**Week 14: Review and Environmental Politics (21.5.2020)**

Topics: *cosmopolitics; speculation, utopia, politics of nature, etho-ecologies, response-ability, forgetting and not knowing, coalitions, assemblages, care*

***Required readings***

Kirsky, Eben, Nicholas Shaprio and Maria Brodine (2014) ‘Hope in blasted landscapes’, in Eben Kirksey (Ed.) *The Multispecies Salon*, pp. 29-63, Durham: Duke University Press.

Malin Ah-King and Eva Hayward (2014) ‘Toxic sexes: Perverting pollution and queering hormone disruption’, *O-zone: A Journal of Object-Oriented Study*, 1: 1-12.

Two readings for this session *Hope in blasted landscapes* (Kirsky et al 2014) and *Toxic Sexes* (Ah-King and Hayward 2014) discuss the topic of persistence of life and the possibilities of a politics for the future bio-cultural co-habitation in the face of catastrophes as in the case of oil well blowout and oil spill, or ‘hormone pollution’ resulting from industrial pollution and he use of chemicals in … [cosmetics, medicines etc.].

the , two texts offer different views on the future bio-cultural co-habitation.

*Hopes in a blasted landscape* shows how the landscape and politics are transformed by a natural and human catastrophe and biocultural hope (p. 29), in this case Hurricane Katrina and particularly the BP’s Deepwater Horizon oil spill. In the wake of these events, people organized themselves and proposed a new mode of being with each other. Biocultural hope here is generated from particular interactions with unloved others. In contrast to Derrida’smessianic *“ hoping for nothing in particular”’ these activists and artists ‘animate[d] the field of biocultural possibility*” (p. 57). They founded a politics of being with each other in multispecies interaction and generate hope and care for organisms like fish, goats and hermit crabs in collaboration with biologists, oceanographers, activists and anthropologists. They adopted a tactic of ethnography where they helped the species in a kind of interspecies care. (p. 38) The disastrous situation of the animals succeeded to mobilize and transform the toxic hopelessness into acts of new hope with organized political actions and movements that fought against an ecological and political situation, where the government did not care enough about the negative impact of the BP explosion. (“ The anti-oil demonstrations even lead to a complex critique of the global capitalism (p. 44) and an anti-capitalist movement in New Orleans: “*While city planners fantasized about a clean opening in the aftermath of this disaster, and tenacious forms of life proliferated, young artists at the other end of the American political spectrum began flocking to New Orleans after the storm.*” (p. 50) This brought opportunities but also new problem (p. 511) connected to gentrification and other symptoms of the capitalism.

[In *Hope in blasted landscapes* the solution is seen in pure, “chemical free” life without heavy industries, which should be replaced with communal gardening and animal rearing (what socialist ecofeminists proffer) and where the author sees the “the possibilities of biocultural hope” (Kirksey et al., 2014, p. 29).]

In *Toxic Sexes* the authors suggest “a counter discourse that rethinks our purity and “chemical free” ideas so as to simultaneously comprehend threat, resilience, and potential. […] Embodiment, which includes sex, is a process of becoming with these altered environments. Whatever futures await us, we are the future organisms that we are becoming.” (Ah-King & Hayward, 2014, p. 9).

The text analyses the coverage of endocrine-disrupting pollutants in the media where  *environmental activism is ‘hyper-focusing sexual anxiety around ambiguity, variability, and changeability*” (p. 5)). the analysis shows how environmental activist organisations use a very heteronormative and heterosexual language to scare people into caring about the environment. The essay recommends a different approach. It presents a dynamic model of sex and the environmental disruption as ongoing process of sexing (p. 1) that humans are part of. The text suggests an “ecological resilience” that reframes the toxicity of the pollutants without reasserting politics of purity. (p. 2) The authors understand the pollution-included sexual change through a dynamic model of reactive sex. (p. 2) The text also discusses how the pollution mostly of the richer states has impact on workers transnationally: *“Although endocrine disrupting pollution affects the whole world, it is relevant to ask which human populations are most exposed and where? Reports notify of banana plantation workers that become sterile, have increased cancer risk, or die from poisoning” (*(p. 3) The working class in the countries of agricultural production has a higher risk to get exposed to insecticides, industrial chemicals and medication, that are often banned in advanced capitalist countries. This creates a class hierarchy of exposure. And the media focuses almost exclusively on the effects of threatened sex and sexuality, rather than talking about other health risks. (p. 4) But the topic of sex change is more sensational than the cancer risks. in these discourses we can see a how the society is still scared by sex change and the in between feminine and masculine. This lead to campaigns like “Save the man!” where  *central importance [is] given to “male” bodies, and a lack of concern for women’s health problems. What is unveiled here is a preoccupation with vulnerability of masculinity, maleness, and manhood, those precious commodities of any patriarchal system*.” (p. 5) This is also set into the context of questioning transnational capitalism, where the pollution isn't regulated at all. (p. 6)

Here are the final questions for discussion

1) What different kinds of bio-cultural political engagements emerged from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and what is the role of affect and the senses (e.g. smell), art and science in building new alliances?

