



Beatrice Marovich

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Galactic Underworlds



(Substack Newsletter)

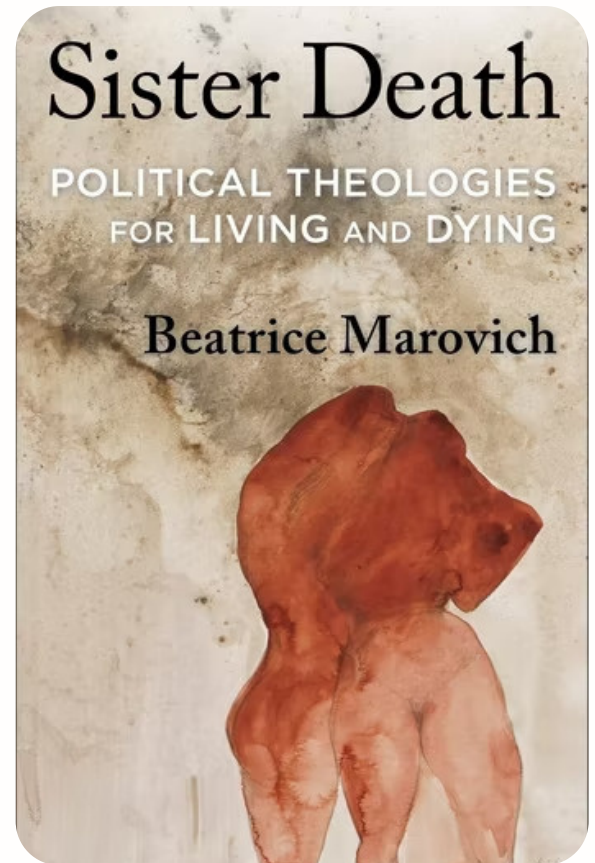
ABOUT

Beatrice Marovich studies, writes, and teaches about religious and philosophical ideas. She doesn't identify with, or defend, a particular religious viewpoint. Instead, her work acknowledges the many ways in which religious ideas, habits, rituals, and patterns have been embedded - in subtle and subterranean ways - in aspects of culture that we tend to think of as secular. Her writing offers provocative reflections on how we can respond to the often troubling impact these ideas have on our cultures, our politics, and our bodies. She offers new perspectives on how we might work both with and against these relics from religious tradition in order to tell new stories about our lives, ourselves, our relationships, our dreams, and the worlds we live in. Her first book is *Sister Death: Political Theologies for Living and Dying* (Columbia University Press, 2023).

SISTER DEATH

Sister Death: Political Theologies for Living and Dying (Columbia University Press, 2023). ISBN 9780231208376. 304 pages. \$32.00 paperback (also available as e-book and hardcover). Available at all major book retailers.

Life and death are commonly seen as representing the starkest of binaries: death is the ultimate adversary of all that lives. Beatrice Marovich argues that such understandings of mortality have been deeply influenced by a strain of Christian political theology that has left its mark on both religious and secular narratives. Adapting the figure of "Sister Death" from Saint Francis of Assisi, she calls for a recognition that life and death are family. In a time of extinctions, it is necessary to disrupt this long dominant story in order to apprehend death as a collective, multispecies event.



TESTIMONIALS

"Few of the countless books written about death are written with such brilliance, imagination, and grace. An exemplary collection of attentive, intelligent, and generous readings."

Gil Anidjar, author of *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*

"Embracing finitude, facing but never glorifying that most difficult sibling, Sister Death guides us on a darkly mesmerizing journey. Exposing a long political theology of death, she reveals—lucidly, beautifully—the enlivening alternative."

Catherine Keller, author of *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement*

"With an intimate and probing voice, Beatrice Marovich invites us to meditate with her on death. She crafts a smart, subtle, and at times moving narrative, elevated to the next level by its gorgeous illustrations.."

Vincent W. Lloyd, author of *Black Dignity: The Struggle Against Domination*

KEY IDEAS

Life and death are not enemies, but family. Death can be tragic, and horrifying. But it's also the case that life collaborates with death in order to make new life.

The idea that life and death are enemies can be tied to a violent theological legacy. Christians long understood themselves to be on the side of God, and the side of life. Their enemies were understood to be on the side of death: doomed to die, and to be excluded from eternal life.

The enmity between life and death has helped white Americans deny the fact of death. As James Baldwin put it, "white Americans don't believe in death". Instead, death is projected onto "the other."

Our collective mortality matters more than ever, and we need better language for it. We are living through a pandemic. And we live with an increasing awareness of the impact of climate change. If we want to speak about our collective mortality, we have to be able to think differently about life and death.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What inspired you to write about death?

Where does the figure of "Sister Death" come from?

Why have you been inspired to write and think about religion, when you don't identify as religious?

What is "political theology"?

What have you learned about death, from teaching your course on death and the afterlife?

How did the pandemic we've been living through shape this book?