**‘Loss’**

**BASN Autumn 2021 Meeting**

(University of Birmingham/online)

Abstracts and Bios

**15-min Papers**

**Apala Bhowmick** (Emory University) ‘Zoocorpographies of Loss in *The Stone Virgins*(2002), Yvonne Vera's Zimbabwean Novel’

Abstract: Given the recent resurgence of discussion around the biopolitics of conflict in postcolonial geographical contexts, my project aims to expand the conversation to include animal subjects of manmade violence in texts set in the global South. My paper (15 minutes) will parse questions of (maimed) animality in the South African novel, *The Stone Virgins*(2002) by Yvonne Vera, demonstrating how species boundaries are collapsed, by virtue of shared embodied losses encountered by human and nonhuman animals after violence effected upon their bodies by the same human male perpetrator. Vera’s novel, temporally, spans from the mid-twentieth century—traversing the Gukurahundi massacres—leading up to the years of Zimbabwe’s official Independence from British forces in 1980. I argue that the loss of corporeal agency (in the nonhuman animal; spiders) and the loss of narrative agency (in the human animal; a woman, whose lips are cut off) collapse human-nonhuman animal species boundaries in the novel. To describe the mapping of animal bodies, I use the term “zoocorpographies.” The  losses incurred on both bodily venues are political, and precipitated by military conflict fuelled by colonial divisions. I will briefly reference Frantz Fanon and Elizabeth Grosz to unpack my thesis in this paper.

Bio: Apala Bhowmick is a PhD student at the Department of English at Emory University, Atlanta, USA. She works on representations of the natural environment and animality in African, South Asian, and Caribbean cultural artefacts produced in the 20thand 21stcenturies.

**Matthew Carter** (University of Nottingham) ‘The Beast of a Lost Age: Progress, Romanticism and the Red Deer in British Popular Natural History, 1775-1860’

Abstract: With increasing concerns regarding human impact on the natural world, the disappearance of species due to human activity, driven by shifting attitudes, has been highlighted within extinction histories and the broader field of extinction studies, which have explored the ways in which people and communities have responded to and engaged with the loss of specific, nonhuman animals at a local and global level. Indeed, studies have revealed that the sense of loss attached to the disappearance of nonhuman animals has its roots in a nostalgic longing for a landscape populated by impressive, charismatic species, reflecting a departure from earlier conceptions of progress, underpinned by control over the natural world. This paper examines the decline of the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), as reported in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century, British popular natural history, to reveal how an emerging sense of loss from the gradual disappearance of this species from British landscapes was deeply intertwined with the growing romantic appreciation of ‘wilderness’. This coincided with the sentimentalisation of the Scottish Highlands within the British popular imagination, illustrating how attitudes towards the shifting fortunes of this species were deeply tied to the cultural importance ascribed to it within a specific historical context, informed by broader epistemological and cultural frameworks that dominated discussions surrounding the natural world at that time.

Bio: Matthew Carter is a third-year History PhD student at the University of Nottingham, researching into expressions of national identity within British popular natural history from 1775-1860. His current research explores the presence of animals within specific landscapes, the temporal and geographical locating of animals and human-animal relationships as indicators of societal development. From January to June 2020, he completed a part-time, research placement at the Wollaton Hall Natural History Museum with the Nottingham Museums and Galleries Service, where he conducted research on the Mansfield Parkyns collection.

**Miranda Cichy** (University of Glasgow) ‘At Last: The Endling in Extinction Narratives’

Abstract: The word ‘endling’ entered public usage in the 2000s, referring to the last individual of an animal or plant species before it becomes extinct. Despite living through an age of mass species loss, we have been aware of comparatively few endlings, varying from the unnamed to the famous. As we struggle to comprehend the spatial and temporal reach of extinction, these isolated individuals offer a concrete and personal narrative. This paper focuses on Martha, the last passenger pigeon who died in Cincinnati Zoo in 1914, in order to evaluate how endlings have been, and might be, used to communicate modern species extinction. Bred in captivity, Martha has become a strange form of synecdoche: a single bird standing in for a species that was iconic for its abundancy. In life and death, she has been exhibited as part of a narrative, the subject of art, literature, and memorials, moving from living monument to revered taxidermy object. This paper navigates the disconnect between the loss of the last and the loss of a lineage, analysing whether the endling ‘reduces species to specimens’ (Thom van Dooren) or ‘can be the beginning of new extinction stories’ (Dolly Jørgensen).

Bio: Miranda Cichy is a doctoral student and writer at the University of Glasgow. Her creative-critical thesis is concerned with anthropogenic bird loss during the age of the Sixth Mass Extinction, and how taxidermy specimens in both the visible and non-visible areas of museums enable us to bear witness to and tell narratives of such extinction. Combining creative non-fiction, poetry, and art, her thesis aims to "flesh out" the fragile surface remains of these animals, exposing their individual stories alongside the history of their species, 19th century specimen collecting, and taxidermy's modern uses. Miranda’s poetry has been published in print and online, most recently in *Magma 79: Dwelling*, and she has a prose piece on the extinct paradise parrot forthcoming in *becoming-Feral*.

