RESEARCH ARTICLE

Angels and the Digital Afterlife: Death and Nonreligion Online

Tim Hutchings

This brief article aims to draw the attention of nonreligion researchers to a growing interdisciplinary research field: the study of death online. In digitally networked societies, the dead are remembered online, and their survivors can use digital resources to express grief, find support and construct memorials. New norms and languages of mourning are emerging, including new references to heaven, angels and communication with the dead. The boundary between religion and nonreligion is blurred in these new practices, but we know very little as yet about what this blurring actually means to the bereaved. This article will outline the main approaches to religion in studies of death online, draw on nonreligion research to critique these approaches, and call for new directions and methods in future studies of nonreligion and media. It will argue that scholars of religion and nonreligion have much to offer to the study of death online, and this article acts as an introduction and an invitation to future interdisciplinary exploration.

Introduction

The internet is embedded in contemporary society (Hine 2015), part of the infrastructure of our work, family and social lives. This article aims to encourage the reader to look more closely at the significance of this entanglement for one specific aspect of contemporary expressions of religion and nonreligion.[1] We will focus on one growing area of interdisciplinary research: the digital constellation of communications, norms, networks, platforms and products now emerging around death and bereavement. Scholars of death and grief online have often noted the frequency with which participants refer to heaven, angels and the afterlife (e.g. Walter et al. 2012), but very little research has yet been conducted on this topic by scholars who are explicitly interested in religion, nonreligion or secularity. This article will explore some of these innovations in death and grief online, highlight the questions they raise for nonreligion and secularity studies and suggest some methods for addressing them.

In some areas of the internet, the lines between religious and nonreligious ideas, practices and identities are clearly drawn. Atheists, agnostics and religious practitioners battle through forums and video blogs, form rival groups on social media, and share satirical memes mocking one another's failings and inconsistencies. This kind of skirmishing has been widely analyzed: see, for example, David Nash's (2002) discussion of online freethought culture; Christopher Smith and Richard Cimino's (2012) study of secularist activism in American blogs and videos; and Stephen Pihlaja's (2018) linguistic analysis of YouTube flame wars between atheists, Muslims and

University of Nottingham, GB
tim.hutchings@nottingham.ac.uk

Christians. Social media can play a crucial role in the de-privatization of anti-religious identities (Ribberink, Achterberg and Houtman, 2013), providing space for individuals to articulate their opposition to religion and its public influence. These online struggles serve to reinforce religious and nonreligious identities and to normalize their public expression.

Elsewhere online, the boundary between religion and nonreligion becomes much harder to trace. If we only pay attention to the most explicit forms of anti-religion, we risk missing some of the more subtle and interesting negotiations of what it actually means for a person, action or utterance to be (non)religious – including whole areas of activity in which the boundary doesn't seem to mean very much at all. As Dusty Hoesly argues, 'religious, spiritual, secular, and nonreligious identities are not stable, unitary formations', but performances, 'discursive, relational constructions contingently articulated in particular locations at specific times for particular purposes' (2015: 9). Researchers interested in how nonreligion is practiced and experienced need to look out for those performances, and to develop methodologies that are sensitive to their transient contexts and implications.

Death remains closely entangled with religion, even in highly secularized societies. In the UK, for example, church funerals have declined in popularity but remain much more common than church attendance (Field 2011). Death is also a space for cultural, ideological and symbolic innovation, and new cultural forms like "life-centred funerals" (Bailey and Walter 2016), humanist funerals (Engelke 2015) and natural burials (Davies and Rumble 2012) have attracted much academic attention. Death offers an opportunity for individuals, families and communities to reengage temporarily with established traditions, or to find new ways to express their values and

aspirations. Death is an existential provocation, threatening long-accepted structures of meaning and purpose, and for some individuals this generates space, energy and freedom to change. As this article will show, the return to tradition and the drive to innovate have both emerged around death online.

Literature Review: Death Online

Innovation at the end of life has often been connected to the domestication of new technologies. In the nineteenth century, the invention of photography was followed by the emergence of new death customs, including post-mortem photographs of the dead body and "spirit" photographs of the returning ghost. Spiritualist pioneers in the United States and Britain challenged received Christian ideas by promising evidence of a different kind of life after death (McDannell and Lang 2001: 292), and they used photography, the telegraph and other technological developments to support their claims (Lindsey 2017: 113–157).

