**Herman Ramm Prize 2019. Abstracts**

**Searching for symbolism: a re-examination of the Neanderthal burial record** *by Hannah Andrews, winner of the Charles Wellbeloved prize*

The differences between the symbolic capacities of Neanderthals and *Homo sapiens* have been debated for years. Until recently, these discussions have been dominated by a bias against Neanderthals as ‘brutish’ and ‘stupid’. However, it is now known that they shared close genetic and cognitive similarities with ourselves. As such, the ‘us and them’ framework in which Neanderthals continue to be studied is outdated. Using the Eurasian burial record as an extended case study, this paper will attempt to distance itself from extant biases by creating a first, tentative model of Neanderthal mortuary symbolism.

Comparable *Homo sapiens* burial data will be used to calibrate what Neanderthals were and were not doing in their burial practices. It is hoped this will challenge the assumption that the ‘sparse’ nature of the Neanderthal burial record equates to a lesser symbolic capacity.