

## Conference abstracts in alphabetical order

**Refkah A'Court, Bec Gee and Amy Creech (Once – arts & ceremonies, Bristol)**

*'Lifting the Lid': an exploration of arts practice and ceremonial theatre as methods for dialogue about death and dying with the general public*

In a multi-cultural, multi-faith society, which includes growing secularisation on the one hand and fundamentalism on the other, how do we understand and talk about death? *'Lifting the Lid'*, a creative workshop series and ceremonial performance, asked what are we doing with our stories of death, dying and grief? Are they all we have to communally understand this most intimate yet universal of human experiences?

Once uses creative intervention methods which draw on their experience in: participatory action research; detached youth work practice; reminiscence and personal story work; ceremony and playback theatre. In the first stage of this project a cardboard coffin filled with objects was taken to the general public in homes, streets and schoolrooms and used to reflect on death and mortality in a safe and creative space. Groups and passers-by shared real stories and experiences of their everyday realities of death and grieving. The second stage saw this gathered material developed into a ceremonial performance attended by 200 people - members of the general public and participants who had shared their stories. Characters, puppets and poetry, tales, music and enchantments, led people on a reflection on living and dying, creating space for reflection, marking and exchange.

A presentation by two members of Once will use audio and visual illustrative material to explore the process and experience of creating the *'Lifting the Lid'* project, its surprises, achievements, responses and learning. The paper also discusses the role of ceremonial theatre and other participatory arts practice, outside of a 'crisis point' or therapeutic context, to create dialogue, learning and reflection on issues associated with death and dying in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain.

**Julia Addington-Hall, Tracy Long and Magi Sque (University of Southampton)**

*What does a diagnosis of brain stem death mean to family members who are approached about organ donation?*

Brain death, whether it be brain stem death [UK] or whole-brain death [USA], is a prerequisite for most cadaveric organ donation. Understanding how brain death is perceived by bereaved family members approached about organ donation, its significance and acceptability to them, is therefore important to explore as biomedicine moves to expand the range of end of life technologies that, potentially, blur the demarcation between life and death.

To explore the concept of brain stem death and what it means to family members who are in receipt of this diagnosis, the present study asked: i) What does the diagnosis of death, which is based on brain stem testing, mean to those family members who are asked to consider donating the organs and tissues of a deceased relative? and ii) How do family members understand this concept? To address these questions a secondary analysis of 28 transcripts, from two primary datasets, was carried out, applying Charmaz's approach to grounded theory. Datasets consisted of interviews with family members who had agreed to donate the organs of a deceased relative.

The core pattern emerging through analysis is defined as: Conflict Rationalisation, a process whereby family members and health professionals appeared to engage in a series of practical and psychological activities aimed at rationalising real or potential emotional and cognitive conflict resulting from a brain based diagnosis of death, whilst being faced with the physical image of a live body. Conflict rationalisation appeared to be how family members and health professionals processed this paradoxical death, a death which, as it is brain-based, is contrary to received conventional opinion. These findings are summarised and interpreted in the substantive theory of 'Paradoxical Death'.

## Lois Alexander

### *Dealing with the dead in disasters*

In the aftermath of a disaster, investigators and victim recovery personnel face the task of identifying the dead. Sociologically and legally, correct identification is of paramount importance.

*“To the dead it may not matter; but it does to the living.... The living will, if at all possible, not let go of the dead until the body involved is respectfully converted back into an individual person”*(1).

Identification is not always straightforward, and mistakes have been made, compounding the trauma suffered by bereaved relatives. Relatives may be asked to view the body for identification purposes – or may wish to do so for their own closure. Whether or not they should be encouraged to do so is another issue.

Where no body is recovered, relatives may experience a “terrible struggle between the need for certainty to allow an ending and the inevitable, irrational hope”. (2) Other procedures, such as an autopsy or interment which does not conform to religious or cultural requirements, are additional potential stressors.

Similarly, rescue and recovery workers face distinct event stressors which may result in psychiatric or psychological trauma. It is naïve to expect those who work in the aftermath of major incidents to walk away unharmed. If relatives or emergency personnel sustain psychological trauma in these circumstances, can damages be recovered under English law?

Unfortunately, the law in this area is complex and ripe for reform. It involves consideration of whether there is a property right in a dead body, and the circumstances in which those suffering psychological damage can sue in negligence.

This paper examines the potential psychological consequences of dealing with the dead in disasters and the legal framework in which claims for such consequences may be made.

- (1) Blanshan & Quarantelli, *From Dead Body to Person: The Handling of Fatal Mass Casualties in Disasters* (1976)
- (2) Hodgkinson & Stewart, *Missing, Presumed Dead* (1988)

## Simon Allen

### *Rising secularism in UK funeral practice*

Funerals in the UK are in a period of immense and rapid change.

1. The first and most dramatic reason is the secularisation of funerals.
2. The second is the way in which many families have retaken control of the funeral. That has developed in two areas which I refer to as the *Hardware* and the *Software*.
3. Lastly, funerals have become a topic of open debate in our society and traditional forms of mourning are in decline.

The largest change that we are seeing – in the UK – is the secularisation of funerals. This is the simple result of the secularisation of the populace. In the 2001 national census, 25% of the population considered themselves to be without religion. However, as far as can be established, the level of UK funerals that are non-religious is currently about 2%. So we are only at the beginning of this trend.

The way in which families are changing modern funerals in this country is divided very simply into *Hardware* and *Software*. The most easily observed is the *Hardware* and the image that conveys this is the reintroduced horse-drawn hearse, now bearing a wicker coffin. The simplest example of *Software* is that the Vicar is rapidly being replaced by an Officiant who may provide anything in the spectrum from a Humanist ceremony, via Pick ‘n Mix, through to full-on religion.

Topical acceptance of Death was encapsulated by Jacque Lynn Foltyn in February 2006, *Dead Sexy: Pop Culture’s New Porn Star*. ‘Water cooler’ conversation will now include *Six Feet Under* and what music you have chosen for your funeral – possibly 40 years in advance of need.

**Lynn Allchin, Amy Fallon, Kathryn Stewart Hegedus and Carol Polifroni**  
*End of life care: students' perspective*

'End of Life' is a universal experience that exemplifies a major life transition. Guided anticipation and empathetic support best facilitate transitions from one stage to another.

The purpose of this presentation is to share an undergraduate, general education course developed to facilitate diversity and sensitivity by addressing end of life from a variety of cultures. The course was designed to facilitate an examination of experiences at the end of life in order to enhance student awareness of related issues through societal, personal, multicultural, and interdisciplinary lenses. Content was presented, often by guest speakers, regarding The Culture of Cemeteries, Advanced Directives & Wills, Planned End of Life, The Hospice Experience and The Unexpected End of Life. Consideration was given to ethical, moral, legal and religious issues. Thoughts, perceptions and values were shared from personal and professional views as they related to the various components of the human experience at the end of life. Students wrote and presented their own preferred end of life experiences.

The paper will focus on the students' projects that were designed to incorporate aesthetics as a means of understanding and communicating transitions. They were able to bear witness to the artful expression of the end of life by: writing poetry, sharing food, music, religious rituals and traditions, creating works of art, and showing customs and costumes from a variety of cultures.

In conclusion, the relatively young students brought a perspective and voice to end of life care that deserves to be captured. Their worldviews were a privilege to hear and now to share.

**Isabel Amorous and Janet Schreiber (Southwestern College, Santa Fe, New Mexico)**  
*Training agents of social change: transformational leadership in death, grief & trauma*

This paper is based on 21 years of experience training counsellors and hospice workers in transformational leadership and working with the dying, the bereaved and traumatised. The training focuses on working with individuals, families, community organisations and social systems. Three programs were developed through two different institutions, The Elisabeth Kubler-Ross Hospice Training Institute and the graduate programs at Southwestern College in Santa Fe New Mexico. The content of the training covers the broadest range of topics in death education, hospice work, grief counselling, and trauma resolution. The teaching methods are largely experiential. What is unique about these programs is that they focus on deep inner work, contemplation, world wisdom traditions, embodiment and self-knowledge. The programs take two years or less to complete. The faculty are multidisciplinary from predominately the social sciences.

Graduates of these programs have gone on to found a variety of community based programs including children's grief centres, hospice programs, and end of life coalitions. Others have trained professional groups, opened therapy practices or created community counselling and death education programmes, worked on public policy issues, founded not for profit organisations, created public ritual space, and made films or other media presentations.

We will reflect and analyse our experiences as the faculty creating the programs and the teaching teams as well as from the perspective of graduates. Experiential exercise and contemplative exercises are core elements of the program and will be summarised. This presentation will increase awareness of possibilities for multidisciplinary education in the social context of death and grief.

**Megory Anderson (Sacred Dying Foundation, San Francisco, US and Canterbury Christ Church University, UK)**  
*'Is anybody listening?' Spiritual needs of the dying and the grassroots response (Sacred Dying and more)*

*“When we die is out of our hands, but how we die should not be.”*

Recognising that the spiritual needs of the dying are not being adequately met by institutions, professional health care workers, or chaplains/religious representatives (as noted in paper by Firth), grassroots organisations are rising to the forefront and providing much needed spiritual support for those at the end of life.

Sacred Dying is a unique organisation, based in San Francisco, California. Its primary work offers presence with the dying and their loved ones, but it is also a fundamental paradigm shift, advocating honour and dignity to the dying experience.

Using narratives and case studies from over 250 deaths, this presentation showcases the hands-on work of Sacred Dying through the use of innovative rituals and ceremony. We examine the effects of intentional presence with the dying that are expanded beyond clinical or pastoral care, and often combines or elaborates upon traditional cultural and religious rites.

Case studies include:

- Those marginalised in institutions and the use of volunteer programs such as ‘No One Dies Alone’.
- Those who do not fall within traditional religious belief systems yet express spiritual needs. We examine the use of sacred space, purification rituals, and opportunities for addressing afterlife fears.
- Those who are rooted in specific religious and/or cultural communities, and want to create a meaningful end of life experience, yet family support system needs assistance with confronting inexperience with death and dying. We examine the symbols and language of traditional rites, and ways to expand and individualise them.

The goal of this presentation is to combine awareness for the psycho-social/spiritual care of the dying with grassroots and experiential EOL programs that are in the forefront of clinical and social change.

**Janicke Andersson (Linköpings University, Sweden)**

*The issue of death and prolongation*

The aim of this paper is to explore discursive changes in conceptions of death, life and the possibility of life-extension. In a sense, life span embodies the boundaries of human existence, but furthermore, it symbolises the system of reason of human existence in the name of the life-span. As such, historical handbooks on life-extension provide an interesting field for the study of life, death and humanity. In this paper I develop the results from my thesis on ‘The Art of Prolongation’. Data consists of handbooks on life-extension published 1700-2007.

The focus in this paper will be on the discursive changes in conceptions of death in relation to notions of natural/unnatural. There seems to be one thing in common between handbooks in the past and present, which is the combination of future oriented scientific evolution and the mythological, almost religious longing for a paradise of the past. Even so, handbooks today are more oriented to prolonging life into immortality than earlier handbooks. In historical handbooks discussion of prolongevity are always related to a pre-designated length of life given by God or Nature. Today we only believe in prolongation. How does this alter our way of dealing with life, death and dying?

**Miguel Andres-Clavera and Inyong Cho (Goldsmiths College, London)**

*scanMemories*

Our paper examines how memory practices in death can be altered by information technologies. This includes questions about how information can alter embodied relation with the materiality of memory objects and space, and how this can change the issues of identity and privacy about the dead.

Alongside theoretical examination, we present our project **scanMemories** (1) ([www.scanmemories.org](http://www.scanmemories.org)), an interdisciplinary art project that uses RFID (Radio Frequency Identification), wireless technologies and databases. It opens a heterogeneous and direct access to the memories materialised in physical spaces and objects.

The main characteristics of the scanMemories system are:

- The database is populated with media contents by those who want to share their lives after their death, or the bereaved who wish to cherish the memory using an online tool created for the project.
- RFID tags are implanted in memory objects (such as tombstones or clothing) which serve as gates to access the memory database.
- The information can only be accessed in the exact location where the RFID tag has been placed as the deceased wished, and it is retrieved by the people who the deceased wanted to share with. The people use wireless and mobile devices customized for the application.

With our project, we explore how information technologies can alter our perception about the post-identity of the deceased and also our sensory relation with memory objects, and how they can produce complex meaning about the death and remembrance in a highly networked society. We will present an extensive theoretical examination on the cultural-cybernetic aspects of memory and death, and **scanMemories** project with a documentary film about its implication in social context of death.

- (1) **scanMemories** is funded by FACT (Foundation for Art and Creative Technology) and supported by Arts Council England.

**Joanne Anning, Selina Horsham and Jacqui Stedmon (Jeremiah's Journey, Plymouth)**

*Stories of hope and inspiration*

This qualitative participatory research study explores the narrative accounts of young people who have experienced the death of an important family member. The study has been developed in the context of a bereavement project for children and their families that help facilitate a continuing bond with the person who has died. Adolescence is considered to be a time when the life-story develops and where cognitive abilities and self-reflection impact on the organization of the life-story particularly around traumatic events and transitions. Drawing on the storied nature of experience and assuming the position of a psycho-social subject, we suggest that adolescence might be viewed as a time when identities are being re-negotiated and that narrative accounts can serve as an important transitional function.

Using the biographical narrative approach to induce an uninterrupted story that explores the lived-life experience and how it is told, researchers analysed the structure of the stories on a number of levels, from intra-personal to the cultural. This method of interview has been purported to have healing effects for the storyteller, and helps develop coherence that is considered to be paramount in building cognitive resilience in children against negative affect and the ability to sustain positive social interactions. Further analysis around attachment narratives were also considered for their coherence in the context of organised/disorganised stories and use of reflective capacity regarding traumatic experience. The whole process of interview, transcribing & analysis enabled each participant's bereavement biography to be re-told. We suggest that the life story account itself can provide a cultural resource that can be drawn on by other young people who have experienced the death of someone important to them as a source of inspiration and of hope, revealing that it is possible to negotiate this existential transition.

**Juan Ignacio Aragonés (University Complutense of Madrid, Spain), Hartmut Günther (University of Brasilia, Brazil) and Gabriel Moser (Paris Descartes University, France)**

*Place attachment for eternity: preferences for burial sites in Brazil, France, and Spain*

Considering 21<sup>st</sup> century mobility, family ties and place attachment are increasingly contradictory: more and more people live and work in places other than where their parents or grandparents live or lived. This raises not only questions of choice for important festivities while living (e.g. weddings, where to spend Christmas), but also choice of one's burial site after death.