The widespread adoption of digital media has also been accompanied by new developments in how people respond to the approach of death and its aftermath (Walter 2018). It is now commonplace to discover news of a death or public disaster online, through email, news websites or reactions on social media. Funerals and memorial events can be shared with distant audiences through livestreaming, selfies and social media updates (Gibbs et al. 2015). Memories and expressions of emotion circulate online through social networks, and can be edited together to produce YouTube videos or curated memorial pages (Greenhill and Fletcher 2013). The bereaved look online for support, in public conversations or private communities of shared experience (Lagerkvist and Andersson 2017). These kinds of online interactions have at times attracted hostile reactions, including disputes between online mourners (Marwick and Ellison 2012), mockery from journalists (Gibbs et al. 2015) and insults from online trolls (Phillips 2011). These digital death phenomena become particularly visible after the death of a celebrity. Fans now customarily use the internet to share the news, demonstrate their grief and build memorials, all under the curious gaze of news reporters (Haughey and Campbell 2013).

One of the key findings of research on digital death, at least in Western contexts, has been that the bereaved talk to the dead online (Walter et al. 2012). Grieving friends and family members continue their relationships with the dead by sending them messages, using all the media discussed above and more. These messages share a largely consistent vision, in which the dead live on in a world parallel to our own (Brubaker and Vertesi 2010). Their world is full of vibrant social activity, music and parties, and the dead are still close enough to hear the living. That other world is accessible to all, and today's survivors will eventually be reunited with their beloved dead.

Digital Death and Religion

Research into what happens online after a death has uncovered some elements that might appear religious, at least in origin. For example, studies of English-language online communication with and about the dead report widespread references to heaven (Brubaker and Vertesi 2010) and angels (Walter 2011, 2016), usually without engaging with relevant scholarship in religious studies or the study of nonreligion and secularity. Only a few scholars have explicitly tried to explore the religious dimensions of digital death and afterlife, and studies of digital death and nonreligion are even rarer.

Significant gaps therefore remain in our understanding. For example, how do these online phenomena differ across religious and nonreligious traditions or geographical regions? English-language research on death and digital media has been concentrated in Protestant or post-Protestant countries, particularly the United States and northern Europe. Much of the world remains unstudied, although there have been a few intriguing exceptions, including Sam Han's (2016) study of celebrity suicide in South Korea as an example of civil religion and Daisuke Uriu's and William Odom's (2016) field test of an interactive memorial object based on a Japanese Buddhist home altar (see also Uriu and Okude 2010). Carl Öhman, Robert Gorwa and Luciano Floridi recently called for new study of the automation of online religion, using a case study of Arabic-language Islamic prayer apps on Twitter that promise 'to continue posting even after the user's death', but note that 'little is known about the attitude of the larger Islamic community' to these innovations (2019: 335).

Even in the West, we know very little about how individuals and groups draw on their performances of 'religious, spiritual, secular, and nonreligious identities' (Hoesly 2015: 9) to respond to, encourage or critique the emerging cultures of online mourning. In religious communities, is anyone issuing guidance and advice about how to grieve online, or trying to shape the death practices of the societies around them? If so, is anyone paying attention? In Sweden, for example, the national Church has begun an annual online campaign to encourage Swedes to talk more openly about bereavement (Hutchings 2017). New case studies of individual, small-group and large community actions are needed to help trace some of the influences now shaping the trajectories of mourning online. These case studies must include those who explore their religious and nonreligious commitments outside of community contexts, because these individuals may still be influential voices in journalism or on social media.

On a smaller scale, how do religious individuals and communities find their own appropriate ways to grieve in digital environments? Elizabeth Drescher's (2012) case study of an American evangelical Christian community mourning the death of a college student showed the negotiations that can take place as individual grievers choose what to share online, which media to use, when to participate and how to frame their actions within a shared worldview, using a shared language. Very few comparable case studies have so far been conducted in other religious contexts, or contexts shaped by explicit distance from religion.

The few scholars of digital death who have mentioned religion have proposed three conflicting arguments: the digital afterlife is compatible with traditional religion; it is not religious at all; or it reflects and contributes to a new kind of religion. We find the first and simplest approach in the work of Human-Computer Interaction researchers

Jed Brubaker and Janet Vertesi, who argue that the use of social media like Facebook 'to continuously communicate with a user in the afterlife… can be framed as [an] example of "technospiritual" practice' (2010: 3). In their analysis of MySpace profiles, they report that 'many online messages are laden with the religious beliefs of the User and the friends, sometimes articulated and sometimes unsaid'; for example, comments implying that the dead live on in heaven 'express the specific commitment to the Christian afterlife wherein believers will be reunited' (2010: 3).

