

# CDAS conference 2024: Death and Communities

## 5 – 7 June 2024

Welcome to the 2024 CDAS Conference, which this year is organised around the theme of Death and Community. In keeping with the theme we have decided this year to have panel plenaries rather than individual speakers, and we open the conference with an opening plenary on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> June at 4pm BST, before two full days of papers and an In Conversation event on Thursday evening (BST). We have organised two streams to facilitate attendance throughout the conference, and have an additional support session on Thursday lunchtime, on publishing in the death studies community.

We look forward to welcoming you to what promises to be an engaging and supportive conference with the CDAS community.

See you there

Kate and Naomi

### Reading the Schedule

To help you decide which sessions you would like to attend, we have colour coded the types of engagement.

- Blue - paper sessions you'll need to come ready listen and ask questions
- Green - panels you can expect cameras on and a willingness to take part in discussions
- Pink - workshops and interactive you can expect cameras on and a willingness to take part in discussions
- Yellow - keynotes we'll all be together to listen to our two fantastic keynote speakers and ask questions after their presentations

Any questions, please get in touch with the conference organising team via [CDAS@bath.ac.uk](mailto:CDAS@bath.ac.uk).

	Paper sessions
	Panel sessions
	Workshops/interactive sessions
	Keynote

**Wednesday 5 June 24**

<b>4pm - 5pm</b>	<b>0. "Make it fun!" Our experience of co-researching death and dying with people with learning disabilities Professor Stuart Todd - University of South Wales and Professor Irene Tuffrey-Wijne - Kingston University, London</b>
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**Thursday 6 June 24**

<b>9am-10am</b>	<b>1. Panel Plenary - The dead during ongoing war Naomi Pendle, Loes Lijnders, Irina Sergeeva, Latjor Dang</b>	
<b>10.10am - 11.10am</b>	<b>2. Visibility</b>	<b>3. Communities over time</b>
	Repositioning Death Community - From 'Victim Capital' to 'Heroic Capital': The Struggle of the Israeli Terror Victims' Community for Public Recognition and Heroization - Udi Lebel and Yonata Amir	Making Muslim burial space in the UK: Brookwood Cemetery as a catalogue of the evolving intersections of religion and ethnicity - Ole Jensen
	DEAD AIR - art, death, and community radio - Hayley West	Reinventing Traditional Death Ways in the Digital Age: The Case of a Transylvanian Village - Adela Toplean
<b>11.10am - 11.30am</b>	<b>Break</b>	

Thursday 6 June 24

	4. Culture	5. Digital 1
11.30am - 12.50pm	The Rise and Fall of Communities and Death Culture in Japan - Norichika Horie	Does the design of online communities meet the needs of bereaved people? A qualitative study exploring bereaved peoples' experiences - Sian Cook
	'The Loss Café' – Navigating online networks of grief and loss in Black communities - Debi Lewinson Roberts	Mourning Animals in Digital Spaces: Sharing Personal Experiences, Providing Informative Content and Offering Emotional Support - Camilla Tumidei
	Eternal Troupers: Circus Graves and Community Identity - Aine Norris	DIGITAL COMMUNITIES AND THE TAMED DEATH. The cemetery's digital turn - Stefania Rasile
	Femicide unmourned bodies and animation as anima: findings from an Art exhibition - Helen Blejerman	Digital Immortality, Responsible Innovation & Islam - Khadiza Laskor
12.50pm - 1.30pm	<b>Lunch</b> <b>Publishing in the Death Studies Community: books vs journal papers</b>	
	6. Suicide	7. Digital 2
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Community-based responses to suicide: An ethnographic exploration across three regions of Scotland - Rebecca Helman	Death is Obsolete: Staging Resurrection in the Age of AI - Elizabeth Hunter
	There Is More Elderly Suicides Than Before: A Study of Elderly Suicides in Czechia - Světlana Nedvěďová	Death Positivity in Online Communities – Commenting and Sharing as Implicit Religion - Anna Wilde

Thursday 6 June 24

<b>2.40pm - 3.40pm</b>	<b>8. The location of bodies</b>	<b>9. Marginalised communities</b>
	Repatriationscapes: African burial models and coloniality in death politics - George Gumisiriza	Public health funeral or community funeral? - Glenys Caswell
	Marriage, Culture and Death: Digging through the archives of Tamar to compare the widow scripts inscribed by culture on African widows bodies - Silindile Thabede	Grieving Overdose: Community Life in the Face of Overdose Death - Emily Campbell
<b>3.40pm - 4.00pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>4.00pm - 5.20pm</b>	<b>10. Knowledge</b>	<b>11. Bereavement and grief</b>
	Urban Indigenous Experiences of Grief and Bereavement - Audrey Medwayosh	The loss of parents in later life - Bethany Morgan Brett
	The Death Rites and Cultural Needs of Gypsies and Travellers - Pauline Lane and Siobhan Spencer	Humanising the coronial system: findings from the Voicing Loss study. - Lorna Templeton
	Detached from Death: non-federally recognized indigenous peoples' missing rights - Katie Stringer Clary	The 'means to grieve': Relational emotion work in the endeavour for authentic expression - Georgie Akehurst
	'Sarab katarb' (the ledger) of life and death: a relational auto-ethnographic conversation reflecting on cultural and racialised histories and lived experiences. - Jane McCarthy and Sukhbinder Hamilton	Finding that Soft Place to Land: Exploring the Necessity of Community for Grief-Induced Activists - Chris Bobel
<b>5.20pm - 7pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>7.00pm - 8.00pm</b>	<b>In Conversation with Stefan Timmermans</b>	

Friday 7 June 24

9am-10am	13. Dying to D.I.Y - a home funeral approach to the dead - Rebecca Lyons	14. Death in Gaza: The Rule of Law, Belonging and Funerary Rituals - Catriona Jarvis, Syd Bolton, Nada Afiouni, Yumna Masarwa
10.10am - 11.10am	15. Open stream 1	16. Memorials and remembering
	Gen Z's View of Death in the Era of Electronic Games: Exploring the Influence of Meticulously Crafted Characters' Death in PC Gaming and Mobile Gaming - Chenyang Guo	Communities of the Living and Communities of the Dead: Ritual, Community and Continuing Bonds in the "New Barrows". - Jennifer Uzzell
	Grieving Beyond Borders: Rituals of Loss among Syrian 'Refugees' in Post-Earthquake Turkey - Ahmet Zahit Ekren	United yet Distant: The National Covid Memorial Wall - Georgina Robinson
	Cultural framing of migrants' grief in online newspapers during the pandemic - Tram Nguyen	Why save Bukit Brown? An exploratory study on a community effort to advocate for the preservation of Bukit Brown Cemetery in Singapore - See Mieng Tan and Darren Koh
11.10am - 11.30am	Break	
11.30am - 12.30pm	17. History	18. Funerals
	'And his death moved those who no danger knew' Describing seafarers' funerals to a land dwelling audience in the age of sail - Dan O'Brien	Rituals and Last Rides: Patch Club Biker Funerals - Kathryn Berry
	'In peace we will ever stay': The National Significance of Deathways in Mississippi's African-American Fraternal Orders,1870-1930 - Jennifer Ford	Post-death rituals in the Community of Mourners in Fez: Negotiating Sacrality and Worldly Expectations - Yousra Sbaihi
	Historical Death and Contemporary Communities, an example from Porto, Portugal - Ana Lema Seabara	"We are Just asking for a room": the lack of funeral freedom among Italian religious minorities - Giorgio Scalici
12.30pm - 1.20pm	Lunch	

Friday 7 June 24

1.20pm - 2.20pm	<b>19. Dying</b>	<b>20. Notable people</b>
	Community partnerships for end of life companionship - Maggie Doherty	Mourning the Ghost Rider: Meditations on the Loss of Skill and Technical Talent in Online Fan Grief Narratives for Rush's Neil Peart - Lee Barron
	Informing Best-Practice and Compassionate Care: Reviewing interventions to Reduce Distress of People Living with Dementia (PLWD) in Care Homes - Chloe Moody	'In Memoriam': The Televisuality of a Hollywood Mourning Ritual - Deborah L. Jaramillo
	"It was completely out of the blue": Potential causes and consequences of failing to recognise dementia to be a terminal condition - Fawn Harrad-Hyde	Paranormal Investigators in Burial Spaces - Janine Marriott and Kate Cherrell
		Bequeathing intergenerational digital information in the digital age in the UK - Edina Harbinja
2.20pm - 2.40pm	<b>Break</b>	
2.40pm - 3.40pm	<b>21. Panel Plenary - Cultivating Collaborative Communities</b> Gayle Letherby, Beth Michael-Fox, Tamarin Norwood - Chaired Kate Woodthorpe	
3.50pm - 5.10pm	<b>22. Open stream 2</b>	<b>23. Mediating Mortality: Evaluating Prosectorship in Anatomy Education - Myriam Nafté</b>
	Implementing the compassionate communities approach within the classroom: The promises and perils of discussing death with students. - Samantha Teichman	
	The Grief Experience of Ukrainian and Palestinian Immigrants in Canada - Zohreh Bayatrizi	
	Fading names on precarious crosses: death and memory of (in)visible migrants. - Michelangelo Giampaoli	
	There was no otherwise': Narratives of The Space Between for Nine Kenyan Children - Callie Daniels-Howell	

### **Wednesday 4 June 2024 - 4pm - 5pm**

#### **“Make it fun!” Our experience of co-researching death and dying with people with learning disabilities**

##### **Stuart Todd and Irene Tuffrey-Wijne**

Is research about death and dying too difficult or upsetting for people with learning disabilities? Many clinicians, families and researchers worry that it is – leading to exclusion. But how can you really find out what matters to people at the end of life, and how we can improve things, if we don't include them? Over the past two decades, we have worked with people with learning disabilities as research participants, advisors and co-researchers in this area. In our opening plenary for the CDAS Conference we will reflect on this experience, with Stuart exploring the history of work in this area and Irene reflecting on how to do research. In her work four researchers with learning disabilities, employed at Kingston University, have co-facilitated focus groups and a co-design group who developed resources for meaningful involvement in end of life care planning. Building on Stuart's reflections on the field, Irene will share some of the methodologies and approaches her team has used – including the importance of creating a truly safe space – and making it fun! Expect pictures, music, hats and games...

