Gordon et al. 61-

61) What might their responses be to an increased "estro-colonization" of their territory, if indeed they detected molecules of estrogen from my female body? (Maggic "Open Source Estrogen") I knew these were questions that, practically speaking, would remain unanswered due to the limitations of the kitchen-based, biohacking method I'd used to create the pheromone brew. Yet, I wondered what clues I might still glean about coyotes' sensory/relational capabilities, and some of the meanings, through application of my pheromones on the property.

Some of the processes in place that surround human-animal interactions in both Canada and Australia may apply to research. Our contemporary human relationships with nonhuman animals, particularly 'wild' ones, are marked with intense political and cultural meaning. Wildlife species are considered, interacted with and managed in postcolonial Western capitalist society through the lens of our two-legged xenophobia; this is a common instance of othering, and a useful estrangement that allows for the prioritisation of certain interests in certain contexts.

Standards of treatment and ethics around nonhuman animals vary from organisation to organisation and location to location, influenced by culture, morality, and often, economics. Free-roaming *Canidae* species are present in different ecologies around the planet, with Australia's closest 'native' being the dingo.[8,9] Both species are subject to grave ramifications of Western cultural fear, due in part to rare attacks on humans[10] (usually human-instigated by feeding them). However, dingoes have a far worse reputation as a threat to humans because of having once carried off a human baby (Sparwath "Are Dingoes Dangerous").[11] Dingoes and other wild dogs in Australia, similarly to their North American counterparts, are considered "pests" (Hunt "Dingoes are both pest and icon"). This is due to their appetite for sheep and other livestock that comprise a significant part of the Australian resource economy. It is primarily this depredation—a behaviour modification tracing back to British importation of herd animals like sheep—and threat to the economy that has fuelled control of wild canids, versus threat to human safety. My inclusion here of dingoes as a comparative species is to connect background cultural subjectivity around wild canids to animal ethics (and safety or liability) considerations at Australian universities.

In New Brunswick, the provincial government classifies coyotes as a "varmint" and places no limits on the number of coyotes that can be "bagged" through a cheaply acquired Varmint License (New Brunswick Natural Resources and Energy Development 19). These Looney Tunes-sounding[12] permits are issued to residents and non-residents alike and apply to both

private and Crown lands. Coyotes share the varmint classification with few other supposed local pests, or, by definition, animals, "…of a noxious or objectionable kind," much like a, "mischievous boy or child" (Oxford English Dictionary). Further classification of the Eastern coyote by the New Brunswick Fish and Wildlife Act places it in the category of "nuisance animal," or an animal that can cause property damage or injury to private landowners—in which case, it can be seized and destroyed (Province of New Brunswick 35). What constitutes a nuisance or harm may be subjective and motivated by cultural loathing or fear stoked by media sensationalism (CTV Atlantic "N.B Community Witnesses"; Harding "Pregnant Woman"). For example, property damage could include a family pet cum coyote snack, though often enough, domestic dogs are ensnared and harmed in traps that have been set for their free-roaming cousins. Cultural catchphrases such as "crying wolf" are conflated with all wild canids, equating coyotes with uncharacteristic predatory behaviour towards humans and inflaming mistrust (Fur-Bearers "Three Behaviours"; Mills "Boy Who Cried"). Coyotes may be considered a nuisance just for being seen where people reside.

Wild dogs in Australia are subject to similar control strategies used in North America on coyotes, where Australian wildlife management specialists have travelled to the United States to learn about them in local contexts from local experts, to then assess their appropriateness for use in Australia. These include softjaw traps, an M-44 device, which, "involves a plunger device that works by ejecting sodium cyanide powder into the mouth of the predator…" and 1080 protection collars, which, "consist of a small rubber bladder filled with 1080 [sodium fluoroacetate] solution and attached to a goat or sheep's neck. Small herds of sheep or goats are used to lure problem coyotes into an attack which proves lethal to the coyote if it bites the under throat of the animal wearing the collar" (Hunt and McDougall "Managing Coyotes"). These are three of approximately a dozen different lethal control strategies. Where odours are used to lure coyotes, synthetic 'attractants' include Fatty Acid Scent FAS, Monkey pheromone DRC-6220 and Abbreviated Synthetic Fermented Egg DRC-6503. How might a monkey pheromone compare to human? Would human pheromones, too, be attractive to coyotes, or conversely, repellant?