The second approach is more dismissive. Christian theologian Erinn Staley (2014) argues that we should not take these practices literally. No one expects the dead to talk back to them on Facebook, she claims, so they don't really believe that they're alive. Talking to the dead is not religious, because it is not motivated by the right kind of belief.

The third approach is more complicated, proposing some areas of stability while identifying some points of change. According to Drescher (2012), the mythology of the digital afterlife might actually change religion itself. One of Drescher's former students was an active Christian, and when she died, her friends continued to speak to her online (2012: 215). For her friends, the student's Facebook wall became not just a memorial but 'a sanctuary, a prayer wall, a site of hope and remembrance' (2012: 207). Drescher sees this as something new: digital media have broken down the barriers between life and death and given rise to a new 'shared theology' (2012: 215). The digital afterlife is still religious, but the content and practice of religion is changing.

Of these three approaches, the third has been most widely shared among writers interested in religion, death and media. Anita Greenhill and Gordon Fletcher, for example, argue that at least some ostensibly non-religious online memorial sites are so embedded in Christian understandings of life after death that 'the construction of any "non-Christian" memorial' would be 'potentially problematic' (2013: 202). At the same time, they suggest, while online memorials 'are not challenging the nuclear core of traditional beliefs', they are at least 'appending and expanding on ancillary beliefs' (2013: 202), for example by encouraging more open talk about angels.

Tony Walter's work also advocates a transformational understanding of media's impact on religion. Walter has written extensively about angels (e.g. Walter 2016), and attributes their popularity in part to the technological affordances and linguistic cultures of online media. The online dead are always accessible, always with us, and often unquiet, surprising us with by emails, images and notifications. This combination of presence and agency is characteristic of the angel (Walter 2018: 8), and so, perhaps, is digitality itself:

> Angels are messengers, traveling from heaven to earth and back, and cyberspace is an unseen medium for the transfer of messages through unseen realms, so there may well be a resonance between how some people imagine online messaging and how they imagine angels. (Walter et al. 2012: 293)

Walter sees the prevalence of angels in online death communication as 'a new religious discourse' (2018: 8) and an aspect of 'vernacular religion' (2016). Walter argues that 'this idea/belief/hope' (2016: 19) is not a 'coherent worldview' or theological creed but 'situational', 'articulated when needed to cope with adversity' (2016: 20). The angel is a 'linguistic resource', deployed in locations where such language is accepted in order to express an idea of continued relationship with the dead that users might perhaps '*like* rather than *believe*' (2016: 21). Nonetheless, Walter still categorises the angel as a religious figure: it might be 'a coping mechanism', but 'this, rather than a transformative worldview, is what religion is for many people' (2016: 20).

Digital Death and Nonreligion

The role of secularity and nonreligion in digital death practices has received even less attention than religion. William Sims Bainbridge has described his personal use of avatars to recreate dead members of his family, and explicitly identifies as an atheist (2013: 197). He suggests that this approach might appeal to others who are 'drawn to religion, yet find it less than fully satisfactory':

> Since many modern people lack complete conviction that their deceased loved ones dwell happily in Heaven, they may wish to do as I have done, conducting virtual resurrections via Internet. (2013: 197)

This specific online practice is far from mainstream, and we certainly need more case studies of different kinds of nonreligious engagement with death and the digital. What is most telling here, however, is Bainbridge's willingness to borrow from religious ideas and symbols to construct his own meaningful practice of memorialization, without compromising his own atheism or committing himself to a new kind of religion.

Bainbridge's example of atheist veneration should encourage us to be cautious about Walter's categorization of angel language as a form of 'vernacular religion' (2016). We should be similarly cautious about the efforts of religious studies scholars to claim the territory of digital death as a form of "implicit religion", "ritual" or "belief". Rebecca Haughey and Heidi Campbell, for example, argue that online grief for celebrities is a kind of implicit religion, because it amounts to the 'worship' of 'new-age saints' (2013: 104) through rituals that 'create a religious experience' (2013: 103). Michael Jackson, they argue, becomes a 'divine martyr' (2013: 109), persecuted by the media, and this argument is supported by a content analysis of the presence of 'explicitly religious terms' like angel, heaven and God in fan messages (2013: 110). A more measured argument about Jackson is proposed by Jimmy Sanderson and Pauline Hope Cheong, who argue that 'religious terminology functions to comfort fans when celebrities pass away and helps them in coping with this loss' (2010: 330). According to Sanderson and Cheong, 'people perceive that religious discourse is a "common language" that they can use to communicate both their affection and contempt for celebrities' (2010: 338) – but they do not argue that this makes fan activity a kind of religion.

