

**Anna  
Gleizer**

University of Oxford,  
Ruskin School of Art,  
Oxford, UK

**WANDERING IN OTHER  
WORLDS, TALKING WITH THE  
SPIRITS.  
CHOREOGRAPHING A  
PERFORMATIVE ANTHROPOLOGY**

This project's title, *Wandering in Other Worlds, Talking with the Spirits*, comes from a passage in Maria Czaplicka's book, *Aboriginal Siberia*, where she describes one of the first shamanic ceremonies witnessed by a Westerner, during the brief window of time in which Western anthropology and the Siberian native came into contact before the 1917 Russian Revolution. Czaplicka contributed her voice to what would be a fleeting conversation with native Siberia –following her celebrated 1915 expedition through central Siberia, the Bolsheviks restricted access to Russia for Western scholars. Meanwhile, forced collectivization, relocation, the eradication of native languages and the Stalinist purges permanently altered the cultural landscape of Siberia. So much so that post-Perestroika restoration efforts to recover traditional customs and practices have had to lean heavily on the records of Western anthropologists to restore memories of pre-Soviet Siberia.



**[Fig. 1.]** Photograph of Maria A. Czaplicka on her return from Siberia, signed by Czaplicka herself. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum photographic archives. University of Oxford (1998.271.42), from Kubica (2015).

Czaplicka is a fascinating character for many reasons: an immigrant and female scholar at Oxford University in 1914, she was able to hold her own in the largely masculine developing field of anthropology, single-handedly spear-heading a female majority expedition to the most remote regions of the arctic, and returning with the most comprehensive account of Native Siberian ethnography available at the time, thereby contributing the entire Siberian collections to the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford University.

The most interesting of Czaplicka's many achievements, however, is her inadvertent participation in the practices she sought to describe in Siberia, and how this involuntary entanglement with both her subject and her own writing reveals the peculiar performances of the 20th century anthropologist, as well as the broader choreography of anthropology as a shifting field, performing its own antics and transformations through time. While describing the performance of the shaman and how he "falls to the ground unconscious, while his soul is wandering in the other worlds, talking with the spirits and asking them for advice",<sup>1</sup> Czaplicka is unwittingly enacting a very similar performance of her own. Not only does she physically travel to the "worlds" of the Evenki peoples she deems "Other" but, by articulating them as such, she begins to create a cultural imaginary world, her own conception of Siberian reality, through which others will later wander, seeking advice from a long deceased "spirit" anthropologist (Czaplicka took her own life in 1921) to reconstruct a cultural reality in the present.

The study of anthropology itself can be read as a topology that emerges through material and linguistic processes of interaction.<sup>2</sup> The product of these interactions (of anthropologists with their subjects—'correlative space'—and of ideas about anthropology then and now—'associated space')—is what Kéline Gotman terms a "discursive zone of intensity" or a "conceptual formulation that [...] stiffens, and may appear to settle, but is always on the move".<sup>3</sup> It is to study this movement that I first set out to learn about Czaplicka. Her example illuminated the quirky dance of

---

<sup>1</sup> Czaplicka, M. (1914). *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study in Social Anthropology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 86.

<sup>2</sup> Deleuze, G. (1988). *Foucault*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>3</sup> Gotman, K. (2018). *Choreomania: Dance and Disorder* (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory). New York: Oxford University Press, 2.

the discipline of anthropology, as well as the possibility that, as a topology moving through time, “the history of thought is itself choreographic”.<sup>4</sup>

In 2019, I led an expedition to Siberia to retrace Czaplicka’s route in an effort to trace her material experience in the experiences of those she passed. This contemporary iteration of her Siberian Year endeavoured to trace remnants of her immaterial ideas/interactions (many of which were highly problematic) in the shifting discourse of today’s anthropology, and address why, though many colonial practices are now seen as admittedly violent and controversial, the ideas they are rooted in maintain firm footing within the discourse seeking to address them.