To try to answer some of my questions, I consulted with experts by reaching out to local wildlife management and Eastern coyote specialists.[13] When queried about the nature of existing relationships between humans and coyotes, resource conservation manager, Erich Muntz explained that, "Coyotes are a political animal and the love/hate dynamic can cause emotions to influence [peoples'] response" (Muntz "Inquiry"). Regarding sociopolitical

complications of the coyote persona (as *persona non grata*), canid behaviour and olfactory researcher, Simon Gadbois expressed that, "a decade ago, it was unbearable" (Gadbois "Inquiry"). Human interaction with coyotes around McAlpines included not only bombardment of their habitat at Base Gagetown, but also bullets occasionally fired by civilians which I witnessed as echoes of miscellaneous gunshots on neighbouring properties. Nonlethal coyote management strategies in Canada can be varied but include 'hazing' methods which amount to what Gadbois described as, "a form of organized harassment." In terms of coyote response to the scent of human urine, Gadbois further explained that, "In the field I always avoided leaving any kind of obvious scent as we were planning a hazing program…if they were exposed to us too much, the hazing by us would not work as well" (Gadbois). Ecologist and evolutionary biologist, Marc Bekoff confirmed that, "…coyotes and many other nonhumans are very sensitive to new odors…perhaps over time they'll adapt to the odors when [they] learn they're not dangerous?" (Bekoff "Inquiry"). Muntz provided additional insights:

> *My general feeling on urine scent marking (called scent posts) by coyotes is that it is done mostly for territorial identification…They may smell the scent put out and be curious over it but changing their territory because of your scent would be very un coyote like… They may not react in a way that alters their territory on a large or landscape scale but…may avoid your scent because its unknown.* (Muntz)

In the interest of better understanding my impact on hyperlocal coyote habitat, whether these "fur-bearing" neighbours would adapt to my presence or be repelled to any extent, I devised a subtle interspecies interaction by a series of applications of my pheromone solution to the pine trees that formed the periphery of my yard, to observe what might result. The intent was not to alter coyote behaviour (as with hazing projects meant to deter their presence, or neighbours' gunshots meant to do the same) but rather to see if my concentrated scent would be noticed, evidenced through normal coyote behaviour of scent marking or otherwise. The institutional ethics *rigor mortis* that followed my proposal for this work is best positioned within the context of compounded 'body colonisation.' I will next discuss how body colonisation can happen through institutional forms of abstraction, or a "a devaluing erasure of [a person's] complexity" and thus can instigate deep internal conflict and disenfranchisement (Nicholls 174). This is then applied to academic research that involves animals, in instances where human-animal

relationships are, in part, delineated according to subjective colonial precepts through distanced forms of cultural value-based ethics. As a result of my ultimate decision to forego the full process of an animal research ethics application, following advice from my supervisors, no sets of experiments took place in the end and any (speculative) insights gained from observation would go unshared within the parameters of my Ph.D.—a debilitating setback, since my other options for conducting research from where I was were nil.

Body Colonisation as 'Ethics'

'Body colonisation' has been defined within contemporary feminist frameworks to address patriarchal capitalist legacies—and continuation—of the oppression of women and *others* different from the dominant culture. This oppression occurs through coerced mediation of people's bodies and resulting manipulation of their senses of self (Leano "Colonization of the Female Body"). Personal features like weight, skin colour, sexuality/sexual orientation, gender expression, age and even 'health' are measurements of value on the yardstick of colonial culture and become formalised through social institutions like healthcare systems and the knowledge communities (universities, etc.) that feed into them. These institutions establish and reinforce mechanisms that ensure compliance to, or preference for body/performance norms. As one example, numerous academic research studies seeking participants for trials concerned with human physiology stipulate that only those between the ages of 18-45 (reproductive age) and 'healthy' are eligible; these requirements discount the full range of human experiences or circumstances outside of the supposed ideal subject.[14] More egregious biases include known research norms where only men's bodies have been tested for things like drug efficacy, leading to more side effects in women who have been prescribed wrong dosages for their differing physiologies (Liu and Mager 1). I will later return to this narrow prescriptiveness in the context of the case study. Body colonisation is also frequently discussed within activist networks of Black and Indigenous people of colour (BIPOC). In this context, attention is paid to racist strategies of oppression that manifest through the 'care,' control/exploitation (and even elimination) of their bodies and identities within Western societies—including establishing toxic industries, such as military bases, right next to their communities (Boehmer "Transfiguring"; Buckman "Body as Site of Colonization"). All modes of body colonisation intersect to compound violence (Leano).

