

Reading Waters, Reparatively

ASLE 2017 Pre-Conference Workshop

Tuesday, June 20, 1-5pm

Water is the site of some of our most acute sites of contemporary environmental justice concerns: from Flint and Detroit's own water supply crises, to the toxic contaminations that pool elsewhere in and through the Great Lakes-St Lawrence watershed, to a changing climate that brings us the angry waters of Katrina and Matthew, to acidifying and plastinated oceans, oil spills, and sonic pollution, water bears wounds both local and global in scale. At the same time it is a sensual and lively presence, a medium of pleasure and memory, an embodiment of kinship. A challenge for the environmental humanities and related pursuits is thus finding ways to story waters that draw attention to the (largely anthropogenically induced) burdens they bear, without remaining tethered to "damage research" (Eve Tuck). To use a paradigm that Eve Sedgwick offered to queer theory, we might consider this in terms of exchanging paranoid readings for reparative ones. This challenge is amplified by our contingent access to many watery environments, as terrestrial humans.

In this workshop, we will draw on participants' own research/art/activism in relation to water to examine some existing reparative readings and relations, and consider how we might also cultivate new ones. Our focus will be on embodied knowledge of and connection to water.

Structure of the Workshop:

1. Reading Reparatively (1 hour – informal presentations and discussion on campus). Participants will share short summaries of their own research from a reparative reading perspective (guidelines for doing so to be supplied in advance to participants).
2. Talk-and-Walkshop: Participants will embark on a 2 hour walkshop through downtown Detroit to Riverside Park on the St Clair River. The walkshop will include a discussion of the social and environmental history of Detroit's water supply and of the St Clair river; an exposition and exemplification of posthuman phenomenology, body hermeneutics, sensory ethnography, ecosexual practice, and other examples of embodied environmental research methods, and their benefits and limits.
3. Love Letters to Wounded Waters (1 hour – writing activity). Participants will be asked to engage in a guided writing activity, followed by discussion.

Reading:

- Sandilands, Catriona, "Unnatural Passions? Notes Toward a Queer Ecology" (2005)
- Murphy, Michelle, "Chemical Infrastructures of the St Clair River" (2013)
- Tuck, Eve, "Suspending Damage: A Letter to Communities" (2009)
- Sedgwick, Eve, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You" (2002)

Practical notes. Except in the event of heavy rain, most of this workshop will take place outside. Participants should come prepared for urban walking (or travel using mobility aids), with equipment for writing *in situ* (e.g. notebook and pen). If you have concerns around any particular needs or restrictions you may experience, contact the facilitator so that all necessary arrangements can be made.

Astrida Neimanis has been hosting participatory workshops on writing, water, bodies, weather, and other environmental matters in the UK, Finland, Sweden, Canada, and Australia since 2011. These involve a mixture of discussion, writing activities, and guidance in embodied methods for ecological attunement. She brings to these workshops a particular interest in feminist and queer approaches, and continues to learn from various decolonial practitioners. A central concern is how embodied difference matters in our environmental research.