Abby Day's interviews with nonreligious individuals suggest a helpful way forward. Day reports that atheists can believe in and sense the presence of angels, ghosts and other beings (2011: 99), but refuses to categorise their experiences as "religious". Applying this category to those who would not choose it for themselves, she argues, 'obscures the significance of the beliefs of people who reported such experiences and… also removes as an appropriate object of inquiry the non-religious orientations of those who experience uncanny or transformative events' (2011: 113). Instead, Day suggests, we should see stories of ghostly experiences as a socially-embedded 'performative ritual' (2011: 110), an embodied and emotionally-charged attempt to belong. Her interviewees were 'creating and sustaining' their belief in a continuing relationship with the dead by 'performing' that belief through the telling of stories (2011: 107). Experiencing and communicating with the dead is not (necessarily) religious, because it is not (always) embedded in a worldview that connects the individual to gods and divinities. Talking to the dead might be motivated by belief, but Day insists that belief itself is not necessarily religious.

Lois Lee also argues for the separation of belief from religion, preferring to study fragmentary and overlapping beliefs about meaning, purpose and what happens after death. Rejecting any language that might privilege religious concerns over the secular, like the "foundational", the "ultimate", or the "transcendent" (2015: 187), Lee suggests instead that these beliefs should be considered "existential". Existential beliefs are the building blocks of "existential cultures", including theism but also humanism, agnosticism, subjectivism and an anti-existential rejection of all such abstractions. These beliefs and cultures are formed through practices and relationships, and revealed to the researcher through 'fragments of articulated belief' and stories (*ibid.* p. 172).

If we apply Day and Lee's arguments to the digital environment, we can see that the religious origins of afterlife language might be less interesting than its performance and social function. Labelling online language of angels, heaven and talking to the dead as explicitly, implicitly or vernacularly "religious" can make it harder to see the more significant and complex negotiations of actual practice and experience.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Research

This very brief article has introduced some of the vast landscape of online activity revolving around death, grief, bereavement and memory. In Christian and post-Christian Western contexts, online mourners appear to draw on a worldview that shares certain themes and symbols with Christian ideas of heaven, adapted and made immediately present. The dead survive online, they are close, and they can receive messages from the living. In some cases, they are angels, active in protecting and speaking to the living. In terms of Christian theology, there are considerable divergences between this view of the afterlife and the historic and current mainstreams of Protestant doctrine (McDannell and Lang 1988). Researchers of digital death have often assumed that any reference to heaven must be

inherently religious and Christian, and we are still waiting for more nuanced studies of the boundary between religion and nonreligion in digital death. In this area, as elsewhere, sensitivity to a broader domain of nonreligious identification and belief points to the possibility and potential of much more diverse – and therefore methodologically challenging – empirical studies.

Content analysis of online postings has been the dominant methodology in studies of religion and digital death, but this quantitative approach cannot easily explore what authors mean by or hope to achieve with the words they choose. We need more qualitative approaches to discover how performances of digital grief are enacted and why. Day explored nonreligious belief using interviews, carefully designed to avoid religious language and assumptions (2011, p. 36). The very different case studies of Drescher (2012) and Bainbridge (2013) both rely on long-term engagement, combining ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approaches.

Helpful research ideas could also be drawn from the field of Human-Computer Interaction. HCI researchers have found that creating new technologies, either as paper designs or in working forms, can be a valuable way to explore users' attitudes, expectations and practices – including attitudes to spirituality and religion (Uriu and Okode 2010; Buie and Blythe 2013; Coulton 2015; Uriu and Odom 2016). Design has very rarely been used as a method in the study of religion and nonreligion, but a collaborative interdisciplinary project could be a fruitful experiment.

In her PhD research, for example, HCI researcher Elizabeth Buie first conducted 24 in-depth interviews about transcendent experiences with individuals who identified as religious, atheist or "spiritual but not religious" (Buie 2018, p. 64). She then used insights from these interviews to develop *Transcendhance*, a game that 'fosters an atmosphere of imagination, fun, and play to stimulate creative ideas for techno-spiritual artefacts' to enhance such experiences (2018: 145). Buie describes her playful approach as "peripheral design", '"sneaking up" on lived experience by addressing context and enabling the consideration of ineffable experience through storytelling, metaphors, and oblique imagery' (2018: abstract). Buie's oblique approach to understanding experience through creative play might be ideally suited to exploring the uncertain, context-specific and situational (Walter 2016: 20) character of beliefs and practices about death, the afterlife and digital media.