Colonial value metrics become internalised beliefs within individuals and communities and become complicit through external actions—which is where, I propose, some of the more covert forms of colonisation lie. This essay is concerned with intersecting forms of body colonisation that are transferred from human to animal research subject, where the 'care'/control of wildlife (bodies) is enforced through elaborate bureaucratic permissions systems that reflect colonial property management strategies. In terms of proposed academic research in the particular case study, these systems and measures are controls expected (enforced) as abstract embodiments of policy through the researcher, and by extension, the animals researched.

For my project concerning coyotes, concepts of care and control did not apply in the ways they might normally apply in academic research with animals: my proposed activities did not include entrapment, sedation or caging of animals, nor were the animals bred, domesticated, contained, or handled; they were not harmed nor interacted with directly, in any way. Their nonhuman animal bodies were not abstracted but rather interrelated, active elements of the landscape in which I resided; my relationship to them was not directly economic value-based but rather affectively proximal and creativity-based. In this case, how are ethics applied? As with human bodies, the colonisation of wildlife, or free-range nonhuman animal bodies, is structured according to their interactions or overlaps with human economic interests, where human interests (and industries around those interests) dominate. These interests are couched in sociocultural principles of ethics, as I will highlight.

As a wild species, coyotes can become habituated to humans through overlapping territories, whether that happens because of human encroachment on existing coyote territories, or around human habitations where coyotes move in; it seemed that both were the case with the farmhouse (and its grounds) I came to re-occupy. Rather than seeing these nocturnal neighbours as one-dimensional others, I saw them as resilient, spirited inhabitants of a landscape economically abandoned and historically abused, and one that I was interested in understanding more sensitively. Canadian scholar and Professor Emerita specialising in cultural ecology and wildlife management conflicts, George Wenzel, has described that such relational frameworks include "the belief that animals also possess rights" (Wenzel 5). This follows ethics philosophy, where rights are understood to be attached to notions of personhood. However, practically speaking, rights are conceptualised in ways that vary from individual to organisation to governing

framework, as a matter of ethics that are described, canonised, and authorised according to the interests of each.

Academic institutional overreach and colonising subjugation has been previously discussed in the context of ethics, where the "ethics process seems to have become more of an exercise in bureaucracy than a reasonable examination of the harm posed by research…" (Robson and Maier "Research Ethics"). Canadian academic researchers and sociologists Karen Robson and Reana Maier highlighted that this unreasonably burdensome process has already been named, and since burgeoned: "Canadian sociologist Kevin Haggerty called much of what [has been] described as 'ethics creep,' whereby 'the regulatory structure of the ethics bureaucracy is expanding outward, colonizing new groups, practices, and institutions, while at the same time intensifying the regulation of practices deemed to fall within its official ambit.' Dr. Haggerty made this observation nearly 15 years ago, and we argue that in the intervening years ethics creep has become an ethics sprawl" (Robson and Maier). It is this ethics sprawl that characterises the kinds of administrative blinders I contended with, in trying to find a way to conduct relevant research offshore.

Bureaucratic Performances – Colonised Bodies in Action

Until very recently, my doctoral studies at The University of Western Australia were conducted through a cross-enrollment between the School of Human Sciences and the UWA School of Design, through the SymbioticA facility.[15] My transdisciplinary research focus, biological art, engages with bioscience-based experiments and inquiry, in laboratories and/or in various field locations (planetary ecologies). However, these are somewhat soft-*er* experiments, by which I mean that they are conducted to form the bases for artistic interpretations, which are then contextualised philosophically. In other words, while sets of experiments utilise and/or adapt (e.g., hack, punk, freak, or otherwise transform) scientific technologies and techniques, sometimes leading to interesting discoveries and innovations, the outputs are predominantly concerned with culture or the cultural impacts of biotechnologies. University policies and procedures are not necessarily designed to account for grey areas between (especially, 'soft' and 'hard,' *or feminised and masculinised*) disciplines, such as this kind of work presents.[16]