This study analyses how the competition between physical and social attachment impacts on the choice of burial place. Two aspects will be addressed, the site of disposal and the procedure. Four different sites can be envisaged: place of family grave, actual place of residence, valorised site, no choice; and three options for burial may be considered: traditional burial of the body, cremation with keeping the ashes in an urn, and cremation with dispersal of the ashes.

Ninety women and men in Brasilia, Madrid and Paris (30 in each city) were interviewed, approximately half of them retired and the other half still working.

In these three dominantly catholic countries, clearly different attitudes toward cremation versus burial were found. Spanish respondents were most favourable toward cremation, French slightly in favour of burial and Brazilians clearly in favour of burial.

Asked where they wanted to be buried, *Brazilians* most often mentioned their place of origin (12/30), justifying this choice with tradition, and wanting to be close to their family. A second option was to be buried wherever they died (10/30), mostly for reasons of convenience. Those opting for cremation (8/30), present a variety of reasons: convenience, environmental beauty and spiritual factors are most often cited.

*Spanish* respondents mention most often (17/30) burial places that have to do with place attachment: or the place where they live (8), or the place they like most (9). The evoked reasons are: in order not to cause problems for the family, to be connected with the place where they are, and, especially in the case of cremation, for reasons of beauty and relation with nature. Those who mention the place of birth and/or the place where their families are buried (10/30), do so for traditional reasons.

More than one third of *French* respondents (12/30) wish their remains to be returned to the family place. Only three out of thirty want to be buried in the place of residence, nine in a beautiful landscape and for six it is of no importance. Thus nearly one third of the respondents expressed attachment to the place of origin as a reason for their choice.

Cremation clearly offers more liberty to choose a last place. It is also less often tied to the choice of the place of origin as last place. One third of the respondents clearly return to their origins by choosing the place where their family is rooted. Nearly one third of French and Spanish respondents choose a place they like, while this is the case of only one out of six Brazilians. The actual place of living is chosen by one third of Brazilians, slightly less Spanish and nearly no French. These results will be presented in terms of burial versus cremation, gender, occupational status, duration of residence, and place attachment.

**Heli Arima (University of Helsinki, Finland), Francesca Fulminante (University of Cambridge) and Ulla Rajala (University of Oulu, Finland and University of Cambridge)**  
*Changing society, changing burial rites: from Orientalising trenches to Archaic chambers at Cisterna Grande (Crustumerium, Rome)*

The *Remembering the Dead* project has excavated at Cisterna Grande in the mainly Archaic cemetery area of the ancient Latin city of Crutumerium for four years in collaboration with *Soprintendenza archeologica di Roma*. At the end of one phase of the research project we want to summarise the new aspects of archaic burial practices our studies have revealed and consider their importance for our understanding of Latin urbanisation and materialisation. The excavations have discovered that the customs of reburial and skeletal disarticulation were commonly practised. There is also new evidence for the ownership of burial rights. In addition, the finds reconfirm the prevalence of meagre grave goods but show unexpected variation in tomb architecture. These phenomena are reviewed in the context of assumed legislation against conspicuous consumption in funerals in Latin city states. Thus, in this paper we discuss the ways the developments in the world of the living were mirrored in the realms of the dead.

**Angela Armstrong-Coster (University of Southampton)**

*Issues encountered when planning research on national attitudes to death, dying and mourning*

Academics, professionals, policymakers and clinicians need information on British perceptions of death and dying, as this will prove critical in managing the impending 'demographic time-bomb'. Not since 1965 has a national quantitative study been carried out on attitudes to death; it is increasingly vital that this paucity be addressed.

The outcome of shifts in how life is lived, for example, changes in patterns of health, housing and immigration means that we are now part of a population who will be dying later in life. It has consequently become vital that we capture relevant data about actual attitudinal change. Dying has now become a key issue in public health, holding direct application for professional practice with the dying and bereaved and for specific program and service delivery.

This paper aims to explore some of the issues encountered during the initial stages of organising such a piece of research. It will examine the challenges involved in the preparation and planning of a national study intended to provide data which can function as a baseline for further longitudinal studies. These data will prove significant both pragmatically and theoretically. It is, therefore, important that a robust research instrument, appropriate for further longitudinal research on this subject, be created. Of further interest is the identification of a compatible funding body, whose ethos and priorities fit well with the objectives of the research.

**Arnar Árnason (University of Aberdeen)**

*So as not to be alone*

In this paper I report on research into the practices of a Japanese self-help bereavement group. The paper will focus on both the activities carried out during group meetings, in particular the sharing of personal stories, and the monthly newsletter published by the group. Expanding on Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities, I use Michael Carrithers' work on rhetoric and Deborah Tannen's notion of involvement strategies to demonstrate how the group achieves two things: to establish a community of grievors, and to clear a path down which the bereaved can see themselves as travelling. Some attention will be paid to how this path simultaneously differs from and is similar to the journey of grief as described by western psychology. To contextualise the differences I focus in particular on Japanese notions of emotions and their links to how personhood in Japan is often conceived in relational and situational terms. To expand on the similarities, I suggest that contemporary grieving can be understood as a global assemblage, to borrow Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier's term.

The paper is based on anthropological fieldwork with the self-help group, analysis of the group's newsletter and interviews with its members.

**Anne Barber (Institute of Civil Funerals, UK)**

*Accounting for lives cut short – a study of Civil Funeral scripts*

A Civil Funeral is: 'A funeral which is driven by the wishes, beliefs and values of the deceased and their family, not by the beliefs or ideology of the person conducting the funeral'. This means that funerals can be completely secular or they can, and often do, include content that is religious or spiritual.

Civil Funerals have been available in the UK since 2002 and account for a disproportionately large number of 'early' death funeral ceremonies. The funerals have often been for those who have died by accident or suicides, perceived as particularly tragic in contemporary society. This study investigates the content and style of these funerals, and seeks to tell us something about how society values a life in today's society.

**Karen Barrett (The University of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia)**

*The sudden death of a child: narratives of bereaved parents and social workers*

The sudden and unexpected death of a baby or young child has been said to be the most traumatic experience that a parent and family can endure.

As an Australian social worker with practice experience in both the acute hospital area and also the longer term counselling and support stages of bereavement care, I am interested in the narratives of parents and family members following the death of their child – how do they see, feel and live their grief, what impact does it have on their lives, how do they maintain connections with their dead child (if at all), how do they perceive the professional support provided (or possibly not provided) to them?

I am also interested in exploring the ways in which acute care social workers perceive the service they provide to families in the initial time following the sudden and unexpected death of their child.

Is it important to know the lived experiences of these parents following the death of a child? Will this knowledge help health professionals and the general community in working with and providing support to parents and families?

Conversely, what about the experiences of the front line health professionals who provide care and support to these families in the immediate period following the death of their child? What can we learn from the narratives of these two groups?

This paper presents the beginning stages of a PhD research project aiming to answer some of these questions – how do we give bereaved parents and the social workers who provide care to them a voice in the research and practice world, and how might this impact on service provision, bereavement care and support for families and workers?

**Tania Becker**

*A Dream of Death: understanding of death in the early Daoist philosophy (The Book Zhuangzi)*

*Time and place:* China, Warring States Period, *zhanguo* 戰國 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> ct. B.C., shortly before the Foundation of the Chinese Empire (221. B.C.)

*Subject:* The Book *Zhuangzi* 莊子, also called "True classic of the Southern Flower Country" (*Nanhua zhenjing* 南華真經) is beside the *Daodejing* 道德經 of Laozi 老子 the oldest and at the same time most literary book of early philosophical Daoism. This book, full of anecdotes, parables and metaphors, through its wonderful poetical quality became a classic of world literature. The life of the author named Zhuang Zhou 莊周 (also named Zhuangzi 莊子, literally meaning Master Zhuang) is widely unknown. The only evidence is that he, according to his teachings, pursued a private life of quietness, releasing himself from the desire to acquire knowledge and understanding.

*Intention:* Death is one of the main themes in the Book *Zhuangzi*. The title of the paper "A Dream of Death" is related to the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, to the story where Master Zhuang happens to find a scull on his way. In the same night both protagonists, Zhuangzi and the scull, lead a conversation about the Hereafter in the Master's dream. Beside this anecdote, the paper will introduce another two well known stories of the Book (Dream of the Butterfly and The Death of Zhuangzi's Wife). The outlining of the importance and the understanding of death in the context of this early philosophical Daoist writing is the main focus of the paper.

*Relevance:* The Zhuangzi's idea of death as a change of different states of mind has been influencing Chinese spiritual praxis, medicine and philosophy until today.

**Susan M. Behuniak (Le Moyne College, New York, USA)**

*Nursing Homes and the amplification of dementia: the power of place*

Dementia is a thief that robs dying patients of their most precious capacities at a time when they are needed most. Although dementia is characterised by physiological changes in the brain

(some reversible and others not), I emphasise in this paper the power that place wields on this assault of brain function. More specifically, I explore how most nursing homes in the United States (where nearly 25% of the elderly live out their lives) act as accomplices in this robbery by unintentionally amplifying the symptoms of dementia.

Studies of dementia conclude that the condition has several etiologies. Although environment is not per se a cause, I maintain that it is a factor that can exacerbate the condition. In particular, I suggest that because nursing homes are not true 'homes', i.e., places where residents can 'dwell' in the full sense of the term, but are instead institutions where patients receive medical care, many of the aspects of home that can reduce the effects of dementia are absent.

I draw on the phenomenology of place scholarship and my own experiences as a Hospice volunteer (who serves in nursing homes) to highlight several ways in which these institutions compound the problem of dementia:

- Architecture that values function over form, i.e., monitoring over personal habitation
- An environment of sensory overload involving sight, sound, and smell
- Haptic deprivation that confuses comfort with the absence of sensation
- Miscues concerning the psychophysical coordinates of time and direction
- A lack of appreciation for the memory contained in the body
- And, misidentifying treatable medical conditions as Alzheimer's disease.

Therefore, because a diminished sense of dwelling intensifies the symptoms of compromised brain function, one way to address dementia is to deliberately nurture the connection between patients and their place in the world.

**Karen Bermann (Iowa State University, Ames, USA) and Randall Hamilton (Iowa State University and Mercy Ruan Neurology Clinic, Des Moines, IA, USA)**

*CARE ARCHITECTURE: a speculative building for Mercy Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, that bridges the gap between hospital and hospice—between 'cure at any cost' and care for those approaching death.*

*Introduction:* Since the time of Hippocrates there have been two overall goals of medical care: Cure of Disease and Relief of Suffering. The acute care hospital and the hospice represent our current commitment to these two goals. Life from birth to death is, however, a continuum, and the healthcare we receive should reflect this. A significant gap exists between the acute care hospital and hospice. Hospice successfully serves the needs of the dying and their families, who have let go of the 'cure at any cost' model and seek relief of suffering and a compassionate death. But the patient with an incurable disease whose death is not imminent is between paradigms. Many of these persons receive insufficient pain relief and suffer unnecessarily as a result.

*Project:* Through writing, collage-making, and discussion, we developed an architectural design for a Palliative Care Unit for Mercy Hospital in Des Moines, Iowa, USA. The work was both analytical and exploratory. Dr. Hamilton's experience as a physician was plumbed not only for medical knowledge but also for emotional knowledge. We are working together - Dr. Hamilton as designer, Prof. Bermann as advisor. In this proposal we aim to bridge this gap between the acute care hospital and the hospice environment by designing an architecture specifically for those who suffer from chronic disease and their painful symptoms. We will present, in words and images, the creative process through which we addressed questions of pain, care, fear, death, grief, and love, as well as the architecture which emerged from this process. The project will be proposed as a reality to the hospital where Dr. Hamilton has worked for the past 11 years as a neurologist.

**Jan Bleyen (University of Leuven, Belgium)**

*Death in the maternity room: metaphors of care after stillbirth*

In this paper, I examine the metaphors by which parents of a stillborn baby understand the care offered by birth professionals in the maternity room. Following Lakoff and Johnson (1980) I suggest metaphors are pervasive not just in language but in thought and action as well. Thus, also in the embodied performances of both hospital practice and narratives of reproductive loss conceptualisations serve as a fundamental way to grasp the abstract ideas of care and emotion. Using open-ended interviews of stillbirth experiences in Flanders from the sixties onwards, I show how mothers and fathers of a stillborn baby have conceptualised their encounter with obstetricians, midwives or nurses as if it had a physical impact on them. With reference to social-cultural developments and changing models of hospital care, I illustrate historical shifts in the use of metaphors: from 'being paralysed' to 'being supported', 'distance' to 'intimacy', 'manipulation' to 'participation', and 'concealment' to 'disclosure'. Interestingly, these shifts in metaphor of care appear to have coincided with those relating to the treatment of the baby's body (from 'being hidden' to 'being held'), the concept of death (from 'failure' to 'normalcy') and ideas of appropriate grief (from 'letting go' to 'continuing bonds').

**Sophie Bolt and Eric Venbrux (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**

*Missing bodies and mortuary ritual in the Netherlands and Rwanda*

In this paper we consider the ritualisation of death in cases of alternative ways of disposal of dead bodies, including donating one's body to science. The donation of the whole body after death for medical research and education is increasingly popular in the Netherlands. The popularity of anatomical donation, to the extent that medical institutions declare they cannot take new corpses anymore, raises the question how the survivors perform mortuary rites, while the bodies of the deceased are missing. Whereas body donation mostly is a voluntary act, the disappearance of bodies at times of genocide is not. Drawing on ethnographic research in Rwanda and in the Netherlands, we will make a comparison of the survivors' ritualisation of death in the respective cases of the missing bodies of their loved ones.

**Lisa Bortolotti (University of Birmingham)**

*Immortality without boredom*

I am going to raise three challenges to the view that immortality is undesirable because it would result in a boring existence deprived of meaning. This view was developed by the philosopher Bernard Williams in his very influential essay, "The Makropolis Case" (1973).

I am going to argue that it is necessary to disambiguate life-boredom from situational boredom as there is no obvious link between the two; Williams oscillates from one to the other when he describes the reasons why an immortal being would find her life meaningless. This is a challenge to the coherence of the definition of boredom necessary for Williams' argument to go through. If situational boredom is caused by the lack of variety in our experiences, then there is some prima facie plausibility to the claim that an immortal life might generate more occasion for situational boredom than a bounded life, if under the assumption that the number of experiences available to immortal beings will remain finite. But the type of boredom that justifies Williams' claims about loss of meaning and lack of motivation cannot be just an instance of situational boredom. It's life-boredom. And there is no reason to believe that life-boredom would be any more likely in the immortal life than in a bounded existence.