The understanding that anthropological discourse is itself performative is crucial to tracing its choreography and ensuring the ethics and mutuality of the performative exchanges and relationships it navigates. Through the use of performance art and VR technology, the aim of *Wandering in Other Worlds* was to develop a participatory choreography that disrupts some of our more entrenched assumptions in the study

---

<sup>4</sup> Gotman, *Choreomania*, 2. As a performance artist, I work with choreography regularly in my studio practice. Choreography is not reducible to writing out descriptors of dance moves on paper; rather, it is a translation process that renders motions (generally ineffable, as motions are not “things”), gestures, trajectories, relations and intentions “visible, intelligible, as *form*” (Gotman, *Choreomania*, 3). In a choreography of a dance, a forward slash may designate the motion of an arm. In tracing the choreography of the changing discourse of anthropology, I accomplish this translation through language (I might transform a series of relationships, movements, conversations into a series of nouns e.g. “relationship”, “movement”, “conversation”, which consequently helps communicate what it is that is changing in the field of anthropology). Very broadly, “choreography constitutes a manner of seeing and writing a relationship in the present to a concept of motion from the past” (*Ibid.*), and is thus a great “apparatus” with which to examine and articulate the trajectory anthropology has traced over the associated and correlative spaces of a dance that has lasted 100 years, from Czaplicka’s time to my own.

(and discourse) of ‘culture’, a necessary step to move away from performances of oppression, violence, and control that have permeated our interactions with (and articulations of) the “Other” over the last century.

\*\*\*

The concept of a performative anthropology is no riveting news in 2019. Movements to reconfigure the discipline made headway in the 1970s, with theorists calling the ‘passive-observer’ anthropologist in for serious interrogation. Following the general methodology of 19th century natural science, early anthropologists, Czaplicka included, had tried to ascribe quantitative values to what was an essentially qualitative research field, or: “took human actions as ‘facts’, objectifying them in order to represent them”.<sup>5</sup> Anthropologists of the 1970s were reasonably proud to shed the legacy of this ‘old anthropology’ for the new “anthropology of freedom” (term coined by Victor Turner): “anthropology is shifting from a stress on concepts such as structure, equilibrium, function, system to process, indeterminacy, reflexivity—from a ‘being’ to a ‘becoming’ vocabulary”.<sup>6</sup> However, while noting this shift in focus regarding what anthropologists sought to observe in

---

<sup>5</sup> Apffel-Marglin, F. (2011). *Subversive Spiritualities: How Rituals Enact the World* (Oxford Ritual Studies). New York: Oxford University Press, 149. The original canon for this “Science of *Man*” (set down by Émile Durkheim, a contemporary of Czaplicka, in *Les règles de la méthode sociologique*, 1919), took these ‘facts’ as objective insights into an overall structure, or ‘culture’, that a trained anthropologist could reflect upon, as a cell-biologist reflects upon slides beneath a microscope. In step with the gradual decolonization of the latter half of the 20th century, the practice of extracting meaning from an objectified people and the whole *méthode sociologique* was slowly (but *not* wholly) disinherited; it came to be perceived instead as a cultural affectation of the colonial scholar, over-steeped in a muddy tea of colonial oppression, and ill-prepared to represent “Other” cultures without perpetuating systems of objectification and violence against them.

<sup>6</sup> Turner, V. (1977). Process, System, and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis. *Daedalus*, 106(3), 61.

culture, Turner is unaware that the principle of continual “Becoming” can be turned on the discipline of anthropology itself, tracing its own “History of Conscious Discourse”<sup>7</sup> as a trajectory in motion—in short, a choreography of anthropology.

When choreographing performance, I trace the trajectory of a dancer across a performance-space: movement is always relative to its position in the past, and a dancer cannot ‘appear’ somewhere without first getting there. In the case of anthropology, the colonial framework that shaped its ‘entrance’ onto our cultural stage in the 19th century is not dust swept under the carpet. We cannot just move on; we move from its precedent.<sup>8</sup> Acknowledging this is necessary to understanding the ongoing problematics that hound even this “new anthropology of freedom”.

The problem remains that while anthropology has shifted gear for anthropologists, the legacy of its colonial origins remains a stark reality for the ‘cultures’ many anthropologists have engaged with (Evenki communities of Siberia still struggle with alcohol, poverty, and environmental degradation—all products of Russian and European

---

<sup>7</sup> Quasha, G. (1977). DiaLogos: Between the Written and the Oral in Contemporary Poetry. *New Literary History*, 8(3), 485-506.