**Anja Höing** (University of Osnabrück) ‘“I know this is a shock, but…” – Losing an Animal Companion in Contemporary Children’s Literature’

Abstract: The loss of an animal companion has long been a recurrent trope in children’s fiction. In the twentieth century, the (often gruesome) death or disappearance of the animal primarily served a thoroughly anthropocentric function: for the child protagonist, the relationship with the animal represented a preparatory stage towards a ‘more meaningful’ human-human relationship. Once the child protagonist had successfully navigated their socialization into human culture (aided by the animal), the child protagonist’s acceptance of the animal’s death/disappearance signposted a new-found maturity. This paper will trace if such a pattern can still be observed in contemporary British children’s fiction, arguing that, even in stories that ostensibly seek to transmit an environmental message, there is often little change to the lost animal companion being reduced to a signpost in the child’s maturation process. Comparing such anthropocentric representations of animal loss to (unfortunately rarer) ones acknowledging the intrinsic value of the lost animal, I will set out how the trope of the lost animal companion proves to be a useful tool in discovering naturalized anthropocentric ideologies that still underlie a disconcertingly high number of contemporary children’s narratives, even ones self-identifying as “green”.

Bio: Anja Höing is a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Osnabrück, Germany. Her primary research interests lies in representations of childhood, nature, and animals in British literature. Having recently finished her dissertation project on conceptions of nature in animal stories of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, she is now working on a research project that traces interconnections between childhood and (primarily vegetal) nature in Early Modern England. Her recent publications include “ “‘Advice […] by one as insignificant as a MOUSE’: Human and Non-human Infancy in Eighteenth-century Moral Animal Tales.” In Romanticism and the Cultures of Infancy, edited by Martina Domines Veliki and Cian Duffy (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020) and, forthcoming with Children’s Literature Quarterly, “A Winged Symbol: The Power of the Child-Animal Bond in Gill Lewis’s Sky Hawk”.

**Jes Hooper** (University of Exeter) ‘Wild-less Life: The Love and Loss of Wild Pets in Indonesia’s “Civet Lovers” Community’

Abstract: This paper will be a biographic essay on the rise and fall of Flo, a civet with an online celebrity-like following, renowned for being morbidly obese. In October 2020 Flo’s owner posted three videos to the Facebook group “Musang Lovers Indonesia” with a detailed and lengthily written message to the page's 68, 500 followers. The first video showed Flo with laboured breathing, the second showed the owner repeatedly failing to resuscitate her and the moment inextricable grief took hold as he realized she had died. The third video was serene, the watering of flowers on Flo’s carefully tended grave. The post gained over 500 comments in under one hour, as the virtual community responded with an outpouring of sympathy and condolences for his loss, though the posts also received instances of condemnation for the loss of Flo’s physical condition at the time of her death. The following day the post was removed. Critical philosophical evaluation of Flo’s story will address key themes of the human-animal bond including differences in cultural perspectives on pet bereavement and animal welfare, the role of online communities and the problematic nature of keeping wild animals as pets and the subsequent loss of their wildness.

Bio: Jes Hooper is an Anthrozoology PhD student at the University of Exeter and a member of Exeter’s Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics (EASE) working group. Jes’ current research focuses on human-animal encounters within the trade in exotic wildlife for the pet, coffee, tourism and zoo industries. Jes’ PhD project, The Civet Project, is a multi-species and multi-sited ethnography following the stories of *Viverridae* species entangled within live animal trade, with encounters viewed through a trans-species lens. Jes’s work actively engages with interdisciplinary scholarship including collaborations with visual artists, critical tourism academics, conservationists, zookeepers and fellow anthrozoologists. Jes lectures part time on two undergraduate programs in Animal Behaviour, Welfare and Conservation at Plumpton College, Sussex, and blogs under the name Shilo & Patch.

**Hannah Hunter** (Queen’s University) ‘Sounding Ivory-billed Woodpeckers Back to Life: Listening to historical bird sound recordings in an age of extinction’

Abstract: In 1935, ornithologists from Cornell University captured a series of sound recordings of the elusive Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Louisiana, USA. These were some of the first bird sound recordings ever taken in the wild and remain the only unrefuted sound recordings of this species. Since then, the ivorybill has dipped in and out of presumed extinction: save for a scattering of controversial sightings, the bird has not been conclusively seen or heard in the USA since 1944. In this paper, I ask how the 1935 sound recordings have affected the experience of the ivorybills' extinction. For instance, how they have imbued the bird with a liveliness that has cast doubt on its demise, and how they have been used as a tool in modern 'rediscovery' attempts. With critical attention to the colonial practices of bird sound recording, I argue that these recordings have fundamentally changed the event of ivorybill extinction, both for humans and for the birds themselves. I further propose that we must reconsider and re-purpose these (and other) historical bird sound recordings to recognise the cultures that simultaneously made these recordings possible and caused the ivorybills' demise, while celebrating the lively possibilities of encountering lost beings through sound.

