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The Queer Animacy of Lead

This paper discusses the animation (enlivening) of transnational toxins, considering especially their racialization and queering. The 2007 U.S. lead panic around children's toys morphed the human poster child of lead from a "black inner city child" to a "white middle class child" whose threatening scene centers around the queer "licking" of Thomas trains assembled and painted in China - the biosecurity threat materialized in paint. The lead itself binds sociopolitical mythologies with biochemical ones, acquiring the racialized liveness of a contagious vector: its demonstrated neurological effects render intoxicated bodies unassimilable into reigning heteronationalisms. Considering *both* U.S. and Chinese activist representations of the threat to human bodies represented by lead, I examine ways in which certain toxicities come to appear "proper" to certain bodies transnationally and transfigure as they (literally) transform. As received typologies buttressing biosecurity narratives transmutate, property (proper bodies, capital, toys, manufacture, nationhood, race) gives way to porosity.