Animal Research Ethics certifications and approvals at The University of Western Australia are specifically within the context of scientific research, such as with laboratory experiments using mice.[17] The welfare of animals in

research is at the foundation of such ethics requirements and important for ensuring research integrity. Ethics applications are built around rigorously detailed, approved experiment plans with well-defined timeframes, and all manner of documentation with signatory requirements to designate responsibility of the project so that people are accountable for their actions. Further to this, such thoroughly documented plans provide a paper trail meant to clarify liability in the unforeseen event that something harmful or illegal happens. Projects are not only the responsibility of the researcher, but of supervisors, their directors, heads of school, animal ethics officers and so on up the chain of command, all the way through to transcontinental, postcolonial agreements. Each link in the chain implements processes of cross-checking project parameters to ensure compliance to this multi-tiered set of mandatory regulation procedures. Noncompliance is threatened with serious punitive measures. This essay does not seek to disparage such requirements as a matter of university research policy in general, nor do I disagree with them. What I raise issue with is the colonising abstraction of bodies that can occur, where certain ethics procedures may be circumstantially inappropriate or redundant, as I will explain further.

Before this case study project, I had already undergone an eight-month process of acquiring Human Research Ethics approval to extract from my body materials for experiments. In that first case, use of my menstrual blood as a research material saw an initial conflation of cultural taboo with institutional taboo, where a committee member's personal discomfort impeded what may have otherwise been a more straightforward approval ([redacted] 2020). I will return to this concept of taboo in terms of institutional research policies, in describing what has been identified as fetishisation of bureaucracy in ethics processes, where evidence of the efficacy of certain measures may be lacking.

Within New Brunswick legislation, as previously described, the nonhuman animal in the social form of coyote is a disposable body, particularly when deemed to interfere with human property. Its value to many humans is not primarily in its ecological role as a predator species (though this may be starting to change), [18] but in its disappearance—either in the disappearance of a direct or imagined threat to property, or in its fur as a natural resource with economic value, where it thus *becomes* human property. This unfortunate status, however, where its animated life is socially valueless, does not remove it from the requirement for ethical treatment when it becomes a subject of formal research (and rightfully so).

In seeking ethics clearance for my project, a congested approvals process ensued over a period of days and weeks, from one disjointed email thread and broken hyperlink to another—between supervisors, research coordinators, research oversight administrators, animal ethics officers, etc. (with me CCed). The university trainings I was mandated to undertake, and certifications required were irrelevant to the project. Regardless, I successfully obtained these permissions. I was first required to complete two separate animal welfare training courses offered online: *Introduction to working with animals in research and teaching at UWA*, and the *ANZCCART ComPass Animal Welfare basic training course (Phase 1 Core Training)* through The University of Adelaide. These certifications were based on an Australian federal framework encapsulated in the *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes* and meant to provide guidelines for "any action or group of actions undertaken that involves the care and use of animals, including acquisition, transport, breeding, housing and husbandry of those animals" (National Health and Medical Research Council 2013). Upon completion of these certification courses, I could apply for "Permission to Work with Animals/ Permission to Use Animals" (PWA/PUA) which I did and was granted through Animal Ethics at UWA. Following or coincident with this, I was required to apply for approval for Observational Studies and to obtain a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) from the property owner. The Observational Studies application states that "This form should not be used when the handling / trapping of animals will occur or there is potential to interfere with normal behaviour. In such cases, a full animal ethics application is required" (UWA Office of Research "Observational Studies"). My application was rejected based on remote and stringent beliefs about 'normal' coyote behaviour and I was informed that I would be required to undertake a full animal ethics application for committee review; if that was approved (some months later), my activity would then need to be in-person supervised.