Bio: Hannah Hunter (she/ her) is a PhD candidate at the Department of Geography and Planning at Queen’s University in Canada. She holds an MA (with Distinction) from the University of Sussex and a BA (1st Class) from the University of Birmingham. Her research interests include historical animal geography, the history of science, sound studies, and creative geographies. Hannah’s doctoral research, funded by a Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship, explores the collection and afterlives of bird sound recordings in North America, with a focus on the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in the 20th century.

**Joshua Jones, Siobhan I. Speiran and Claudia Hirtenfelder** (Queen’s University) ‘Displacement as Disappearance: Considering Ecology after Loss’

Abstract: Throughout the Anthropocene, non-human animals have been displaced from their homes by humans at increasingly alarming rates. In these displacements lingers a *loss*; the removal of these non-humans changes the fabric of the world. Displacement is more than just the movement of bounded individuals from one location to another; it could mark a rupture in the unfolding of existence. In this paper, we consider displacement as the *disappearance* of a way of being-in-the-world. Our multidisciplinary team, comprising three PhD candidates from Queen’s University, contend with ideas of disappearance in the context of ecological loss. We offer insight into the ways in which ecological loss can be grappled with— especially when the ‘disappearance’ of non-humans comes, not through death, but through changes in behaviour and place. Our paper will begin with a broad philosophical consideration of place-making, and ecological ‘being-with’ (drawn from Nancy). This is followed by two case studies of animal displacement: (1) one contemporary example of monkeys displaced from the wild into managed/human spaces in Costa Rica, and (2) one historical example of cows displaced from urban settings in Canada. We aim to highlight the tensions underlying the discourse around ecological loss, and open novel avenues for conceptualizing disappearance.

Bios: This co-authored paper has been completed by three graduated students from Queen’s University, Canada. Joshua Jones is a PhD candidate in the School of Environmental Studies where he is supervised by Dr. Mick Smith. Joshua studies the emptiness of extinction and how ecologies are irrevocably changed in the wake of species loss. Siobhan I. Speiran is a PhD candidate in the same department whose research explores the lives of monkeys in Costa Rican sanctuaries, which is generously supported by a SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Doctoral Scholarship. Claudia Hirtenfelder is a PhD candidate in the Department of Geography and Planning who is interested in the relationship between urbanization and questions of multi-species belonging, specifically how cows came to un/belong in some cities.

**Ankit Kawade** (Jawaharlal Nehru University) ‘Stigma and Silence: The Social Consequences of the Extinction of Vultures in India’

Abstract: This paper proposes to discuss the issue of the extinction of vultures in India as an exemplary case in order to throw some light upon studying the problem of the human-animal distinction in the discourse and practice of caste. The consequences of the extinction of vultures upon the Parsi or Zoroastrian community in India is discussed in this article from the perspective of the "depressed sub-caste" of corpse-bearers among the Parsis. The Parsi funeral ceremony involves carrying the corpse to a designated site called “The Towers of Silence”, or *Dakhma*, where the corpse is laid down at an elevated roof-structure. The process involves exposing the corpse to the rays of the sun and then letting vultures and other scavenger birds feed upon it till only its bones remain. By looking at narrations of stigma and discrimination experienced by Parsi corpse-bearers, the paper attempts to contextualise the Zoroastrian funeral ritual as the site of a conflict between contending notions of social and ecological justice.

Bio: Ankit Kawade is an MPhil Candidate at the Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. His MPhil dissertation focuses upon the reception of the *Manusmriti* or *The Laws of Manu* in the writings of F.W. Nietzsche and B.R. Ambedkar.

**Anin Luo** (Princeton University) ‘The Invention of a Veterinary History: Epizootic Science and International Policy between the World Wars’

Abstract: In 1924, the Office International des Épizooties (OIE) was established in Paris to combat epizooties—infectious animal diseases—on an international level. Veterinarians, many leading their respective national veterinary services—largely in Europe, but also in Asia, Africa, and South America—met at the OIE, League of Nations, and International Veterinary Congresses to share scientific information and formulate and coordinate veterinary policies. Drawing on their discussions, I argue that the interwar period saw a major shift in international policy from coercive slaughter of livestock infected with acute and obvious epizooties to cooperation with voluntary farmers that emphasized protection of livestock against chronic and difficult-to-diagnose epizooties. This shift was informed by bacteriological research showing that carriers of disease could remain virulent while displaying no signs of infection. However, despite a rhetorical emphasis on protecting healthy livestock instead of slaughtering sick ones, the major thread of continuity between what this new international class of scientifically informed veterinarians called “modern” and “classical” policies was a disregard for the loss of animal life in pursuit of measures that could best ensure free international trade in livestock; veterinarians rhetorically relegated slaughter to the “classical” past while in fact recuperating the practice for protective aims articulated in the “modern” framework.

