Environmental Media

humans
readings


What are your impressions?
What is the connecting thread in all three pieces?
Peter C. van Wyck

The Highway of the Atom: Recollections Along a Route

Citation

This project began for me in an encounter with a documentary film by the Toronto film-maker, Peter Blow. His film, *The Village of Widows*, is an extraordinary tale of the Sahtu Dene of Great Bear Lake. The Dene—who have resided in the region for three or four thousand years—were involved in the mining and transportation of first radium, then uranium ores from a mine-site on Great Bear Lake to Waterways, Alberta. As a result of this labour, the Dene have suffered the loss of many of their men and children. Cancer.
witnessing
frustration with accessing information
journal-document
critiques about the limits of the archive
theoretical and historical discourse
melancholic prose
reflexive moments
problem of historical gaps
TOXIC ANIMACIES, INANIMATE AFFECTIONS

Mel Y. Chen

Toxic Allure

A toxin threatens, but it also beckons. It is not necessarily alive, yet it enlivens morbidity and fear of death. A toxin requires an object against which its threat operates; this threatened object is an animate object—hence potentially also a kind of subject—whose “natural defenses” will be put to the test, in detection, in “fighting off,” and finally in submission and absorption.

This essay suggests that thinking, and feeling, with toxicity invites a recounting of the affectivity and relationality—indeed the bonds—of queerness as it is presently theorized. Approaching toxicity in three different modes, I first consider how vulnerability, safety, immunity, threat, and toxicity itself are sexually and racially instantiated in the recent panic about lead content in Chinese-manufactured toys exported to the United States. While the essay seems at first to float somewhat outside queerness, a queer analysis is completed in the next section, where I interweave biopolitical considerations of immunity into an account of the peculiar intimacies and alienations of heavy metal poisoning, rendered in the first person. The essay ends by suggesting that the queering and racializing of material other than human amounts to a kind of animacy. Animacy is built on the recognition that abstract concepts, inanimate objects, and things in between can
Approaching toxicity in three different modes, I first consider how vulnerability, safety, immunity, threat, and toxicity itself are sexually and racially instantiated in the recent panic about lead content in Chinese-manufactured toys exported to the United States.
What does Chen mean when she says:

“As a toxin, lead deterritorializes.”
Why is the “first person” approach important?
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Cleansing the Superdome: The Paradox of Purity and Post-Katrina Guilt
Daniel A. Grano & Kenneth S. Zagacki
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In this essay, we analyze visual and spatial contrasts between the reported post-Katrina apocalypse and the Superdome’s cleansing on MNF to identify a complex tangle of motivations surrounding guilt and absolution, whereby Katrina’s victims were both blamed for their own suffering and elevated as a population demanding national atonement.
METHOD
Our argument is supported in three parts: first, we establish the substantive terms of the paradox of purity bound up in pollution archetypes and the ghetto as scene by analyzing press reports and rumors about the post-evacuation apocalypse in the Superdome. Second, we demonstrate how the Superdome reopening on MNF was patterned with substantive terms of filth that counterposed purification priorities and the purgation of pollution imagery against desires to commemorate the tragedy’s victims. Finally, we discuss the implications of visual purification rhetorics aimed at absolving racial guilt on a national scale, and how they shape public engagement with the pollution archetypes that support structural racism.
...the Superdome reopening became the signal event in New Orleans’s early recovery...

Why?
...sports rituals function to “produce and reproduce culture, including political culture” by legitimizing, fostering, and repairing national identity.
Rufus Burkhalter and Bobby Brown

Rufus Burkhalter, 61, and his friend and co-worker Bobby Brown, 58, are water-pump operators at Pumping Station No. 6 along the 17th Street Canal in New Orleans.

In the days after Katrina hit, Burkhalter and Brown risked their lives inside the station, continuing to work even after the levees broke. Pump Station 6, in Orleans Parish, is one of the world's largest pumping stations.

Brown's home in the Lower Ninth Ward was submerged and destroyed, and everything inside Burkhalter's home was severely damaged by the rising water.

The pair have worked together for more than 20 years.
When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Parts - Parts I and II.
Collecting and Preserving the Stories of Katrina and Rita

The Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University and the University of New Orleans organized the Hurricane Digital Memory Bank (HDMB) in 2005 in partnership with many national and Gulf Coast area organizations and individuals. HDMB was awarded the Award of Merit for Leadership in History, and is the largest free public archive of Katrina and Rita with over 25,000 items in the collection. Read More.

Featured Image

Featured Stories

“My family and I evacuated the Sunday before Katrina. We intended on staying and riding out the storm, but when we saw how much strength it had gained during the previous days of tracking it, we had no choice but to pack a couple of days’ worth of clothes and food, and head out on a journey that we never would have expected.” More...

“I evacuated to Baton Rouge for Hurricane Katrina. It was the most horrible experiences of my life. We were living in an apartment with fifteen other people. It was air matresses lined up from door to door. My parents and my... More..

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Tags

Katrina, New Orleans, st bernard parish, Rita, hurricane, Hurricane Katrina, nola, justice system

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My experience in the Superdome during Hurricane Katrina

Not a lovely experience, but something that has helped form me. There is a documentary about Katrina today, with the 5 year anniversary here.

This was the exact article I had published in Marie Claire in November 2005.

It was largely taken from my diary that I wrote during my time trapped there, but re-written by a features editor after an interview with me.

The photos are my own and were not part of the magazine article. The comments in brackets are my comments now, not from the article)

My Nightmare in the Superdome
Remembering Katrina, five years ago

Sunday, August 29, 2010 will mark the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina’s landfall in Louisiana. Five years ago, Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, centered on New Orleans, as a Category 3 hurricane with sustained winds of 125 mph (205 km/h). More than fifty levees were breached by its storm surge, causing massive flooding. Over 1,800 Gulf Coast residents lost their lives then, and damages totaled more than $80 billion - the costliest hurricane in U.S. history. Many intangible things were damaged then as well; communities were erased as their neighborhoods washed away, much of historic New Orleans was badly damaged, and frustration and anger remain towards an inadequate immediate response by the U.S. government. Collected here are images from five years ago, as well as some from the past few weeks, in New Orleans and the surrounding area. (49 photos total)