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Life Beside Itself: Imagining Care In The Canadian Arctic



Synopsis

In *Life Beside Itself*, Lisa Stevenson takes us on a haunting ethnographic journey through two historical moments when life for the Canadian Inuit has hung in the balance: the tuberculosis epidemic (1940s to the early 1960s) and the subsequent suicide epidemic (1980s to the present). Along the way, Stevenson troubles our commonsense understanding of what life is and what it means to care for the life of another. Through close attention to the images in which we think and dream and through which we understand the world, Stevenson describes a world in which life is beside itself: the name-soul of a teenager who dies in a crash lives again in his friend's newborn baby, a young girl shares a last smoke with a dead friend in a dream, and the possessed hands of a clock spin uncontrollably over its face. In these contexts, humanitarian policies make little sense because they attempt to save lives by merely keeping a body alive. For the Inuit, and perhaps for all of us, life is somewhere else, and the task is to articulate forms of care for others that are adequate to that truth.

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Customer Reviews

Stevenson does a remarkable job illuminating the complexities of suicide without a reductionist position. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in historical and contemporary influences of suicide among disenfranchised populations in North America.

Beautifully written, original research. Highly recommended for anyone interested in medical politics, cultural anthropology, medical anthropology, or ethnography.

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