<sup>8</sup> One of the most notable spectres of anthropology-past haunting anthropology-present, is the persistently surfacing subject-object paradigm, in which the subject [anthropologist] acts as an “apparatus” for measuring or observing certain aspects of its object ‘culture’. Another ghost is the idea that the relationship between anthropologist and culture is one of reflection and representation: the anthropologist is a mirror reflecting an image of the culture she has witnessed back to her own. This paradigm has been persistently and vehemently challenged by different critical theorists and anthropologists for the last five decades: “A performance paradigm prevents the reification of culture into variables to be isolated, measured and manipulated. Moreover, it dissolves hard-edged distinctions between observer / observed, self / other, subject / object, ‘the almost de rigueur opposition of subjectivity and objectivity’” Rabinow in Conquergood, L. and Johnson, E. (2013). *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 17.

interventions on their land): “Many ethnographers are in the seventh moment of qualitative inquiry [...] understanding that the dividing line between performativity (doing) and performance (done) has disappeared [...] But even as this disappearance occurs, matters of racial injustice remain”.<sup>9</sup> An awareness of the performative aspects of anthropology and its discourse brings new ethical ramifications to these disciplines; it calls into question the effects our performances have and have had on others. Perhaps a performance of reconciliation is called for. Perhaps a performance of attempted erasure is an unintended consequence of celebrating a reformed anthropology. Examining anthropology not only in terms of performance, but in terms of the histories of this performance (its choreography), leads me to the question: what sort of performance of anthropology can be simultaneously held accountable both to its participants (anthropologists and host-cultures alike) and to its own history?

I suggest that we perform the necessary paradigm shift through performance.<sup>10</sup> A performance of restitution would have to begin by

---

<sup>9</sup> Denzin, N. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture* (SAGE Research Methods). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 5. Denzin’s conjuncture here is critical: how do we cope with the discrepancy of a reformed anthropological method in the presence of the very real “remnants” it fails to erase? The language we use also performs a critical role: “naming the word ‘post-colonial’ is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business. The past is never post, never free from its history” (Denzin in Reinertsen, A. (Ed.). (2016). *Becoming Earth: A Post-human Turn in Educational Discourse Collapsing Nature|Culture Divides*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 149).

<sup>10</sup> Understanding performance solely through its representation leaves us at an impasse. Representational language is one of those persistent spectres: present as soon as we speak of ‘culture’ or performative anthropology, it lands us back into representation, often undoing any headway gained. I propose to understand the performativity of anthropology through performance itself, because the nature of performance allows it to become part of the unfolding narrative: “Staged ethnography, ethnodramas and performance autoethnographies do the work of advocacy. The performance is not a mirror, it is, after Berthold Brecht, the hammer that breaks the mirror, shatters the glass and builds a new reality. In their performances autoethnographers incite transformations, cause trouble, act in unruly ways. They

confronting the *spect-actor* with the reality of the performances of obscuration underlying past stages of anthropology's trajectory and our communal subscription to this sublimation. For this purpose, VR technology has been invaluable not only for portraying but for embodying this dynamic. The medium is peculiar, not particularly because it is marketed as a type of "reality", but precisely for the opposite reason: it makes the viewer hyper-aware of the unreality of her experience. In a VR headset you are the camera, and you are made aware of this forcefully when looking down to find a tripod instead of your body. You are the perfect, reflective object, an unbiased computer, a pair of disembodied eyeballs floating in mid-air, cut off from precedent, body, culture, and history, free to wander this objective reality... Except of course you're not, as the claustrophobic awareness of the box on your head kicks in. The headset begins to press on a nose that doesn't exist in the reality you are seeing; the neck, which is absent from the phenomenological experience of the VR, begins to ache—the discrepancy between the embodied experience and the disembodied representation starts to take a toll, and slowly the dream of representation implodes. The dreamlike world in the headset is a creation, overlaid by the consciousness, perspectives, and ideas of each viewer in a three-dimensional palimpsest. Nor is the existence of the camera itself hidden. I have devised methods of making the camera visible in reflections in dark glass and the eyes of others. The viewer remains hyper-aware that they are participating in the choreography.

---

self-consciously become part of the performance itself, the instrument of change. Performance now becomes a moral, reflexive act, more than a method, and ethical act of advocacy" (Denzin in Reinertsen, A. (Ed.). (2016). *Becoming Earth: A Post-human Turn in Educational Discourse Collapsing Nature | Culture Divides*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 147).