In recent psychological studies the suggestion is that boredom is not caused by an impoverished environment, but is the result of an internal psychological process which affects some individuals more than others. Hence, we should view with some suspicion the claim that the quality of experience in the immortal life would be likely to cause boredom, as the alleged lack of variety or repetitiveness of experiences would not be the determining factor for the occurrence of boredom.

**Crystal Brieden, Pamela Roberts and Katie Valles (California State University, USA)**

*Just like her: finding the right place for cremated remains*

Although it is becoming more popular, Americans have been slow to embrace cremation; in 2005 only 31% of American dead were cremated as compared to over 70% in the UK. Currently, many Americans are experiencing the cremation of a loved one for the first time and deciding where to put cremains without any traditions to guide them. This paper will present data from an ongoing interview study on Americans' first decisions about the cremated remains of loved ones.

To date, 30 interviews (discussing 47 cremation experiences) have been analysed. Decisions to cremate were based on the wishes of the deceased, but few left instructions on what to do with their ashes; none had a family history of cremation. Consequently, all participants puzzled over the 'correct' ritual for and placement of the cremains. While beliefs about bodily integrity, a place to visit, and concerns over the confinement of the grave (described by Kellaher, Prendergast & Hockey, 2005) contributed to the decisions of many, all focused on the personality of the deceased as their ultimate guide, even if that required disregarding their own preferences. Placement decisions were split evenly between scattering and keeping the ashes together, but a small, anguished group had not yet decided.

Most of our other respondents felt that the solution they had reached (whether to keep some of their mother in a teapot or to have her urn on their nightstand) was unusual and possibly a little crazy. These presumptions made participants hesitant to discuss their decisions with others, but contributed to feelings of pride in having honoured their dead fully and appropriately. Our paper will explore various methods of ash disposition, the effects of creating these personalised tributes on the bereaved, and compare our findings with research conducted in the U.K. by Kellaher and colleagues.

**Isobel Broome (University of Southampton)**

*'I must hire a little room to die in': patient choice in early homes for the dying*

This paper aims to explore the way in which homes for the terminally ill in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain were able to offer the dying, for the first time, a choice in their place of death. In our society today, the ascendancy of patient autonomy and choice is hailed as an innovation deemed to lie at the centre of patient dignity. The dying are to some extent able to exercise freedom of choice over their place of death, whether it be at home, in hospital or in hospice. In Victorian England, the opening of homes for the terminally ill located the dying as a discrete group in need of a specific type of care. This paper will argue that at the same time, these homes in fact took the first step towards offering terminal patients a choice in their place of death and, by doing so, they therefore added an as yet unrecognised dimension to the dignity of those in their care. That the choice then, as now, was limited by financial constraints and the numbers of beds available does not refute this supposition.

**Tim Bullamore (University of Bath)**

*Evolving forces and contemporary practice in the art of obituary writing*

Obituary writing in British newspapers has been recognised as a distinctive genre in literary journalism, combining the 'reporter's craft with the scholar's judicious sense of perspective' and saving British journalism from the 'banalisation of mediocrity'. Some go farther and argue that obituaries have attracted something of a cult following, a claim given some authority by the publication of two books devoted to the subject (Johnson, 2005, and Starck, 2006). Clearly the obituary is more than a notification of death or a faithful reproduction of the chronology of a life lived, important though these facets are; it is also an appraisal of that life informed by a sense of why this life mattered. Some argue that, given the subject's inability to respond to his or her

critics, there is an obligation to write an obituary with some degree of generosity, but this demand sits uncomfortably with the notion that the obituary should be the 'first brisk judgment of a life'

Scholars have for several years commented that the image of the life course conveyed in British obituaries is under-researched. Others have asked why, through the medium of the obituary, society chooses to remember certain lives and not others and noted how the type of life featured in the obituary page has changed over time. Attention has also been drawn to the dearth of women's obituaries and the prominence of certain social classes in obituaries.

This paper introduces a research initiative at the University of Bath's Centre for Death and Society that over the coming years will seek to build on the work of the Australian academic Nigel Starck and others to propose a definitive history of the British newspaper obituary. It will go on to examine, in greater depth than hitherto, who is included in the obituary page and who is not, with particular reference to the gender, race, education, class and social background of those who are included. Trends over the course of a number of years will be examined and the merits (or otherwise) of anonymous obituaries will be considered. In so doing, the study aims to explore and develop a framework for understanding the place of obituaries and their connection to continuing relationships between the living and the dead and how they help families, friends and strangers to make sense of the life of the deceased.

**Louisa Cadman (University of Glasgow)**

*Understanding life and death decisions in and through the work of Giorgio Agamben*

This paper will discuss the contribution that the work of Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben might make to bridging a divide between the place of death in philosophy (in terms of negativity, finitude and the non-relational) and social scientific understandings of death in the areas of assisted suicide and euthanasia. After outlining Agamben's understanding of death as it has manifested in both philosophy and society, I will go on to discuss how this understanding enables us to go beyond the so-called 'moral problems' of assisted suicide and euthanasia and to instead consider these phenomena as 'biopolitical problems'. That is, I seek to diagnose why such life or death choices arise in the first place, and why they have come to the forefront in contemporary Western society. Throughout I will be using the example of the 'Not Dead Yet' movement in the USA and the UK.

**Joan Cameron (University of Dundee), Alexandra Greene (University of Aberdeen) and Julie Taylor (University of Dundee)**

*Policies for pre viable infants in the UK: who cares for the baby?*

*Background:* Pre viable infants are babies born at less than 24 weeks gestation. At birth, signs of life may be present but resuscitation may be withheld because it is considered that treatment will prolong only suffering. Current practice is for dying pre-viable babies to remain in labour wards with their parents. National UK guidelines recommend that these babies should be given palliative care. The purpose of this study was to explore if policies from maternity units in the UK reflect the need for palliative care of the dying pre-viable baby.

*Method:* Maternity units in the UK were contacted by post and invited to complete a structured response sheet relating to the use of policies for the care of pre-viable dying babies. Recruitment to the study commenced in December 2005 and was completed in May 2006. Analysis of the policies was completed in October 2006. Units with specific policies for the care of dying pre-viable babies were invited to submit them for review. Critical analysis of the policies was undertaken using a framework based on the AGREE guideline analysis tool and rhetorical analysis as proposed by Leach (2000).

*Results:* Consultant maternity units were most likely to report having specific policies for the care of dying pre-viable babies. Policies encourage parents to participate in caregiving rituals such as holding, bathing and dressing the dying infant. The potential needs of the dying infant are not addressed.

*Conclusion:* Maternity units have developed policies to inform the care of dying preterm babies. Analysis of the policies has demonstrated that they fail to consider how to meet basic needs for palliative care – even though the baby may live for several hours. The omission may relate to difficulties in assessing needs in this group of babies and the desire to construct a parenting identity.

**Yvonne Carter (University of Warwick), Roland Petchey (City University, London) and Jacky Williams (University of Warwick)**

*National evaluation of the Big Lottery Fund Palliative Care Initiative*

*Introduction:* The Big Lottery Fund distributes half of the National Lottery ‘good causes’ monies across the United Kingdom ([www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk)). Its palliative care initiative allocated £84 million to a range of schemes focusing on the provision of palliative care for adults and children, facilitating the support and development of local hospices, increasing the number of community teams and bereavement support services, improving response to patient preference and enhancing the provision of support and information services.

*Aims:* The aims of the national evaluation were to assess the achievements of the initiative through widening access, improving quality of life, social inclusion, partnership working and sustainability.

*Methods:* The evaluation was phased over four years and included a multi-method approach, including: key stakeholder interviews, qualitative in-depth case studies, documentary and geographical analysis and a survey of all schemes.

*Summary of findings:* Findings illustrated a diversity of provision, innovation in service delivery, and increased responsiveness to local circumstances. Transitions included: extending the age range catered for, broadening the focus of care, shifting the locus of care, shifting the vehicle of care delivery, expanding the range of conditions and shifting the clinical interface. We will provide an overview of the initiative, including its legacy and the continuation of grant schemes.

*Conclusions:* New palliative care services have been designed and delivered in new ways, extending services to new client groups through new partnerships. However, there is an unevenness of policy development that has particular implications for the transfer from children’s to adult services. In addition, with partial pick-up of some schemes, particularly amongst children’s services, there is a risk that services could narrow back down to a ‘clinical core’.

**Glenys Caswell (University of Aberdeen)**

*Tailor-made or pre-packaged?*

*A sociological exploration of Scottish funeral practices*

Sociology frequently depicts society today as composed of individuals who lack the anchors of settled community life. These individuals reflect upon their lives and make choices about how and where to live. If they do not like some aspect of their current life style, they can make the changes they perceive as desirable. In this way, creating and recreating their identities, individuals pursue their own personal fulfilment and express themselves as individuals. Reflexive individuality applies to death as well as to life, and a funeral may be seen as the final self expression of an individual.

This research investigates the personalisation of funerals in a Scottish context, comparing and contrasting practices in three sites. The first site is Inverness in the Highlands, the second is Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides, and Edinburgh, Scotland’s capital, is the final site.

Fieldwork, involving unstructured, qualitative interviews with professionals working in the funeral business and bereaved people who have arranged funerals, is ongoing. Initial results present a diverse picture, ranging from the Free Presbyterian who does not even mention the name of the deceased at a funeral, to the humanist for whom ‘the tribute...makes up the bulk of

the ceremony'. The majority of funerals fall between these extremes, retaining some traditional facets while increasingly incorporating elements personal to the deceased and bereaved.

Once fieldwork is complete the opportunity will be taken to reflect on whether any changes taking place in funerals are linked to broader processes of social change, such as reflexive individuality or secularisation. The question will be addressed, therefore, as to whether funerals today are tailor-made to the individual or whether one size fits all.

**Elise Ciregna (University of Delaware and The Winterthur Museum)**

*Sleeping cherubs, marble lambs, and empty cradles:  
Children's memorials in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century America and England*

Cemeteries all across America and Great Britain tell the tale of high child mortality during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Small headstones line up next to 'Mother' and 'Father', in a painful, but endlessly repeated, ritual. Despite the tragic nature of such deaths, parents found solace and expression in the memorials they placed at their children's graves.

Prior to the eighteenth century, little public or private expression of the sorrow over a child's death was evident other than in the poems written by educated men and women of the upper classes, or in high style funerary monuments. Milton's poem *On the Death of a fair Infant dying of a Cough* (1673) and the marble monument to days-old Princess Sophia in Westminster Cathedral (1600) are elegant tributes attesting to the grief over the death of a child. Of the grief and mourning that most families went through, however, little evidence remains. It wasn't until the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when mourning practices in general became much more elaborate and complex, that the grief over losing a child became part of the public cultural landscape.

Coinciding with relatively new attitudes towards childhood as a distinct and special period of human development, children's memorials became a particular genre of commemoration in this period, especially in the picturesque landscapes of the new romantic "rural" cemeteries. Based on sculptures such as Thomas Banks' *Monument to Penelope Boothby* (English, 1793) and Lorenzo Bartolini's *Innocence* (Italian, c. 1825), a new vocabulary of motifs and figures expressed the particular loss that was the death of a child. From the earliest examples in the eighteenth century to the plethora of sleeping babies, lambs and angels that dotted the cemetery landscape during the nineteenth century, this paper explores the iconography and 'dialogue' of such grave markers.

**Mary McCarron, Kevin Connaire, Karen Cox and Kathleen Neenen (Trinity College, Dublin)**

*Precious moments in Hospice Day Care*

Our society is experiencing an increase in numbers of older people. Coupled with this we need to recognise that end of life care is valued by our society. Ireland has a rich culture of hospice and palliative care organisations involved in end of life care. The goal of palliative care is a good quality of life, as defined by the patient, by maintaining dignity and controlling symptoms. More recently, hospice care has expanded to include specialist palliative day care. The international literature suggests that hospice day care services are the most rapidly expanding component of palliative care and are a recognised priority area for development.

While the National Advisory Committee Report on Palliative Care and A Baseline Study of the Provisions of Hospice/Specialist Palliative Care Services in Ireland highlight the crucial role which Hospice Day Care provides to patients with cancer, there is a lack of empirical work which explores this role.

This paper presents an ethnographic study of Hospice Day Care in Ireland. It gives patients' and carers' accounts of their daily care in of hospice day care. It gives the patients' perspectives of receiving care from all disciplines with the Hospice Day Care Service. A sample of patients is followed through the service from their presentation to Hospice Day Care to three to six months in the service.

**Jan Cooper (University Warwick)**

*'Last but not least' – Student nurses' experiences of performing last offices*

Despite the fact that nurses have cared for dead bodies for over a hundred years, the emotional impact of this procedure has received minimal exploration. It is suggested that nurses are in a unique position - being the only occupational group who are required to deliver care to a person both before and after death. This presents the nurse with internal conflicts that affect his/her behaviour and coping mechanisms.

This paper reports on one finding of a qualitative descriptive study which explored aspects of caring for dying patients which caused anxiety to student nurses during the first year of their training. Last offices emerged as a major theme with particular reference to:

- Experience of seeing a dead body for the first time
- Depersonalisation of the 'known patient' by the removal of personal effects such as jewellery
- Packing of orifices – the 'dirty work' of nursing
- Wrapping the body in a sheet, in particular covering the head
- Talking to dead patients during the procedure

The findings suggest that the physical acts associated with last offices conflict with the holistic approach nurses aspire to, creating a dissonance with the desire to be a caring, compassionate nurse. Their anxiety appears to be compounded as they watch the transformation of the patient from person to corpse through their actions, leading to the need for them to reconfigure their view of the patient. This is inherently difficult for the student and may offer some explanation of why nurses talk to dead patients as they lay them out. It may be that such action numbs the reality that the patient has died and allows the caring role to continue.

**Anne Corden, Michael Hirst and Katharine Nice (University of York)**

*Financial consequences of the death of a partner*

A great deal is known about the impact of bereavement in terms of health and psychological well-being. Much less attention has been paid to financial and economic consequences, yet bereaved people in Britain are known to be at particular risk of poverty and problem debt. Their experiences of and feelings about financial pressures and economic uncertainties may also be contributing strands in their responses to bereavement.

Every year, over 200,000 adults in Britain report the death of a spouse or partner: two-thirds are women and one in five is under state retirement age. The financial consequences of widowhood have been identified as a priority for research to inform policy towards older workers and their incomes before and after retirement. Evidence is also required for policy on personal responsibility for financial security in later life, the rights of partners, and institutional arrangements affecting the financial consequences of bereavement.