'Normal' coyote behaviour may vary according to circumstance. It is typical for coyotes to avoid humans—in my case, their behaviour would have already been influenced in this way simply by my presence on the property. Yet, as Muntz had explained, coyotes would not leave because of humans, just inch further away while maintaining their territories. With the farmhouse property, rotating human habitation was guaranteed (and thus, new scents). The owners intended to occupy the farmhouse after I left, and continue renovations to turn it into a visiting artist residency—to support economic and cultural revitalisation of the community (I had been a test case). Coyotes in the neighbourhood were far more likely to have their behaviour altered by

being shot at by disgruntled neighbours, struck by one of the several pickup trucks that rumbled along Upper Hampstead Road (their drivers possibly responsible for the beer cans in the ditch), or caught in a snare. Other factors that could impact their 'normal' behaviour would be humans hunting their prey animals nearby, as deer hunting season was open during part of my stay. In addition to these factors, the property was a regularly harvested tree lot. The work I proposed to do was not definitively scientific research but open artistic inquiry, my ad hoc laboratory was my kitchen, the activity in the field was at the edge of my yard/lawn and meant to be a series of one type of event with negligible impact. The qualifier for 'negligible' was not just comparison to other events in the area, such as ongoing military ballistics, civilian trapping and shooting, or dispersed human habitation with vehicles, waste, pets, etc.—the main qualifier was the expertise from local coyote researchers and wildlife managers, and representatives of regional and federal governing bodies who had deemed the activity as such. These affirmations of both expert and official were dismissed as inconsequential in my request to the university for straightforward approval of my project.

When looking to untangle any unforeseen repercussions of a scent-marking event onsite, I had sought information about local regulatory permits needed, and offered this information to my university to help evince the innocuousness of my proposed project. Since I did not intend to hunt, trap, snare, remove, or relocate the coyotes, I wondered where small-scale pheromone spritzing would fall in terms of legislated activity. Biohacked pheromones are not industrially prepared attractants. Squatting in the woods to pee in the same spot a few times would have essentially had the same effect. The only difference was that I wanted to do it in a more controlled manner so that I would be more likely to have something to observe. The only "capture" I had planned was using an infrared trail camera. After a string of friendly phone calls, I was informed in an official email that "the New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy does not require you to obtain a permit to observe the effects of pheromones on coyote behavior" (Cormier 2021). Mr. Cormier had also specified on the phone that I didn't need permission from the landowner, since *all wildlife falls under provincial legislation*, whether on public or private land. Since legally, I was openly permitted by the authorities (and welcomed by the landowner, anyway) to spray a kitchen-crafted pheromone solution on a single tree in New Brunswick, Canada, in a groomed commercial lot where I resided, why did The University of Western Australia require me be trained, certified, authorised and then officially witnessed/in-person supervised in performing what

equated to a squat to relieve myself on a woodsy hike? I do not mean to imply here a simple misapplication of process but rather more specifically that Western colonial (capitalist) attitudes come to bear greater and greater weight in determinations about what constitutes necessary risk/harm prevention measures.

When I asked Gadbois about university ethics approvals processes he had undergone with his research, he informed me that, "Animal Ethics approval is a touch and go experience. It was not that bad for the coyote hazing as we made the argument that the provisional government was already going for a bounty and we wanted a 'federal' alternative" (Gadbois "Inquiry"). The point Gadbois makes seems to be that it was easier to obtain ethics approval when the (large scale) activity best served resource management interests. Muntz agreed that: "It's definitely a grey area. On larger scale projects a research permit would be issued by the NB Government with conditions and requirements to do the work and that would likely include gaining permission from landowners to work on private land" (Muntz "Inquiry").

As Robson and Maier pointed out,

> The fetishization of rules and bureaucratic process in ethics review and a blanket worst-case scenario approach is a drain on researchers' time and resources in return for – what? Do we have any evidence that this level of procedural minutiae is providing improved protection of research participants or preventing unethical research? (Robson and Maier "Research Ethics")

