

Session 6
03/11/2020

1. Attendees: Leora Fuller, Liz Sevchenko, Neil Maher, Jack Tchen, Rosanna Dent, Rachel Mundy, Claudia, Alex Chang, and Alex Seggerman
2. Rosanna can't make Wed. meetings but zoom meetings work well
3. Introduction
 - a. Eco Working Group started through Price Institute last semester and will continue as a collaboration with HAL. The primary shared goals are still being developed and we hope to get into this more next meeting or semester. We are working towards centering our campus on environmental justice issues as HAL has done nationally and globally.
 - b. Currently doing one eco-working group meeting a month and then next semester we'll be meeting more frequently.
 - c. We will approach the situation by focusing on more immediate needs and also talking about the big picture and ideas to think of them in more interesting and collaborative ways.
4. Student Mixer
 - a. Student Mixer included 5 EJ classes
 - i. Eco Art II : EcoArt and Anthropocene, Alexandra Chang
 - ii. Our Planet Crisis: Change, Justice, Urgency, Jack Tchen and Leora Fuller
 - iii. HLLC: Climates of Inequality and Core Topics in Video, William Garcia
 - iv. History 490: Environmental Justice in the US, Neil Maher
 - b. We are trying to work closely together and are imagining how that can be linked up in order to get out of single disciplines, single semesters, and single campuses.
 - c. Reflections from Student Mixer
 - i. Timing was an issue
 - ii. Momentum is building thanks to eventsNeed to study how other groups get students involved
 - iii. How to make student project share interactive
 - iv. Bahamas call - students need to be able to share and talk about their work.
 - v. Real time interaction with Bahama students (via Zoom) was effective
 - vi. Collaboration needs to be built into the syllabi and instructors plans
 - vii. Schedule classes at the same days or times.
5. Leora created a document that has activities to help more people get involved in the Eco Working Group. <http://climatesofinequality.org/> considering making this site a place where they're linking the work happening on campus. There is also a EWG website meant for internal community building to post shared documents and presentation and notes, etc.
6. Alex: trying to connect with faculty and find thematics of interest that might interest students and the community to build smaller pockets of working groups to develop

projects. Three thematics are: eco-literature, environmental Care, Grief, and Healing, and Sound and Environment.

7. Rachel Mundy:

- a. Katherine Boynton Payne – uses musical listening approach that is completely unparalleled in the sciences, she was doing this during a time when animals were treated as machines and has influenced subsequent work
- b. Backdrop on work on Rachel's work on Payne is the idea that the modern notion of extinction and survival is predicated on a version of humanism in which survival is always already about life existing at the expense of another.
- c. Humpback Whale Song story – told many times by newspapers and by Payne.
 - i. A man gives the Paynes the secret recordings of the Whale Song while telling them to "save the whales".
 - ii. 1970 – Rodger Payne releases highest selling nature recording of all time.
 - iii. 1971 – Rodger Payne and Scott co author an article, "Songs of the Humpback Whale" that claimed whales were music making animals.
- d. In Rachel's research, she's made connections between scientific experimental design and bird song research and did a section on tools that were used in 19th century section experiments just to briefly summarize that connection.
- e. 1971 article did not rely on comparisons with language and tried to move away from utilitarian view of animal bodies. Instead, it's approach is almost entirely on very musical version of listening that was developed in the 1950's by music instructors. They used music terminology in describing the sound. Katherine Payne was a music major and her most influential teacher was Donald Grout and is an author of, "A History of Western Music". The book is famous for teaching structural listening in which you break sounds down into parts and look at the melodic repetition. Relationship to the 1971 article is shaped by the broader context of women in the sciences especially in the multiple roles she had to navigate. No one else involved in the article had extensive background in music but Katie was not listed as the co-author. When Rachel asked her directly whether or not she should have been listed as a co-author, she replied, "Roger is a wonderful father to my four beautiful children". Katie's primary contribution comes from a complete gendered context in which meaning circulates through relationships and not through authorship. Katie Payne was a vital but unrecognizable contributor to the discovery of the humpback whale song in 1970.
- f. Attentive listening as part of the humanistic ideals that teach us Humanism and art transcends barriers, particularly barriers that are between human beings.
- g. The discovery of the Humpback whale song made space historically for a kind of environmental activism that recognized non-human selfhood through song. It's very hard to do scholarship and activism without carefully looking at this humanistic faith that both allows us to transcend boundaries but also places very specific limitations on work of transcendence.

