



ECOLOGIES OF DEATH, ECOLOGIES OF MOURNING

VOLUME I

23rd March 2023, Norrköping, SE (Symposium)

Arbetets Museum / The Museum of Work

Laxholmen, Norrköping

Sweden



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Ecologies of Death, Ecologies of Mourning: Volume I

International Symposium
23rd March 2023, 13:00 – 18:00

The symposium is organised by **The Eco- and Bioart Lab** (EBL: <https://liu.se/en/research/the-eco-and-bioart-lab>), in collaboration with **Queer Death Studies Network** (QDSN: <https://queerdeathstudies.net/>)

Venue:

Arbetets Museum/The Museum of Work, Laxholmen, Norrköping
(<https://www.arbetetsmuseum.se/>)

Keynote speakers:

Prof. Patricia MacCormack (Anglia Ruskin University, UK)

Prof. Em. Nina Lykke (Linköping University, SE/Aarhus University, DK)

Speakers:

Dr Evelien Geerts (University of Birmingham, UK)

Prof. Christina Fredengren (Uppsala University/Stockholm University, SE)

Dr Tara Mehrabi & Dr Wibke Straube (Karlstad University, SE)

Dr Marietta Radomska (Linköping University, SE)

In the Anthropocene, the epoch of climate change and environmental destruction that render certain habitats unliveable and induce socio-economic inequalities and shared ‘more-than-human’ vulnerabilities, death and loss become urgent environmental concerns. As climate scientists indicate, in order to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), a much more radical transformative action is needed from all stakeholders: governments, the private sector, communities and individuals (Höhne, et al. 2020).

Simultaneously, planetary environmental disruption, contributing to the mortality of humans and nonhumans, destruction of entire ecosystems, the sixth mass extinction, both abrupt and ‘slow’ violence (Nixon 2011), evoke feelings of anxiety, anger and grief, manifested in popular-scientific and cultural narratives, art, and activism. These feelings are not always openly acknowledged or accepted in society; and the ecological, more-than-human dimensions of death have traditionally been underplayed in public debates. Yet, what we need now – more than ever – is the systematic problematisation of the planetary-scale mechanisms of annihilation of the more-than-human world in their philosophical, socio-cultural, ethico-political and very material dimensions. Only then will it be possible to talk about the issues of responsibility, accountability and care for more-than-human worlds (Radomska & Lykke 2022).

Taking its starting point in critically investigating and challenging conventional normativities, assumptions and expectations surrounding issues of death, dying and mourning in the contemporary world (Radomska, Mehrabi & Lykke 2020; <https://queerdeathstudies.net/>), this interdisciplinary symposium zooms in on more-than-human ecologies of death, dying, grief and mourning across spatial and temporal scales.

The event forms part of the **official launch** of the four-year research project **Ecological Grief, Crisis Imaginaries and Resilience in Nordic Lights (2022-26)**, led by Dr Marietta Radomska and generously funded by **FORMAS: a Swedish Research Council for Sustainable Development**.

PROGRAMME

13:00 – 13:15 – Introduction / Launch FORMAS Eco-Grief Project

13:15 – 14:15 – Keynote I: Prof. Patricia MacCormack (Anglia Ruskin University, UK), “The Difficult Joy of Death Activism”

14:15 – 14:45 – Break (fika)

14:45 – 15:15 – Dr Evelien Geerts (University of Birmingham, UK), “The Memorial 22/3’s more-than-human hauntings: Reimagining memory, commemoration & mourning through queer(ing) spacetime matters”

15:15 – 15:45 – Prof. Christina Fredengren (Uppsala University/Stockholm University, SE), “Ancestral ecologies of life, death and regeneration”

15:45 – 16:15 – Dr Tara Mehrabi & Dr Wibke Straube (Karlstad University, SE), “Unsettling Intimacies: On World-Making Practices with the Other in Minoosh Zomorodinia’s Mixed-Media Installation *Knots and Ripples*”

16:15 – 16:45 – Dr Marietta Radomska (Linköping University, SE), “Between Terminal Ecologies and Arts of Eco-Grief: A Queering Reflection”

16:45 – 17:00 – Break (fika)

17:00 – 18:00 – Keynote II: Prof. Em. Nina Lykke (Linköping University, SE), “Mourning (with) Diatoms”

REGISTRATION

The event is now **fully booked**. In case you have registered, and it turns out you can no longer participate, please let us know by sending an email to: ecobioartlab@liu.se. In this way we may be able to let in anyone who may be on the waiting list.