Bio: Anin Luo received her BA in Molecular Biophysics & Biochemistry and History at Yale University and her MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge, where she was a Gates Cambridge Scholar. She will begin her PhD in History of Science at Princeton University in August 2021. Her work focuses on legal and cultural history of animals and the environment in the early twentieth century, as well as methodological issues in historians’ engagements with science studies and animal studies.

**Catherine Oliver** (University of Cambridge) ‘A Badger, a Tree, and a Geographer Walk into a City: More-than-Human Precarity and Loss in Birmingham’

Abstract: Ten years ago, outside my student flat in Birmingham, a badger visited me every evening. When I moved across the city, I never saw them again. Five years later, I met a fox on the city’s high street at 5am who pulled me into the underbelly of the city. In 2019, while walking along the city’s canals, I began talking to a heron, who taught me about urban displacement. In 2020, a eucalyptus tree became shade and respite for me and a community of birds and squirrels in a disturbed pandemic city, before being destroyed by a landlord. In 2021, just before leaving the city, I finally met the urban parakeets who I had spent years looking for. In this paper, I attend to urban animal stories over ten years to think about loss, mourning and precarity in multispecies urban communities, where (some) humans and non-human animals are constantly moved on and pushed out. I weave these animal stories into a larger urban narrative of Birmingham’s neoliberal regeneration. I ask what animal studies scholars can learn from the loss and displacement of multispecies urban communities, and how we might cohabit better with urban animals in solidarity through our shared precarity.

Bio: Catherine Oliver is a postdoctoral researcher, currently working on the ERC-funded project *Urban Ecologies* (Grant Number 759239) at the University of Cambridge. Her current research with backyard chickens and chicken-keepers in London asks how we can rethink the city from beyond-human perspectives. Her first monograph, *Veganism, Animals, and Archives* is forthcoming with Routledge in 2021, based on archival and ethnographic research from her PhD at the University of Birmingham. Catherine is also a Wiley-Royal Geographical Society Digital Archives Fellow, exploring the archive for stories of animal collaboration, labour, and conflict. Catherine’s wider research in feminist geographies explores ‘dis-belonging’ and the reproduction of neoliberal hierarchies in academia. More about Catherine can be found at catherinecmoliver.com and she can also be found on twitter at @katiecmoliver.

**Sreyashi Ray** (University of Minnesota) ‘“Where Have All the Dogs Gone?”: Language, Animality, and Spectrality in the Vernacular’

Abstract: This paper focuses on the aesthetics and politics of vernacularization of the canine worldview in postcolonial Bengali writer Nabarun Bhattacharya’s fictional narrative *Lubdhak*(“The Dog Star”, 2006). Written in a speculative vein in the context of an impending apocalypse that threatens to exterminate all free-ranging stray dogs on the streets of Kolkata, the text represents how spatial segregations produced because of urban gentrification of postcolonial cityscapes manifest different dimensions of ontological blurring through intersubjective material-semiotic entanglements between humans and canines. I argue that through the deployment of a range of non-anthropocentric narratological innovations, the text reimagines human-canine co-constitution and shared vulnerabilities through aural rearticulation of the city-space. In doing so, it explores the possibilities of a redemptive animalization of the vernacular through a displacement of its logocentric presumptions, and literary instrumentalization of the stray dogs’ legal, biological, and behavioral liminality. Moreover, the text engenders a spectralization of the vernacular through the figures of *chhaya-kukur*(literally, “shadow dogs” in Bangla), ghosts of dead dogs that haunt spatial enclosures marked by colonial and postcolonial violence. Thus, the text conflates the endangered status of the vernacular literary canon with the biopolitical susceptibility of stray dogs to underscore the interconnectedness of language and animality.

Bio: Sreyashi Ray is a PhD candidate in South Asian Literatures, Cultures, and Media at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. Her dissertation project combines archival research and literary analysis to study representations of interspecies communication and multispecies cohabitation in South Asian vernacular cultural productions. She is a 2020-21 Environmental Humanities Fellow at the UMN-Environmental Humanities Initiative, and a 2020 recipient of the Rose Travel Fellowship in the Arts and Humanities for Creative Research in Asia.