\*\*\*

If Czaplicka's narratives contain traces of native Siberian 'culture', then equally, traces of Czaplicka hint at the narratives of those natives she encountered.<sup>11</sup> A full effort towards reconstructing a cultural history of Siberia must therefore include both: traces of Siberian stories and anthropologists' stories alike. As part of this project, I collaborated with Evenki-led cultural institutions (the Tura ethnographic museum, the Baykit School, and the Surinda Reindeer Brigade) to develop performances and create a VR film to complement the Pitt Rivers exhibit on Evenki culture. I ran classes within the Baykit school to teach young people the use of the 360° film technology that allowed them to document their experiences of life in their villages and of my presence among them. This work has resulted in the installation *Granny's Bones* (2019), a participatory sculpture which viewers can enter to participate in the VR experience of being at either end of an Evenki-Anthropologist

---

<sup>11</sup> In an agential realist ontology, the act of "othering" pre-exists and articulates the "Other." This process is not uni-directional but the result of "the repetition of (culturally and historically) specific bodily performances", a sequence of intra-actions through which boundaries are articulated (Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press, 155). The intra-actions enacted by Czaplicka's observation and measurement of natives in Siberia articulated the boundaries between her and them, anthropologist and native, and between the different groups that she had set out to delineate and describe. As a result of these intra-actions, identities were articulated, marks were left on bodies, cultures, psychologies. Intra-action ("interaction" pre-supposes separate bodies that then interact) signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. In Barad's proposal distinct agencies "do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (33). Exchanges, observation and measurement are all causal intra-actions. The intra-actions enacted by Czaplicka's observation articulated the boundaries between her the different groups (the Evenki, 'Ostyak', 'Tungus', Koryak) she encountered. The basic tenet of Karen Barad's agential realism is that we are all actively a part of the 'nature/culture' we seek to understand. "Matter is agentive" and in seeking to understand matter, it is enacting a performance that influences that which it seeks to observe: "Relations do not follow relata, but the other way around" (136-37). This does not preclude us access from the world or "Other". In fact, it guarantees us direct access, side-stepping representation.

interaction, fraught as it is with misunderstanding, humour, mystery, trauma and the complexity of an ever-unfolding story. The possibility to reach for reconciliation with the invisible “Other” is opened to each viewer through their participation. This artwork also served as a site for bringing an Evenki voice directly to the Oxford University campus for the first time: during a performance at the college, traditional Evenki artist Galina Veretnova and I live-streamed a projection of Galina singing over the sculptures.

The Pitt Rivers is now working to incorporate the VR film into their native Siberia display, using this collaborative artwork as a stepping-stone to inviting an Evenki delegation to re-curate the collection, with the goal of repatriating items that Czaplicka extracted from a Shamanic grave-site. My presence in this film remains overt, a new performer in the ever-unfolding story of anthropology’s dance with Siberia. As I overlay my images on Czaplicka’s, my fingerprints remain besides her own;<sup>12</sup> my performance, coming a century after hers, does not remove her story nor erase the legacy of the colonial practices of her time. If anything, I seek to expose “the intellectual and material zigzag, a history of bodies and ideas moving”,<sup>13</sup> and in this trajectory, chart the choreography of an anthropology that knows where it has been, where it is going, and why this matters.

Getting involved implicates realizing that we are already involved; participating in the performance is not mandatory but inevitable. In Tim

---

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix for images and explanation of the author’s creative process involving images from the Czaplicka photographic archives at the Pitt Rivers Museum.

<sup>13</sup> Gotman, K. (2018). *Choreomania: Dance and Disorder* (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory). New York: Oxford University Press, 4

Ingold's words, "these anthropologists, once you get to know them, turn out to be human-beings. [...] It is not, then, that some of us are on the roundabout and others are on firm ground. We are all on the roundabout: only when we try to get off do we call it 'culture'".<sup>14</sup> Helping an audience realize that we are all on this "roundabout" is empowering—it facilitates a deconstruction of an accepted subject | object paradigm and allows us to consider the emergence of new kinds of relationships. In *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad reminds us that "particular possibilities for acting exist at every moment, and these chasing possibilities entail a responsibility to intervene in the world's becoming, to contest and rework what matters and what is excluded from mattering".<sup>15</sup> To provide an audience with the possibility and the tools to make the choice to intervene, contest and rework the dynamics of their intra-actions is the overall direction of this choreography.

## References

Apffel-Marglin, F. (2011). *Subversive Spiritualities: How Rituals Enact the World* (Oxford Ritual Studies). New York: Oxford University Press.

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs*, 28(3), 801-831.

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Campbell, C. (2014). *Agitating Images: Photography against History in Indigenous Siberia*. Minneapolis: First Peoples.

---

<sup>14</sup> Wagner, R. (2016). *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, x.

<sup>15</sup> Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs*, 28 (3), 827.

Conquergood, L., and Johnson, E. (2013). *Cultural Struggles: Performance, Ethnography, Praxis*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Czaplicka, M. (1914). *Aboriginal Siberia: A Study in Social Anthropology*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Czaplicka, M. (1916). *My Siberian Year*. London: Mills & Boon.