Was there any reasonable assumption to be made that an additional person onsite to supervise (witness) me pumping a perfume spray bottle at the base of a tree would further mitigate any—already deemed negligible—potential harm to coyotes? Or was it more a matter of risk aversion to liability? Also, in following the logic of the animal ethics strictures as they were deciphered for me, further disrupting the dystopian quietude at McAlpines with another newcomer's sounds and scent could impact coyotes just as well, if not more, than my experiments. Regardless, would it justify the time and expense of having that witness drive from another province (or even closest city over 65km away), even if they were willing and able? This would have put my health and that of my family's at risk from possible exposure to SARS Cov-2; it would not have been allowed nor feasible, as entering the province required a two-week quarantine, and within the province, county-designated lockdowns were firmly in place. Just trying to determine who to ask to come to McAlpines, when it was logistically moot in my local context (and at that time, illegal), was

crazymaking. Another colonising institutional contradiction had presented itself: I was expected to adapt my research under exceptional circumstances yet was all but forbidden to adapt it to my present reality. I was ultimately being asked to violate local laws to satisfy (foreign) loosely applicable academic policies. In cases like this, the true danger is that "one effect of the increasingly formalized research ethics structure is to rupture the relationship between *following the rules* and *acting ethically*" (Haggerty 391, emphasis added). I would add that, in my example, the process took on an air of the absurd.

Conclusion

Ethics committees at UWA do not represent unbiased moral beliefs. The UWA Human Research Ethics committees include officiates of "pastoral care" (via Christian faiths) whose theological foundations place humans in dominion over animals, based on species hierarchies (UWA Office of Research "Human Research Ethics Committee"). In contrast, my moral character is based on principles encapsulated by contemporary ecofeminism and witchcraft, where nonhuman animals are considered to have their own (often superior) agencies; also, where 'situated knowledge' is the counterpart of 'embodied' objectivity (Hunter "Witch in the Lab Coat" 23; Haraway "Situated Knowledges" 583). In terms of the latter set of characteristics, UWA Animal Ethics committees may not be fully equipped to assess foreign ecologies and contexts—such as "lay members" who "represent the general community" (of Western Australia) or "animal welfarists" who do not require a background in "animal science or care" but who are deemed to have "a good understanding of the contemporary context of animal welfare…to ensure that a proposal sufficiently considers and provides measures for protecting and maintaining animal welfare" (UWA Office of Research "Animal Ethics Committee"). This committee composition draws upon the generalist community within (Western) Australia, some of whom may not be familiar with North American boreal ecologies, sociopolitical climates regarding animals, or regulations surrounding wildlife that is continents away. Also included are unspecified, "scientists" who determine the "importance of the proposed project to the community and the soundness of its experimental design." Again, which community? And what if the experiments are (bio)artistic in design? Finally, "veterinarians" are included, whose skills might have been most applicable in my case, as they are tasked with "providing information on variations between species in their reactions to different procedures or substances, their housing

needs, post-operative care, and signs of pain and distress." Pointing out the potential significant knowledge gaps here is not intended to discredit the importance of such committee members overall, but rather to clarify that exceptional situations (such as offshore, transdisciplinary research during a pandemic) may require more consideration and reasonable flexibility, which was not granted to my project.

As a result, instead of a series of experiments, I generated a one-minute video and an art poster using video stills (Fig. 1 & 2). I extrapolated from imagery from trail camera footage showing a single coyote briefly interacting with my scent on a tree where I frequently walked through the woods. I overlaid this with more extensive trail camera footage of my own body moving through that same space and interacting with the same tree, the day before. Within this small output, which I entitled, *The Pheromone Trees and Coyote*, image-making was used to create a sense of imperceptible overlap between humans and nonhuman others that share the same space, a sense centred in forms of *likeness* and towards empathy. This was not to romanticise nor anthropomorphise human relationships with wildlife but rather to undo some of the cultural othering of this so-called nuisance species. By creating imagery of commonality between a human and nonhuman animal, the intention was to counter abstraction, to show multiple agencies acting separately but in co-existence. It was my intention that this project serves to disrupt the imperialist gaze, which relegates nonhuman animal bodies as commodities (part of Crown or human property). I also incorporated audio samples of other wildlife species at McAlpines (ravens, etc.), to generate a soundtrack that would convey the mood I experienced in that deeply complicated landscape.

Fig. 1 & 2. The Pheromone Trees and Coyote, video stills © WhiteFeather Hunter, 2021.

As a final note, through more research on appropriate action and behaviour towards coyotes who appear in yards within human communities, I learned that personal hazing methods are strongly recommended for humane human-coyote relations. Hazing serves to *deliberately change coyote behaviour* to ensure human and pet safety—and ultimately prevent need for destruction of what may otherwise become a "problem animal" (The Humane Society of the United States "What to do about Coyotes"s). In the case of my project, my actions would have served the best interests of not only coyotes but myself, my family, and my immediate community.

