



The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer: Changing Cultures of Disease and Activism

Maren Klawiter

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For nearly forty years, feminists and patient activists have argued that medicine is a deeply individualizing and depoliticizing institution. According to this view, medical practices are incidental to people's transformation from patients to patient activists. The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer turns this understanding upside down.

Maren Klawiter analyzes the evolution of the breast cancer movement to show the broad social impact of how diseases come to be medically managed and publicly administered. Examining surgical procedures, adjuvant therapies, early detection campaigns, and the rise in discourses of risk, Klawiter demonstrates that these practices created a change in the social relations-if not the mortality rate-of breast cancer that initially inhibited, but later enabled, collective action. Her research focuses on the emergence and development of new forms of activism that range from grassroots patient empowerment to environmental activism and corporate-funded breast cancer awareness.

The Biopolitics of Breast Cancer opens a window onto a larger set of changes currently transforming medically advanced societies and ultimately challenges our understanding of the origins, politics, and future of the breast cancer movement.

Maren Klawiter holds a PhD in sociology from the University of California, Berkeley. She is currently pursuing a law degree at Yale University.

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