Czaplicka, M. (2007). *Shamanism in Siberia: Aboriginal Siberia, a Study in Social Anthropology*. Oxford. Republished by: Forgotten Books E-publishers.

Deleuze, G. (1988). *Foucault*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Denzin, N. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture* (SAGE Research Methods). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, [electronic resource].

Gotman, K. (2018). *Choreomania: Dance and Disorder* (Oxford Studies in Dance Theory). New York: Oxford University Press.

Ingold, T. (2011). *Redrawing Anthropology: Materials, Movements, Lines* (Anthropological Studies of Creativity and Perception). Farnham: Ashgate.

Kubica, G. (2015). Maria Czaplicka and Her Siberian Expedition, 1914-1915: A Centenary Tribute. *Arctic Anthropology*, 52(1), 1-22.

PRM MS Collections, Blackwood Papers, PRM MS Collections, Balfour Papers PRM MS Collections, Marett Papers, Czaplicka photograph collections.

Reinertsen, A. (Ed.). (2016). *Becoming Earth: A Post-human Turn in Educational Discourse Collapsing Nature | Culture Divides*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Safonova, T., and Sántha, I. (2013). *Culture Contact in Evenki Land: A Cybernetic Anthropology of the Baikal Region*. (Inner Asia Book Series no. 7). Boston, MA: Global Oriental.

Сирина, А. А. (2012). *Эвенки и эвены в современном мире. Самосознание, природопользование, мировоззрение*. Moscow: Vostochnaia Literature.

Quasha, G. (1977). DiaLogos: Between the Written and the Oral in Contemporary Poetry. *New Literary History*, 8(3), 485-506.

Somerville College Archive SCA, CP - Czaplicka Papers.

Turner, V. (1977). Process, System, and Symbol: A New Anthropological Synthesis. *Daedalus*, 106 (3), 61-80.

Vider, J. (2017). *Marginal Anthropology? Rethinking Maria Czaplicka and the Development of British Anthropology from a Material History Perspective* (PhD thesis). University of Oxford.

Wagner, R. (2016). *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

## Appendix

In practice, I first came across a bizarre example of Maria Czaplicka's unwittingly 'creative' performance as an anthropologist with the curious phenomenon of overpainting on daguerreotypes and lantern slides. I had never heard of this practice before, so you can imagine my surprise when rummaging through the Pitt Rivers archives of Czaplicka's photographs of 1915 Siberians, I came across the following:



**[Fig. 2].** Photograph taken by Maria Czaplicka in 1915 in Siberia. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum photographic archives, University of Oxford.

I sat up, flummoxed, staring at the slides. “What is this?!” I asked the assistant curator of photographic archives, who was keeping an eye on me. He did not seem at all surprised. “Overpainting”, he dropped casually. When I continued to look perplexed, he explained that “correcting” daguerreotypes by painting over them in oil was common practice in the early 20th century, a form of primitive airbrush before Photoshop. “But why are the faces blue?” I asked, unrelenting. “She was touching up the photos to be reprinted in her book. The photos would be printed in black and white so the colour really didn’t matter”. It mattered. Here was hard, definitive proof; anthropology caught red-handed, masquerading a fictive creation as an objective representation of Native reality in a procession of eerie blue Noh masks.



**[Fig. 3].** Photograph taken by Maria Czaplicka in 1915 in Siberia. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum Photographic Archives, University of Oxford (1998.258.01.62.1).

Whose faces had been so “perfected” to reflect the “reality” that Czaplicka was representing? I was fascinated by Figure 5 (people in the snow): the strange quality of the overpainting made it impossible to tell if the figures had been in the picture originally—were they perhaps entirely fictional additions? Figure 6 was also striking. In her travel journal, *My Siberian*

*Year*, Czaplicka mostly maintains a detached, impersonal tone with a few notable interruptions. One such hiatus occurs in an episode that clearly made a deep impression: the encounter with a Yurak woman whose “right eye had been gouged out by her husband in a drunken fury two or three days before. She was his favourite wife”.<sup>16</sup> Czaplicka’s book is permeated with a dry sarcasm when it comes to the status of women, both in Siberia and in the West, a subtle linguistic ‘overpainting’ reflecting a frustration with her own culture. The curt sentence “she was his favourite wife” is one of the few instances where anger and a deep-seated commiseration with the natives peeks through the objectifying language of Czaplicka’s narrative. I could not help but wonder if among the many photographs that had come out blurry, her determination to repair the eye of the photographed woman of Figure 9, was a futile and unconscious attempt to fix a situation she had been unable to heal in the field, or indeed in her own life. Even the outwardly ‘objective’ medium of photography reveals itself as distinctly performed and moulded by the pre-perceptive assumptions of the artist-anthropologist. Figure 7 is revealing exactly where it conceals: we are no longer sure if we are looking at a reflective photograph or a constructed painting.