**Adam Searle** (University of Cambridge) ‘Contesting Biotic Loss, Biotechnological Promise, and Recovering Memory’

Abstract: What might it mean to institutionalise biotic loss? And how does the enshrining of biotic loss in an era of mass extinction shape future aspirations for biotic recovery? This paper builds upon qualitative research in *El Museo del Bucardo*—The Bucardo Museum—an exhibition space in the village of Torla, high in the Spanish Pyrenees. The bucardo (*Capra pyrenaica pyrenaica*) was declared extinct on 6th January 2000, and rose to international fame three years later, when scientists in Zaragoza delivered a bucardo clone; this event is commonly portrayed around the world as ‘the first de-extinction’. After years of campaigning from local activists, in 2013 the taxidermic remains of the last bucardo were returned to Torla, and the museum was founded. I draw upon interviews, ethnographic, and archival material to present an environmental history of the bucardo as told through the lens of the museum, one which set out to ‘recover’ and institutionalise the bucardo’s memory, allowing its legacy to continue to shape understandings of endemic Pyrenean nature. I examine *El Museo del Bucardo*’s role in generating meaning in an epoch characterised by mass extinction and the Promethean promises of biotechnological fixes.

Bio: Adam Searle is a cultural and environmental geographer at the University of Cambridge, where he has recently completed his PhD. His research broadly studies the relationships between humans, nonhumans, and technologies. His doctoral project explored the case of the bucardo, the only extinct animal to have ever been cloned, and examines the liminal and emergent space between the existential poles of extinct and extant. Recently he has convened Digital Ecologies, a two-day, interdisciplinary, and free workshop addressing the sociocultural, political, and ecological implications of digitising wildlife.

**Jennifer E. Telesca** (Pratt Institute) ‘Tuna En Masse: Necrograms and Representations of the Living Dead’

Abstract: The slaughter continues, despite public awareness about overfishing. What conditions have enabled this to become normalized, quotidian, and routine? This paper considers popular representations of tunas across various cultural registers: for sport, recreation, and entertainment; as both an elite (sushi) and a low- or middle- income (canned) foodstuff; and as material through which human preoccupations with whiteness, status, masculinity, sexuality, nationalism, and imperial ambitions play themselves out. Across narratives about bluefin, yellowfin, and albacore tunas, at least in the United States, a widespread pattern has emerged: the inability to recognize, relate to, and empathize with these animals as moral agents worthy of care. Instead, tunas in the main appear en masse, as objects grouped by population, depersonalized, as if passively awaiting human consumption, mastery, and control. By contrast, other sea creatures, such as mammalian whales and cephalopodic octopuses, appear not only in the world but as beings who are aware of it. Terra-centric, human-centric, resource-centric narratives mark tunas for erasure and early death. Thinking with Achille Mbembe, Ailton Krenak and others, I propose the term “necrograms" to better understand why people enmeshed in the dominant culture consent to managed extinction.

Bio: Jennifer E. Telesca, PhD is Assistant Professor of Environmental Justice in the Department of Social Science and Cultural Studies at the Pratt Institute. She is the author of *Red Gold: The Managed Extinction of the Giant Bluefin Tuna* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), which goes behind the scenes of ocean governance to illuminate the conditions enabling the slaughter of one of the planet’s last big fish. Her op-eds have appeared in *Hakai Magazine* and *Yale e360.org*, and her work featured in *Earth Island Journal,* [*Mongabay*](https://news.mongabay.com/2021/04/podcast-the-tales-of-two-tuna-and-the-consequences-of-overfishing/), and *Psychology Today.* Cross-trained in anthropology, law and media studies, Telesca does fieldwork at the United Nations and in treaty bodies, diplomatic missions, and other sites scaled supranationally.

**Monica Vasile** (Maastricht University) ‘History of a Clone: Losing and Reviving the Przewalski’s Horse in the 20th Century’

Abstract: Kurt, a Przewalski's horse clone, was born in 2020 at San Diego Frozen Zoo. This was not a scientific experiment, but a conservation effort. Kurt carries 'rare genes' that can help his endangered species. Currently counting two thousand individuals, the species descends from only twelve horses caught by animal traders in the early 20th century and captive-bred in zoos. Kurt’s story unravels a century-long journey of 'saving' the Przewalski’s horse. Drawing on archives, published scientific material and oral history interviews, in this talk I trace the historical genealogies of Kuporovic's biography, i.e. Kurt's clone-father, born in 1975. As he descended from a hybrid, zoo-breeders concerned with species purity discarded him as 'surplus', for the most part of his life. In the 1980s, a switch occurred - Kuporovic transformed from 'surplus' into 'genetically valuable', when advances in genetic research discovered his previously concealed rare genes, and altogether altered understandings of animal bodies. It was too late for him to breed, but timely for cryopreserving his cells. I discuss the contingencies that shaped Kuporovic’s life, his afterlife, and his genes. I trace a part of his ancestry, which opens a window into the broader history of the species. These explorations shed light on broader issues of de-extinction, evoking riveting questions of hybridity, purity, species, genetic diversity, inbreeding and captivity - notions and conditions that have shaped animal life across the twentieth century.