This paper presents preliminary findings from newly funded research focusing on the financial and economic consequences of the death of a partner. It outlines financial difficulties reported by bereaved partners and identifies those at greatest risk of financial strain and the factors involved. The analysis explores changes in their financial circumstances and outlook, the duration of financial difficulties, and describes outcomes and their meaning.

The research is based on a mixed methods approach which combines findings from a large, population-based sample of couples where one partner dies, and in-depth interviews with bereaved partners in different circumstances and stages of life. Funding for the research is provided by the UK Economic and Social Research Council.

**Marie Craig (St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, Australia)**  
*Retained organs at autopsy: evaluating the role of Post Mortem Coordinator*

Recent international controversy regarding retention of organs following autopsy has focused attention on practices around gaining consent from and giving information to families when either a coronial or non-coronial autopsy is being sought. This paper reports on the evaluation of an innovative practice model developed to address this issue.

Reports into autopsy practices in both the UK and Australia have identified the prevalence of paternalistic attitudes towards families, manifesting in the lack of adequate information about the autopsy process and particularly that tissues and often organs will be retained. Families have therefore assumed that they are burying their loved one 'intact'. Various jurisdictions have recognised the need for trained persons to be involved in the information and consent process for autopsies to address this issue. The New South Wales Department of Health in 2004 required that all public hospitals in NSW appoint a 'post mortem coordinator' (PMC) with requisite bereavement skills to coordinate the seeking of consent for non-coronial post mortems and provide support in coroner's cases. At St. Vincent's Hospital, the social work department devised and implemented a program for the PMC that began in March 2005. This utilised the existing extended hours Emergency Department Social Work service.

A hospital wide stakeholder evaluation was conducted as well as a focus group evaluation with the post mortem coordinators (a group of 7 social workers), a case study, and analysis of statistical data. The PMC was involved in a majority of the non-coronial autopsy consents from 2005–6 and many of the coroner's cases as well. Findings supported the use of this type of model as an efficient, cost effective way to address this issue.

**Jodie Croxall and Sarah Hillcoat-Nallétamby (University of Swansea)**  
*Living on after death – bereavement and social welfare needs*

With the erosion of both the principle of 'cradle to grave' provision underpinning Beveridge's post-war welfare state model, and Marshall's conception of 'social citizenship', it is argued by many that welfare and social policy in the UK no longer ensure the protection of individuals' social welfare rights throughout the life course. In the context of death and bereavement, this raises the question of whether the needs of those recently bereaved are being adequately met. Current government policy discussion (e.g. *Transformational Government Strategy, 2005; Varney Review, 2006; Local Government White Paper, 2006*), would suggest that they are not. These reports in fact highlight the inadequacy of social provisions for several groups, including the recently bereaved, emphasising in particular the need for increased co-ordination between service providers.

As part of a PhD study focusing on individuals' experiences of bereavement, and the adequacy of public, private and voluntary sector agents in meeting their needs for support during this experience (e.g. bereavement counselling, financial support, general advice), this paper presents the results of a literature review of scholarly and policy materials. The review will: (a) identify key developments in public, private and voluntary sector provision for the bereaved from the New Poor Laws to the present day; (b) help refine the key research questions on social welfare provisions and bereavement to be addressed by this research; (c) explore the relevance of concepts of 'risk', 'wellbeing' and 'life course' as theoretical perspectives for the research. This will inform the development of the PhD's empirical component, namely, interviews with those recently bereaved whose loved ones died at the beginning, middle and end of the life course; and with service providers from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

**Cath Davies (University of Wales Institute, Cardiff)**  
*Analysing media representation: stardom and spectres of death*

During its transmission on 29 December 2006, CNN presented coverage of hordes queuing in Harlem to catch a glimpse of James Brown's corpse in an open casket, the funeral of Gerald Ford and, at the same time, awaited news of the imminent execution of Saddam Hussein (an event that would be broadcast directly via the internet only hours later). This coverage offers insights into a range of media and public responses to celebrity and death, highlighting the relationship between fame, mortality and constructions of the acceptable face of death.

Death, preferably tragic and unexpected, is generally considered to be a key signifier in identifying an icon within popular culture. As part of wider research investigating the characteristics that elevate a star into the realm of an icon, this paper will examine the meanings inherent in the spectacle of death.

In a post-modern culture preoccupied with a nostalgic recycling of images from the past, how prominent is an untimely death within contemporary media representations of certain stars like Marilyn Monroe, Elvis and John Lennon? How does death function as an integral 'meaning system' in the understanding of a star's persona and iconic identity? What issues are raised when particular stars/celebrities like Muhammad Ali, George Best and Marlon Brando fail to die at the pinnacle of their youth and fame?

Through textual analysis of images and newspaper coverage, this paper will identify the tension between presence and absence in images involving death, and discuss preservation and resurrection as essential ingredients of iconic significance.

#### **Penelope Davies (University of Texas at Austin, USA)**

*Living to living, living to dead: communion and communication in Roman Republican tombs*

During the Republic, a family tomb was an essential element of elite propaganda. Tombs did not fall under the senate's veto, so they were among the few forms of artistic or architectural display where a patron could exercise free reign. At this time, a star-studded pedigree was key to a successful political career, and advertisement of that pedigree was paramount. Romans therefore broadcast their ancestors' achievements in the tomb's design. Scholars have focused on the statues, paintings and inscriptions that served this purpose; this paper, by contrast, examines how the very form of the tomb not only allowed for communion with the dead, but also communicated its message of status to the living. This was a challenge, for no matter how spectacular or bizarre a tomb was, it had meaning only through those who saw it; words etched into its surface depended upon a passerby to read them.

In my previous work I have argued that architects in the imperial age were fully aware of this challenge, and addressed it in the design of imperial funerary monuments such as the Mausolea of Augustus and Hadrian and Trajan's Column. These designs engaged not just those who visited the grave for commemorative festivals, but also casual passersby; they engaged them in both physical and cognitive-affective ways. This paper moves back in time to consider two well-known tombs of the mid to late Republic, the Tomb of the Scipios (begun ca. 298 BC) and the Tomb of Caecilia Metella (first century BC) with a view to understanding how, through visitor manipulation, their forms both perpetuated memory and re-framed the past for political purposes.

#### **Bel Deering**

*From Asbos to X-rated: exploring the social diversity of the cemetery*

Visitors to cemeteries and churchyards exhibit a wide array of value systems. These values contribute to the equally wide range of perceptions that visitors have to such sites, which range from sacred and peaceful to scary or seductive. Both values and perception impact on behaviour and mean that cemeteries perform social roles varying in scope from a site of mourning to gang territory. The multiple roles, however, are not always complementary. This research examines real and potential conflict, resolution and the influence this has on the cemetery environment.

This paper takes two journeys in pursuit of a deeper understanding of the social diversity in cemeteries. The first journey is a physical one which documents experiences and observations of interviewees about the activities common to burial grounds. It interrogates the reality, motivations and dynamics of visitors and considers how they assimilate their visit(s) into everyday life. The second journey takes place in the virtual dimension, travelling through websites and blogs to gain insight into the opinions and attitudes held about graveyards. Taken together, these voyages form the starting point for an exploration of alternative graveyard behaviours ranging from vandalism, to drug taking and sex.

The more extreme or transgressive activities recorded in cemeteries can be viewed as disrespectful, conflicting or inappropriate in a place designed for burial and mourning. This paper posits an alternative understanding. I suggest that the majority of visitors to cemeteries make a positive contribution and that both real and virtual excursions can promote and enhance the cemetery as a place for the living and the dead.

**Eric de Maaker (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**

*Material memory, mediaisation and the dead*

In the Netherlands, secularisation and individualisation cause people to search for new ritual expressions in relation to the dead. In addition to 'classical' Christian approaches, ritualists draw on performative practices from domains as varied as theatre, television, as well as contemporary visual arts. Furthermore, globalising tendencies provide an impetus for people to reflect on perceptions of the dead that derive from cultural traditions elsewhere. This paper explores in what ways such new materialisations and visualisations reflect changing ideas about death and the ancestors.

**George Dickenson (College of Charleston, USA), David Clark (Lancaster University) and Magi Sque (University of Southampton)**

*Palliative care and end-of-life issues in UK pre-registration, undergraduate nursing programmes*

Palliative and end of life care have traditionally not been in nursing school curricula. Only in recent years have they been included. The aim of this research was to determine the current status of such an emphasis in programmes in the United Kingdom (UK). A mailed survey in 2006 to the 66 undergraduate (pre-registration) nursing programmes in the UK (return rate of 79%) determined that palliative and end of life care play a significant role in these programmes. Forty-five teaching hours on average were devoted to these topics. All of the schools have some provision on palliative and end of life care, and over 95% of students participated in these courses. A nurse was usually the primary instructor, although non-nurses were sometimes used. Attitudes toward dying and death and communicating with terminally-ill patients and family members were emphasised. By highlighting dying and death in the curricula, nursing schools appeared to be giving nursing students an opportunity to face the issue of death, thus helping them to be better prepared to help their patients and their families to do so.

**Julie Ellis (University of Sheffield)**

*'I don't like to be down because I don't think people like to know you when you're feeling miserable...'*

*Negotiating expectations: bereavement, experience and identity*

Drawing on interview data from a small-scale study with people who have lost a partner and attend a bereavement support group, this paper will discuss how experiences of bereavement are socially constructed. It considers how dominant ideas about what is accepted, and what we expect of those who are grieving, get negotiated and have authority in the social world.

Taking the stories of bereaved people as its focus the paper explores wider social influences that give a context and meaning to individual and localised experiences of bereavement. It discusses how participants' accounts of living with and negotiating a bereaved identity suggest that grief is a concept which is constructed in socially acceptable and legitimate ways, and that managing interaction at both an individual and institutional level plays a key part in this process.

What the paper ultimately highlights is the subtle and complex ways in which grief is 'produced' rather than simply 'exists' in everyday life. By focussing upon the contingent ways in which individual experiences of bereavement are negotiated, the paper replaces the dominant model of innate emotionality with a more contextual and fluid understanding of the nature of grief. It challenges the idea that grief lies purely within the individual, by focussing more on the social context and its constructive processes.

**Ivan Emke (Memorial University of Newfoundland)**

*"The Gentle Hands of Women:" Traditional role expectations of female spouses of funeral directors*

The goal of this paper is to analyse the traditional role of female spouses of funeral directors in the North American funeral care system, and the changes taking place in that role. In the past century, the majority of licensed funeral directors and embalmers in North America have been male, but their spouses have also played a part within funeral services, even though it has often been informal and unacknowledged.

The first part of the paper looks at the occupational negotiations regarding the traditional role of women (especially spouses) in Funeral Services in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The second section of the paper will report on new data on how funeral professionals perceive the changing role of women (especially the spouses of funeral directors). There is very little research literature which directly addresses this issue, outside of a few industry materials from periodicals.

The specific research methods and data collection procedures for this project are two-fold. First, there is a reliance on archival research, especially from Funeral Industry periodicals, to illustrate the early role of women in the history of the funeral profession in North America. The second research method is a web-based survey of current Funeral Services workers (the web service company, Survey Monkey, will be used as a platform for the survey). The survey, which will be promoted in current Funeral Industry periodicals, will inquire about the past role of female spouses of Funeral Directors and Embalmers, with some comparative questions regarding the current situation.

It is expected that this research will help to address a current gap in our understanding of the changing role of gender in Funeral Services occupations in North America.

**Mario Erasmo (University of Georgia, USA)**

*Ausonius' Parentalia: walking among the dead*

The poems written by the Christian author Ausonius in the 4th c CE are poetic tributes to his dead relatives that imitate the offerings to the dead normally given at their tombs during the festival *parentalia*. As figurative offerings to the dead, the poems turn the reading process into a ritualised experience as Ausonius uses the Roman festival of the dead as a pretext and text for his collection that transforms the reader into a participant in the commemoration who figuratively visits the tombs of his relatives and recites Ausonius' text.

The collection begins with poems addressed to his parents and next come poems addressed to relatives in a seeming random order. There is no teleological order to the list and there is a certain artistry apparent in the haphazard arrangement that reflects the uncertainty of life and death since members of a family do not die in a set order or symmetrical pattern. The effect is like a visit to a cemetery where one encounters tombstones in a random order, depending on the date of death or the date the tomb or burial plot was purchased, even in areas

where members of the same family are buried. The dead are not where the epitaphs claim they are but rather the epitaphs serve as textual markers that distinguish each of Ausonius' dead relatives and effect the same reification as an epigram on an actual tombstone that turns the reader into a passer-by at a cemetery who converses with the dead. This paper explores how Ausonius uses allusion to death ritual to transform his readers into grave visitors who recite the poet's epitaphs to his own relatives: the more the poems are read, the more Ausonius' relatives (and not those of the reader) are commemorated.

**Eric Ettema (VU University Medical Centre, the Netherlands))**

*Existential loneliness: a conceptual review of the literature*

Healthcare literature suggests that many people with a life threatening illness are confronted with an experience of absolute isolation. This isolation is related to the awareness of being ultimately alone in facing one's own finitude. The experiencing of this isolation is elaborated in the scientific literature under the notion of existential loneliness. In contrast with social and emotional loneliness, existential loneliness is thought not to be relieved by the presence of friends and family: the loneliness of having to face one's own finitude alone remains. The disruptive experience of having to die alone makes the issue of existential loneliness highly relevant for end-of-life care practices. However, the literature on existential loneliness has never been systematically reviewed. In order to conduct such a review, this article critically analyses the various conceptualisations of existential loneliness that are found in the scientific literature. From there, three main conclusions are drawn. Firstly, the literature on existential loneliness shows profound conceptual unclarity on what it means to suffer from this type of loneliness. Secondly, this unclarity consists partly of a conceptual confusion about human nature. Especially conflicting presuppositions concerning the spiritual versus non-spiritual dimensions of human nature induce confusion about what it means to suffer from existential loneliness. Thirdly, conceptual unclarity consists further of an elusiveness concerning the existential loneliness experience. In particular it is the absolute character of the isolation that obfuscates the existential loneliness experience and hinders it from further conceptualisation.

