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"Making Live and Letting Die: Cancerous Bodies between Anthropocene Necropolitics and Chthulucene Kinship"

Lykke, Nina

Lykke, Nina. "Introduction: Toxic Embodiment and Feminist Environmental Humanities." *Environmental Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2019): 108-36. https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-7349444 .

With a focus on global cancer epidemics, the article discusses biopolitics in the Anthropocene against the background of a notion of dual governmentality, implying that efforts to make populations live and tendencies to let them die are intertwined. The conceptualization is based on postcolonial scholar Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics and cultural critic Lauren Berlant's notion of slow death, developing Foucauldian understandings of biopower. Liver cancer and breast cancer serve as cases showing the operations of an Anthropocene necropolitics, that is, its modes of working through political neglect of carcinogenic effects of conditions of poverty in postcolonial capitalism and chemical modernity. The article introduces Anthropocene necropolitics as an analytics, useful for a critical understanding of the global cancer epidemics. But it aims also to transgress a merely critical approach and to contribute to the search for critically affirmative points of exit into new and more promising worlding practices. Therefore, it engages in the discussion of the Anthropocene concept's lack of potentials to go beyond critique. Instead, the author tries out Donna Haraway's proposal to complement the Anthropocene concept with the figuration of Chthulucene, calling for a shift of ethical stance and position of enunciation *from* the sovereign (white, Western) "I," waging "war" on cancer to a "we," based on a planetwide kinship of vulnerable bodies. Underlining that this shift can also commit to alternative modes of writing, the article ends with a poem, "Anthropos and the Canary in the Mine." The poem situates the analysis in the entanglement of political, ethical, theoretical, and personal passions brought about by the author's process of mourning her life partner's cancer death. (Text from author's abstract)

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