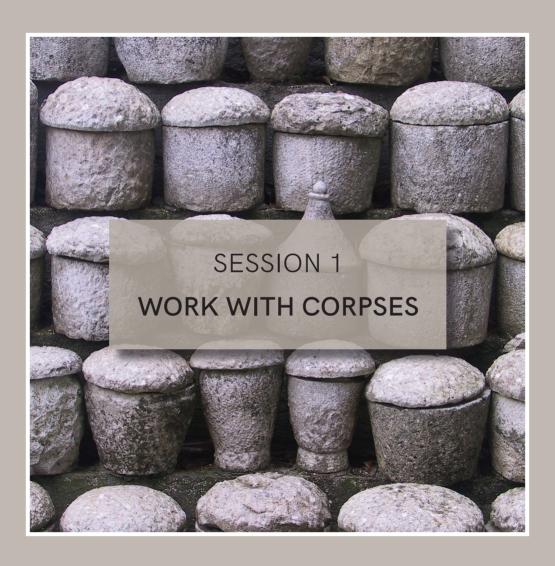
# INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO CORPSE WORK

ABSTRACT BOOKLET

09:00 Registration opens 09:30 Welcome 09:45 Session 1: Work with corpses Nathan Lents (The City University of New York), Cat Irving (Surgeons' Hall Museum), Jon Shute (The University of Manchester), Katherine Crouch (Independent Researcher) 11:15 Break 11:45 **Session 2: Endings** Jennifer Wallis (Imperial College, London), Daniel Robins (University of York), Kirstin Gupta (Rice University), Maggie Jackson (Teeside University) Lunch 13:15 14:00 Session 3: Insighting a thanatological imagination Sandy Weatherburn (University of Winchester), Kyveli Lignou-Tsamartani (University of York), Nicky Gardiner (University of Huddersfield), Catherine Edwards (University of York), Kelly Richard D'Arcy-Reed (University of York), Katie Taylor (Oxford Brookes University) Break 15:30 16:00 **Session 4: Reanimations** Matthew Hart (University of Leicester), Agi Haines and Bea Haines (Independent Artists), David Kerekes (Headpress Books), Polina Ignatova

17:30 Close

(Lancaster University)



### Machine Learning Meets the Postmortem Microbiome

Dr Nathan H Lents The City University of New York

The community of microscopic life that lives in, on, and around our bodies. officially known as human microbiome, has become the subject of intense scrutiny in biomedical science. The microbiome also holds great promise for forensic science, particularly in death investigations. Several studies have now documented a series of changes that occur in the microbiome following the death of the human host. The postmortem microbiome, sometimes called necrobiome, exhibits a succession of ecological changes that both reflect and impact chemical and biological changes related to the decomposition of the cadaver. This research is enhancing the view that a decomposing body is a rich, dynamic, and biodiverse ecosystem.

This postmortem ecosystem is now being aggressively characterized by forensic scientists using increasingly sophisticated

sequencing technologies and machinelearning algorithms. But the question remains: Can the necrobiome tell us how long a body has been deceased? In this presentation, I will present the results of our ongoing research into the skin microbiome of decomposing human cadavers.

We have now published the first phase of our study, demonstrating that machine learning techniques can be used to predict the postmortem interval (time since death) with impressive accuracy.1 addition to demonstrating that this approach is likely to be useful, our research reveals clear avenues for subsequent work to further refine the predictive algorithms. We are now closing in on the factors that will enable this technique to reach the reliability threshold necessary for forensic utility. In this presentation, I will summarize our past, current, and future research and describe both the microbial context and the machine learning results in a way that is broadly understandable to an audience of specialists and non-specialists from diverse academic backgrounds.