- h. This can be a starting point for asking questions on humanism, transcendence, animal identity as a proxy for other kinds of marginalization. It's work that's related to reconfiguring sonic values that have historically situated western listeners as secure in relation to endangered or extinct voices.
8. Poses Questions
- a. What is humanistic faith if it allows non-humans structures to transcend species boundaries while excluding human voices?
 - b. What would a study of more than human meaning be if formal structures were included without being privileged?
 - c. What kinds of stories would we tell about the right to life if we exchanged that privilege of authorship and discovery for the privileged of relational listening?
9. Discussion:
- a. Neil would like to invite Rachel to his Environmental History conference since this it's something that people are not doing and need to hear. It's relevant to Neil's field but also very different.
 - b. Jack: Rachel's work seems much related to David Baum's "implicate order". The sound diagrams appear similar to work done around eugenics and there are linkages around scientific othering practices.
 - i. Rachel: Suggested work on Claire Kim whose done work on the impulse to approach the question of the animal and the question of indigeneity from this problematic comparative perspective which questions which is more important, the animal or the other?
 - c. Rosanna: Commitment to interpreting Payne's response to the question of co-authoring was helpful just for thinking about the interactions between indigenous people and the scientist who come and are hosted by them in their communities. Sparked thoughts on research coming out on relationality from indigenous scholars that are thinking about different epistemological groundings for knowledge production speaks nicely with reading of Payne – meaning being circulated through relationships, not authorship – that allows us to think about what other types of meanings are made and circulated. Curious about structural listening and longer connections to structuralism.
 - i. Rachel interprets Payne's resistance to authorship as making a conscious and deliberate feminist move. There is no connection between structural listening and structuralism. Maybe there is a connection between reckoning with the Holocaust that both Anthropologist and Music scholars shared.
 - d. Alex: Excited to bring in other folks to talk about the archive of sound, thinking about the space of the ocean and memory of water and tying it back to the present, the interrelationship between the pacific and the military and how all this material actually came about and why we have this information and how it was initially interpreted, and the ties back to this time period. We hope to have folks join in conversation that come up more often to meet in different ways and bring in people, perhaps artists, that are working with us as well and think about developing projects. Projects could trace the history of setting up these

classifications, to think more holistically thought animal and creativity, thinking about humanizing and tracing this moment that we're in, also thinking about "how do we listen?"

- e. Neil: Rachel's studies and work around musicology, sound, and science? Is this prevalent in her field?
 - i. No, this is due to her being a holistic thinking which leads her to doing work that's really unusual in her field and other fields. It's a good time for threads to be drawn together to help us rethink the ways disciplinarity is practiced, particularly in this context of science, humanism, as a reflective division that speaks to a lot of other problematic division. Work is the intersection of sound studies, the history of science, and animal studies, and sometimes post-humanism. Looked at practices of collecting songs in both human and animal context to build comparative claims about difference and also trying to formulate arguments that those comparative claims are actually the exemplar and unseen foundation of all claims we make about sonic culture today.
10. Jack: Email from University College of London organizing campus and city wide with their legacy of eugenics and want to bring the projects and work done around eugenics to NYC. This could be an opportunity to incorporate everyone's work as well. Link to haunted files as an example of work from Leora and Jack ([link](#)).
11. Jack, Leora, Rachel, Rosanna, and Neil will be teaching in the fall. Alex will not be.
12. Next Steps:
 - a. Think about what kind of efforts and energies that we want to bond these courses? We need to articulate what this is.
 - b. Key Topic: Logistical questions on what kind of efforts we want to put into bonding the courses and clearly articulating / stating why.
 - c. Share Eco Group HAL Handout, Leora can share syllabi of the courses, share meetings notes, and post video / notes on the website.