WEBSITE

Check out the event webpage: <https://queerdeathstudies.net/2023/01/21/ecologies-of-death-ecologies-of-mourning-international-symposium-23-march-2023-in-norrkoping/>

ABSTRACTS AND BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS:

The Difficult Joy of Death Activism

By Patricia MacCormack

Convincing humans of the ethical wonder of death seems a task incommensurable with a capacity for activism and indeed to live. Through suggesting various ways in which the world is already full of compassionate death activisms, posthuman practices of death which surround us in humble and compassionate ways, and how attending to the current deaths with which we live, to which we bear witness and which, as consumers, we perpetrate, the deeply off-balance ‘deathings’ of this world are foregrounded. Death activism, oriented in feminist, queer, posthuman and abolitionist knowledges, is critical for developing a material ethics which allows alterity to flourish in relation with rather than lateral to the exceptionalism of human life, and only some kinds of human life. In this sense some death practices are already posthuman, while posthumanist comprehension of death can lead to radical practices of care of life and death. By embracing death, we open the world.

Patricia MacCormack is Professor of Continental Philosophy at Anglia Ruskin University Cambridge. She is the author of *Cinesexuality* (Routledge 2008) and *Posthuman Ethics* (Routledge 2012), and the editor of *The Animal Catalyst* (Bloomsbury 2014), *Deleuze and the Animal* (EUP 2017), *Deleuze and the Schizoanalysis of Cinema* (Continuum 2008) and *Ecosophical Aesthetics* (Bloomsbury 2018). Her new book is *The Ahuman Manifesto: Activisms for the End of the Anthropocene* (2020). She is currently a Leverhulme Research Fellow researching death activism.

Mourning (with) Diatoms

By Nina Lykke

Through a reading of eco-poetic texts – among others from my recent poetic-philosophical and autophenomenographic monograph *Vibrant Death* (Lykke 2022) – I will invite the audience to engage with the life and death of the micro-algae, diatoms. Diatoms are single-cell algae with a unique, coloured silica shell that annually produce 20-50% of the world’s oxygen. With an example from current debates on the dying of the majority of Denmark’s coastal waters due to pollution, I ask what it takes to mourn the death of micro-algae and begin to care about them. Moreover, I raise the question if an ethics of vibrant death critically-affirmatively can mark out a political space for spiritmattering resistance to conditions of double-death (Rose 2004) and extinction.

Nina Lykke is a poet-philosopher and Professor Emerita of Gender Studies at Linköping University, Sweden, and Adjunct Professor at Aarhus University, Denmark. She* has participated in the building of Feminist Studies in Scandinavia and Europe more broadly since the 1970s. She* is co-

founder of the International Network for Queer Death Studies. Her* monographs include: *Cosmodolphins* (2000), *Feminist Studies* (2010), and *Vibrant Death* (2022).

SPEAKERS:

The Memorial 22/3's more-than-human hauntings: Reimagining memory, commemoration & mourning through queer(ing) spacetime-matterings

By Evelien Geerts

In this talk, memory studies, queer hauntological theory (Derrida 1994; Barad 2010), and critical new materialist philosophies that emphasize the bio-/necropolitical 'making live and letting die'-powers (Lykke 2019; Radomska, Meharbi & Lykke 2020) of philosophical, socio-political, and memory work are combined to investigate the 2016 Brussels terrorist attacks memorial – also known as the *Memorial 22/3* – and the processes of memory, commemoration, and mourning it has engendered.

Two lines of thought in particular will be traced: 1) The reconceptualisation of the *Memorial 22/3* as a more-than-human memorial, forming a lively assemblage with the thirty-two victims whose presence-through-absence haunt the nature-embedded memorial and its environment; and 2) the exploration of the idea that memory, commemoration, and mourning processes captured and provoked by the *Memorial 22/3* resemble the disruptive queering of spacetime – also theorised as Baradian (2007: 182) "spacetime-matterings" – thereby highlighting the potential of memory work to reimagine the world otherwise.

Evelien Geerts (Ph.D., UCSC) is a multidisciplinary philosopher, Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham, and researcher affiliated with The Posthumanities Hub and The Eco- and Bioart Lab. Her interests include posthumanist, new materialist, and Deleuzoguattarian philosophy, the (post-)Anthropocene, and questions of identity, difference, and violence. She has published in *CounterText*, *Philosophy Today*, *Rhizomes*, and *Women's Studies International Forum*, and recently edited special issues on "Dis/Abling Gender" (*Journal of Gender Studies*) and "Gender, Sexuality, and Embodiment in Digital Spheres" (*Journal of Digital Social Research*). Web: www.eveliengeerts.com.