# Skeletons in the Closet: The value of human remains in a museum

Cat Irving Surgeons' Hall Museums

Human remains in museum collections can provide valuable information to researchers, allowing study of subjects such as disease, diet, forensics and genetics amongst many other things. The display of human remains in a museum environment requires sensitivity, with some people questioning its appropriateness. Yet there is a continuing popularity of collections holding human remains, as can be seen from 47 million visitors to Gunter Von Hagen's Body Worlds exhibitions worldwide, increasing visitor numbers to Surgeons' Hall Museums. To the viewer, not only does this provide an educational function but can also represent a chance to experience something that can be disturbing, both in its intimacy to our very being and its alien-ness, in that it is something we rarely encounter. In a modern society where death increasingly becomes compartmentalised away from our everyday existence, encounters with human remains in a museum setting can allow us to confront our own mortality and that of those around us. This can be shocking, and sometimes difficult, but it seems to answer a very human need. The considered and respectful display of human remains in a museum can help us appreciate the strength and weakness of our own bodies and create conversations about what it means to be human in a way that displays of material culture cannot.

### Corpse Work in the Context of Mass Violence

Dr Jon Shute The University of Manchester

One of the chief products of atrocity crime is dead bodies, however, criminology - the study of crime - has, until recently, studied neither. This paper explores something of what can be gained from doing so; and samples a number of key messages from a four-year multi-site study of how post-conflict societies address a history of mass violence through the dead. The 'journey' of the corpse from destruction, through to recovery, identification and commemoration is described in relation to a wide variety of 'corpsework' and 'corpseworkers'. Perpetrators become the latter when they attempt to dispose of and conceal bodies and often do so in ways that are expressive of source motivations, organisational routines and professional contexts. 'Peacetime' corpseworkers are sometimes co-opted. The detailed investigation of mass grave sites has created entirely novel disciplines and forms of corpsework - forensic

archaeology and anthropology - that have, in turn, catalysed scientific, legal, religious and ritual innovation at the heart of transitional justice efforts. Finally, material human remains are often central to the commemoration of conflict. It is argued that the corpse, amongst other things, is a vehicle of acknowledgement and for the re-ascription of value to radically devalued lives.

#### Museums and Mortality: displaying the archaeology of death

Dr Katherine Crouch Independent Researcher

This paper explores the presentation of the archaeology of death in UK museums; more specifically, it examines the role human remains play in our own mortuary culture and asks: what does archaeological "corpse work" achieve for museum visitors? Beginning with an overview of the ways in which human remains are demarcated as "special" and distinct from other archaeological artefacts within museum settings (so as to promote a "respectful" and perhaps even spiritualised encounter), this paper will critique—through analysis of the presentation of infant and childhood mortality, cremated and fragmented remains, the deaths of "Others" and the use of replicas, casts and digital reconstructions-how our methods of displaying past deaths simultaneously reflect and reify our own attitudes towards mortality in the present.

This paper ultimately argues that in addition to educating people about the past and playing an important part in our evolving relationship with our sense of cultural identity and memory, the "corpse work" performed by archaeology and museum professionals also creates a mediated space for reflection upon what it means to live and die. In a culture in which we arguably lack experiential proximity to death and the visibility of the dead is strictly controlled by an array of professionals—archaeologists included museum displays pertaining to death may serve to inform and enrich our understanding of mortality and, perhaps, even encourage change in our dealings with this fundamental and inescapable part of the human experience, on both a personal and societal level.



#### The Infant Corpse as Experimental and Emotional Body in the Nineteenth Century

Dr Jennifer Wallis Imperial College, London

From the mid nineteenth century stillbirth received an increasing amount of attention from the British medical and scientific community. The collection of national birth and death statistics and, later in the century, the rise of obstetrics and professionalization of midwifery provided significant impetus for experimental research into the recovery of stillborn children.