Notes

[1] For more, see Hunter, "Mooncalf: 'Unclean meat.'"

[2] The entire area lies within traditional territories of the Wolastoquey (First) Nation.

[3] This was within the period that the New England Company established Indian Day Schools to assimilate indigenous children into colonial culture or contracted them to settlers for indentured servitude (Fraser 2021).

[4] I want to acknowledge the expertise of New Brunswick forester, Eliah Hunter-Dixon, in explaining one of the main commercial purposes for establishing Eastern white pine woodlots, as well as the impact of pine monocultures on wildlife species such as birds. According to Hunter-Dixon, Eastern white pine grows very straight and consistent, ideal for producing telephone and other utility poles.

[5] This is anecdotal family history, according to owner family member, Cornelius Callens, who rented me the farmhouse.

[6] Softwood trees, such as pines, are not ideal nesting spots for most birds since their branches are thickly needled.

[7] Mary Maggic is a well-known artist and biohacker whose practice focuses on the Anthropocenic impacts of hormones, including synthetic xenoestrogens, on bodies and other ecologies. For more, see https://biofriction.org/artists/mary-maggic/.

[8] Despite dingoes being an ancient, naturalized wild species with an important ecological role, "…the Western Australian government recently made a controversial attempt to classify the dingo as 'non-native fauna.'" For more, see Smith et al., "The dingo is a true-blue, native Australian species."

[9] Coyotes and dingoes share some similarities, particularly their relation to wolves, but there are subtle distinctions: coyotes have interbred with wolves but are not a subspecies of wolf, while dingoes debatably are. See Brookes et al., "What Is a Dingo? The Phenotypic Classification of Dingoes by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Residents in Northern Australia."

[10] Research and practical experience have demonstrated that domestic dogs are more likely to attack humans than coyotes are, and that coyote attacks are typically defensive versus predatory. For more, see the Urban Coyote Research 2021.

[11] At the time of final edits of this manuscript, a news headline appeared online stating, "Dingo bites tourist sunbathing in Australia." The brief story includes an 11-second video of a dingo nipping at the fleshy buttocks of a French woman in a G-string bikini, before being chased off and shortly after, "humanely destroyed" (BBC).

[12] I am referring specifically to Yosemite Sam, always in pursuit of that 'pesky varmint,' Bugs Bunny. See Peters, "The Yosemite Sam Book of Revised Quotations."

[13] These included Erich Muntz, Acting Manager of Resource Conservation in Cape Breton Highlands National Park (Nova Scotia) and Professor Simon Gadbois, Director of the Canid and Reptile Behaviour and Olfaction Laboratory at Dalhousie University in Halifax (Nova Scotia). Through these individuals, I was directed to Dr. Marc Bekoff, Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and cofounder of the Jane Goodall Institute of Ethologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. Additionally, I inquired regarding federal and provincial governmental regulations around coyotes by contacting local authorities within the Government of New Brunswick. I was directed to Jonathan Cormier, Furbearer Management Biologist within the Big Game and Furbearers Section of the Fish and Wildlife Branch, Natural Resources Division of NB Natural Resources and Energy Development.

[14] This statement is based on taking note of several studies recruiting participants through the UWA Community Research Participation System. As a member registered with this system, my individual pre-screening for available studies is based solely on age and gender, which has left very few open to my participation.

[15] Cross-enrollment at The University of Western Australia was recently phased out as part of a transition to a new Higher Degree by Research (HDR) management system that isn't capable of processing students enrolled in more than one school.

[16] Much has been written about this topic, which would exceed the scope of this paper to reiterate. For a relevant example, see Zurr and Catts, "The Unnatural Relations Between Artistic Research and Ethics Committees: An Artist's Perspective."

[17] The university website clearly states that "The Animal Ethics Committee oversees the care of animals that are to be used for scientific purposes at UWA" (The University of Western Australia 2022).

[18] It is only in the past couple of years that wild canid predator species, such as dingoes, for example, are being reassessed for their value based on their newly understood ecological importance. For more, see Hunt 2022, "Dingoes are both pest and icon. Now there"s a new reason to love them."

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