Bio: Monica Vasile is a PhD student in environmental history at Maastricht University. She is part of the research group 'Moving Animals: A History of Science, Media and Policy in the 20th century', since March 2020. Her thesis is on the history of reintroductions of endangered species, and she currently examines the case of the Przewalski's horse. Her approach integrates animals' biographies with a history of science and conservation. Previously, Monica worked on human-forest relations in the Carpathian Mountains of Romania. She was awarded a PhD in sociology from University of Bucharest in 2008, was a fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Munich, and a researcher at the Max Planck Institute of Social Anthropology in Halle.

**5-min Lightning Talks**

**Angela Bartram** (University of Derby) ‘Reflections in Anticipation of Loss’

Abstract: There is a shadow that quietly, but progressively creeps upon us with advancing age, a sense of being unheard and increasingly cloaked with invisibility. Solitude and loneliness, which is so often a consequence for the elderly, has a deteriorating effect on health, which often goes unrepresented, unacknowledged, and not discussed. A domestic companion offers appeasement, and a dog gains significance where there is no other human present. The lightning talk focuses on the reflective and poignant stories of the anticipated loss of a pet dog told by participants in my artistic research project, *Dogs and the Elderly.*The project, made with participants from the Alzheimer’s Society’s ‘Memory Cafes’ in Nottingham and Lincolnshire, connects with those held in a companionable embrace with dogs. It offers personal and pertinent stories of the significance of end of live interspecies relationships to be told; it provides the opportunity for others to listen and hear those intimacies and understand the positive value such inter-species relationships bring. The talk addresses and discuss the importance of domestic end of life human-dog relationships, and the anticipation and fear of loss to come. A video, containing the words spoken by participants, will play throughout to illustrate their sentiments.

Bio: Angela Bartram is an artist and artistic researcher working with objects, sound, video, print, performance event and published text, concerning thresholds of the human body, gallery or museum, definitions of the human and animal as companion species and strategies for documenting the ephemeral. Bartram is Professor of Contemporary Art and Head of the Digital and Material Artistic Research Centre at the University of Derby. She is Executive Board member for the Society for Artistic Research, CHEAD Research Alliance Strategy Group member, peer reviewer for Project Anywhere global exhibition programme (University of Melbourne) Emotion, Space and Society journal, the Journal for Artistic Research (JAR), and the Austrian Science Fund, and consultant for The Danish National School of Performing Arts journal and Kingdom University (Bahrain). Additionally, she is a Chair of the steering group for Contemporary Visual Arts Network East Midlands. She has a PhD from Middlesex University.

**Laura D. Gelfand** (Utah State University) Lost in Plain Sight: Whistler’s *White Girl*, a wolf in sheep’s clothing

Abstract: As one of the most talked about paintings in the 1863 Salon des Refusés, nearly every aspect of Whistler’s *Symphony in White, No. 1* (National Gallery, Washington DC) was parodied and praised, yet, until now, the identification and meaning of the animal in the painting was lost. Nestled within a thick white pelt, the head of an animal meets the viewer’s gaze with fangs bared and a menacing stare. Given the overall simplicity of the composition, it’s hard to miss this startling presence, yet few critics have ever mentioned it. At present, most leading Whistler scholars believe that this is a polar bear, but in my lightning talk I reveal that in fact Whistler painted a wolf’s head on a sheepskin to produce a wolf in sheep’s clothing. This clever insertion reflects and amplifies the woman depicted in the painting, the flamboyant artist who painted her, and the painting itself. My talk will also explore how and why critics and scholars lost sight of an animal that is so insistently visible.

Bio: Laura D. Gelfandis a Professor of Art History at Utah State University.She edited the volume, *Our Dogs, Our Selves: Dogs in Medieval and Early Modern Art, Literature and Society* (Leiden, Brill, 2016), and authored the forthcoming essay, “The Wolf at the Door and the Dog at our Feet,” *Home Cultures: Special Issue on Animals and Home*, Jane Hamlett and Julie-Marie Strange (eds), (forthcoming 2021). She is currently completing a monograph that explores how wolves have been represented in Medieval and Early Modern England, and in 2018-19, Gelfand was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of York in the Department of the History of Art.

**Joe Hardwick** (University of Northumbria) ‘Cattle Plagues, Sermon Literature, and the Problem of Animals in Victorian Christian Thought’

Abstract: In June 1865 the British Isles suffered a recurrence of the rinderpest cattle disease. By the time the epizootic receded in 1866, an estimated half-a-million animals had perished. A fearful religious public worried about what the great loss of animal life meant, and how best to respond. The government ordered a special petitionary prayer and congregations in the Church of England observed ‘days of humiliation’ in February and March 1866. In organising these ritual responses, the authorities were primarily concerned with the social and economic impacts on the human population. The special prayer, for instance, asked God to show compassion to human sufferers. Diseased and dying cattle were, it seems, of secondary importance. Yet a close reading of what clergymen said in their humiliation day sermons reveals that animals did force their way into Christian ritual and prayer. Preachers asked whether it was appropriate to pray for animals, whether the visitation was a divine judgment on corrupted human-animal relationships, and whether British meat diets had to be rethought. This lightning talk will introduce some of the hidden aspects of this sermon literature, and, in so doing, will gesture to a larger research project that considers how animal agency, death and abuse, disrupted some of the anthropocentric assumptions of British Christians in the modern age.