This paper will focus upon obstetrician Francis Henry Champneys' resuscitation experiments of 1878-80, which used the corpses of stillborn children to determine the most effective methods of resuscitation for infants who failed to show signs of life. By assessing each method in terms of its suitability when applied to the infant's body, as well as the potential for bodily harm, these experiments were

part of a re-orientation of view that saw infant death as an avoidable, rather than inevitable, event. Champneys' account of this 'corpse work' – chronicled in his *Experimental researches in artificial respiration in stillborn children* (1887) – is explicit in the value it places upon infant bodies as objects of scientific research, striking in its use of language that reduces these bodies to experimental material.

While seeking to decrease instances of a traumatic event, Champneys' account of his work glossed over the trauma of the corpse work in which he himself was engaged. The body of the stillborn infant was transformed into a kind of technological object: a body that 'breathed' as air was introduced into the lungs and which served as a model for the recovery of stillborn children despite its own hopeless condition. In this paper I will explore how Champneys' research contributes to broader histories of stillbirth and infant death, but also how his experiments conceived of the infant corpse as both an experimental and emotional body.

#### The Discarding of Dead 'Waste'

Daniel Robins University of York

Discussions over environmental futures of the death profession have shown that there is value in exploring waste analogies of the corpse.<sup>2</sup> However, waste can hold many different meanings. Whilst it can be understood as something abject and damaging, which must be controlled and policed; developments in both death disposal and waste literature have suggested it also has a powerful potential as a resource.<sup>3</sup>

In the back rooms of the crematorium, the waste materials from the dead body, such as the medical implant, can be potentially damaging to crematorium technology and urns for ashes. Yet, they can also simultaneously hold potential as resource through reuse in automobiles. With this in mind, this talk draws on ethnographies and interviews with UK funeral directors and crematorium staff to explore how death professionals make sense of and navigate these varying approaches to bodily waste in the crematorium.

This exploration of how these multiple approaches to waste interact during the process of cremation will then be drawn upon to take a more nuanced view of the act of 'discarding' of the dead.

By taking this view of discarding, further recommendations can be made towards best practice for crematoria, as well as education for its staff over the handling of bodily waste. There is also an intention to drive forward discussions on the environmental futures of the death profession, particularly in public discourse. This is because the inner workings of the crematorium are drawn into public thought and discussion, allowing for people to ask questions and consider how they want their body to be managed after death.

## The Messy Ontologies of Dying at the End of the World

Kirstin Gupta, Rice University

As the sixth great extinction event has begun to be imagined and experienced, funeralshaveincreasinglybecomepolitical and ethical activities in which people confront their entanglement in volatile ecologies to challenge Western norms of death. This phenomenon is particularly acute in the United States, where corpses often undergo extensive manipulation to shield the body from decomposition and contamination. A proliferation of "green" internment methods such as recomposition have arisen in response to the environmental damage caused by these practices, embracing the messy materiality of decay and enmeshing funeral practices in larger questions of ecologically responsible citizenship and collaborative survival with nonhuman life.4 These emerging funeral rituals have become sites for theory, activism, and art practice; articulating shared visions of alternative funeral professionals and

activists who see decomposition as a process of multispecies renewal and profound opportunity to confront the reality of mortality. Responding to Donna Haraway's call for embracing situated technical projects in order to engender "oddkin",5 this paper considers green burial practices as fashionings of the body that gesture towards the importance of sensorial and corporeal perceptions of pollution and planetary limits. How might anthropologists engage with forms of expression that do not abstract away from the body, but center on messy and often disconcerting experiences of the flesh? How can this help us imagine new genres of dying in the epoch of the Anthropocene, reshaping ontological claims about life and death in the process?

#### Death in the 'Undead Pets' Series: Smelly, full of gore and the odd lesson in loss and death

Dr Maggie Jackson Teeside University

Although the subject of death is not one that is absent from books for young children it is often presented in terms of loss and remembering rather than looking at the 'messier' aspects of death. These aspects were not shied away from in the early Victorian period but had largely disappeared from 20th and 21st century children's literature.