I will end this brief article with two calls to action. First, we urgently need a much wider range of cross-cultural studies of death and grief online (as of other forms of religious/nonreligious existential experience), to balance the current wealth of case studies from the English-speaking (particularly North American) world. Second, we must build on the insights from Dusty Hoesly (2015), Abby Day (2013) and Lois Lee (2015) outlined above, and approach commitments to "religion", "nonreligion" and expressions of "belief" as unstable and temporary performances, embedded in social contexts and articulated for specific purposes. Individuals decide how to speak publicly about and to the dead, how to find meaning and purpose in

their experiences, how to preserve memories and how to share them, and that includes deciding when to deploy religious language and to perform aspects of their existential beliefs and cultures. Engaging with the field of nonreligion and secularity studies can help death researchers to sharpen our awareness of what is really at stake in these moments of decision. Instead of studying the digital afterlife as a worldview borrowed from religion, it will be considerably more interesting to broaden our analyses to include practices used to engage with the afterlife in all their diversity, paying attention to the social functions of ritual and the identities and relationships constructed by online talk.

Note
[1] This article defines nonreligion in line with Johannes Quack's (n.d.) relational approach, which encompasses 'phenomena that are considered to be not religious, but are nevertheless related to "religion" in important ways' – with the exact nature of that relatedness open to empirical study.

Competing Interests
The author has no competing interests to declare.

References
Bailey, T and **Walter, T.** 2016. Funerals against death. *Mortality*, 21(2): 149–166. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2015.1071344

Bainbridge, W. 2013. Perspectives on virtual veneration. *The Information Society*, 29(3): 196–202. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01972243.2013.777312

Brubaker, J and **Vertesi, J.** 2010. Death and the social network. *Presented at the CHI 2010 Workshop "HCI at the End of Life: Understanding Death, Dying, and the Digital"*, Atlanta, GA, USA [online]. Available from: www.dgp.toronto.edu/~mikem/hcieol/subs/brubaker.pdf [Accessed 14 February 2018].

Buie, E. 2018. Exploring techno-spirituality: Design strategies for transcendent user experiences. Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University. Available from: http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/33799/1/Elizabeth%20Anne%20Buie%20Final%20Thesis.pdf [Accessed 01 July 2019].

Buie, E and **Blythe, M.** 2013. Spirituality: There's an app for that! (but not a lot of research). *Proceedings of CHI 13: Human Factors in Computing Systems, Paris, France, April 27–May 02*, 2315–2324. New York: ACM. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/2468356.2468754

Coulton, P. 2015. Digital installations in Hawkshead Church. [video] Available from: http://imagination.lancs.ac.uk/articles/Digital_Installations_Hawkshead_Church [Accessed 14 february 2018].

Davies, D and **Rumble, H.** 2012. *Natural burial: Traditional-secular spiritualities and funeral innovation*. London: Continuum.

Day, A. 2011. *Believing in belonging*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Drescher, E. 2012. Pixels perpetual shine: The mediation of illness, dying, and death in the digital age. *CrossCurrents*, 62(2): 204–218. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1939-3881.2012.00230.x

Engelke, M. 2015. The coffin question: Death and materiality in humanist funerals. *Material Religion*, 15(1): 26–48. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2752/205393215X14259900061553

Field, C. 2011. The ways we say goodbye. [online]. *British Religion in Numbers*. Available from: http://www.brin.ac.uk/2011/the-ways-we-say-goodbye/ [Accessed 14 February 2018].

Gibbs, M, Meese, J, Arnold, M, Nansen, B and **Carter, M.** 2015. #Funeral and Instagram: Death, social media, and platform vernacular. *Information, Communication & Society*, 18(3): 255–268. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2014.987152

Greenhill, A and **Fletcher, G.** 2013. Life, death, and everyday experience of social media. In: Gillespie, M, Herbert, D and Greenhill, A (eds.), *Social Media and Religious Change*, 201–218. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Han, S. 2016. Celebrity death, media events and civil religiosity: An interpretive media sociology of the suicide of Choi Jin-sil. *Asian Communication Research*, 13(2): 9–26. DOI: https://doi.org/10.20879/acr.2016.13.2.9

Haughey, R and **Campbell, H.** 2013. Modern-day martyrs: Fans' online reconstruction of celebrities as divine. In: Gillespie, M, Herbert, D and Greenhill, A (eds.), *Social Media and Religious Change*, 103–120. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Hine, C. 2015. *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, Embodied and Everyday*. London: Bloomsbury.