**Gerri Excell (University of Reading)**

*I hate myself and I want to die... So I wrote this song! Death Metal and cybermourning*

Once upon a time popular music comprised easy songs about love, relationships and happiness, band names were similarly happy and cute, for example the Happy Mondays. In 2007 you will find Funeral for a Friend, My Dying Bride and The Black Death riding high in the download charts. One of the biggest bands on the planet at the moment is My Chemical Romance, an American "Emo" (Emotional Hardcore) band who sing about suicide, death and cancer, not exactly relaxing. This musical genre has grown in popularity around the globe, displeasing hardened fans who believe that what was once feared is now becoming mainstream. Death Metal, Black Metal, Doom Metal, Gothic Metal and Emo Music have a huge following and what is especially disturbing to some sections of society is that fans of this genre are as young as eight years old. Death, once a taboo subject, is now the subject of songs listened to on i pods by children on their way to school. Cybermourning blogs appear on line and My DeathSpace.com has a forum on interesting deaths, unusual deaths and celebrity deaths. Death is a marketable and profitable commodity, but how did this happen and why? This paper will investigate the growth of the Death Metal genre and place it alongside the growth and popularity of the Internet, where cybergrieving has become de rigueur for the Myspace generation.

**Kate Field and Louise Locock (University of Oxford)**

*Memorialising the dead fetus: an analysis of narratives about termination following a diagnosis of fetal abnormality*

We conducted 48 qualitative interviews with parents who ended a pregnancy following a diagnosis of fetal abnormality as part of two projects for the DIPEX research project. Both projects - Experiences of Antenatal Screening, and Ending a Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality – were funded by the NHS National Screening Committee and can be seen on the DIPEX website ([www.dipex.org](http://www.dipex.org)). Our interviews were recorded on video and audio and are copyrighted for use in teaching and presentations, as well as the website.

Our presentation - illustrated with at video/audio clips from the interviews – analyses the ways that parents approached the issue of disposal of the fetus. We will argue that deciding whether and how to mark the baby's life (all our respondents rejected the term fetus) was a turning point for many people in restoring their moral and social identities after the termination process.

Our analysis will begin by outlining how unprepared most parents were for the physical demands of termination but also for the baby's corporeality. Though most respondents had no previous experience of mourning or grief rituals, many found that commemorating the baby through funerals, memorial services and cremations provided an appropriate way to channel grief, regain control of their lives and heal their damaged self-identity.

**Shirley Firth**

*'Is anybody there?' Spiritual needs of the dying; from the UK to the US*

As the elderly and those facing death continue to be marginalised within the UK and the US, spiritual questions about suffering and pain, abandonment, life's purpose, efficacy of prayer, and the afterlife surface frequently. Recent studies tell us (Speck and Coleman in the UK, and Balboni, *et al* in the US) that terminally ill people rank spiritual worries in the top three categories of priorities as death approaches. Yet, those caring for the dying – medical centres, hospices, and religious communities – are consistently identified as providing insufficient response to spiritual needs. The dying are being tuned out.

This paper examines:

- Recent studies addressing the high placement/value of spiritual needs at end of life
- The range and scope of spiritual meaning from a multifaith perspective, which includes everything from practice of cultural and religious rites and traditions, through wrestling with existential, pastoral and theological questions.
- Institutional context and response, specifically comparing the two countries. We find striking similarities in the functionality of care for the dying, even considering the UK's social medicalised system vs the US's privatised medicalised system; and the dynamics of England's state church within a secular society, and the unique way religion dominates the US.

The goal is to explore the very real spiritual needs of the dying, to examine where critical communication between end of life responders (health care professionals, chaplains/clergy, etc) and the dying has broken down, and to examine the fertile ground where grassroots movements and philosophies are beginning to take root. (Continued in Andersons' paper)

**Pam Fisher (University of Leicester)**

*'Houses for the Dead': The provision of mortuaries in London, 1866-1889*

In 1843 Edwin Chadwick drew attention to poor households who were retaining for up to ten days the corpses of family members who had died in the single room in which the family also ate and slept. He thought the practice bred disease and was 'morally degrading'. Some parishes had disused buildings that were pressed into use as makeshift mortuaries during epidemics or,

for example, when bodies were washed up by the river. Chadwick had something more permanent in mind, and recommended that premises were built in every town where 'all classes of people' could deposit the corpses of family members until they could be decently buried.

The Sanitary Act of 1866 effectively marked the beginning of mortuary provision, for that Act was the first to provide powers for the compulsory removal of corpses from homes, without which earlier Acts were ineffective. However, a shortage of land in the metropolis led to tensions developing between the public health aspirations of the parish authorities and the private interests of residents who objected to a mortuary being built near *their* homes or businesses. The sharing of sites by parishes was also problematic, as the residents of the parish that had procured the site complained that another parish's bodies would introduce new infections. Progress was slow until 1875 but then began to gather pace, fuelled by fears of compulsion, a changing understanding of the causes of infection, and feelings of local pride.

This paper examines the issues faced by three groups of London parishes between the Sanitary Act of 1866 and the formation of London County Council in 1889 (which soon introduced compulsion), and how and when these parishes managed to overcome local concerns in order to provide the 'houses for the dead' that Chadwick had sought.

**Jacque Lynn Foltyn (National University, California, USA)**

*The Last Look: Anna Nicole Smith, James Brown, Princess Diana, Saddam Hussein...and, yes, Jesus: The celebrity corpse in the infotainment era*

"I'm ready for my close-up, Mr. DeMille," vamped Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard*. In 2006-7, the camera (un)ready corpse took centre stage, as 'hard' news, conflated with gossip and celebrity, with the deaths of:

- 1) Anna Nicole Smith, *Playboy* model and reality TV star, whose corpse required 24 hour 'protection' from the media in a Florida coroner's freezer.
- 2) James Brown, 'godfather of soul', whose open-casket corpse 'performed' in a funeral stage show.
- 3) Saddam Hussein, executed Iraqi despot, whose corpse, swinging from a noose and splayed obscenely on the floor, was featured in pirated and official news photographs. Even the long dead were not allowed to rest in peace.
- 4) Princess Diana was news again, because of the protracted inquest into her death and published photographs of her mortally injured body.
- 5) No less than Jesus entered the human remains fray, when a television documentary claimed to feature the bones of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (hotly contested by archaeologists as well as Christians).

These seemingly separate media events created a series of overlapping, sometimes preposterous narratives, about disfigured, putrefied, embalmed, dissected, buried, disinterred, and displayed remains of the famous, legendary, semi-mythic, and possibly divine. There were battles for meaning, bodies, deposition, and genetic material. Forensic investigation, an entertainment commodity as well as science (which I call 'corpse porn'), came to the fore in each of the cases; for legitimate reasons - to establish personal identity (Hussein, Jesus et al), paternity (Brown, Smith, Jesus), or maternity (Smith, Princess Diana, Jesus et al) - but also to feed contemporary popular culture's obsession with dissection, decay, and DNA.

In this paper, I examine the celebrity corpse as a voyeuristic spectacle in the infotainment era, for a public, greedy for a last look, even as looks at the war, disaster, and everyday human dead remain taboo. I will approach this topic from a variety of theoretical approaches.

**Duncan Forbes (The Shakespeare Hospice, UK) and Chi-Keong Ong (University of Warwick)**

*Enabling the 'Good-Enough' Death*

With increasing medicalisation of death, there is a risk that within the UK dying people may be regarded as being different and thus excluded from normal social activity: i.e. viewed as socially dead before biologically dead. Social insignificance undermines the dying person's self worth; but it is precisely the recovery of such self-worth which is crucial to a "good" death. As Cicely Saunders said, "good" dying involves "a journey from ... anger, guilt, and fear into acceptance, peace and a continual personal progress".

One's own death is the ultimate threat to self-worth. The task for the individual and their family is the recovery of self-worth in the face of apparent annihilation. The continued care and love of others is vital to affirm the significance and value of the person facing death. The immediate family, with its own journey towards acceptance to make, may be unable to provide the objectivity that is needed.

We suggest that a crucial pre-requisite for enabling and containing a more peaceful death, assuming adequate pain and symptom control, is to establish a good enough retrospective sense of one's life, and to know what is good, that will be left behind for loved ones. This is crucial to actually achieving a 'good- enough' death. Working with subjective memories challenges the notion that there is such a thing as a medically prescriptive and technically deliverable "good" death. Saunders observed that "the whole experience of that life was reflected in a patients' dying" and that a subjectively "good" death is not only defined by those "who face their end with peace and fulfilment but also those who have never had any chance of finding a worthwhile life or death." Thus, it is unlikely that there can be a generalisable "good" death that would be universally deliverable – instead, we are called to find a 'good-enough' death for each and every person.

#### **Katherine Froggatt (Lancaster University)**

*'Hide and seek': managing living and dying in care homes for older people*

The end-of-life needs of older people in care homes are receiving increased attention in the United Kingdom and worldwide. An action research study has been undertaken in the UK to develop end-of-life care in two care homes for older people. The primary aim was to identify how residents, relatives and staff can be involved in the process of change. In this paper, the ways in which living and dying are held in these two care settings are presented, as this provides the context within which changes are implemented. This discussion is informed by data collection entailing participant observation, interviews/conversations with residents, relatives and staff (n=27) and data from staff education sessions and meetings of staff working groups.

Data analysis entailed a thematic content analysis of the interview transcripts and meeting notes. A tension is seen in the management of the life-death transitions that take place in care homes for older people. Whilst residents, relatives and staff emphasised 'living now' in the care home, there was also a recognition of their own mortality by residents and their relatives. Staff were also aware of the 'future dying' that residents would face, but were not always able to address this issue because of personal unease with death and dying. The way in which this tension was managed in the care homes relied on two processes: watching and protecting. Residents, relatives and staff watched the changes in people's physical and mental conditions. The care and support residents received were similarly observed. Alongside this staff described, and were observed, shielding residents from the deterioration and dying of other residents. They also protected themselves through this process from emotional distress in others and for themselves. Holding living and dying in one care setting therefore requires an ability to engage with sometimes dialectically opposed processes.

#### **Chiara Garattini and Lawrence J. Taylor**

*Gathered to her babies: children, death and maternal love in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*

This paper explores the central role of death, rather than birth, in establishing the sacred character of motherhood in what may be called the nineteenth century Western cult of

domesticity. In this period, the death of infants – as figured in middle class material culture and popular expressive forms – becomes the central motif for symbolising motherly love. This, the purest of all possible loves, establishes the moral status of the nuclear family and the central sacred role of woman (as mother) in this newly critical social unit. Drawing on the already central symbolic role of death in romantic culture, mid-century cultural formations utilised the available space of the cemetery and the home as repository of memory, as well as the newer realm of popular consolation literature, to construct the exemplary death of children, and through them, the exemplary life of mothers, and hence families and nations.

**Ananya Ghoshal (Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, India)**

*'Not a day has gone by in my life when I haven't thought about death' - Ingmar Bergman*

In my paper I aim to explore the notion of death in the cinema of Ingmar Bergman. Ranging from *The Seventh Seal* and a knight playing chess with a personified Death to *Autumn Sonata* impregnated with a fear of death haunting impaired bodies and minds, the notions of death and oblivion are dynamically represented in Bergman. At the centre of these films lie Bergman's spiritual quest for God and why he seems absent from the world. Whereas, in *Through a Glass Darkly* the mentally ailing heroine has a vision of God as a spider, the severe *Winter Light* tells the story of a country priest whose faith is threatened by the imminence of nuclear catastrophe. Who is there to answer? In *Persona* televised images of war cause an actress to simply stop speaking, and *Cries and Whispers* redeems a woman suffering from cancer and yet finding consolation in a faith her sisters cannot understand or share. What are these visions? How are they relevant for us now? How do they help us understand the notions of death and dying? Let's discuss a filmmaker who had dared to ask perhaps the most rhetorical question available to human beings: "Why live at all?"

**Margaret Gibson (Griffith University, Australia)**

*Impersonating the dead: on the relationship between mimesis and mourning*

Faced with an irreversible absence, those in grief sometimes, and to varying degrees, impersonate the dead in order to keep them alive and present in their bodies. The effect of impersonation can be felt as a shudder of recognition passing through the body or as a flash or glimmer across the surface of one's body or the body of another person. In his essay "The Reversal of Death: Changes in Attitudes Toward Death in Western Societies", Philippe Ariès regards impersonation as a pathological expression to grief: "The prohibition of mourning pushes the survivor into losing himself in his work or, on the contrary, to the brink of insanity, into pretending to live with the dead person as if he were still there, or, further, into taking his place, imitating his gestures, his words, his eccentricities, and sometimes, in the height of neurosis, into copying the symptoms of the disease that carried him off" (1974: 554). This paper will examine the relationship between impersonation and grief, using examples from personal stories (my own interview research) and wider cultural examples. Impersonation can be a conscious process or performance and it can also operate in unconscious ways – ways which may or may not be externally perceivable by others. Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia will inform the analysis of why mimesis is part mourning, not just in relation to particular losses, but mourning as part of the human condition.

**Christina Marsden Gillis**

*A space not their own: burying the dead on a Small Atlantic Island*

It is perhaps not surprising that the grave of Princess Diana is located on a small island in the park of her family's estate, Althorp. Islands are specially demarcated places; their boundaries

seem clear and secure. At the same time, the island is usually seen as 'other': always apart from the mainland, a separate place, 'not here.'

In a paper that combines a personal experience of loss with literary examples, I want to question this view. The island off the northeast coast of the United States that I will principally consider, the site of a well-preserved mainly nineteenth-century cemetery, offers the consolation of stark beauty, the visible, even touchable, traces of a culture long gone, and shared memories that continue to live in a small community. But more than this, the small island, concentrating and crystallising experience, is also a lens within which the minute and the large, the near and the distant – and most importantly – the present and the absent, are linked in a framework that sustains the living in the face of the loss. This process is at the core of what I call the consolation of place.

To look out from the kitchen window to a small fenced cemetery and the grave of one's son, with an islanded sea beyond, may be an unusual experience in contemporary western culture. The centrality of that cemetery in the life of the island community, the permeability of the boundary between the village of the living and that of the dead, call into question the very notion that the dead are, or can be, shut away in a place that is entirely their own. Rather, they are woven into a fabric in which landscape, sea, rock, time, and memory together offer consolation to the living.

**Clare Gittings (National Portrait Gallery, London)**

*Keeping memory alive: John Knill (1733-1811) and the creation of a Cornish death ritual*

*"I confess I have a real affection for St Ives and its inhabitants, in whose memory I have an ardent desire to continue a little longer than the usual time...To that end my vanity prompted me to erect a mausoleum and to institute certain periodic returns of a ceremony..."*

Will of John Knill, National Archives, Kew

So wrote John Knill, lawyer, customs officer and sometime mayor of St Ives in Cornwall. The 'ceremony' that he devised includes ten young girls, two elderly widows, and the current mayor, customs officer and vicar all dancing round his hilltop mausoleum. He himself attended the first performance in July 1801, and it has occurred every five years since, most recently in 2006, when I was present.