The Undead Pets series offers a classic hero story where the young protagonist of the story desperately wants to own a pet but is not allowed.<sup>6</sup> He is given an ancient amulet by his uncle and this leads to him to become the protector of the undead pets. These books offer a way of talking about death with young children (aimed at 6-8 year olds) –they can be dismissed (or enjoyed) as 'just adventure stories' but they also offer a space within which to

talk about death to children.

The stories have a domestic setting with Joe living in a nuclear family able to go on small adventures. The stories are humorous at times but also brutally frank—in the 'Phantom Furball' the cat dies as a result of being chased into the road and hit by a car—and we are shown an image of the result.

The pets arrive in states of decay, smelly and rotting and it is our hero's (Joe) task to resolve their deaths so they can fully die.

What is interesting in the stories is that amongst the gore and the smells they also offer some comments on the nature of death and the distress of loss.



#### Tsunami Memorials

Sandy Weatherburn University of Winchester

Decomposition of corpses was problematic in both a hygienic and spiritual sense for the relatives of seventyfour children who went missing from Okawa Primary school in Japan on 11th March 2011. An underwater earthquake occurred on the east coast of Japan triggering a tsunami that killed more than fifteen thousand people. The natural disaster was so destructive that eight thousand people were never accounted for and their bodies were never recovered from the devastation. By examining two communities affected by the natural disaster, I am able to explore the positive effects of visual memorialisation, following a catastrophe, to establish that shrines and acts of remembrance are an aid to social recovery. Richard Lloyd Parry an English journalist who was living in Japan at the time of the disaster, wrote the book Ghosts of the Tsunami, which prompted this research. His intimate interviews with the multi-faith community tell how grief unites people as they try to support each other, but also gives harrowing details of the families' efforts to find the bodies of their children, who were buried in thick mud, after the wave receded. By applying Victor Turner's theory of "liminality", I show how the children were held in an undetermined state, as cultural death rituals could not be performed. This highlights the importance of ritual practice and illustrates that death is a both a physical and social event. I consider the impact of "dark tourists" in the regeneration of the area discussed and explain how visual memorials, at the site of death, evolve into educational safety symbols, with cautionary messages for future generations regarding the power and destructive force of nature.

## Pixelating the Corpse: Thomas Hirschhorn's Self-Pixel (2016)

Kyveli Lignou-Tsamantani University of York

In 2016, the contemporary artist Thomas Hirschhorn created the digital piece Self-Pixel a web commission for Remai Modern The visitors of the museum's website have the opportunity to interact with Hirschhorn's digitised collage. They can click on each of the three different parts of the collage: the background of the photograph, the body of a female fashion model and the body of a dead man. The viewer, in this case, can choose how each part will be presented - whitened, pixelated or natural. In this paper, I will examine the limitations of the artist's suggestion that 'de-pixelation' is a needed process for people to start seeing with their own eyes, and hence is a demand of the contemporary visual era (artist's statement, summer 2016). For whose sake does pixelation take place in visual representations of atrocious deaths? This question will be approached by examining how the pixelation of the corpse in

Hirschhorn's work might function as an ethical performative gesture that will allow the viewer to recognize the 'face' of the Other in Levinasian terms.

#### Being Dead: decomposition, new materialism and the forensic poetry of Jim Crace

Nicky Gardiner University of Huddersfield

Few subjects of literary representation are as strange, or indeed, as contested, as the human corpse. From the saccharine sentimentality of Dicken's Little Nell (*The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1841) to the graphic sensationalism of Poe's M. Valdemar ('*The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*', 1845), the literary corpse appears in a variety of guises and forms. But how might the particularity of the corpse's literary depiction influence our perception of death, the body and materiality itself?

Drawing on the work of Jane Bennet's Vibrant Matter (2009) and Stacey Alaimo's Bodily Natures (2010), this paper adopts a new materialist framework to consider how textual depictions of the corpse operate as sites of narrative investigation that examine human relations with the material world in and of which they are comprised. In doing so, it challenges

standard literary practices of reading the corpse as a symbol of finitude and decline, instead approaching the dead body as a site of nonhuman, material vitality.

