

Svendsen

Near Human

Border Zones of Species, Life, and Belonging

In the animal facility, fragile piglets substitute for humans who cannot be experimented on. In the neonatal intensive care unit, extremely premature infants prompt questions about whether they are too fragile to save or, if they survive, will go on to lead a life of grave disability. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork carried out on farms, in animal-based experimental science, and in hospitals, Mette N. Svendsen redirects the question of "what it means" to be human to "what it takes" to be human and to forge a nation. The near humanness of preterm infants and research piglets becomes an avenue to unravel how neonatal life is imagined, authenticated, extended or eroded, and how societal belonging is evaluated, confirmed or ended when beings are at the margins of life and death. This courageous multi-sited and multi-species approach cracks open the complex ethical field of valuating life and making different kinds of pigs and different kinds of humans belong in a nation.

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163,50 €

152,80 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9781978818224

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-1-9788-1822-4

Verlag: Rutgers University Press

Erscheinungstermin: 12.11.2021

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2021

Serie: Medical Anthropology

Produktform: Gebunden

Gewicht: 454 g

Seiten: 262

Format (B x H): 152 x 229 mm

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15.08.2024 | 21:45 Uhr