This paper, illustrated with slides and music, explores this delightful event and the engaging, eccentric and fondly remembered character whom it commemorates. His posthumous philanthropy also included leaving his body for dissection by surgeons at William Hunter's Museum in Windmill Street in London. While his precise reasons for doing this remain unclear, it is possible to speculate, from the wording of his will, on how he perceived his identity to be embodied.

While his specific requests and ceremony were peculiar to him, he was not alone in this period in creating an individualistic death ritual. This paper sets Knill in the context of a largely unstudied phenomenon, the creation of personalised, pre-planned funerals in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, and as so, might well be of interest to sociologists, archaeologists and anthropologists, as well as to historians and folklorists.

**Anne P. Glass (University of Georgia, USA)**

*Attitudes about funerals revealed through narratives*

Deritualisation has been increasing in the American culture, and this movement away from ritual and tradition has spread to the period of bereavement. Exploratory qualitative in-depth interviews with 15 elders aged 70 and above, and 15 adult children, offered the participants an opportunity to describe their life experiences with death and dying, which are major events that are rarely discussed. The sample was primarily female (12 of the adult children, 13 elders) and white (80%).

The mean age of the adult children was 53.1 (range of 42 to 63) and 78.6 for elders, with a range of 70 to 88. Using open-ended questions, as part of this larger project, the sample was asked about their funeral-related experiences and attitudes, including opinions regarding open caskets and cremation. The experiences and beliefs that surfaced from their narratives displayed some strong opinions, both positive and negative. The potential role of funerals and memorial services in helping individuals cope with the deaths of loved ones was demonstrated, as well as instances in which the ceremonies were not helpful. Some attitudes could be traced back to early childhood experiences, and family customs of dealing with funerals were noted. Cohort differences were also explored. It was clear that some participants distanced themselves from the topic of death more than others, and their choices not to have memorial events reflected this distance. Evidence showed, however, that the omission of a ritual ceremony was later regretted, and pent-up grief sometimes emerged when later deaths occurred. The wide variety of funeral-related experiences and perspectives revealed through the narratives demonstrates an underlying ambiguity about the process.

**Paul Gough (University of the West of England)**

*Redemption and resurrection: picturing the dead in the post-war work of Stanley Spencer, Will Longstaff, and Jeff Wall.*

Stanley Spencer served in Bristol as a medical orderly during 1915, before being posted overseas to serve on the Macedonia Front. While working in the grim circumstances of the Beaufort Hospital he drew fellow orderlies, occasionally copying photographs of their dead brothers or sons, bringing them back to life in exquisite line drawings which have long since vanished.

Taking as its starting point Stanley Spencer's vast panorama of post-battle exhumation *The Resurrection of the Soldiers* (1927-32), this paper examines how painting and photography have been used to bring the dead, the disappeared and the dying back into figurative life. Spencer's panorama of earthly redemption was painted in the 1920s as vast tracts of despoiled land in France and Belgium was being brought back from apparent extinction, and planted with thousands of gravestones and military cemeteries. As salvage parties recovered thousands of corpses, concentrating them into designated burial places, Spencer worked high in his scaffolding painting his powerful panorama of recovery and reconciliation. This illustrated paper will locate Spencer's work in the context of such artists as Will Dyson, Otto Dix, and the Australian Will Longstaff whose image of the *Menin Gate at midnight* depicts a host of phantom soldiers emerging from a Flanders battleground. However, unlike the grotesque 'undead' depicted in Abel Gance's 1919 film *J'Accuse*, Longstaff's ghost army and Spencer's reborn battalion are intact, pure and unsullied by warfare.

Achieving greater popular acclaim than Spencer's vision of rhapsodic peace, Longstaff's painting was more in tune with the mood of séances, spirit-photography, and battlefield pilgrimage that so dominated the decade after the Great War, but its significance has paled in comparison to Spencer's elegy on recovery and re-membering.

Through its analysis of the risen, once-dead soldier, the paper will conclude with a short reflection on Jeff Wall's epic photographic battle-scape of 1992 *Dead Troops Talk* and the paper will explore common themes and differences between Spencer's ontology of reconciliation with Wall's bleaker montage of disaster and death.

**Margaret Gouin (University of Bristol)**

*How to study a funeral*

My doctoral research topic is Tibetan Buddhist funeral rituals. There is not a lot of information on these rituals, and what there is, is scattered across a huge geographical area, a variety of ethnic groups, and more than a hundred years. The information is fragmentary and was collected by many different people for different purposes—much of the earlier material takes the form of

published memoirs of travellers, diplomats, soldiers and missionaries, although there have been valuable ethnographical studies in the past fifty years or so. The data is frequently only available in anecdotal form; often it is incomplete (describing only part of the funeral rites). The challenge for me was to develop a framework for analysis of Tibetan Buddhist funeral rituals which would allow me to correlate all this disparate information so as to be able to tease out some sense of what is usually done, apart from regional, cultural and historical variations.

My solution was to design a detailed matrix which breaks the death rituals down into a sequence of steps and sub-steps covering the period from the time when it is ascertained (or believed) that a person will definitely die, to the conclusion of commemorative rituals which may occur long after the actual death. The matrix, which I will describe in this paper, permits a detailed analysis of the information distilled from the written accounts, so as to reveal both how much we know, and where there are gaps in our knowledge. In addition, I suggest that it could also be used to analyse information on other funeral rituals in other societies, and to compare this data across cultures and religions.

### **Polly Gould (University of the Arts, London)**

#### *Art and mourning in an Antarctic landscape*

How does the past engender the future in our personal lives and in art? Approaching this question as an artist, I propose an exploration of art and mourning, and the task of successfully inheriting the past, set against an Antarctic landscape. My strategy involves the grafting of personal narratives onto wider theoretical and historical discourses. I mix theoretical explication with poetic and metaphoric evocation in language and images, combining slide projection, video and sound with the spoken word.

The bones of this story lie in my mourning for my father. As he lay dying, in that time of waiting with nothing to be done, I made a few drawings of him against the white expanse of the bed sheets. After his death, after his body was gone, I wonder what is to be done with his corpus. This personal drama of inheritance is played out against the question of how to inherit art's history, and how to make art anew. How does one go on making art in the post modern and how does one live on post mortem?

Approaching the third anniversary of his death, I was still perplexed by this hiatus, this halt in temporal progression that mourning had produced in me. I resolved to break open time with a journey through space, to one of the most remote and least human places in this world, to the Antarctic Peninsular. So, I took the drawings of him with me, and set them out, there, amongst the penguins and ice and the white expanse of glaciers. Why?

To respond to this question I apply some aspects of the existential philosophy of Heidegger, Freud's psychoanalytical ideas in *Mourning and Melancholia*, and the Romantic theme of the artist's lonely journey into awesome and sublime nature.

### **Hilary Grainger (London College of Fashion)**

#### *Maxwell Fry and the 'Anatomy of Mourning' at Coychurch Crematorium, Bridgend, Glamorgan (1969-70)*

In 1964, Edwin Maxwell Fry addressed the Cremation Society of Great Britain on The Design of Modern Crematoria, concluding that too many British examples failed to assuage grief and bereavement, given the absence of a meaningful relationship between spatial arrangement and inner condition. Fry identified a Cultural ambivalence lying at the heart of the design of a building frequented by a large cross-section of religious, secular and ideological movements, all with different, but overlapping needs.

The impediments to the act of mourning in Fry's view 'were abruptness, obviousness, peremptoriness and banality'. While working in Chandigarh with Le Corbusier, Fry had been struck by the immediacy of Indian cremations and by the active involvement of mourners in the ceremony, in contrast to the British disassociation from ritual and grief. He talked of an 'anatomy

of mourning' invoking sociologist Geoffrey Gorer's emphasis on the importance of acknowledging of the fact of death and the necessity for the full expiation of grief as a communal act.

In the audience were representatives of a group of small rural authorities in South Wales who subsequently commissioned Coychurch Crematorium, Bridgend (1969) where Fry was to make the leap from theory to practice to produce one of the most significant crematoria in Britain. This paper examines the ways in which Fry sought to realise his aims of architectural purity, clarity and meaning by working on the premise that a procession or ritual passage of mourners following an encoffined body through the grounds could itself have spiritual meaning.

**Eva Jeppsson Grassman (Linköping University, Sweden)**

*'A short life': notions of a limited future and of premature death in chronically ill, visually impaired adults.*

The notion of life as being short is a central existential theme and undoubtedly a universal element in the subjective life-span construct, but may change in form and intensity through the different phases of life. The awareness that life is short may affect us more intensely at certain times and in connection with specific events, such as traumatic life transitions. For some groups, the statistical probability of in fact having a short life is higher than for others. People with severe chronic illness belong to these groups.

In a longitudinal study in which a group (14 at baseline) of chronically ill, disabled people, 11 of whom had diabetes since childhood, was followed for 25 years through repeated interviews, 'a short life' emerged as a prevalent theme. It seemed to encompass increased awareness of a death approaching prematurely, as well as more general, subjective assessments of the risk of having a limited future. The centrality of this theme was a discovery, and particularly distinct in the third round of interviews, eight years after the first one. It was found to be important for the understanding of changing priorities, adaptive strategies and general life planning of the participants, many of whose lives were already then marked by gradually deteriorating health and aggravated disabilities. However, the 25 year-follow up indicates that patterns of change in the theme of 'a short life' had evolved over the years. This could be interpreted in a context of the illness trajectory, time with disability and social age. However, the participants' various experience with peers who were 'ahead of them' in the illness trajectory also had importance for the 'short life' notion.

**Eva Jeppsson Grassman (Linköping University, Sweden), Elina Juntunen (University of Helsinki, Finland), Anna Whitaker (Ersta Sköndal University College, Sweden) and Anne Birgitta Yeung (Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies, Finland)**

*Spiritual care in the last phase of life: a comparison between the Church of Sweden and the Church of Finland*

The focus of the presentation will be on the spiritual care and support offered by the majority Lutheran churches in Sweden and Finland to people in the last phase of their lives and to the bereaved. The past couple of decades have seen a new attention around dying in some of the Nordic countries. This intensified concern is due to several interplaying currents. A common pattern in this context is the new visibility of the churches in the welfare sector and their claims to the expert role in matters of bereavement. Yet, Nordic churches also differ, to some extent, as to religious tradition and popular rootedness.

The point of departure will be results from a comparative Nordic project concerning end of life issues. The main question addressed was: If and what types of support does the Church offer to dying parishioners and to those bereaved? What are Nordic similarities and differences? All parishes in two Swedish and three Finnish middle-size communities were included and data was collected through in-depth interviews and through postal questionnaires. Results from the Swedish study indicate that spiritual support for dying people from priests and deacons in the Church of Sweden is surprisingly uncommon while most parishes offer support for the bereaved.

Preliminary results from the Finnish study point in a somewhat different direction. By the time of the conference, they can be more fully discussed and compared to the Swedish cases in order to further understand spiritual support in the last phase of life and the roles of Nordic religious institutions in it.

**Peter Groote (University of Groningen, the Netherlands)**  
*Place meanings of memorialised roadside accident locations*

Death always takes *place* somewhere. Where it is placed may be of importance for how those left behind cope with their new situation. Allegedly, in modernity spatial exclusion of death has been used as a rational coping strategy for this most irrational transition in life. Places of death and dying were kept out of sight and were drained of meanings. Nowadays this seems to be giving way to a re-appearance of death as an almost openly performed and communicated life event. This means that the meanings attached to places of death have gained importance and are communicated to wider audiences.

A way of communicating commemorative place meanings is the erection of memorials at sites of fatal (traffic) accidents. In this paper we analyse a sample of more than 120 roadside memorials in the Netherlands. A quantitative analysis regards the prevalence of roadside memorials: how many memorials are there, where are they located, who erected them for whom, what do they look like, and how long do they remain in place?

A qualitative analysis focuses on the meanings that are communicated. These may be negative (anxiety, fear, anger) as well as positive (love, hope, resignation), and are always contested. The literature often focuses on the celebration of masculine traffic behaviour, but one would expect this to be less accepted in the relatively feminine Dutch culture. The multiplicity of meanings of roadside memorials may also interfere with the issue of private use (for communication) of space that is public both in ownership, and in use.

Our conclusion is that roadside memorials do tell stories that make the place surpass thresholds between for example the masculine and the feminine, or the public and the private, but these are not necessarily listened to, accepted and/or reproduced.

**Sheila Harper, University of Bath**

*Looking death in the face: a comparative ethnography of English and American funeral homes*

Although the death rituals of England and the US – two contemporary Western societies, between which there is cultural, social, political, and ideological exchange – possess some similarities, the role played by the dead body in mourning is notably different. It appears within funeral rituals in different ways and for different lengths of time. This paper aims to a) document the ways in which the body is displayed in one American and one English funeral home, and b) elicit the meanings given by mourners and the public to viewing, or not viewing, the body. Do mourners in England and the US have different socially prescribed experiences of the dead body within funeral rituals? How do the two publics assign meaning and value to the physical remains of recently dead bodies, if they do so at all? Does the social nature of viewing human remains in the US, vs. the private nature of viewing human remains in England, lead to different meanings ascribed by those present? The 'denial' and '(in)visibility' of death are two concepts that have been propagated and contested. This research project grounds the debate in a comparative ethnography of one particular rite: viewing the recently-dead body.

This paper problematises the homogeneity of the West as a research framework. It argues that although there are commonalities between Western countries with regard to death rituals, the dead body continues to play a significantly different role in the US and in England. The comparative design of the research is therefore essential in the attempt to move away from an homogenised view of countries that are categorised as Western.

**Kaneez Hasna (University of Oxford)**  
*Bonn Pchum Ben: the Festival of the Dead*

The Khmer speaking Buddhist communities in Cambodia believe that most living creatures are reincarnated at death, but some unfortunate souls will be trapped in the spirit world due to bad karma. Pchum Ben or the Festival of the Dead is a time when it is believed that these souls are released for fifteen days to search for their living relatives, who offer them food, flowers and fruits and meditate and pray to reduce the bad karma to enable the reincarnation of their ancestors.

On the fifteenth lunar day during the tenth month of the Khmer calendar, called Pheaktrobotr, people celebrate Bonn Pchum Ben. It is believed that the spirits come down to the earth on this festival occasion and unite with their relatives and friends on earth in peace and rejoice. During the first fourteen days, people takes turns offering food to the monks of their local pagodas in the belief that their offering will reach the souls of their ancestors and friends by virtue of the monks' sermons.