This new paradigm for interpreting the literary corpse will be demonstrated through an analysis of Jim Crace's award winning 1999 novel *Being Dead*, showing how Crace's depiction of the corpse entails a 'forensic poetry' that aims to re-enchant the material world whilst respecting the nonhuman 'otherness' of the corpse. In doing so, it argues that the corpse operates as a strategic figure for conceptualising the usefulness, but also the limitations, of literature as a vessel for new materialist inquiry

# Call for the Dead: Collecting dispatches from the dispatched in Smiley's People

Catherine Edwards University of York

Two dead bodies in John le Carré's 1979 novel Smiley's People provide a physical reminder of the mortal dangers of international espionage. Punctuating the cerebral and painstaking investigation conducted by the novel's protagonist George Smiley, the two corpses - the first defaced and disfigured, the second tortured and twisted - embody the trauma and violence underlying the workings of the secret state. This paper will argue that the material function of the corpse (which exemplifies the generic link between detective fiction and the spy thriller) is augmented by the novel's symbolic evocation of angel mythology. The prolific textual references to angels in the novel ("Got an angel for you," "on the side of the angels," "Half-angels fighting half-devils") point towards an allegorical interpretation. I argue that the angel's tripartite role as messenger, protector,

and avenger provides a structural frame for Smiley's narrative journey. This paper will focus on the function of messenger, with Smiley mediating between a series of intercessors to gather the missives they convey. His attendance at the two bodies ("The General" and "The Magician" assumed names which express their archetypal roles) thus takes on a symbolic purpose. As Psychopomp, his task is to facilitate their journeys to the afterlife by collecting the messages they carry in fulfilment of their missions. In essence, he is their executor, an act of reverence and release that befits his codename: "The Vicar." These messages - material, hidden, and incomplete - form part of the investigative puzzle to be solved. The plodding and procedural thus conceals a narrative which exists on an almost mythical plane. The tangible reality of the corpse is juxtaposed with a spiritual symbolism that offers an innovative perspective on the novel, reflecting and amplifying its core themes of atonement, vengeance, and deliverance.

#### **The Anatomical Superwoman**

Kelly Richards D'Arcy-Reed University of York

While we may consider death to be something of a finality, in comic books, due to alternate timelines, universe reboots, and broken continuity, death is rarely permanent. Characters die often, sometimes multiple times, only to be reborn, resurrected or just reinserted into the continuity as though nothing happened.

The pervasiveness of death in contemporary comic books, particularly those of the superhero genre, mean that many if not all readers will at some point be faced with an image, if not images, of dying bodies and ultimately of death laid out in full colour and graphic detail.

While conversations have emerged regarding the emotional and narrative impact of a death known to be impermanent, little has been said about the visual impact of these occurrences; of what it means to be confronted with images of brutalised bodies, of what these

images say about us as a community of fans, creators, and human beings and our relationships with death and the dying body.

Through this paper I will give an overview of my current research project which seeks to examine visual representations of death as a gendered experience within contemporary comic books and the meanings these images hold for readers.

#### Fabric, Clothing and Mass Graves

Katie Taylor Oxford Brookes University

My research explores fabric clothing found in mass graves which evolved interdisciplinary has into sculptural installation artwork. Memory, individuality and identity is indelibly left behind within materials and belongings including our bones. In this paper I will discuss how my research develops into artwork exploring identity and individuality. I will show examples of my work to date as well as exploring the themes that I propose to continue to research within a PhD next year.

Textiles and clothing are often part of the primary tools used to identify human remains after atrocity. In Rwanda people had made their own clothing making it very personal and individual. In Bosnia, particularly Srebrenica, people had not been able to leave the enclave, and resorted to making and repairing their clothing. In Iraq, many people began to sew their identity documents into secret

pockets within their clothing. These identity documents were later vital for the identification of the dead. The fabric used as blindfolds and ligatures, in Bosnia Herzegovina were consistent across many mass grave sites this evidence was part of the proof that events at Srebrenica amounted to genocide.