**Professor Stuart Todd** has a career long interest in research in intellectual disabilities. He is a sociologist and based at the University of South Wales and is lead for the Unit for Development in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (UDDID). His interest in death related research in this area stemmed from research work of parents of people with learning disabilities where it seemed death, in different guises, seemed a prominent feature in accounts of their lives as carers. His work has focused on parental bereavement, the death perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities, and patterns of death and dying, and the challenges these pose for people working in intellectual.

**Professor Irene Tuffrey-Wijne** (RN, PhD) is Professor of Intellectual Disability & Palliative Care at Kingston University London. She has extensive clinical experience in both intellectual disability and palliative care services.

Since 2001, Irene has led a programme of research and development focusing on intellectual disability, bereavement and palliative care. She has published widely and presented her work in the UK and across the world, and is recognised as the leading international expert in the area of palliative care for people with intellectual disabilities. Inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities as study participants and as salaried researchers is a key part of her work.

### **Thursday 6 June 2024 - 9am - 10am**

#### **The dead during ongoing war**

##### **Naomi Pendle, Loes Lijnders, Irina Sergeeva, Latjor Dang**

Historians, lawyers and sociologists have drawn our attention to the social and political significance of bodies created during wars. In this panel we pick up this theme of the wartime dead, but instead focus on burial and the treatment of the dead during ongoing war, with a particular focus on actions that go beyond simply connecting the wartime dead with the warring parties. This panel brings into conversation research and experiences of dealing with the dead during ongoing wars in Ukraine and South Sudan. In this panel, Loes Lijnders

(University of Durham), Latjor Dang (overseas consultant, LSE), Irina Sergeeva and Naomi Pendle (University of Bath) draw on their own historical, ethnographic and professional work. Loes' paper explores the socio-technological evolution of post-mortem rooms into mortuaries in South Sudan since the 1960s. Latjor, Irene and Pendle's focuses on the bodies of combatants and the setting up of mortuary and / or burial practices for combatants by their own peers. All contributors highlight the importance for the living not just of connecting the dead to the state, to the warring parties or to narratives that justify the war, but instead of connecting the dead to their wider family networks including across geographies.

**Thursday 6 June 2024 - 10.10am - 11.10am**

## **2. Visibility**

### **Repositioning Death Community - From 'Victim Capital' to 'Heroic Capital': The Struggle of the Israeli Terror Victims' Community for Public Recognition and Heroization**

**Udi Lebel and Yonatan Amir**

In Israeli society's deeply ingrained cultural militarism, all fallen soldiers, regardless of the circumstances of their death, are framed and perceived by the public as having died heroically, hence holding "Military Death Capital". Since the start of the millennium, a period in which Israel coped with frequent terror attacks, thousands of terror victims' families formed a new loss community, operating as a 'policy community' to gain recognition for its transparent loss and Disenfranchised Grief; eligibility for the same support received by military victims' families; and for including its victims in the Nation's Remembrance Day, thereby obtaining 'Victim Capital' within the public discourse of loss and grief. The study focuses on a further, more recent stage in the mobilization of this community, in which it strives to obtain 'Heroic Capital' – not only eligibility for rehabilitation and commemoration, but legislation and policy initiatives by which civil casualties and not only military ones would gain 'heroization practices' which until now had been exclusively dedicated to fallen soldiers (ceremonies, burial in military cemeteries, citations, and more). In fact, this new community operates as a Counter Discourse Community to the military loss community. The study also examines the extent in which this community had created an alternative bereavement discourse, or whether it had in fact coopted the military one.

Research in communal symbolic, policy and discursive entrepreneurship; in Repositioning Death Community and acceptance; and about its implications for hierarchies and the ethos of the discourse of loss, bereavement, and national heroics.

### **DEAD AIR - art, death, and community radio**

**Hayley West**

In this presentation, I'll share my socially engaged art practice, tracing my journey and highlighting the impact of art and radio in community engagement and knowledge sharing.

For over two decades, my practice has spanned research, exhibitions, and residencies globally. My current project, DEAD AIR is Australia's sole weekly radio program dedicated to open discussions about death and dying, broadcasting live from a small country town in regional Victoria.



Curating a diverse mix of global and local sources, DEAD AIR emphasises local events and opportunities, providing an engaging experience through newspapers, magazines, TV reports, interviews, and social media. Its uniqueness lies in its commitment to diverse content, community engagement, local relevance, creative presentation, independent voice, and collaborative efforts, forming a captivating connection with its local audience.

Live broadcasting, with its spontaneity, charm, and inherent inclusivity, becomes an irreplaceable medium for disseminating information, especially for those facing isolation or print disabilities. Amidst the vast internet landscape, where content abounds, live broadcasting meets the human need for community and genuine connection.

In essence, my art practice and death literacy advocacy converge in a shared goal: to raise awareness about death, fostering a deeper appreciation for life.

## **Legacy Narratives in End-of-life Documentaries**

### **Outi Hakola**

End-of-life documentary films tell stories of dying people whose diagnoses of terminal illnesses often inspire them to reconstruct their life stories and legacies. Legacy translates into how and what for a person will be remembered, making it inherently a social phenomenon. Documentary film projects give personal legacies a wider audience and turn something personal to public; they leave a mark on historical and social communities. In this presentation, I discuss the social processes of legacy in three films: *Prison Terminal: The Last Days of Private Jack Hall* (US, 2013), *Helen's Story* (New Zealand, 2016), and *Marika's Passing* (Finland, 2021). I argue that both the filmed subjects and audiences are aware of the social norms and values related to desirable legacies. These sociocultural expectations can encourage the dying to create idealised and polished images of how they want to be viewed by their communities. Also, the film audiences, based on the reception study of *Marika's Passing*, expect positive legacy stories that provide a potential for a happy ending. While death cannot be conquered, some life crises can still be solved in a way that produces a sense of happiness and achievement, not only sadness and loss at the end of life.

## **3. Communities over time**

### **Making Muslim burial space in the UK: Brookwood Cemetery as a catalogue of the evolving intersections of religion and ethnicity**

#### **Ole Jensen**

Expanding on Humayun Ansari's notion of 'making Muslim space in Britain', this article will use Muslim burial grounds in Brookwood Cemetery, UK, as a lens to explore intersections of Islam, ethnicity and diasporic identity since the late 19th Century. Brookwood Cemetery, situated 30 miles south of London, became the site of the first Muslim burial ground in the UK in 1884. Over the next 90 years this burial ground evolved into an expanding and inclusive 'Pan-Islamic' burial space constituted by graves from across the Muslim Ummah, and representing a wide range of nationalities. But as Muslim communities in the UK became increasingly well-established, they would purchase their own, exclusive burial space within Brookwood Cemetery. The result is a unique plethora of Muslim burial grounds defined on the basis of different sects of Islam as well as diasporic identities, typically evolved around the relationship between the Indian Subcontinent, East Africa and the UK. Accordingly,

Brookwood Cemetery remains both a catalogue of Islamic burial grounds, each with its own characteristics, and an important record of the emergence and consolidation of Muslim communities in the UK.

## **Reinventing Traditional Death Ways in the Digital Age: The Case of a Transylvanian Village**

### **Adela Toplean**

In this presentation, I focus on how a rural community (central Romania) responds to changing ways of dying in a complex, digital society. Informed by Georg Simmel's approach to creative action, Alfred Schutz's approach to the acting self through life events and Hartmut Rosa's theory of social resonance, I attempt to depict and analyse the ongoing process of transitioning from more communal death ways to more individualised and digitalised ones. I suggest there are internal and external constraints to this process, for example, an ageing community, a break in communal bonds, and an ambivalent attitude towards both inherited religious values and the new possibilities brought by digital technologies. Changes did occur at all levels: logistics, funerary rites, grief and mourning customs, everyday communication and exchanges between the living and the dead, suggesting a satisfying communal adaptation to new challenges. However, preliminary data (participative observation, interviews) hint at social apathy and lack of community participation among villagers. Following the mentioned theories, I suggest distinguishing between communal adaptation and individual adequacy. Unlike adaptation, adequacy retains individual integrity; it is a meaningful affective and creative accomplishment that can make uncontrollable dreadful events more manageable and sustain resonant relationships in times of dying, death and loss.

**Thursday 6 June 2024 - 11.30am - 12.50pm**

## **4. Culture**

### **The Rise and Fall of Communities and Death Culture in Japan**

#### **Norichika Horie**

Sociologists of death have criticised medicalisation, professionalisation and institutionalisation of death in modernity. In Japan, there is a movement advocating dying at home and community-based end-of-life care. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW) also promotes an 'integrated community care system', but with a reduction in healthcare costs and hospital beds due to austerity measures. Its viability is uncertain in rural Japan, which suffers from a shrinking population and a shortage of healthcare workers.

In the longer term, modernisation has led to labour mobility from primary to secondary and then tertiary sectors. A recurring pattern in this process is that young people are attracted to emerging industries and create new communities, while previous generations are left in declining communities and die with poorer care.