Bio: Joe Hardwick is senior lecturer in British History at the University of Northumbria. He specialises in the political, religious and environmental histories of Britain and British settler societies in the long nineteenth century. In addition to several articles and chapters, he has written two books. The first, *An Anglican British World* (Manchester, 2014) considered the overseas development of the Church of England and how this 'national church' preserved its authority and dealt with mass migration. The second, *Prayer, Providence and Empire* (Manchester, 2021) explores the empire’s culture of ‘special worship’ and ‘national prayer’: those moments when colonial populations of many faiths and ethnicities came together to pray for common causes and objects in times of crisis and celebration. Joe has also written on the history of religious responses to extreme weather and climate change, and his new project, ‘Anglican animals’, asks why non-human animals have been such a problem for Anglicans, and why the institutional Church took so long to engage with anti-cruelty campaigns, foxhunting debates, and a theology that emphasises the rights of animals. For more details on his research and publications, see <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-staff/h/joseph-hardwick/>.

**Caroline Harris** (Royal Holloway, University of London) ‘*Cut-out Bambi*: A Presentation of Poetic Practice on the Cuteness and Erasure of Deer’

Abstract: How does the ‘cuteness’ of deer reconcile with their killability? Burgeoning deer populations have been cited as an issue for biodiversity loss and human health (e.g. Lyme disease) and implicated in the damages of settler colonialism; culls are a norm. At the same time, cute images and narratives of deer proliferate (e.g. Netflix production *Sweet Tooth*). My creative and critical research focuses on the poetics of deer – what we do when we put deer in poems – in particular in relation to the growing field of Cute Studies. Ngai’s theorisation of the cute as an aesthetic category opens ways to analyse the power relationships involved in cuteness, and how ‘cute objects’ can be flipped from unthreatening cute to killable pest: from ‘Bambi’ to ‘thug’ (*Daily Mail*). My poetic bookwork *Cut-out Bambi*, which I will present and contextualise, engages in innovative, material ways with Ngai’s theory, bringing together two manifestations of the cute – YouTube videos of deer in human habitats and Disney’s 1942 animated film *Bambi* – to provoke a questioning of attitudes. Through physical cutting-out of the printed deer, it explores the collision between cute images in mass media and the erasure of deer by humans.

Bio: Caroline Harris is a poet, publisher and editor, and a PhD student in Poetic Practice at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her PhD research focuses on the poetics of deer in relation to Cute Studies, ecological philosophy, and material poetries. Caroline is co-organiser of AWW-STRUCK: Creative and Critical Approaches to Cuteness, a virtual seminar, online exhibition and print publication (May 2021). She is also a Research Centre Associate in the Centre for Visual Cultures at Royal Holloway. Publications include the poetry bookworks *SCRUB Management Handbook No.1 Mere* (Singing Apple Press, 2018), *Type Flight* and *Cut-out Bambi* (Small Birds Press, 2020) and work in *Rewilding: An Ecopoetic Anthology* (Crested Tit Collective, 2020) alongside online and print magazines. Academic writing includes the article ‘Movable Type: Birds, Thoughts, Print’ (*The Blue Notebook: Journal for Artist’s Books*, 2020) and a chapter in *Contemporary Publishing and Book Culture* (Routledge, 2020).

**Kris Hill** (University of Exeter) ‘Furever Tattoos and Maintaining an Absent Presence’

Abstract: On the eve of March 19th 2020, I said my final goodbyes to my beloved cat Sophie (2005-2020). She laid her head down on my right forearm and closed her eyes forever. Her image is now immortalised on my arm. When I stroke the soft hair that has grown over her portrait, I feel like a part of her is always with me. The experience of losing Sophie and then having her image immortalised as a tattoo is a personal journey, but one that is intrinsically linked to a study I had just completed on tattoos dedicated to companion animals (Hill 2020, Anthrozoös). My previous study focused on multispecies families and non-human kinship through the lens of tattoo narratives, but also explored the role of memorial tattoos in griefwork and the theory of ‘continuing bonds.’ Using my personal experience and narrative, I build upon the theory that tattoos, through embodied storytelling, can help the bereaved maintain an absent presence with the deceased.

Bio: Kris Hill is a PhD researcher with the University of Exeter’s anthrozoology program and a member of the Exeter Anthrozoology as Symbiotic Ethics (EASE) working group. Her research focuses on human-cat relations within urban communities, and social discourses surrounding free-roaming and free-living cats. She is working on her PhD part-time while building the foundations of a new career – either as an academic, an educator, or a researcher within a non-profit organization, dedicated to improving the lives of both human and non-human animals. She has published two peer-reviewed papers based on research she conducted for her MA dissertation into animal-themed tattoo narratives (Hill, 2020, 2021; Anthrozoös).