Fabric is an important part of identifying these individuals and it is this research that has formed the basis of my artistic practice for the last 3 to 4 years. I have explored evidence of fabric found within Mass Graves predominantly within Bosnia but also other countries including Kosovo and Iraq. Borders too are an important element for my exploration, the borders between countries as a touchpoint for conflict, but clothing and skin, life and death, homeland and refugee are also borders. This work has evolved through my undergraduate degree in Textiles for which I was awarded first class honours. and into my current MFA (Master of Fine Art) at Oxford Brookes University



#### Stream of the Living Dead: The reanimation of Bob Ross on twitch.tv and the zombification of digitallymediated neo-tribes

Dr Matthew Hart University of Leicester

World-famous painter and television host Robert 'Bob' Ross died on July 4 1995 at the age of 52, after having hosted The Joy of Painting, an instructional painting programme for 31 seasons, between 1983 to the year before his death. Bob Ross' Joy of Painting would go on to become a cult phenomenon, syndicated nationally in the US and broadcast in various parts of the world for years to come. In late 2015, the videogame streaming platform Twitch.tv ran a week-long marathon of back-to-back The Joy of Painting episodes to celebrate the launch of its new Creative channel, dedicated to artistry of all sorts - from painters to sculptors to musicians. This was a bold new direction for Twitch. as it had historically dedicated itself to broadcasting videogame tournaments

and lets-plays of video games like Starcraft and Counter Strike. The marathon proved to be a cultural phenomenon, drawing an average real-time audience of 40-60,000 users at any given time. The corpse of Bob Ross had been reanimated, patient zero, infecting those watching with his enthusiasm and catchphrases, giving rise to a shared memetic paralanguage. At the conclusion of every episode, the corpse of Ross would say goodbye, reminding those in observance that the corpse must return to its grave - if only to be immediately reanimated again in the very next episode. So the process would repeat, until the conclusion of the marathon. upon which the horde dispersed back into the varied media wilderness of Twitch. as fluidly and ephemerally as it had assembled. In this paper, I will use online ethnographic observations and archival research conducted during and after The Joy of Painting marathon on Twitch.tv to argue that the sociological concept of the 'neo-tribe' can help to account for the zombification of visual social media.

#### The Material Body

Agi Haines and Bea Haines Independent Artists

Speculative designer Agi Haines, and visual artist Bea Haines make work that considers the fabric of the body as a material for art and design exploration. Their works use collaborative methodologies to create visual and interactive experiences that challenge perceptions of bodily materials and processes. Although working independently they will present how the cross overs in their work explore the transitional states of the corpse in relation to its environment.

Bea and Agi's work captures ethereal and imagined states of the body in the form of speculative histories and futures that are grounded by inter- and trans- disciplinary supervision from the sciences. In the case of Bea's work her research and residencies as an artist in collaboration with the forensic sciences images and makes concrete traces of the body that are representative of a narrative past. Agi's work on the other hand imagines probable, preferable and plausible

representations of the future body using insights from nascent biomedical and healthcare technological research.

Bea's recent work explores artistic uses for the body after death in the form of pigment and paint produced from human and animal cremains. Working alongside chemists at ColArt's Innovation and Development Lab, Bea developed paintings created with human ash. As the materials of the body become a more common addition to the art and design toolbox Agi will project what this might mean for the future corpse using her project "The Anatomy Lesson: Dissecting Medical Futures".

In reflection of their own practice-based case studies Agi and Bea will consider the provisionality of corpse work and the role of art and design in making the corpse tangible

# The Mail Order Gaze: A cultural history of the custom erotic death film

David Kerekes Headpress Books

With the emergence of video technology in the 1980s new filmmakers, as well as new channels of filmmaking and distribution, emerged. No longer constrained by the studio system, but in competition with it, this new technology gave rise to new forms of spectatorship. One lesser-known aspect of this spectatorship is the 'custom erotic death' film: mail order short films that sexualise death and the corpse, often by expanding upon the tropes of mainstream action movies.

