

## Kent Animal Humanities Lecture series (Virtual): Summer 2020

We are delighted to announce that the Kent Animal Humanities Network will be hosting a special virtual lecture series. These events are open to everyone, and we very much hope you'll be able to join us! All talks will take place at 4-6pm, UK time. Please see below for more information and the Zoom link.

- 27 May 2020: Jane Spencer, 'I Was An Ass': Writing about Animals in the Age of Revolution
- 3 June 2020: Jeanne Dubino, Global Subjects: Street Dogs in Modern and Contemporary World Literature
- 10 June 2020: Lucinda Cole (with Rajani Sudan), 'Great Mortalities': Animal Plagues, Human Health, and the Medical Posthumanities

27 May 2020, 4-6pm (UK time)

### Jane Spencer, 'I Was An Ass': Writing about Animals in the Age of Revolution

Organiser: Dr. Derek Ryan [e-mail: [d.j.ryan@kent.ac.uk](mailto:d.j.ryan@kent.ac.uk) ]

The lecture series opens with a special virtual lecture by Prof. Jane Spencer (University of Exeter): "I Was An Ass": Writing about Animals in the Age of Revolution'. Alongside her talk, Jane will be joined by her colleague, Prof. Karen Edwards, to discuss her [new book](#) on the subject, published this month by Oxford University Press.



**Abstract:** In the revolutionary upheavals of the late 1700s and early 1800s, nonhuman animals were central to human attempts to reimagine the social and political landscape. An appreciation of human—animal similarity and a literature of compassion for animals developed in the same years that radicals formulated political demands based on universal human rights. Animal rights, potentially, were extensions of the rights of man and woman; yet human and animal rights had a complex and fraught relationship. People of colour, slaves, women, plebeians, and children were intersecting groups, all in different ways considered close to animals, less than fully human; oppressed people therefore insisted on their own separation from animals in order to claim their share in human privileges. Great apes, pigs, horses, dogs, and other animals figured prominently in writing by and about these people, their significance fought over in the struggle for rights and freedoms. In this talk I focus on the ass, or – as it was becoming known in the interests of politer discourse – the donkey. A byword for absurdity yet Christian meekness, the donkey takes a multivalent role in revolutionary, abolitionist, and feminist discourses and in children's writing: a role explored here in work by Thomas Spence, Ignatius Sancho, Mary Wollstonecraft and 'Arabella

Argus'. In them we see concern for human enfranchisement, involving an insistence on human—animal separation, but also, sometimes, hints of something very different – an attempt to dissolve barriers between humanity and animality. Such an attempt was felt as so absurd that it came with apologies, excuses, and jokes. The ass, an animal that people found almost impossible to mention without a joke, makes a good emblem for writing that often shored up human exceptionalism, but occasionally contained the seeds of a reevaluation of human—animal relations.

**Jane Spencer** is Professor of English at the University of Exeter. Her books include *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (Blackwell, 1986), *Aphra Behn's Afterlife* (OUP, 2000), and *Literary Relations: Kinship and the Canon 1660–1830* (OUP, 2005). She has published essays on Enlightenment animals in *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* and *Intellectual History Review*. Her latest books are *Reading Literary Animals: Medieval to Modern* (Routledge, 2019), co-edited with Karen Edwards and Derek Ryan, and *Writing About Animals in the Age of Revolution*, published this month by OUP.

**3 June 2020: 4-6pm (UK time)**

## **Jeanne Dubino, Global Subjects: Street Dogs in Modern and Contemporary World Literature**

Enquiry: Dr. Kaori Nagai [e-mail:  
[K.Nagai@kent.ac.uk](mailto:K.Nagai@kent.ac.uk)]



We are delighted to welcome Professor Jeanne Dubino (Appalachian State University) as the second speaker of our virtual animal humanities lecture series. She is going to discuss her monograph-in-progress, *Global Subjects: Street Dogs in Modern and Contemporary World Literature*, and her talk will be chaired by Professor Donna Landry (Kent).

**Abstract:** *Global Subjects: Street Dogs in Modern and Contemporary World Literature* is a study of the representations of street dogs (alternately called free-ranging and stray, and here I use these terms interchangeably) in global literature from mostly the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Eschewing allegorical readings, which tend to erase the animal, my project attends to strays' variable modes of being and to the multiple meanings of their experiences as they are represented on the pages of literature from the six inhabited continents. As part of my introduction, I briefly address several of the project's seven chapters:

Chapter One - Introduction: Mongrel Dogs, Mongrel Literature

Chapter Two - Lost and Found: Strays vs. Pets

Chapter Three - Giving Voice to the Dogs: Canine Travel and Homelessness

Chapter Four - Living on the Edge: Human-Canine Relationships in the Margins

Chapter Five - Tossed off as Trash: Stray Dogs as the Abject  
Chapter Six - 'Cry Havoc!': Stray Dogs in Times of War and Upheaval  
Chapter Seven - Dog Men, Dog Girls, and Dog Boys: Street Dogs and the Posthuman