This paper outlines the rise and fall of rural communities, mining areas, industrial areas and suburban 'new towns'. It also looks at the dynamics of family, ancestor worship and graves,

and discusses their impact on the death culture. It is facing contemporary challenges, such as the disengagement from the family and a declining birthrate. Particularly in Japan, where care is less dependent on immigrants, an ambivalence of anxiety and longing for 'dying alone' can be observed.

### **'The Loss Café' – Navigating online networks of grief and loss in Black communities.**

#### **Debi Lewinson Roberts**

In an arena where the grieving process is traditionally culturally lively and dramatic, what can we learn from online, digital spaces of grieving in Black communities? This presentation centres on the transformative role of the Loss Cafe Bereavement Group, an International Digital Space and Network for the Black community.

Established in response to the challenges posed by Covid-19, the Loss Cafe serves as a beacon for the Black community, offering a virtual haven for healing, resilience, and support. In this voluntary role, a safe space is facilitated based on Black feminist principles of safe spaces of resilience (bell hooks, 1993) that transcends geographical boundaries, providing attendees with elements of comfort, friendship, advice, and guidance. The digital nature of this community highlights the evolving landscape of grief support, especially in the wake of global disruptions.

This presentation advocates for the recognition of digital platforms as powerful tools for fostering community connection and healing, particularly within marginalised communities.

As a Funeral Celebrant deeply rooted in community support, the Loss Café is a testament to my commitment to ensuring that the transformative potential of community support extends beyond physical confines, nurturing a global network that navigates the complexities of grief with compassion and resilience.

### **Eternal Troupers: Circus Graves and Community Identity**

#### **Aine Norris**

As a long-standing, distinctive, and traditionally closed subculture, the American circus community engages in the memorialization of its deceased members in a myriad of ways, including graveside performances, historic preservation efforts, shrines, and a personalized effort of perpetual care. However, it is the choice of individual members to include circus as part of their gravesite that reflects a deeply personal and enduring commitment to group belonging and identity.

This paper examines a sample of American circus headstones and gravesites from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that reflect the decedent's role in circus subculture within a larger framework of group identity and memorialization practices. Through design, epitaphs, and the use of insider lexical words and phrases, circus memorialization often follows a distinct pattern that is both personal in meaning and demonstrates an enduring commitment to audience remembrance. Examining circus memorialization through the lens of community belonging and identity provides additional contexts to the longstanding ways in which circus endures through community and audience alike.

## **Femicide un mourned bodies and animation as anima: findings from an Art exhibition**

**Helen Blejerman**

Amnesty International reported that, on average, ten women a day were killed in Mexico since the pandemic began. The word 'anima' means 'soul' in Latin. My research investigates how alternative animation in art practice can contribute to the conversation about the religious aspect of the Mexican communities' loss as they search for their daughters' bodies, lacking a funeral while seeking justice after femicide.

Robert Hertz suggested a synchronicity between the buried body, the mourner, and the soul's journey. My research proposes alternative animation at the centre of this model where, as art practice, it embodies the three elements as it feeds on them.

This paper will present the findings from questionnaires in my latest solo exhibition For Whom the Mountains Pray, where I investigated the landscape and the mushrooms growing in Sierra Madre de Oaxaca, Mexico, a vast mountainous area where families have searched for bodies. Professor Tony Walter quotes Professor Abby Day saying, 'If dead ends a life, not a relationship,' he writes, 'the dead need agency'. I used the exhibition to understand further the connection between the community's religious burial practices and the un mourned women's voices through the spiritual aspects of the local mushrooms in Oaxaca.

## **5. Digital 1**

### **Does the design of online communities meet the needs of bereaved people? A qualitative study exploring bereaved peoples' experiences**

**Sian Cook**

The particular environment created by social and political responses to COVID-19 changed how bereaved people manage their grief, accelerating the shift towards digital technologies including online communities and networks. Despite this shift and numerous online grief communities now available, there is limited evidence that service design has been informed by bereaved peoples' experiences within such communities and a clear need for digital grief services to be person-centred has become evident in the field. My paper addresses these deficits by providing data from bereaved individuals participating in online communities. My findings demonstrate how choice over engagement levels play an influential role in bereaved people engaging in online communities to aide their grieving process. While online communities offer choice for bereaved people, its technological design does not satisfy all their needs. Shortcomings while engaging in online communities include sub-optimal interactions, loss of control and being emotionally triggered. This paper highlights how current digital technology design within the online grief community landscape only partially supports bereaved individuals' grieving process. Overall, I claim that the design of online communities need to better encompass individual grieving experiences of bereaved people.

### **Mourning Animals in Digital Spaces: Sharing Personal Experiences, Providing Informative Content and Offering Emotional Support**

**Camilla Tumidei**

Over the last two decades, the internet has provided a privileged space for individuals to navigate the challenging terrain of animal loss. The era of pandemics has witnessed a

proliferation of virtual cemeteries, facebook pages, and discussion forums commemorating the lives of departed animals. These digital communities foster a sense of acceptance and hope playing a crucial role in validating the expression of multi-species mourning and disseminating collective narratives, practices, and ceremonies. Artists, counselors, and veterinarians, populate various social platforms, each offering unique approaches to extending emotional support and sharing informative content for those grappling with the loss of a beloved animal.

In this paper, I will illustrate the significance of digital spaces and communities, drawing from observations made during my Ph.D. research on animal death, which alongside my ethnographic research in a pet cemetery and cremation center in Italy, has been enriched by extensive online engagements, involving the collection of data on Instagram (stories and posts) and the analysis of diverse interactions on social media platforms. This comprehensive approach aims to deepen our understanding of the entanglements between human and companion animal life and death, shedding light on both personal and societal dimensions.

## **DIGITAL COMMUNITIES AND THE TAMED DEATH. The cemetery's digital turn**

**Stefania Rasile**

In the virtual dimension of social media, memories are mediated by devices that expand the experience of grief from a private space into a collective sphere, generating a new phenomenon of proximity towards the concept of death. In daily interactions on these platforms, there is a promiscuity between the profiles of the living and the deceased. This condition has a resemblance to the Medieval relationship between the living and dead when they were generally buried in the fulcrum building of the society of that time: the church. It was not just a place dedicated to religious worship but also a communitarian space for popular parties and markets. Due to this multifunctionality, there was daily contact between the living and the dead, which Ariès defines as a period of tamed death. The displacement of the deceased towards cemeteries outside the urban perimeter, in a monofunctional architecture for individual commemoration, generated a process of socio-cultural removal of death. Digital communities are shifting this phenomenon and as a consequence, a new typology of cemeteries emerged in the XXI Century. A multifunctional building in the city that integrates digital technologies, providing collective commemorative spaces that shape the ongoing cultural transformation.

## **Digital Immortality, Responsible Innovation & Islam**

**Khadiza Laskor**

Digital Immortality (DI) implies that death, when viewed as a technical problem, will be fixed later this century (Kurzweil, 2006). This potentially brings to the forefront disruptions of current practices regarding death and dying where religious faith may be the most affected (Anderson, 2022).

When focusing on Transhumanism and their version of DI, the following questions have previously been asked: will it negate the need of religion; will the devout reject DI; will Transhumanism be the religion of the future; or will there be room for both to co-exist?

Comparisons and contrasts have been conducted between Transhumanism and Judeo-Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism (Rothblatt, 2014) but analysis with Islam is few and far between (Kam, 2023). Therefore, this paper explores the notion of Transhumanist DI with Islamic perspectives on death. Parallels will also be drawn from the theory of Responsible Innovation (RI) (Owen et al., 2013), especially on seeking knowledge which is key in both Transhumanism and Islam. Pairings, such as, immortality and resurrection, individual and ummah (community), mind and body or soul, spirituality and intelligence, enhancement and reestablishment, and the Digital Afterlife and Qur'anic Hereafter will be discussed before concluding on where tensions and, perhaps surprisingly, compatibilities lie.

#### **Thursday 6 June 2024 – 12.50pm – 1.30pm**

##### **Publishing in the Death Studies Community: books vs journal papers**

Join University of Bristol *Death and Culture* Series Editors Professor Ruth Penfold-Mounce, Dr Kate Woodthorpe and Professor Erica Borgstrom (who is also editor of the journal *Mortality*) as they reflect on the different methods of publishing, and their respective benefits and potential pitfalls within our community. This is an opportunity for an informal discussion over lunch, where you can pitch your ideas to the panel.

#### **Thursday 6 June 2024 – 1.30pm – 2.30pm**

##### **6. Suicide**

##### **Community-based responses to suicide: An ethnographic exploration across three regions of Scotland**

**Rebecca Helman**

Community-based organisations play a key role in supporting people experiencing suicidality and suicide bereavement, particularly in light of failures by statutory services to meet demands for mental health care. To explore the social and cultural contexts that shape understandings and practices of suicide in Scotland we have engaged in long-term ethnography with 12 community organisations across three distinct regions. Our ethnographic investigation has focused on the conditions within local communities that contribute to suicidality, through engaging with service users, staff and volunteers. This approach has allowed us to develop nuanced understandings of the social, cultural, political, environmental, economic and interpersonal contexts in which suicide is enacted, understood and responded to. In this presentation we outline some of the key mechanisms through which community-based organisations support people in relation to suicide, including through accompaniment, group work, and outdoor activities. We also reflect on some of the challenges that these organisations face, including providing tailored support to a diverse group of service users, and scarcity of resources and funding. Our findings highlight the complex contexts in which suicide is located and the need for responses which meaningfully engage with this complexity in order to better support people who are affected by suicide.