Custom erotic death film closely mimics the motifs of the mythological 'snuff' film: the customer requests a scenario, a preferred mode of death (gunshot, strangulation, stabbing, etc.), and a choice of victim (plucked from a studio's own roster of performers). The production and representation of the corpse within these films is highly mediated and artificial at

the same time as it attempts to reflect a 'real' death and 'real' corpse.

This paper expands upon my previous research in *Killing for Culture* (1999, 2015) by exploring custom erotic death films in the context of the video technology that helped to spawn them, through to their current online existence. As such, it will argue that the custom-shoot, and the presentation of the corpse within it, inhabits a unique space on the cultural landscape, one created — but never actually occupied by — the so-called 'snuff' film.

#### Medieval Death in a Modern Setting: How horror films adapt legends about restless corpses

Polina Ignatova Lancaster University

knight called William Laudun complained to Bishop Gilbert Foliot, that a certain Welshman 'of evil life', who 'died unchristianly' kept haunting the village, calling the locals by their names. Those who were called fell ill and died within a few days. Gilbert's advice to pierce the cadaver's neck and to sprinkle the body and the grave with holy water did not work. Eventually, William cleaved the revenant's head with a sword, thus putting an end to his wanderings. This story, written in the twelfth century by a court cleric Walter Map, bears a number of features typical of today's horror films: death of the revenant is surrounded with negative circumstances, which causes him to turn into a 'zombie', the restless cadaver spreads infection, the efforts of the official authorities are futile, the

situation is saved by an ordinary hero, and the remedy is the destruction of the revenant's head.

The fact that the image of a restless corpse in Western culture has stayed almost unaltered suggests that while our rational understanding of the nature of death has changed over the centuries, the fears associated with a dead body have remained the same. Consequently, the image of a walking cadaver is still appealing for the modern audience of horror films. This paper will explore the continuity between medieval legends and today's horror films, demonstrating how the walking dead have evolved to answer the concerns of modern society while still preserving their medieval nature.

#### **Abstract notes:**

- 1. Johnson, H.R. *et al*, 'A Machine Learning Approach for Using the Postmortem Skin Microbiome to Estimate the Postmortem Interval', *PLOS ONE* (2016). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0167370
- 2. Olson, P.R., 'Knowing "Necro-Waste", *Social Epistemology* 30(3) (2016): pp. 326-345. Krupar, S.R., 'Green death: sustainability and the administration of the dead', *Cultural Geographies* 25(2) (2018): pp. 267-284.
- 3. Rumble, H., Troyer, J., Walter, T., Woodthorpe, K., 'Disposal or dispersal? Environmentalism and final treatment of the British dead', *Morality* 19(3) (2014): pp. 243-260. Reno, J., 'Waste and Waste Management', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44(1) (2015): pp. 557-572.
- 4. Tsing, A.L., *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press (2017).
- 5. Haraway, D.J., *Staying with the Trouble: Making kin in the Chthulucene*, North Carolina: Duke University Press (2016).
- 6. Campbell, J., *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, California: New World Library (1975).

#### Speaker biographies:

Dr Katherine Crouch completed her PhD on the emotive impact of "digging up" the dead on archaeology practitioners in 2018. Her further research interests include the ethical and legislative challenges of excavating, curating and displaying human remains, as well as their role in facilitating discussions pertaining to contemporary issues of mortality.

Catherine Edwards is a Doctoral Researcher in the Department of English and Related Literature at the University of York. Her research focuses on the intersections and tensions between writers and spies in Cold War fiction and film.