Most of the presentation will be a Powerpoint version, with many illustrations and contextual background information, of the final chapter, “Dog Men, Dog Girls, and Dog Boys: Street Dogs and the Posthuman”:

Penned by authors from around the world—USSR, UK, and Australia—Mikhail Bulgakov’s *The Heart of a Dog* (1925, 1968), Nick Abadzis’s *Laika* (2007), and Eva Hornung’s *Dog Boy* (2010) are all set in the same place: Russia. Spanning nearly a century, they all follow essentially the same plot: free-ranging dogs, or in the case of *Dog Boy*, dog figures, are removed from the street and used for the sake of science. Sharik in *The Heart of a Dog* is lured by a scientist to undergo a brain transplant; Laika is netted by dogcatchers to become a famous Soviet space dog; and Puppy, one of the two dog boys in *Dog Boy*, is seized by the *militzia* to be studied for the origins of what makes us human. The reader is enjoined to sympathize with the piteous existence of life on the street: Sharik is scalded by a cook, Laika is thrown by a cruel boy into the river, and the stray dogs with whom the dog boys cohabit undergo recurrent exterminations by the authorities. If dogs live wretched lives on the street, they are treated even worse in the name of science, and all three novels provide detailed descriptions of their experiences. This chapter further addresses the pathos that is present in them, and how that pathos is heightened as readers witness the dogs’ becoming unwitting posthuman subjects in the name of science. It considers how the factors of the writers’ nationalities and the different eras of the novels—early, mid-, and post-Soviet—shape three books which are located in such similar settings and which follow such similar narrative trajectories.

**Jeanne Dubino** is professor of English and Global Studies at Appalachian State University in North Carolina. She has been a visiting assistant professor of literature and Women’s Studies at Bilkent University, Turkey; a Fulbright Scholar/Researcher at Egerton University, Kenya; and a Fulbright Specialist at Northeastern University, China. Her most recent publications include the edited volume *Virginia Woolf and the Literary Marketplace* (2010); the coedited *Representing the Modern Animal in Culture* (2014), *Virginia Woolf: Twenty-First-Century Approaches* (2014), and *Politics, Identity, and Mobility in Travel Writing* (2015); and essays, articles, and reviews on travel, Woolf, and Animal Studies. She teaches a course called “Animal Planet” and was part of starting a minor in Animal Studies at Appalachian.

**10 June 2020 (4-6 UK time)**

**Lucinda Cole, Lecture and conversation with Rajani Sudan, on “Great Mortalities”: Animal Plagues, Human Health, and the Medical Posthumanities’**

Enquiry: Dr. Kaori Nagai [e-mail: [K.Nagai@kent.ac.uk](mailto:K.Nagai@kent.ac.uk)]

Our lecture series concludes with a talk by Prof. Lucinda Cole (University of Illinois) on the threats of zoonotic disease, considered within the contexts of the early modern period. The talk will be followed by a conversation with her colleague Professor Rajani Sudan (Southern Methodist University). Please join us for what promises to be a very exciting and timely event.



**Abstract:** Veterinary historians and epidemiologists have compiled long records of murrains or ‘great cattle mortalities’ in the early modern period. Between 1470 and 1570, they note, a new transnational system emerged in the marketing of livestock with serious epidemiological consequences; by 1600, a mostly unregulated global cattle network had all but eclipsed regional marketing systems across much of Europe. Calling for a ‘medical posthumanities’ that includes nonhuman animals, Lucinda Cole explores how early modern and eighteenth-century literature registers the threats of zoonotic disease, especially rinderpest and anthrax, to trade, health, ecology, and the socioeconomic order.

**Lucinda Cole** is Research Associate Professor (English) and Affiliate Professor, Institute for Sustainability, Energy, and Environment at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She is author of *Imperfect Creatures: Vermin, Literatures, and the Sciences of Life, 1600-1740* (University of Michigan Press, 2016). *Imperfect Creatures* won the Robert Lowry Patten award from Studies in English Literature 1500-1900, for the best recent book in Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Literature. Her articles have appeared in such venues as *ELH*, *Criticism*, *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, *Configurations*, and *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, and in numerous collections on animals and animality. She is now writing a book on zoonotic diseases.

**Rajani Sudan** is Professor of English at Southern Methodist University, where she specializes in 18thC studies, post-colonial theory, and science studies. She is the author of two monographs, *Fair Exotics: Xenophobic Subjects in English Literature, 1720 to 1850*, and, more recently, *The Alchemy of Empire: Abject Materials and Technologies of Colonialism* (which was named top 6 books on South Asian studies, 2016, by the British South Asian Studies Association.) Currently, she is working on her third book, *Mines, minerals, Mimesis and Memory*, a study of the colonial origins of digital culture. She is also the co-editor of *Configurations: A Journal of Literature, Science, and Technology*.