## **"There Is More Elderly Suicides Than Before": A Study of Elderly Suicides in Czechia**

**Světlana Nedvěďová**

In recent years, the prevalence of suicide among older individuals in Czechia has exhibited a concerning upward trend. Despite its prominence in media discourse, suicide remains a taboo subject within Czech society, largely influenced by the nation's post-socialist and secular context. This abstract explores the dynamics surrounding suicides and suicide griever among the elderly population in Czechia, shedding light on the complex interplay of cultural, social, and psychological factors contributing to this phenomenon.

The increasing number of suicides underscores the urgency for deeper understanding and proactive intervention strategies tailored to the unique needs of older adults. Given the societal reluctance to openly discuss suicide, there exists a pressing need for destigmatization efforts and accessible mental health resources targeting this demographic. Moreover, the implications of suicide extend beyond the individual, impacting families and communities grappling with the aftermath of loss and grief.

By examining the socio-cultural landscape and prevailing attitudes towards suicide in Czechia, this abstract underscores the imperative for comprehensive approaches aimed at prevention, support, and destigmatization within the context of an aging population facing unprecedented mental health challenges. Such endeavors hold the potential to foster greater awareness, resilience, and ultimately, reduce the incidence of suicide among older adults in Czechia.

## **7. Digital 2**

### **Death is Obsolete: Staging Resurrection in the Age of AI**

**Elizabeth Hunter**

This paper will use performance theory to illuminate the communities behind the creation and reception of "digital resurrections," a recent development in memorial practices. As my project defines the term, a digital resurrection is an interactive installation powered by artificial intelligence (AI), deployed with spatial computing technology (virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR)), and the subject of which is bringing back to life a person who has died. This paper will focus on three iterations: (1) private individuals, as in headset-based VR experiences like "Meeting You," a South Korean documentary series that follows bereaved family members who interact with avatars of their deceased relatives; (2) artists and their oeuvres, as in full-length concerts of deceased singers like Whitney Houston, wherein a hologram of the singer performs on a physical stage, surrounded by a live band, dancers, and audience members; and (3) still-living people who collaborate on their own resurrection, as in museum exhibits where holograms of Holocaust and Tulsa Race Riot survivors answer visitor questions. As this paper will demonstrate, multiple discourses in theatre and performance studies illuminate the communities creating digital resurrections (producers, directors, performers, playwrights) as well as the audience communities for whom they are intended.

## **Death Positivity in Online Communities – Commenting and Sharing as Implicit Religion**

**Anna Wilde**

The Death Positive Movement (DPM) is the latest iteration of death-related social movements, based on the concept that the discussion of death should be brought out from the shadows, into the light of open discussion and debate. Death positivity itself is largely an online phenomenon, with its central message disseminated over the internet; it can be found on, and is enabled by blogs, social media, YouTube, and podcasts.

When facing or following death, people can find solace in online communities such as Reddit or YouTube, where questions can be asked and support is offered. As Chitwood (2019) says:

‘commenting and liking, sharing and posting — can become rituals of meaning making and identity-construction ... in the contemporary digital world’

This paper examines the phenomenon of how death positivity is demonstrated in online communities and how comments and the replies and responses they provoke can be interpreted as a form of Implicit Religion (Bailey, 2010). I apply implicit religion to death positivity using Bailey’s three defining points – evidence of commitment or meaning-making to a cause, what he called intensive concerns with extensive effects – death itself is certainly that – and integrating foci, in this case to an outward looking group (the DPM).

**Thursday 6 June 2024 - 2.40pm - 3.40pm**

### **8. The location of bodies**

#### **Repatriationscapes: African burial models and coloniality in death politics**

**George Gumisiriza**

How does coloniality shape the discussion on ‘proper burials’ in the UK and Africa?

This paper aims to contribute towards the body of knowledge on ‘modern burials’. I employ phenomenological approach and a combination approach of “things” (des-choses) Durkheim cited in (Hertz, 1960, p.18). Some African diaspora return corpses to countries with their heritage connections for “proper, befitting or decent burials,” according to funeral directors and participants in my ongoing PhD research interviews in the UK. The metaphor ‘proper burial’ prominently features among other social ethnic groups in the UK who choose the option. This implies that the metaphor means different things to different individuals and groups in the UK and beyond. This paper presents findings from my PhD field work and my archival research at Cambridge University in December 2023, focusing on African burial models. Other than contemporary burial models in Africa, the paper may not define the historical periods. My archival research reveals parallels between African burial models and contemporary practices involving woodland, green, and natural burials in the UK.



## **Marriage, Culture and Death: Digging through the archives of Tamar to compare the widow scripts inscribed by culture on African widows bodies**

**Silindile Thabede**

In a multitude of African cultures, profound beliefs and customs revolve around death and mourning, highlighting the differing significance attached to the death of a husband versus that of a wife. Across many African societies, the passing of a husband holds great importance, marked by intricate rituals, communal solidarity, and adherence to cultural practices. Significantly, the mourning period for the husband extends up to one year or two, whilst for the wife, it typically lasts up to three months. These mourning practices mirror the esteemed role held by the deceased within their social and familial circles which has proven androcentric. Often, widows face barriers to expressing the injustices they endure within marital settings. However, this research aims to become the reflective surface to uncover the inherent oppression widows experience in African traditional families while also illustrating how the female body serves as the embodiment of cultural narratives within such marital and bereavement frameworks. The article will utilize the biblical narrative of Tamar, to reexamine and expose the challenges widows face within the African cultural context of marital affairs regarding death.

### **9. Marginalised communities**

#### **Public health funeral or community funeral?**

**Glenys Caswell**

This paper suggests reframing public health funerals as community funerals. When a person in the UK dies with no relatives or friends to make arrangements for their funeral, this is taken on by the local authority, as one of its statutory duties. When this occurs, it may appear to be a matter of individual failure on the part of the person who died. However, by applying C Wright Mills's sociological imagination it is possible to see that what looks like the personal trouble of one individual lacking social and economic capital to arrange a funeral is, in fact, a social issue impacting many people. We all need others in order to survive; we are embedded in networks of interdependence, as Norbert Elias reminds us, and anyone may find themselves separated from their intimate networks by time, geography or death. Every time a local authority arranges a public health funeral they do so on behalf of the community, even if no one in that community knows about it. Current practice varies, but as a minimum respect should be shown for the death of a person, at best a farewell may be offered to someone who was part of the human community.

#### **Invisible Lives, Invisible Deaths: Unveiling Grief of Unhoused Populations**

**Kelly Butler**

This paper explores the often overlooked experience of mortality among unhoused populations, shedding light on the lived experiences of individuals grappling with the loss of friends in the precarious environments of shelters and streets. Through in-depth interviews with homeless individuals, this study seeks to unveil the intricate web of emotions, coping mechanisms, and societal challenges surrounding the death of peers in a state of homelessness. The research captures the unique perspectives of participants, revealing the

struggles and complex grief that accompany the loss of companions within an already marginalised community.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the intersectionality between homelessness and mortality, urging policymakers, healthcare professionals, and society at large to recognize and address the invisible lives and deaths within unhoused populations. By amplifying the voices of those who have experienced the loss of friends while navigating the challenges of homelessness, this paper advocates for a more compassionate approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable communities.

## **Grieving Overdose: Community Life in the Face of Overdose Death**

**Emily B. Campbell**

Fatal overdose is a now devastatingly ubiquitous feature of American life. Every year since the new millennium, overdose fatality has increased—taking the lives of more than a million people since 2000. Despite growing attention and resources, deaths have continued to surge, fueled by a drug poisoning crisis, social isolation, and limited access to treatment and harm reduction options for people who use drugs. One region especially hit by the crisis has been New England. A 2018 survey found that one in four Massachusetts residents knew someone who'd died by overdose, a proportion that has surely grown as each successive year has marked a new grim record. Drawing on a multi-year ethnography of community response to the overdose crisis in New England and over 80 interviews, I illuminate how through memorialization, advocacy, and protest, those 'left behind' give overdose death, and in turn, their own lives, new meaning.

**Thursday 6 June 2024 - 4pm - 5.20pm**

### **10. Knowledge**

#### **Urban Indigenous Experiences of Grief and Bereavement**

**Audrey Medwayosh**

This paper looks at urban Indigenous Peoples' experience of grief and bereavement in Edmonton, Canada. Indigenous People whose lands are now occupied by Canada have had their traditional lifeways disrupted by colonization, a process that remains ongoing. As a result of colonial attempts at cultural and physical genocide via the Indian Act, Indian Residential Schools, and multifarious child welfare interventions, Indigenous People have faced many traumas. These traumas are intergenerational, and actively present in daily life. We are overrepresented in statistics on homicide and suicide, and our life expectancy is 15 years less than the non-Indigenous Canadian population. Further, many Indigenous People have been separated or disconnected from our traditional lands, languages, arts, and other forms of culture. This is important because we know that during times of grief, cultural and community support can be particularly impactful in the healing process. This paper will share the findings of a qualitative study undertaken by and for Indigenous People, to uncover what it means to be an urban Indigenous Person, separated from land and traditions, while simultaneously experiencing the sorts of grief that can be unique to the Indigenous diaspora.

## **The Death Rites and Cultural Needs of Gypsies and Travellers**

**Pauline Lane and Siobhan Spencer**

This presentation will offer an overview of the death rituals and cultural needs of Gypsies and Travellers in England.

