

Every day we awaken to stories of the dead. At this time, what can I say about death anymore? Your extinction is a loss amongst many who have been killed. None of these deaths were just.

Extinction is a term that collapses things, it is made to grasp what cannot be grasped. It is a word given to those who are seen, by those of us who only attend to the world through what we can name. To name is to see, but more, to recognise. To name, for us, is to colonise, to own and control. To name is to carve the world apart and configure it into what we can claim.

The naming of your extinction took two centuries to declare. You had not been seen since your capture by a French explorer and naturalist who stole you from your waters, somewhere in the south east of Tasmania where the reach of your travels was small. Between 1800 and 1804 you were taken by this European who named you and built himself from your existence. Your dispossession was part of the wave of thievery and genocide that the Europeans brought here. They bought death with their names. As they killed they said, you are this kind of thing. They said you are that kind of thing. They said, we will take you and you will become known to us so that we can render our world from your breath. You will be known.

You were the only one they found, and you became a holotype for all of your kind. You were the only one ever to be found, and in your finding, you disappeared.

To be seen, over two hundred years ago, and never seen again. And it is now that we have declared you gone. We name absence in your place – this is what you have become. A pillar. The rest of your kind we conserve, to try to ward off what we bring with our own hands. Your name now stands for something, a visibility in death that we didn't care for in life.

Each named extinction holds a place for the myriad unnamed. The extinction of those we never even found. The extinction of those who were never held in mind enough to be missed. To be given the title of extinct, and mourned and revered and acclaimed. A name in a list of names, a title, an honour bestowed.

It is not without precedent to say that there is a freedom in remaining unfound, because if to be found means to be taken, means to be named, means to be lost, then it is better to remain unseen. It is in our finding that death comes, without fail. Without that finding, there are many forms of being left to be.

One might counter and say, but to be seen means to be mourned. To have the possibility of mourning. But really, it is up to whoever it is that does the mourning to determine whether it is a true lament or simply a commemoration of conquest.

It's hard right now to write a eulogy for you in this time of loss, it's harder still when we have no rituals for this, when death piles up around us and holds little of our regard. We who mark you as extinct built our lives on violence. We are unable to grapple the extent of what we have done so we cry for you here, for a moment, for a minute.

So perhaps all I can say is this, to all that are gone: I hope that wherever you are you have found rest from us. I wish for you to only be seen by those who will leave you to be as you are, who will celebrate you in life. Whatever you are, whatever you were, I hope you are surrounded by plenty, in all that that word means. And for us I wish an end to our endings. I wish us to let go of what must be gone. To learn to leave alone, undone, unsaid, untouched. To learn to leave without doing more harm. To learn to leave each other to be free.