The final day of Pchum Ben is the most important. On this day, in every pagoda around the country, the mass collection of offerings (Bens) is dedicated to the souls of ancestors. If this duty is ignored, it is believed that the ancestral souls are cursed and will haunt the neglectful descendants for the rest of the year.

In the early morning of the last day of the Pchum Ben Festival, men and women wear their traditional costumes especially silk Sampot Hol, Sampot Phamuong, embroidered blouses and scarves and bear offerings, candles and incense sticks as symbols of respect to the ancestral spirits. Lotus flower offerings are symbolic, as are the sweets such as Num Onsam and sweet Num Korm (steamed cakes wrapped in banana leaves) which are taken to pagodas during the festival to share among participants.

**Meike Heessels (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**  
*Re-inventing All Souls' Day in the Netherlands*

In the Netherlands the processes of secularisation and individualisation put traditional religious rituals increasingly out of favour, resulting in a quest for new rituals. Experimentation and innovation is taking place not only in funeral and cremation services, but also with regard to rites on the Catholic Calendar such as All Souls' Day (November 2). This paper focuses on the re-invention of the ritual by non-Catholics, that is, people who no longer or never did adhere to Catholicism. What is more, gestures, imagery and objects related to the Mexican Day of the Dead (*Día de los Muertos*) have been incorporated in the new ritual. Why is it that religiously unaffiliated people in the Netherlands seek to appropriate ritual elements from Catholicism? And why do they take inspiration not only from the Dutch but also the Mexican version of the Day of the Dead?

The paper, in addition, deals with the question of whether the bereaved people concerned mainly use the new ritual to reconnect and communicate with the deceased or whether they have given it new meaning in terms of remembrance.

**Paul Hill and Mike Simmons (De Montfort University)**  
*Photography and grief*  
*Interpreting lived experience: personal stories in a social context*

Creative photographic practice, as a vehicle for the expression of human emotion, provides a methodology that can be used effectively to interpret lived experience, as it involves an active process of deconstruction, and a reconstruction of events.

This re-living and a re-telling of experiences, presented in photographic terms, extends the reactive and subjective process, developed through its creation, into an inter-subjective experience, in a social context, as the work engages with an audience.

In this paper, two qualified and experienced photographic artists explore the meaning of death, from two diverse perspectives. One reflects on the recent death of his wife, after many years of marriage. The other examines perhaps one of the most difficult areas of bereavement, that of pre-term infant death.

Grief is a formative process representing contemplation and adjustment to changing sensibilities, and the acknowledgement and acceptance of emotional significance shaped by personal events.

It has been argued that reality as an objectively observable truth is impossible, and that our idea of what is real or true, is an association between stimulus and perception. Personal stories can often speak in ordinary terms, about extraordinary events, and whether the story is accurate or not, fiction or fact, its value is in the telling and its relevance is in the interpretation.

In a complex world mediated by social and cultural exchanges, developing a sense of self, and providing a memory structure on which to establish order and create meaning within our lives, is fundamental to our survival as individuals and in a broader social context.

The value of photographic practice as a strategy for scholarly research, its impact as a tool in the study of grief, and a methodology for bereavement care will be considered.

**Lorens Holm (University of Dundee)**  
*The Death of Le Corbusier: the death of space*

Shortly before his death in 1965, Le Corbusier prepared his first manuscript for publication. *Voyage to the Orient* (1965) was the travelogue of his architectural tour of 1911, the tour that formed him as an architect. It included his first encounter with the Parthenon, an experience that, arguably, traumatised him. This *arché*-object of architecture destabilised space for him. It appeared to be both too close and too far away - and for a number of reasons, publication had to wait until the end of his life. In a single last line added to the manuscript, he claimed that the questions the Parthenon had posed to him *then*, remained for him unanswered *now*. His admission that the Parthenon remained unassimilated in his architecture, even as it seemed to dominate it, undermines any positivist reading of his career, as a progressive accumulation of architecture and knowledge. It suggests that, with respect to his encounter with the Parthenon, nothing really happened between 1911 and 1965; although there had been a lot of work and progress, it amounted to repetition without difference. Le Corbusier stood at death's door, a manuscript in hand, surveying a life, and what he saw was the death drive.

This paper will read the death of Le Corbusier against the psychoanalytic theory of the drives as elaborated by Freud and Lacan. It will argue that death was present in Le Corbusier's *oeuvre* throughout his career in the form of the Parthenon, and not simply at the end. The drive is the most fundamental psychical force; it is the psyche's flywheel. This paper will argue that architecture is the expression of the drive of the psyche to be spatial; and that to be driven by space, to desire not simply to *have* it, or to be *in* it, but to *be* it, is tantamount to death.

This paper is about how to formulate death in spatial terms. It should be clear how inadequate any response that turns directly to tombs would be. These spaces in which you house a dead body, are not significantly different from the spaces that house the living. We shall argue that *drive space* is a condition of indeterminacy that makes architectural spatial experience possible. Space that is always returning to an archaic, more indeterminate form, alluded to but never fully represented in *King Lear*, in Freud's comments on the oceanic, in Plato's discussion of *Chora*. Perhaps even in Giedion's 'non-oriented' 'Archaic space', that precedes the three space 'conceptions'....

**Charlotte Horlyck (University of London)**  
*Relations between the dead and the living in pre-modern Korea*

This paper questions attitudes to and perceptions of death in pre-modern Korea, in particular during the period of the Koryŏ kingdom (AD 918-1392). At this time Buddhism flourished, but other religious and philosophical beliefs also influenced the ways in which death was dealt with. Taking as its focal point archaeological material, this paper examines how Koryŏ society viewed death and issues related to dying and how this was materialised in the ways in which the dead were disposed of. During the Koryŏ period, the dead were interred in different ways but the historical sources provide few clues as to why certain types of burial were more prominent and popular than others. Instead we have to reconstruct such underlying emotions and actions through the surviving material remains.

Death rarely occurs in isolation but more often than not affects a larger group of individuals who are either directly or indirectly related to the dying. It is these individuals who out of emotional, social or financial obligations to the dead conduct the burial and, in the case of Koryŏ society, formally observed a period of mourning and performed ancestral rites. It is also the living that will either suffer or benefit from the death of an individual, and according to traditional East Asian thinking must bear the consequences for an inadequate burial, a badly chosen grave site or an inappropriately conducted funeral. It can therefore be argued that death as well as the disposal and burying of the dead concern the living rather than the dead. This appears also to have been the case in Koryŏ times, when the continuous relationship between the dead and the living appear to have had a paramount influence on how death was managed, emotionally as well as practically.

**Anne-Marie Hughes (University of Manchester)**

*Munition workers and workplace fatalities in the First World War: the influence of gender and war role in the valuing and commemoration of war related deaths.*

This paper will explore the handling of the deaths of male and female munition workers killed in workplace accidents during the First World War. At present, the commemoration of munition workers does not feature significantly in the literature on the commemoration of war by Jay Winter, Adrian Gregory and Alex King among others, who tend to focus upon the armed forces' dead to the exclusion of women and civilian men. Equally, although much has been written about women munition workers as war workers by researchers such as Deborah Thom, Gail Braybon, and Angela Woollacott, the study of their deaths has concentrated upon the press coverage of deaths from industrial poisoning without locating their deaths within the literature on the commemoration of war deaths. Yet the British Government, employers (both state and private), colleagues and families of the workers killed in munitions explosions responded, both in terms of the burial and mourning of the dead and in terms of their later commemoration, in ways that can say much about the significance they assigned to those deaths.

These meanings will be explored here through the languages used to describe the incidents and the dead, and through the ways in which the dead were disposed of and commemorated. Particular attention will be given to the July 1918 explosion at the Chilwell National Filling Factory, with comparisons drawn with incidents in other factories. Contrasting wartime munition workers' treatment against the pre-war treatment of industrial deaths and the wartime treatment of frontline death, I will explore the impact of the complexities of their gendered identities and war role, and contemporary expectations of masculinity and femininity, on the way in which male and female workers' deaths were interpreted and commemorated during war.

**Victoria Ka-Ying Hui (University of Southampton)**

*Lyrical themes in 2006 top ten UK funeral songs*

The present study aims to identify the lyrical themes in 2006 top ten UK funeral songs. Eight emerging concepts were discovered in the preliminary analysis. First, the relationship described in the majority of the ten funeral songs is a romantic relationship. Second, the prevalent behavioural response to loss or separation is waiting for the other person. Third, the typical

emotional responses are lingering passion for, feelings of emptiness and incompleteness without the other person. Fourth, cognitive responses are primarily about reminiscence of and missing the other person. Fifth, pain and loneliness are the common adversity the remaining person experienced. Sixth, wishes to keep the memories of togetherness intact and to express own feelings to the other person are frequently mentioned. Seventh, a few songs conveyed a gratitude for what the other person has done for oneself. Eighth, death is only portrayed in one song and that it is peaceful as well as causes forgetfulness of past life. Discussion will focus on the use of euphemism for death in funeral songs, how to relate these lyrical themes to mortality anxiety as well as analyze obituaries and epitaph in future studies.

**Emilie Jaworski (University of Paris)**

*Images of death, images of society*

Globalisation may be described as the expansion of the capitalist system and its ideals. This phenomenon implies deep structural transformations inside societies and reorganisation of the worldwide population. It is then obvious that each society must redefine all their social and cultural practices in order to give sense to the new social reality.

The mechanism of those reshaping obviously appears in funeral rituals. Those events, which combine economical, social and cultural dimensions of a society, are interesting to get a better understanding of a population. The role of funeral participants is to establish the dead among the ancestors - references for the identity of a group - and fix his memory. Then, during this action, they solicit all the values and ideals of the society. So, funerals can be considered as a mirror of the society.

This problematic, which involves social change and funeral rituals, can be applied to the case of Poland and the Polish community in the North of France. Since the fall of communism, the social and cultural environment of Poland has deeply changed, and the population must adapt itself to a new reality. The Polish Community has also had to reconfigure its practices but in a foreign environment. A comparative study of these two common originated populations, facing social change, can help to understand the mechanisms which drive the social and cultural reshaping. I particularly focus on a practice which was common to both of the concerned populations: *post-mortem* pictures, taking pictures of dead relatives in the coffin before the funeral mass. By working on the evolution of funerals and of social functions of those pictures, it is possible to understand how a society works and how a population adapts itself to contemporary changes.

**Tiffany Jenkins (Institute of Ideas and University of Kent at Canterbury)**

*Contesting dead bodies in museums: the emerging cultural meanings of human remains*

There is a long tradition of displaying and researching bodies and body parts in museums. After the Enlightenment they were presented as part of scientific, ethnographic, archaeological or medical museums.

Today the old thinking which allowed human remains to be used for research and displayed in museums is changing, in America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand and in particular, in Britain. In the UK, human remains are increasingly treated in law as sacred and a new 'respect' is emerging in new policy and in practise. Whilst there has been some opposition within the museum profession, which once argued for academic freedom and the importance of the remains for research purposes, both of which have been challenged, many professionals are beginning to change the way dead bodies in museum collections are treated. Human remains have been repatriated to overseas indigenous groups; some buried or removed from display; audiences consulted on their display and exhibits. Through these actions and new policies it is possible to note the development of new meanings ascribed to dead bodies. The dead body as research object is sidelined, but the dead body as providing witness to past wrongs or messages about damaged human beings is valued.

The paper will chart this shift and explore the cultural meanings of human remains in museum collections, showing how extensive and profound the changes are, with examples from the empirical research of my PhD.

**Malcolm Johnson, University of Bath**  
*Spirituality and biographical pain at the end of life*

Having previously devised the term Biographical Pain and separated it off from spiritual pain, I have since conducted related research and training (principally of staff working in care homes). This paper sets out to elaborate the theory and to present observations from a study of older people with late onset serious visual impairment and from practice in care homes for older people in the UK. The provision of empirical evidence of how biographical pain presents itself, will permit a deeper explanation of how individuals in secular society express a mixture of spiritual concerns and life review anxieties as finitude presses on them.

Biographical Pain is defined as: 'The irremediable anguish which results from profoundly painful recollection of experienced wrongs which can now never be righted. The anguish is heightened when finitude or impairment terminate the possibility of cherished self-promises to redress deeply regretted actions.'

Whilst it has proved relatively easy to convince other researchers and those who work with older people of the value of the concept of biographical pain, my earlier work has insufficiently operationalised it. Here is the opportunity to bring to bear on the concept a range of evidence which will serve to validate and challenge it through the application of data and illustrative case material. The intention is to further develop a well received idea in a more rigorous fashion, in order to provide deeper articulation.

**Peter C. Jupp**  
*Maryhill: the beginnings of cremation in modern Scotland*

Maryhill, Glasgow, was opened in 1895 as the first crematorium in Scotland and the third in the United Kingdom. Cremation, as a technological mode for the respectful disposal of the dead, had been promoted in England since 1874 as a more hygienic and economic alternative to the age-old burial tradition. The process was declared legal in a court case of 1884, and confirmed in the Cremation Act 1902 and Cremation Regulations 1903.

This paper focuses on the work of the Scottish Burial Reform and Cremation Society (SBRCS) founded in Glasgow in 1888, and on the obstacles it needed to overcome to establish Scotland's first crematorium. All the early promoters of cremation encountered prejudice, suspicion and religious opposition, but the obstacles faced by the Scottish pioneers of cremation proved more formidable than in England.

This paper is the first serious attempt to analyse the beginnings of cremation in modern Scotland. It will seek to interpret the achievements of the SBRCS and, in assessing the key factors that aided or impeded its progress, sheds light on the strengths of Scottish political, religious and cultural institutions compared with those in England during the same period.

**Eva Karlsson (University of Stockholm, Sweden)**  
*The limited freedom of palliative care*

Within palliative care in Sweden, there is a strong ideology of the autonomous and self-determinative patient. In my presentation I will from an ethnological perspective discuss how this ideology influences nursing staff in their understanding and categorisation of patients and relatives. My empirical data is grounded in observations and interviews made at three units for

palliative homecare within a period of six months. During this period, I was focusing on how ideals and directives were put into practice within health care.