Ancestral Ecologies of Life, Death, Regeneration

By Christina Fredengren

The dead are rarely dead and gone, but continue their working in various environmental locations. This paper deals with the deposition of artefact and bodily remains in watery places, such as lakes, rivers and bogs. The research engages in questions on how necropolitics were linked to the subject formation of the killable, thereby examining changing human-animal relations and their links to situated ecologies. The paper traces the critical archaeological cartographies of the dead and how the dead co-worked in generative and lively worlding practices. This is done by investigating some

of the relations that were tied together and undone through such deposition. It deals with questions around ancestrality, ecocide, sacrifice and the personhood of waters and other matters around how ecologies become alive or dead and what it could entail to be a speaker for the dead.

Christina Fredengren is Professor at Uppsala University, Department of Art History, with research in archaeology, natureculture heritage, also affiliated to the Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University, with publications in archaeology, feminist posthumanities, natural/cultural heritage and environmental humanities; member of The Posthumanities Hub and founding member of the Bog Body Network; PI of 'Water of the Times', focused on the deposition of human and animal remains in watery places (funded by the Swedish Science Council, Berit Wallenberg foundation); and PI of 'Curating Time' (funded by The SeedBox) and 'Museum Ecologies' project (RAÄ).

Unsettling Intimacies: On World-Making Practices with the Other in Minoosh Zomorodinia's Mixed-Media Installation Knots and Ripples

By Tara Mehrabi and Wibke Straube

This paper engages with the installation of San Francisco-based Iranian artist Minoosh Zomorodinia, *Knots and Ripples* (2017), through the concept of 'unsettling intimacies'. An unsettling intimacy emerges in the artwork in ways that connect different tropes of Otherness, such as the figure of the Muslim woman wearing a hijab in the US context and the environmental crisis. Through our engagement with the artwork and based on interviews with the artist herself, we suggest that *Knots and Ripples* enacts a complex, posthuman, affective space of response-ability that draws on poetics, ethics, and politics of affective communality beyond any predefined boundaries of the human, the animal, and the more-than-human. We develop the concept of unsettling intimacies as a world-making practice through engaging with the materiality of water, its sacredness in Iranian culture, the ritual of *dakhil*, involving the knotting of strings to make a wish, and the hijab, as central elements of our interaction with the work.

Tara Mehrabi, PhD, senior lecturer at Karlstad University, SE. Her research is situated within queer death studies, affective methodologies, feminist new materialisms and critical digital health studies. She is a founding member of the Queer Death Studies Network and the E-MigrAgeing Network (on migration, ageing and digital technologies); and the PI of the project 'Ageing Well with Technologies' (funded by Vinnova and Region Värmland). Mehrabi has published in *Australian Feminist Studies*, *Women, Gender and Research*, *NORA* and *European Journal of Women's Studies*, among others.

Wibke Straube, PhD, senior lecturer and research coordinator at Karlstad University, SE. Straube's work focuses on an intersectional analysis of trans embodiment, affective methodologies and possibilities to create zones of liveability for those on the social peripheries. They have published in, among others, *Environmental Humanities*, *Screen Bodies*, *Lambda Nordica* and *NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*. Their research is currently funded by Kone Foundation and

is part of the research/art/activism project “Trans*Creative: Health, Violence, and Environment in Transgender Cultural Production” (2020–2024).

Between Terminal Ecologies and Arts of Eco-Grief: A Queering Reflection

By Marietta Radomska

While the notion of bereavement linked to the death of a human or to the loss of that which has already passed are societally accepted or even expected, the mourning of nonhuman death and ecological loss has a rather different status. It is frequently described as ‘disenfranchised grief’ (Doka 1989): not openly accepted or acknowledged in society. Simultaneously, in the present anthropocenic context, where planetary environmental destruction generates unliveable spaces and amplifies ‘more-than-human’ vulnerabilities, the killing of nonhuman populations, annihilation of entire ecosystems and species extinction catalyse discussions among scientists, legal experts, activists and general society. Yet, it is not only natural-scientific and legal, but also philosophical, artistic and cultural understandings of death and eco-grief that are urgently needed. Grounded in QDS, this talk zooms in on the imaginaries and engagements with more-than-human death, as they are interwoven through the tissues of select contemporary artworks, where ecological ontology of death is being exposed and where ethical territories of eco-grief and mourning the more-than-human unfold.

Marietta Radomska, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in Environmental Humanities at Linköping University; director of The Eco- and Bioart Lab; co-founder of Queer Death Studies Network; member of The Posthumanities Hub; PI of ‘Ecological Grief, Crisis Imaginaries and Resilience in Nordic Lights’ (2022-26; funded by FORMAS). She works at the intersection of posthumanities, environmental humanities, continental philosophy, queer death studies, visual culture and contemporary art; and has published in *Australian Feminist Studies*; *Somatechnics*; *Environment and Planning E* and *Artnodes*, among others. Web: www.mariettaradomska.com



Booklet design & artwork: Marietta Radomska



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