**Alison Laurence** (Stanford University) ‘Loving the Lost: On Dinosaurs and Anthropocene Extinctions’

Abstract: Absence makes the heart grow fonder. The adage proves itself with respect to dinosaurs, utterly absent beings that went extinct long before we humans evolved. And yet dinosaurs are a ubiquitous and much-loved feature of modern American life. They are fixtures of children’s media, the celebrities that draw visitors to natural history museums, and sensational spokes-creatures that make any product more appealing. This lightning talk traces in brief how dinosaurs came to be icons of and advocates for consumer desire in the United States, showing how twentieth-century display practices transformed them from scientific specimens to mass-produced material culture. I call attention to the prevalence of dinosaurs within the children’s media landscape. I also highlight the promotional exhibitions of Sinclair Oil Company, which has used dinosaurs to advertise petroleum products since 1930. Generations of Americans, including (and especially) impressionable children, have thus been trained to love oil and consumer culture through their love of dinosaurs. Long-extinct animals are implicated by nature of their charisma in anthropogenic climate change and its attendant catastrophes. I posit further that universal popular affection for dinosaurs has detrimental implications for endangered creatures at present, for love of dinosaurs lends a perversely positive connotation to extinction events.

Bio: Alison Laurence is a cultural and environmental historian of the modern United States. She is a lecturer and postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University. Her dissertation-to-book manuscript, *Of Dinosaurs and Culture Wars: Extinction, Extraction, and Modern American Monsters*, traces how popular displays transformed dinosaurs and other creatures of deep time from scientific specimens to consumer objects and artifacts of everyday American life.

**Rosamund Portus** (University of the West of England, Bristol) ‘An Ecological Whodunit: Examining Loss and Grievability in an Age of Extinction’

Abstract: In a time when immeasurable numbers of Earth’s living species are having their timelines cut short, the bee decline stands out as a crisis which people have willingly and actively engaged with. This lightning talk will therefore examine the cultural frameworks by which bees have become broadly seen as a grievable species. To do so, this talk will travel back to the root of public discourse around the ongoing loss of bees, tracing the story of the honeybee syndrome known as colony collapse disorder which caused honeybees to begin disappearing from their hives in the mid-2000s. The cause of this disappearance proved a mystery for some years, a fact which paved the way for the loss of honeybees to become framed as an ecological whodunit in the public imagination: a framing which not only encouraged the pre-emptive mourning of honeybees’ extinction, but extensive advocacy on the behalf of bee species in the years which followed. In telling this story, I will emphasise that how we respond to nonhuman species extinction is rooted as much in human histories, cultures, and values, as it is scientific fact.

Bio: Rosamund Portus is a research fellow at UWE Bristol working on an international project examining young people’s experiences of the climate emergency. Rosamund recently completed a PhD examining the bee decline as part of the interdisciplinary Imagining and Representing Species Extinction Network. Her thesis specifically focused on how the ongoing loss of bee populations has been narrated, experienced, and challenged through the creative arts sector. This lightning talk is inspired by Rosamund’s most recent publication in *Society & Animals*, which examines the phenomenon of colony collapse disorder. In her spare time Rosamund volunteers as a project reviewer for the RSPB and works as an artist and illustrator.

**Eva Spiegelhofer** (University of Vienna) ‘Rewilding Tales – Narratives of Hope and Loss’

Abstract: In an age of climate uncertainty and dramatic biodiversity decline, rewilding has become a buzzword for positive change. It carries notions of nature restored to a past state of pristine wilderness and of thriving ecosystems undisturbed by human activities. Rewilding projects all around the globe promise hope in the face of planetary crisis, yet the narratives they offer are not only hopeful but also full of loss. Lost habitats, species extinction and irreversible ecological damage. Taking the documentary film *Mammoth* (Grant Slater, 2016) as my starting point for reflection, I will consider the Pleistocene Park project in Siberia as an example for the potential and the challenges of rewilding, and the narratives woven around them. In doing so, I aim to show how rewilding narratives both underpin and undermine current Anthropocene discourses of the human species as ecological force. Yet, while exposing these narratives’ inherent anthropocentrism, a closer look also reveals that they point beyond the human, acknowledging the key roles other species play in shaping and maintaining ecosystems. It is this tension between the so-called ‘wild’ and human interference, between hope and loss evoked by rewilding tales about saving the planet that this lightning talk will explore.

Bio: Eva Spiegelhofer holds a Joint Masters degree in Cultural Studies after completing an Erasmus Mundus Master programme at universities in Germany (Universität Tübingen), the UK (University of Sheffield) and Poland (Adam Mickiewicz University). For her dissertation project, she specialised in animal languages and interspecies communication, investigating the potential of dialogue between humans and other animals from a socio-cultural perspective. Eva currently works for the Vienna Anthropocene Network at the University of Vienna, Austria.