2) What is “biocultural hope” according to Kirksey et al? How is this informed by Derrida’s distinction between apocalyptic and messianic thinking? Does this hope arise through practices such as caring for other beings? (pp. 35, 54-57). How do you understand the figure that hope ‘move[s] like oil in water’ (39)? Does “biocultural hope” challenge the dominant nature-culture divide in political action? If yes, in what way?

3) What is the importance of caring for ‘unloved others’—species largely beyond the political, economic, and affective calculus of most Westerns? What are the differences between the loved and the unloved ones? (p. 40)

4) What alternative conceptions of ‘sex’ and sexual environmental politics are offered by Ah-King and Hayward to challenge the discourse of “sex panic” that arose in the wake of sex transformations in animals induced by endocrine disruptors?

5) What is meant by the concept “shared interdependent transsex” that Bailey Kier proposes? (p. 7) How do you understand the closing statement on page 9: “…we are the future organisms that we are becoming”?

6. Why do you think environmental organisations panick about sex change (“the feminization of young boys and the masculinization of girls” (p. 4)?  Do you know of other examples of eco-heteronomativity?

7. How can politics take into account the relations between our over consumption and how it affects the sex and health of the workers in the developing countries who often produce our goods? Would a transnational politics help to protect the workers (p. 3)? How can transnational politics be linked to interspecies politics?

8. How do you understand Haraway’s argument that “we are all chimeras—products of technological, linguistic, cultural, political, and biological fusions” (Kirksey et al., 2014, p. 59)? Explain based on today’s and previous readings of this course, using some examples from media, your life experience, etc.

Below is the text to be deleted:

Questions to discuss *Hope in blasted landscapes:*

**1) What different kinds of social-biological political engagements emerged from the oil spill and what is the role of affect and the senses (e.g. smell), art and science in cross-species alliances**

Social:

“The masses were starting to move….” (p. 39)

“…parade to mourn the loss of life” in New Orleans (p. 41) it’s in the details – the different fraction (krewe of dead pelicans vs Fuck BP) that are interesting to discuss here and different temporalities.

“.. actions on the streets of New Orleans in early June 2010, and solidarity actions in many other cities around the United States...” (p. 45)

Biological:

Which beings flourished and which suffered /perished in the aftermath and as a result of response actions (use of chemicals)? Give the examples of the “persistence of life in the face of catastrophe” (p. 40).

**2) What is “biocultural hope” and how is it enacted? How is this informed by the distinction between apolcalyptic and messianic thinking? (Does this hope arise in and through practices such as caring for other beings?) (pp. 35, 54-57). Does the concept “biocultural hope” challenge the dominant nature - culture divide in political action? If yes, in what way? How do you understand the material figure that ‘hopes began to move like oil in water’ (39) 39)**

1. **What is the importance of caring for ‘unloved others’—species largely beyond the political, economic, and affective calculus of most Americans? What are the differences between the loved and the unloved one? (p. 40)** —were less easy to understand and represent. “It’s the sea turtles and pelicans that get all the press,” said Lesen, who is an expert on foraminifera, among the most common plankton species.
2. **How does smells created memories evoking resistance to oil? (p. 41 - 42)**

Questions to discuss *Toxic Sexes*

**4) What alternative conceptions of ‘sex’ and sexual environmental politics are offered by the authors to challenge the discourse of “sex panic” that arose in the wake of sex transformations in animals induced by endocrine disrupters artificial hormones?**

**55) concept proposes and How do you understand the the closing statement on page 9: “…we are the future organisms that we are becoming” and how is it supported?**

**6. Why do you think environmental organisations hold a conservative argumentation about sex and (“the feminization of young boys and the masculinization of girls”) Do you know of other similar examples of eco-heteronomativity? (p. 4)**

By which he attends to the ecologically constitutive nature of bodies: he refers to “bodies” as constant processes, relations, adaptations, and metabolisms, engaged in varying degrees of re/productive and economic relations with multiple other “‘bodies’, substances and things” (Kier 2010). In alliance with our project here, Kier’s entanglement works to decenter normative assumptions about embodiment, futurity, and nature.

**7. How can biocultural politics take into account the relations between our over consumption in the so called industrial states and how it affects the sex and health of the workers in the developing countries, who often produce our goods? Would a transnational politics help to protect the workers (p. 3) ? Is this divorced from interspecies politics?**

~~Summarizing final question for discussion in class:~~

**~~6) How do you understand Haraway’s argument that “we are all chimeras—products of technological, linguistic, cultural, political, and biological fusions” (Kirksey et al., 2014, p. 59)? Explain based on today’s and previous readings of this course, using some examples from media, your life experience, etc.~~**

~~// See Note on p. 59~~

~~10. Haraway has argued that we are all chimeras—products of technological, linguistic, cultural, political, and biological fusions. “By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time,” she writes, “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs”: Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto,”. The chimera—a fabled fire­ breathing monster of Greek mythology with a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpent’s tail—also has served as a way for biologists to think about how tissues of genetically different individuals coexist as a result of grafting or an analogous process in nature:~~ *~~see also Haraway, When Species Meet 304, n3. (p59~~*~~)~~

~~See also~~ *~~Introduction~~* ~~in Eben Kirksey (Ed.)~~ *~~The Multispecies Salon~~*~~, p. 3~~

~~“… we have become~~ *~~post- human~~*~~, since our mode of being is dependent on complex entanglements with animals, ecosystems, and technology.”///~~