Based on our research with community members, our presentation describes a range of death rituals and customs that are followed by many Gypsy and Traveller families, and it also highlights some of the challenges that families face when their cultural practices are not understood by the wider community. The presentation will highlight some of the cultural needs of families, including the preparation of the body, the wake (and the specific rituals and customs are observed at this time), the significance of the funeral cortege, the tradition of joint burial plots. Finally, we shall reflect upon headstones and how Gypsy and Traveller memorials are both sites of contention and comfort.

The paper is based on co-produced, primary research conducted by community researchers from the Derbyshire Gypsy Liaison Group, and a sociologist from Anglia Ruskin University.

## **Detached from Death: non-federally recognized indigenous peoples' missing rights**

**Katie Stringer Clary**

Since 1990, museums, universities, and public institutions in the United States who receive federal funding have been obligated to consult with federally recognized Native American tribes to identify and sometimes repatriate human remains, items of cultural patrimony, and other sacred and funerary belongings. The passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) is seen by many as a watershed moment that provides Native Americans with sovereignty and power to reclaim their heritage and ancestors that were collected by colonizing forces. For many groups, however, NAGPRA does not apply. On the East Coast of the United States this is particularly problematic as many tribes hold state, but not federal, recognition, and as a result are left out because of the colonialist parameters set out in the law. This paper details the ways in which NAGPRA and other federal legislation discriminates against non-federally recognized indigenous communities in the United States. The chapter will focus on the Waccamaw Indian People (WIP) of Aynor, South Carolina as a case study. Because the WIP are not federally recognized, they are prohibited from negotiating under NAGPRA for the repatriation of ancestors' remains held in museums and other repositories. They are Also unable to practice traditional burial and death rites, including the use of eagle Feathers, because of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918 (16 U.S.C. 703-712).

## **'Sarab katarb' (the ledger) of life and death: a relational auto-ethnographic conversation reflecting on cultural and racialised histories and lived experiences. Sukhbinder Hamilton, Jane Ribbens McCarthy and Berenice Golding**

**Jane McCarthy and Sukhbinder Hamilton**

This presentation contributes to emerging decolonising approaches challenging current individualised and medicalised framings of 'bereavement'. Here we consider aspects of our on-going collaboration working with our innovative methodology of sociologically informed auto-ethnographic conversations (Golding et al, in press; Hamilton et al, 2022). As Chang (2016:43) observes, auto-ethnography 'transcends mere narration of self to engage in

cultural analysis and interpretation'. Drawing on our own complex, intersectional identities and family histories, we explore our experiences and emotive journeys with death and its aftermath, embedded as such experiences are in everyday on-going relational lives (Ribbens McCarthy et al, 2023). As we seek to 'make sense' of our experiences, we reflect on our cultural histories as they are interwoven with colonialist legacies and dynamics of power and inequality. In this presentation we focus particularly on unexpected deaths, patterned as mortality is by inequality, and building on the theme of life and death's 'sarb katarb'. Cultural expectations and explanations offer differing rhetorics and resources for meaning-making in response to (multiple or otherwise unexpected) deaths, varying, for example, from 'fate', 'cursed', 'God's Will', to the randomness of 'the universe'. We explore such resonances as they arise from our auto-ethnographic conversations.

## **Thursday 6 June 2024 - 4pm - 5.20pm**

### **11. Bereavement and grief**

#### **The loss of parents in later life**

##### **Bethany Morgan Brett**

The psychological impact the loss of an older parent has on the adult child is often underplayed. This presentation focuses on the experience of loss which arises from the witnessing the cognitive and physical decline in an older parent's health, evoking fears for the parent's future and existential anxiety for the adult child. It will show that bereaved adult children experience a greater awareness of personal mortality, increased existential sensitivity, a reprioritisation of life goals, and a recalibration of relationship in the external world and the intra-psycho space. The presentation will also highlight the experience of loss and grief that can occur before the physical death, and this is an experience which is commonly disenfranchised.

#### **Humanising the coronial system: findings from the Voicing Loss study. Professor J Jacobson, Dr A Murray (ICPR, University of London); L Templeton (CDAS, Bath)**

##### **Lorna Templeton**

By law, bereaved people have certain rights to participate in the coronial process. Government policy and Chief Coroners have emphasised that they should be 'at the heart' of the process. Voicing Loss explored what is – according to law and policy, and as experienced in practice – and what could and should be their role. We interviewed 89 bereaved respondents, 82 professionals and 19 witnesses across England and Wales.

While there was broad consensus that bereaved people should be at the heart of the process, bereaved respondents described how they often felt excluded from, and poorly treated by, coronial professionals. It was also clear that their hopes and expectations of the process were often not fulfilled, and they were often unhappy with ways in which the personhood of the deceased was represented and reflected. Exclusion and poor treatment can cause emotional harm to individuals who are grieving and may already feel marginalised and disenfranchised. Conversely, the positive impacts of inclusion and good treatment are far-reaching.

We will summarise our findings, and our recommendations for improvements to practice. We suggest that what is needed is a coronial process that better facilitates the effective participation of bereaved people and has humanity at its heart.

### **The 'means to grieve': Relational emotion work in the endeavour for authentic expression**

**Georgie Akehurst**

This paper looks to extend the sociality of grief through a relational and spatial theoretical lens. In moving away from the empirical focus on individual grievers and towards a more relational focus, my PhD thesis offers a way to explore how members of social networks (family members, friends and colleagues) perform emotion work (Hochschild 1983) in response to others' grief and therefore become the 'means' by which grievers express grief authentically. To conceptualise this process, I draw on spatial metaphors to explore 'feeling landscapes' as embodied characterisations of how people navigate and negotiate emotions in a relational manner. Grievers often become 'feeling occupiers' during periods of reduced capacity to perform emotion work. Such occupiers require expanded space for the process of 'enfranchisement' – an inversion of Doka's (1989) disenfranchisement – to occur. However, such space is not statically offered by social others. It requires a process of spatial 'groundskeeping' by social others, encompassing spatial reorganisation and emotion work. This paper attempts to address the 'joy deficit' in sociology (Shuster & Westbrook, 2022) by exploring the roles social others construct and perform in socially acknowledging loss and grief.

### **Finding that Soft Place to Land: Exploring the Necessity of Community for Grief-Induced Activists**

**Chris Bobel**

As Judith Herman (2023) asserts, trauma is a social problem, not an individual one. It requires collective and sustained acknowledgement. For some, this acknowledgement is expressed through what I call 'accidental activism' that emerges in the afterlives of traumatic loss. This paper is grounded in in-depth interview with 70+ activists and informed by Ann Cvetovich 's (2003) articulation of how communities process trauma, research on the place of emotions in shaping activism (see Gould, 2009) and literature that resists the idea of closure as the most rational response to grief. (see Berns, 2011 and Boss, 2022). It explores how and why grief transforms into grievance. Of course, grief-inspired activist work does not come without its hazards, and it is not equally available to all. Realities of class, gender and race shape who occupies the role of activist and the degree to which the activism is taken seriously. But the benefits are also profound. For some, the activism creates a community of grievers who provide networks of emotional support. In particular, for Black mothers who lost their children to police violence, community was especially important. It was forged through fundraisers, legislative strategy sessions, lobbying days, press junkets, and participation in issue-oriented conferences, and it was in these spaces where the mothers felt most at home, or as one accidental activist put it, "where I could actually breathe."

**Thursday 6 June 2024 - 7pm - 8pm**

**In Conversation with [Professor Stefan Timmermans](#), Professor of Sociology at UCLA**

### **The Unclaimed: Abandonment and Hope**

For centuries, people who died destitute or alone were buried in potter's fields—a Dickensian end that poor families tried to avoid by joining burial societies and forgoing life's necessities to buy burial insurance. Today, more and more next of kin in the US are abandoning their dead, leaving it to local governments to dispose of the bodies. Common explanations blame rising funeral costs, homelessness, and the entwined epidemics of drug addiction and untreated mental illnesses. Certainly, these are factors contributing to the rising numbers of Americans who have no next of kin willing or able to claim their bodies when they die. However, this study, which draws on extensive participant-observation, interviews, archival research, and quantitative analyses, locates a different and far greater problem: social isolation caused by eroding family ties. In this talk I address the roots of this erosion, discussing how changes in household demographics, widespread family estrangement, and restrictive laws around who qualifies as bureaucratically legitimate kin) contribute to the rise of unclaimed bodies. Simply put, we live in a diversity of family forms, but at critical life moments those diversities are not recognized. In this talk, I explain who the unclaimed dead are, the factors that lead to their abandonment after death, and the role the state is increasingly forced to play as a result of the fracturing of family ties.

For those who want to learn more, Stefan has recently written [a book on this](#), with [Dr Pamela Prickett](#).

**Friday 7 June 2024 - 9am - 10am**

### **Dying to D.I.Y - a home funeral approach to the dead**

**Rebecca Lyons**

There is a growing movement of people looking to reclaim the rites and rituals around their dead through empowering families and communities to be hands on in caring for their people, conducting funeral, and arranging body disposal. There are many reasons people come to this movement which include - a need for a little social justice (funerals are expensive), searching for a different grief and bereavement outcome and through (bad experiences) and through those that have experienced how different death can be and they want to tell others about it. It is about educating people, advocating for their rights and supporting them to be the care givers to their people – making the last thing they do for their person, an act of service.

Many of us working in the space know the difference that can happen when a family care for their dead, I have experienced it – five times.

In this multi-media presentation I will take people on a photographic journey of the five deaths of my people – my great aunt, grandmother, father, brother and mother. Each death was different; suicide, sudden and traumatic death, nursed dying at home – they all come with their stories and lessons and ultimately, they show people what is possible for a family to do when a person is dying.

