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Necropersona: Beyond the Living | Dead Dichotomy

Ewa Domanska

Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan / Stanford University

The talk will present a fragment from a forthcoming book *Necros: An Introduction to an Ontology of the Dead Body* (in Polish, 2017). The book is based on the analysis of various kinds of historical sources, art works and research materials collected during anthropological field studies conducted in Argentina, Brazil, Poland, Japan and the USA. Applying grounded theory allows me to develop a theory of necrocratic metamorphosis and necrovitalism that complements and supplements necropolitics, which is a predominant approach to "dead body studies" as practiced in the humanities and social sciences. I would claim that in order to refresh and redefine reflection on the agency of the human dead body and human remains, the discourse should not be limited to an overwhelming discourse of necropolitics and necroviolence. Inspired by the idea of a person as conceptualized by new animism (Bird-David, Harvey) as well as by theories of ecomaterialism, new vitalism and multispecies collectives, I will propose to consider necropersona as agents of change from the standpoint of physical-chemical processes. I would pose the question: how might death studies/thanatology as practiced in the humanities and social sciences change if we complement it with approaches coming from geology, life sciences, and soil science. "The Infinity Burial Project" by bioartist, Jae Rhim Lee, relates to a larger vision of a "Decompiculture Society" and illustrates several key themes of this talk.

Ewa Domanska is Professor of Human Sciences and holds her permanent position at the Department of History, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. She is affiliated with Anthropology Department and CREEES at Stanford. Her teaching and research interests include comparative theory of the human and social sciences, history and theory of historiography, genocide and ecocide studies. She is the author and editor of 18 books. Her more recent publications include: "Dehumanisation Through Decomposition and the Force of Law," in: Mapping the 'Forensic Turn,' ed. Z. Dziuban. Vienna 2017; "Animal History." History and Theory, vol. 56, no. 2, June 2017 (forthcoming); "Ecological Humanities." Teksty Drugie/Second Texts, no. 1, 2015: 186-210.

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