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"Broken"

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Muir, Cameron. "Broken." *Environmental Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2014): 287-90. doi:10.1215/22011919-3615532.

Since World War II humans have released over 80,000 chemical compounds that no organism had previously encountered in the 3.5 billion year history of life on earth. Only a fraction of these have been tested. It is a profound change, one that can't be undone easily and not within our lifetimes. It will persist in the geological record and in our genetic legacies. Earlier this year, researchers in *The Lancet Neurology* announced that we are in the midst of a "global, silent pandemic of neurodevelopmental toxicity." That's your brain, and my brain, taking a hit—and it's worse for those who farm or who live in the world's most polluted places.

It's not just our pesticides and car fumes and flame retardants that are toxic. Fertilizer plants that produce the inputs necessary for industrial agriculture spew out acidic and radioactive tailings. The fertilizers themselves run off into rivers, estuaries and oceans creating vast "dead zones."

I probably don't need to tell you all this. I don't need to tell you that the way we eat has played a leading role in plunging the earth into another mass extinction event. I don't need to tell you that we participate in an unfair food system—where millions starve in a world with enough—that we operate on the assumption that some lives are worth more than others. We know things are broken. The question is, how do we respond to the broken, as scholars, writers, artists? And what can the broken tell us? (Text from author)

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