## **Death in Gaza: The Rule of Law, Belonging and Funerary Rituals**

**Catriona Jarvis**

This panel explores the impact of the escalation of violence against fundamental human rights, in particular the right to life and to dignity in death in the context of the current conflict between Israel and Palestine in Gaza.

Death and extreme traumatic images and narratives are pervasive yet heavily mediated. The panel is structured around 3 pillars: death and burial; cultural representation of death; death and human dignity and thus addresses the following questions:

How does the 'war' on Gaza affect funerary rituals? How does the community bury its dead when tens of thousands are killed and there is no cemetery, no graveyard?

How do narratives portraying grief and death in Gaza presented by the global television broadcaster Al Jazeera differ, as between the English language and Arabic language version broadcasts?

Finally, how do we restore what is left of human dignity, for the dead, their families and communities and for those who witness, by proxy, these events?

**Friday 7 June 2024 - 10.10am - 11.10am**

### **15. Open stream 1**

#### **Gen Z's View of Death in the Era of Electronic Games: Exploring the Influence of Meticulously Crafted Characters' Death in PC Gaming and Mobile Gaming**

**Chenyang Guo**

Generation Z (aka Gen Z, iGen, or centennials) refers to the generation born between 1997 and 2012, following the Millennials (Meola, 2023). Gen Z is growing up in a highly digital world and heavily influenced by technology for work, study, communicating and play. Electronic games, particularly PC gaming and mobile gaming, takes up a lot of their playtime. PC gaming and mobile gaming are becoming industrialized. While ensuring a large amount of text content, the emotional and humanistic nature of the storyline in games have not been reduced due to the heavy involvement of technology. In the virtual game world, death is no longer a taboo. In order to make the story more topical, game producers are more willing to create stories about death and loss to stimulate players' emotions. For example, good qualities displayed by sacrificing a meticulously crafted character can allow players to spend more money in the game. At the same time, many classic historical events, religious stories and ideas related to death have been adapted or reshaped. Gen Z are going through an unprecedented period of discussing death. This study aims to explore Gen Z's view of death in the era of electronic games.

#### **Grieving Beyond Borders: Rituals of Loss among Syrian 'Refugees' in Post-Earthquake Turkey**

**Ahmet Zahit Ekren**

This research analyzes the meaning of death and the rituals of loss in the context of Syrian disaster-survivor refugee communities working in the precarious informal economy in post-

earthquake Turkey. It does this by examining how their ways of representing and dealing with death, as communicated across diverse channels, are shaped by the complex network of communal, moral, and social obligations. These obligations encompass customary funerals, commitments, loyalties, and the redistribution of property and social statuses upon death. By analyzing how these dynamics shift in the context of migration, this research hopes to contribute to a deeper understanding of identity and belonging within this displaced community, according to which we can discuss an alternative ethnographic imaginary beyond methodological nationalism that externalizes refugees as strangers to a nation-state.

## **Cultural framing of migrants' grief in online newspapers during the pandemic**

### **Tram Nguyen**

This paper will examine the portrayal of migrants' grief in online newspapers during the pandemic. Nine international articles reporting on migrants' grief were eligible for inclusion and analysed using qualitative framing analysis. Our findings revealed a trend in framing migrants' grief as cultural, highlighting the role of culture as a supportive resource in the grieving process. Cultural rituals, beliefs and communal support were depicted as components that contributed to migrants' wellbeing and social belonging during times of grief.

Migrants' grief during pandemic was portrayed as an impossible situation with impossible choices due to the restriction and unprecedented circumstance. The pandemic restrictions were described as leaving migrants feeling isolated, both physically and culturally. The cultural responsibilities and expectations that migrants carried with them to their host country could not be fulfilled during the pandemic, creating a sense of burden.

By exploring how online newspaper framed migrants' grief, we gained insights into the framing of their experiences and the cultural dimensions of their grief. The implication of this research is the need for acknowledging cultural elements as integral aspects of the grieving process, especially for migrants. Furthermore, the research findings extended to policymakers and media professionals, urging them to adopt more culturally sensitive approaches to address the diversity of migrants' grief.

Co authors - Tram Nguyen, Jessica E. Young, Mary Breheny and Ágnes Szabó

## **16. Memorials and remembering**

### **Communities of the Living and Communities of the Dead: Ritual, Community and Continuing Bonds in the "New Barrows".**

#### **Jennifer Uzzell**

In 2014 Tim Daw, a farmer in Wiltshire, became the first person in around 5,000 years to build a long barrow in Britain. Nestled seamlessly into the ancient sacred landscape of West Kennet, it was filled with niches designed to hold cremated remains. All of the niches were booked within a couple of years and as a company was formed to build more long and round barrows around the south of England. This paper will examine the ways in which these barrows have led to new approaches to the ritualisation of death resulting in communities of the living interacting with communities of the dead in ways that are unique in the United Kingdom. Communities have formed around each of the barrows, comprising those who have niches reserved, and those who have loved ones interred already. The various communities of the living involved with the barrows have organically developed creative and



innovative rituals for honouring the communities of the dead within them. The result of this is to create what is essentially an Ancestral shrine, independent from any fixed or traditional ideas of religion. This paper will explore the implications of this for theories of continuing bonds.

## **United yet Distant: The National Covid Memorial Wall**

**Georgina Robinson**

This paper centres on the UK National Covid Memorial Wall (NCMW), <https://www.nationalcovidmemorialwall.org/>, a grassroots memorial located in London, directly opposite the UK Houses of Parliament, alongside the River Thames. The NCMW was conceived by a community of individuals bereaved by Covid-19 (Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice) and supported by the activist group Led by Donkeys. Some 150,000 hearts were initially hand-painted on the Wall by a team of volunteers over ten days in March 2021, and the physical memorial now continues to be added to and maintained by a group of volunteers known as 'The Friends of the Wall'.

This paper's title, 'United yet Distant', seeks to draw emphasis on the community and engagement that has been facilitated by the latter 'digitisation' efforts of the NCMW: the virtual 'Walk the Wall' feature, 'Virtual Dedication' page, and opportunity to 'Request a Dedication' to have a heart painted on the Wall on your behalf. While the physical memorial inevitably unites the bereaved and is the central focal point of that community, its concurrent digitisation facilitates much wider scope: this paper explores the significance of this digitisation and discusses the relationship between the physical and digital elements, with some comment on 'digital communities'.

## **Why save Bukit Brown? An exploratory study on a community effort to advocate for the preservation of Bukit Brown Cemetery in Singapore**

**See Mieng TAN and Darren KOH**

This paper examines a community-led effort to prevent a century-old Chinese cemetery called Bukit Brown Cemetery (BB) in central Singapore from being cleared by the government. Called 'all things Bukit Brown' ('atBB'), this community comprises volunteers from white-collared professions called 'Brownies' who have been advocating for the preservation of BB since 2012 using strategies that focus on its rich heritage, history, and habitat. As one of the largest Chinese cemeteries outside of China, BB is a record of the Chinese diaspora in early Singapore and a testament of today's global flows of migrants when descendants move abroad permanently. This paper examines the storytelling approach which involves Brownies sharing the social histories of selected deceased during their free guided walks in BB. The social histories revolve around topics like education and family which resonate well with the participants and allow the Brownies to weave their advocacy messages within. Episodic memory is also reinforced when participants recall past personal experiences and associated emotions or feelings. We argue that atBB has evoked a silent but impactful ground-up social movement to preserve BB by harnessing the shared episodic memories in relation to the social histories of the dead in their storytelling approach.

**Friday 7 June 2024 - 11.30am - 12.30pm**

## **17. History**

**'And his death moved those who no danger knew' Describing seafarers' funerals to a land dwelling audience in the age of sail**

**Dr Dan O Brien**

Seafarers were an essential part of life in long-eighteenth-century England engaged in conflict, trade and resource harvesting far beyond the certainties of the shore. Seafarers aboard vessels lived as close-knit communities surrounded by the constant dangers of the sea and dependent on each for survival. The lives of these individuals were often glamourised in print with sensational and romantic accounts of the sailors very different routines and beliefs. Death was no different and in the period we may observe numerous attempts to present the land-dwelling public with an account of the ways in which the seafaring community responded to death. This paper examines how contemporary accounts presented the unfamiliar and familiar in the different rites which followed a death onboard. Through this approach it is possible to see how these accounts upheld the character of the sailors, presenting them as pious men, but also emphasised their otherness by highlighting the differences in burial and the redistribution of possessions. It is argued that this otherness supported the central message that seafarers, whilst Christians and Britons, were clearly different to the people who lived on land.

**'In peace we will ever stay': The National Significance of Deathways in Mississippi's African-American Fraternal Orders, 1870-1930**

**Jennifer Ford**

Historian John Giggie argued that post-Reconstruction African American fraternal orders in the Southern United States, "promised a ritual life that celebrated African American achievement, health and burial insurance... [offering] a new level of control over their lives and a choice at economic advancement." (The Struggle for Equality, 199). In Mississippi, historically one of the most racially contested regions in the United States, public manifestations of mourning and burial support for African-Americans increasingly appeared by the late 1880s. These responses included, but were not limited to, cemetery spaces, funerary rites, as well fraternal rituals and burial insurance. Although a subject of debate for some, these fraternal programs and mourning rituals appealed to many different socio-economic communities, also offering African American funeral directors thriving business opportunities, rare in Southern society at that time. This presentation builds upon earlier scholarship, as well as adds a case-study investigation to such group responses to death, loss, agency, and hope within Mississippi's African-American communities during Reconstruction and the onset of the Jim Crow period. The paper will assert that the economic support and ritual offered by fraternal orders afforded a continuation of an antebellum "Good Death" paradigm, especially significant for ongoing historiographic debates about American deathways.