Cat Irving is Human Remains Conservator for Surgeons' Hall Museums in Edinburgh. She has worked in preserving human tissue for seventeen years, including the anatomical and pathological collections of Glasgow University's Hunterian Museum. She is a licensed anatomist and lectures regularly on pathology and the history of medicine.

Nicky Gardiner is an associate lecturer and PhD researcher in literature and critical theory at the University of Huddersfield. His research looks at depictions of the corpse and material philosophy in contemporary literature and he has lectured on this topic at a variety of universities and events across the UK.

Kristin Gupta is a second-year PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at Rice University, where she studies new burial technologies and death positive activism in the United States.

Bea and Agi Haines attended the Royal College of Art, studying Fine Art Printmaking and Design Interactions, they lecture, research and exhibit internationally. A member of the Royal Society of Sculptors Bea recently completed the prestigious Royal Academy Fellowship. Agi teaches MA Material Futures whilst undertaking her Transtechnology Research PhD.

Dr Matthew Hart is a lecturer in Digital Society at the University of Leicester's school of media, communication and sociology. His research examines digital cultures and young people's online media practices, and has been published in the Journal of Youth Studies, Young, and Continuum.

Polina Ignatova has degrees in Diplomacy from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and in Medieval History from King's College London. She is currently completing her PhD at Lancaster University on the history of walking dead accounts. She is particularly interested in transmission of ideas between different cultures.

Dr Maggie Jackson began work in an educational psychology service where her interest in working with bereaved children lead to the publication of The Teacher's Handbook of Death. Following her doctorate in death in children's literature she has more recently begun to focus on death in picture books for young children.

David Kerekes is co-author (with David Slater) of Killing for Culture (1993, expanded and revised 2015), which was the inspiration for the recent 2019 Offscreen film festival in Brussels. He lives in Oxford, founded and runs Headpress books, and is currently undertaking an MA.

Dr Nathan H. Lents is Professor of Molecular Biology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a visiting faculty member in forensic science at the University of Lincoln in the UK. His laboratory has published forensic research in the area of toxicology, microbiology, and botany.

Katie Taylor is an Oxford based artist who works in a variety of media to create sculptural installations that explore the interface between materiality and memory. Exploring ideas of how we are remembered beyond death by means of our possessions as well as the conceptual and emotional content of objects.

Kyveli Lignou-Tsamantani is a PhD candidate in the History of Art Department, University of York (AHRC and A.G.Leventis Foundation funded). She holds an MA in History of Art, University of York, and a BA in Theory and History of Art, Athens School of Fine Arts.

Kelly Richards D'Arcy-Reed is a current PhD student at the University of York. Her thesis focuses on the gendered representation of death within contemporary comic books. Kelly's research interests include comic studies, thanatology, visual methods, and popular culture.

Daniel Robins is a doctoral researcher in Sociology at the University of York. His research project looks at the notions of value attached to the waste materials of the dead body as they pass through the death care process. It has a particular interest in bodies that have undergone medical interventions before death.

@Daniel PGRobins

Dr Jonathan Shute is a Lecturer at the Centre for Social Ethics and Policy, School of Law at The University of Manchester. His research interests lay in human development, family stress and the criminology of mass violence.

Dr Jennifer Wallis is a historian of medicine at Imperial College London. Her work includes Investigating the Body in the Victorian Asylum (2017) and the forthcoming co-authored volume, Anxious Times: Medicine and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Britain (2019). She is currently working on the history of 'air technologies' and resuscitation

Sandy Weatherburn is currently a mature student with the University of Winchester studying an MA in Death Religion & Culture. Sandy is the founder of Social Embers a digital resource that gives advice on issues relating to digital legacy and bereavement. @SocialEmbers



The Death & Culture Network (DaCNet) based at the University of York seeks to explore and understand cultural responses to mortality. It focuses on the impact of death and the dead on culture, and the way in which they have shaped human behaviour, evidenced through thought, action, production and expression. The network is committed to promoting and producing an inter-disciplinary study of mortality supported by evidence and framed by theoretical engagement.

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