Hoesly, D. 2015. "Need a minister? How about your brother?" The Universal Life Church between religion and non-religion. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 4(1): 1–13. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.be

Hutchings, T. 2017. "We are a united humanity": Death, emotion and digital media in the Church of Sweden. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 61(1): 90–107. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2016.1273930

Lagerkvist, A and **Andersson, Y.** 2017. The grand interruption: Death online and mediated lifelines of shared vulnerability. *Feminist Media Studies*, 17(4): 550–564. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2017.1326554

Lee, L. 2015. *Recognizing the non-religious: Reimagining the secular*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198736844.001.0001

Lindsey, R. 2017. *A Communion of Shadows: Religion and Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5149/northcarolina/9781469633725.001.0001

Marwick, A and **Ellison, N.** 2012. "There isn't wi-fi in heaven!" Negotiating visibility on Facebook memorial pages. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 56(3): 378–400. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2012.705197

McDannell, C and **Lang, B.** 1988. *Heaven: A history*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Nash, D. 2002. Religious sensibilities in the age of the internet: Freethought culture and the historical context of communication media. In: Hoover, S and

Clark, L (eds.), *Practicing Religion in the Age of Media*, 276–290. New York: Columbia University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.7312/hoov12088-014

Öhman, C, Gorwa, R and **Floridi, L.** 2019. Prayer bots and religious worship on Twitter: A call for a wider research agenda. *Minds and Machines*, 29: 331–338. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s11023-019-09498-3

Phillips, W. 2011. LOLing at tragedy: Facebook trolls, memorial pages, and resistance to grief online. [online]. *First Monday*, 16(12). Available from: http://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3168 [Accessed 15 February 2018]. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v16i12.3168

Pihlaja, S. 2018. *Religious Talk Online: The Evangelical Discourse of Muslims, Christians and Atheists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316661963

Quack, J, Blechschmidt, A, Schenk, S and **Schuh, C.** n.d. What is nonreligion? Outline of a relational approach. [online]. *The Diversity of Nonreligion.* Available from: http://www.nonreligion.net/?page_id=35 [Accessed 18 February 2018]. DOI: https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429196799

Ribberink, E, Achterberg, P and **Houtman, D.** 2013. Deprivatization of disbelief? Non-religiosity and anti-religiosity in 14 western European countries. *Politics and Religion*, 6(1): 101–120. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1017/S1755048312000740

Sanderson, J and **Cheong, P.** 2010. Tweeting prayers and communicating grief over Michael Jackson online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society*, 30(5): 328–340. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610380010

Smith, C and **Cimino, R.** 2012. Atheisms unbound: The role of new media in the formation of a secularist identity. *Secularism and Nonreligion*, 1: 17–31. DOI: https://doi.org/10.5334/snr.ab

Staley, E. 2014. Messaging the dead: Social network sites and theologies of afterlife. In: Lewis, A and Moreman, C (eds.), *Digital Death: Mortality and Beyond in the Online Age*, 9–22. Praeger: Santa Barbara.

Uriu, D and **Odom, W.** 2016. Designing for domestic memorialization and remembrance: A field study of Fenestra in Japan. *Proceedings of CHI 16: Human Factors in Computing Systems,* San Jose, USA, May 07–12, 5945–5957. New York: ACM. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/2858036.2858069

Uriu, D and **Okude, N.** 2010. ThanatoFenestra: Photographic family altar supporting a ritual to pray for the deceased. *Proceedings of the 8th ACM Conference on Designing Interactive Systems,* Aarhus, Denmark, August 16–20, 422–425. New York: ACM. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1145/1858171.1858253

Walter, T. 2011. Angels not souls: Popular religion in the online mourning for British celebrity Jade Goody. *Religion*, 41(1): 29–51. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2011.553138

Walter, T. 2016. The dead who become angels: Bereavement and vernacular religion. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 73(1): 3–28. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0030222815575697

Walter, T. 2018. The pervasive dead. *Mortality, 23.* Published electronically January 03, 2018.

Walter, T, Hourizi, R, Moncur, W and **Pitsillides, S.** 2012. Does the internet change how we die and mourn? An overview. *OMEGA: Journal of Death and Dying*, 64(4): 275–302. DOI: https://doi.org/10.2190/OM.64.4.a