**Historical Death and Contemporary Communities, an example from Porto, Portugal**

**Ana Lema Seabra**

The proposed paper aims to present the “parallel” expressions of Early Modern studies of death and funerary practice on a scholarly and museum level with the more subtle expressions of grief of descendent communities.

During the Napoleonic invasions in Porto, a tragedy took place, known as the tragedy of the “ponte das barcas” a bridge located in the “Ribeira” area which collapsed under the weight of the people trying to escape conflict. While this event might be sometimes recalled in museum exhibits and conferences marking the Napoleonic Invasions and the Civil War, or when an archaeological burial site pertaining to that time is discovered.

There is a quiet constant grief undertaken by the local community that is subtle, almost unnoticed but constant. The memorial of the tragedy is always lit with candles and cared for by the local residents, surrounding churches keep ex-votos or paints of the event. For the local population in Ribeira this historical event is in many ways ever present.

**Friday 7 June 2024 - 11.30am - 12.30am**

## **18. Funerals**

### **Rituals and Last Rides: Patch Club Biker Funerals**

#### **Kathryn Berry**

The biker (motorcycle) community, particularly the 1% patch club fraternity, is a group with a strong sense of belonging and identity. This paper will examine how the rites and rituals of biker funerals reflect their immersion in a “dense circle of kinship and community” (Walter, 1954:52) that creates a neo-tribe with “tags of tribal allegiance” (Bauman 1992:137).

Often inhabiting the “liminal state” (Van Gennep, 1988:11) between lawful and unlawful behaviour, the identity as a club member often takes precedence over ‘other’ identities; a precedence that is emphasised when a biker becomes a ‘fallen brother’. Through a series of rituals, biker funerals are a mix of both totemistic military behaviours around the ‘patch’ and religious reverence shown through the funeral customs themselves. The biker’s ‘Last Ride’ alongside their club ‘family’ is a ride of ritual spectacle, reflecting the dichotomy of a rejection of societal norms whilst adhering to club protocols.

By examining examples of biker funerals and applying a theoretical approach that includes death, religion and culture, this paper analyses how these funerals reflect a creation of a new “communitas” (Turner, 2011:96) in both life and death.

### **Post-death rituals in the Community of Mourners in Fez: Negotiating Sacrality and Worldly Expectations**

#### **Yusra Sbaihi**

Relying on fieldwork in Fez, Morocco, from March 2022 to July 2023, I rehearse the negotiation of sacred and profane rituals in the funerals of Fez. Post-death protocols’ mobilization of socio-cultural expectations aim at sustaining the public image of the deceased as well as the bereaved. Nevertheless, the funeral, and the rites followed therein, underscore a subtle coexistence between the sacred and the profane, as is epitomized in the liminal state of the deceased. The funeral transpires as an event where solemn decorum is observed by mourners, yet this emotional momentousness is frequently thwarted as the community of mourners seizes the chance to socialize and catch up on the latest news in the

neighborhood, in an atmosphere bogged down by the tug-of-war between the luring sacrality of the recent deceased and the profanity of everyday life. Such negotiation is reflective of the liminality of the deceased; the funeral is marked by the presence of the body in the 'house of death', (dar el mut), i.e., where the funeral is taking place. The deceased is situated in a liminal state, between the exit of the soul, as an impersonal essence bereft of observable physicality that crosses into the invisible after-life, and the complete integration into the after-life. In this instance, the body acquires sacrality. The funeral is regimented by the community of the mourners and the bereaved to preserve not only the deceased's well-being in the after-life, but also their dignity before the mourners, where the 'right way' of mourning is not only about the social expectations, but their impingement upon and mediation of other-worldly concepts, such as tribulation, infliction and content with God's decree.

## **“We are Just asking for a room”: the lack of funeral freedom among Italian religious minorities**

**Giorgio Scalici**

In the European Union there are 47.3 million people who were born outside their resident country. More specifically, in 2009, it was estimated a Muslim population of 13 million, a Jewish population of over a million and various groups of other world religions and contemporary paganism. Despite these numbers, and even though the European Convention on Human Rights guarantee the Freedom of thought, conscience and religion, this freedom is not always guaranteed during various stage of life and death.

Indeed, many minoritarian groups are unable to carry funerals according to their tradition. This impossibility is not only against the freedom of religious expression the human rights guarantee, but it also creates traumas, hinders the opportunity for a positive and successful grieving experience and it is a real impediment for the integration of these communities into the social structure of Italy.

The aim of this project is to mix together different approaches (law, religious studies, psychology, migrant studies) to explore the current status of the religious minorities in Italy and their needs to feel welcome and respected, in life and in death.

**Friday 7 June 2024 - 1.20pm - 2.20pm**

### **19. Dying**

#### **Community partnerships for end of life companionship**

**Maggie Doherty**

The End of Life Companionship project is a collaboration between the Centre for the Art of Dying Well at St Mary's University and the St Vincent de Paul Society in England and Wales. Since April 2021, over 300 Society members have undertaken training to serve as end-of-life companions for the elderly and terminally ill. Companion volunteers can help reduce isolation, support caregivers, and complement healthcare services so people who wish to remain at home through the end of life may do so.

Following training, volunteers feel better equipped to provide presence and listening, advocacy, spiritual/religious care, and relief of loneliness and fear. Evaluations show the project has increased volunteer skills, confidence, awareness, and motivation to serve in this capacity in hospitals, hospices, care facilities, and local communities.

The research identifies four key approaches of companions that lead to outcomes like reduced anxiety and increased calmness and comfort. These include: practical support as a friend; holistic presence with individualised response; nonjudgmental listening; and continuous personalised care and advocacy.

Volunteer end-of-life companions can empower people to live well through the end of life and death itself, providing comprehensive support unmatched by professional medical roles. The project shows trained companions are a valuable community asset.

## **Informing Best-Practice and Compassionate Care: Reviewing interventions to Reduce Distress of People Living with Dementia (PLWD) in Care Homes**

**Chloe Moody**

Dementia, a terminal diagnosis recognised by WHO as a public health priority upon exceeding 55 million global cases, causes significant distress within people living with dementia (PLWD) during cognitive decline, impacting their and peers' daily wellbeing. Expressions of distress have led to physical or chemical restraints in care settings, infringing on PLWD wellbeing and human rights. Subsequently, WHO iterate the need to understand appropriate intervention to ensure high quality-of-care for PLWD in care-home settings. A scoping review was decided to evaluate approaches reducing distress of PLWD in care-homes.

We searched three electronic databases for peer-reviewed studies published in English until August 2023, yielding 63 eligible records: 11 pharmacological and 52 non-pharmacological interventions. 'Distress' was mainly measured through self and proxy reports, often targeting 'agitation' and 'disruptive behaviour'. Pharmacological interventions, primarily antipsychotics and anticonvulsants, demonstrated significant benefits. Non-pharmacological approaches, categorised as 'psychosocial,' 'physical,' 'technological,' or 'staff training,' highlighted physical and technological methods as effective, with psychosocial interventions showing promise.

Methodological limitations included small sample sizes and oversight of dementia-type or severity. Despite increasing research on distress management for PLWD, interventions require refinement. A standardised conceptualisation of distress is crucial for compassionate care, and robust study replications are needed to reinforce findings.

### **“It was completely out of the blue”: Potential causes and consequences of failing to recognise dementia to be a terminal condition**

**Fawn Harrad-Hyde**

Informal carers of people living in care homes, such as family and friends, may be involved in discussion about care and treatment options regarding deterioration and end-of-life care, alongside others, including the resident, care home staff and external healthcare professionals. Although families often want to remain involved in the person's care, they may not have a good understanding of the person's wishes and may not know what to expect as the person's condition progresses. Policy suggests advance care planning improves end-of-life care, yet planning for end-of-life when a person has dementia can be difficult, as many people do not recognise dementia to be a terminal condition. In this presentation we draw on data collected via semi-structured interviews with 40 participants (including current and bereaved family members of care home residents and care home managers) and analysed in line with constructivist thematic analysis. We explore informal carers' experiences of discussing end-of-life care in care homes and highlight some of the reasons informal carers did not recognise their relative to be approaching end-of-life. In addition, we explore the potential implications that failing to recognise dementia as a terminal condition can have for residents, families, staff and wider health and social care services.

## **20. Notable people**

### **Mourning the Ghost Rider: Meditations on the Loss of Skill and Technical Talent in Online Fan Grief Narratives for Rush's Neil Peart**

**Lee Barron**

This paper examines online fan community reactions to the death of the Canadian rock band Rush's drummer and primary lyricist, Neil Peart, who died in 2020. Considered as one of the most technically accomplished drummers in rock music history, Peart's death elicited online reactions that focused on the passing of an inspirational talent. Furthermore, Peart had written candidly of his own grieving experience for his daughter and wife in the book *Ghost Rider* (2002) and documented how a return to drumming was a crucial factor in this process. In this regard, fan postings for Peart focus on musicality rather than celebrity. The paper draws on fan mourning literature in conjunction with netnographic analysis of YouTube videos of Peart's drum solos and fan-created commemorative memorial content. It explores how the celebrity dead 'retain the ability to interact and affect individuals in society' (Penfold-Mounce, 2018: 9) in terms of fans articulating this affect as meditations on how death takes away musical virtuosity and who remember an individual who is 'yet still present and influential in their lives' (McManus, 2013: 141).