The colour mattered. And its obscuration in the b&w printed book also mattered. The fact that the alterations became harder to notice in print mattered, as well as the fact that none of the blue-faced altered daguerreotypes had made it onto the Pitt Rivers public display. It was the embodiment of sweeping over the tracks, early anthropology constructing the image of the cultures it sought to represent, hiding its

---

<sup>16</sup> Czaplicka, *My Siberian Year*, 39.





All photographs taken by Maria Czaplicka in 1915 in Siberia. Courtesy of the Pitt Rivers Museum photographic archives, University of Oxford. **[Fig. 4]**. Three men (1998.258.10.49.1). **[Fig. 5]**. People in the snow (1998.321.144). **[Fig. 6]**. Woman with one eye (1998.258.10.51-0). **[Fig. 7]**. Landscapes with reindeer (1998.258.10.7).

paintbrushes behind its back and claiming objectivity, and of a new anthropology applauding its own reforms while quietly slipping the brushes backstage. It was all a circus act, a performance, a magic trick. I found myself imagining a candid performative anthropology, one that

was openly, self-reflexively, unscrupulously performing, creating a counter-reality where we had never been collectively duped as to what it was representing:

Acts of activism use performance as the vehicle for getting free, as the way of contesting official history and the status quo. A double reflexivity is at work. The performance text uses performativity as a method for making a slice of contested reality visible. The performance is intended to bring the audience and/or spec-actors into a state of critical reflexivity concerning the events under discussion. The act of witnessing (and performing) utopian performance is itself a performative, interpretive act, somehow the world can be a better place. The coyote trickster leads us into this new space. The intent is to create a counter-memory, an alternative history of the present.<sup>17</sup>

So I took out my paints and began to alter Czaplicka's altered photographs. I created a character for myself—Волчок (Volchok or Little Wolf), one of the spirits encountered in that "Other World" Czaplicka had started to create, a personification of a "dancing anthropology" performing its choreographies through time. Волчок searches for Czaplicka's traces in the shifting topological landscape he travels through, in her texts, pictures, and letters. In the tradition of native Koryak, the wolf is not eaten, and therefore in the Wolf-Festival (as opposed to the Bear-Festival) the Wolf is not 'sent home' afterwards; there is no backwards journey for the Wolf; he can only move forward carrying the memory of where he has been. "The Wolf is only a danger to

---

<sup>17</sup> Denzin in Reinertsen, *Becoming Earth*, 147.

the traveller in the desert. He is dangerous, not in his visible, animal state—for the northern wolves, as a rule, are afraid of men—but in his invisible, anthropomorphic form”.<sup>18</sup> I agreed with this characterization: the antics of an embodied ‘anthropology’ tended to be most dangerous when they were left invisible, so in my performance I strove to make the process conspicuous from beginning to end. My intent was to create an alternative memory in which a consciousness of the artist-anthropologist had always been present. Where the awareness of a mutual creativity of anthropologist and native precluded the objectification of host cultures. Where the magic-trick of border-building and “Othering” was divulged. I wanted to consciously leave traces of my passing, so that the choreography would remain apparent.

Moreover, I wanted to film this process throughout its progressive emergence. In her poem “This Evolution Will Not Be Televised”, May Weems writes of the sublimation of the processes of appropriation and representation of culture as an ever-unfolding dynamic. In Weems’ poem, the implication is that the evolution of the portrayal of Black America is subject to internal/external pressures, and while we are given access to images and objects (material culture), the evolution process itself is hidden (not televised), perhaps because of the consciously obscured violence of these histories:

Our image, our braids, our music, our mistakes,  
our asses, our rhythms are played on TV  
like a long 78 album in commercial after commercial  
The Colonel in plantation-dress raps and moonwalks  
selling a black woman's stolen fried chicken, black kids

---

<sup>18</sup> Czaplicka, *Shamanism in Siberia*, 165.

snap their fingers, think that's so cool, bug their mamas for extra-crispy

This is a never-ending story, that won't be televised.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> Reinertsen, *Becoming Earth*, 148.