### **'In Memoriam': The Televisuality of a Hollywood Mourning Ritual**

**Deborah L. Jaramillo**

Death announcements, televised funerals, episode dedications, and large-scale memorial services, such as those on the anniversaries of national tragedies, mark television as one stop in the procession of our memorable dead. Since the 1990s, the film and television communities in Hollywood have paid tribute to their departed on a type of television program not known for somber contemplation. Derisively known as "death reels," the "In Memoriam" segments at the Academy Awards and Emmy ceremonies whittle down the long list of deceased entertainment industry workers into a manageable, song-length roster. Although the segment is criticized for being a morbid popularity contest, I argue "In Memoriam" is a legitimate mourning ritual—an amalgamation of epitaph, obituary, and eulogy—imbued with televisual language and the industry logics of the entertainment community. This paper will analyze "In Memoriam" segments from the Academy Awards and Emmys telecasts to explain their cultural value as industry-specific mourning rituals created by and for the entertainment industries. Specifically, I will place Television Studies and Death Studies in conversation to parse the function of opening remarks, montage, music, and audience participation in "In Memoriam" segments from 1994 to the present.

### **Paranormal Investigators in Burial Spaces**

**Janine Marriott and Kate Cherrell**

Many burial sites are open to local communities and may market themselves as places of community and public engagement with various hobbyist groups are aware of these spaces as viable locations for their own practices. Sites may pride themselves on the diversity of their paid public events and various community users. However, one such group of hobbyists who keenly use sites of death and burial for their enjoyment is Paranormal Investigators, or Ghost Hunters. This group is growing in popularity, as is their use of burial sites, yet such

usage goes broadly unacknowledged or is actively discouraged by site managers. With no sign of meaningful dialogue between these groups and as they are usually night time site users, there is little to no interaction between managers and hobbyist group. The impetus for this paper grew during the periods of UK Lockdown in 2020/2021 as during this time, many paranormal groups or individuals sought to retain and grow their audiences via remote means. This paper focuses on some of these more prominent influencers, their use of burial grounds, exploring the reaction of site managers, members of the public, and compares this activity to other unsanctioned and sanctioned burial ground based leisure activities.

## **Bequeathing intergenerational digital information in the digital age in the UK**

**Dr Edina Harbinja, Dr Tal Morse and Prof Lilian Edwards**

Bequeathing information from one generation to another is pivotal for community-building. Personal information and familial stories are essential to forming a sense of belonging and continuity. Today, passing of personal information is performed in and via digital media, raising new questions about information ownership and posthumous access.

Offline personal information is often subject to social norms and accessible to the family and local community. However, access to digital remains requires the involvement of technology companies. This is further exacerbated by the fact that commemoration practices are often local, while digital platforms are global. Thus, global networks and regulations interfere within bereavement and commemoration practices that used to be governed by local communities.

In this pioneering quantitative study, we examined UK residents' perceptions and behaviours regarding the bequeathment of personal digital information. A national representative survey of UK population addressed the various attitudes towards access to digital remains and its regulation. The findings reflect UK users' perceptions of utilizing digital information for commemoration as well as of posthumous privacy.

Our study reveals a desire for control over digital remains, but low awareness and utilization of existing tools. These phenomena are known in the literature as posthumous privacy paradox and the inverted posthumous privacy paradox.

### **Friday 7 June 2024 - 2.40pm - 3.40pm**

#### **21. Panel Plenary - Cultivating Collaborative Communities**

**Gayle Letherby, Beth Michael-Fox, Tamarin Norwood - Chaired Kate Woodthorpe**

Since the 1980's the rapid global neo-liberalisation (the marketisation) of higher education has seen quantification colonising every part of university practice, (re)creating normalised and ideological ways of thinking, doing and being. Internal and external measures of 'quality assurance' are the dominant regulatory tools in the management of higher education and 'efficiency' savings have led to automated processes in the daily work of university employees and our teaching and research activities and relationships are measured in metrics. This denies the embodied, emotional, political experience of our daily working experiences. With reference to concepts such as care-ful as opposed to care-less practices (e.g. Rogers 2017), slow scholarship (e.g. Dionne 2021) and intimate professionalism (e.g. Kelly 2015), and drawing on examples from our own individual and joint working practices we (the panel members) reflect on alternative, collaborative ways of working, learning and being in higher education; on cultivating (and maintaining) collaborative communities. In the



session there will be plenty of time for discussion and sharing of challenges and strategies for working in positive collaborative communities, so please come along with stories and concerns to share.

### **Friday 7 June 2024 - 3.50pm - 5.10pm**

#### **22. Open stream 2**

##### **Implementing the compassionate communities approach within the classroom: The promises and perils of discussing death with students.**

**Samantha Teichman**

In shaping curricula for the social sciences, specifically on topics of families, aging, and health, the tendency is to place death-related topics at the course's end. What if we redesigned classes to prioritize discussions on death and dying? The compassionate communities approach asserts that these subjects, traditionally confined to professionals, extend beyond such boundaries. Educators, uniquely situated in the realms of families, aging, and health, can facilitate public engagement with mortality, necessitating an exploration of personal and societal perspectives on death and dying. This paper advocates for educators to develop effective engagement strategies within these realms, stressing the importance of integrating death and dying education into the broader social sciences. Examining the transformative impact on higher education and communities through grief literacy, this presentation encourages educators to incorporate resources like Death Cafes and art for critical discussions on how grief, death, and dying shape life courses within families, aging, and health. This approach empowers educators to cultivate a compassionate and informed learning environment.

Authors: Samantha Teichman (Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, BC), Albert Banerjee (St. Thomas University, Fredericton, NB; NB Research Chair in Community Health and Aging)

##### **The Grief Experience of Ukrainian and Palestinian Immigrants in Canada**

**Zohreh Bayatrizi**

In the context of the current wars going on in Ukraine and Gaza, we are conducting a study among participants who immigrated to Canada from Ukraine or who are Palestinian in origin. This is part of a broader research project on the experience of grief among immigrants who have come to Canada from countries that experience turmoil, such as war and political violence. The study seeks to document the 'vicarious' experience of violence and loss 'back home' among the participants, how it shapes their diaspora identity and sense of belonging, and what impact it has on their everyday life and mental health. While there is a range of psychological studies on grief and loss among immigrants, the topic is rather neglected by sociologists, leaving major gaps in our sociological understanding of loss and grief. Our previous study of a similar topic indicates that among immigrants the experience of grief can be closely intertwined with identity, the sense of home, politics, and perceptions of justice.

## **Fading names on precarious crosses: death and memory of (in)visible migrants.**

### **Michelangelo Giampaoli**

Within the long and complex history of migrations between Europe and Brazil, the subject of transgender people leaving Brazil to go work, live and - sometimes - die in Italy is generally 'uncomfortable' and little debated. Even more obscure seems to be the question of what happens to those individuals who die in a context of migration and daily life often marked by job insecurity and socio-economic and health precariousness.

Starting an ethnographic investigation in two local cemeteries, we aim to investigate the fate of the bodies, remains and/or ashes of Brazilian transsexual/cross-dresser people living in a mid-size city in Central Italy. Often invisible to most of the population, victims of prejudice and stereotypes, systematically exposed to symbolic and real violence, these people seem to live at the margins of society both in life and after death. To understand what happens to their bodies, identifying who takes care of them and manages the ritual process and how it happens, why some funerary practices are carried out or not, and how long these remains will occupy a space within the cemetery is not only an exercise in anthropology, but also in citizenship and respect for life, memory, and human dignity.

## **'There was no otherwise': Narratives of The Space Between for Nine Kenyan Children**

### **Callie Daniels-Howell**

End of life care for children is gaining focus in postcolonial contexts under Western goals of 'good' death focused on advance, open awareness of dying and controlled preparation for death. In settings such as Kenya, where impending death is not openly discussed and illness and death experience may be shaped by structural constraints and communal meaning-making, critical anthropological analysis of complex interactions of power, agency, and culture in constructions of child dying and its meaning is needed. This ethnographic study took an iterative, care-centred approach of family-led accompaniment. We engaged the families of nine children who died from cancer in March and April 2022 to coproduce narratives of the space between their child's life and death over the course of the first year of bereavement, seeking to understand critically how children in Kenya die, as an active social process, and how this is experienced by families. These narratives suggest multiple, non-linear spaces between illness, death and beyond that demonstrate complex interactions between culture, community, class, and politics. Children's illness, dying, death, bereavement and their dynamic (un)certainities are as much shaped by social belief as by structures of inequity, suggesting important challenge and opportunity for shaping care at life's physical edge.

## **23. Mediating Mortality: Evaluating Prosectorship in Anatomy Education**

### **Myriam Nafte**

Prosectors facilitate the transition of theoretical knowledge into practical application through the preparation of bodies into cadaveric specimens. They are the quintessential mediators in anatomical pedagogy. Their role, historically utilitarian, now exemplifies a bridge between the life and death of the donor and their subsequent transformation into vital academic resources. This comprehensive research project evaluates prosectorship in various anatomy programs through a combined scientometric and ethnographic approach, to quantify and qualify their pedagogical influence. Scientometric indicators, encompassing cadaver utilization rates, emergent technologies, and publication analyses, are integrated with

ethnographic fieldwork, including direct observation and in-depth interviews, to elucidate evolving prosector responsibilities and interactions within the laboratory environment. Central to this inquiry is the exploration of the ethical dimension of prosectorship. Prosector engagement with the deceased has become increasingly complex and multipurposed: while the role demands exacting professional standards and objectivity it simultaneously venerates and advocates for the sanctity of donor bodies. Their concomitant roles as both educators and moral custodians have come to be instrumental in shaping their own and students' perceptions of mortality and dissection.