During my fieldwork I noticed that the nursing staff often categorised patients as 'good' or 'problematic'. The 'good' patient was autonomous, self-determinative and participating in her own care. It was a patient that the staff felt they could trust and also had control over. The 'problematic' patient was not self-determinative or participating in her own care. On the other hand, this could also be the patient who was too self-determinative and had, in the eyes of the staff, too many ideas about how she wanted to live and die, and what was best for her. The staff felt as if they could not rely on these patients, and that they had no control over them. The staff could in those cases question whether the patient was capable of deciding what was best for her. In my analysis of the classification of patients into 'good' or 'problematic' patients, I will use Michel Foucault's theories about power and discipline to make visible what I call the limited freedom in palliative care.

**Elaine Kasket (London Metropolitan University)**

*Death and the doctor: the physician's experience of patient death*

Review of the academic literature and popular press suggests that physicians have difficulty with issues of death and dying, to the detriment of patient care. There is a dearth of study or commentary in the psychological literature about physicians' grief or trauma in response to death. The research presented here represents qualitative interviews with eight physicians, out of which emerged themes including death-and-dying issues as experienced during training, factors associated with a more intense experience of patient death, reactions and responses to 'difficult death', expectations of self and perceived expectations from others regarding responses to patient death, and perceptions of available emotional support. Implications of the findings for physicians are discussed, including the 'silent bargain' struck between doctors and society that physicians regulate emotions in a particular way, and the role of physicians as 'ultimate rescuers'. Suggestions are made for psychotherapists and for medical educators. The impact that physicians' emotional regulation has upon patients and upon society at large is highlighted.

**Margareta Kern**

*Clothes for Death – Odjeća za Smrt*

*Clothes for Death (Odjeća za Smrt)* is a research based visual art project documenting women in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina who prepare clothes in which they wish to be buried. Through the project I aim to explore the relationship of the women in the South East Balkans to death and through this further understand their lives, which have been shaped by turbulent historical, political and cultural currents. The photographs from the project will be shown in a solo exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Interdisciplinary Arts, which will open as part of the conference. In the conference presentation I will chart the background to the project and discuss the dynamics of interdisciplinary working.

Although predominantly coming from a contemporary fine art background, through this project I began to communicate with anthropologists, ethnographers and cultural theorists and inform my practice through reading a wide range of literature on related subjects. Within the presentation I will explore further the impact these disciplines and the professional relationships I forged have had on my work.

As well as contextualising the project I will share the experience gained during the fieldwork research. Searching for women who have prepared clothes in which they want to be buried, meant discussing death publicly and in a new context. This process has revealed a range of responses and concepts on death, as well as challenges linked to the personal and intimate nature of the project.

Having left former Yugoslavia at the start of the civil war, this project has a strong autobiographical dimension which I intend to share and weave into the talk. Going back and

engaging with the people through the research forms part of the discourse on return, questioning the notions of home, place and belonging.

The presentation will be accompanied by short video clips of interviews I recorded with the project participants.

**Paul Kingston, Stella Mills and Nothando B. Ngwenya (Staffordshire University)**

*Weblogs as therapy and memory reservoirs?*

With the emergence and widespread innovative use of computers and technology it is imperative that social scientists embrace this phenomenon in offering 'dignity in dying' therapy for the dying and their families. Recently weblogs have emerged as the new 'buzz' in technology as everyone from the young to the old has joined in the rush of this genre. There has been encouraging research on the dying leaving a 'heart will' for family members and friends to try and ease the emotional anguish of both parties. Weblogs offer a platform not only to share but also to leave memories for loved ones and hence an important tool to explore. Weblogs offer a form of disclosure and can be very therapeutic for the dying. Research shows that accepting death can lead to a dignified and more peaceful death, and weblogs smooth the progress of confrontation and admission of death. Writing weblogs would facilitate the move from a 'death denying' culture to a 'death accepting' culture that cherishes memories of their dead loved ones through celebrating their lives rather than mourning their death and also embracing the mortuary and obituary rituals that have since long been practised and valued by society. This presentation is part of ongoing work that will contribute to the findings of the research which will attempt to develop a theoretical model of weblog usage in hospices, for patients, carers and staff.

**Carol Komaromy (Open University)**

*Death instead of life: the ambiguity of managing the life-death boundary*

Stillbirth and neonatal death can cause great emotional suffering to family and friends. Midwives are charged with offering support to parents at this very difficult time of loss and yet they are often traumatised by the shock of an unexpected stillbirth or neonatal death. The professional demeanour of the midwife at this time is central to this exploration. Based on the work of Hochschild (1983) and Goffman's theory of performativity, the paper draws on the need for everyone to manage these feelings through emotional labour.

Over the past thirty years there has been a normative shift (in the UK at least) from concealing dead babies to encouraging bereaved parents to hold and handle the body of the deceased baby as an important part of the grieving process. This shift requires careful management and the paper raises questions about the role of emotion for parents and professionals in this situation. The event of stillbirth takes place at a time when birth is often (though not always) anticipated. The difficulty that is associated with making sense of this type of event creates ambiguity for everyone involved. In this paper, I argue that this difficulty is the same regardless of the practice. Indeed, at a time of a greater recognition of the range of individual diversity of need in bereavement and the academic shift to post-modern grief theories, using a one-size-fits-all doctrinal approach imposes an expectation on parents to want to see their dead baby. This has become the norm and responding to that norm requires what Goffman calls impression management. In other words, the scope for hidden feelings can be just as great whatever the institutional or social framing of the response to death.

This paper explores some of the ways in which this ambiguity, as part of the pain of loss, is managed and draws on data from one midwife's experiences of stillbirth in a labour ward and an interview with a woman whose grandson, called Elliot, died just three hours after birth. Elliot's death was totally unexpected and I explore the extent to which his body was used as a form of comfort and its central role in helping everyone to negotiate his identity. The data highlights how one of the consequences of the collision between life and death results in ambiguity with a fragile script with which to negotiate this performance.

**Chris Kynaston (Australian Catholic University)**

*Giving form to the dead and work to the living: an exploration in the sociology of coffins*

In the Collins English dictionary, a coffin is described, quite simply, as “a box in which a corpse is buried or cremated”. For many, this would undoubtedly be accepted as a more than adequate description of an object that we often prefer not to think about too much. The description, however, does ‘rough justice’ to the layers of meaning that reside in this academically neglected object. The key purpose of this paper will be to tease out these layers of meaning and demonstrate that coffins, both humble and not so humble, can tell us a great deal about the nature of social life and also about the nature of social change. The material upon which the paper is based will be drawn largely, although not exclusively, from the Australian experience.

It will be argued that coffins are powerfully symbolic, frequently conveying crucial information about the bodies they hold within. As the final exterior ‘shell’ of the deceased, they, along with the various coffin adornments, can speak to issues such as class, age, ethnicity, and gender. Changes in the nature of coffins – in terms of construction, for instance – can also tell us much about changes in the wider society. For instance, the American ‘torpedo coffin’ (which would explode if interfered with), the hollowed-out logs and old packing cases used on the Australian gold fields, or the striking present-day Ghanaian fantasy coffins (offering coffins fashioned into items such as Mercedes Benz, fish, shallots, and Yamaha Outboard Motors), all offer powerful insight into aspects of the society in which they are located.

Of course, as well as being highly symbolic items, coffins are also typically highly expensive items. Indeed, they are a key source for the realisation of profits in the funeral industry. Not surprisingly, then, tracking the production and marketing of coffins can yield key insights into the inroads made by ‘global giants’ in the funeral industry, in Australia and elsewhere. Interestingly though, niche markets are developing for the production of individualised ‘life art’ coffins. Paralleling the celebratory, life-centred funeral, there are now coffins specifically designed to reflect and celebrate the life and individuality of the deceased.

**Gunilla Larsson (Uppsala University, Sweden)**

*Boat burials, gender and power structures*

Contemporary views on gender relations and power structures have deeply affected the interpretations, description and presentations of Late Iron Age boat burials in Scandinavia. Material has often been chosen that fits into this general image. In Sweden the exclusively male boatburials of Vendel and Valsgärde cemeteries are usually discussed, verifying the popular image of the armed, aggressive, male ‘Viking’. In this paper, with material from the Swedish boatburial cemeteries from Tuna in Alsike parish, Tuna in Badelunda parish, Norsa and other places where also female burials occur, I will give an alternative interpretation of the gender and power aspects of the boat burial ritual. I will also bring the Scandinavian boatburials in Russia into the discussion to enlighten this question, as well as the often neglected or biased issue of the life and death of Scandinavian women on the Eastern journeys in the Viking Age.

**Alison-Kate Lillie (University of Birmingham)**

*How does a family history of cancer affect the care needs of palliative care patients?*

There has been widespread coverage of cancer genetics in the British media. It is now known that around five to ten percent of cancers are associated with an inherited genetic predisposition. In families where there is a history of cancer, individuals are more likely to have experienced the death of other family members from the same disease, to develop cancer at a younger age than

normal and/or to develop multiple primary cancers. There has however been a dearth of research into how this affects the care needs of palliative care patients

This paper presents a phenomenological study that aimed to explore the meaning of a family history of cancer for palliative care patients. Data was collected through recorded semi-structured interviews with twelve hospice patients who had a family history of cancer and ten hospice nurses. The data was coded, using an iterative approach, into themes that arose from the participants' experiences. The themes were compared to Van Mannen's (1990) existential themes of lived-time, lived-body, lived-human relationship and lived-space.

This paper will build on emerging data presented at the RCN International Research Conference (2007). It will focus on the effect of sequential deaths within families with a family history of cancer. It presents a model that considers why previous experiences of cancer within the family enabled some patients to act more autonomously and reduce their reliance on nursing care, whilst the care needs of other patients are dominated by an overwhelming grief due to previous deaths within the family. It will also discuss how the awareness that a family history of cancer may be associated with a genetic predisposition affected patients' concerns for other family members.

**Vanessa Lockyer-Stevens (University of Bournemouth)**

*Sudden death of the child: time to go home*

The death of a child is a profoundly tragic event. Feelings of intense loss and grieving are exacerbated further when a child dies suddenly. We know that the unexpected death and abrupt loss of a loved child may prolong the early stages of grieving both parents and siblings (Hazinski 1992, Campbell & Glasper 1995).

The death of a child within a critical care setting is particularly difficult as parents may find themselves in an inappropriate environment in which to say goodbye. The intense desire to hold, caress, touch and talk to their dead child needs time and a special place. Critical care settings in particular, are not places in which in families can come to terms with such an overwhelming loss, but home may be.

Taking a child home following death in hospital is uncommon practice. Reasons are varied, ranging from a lack of knowledge relating to ownership of the child's body and to the requirements of the coroner's office.

The aim of this paper is to explore the notion of promoting the option for parents who may wish to take their dead child home. Issues about communicating such opportunities to parents and the role of the multidisciplinary team in creating a policy for its introduction are explored. Clearly the sensitivity of these issues requires discussion and reflection but the role of the practitioner in considering such options for parents warrants further debate.

**Tracy Long, Sheila Payne and Magi Sque (University of Southampton)**

*Why do bereaved relatives decline organ donation?*

Organ donation refusal rates in the UK are of concern to the transplant programme (40% rising to 70% in non-white groups). This paper presents a study, commissioned by UK Transplant, which explored the end of life decision-making and hospital experiences of bereaved adults with whom organ and tissue donation was discussed and who declined donation. Twenty-six relatives of 23 deceased individuals, who chose not to donate their deceased relative's organs for transplant operations, were recruited via three staged media campaigns in large urban areas of the UK, and from four NHS Hospital Trust intensive care units. Data were collected via single face to face or telephone interviews. Contrary to the world literature, positive views held by the family about donation and the wish of the deceased to be a donor did not guarantee that donation would take place. This suggests that donation decisions depend, in part, on a number of factors converging in a particular situation. These include: the family's view about protecting the body and keeping it intact; the timing and manner of the donation discussion; a lack of information about the donation

process; a desire not to prolong the perceived suffering of the deceased; a need to be with the dying and to witness the observable ending of life represented by cessation of the heartbeat. Case study examples will be used to show how these factors influenced participants' donation decisions. Protecting the body was the most frequently recurring theme underpinning a decision not to donate. Participants could not bear the thought of their deceased relative being cut up. The 'sacrifice' of an unscathed body, which must be made if organ donation is to proceed, could be an important barrier to actualising donation even in populations where there is high awareness of the benefits of transplantation.

**Mirjaliisa Lukkarinen Kvist (Linköping University, Sweden)**

*The last decision*

My study is concerned with identity and belonging. The study focuses on people that were young when they moved from Finland to Sweden during 1950s, 60s and 70s. The overall aim of the study is to look at how people who migrated when they were young, and who have lived in their 'new' country for several decades, identify themselves, where they feel they belong and what kinds of ties they have developed over the years to both the old home district (Haapajärvi in Finland) and to the new (Eskilstuna in Sweden).

The study shows how individuals continue to maintain social relationships in their former place of abode, relationships that have nevertheless dissipated with time. The interviewees still identify with their former home district, even though this has diminished in significance and there are no longer as many important relationships as before. There is still a lot that feels familiar. But much has changed, too, which to a certain extent leads to feelings of being an outsider and being therefore different to people that still live there.

The study shows that Eskilstuna has become a home district for the interviewees. It would be misleading to say that they have just changed home district during their lifetime, however. They have rather created another home district while retaining the old one. With time they have developed sustained relationships with Eskilstuna. They feel that they belong here and that it is here they have their home. Like their old community, the new is associated with memories and feelings. The interviewees clearly identify themselves as inhabitants of Eskilstuna. When they die their bodies will be buried in the soil of their 'new' country because they know that their children and grandchildren can take care of their graves.

**Avril Maddrell (Oxford Brookes University)**

*Mapping grief: spatialities of bereavement*

This paper explores ways in which bereavement is experienced in and through space, drawing on recent work on emotional geographies and emerging geographies of belief as well as work in death studies. A framework for 'mapping' grief in different types of spaces is conceptualised using physical, emotional/ psychological and virtual spaces. The spaces of both formal and informal memorialisation at varied scales are discussed. Ways in which the emergence of individualised practices of grief and consolation and how these reflect changing views of 'continuing bonds' with the deceased and sacred space, including 'secular-sacred' space, as well as conflict between private expressions of grief in public spaces are explored.

**Laura Mansfield and Daphne Wright**

*Daphne Wright: the corpse and the death cast*

The deathmask stands as physical memory of the body, a trace of the living flesh. But within the trace there is a lack, an awkward void, as the dead and biological body becomes transformed into a cleansed and classicised form. There is no mess, no decomposition and no emotional

attachment. The body mask is a copy, an imitation, but an imitation that transforms the original into a new object, with a new language and a new way of being in the world. Displayed hung, or consciously placed on the floor the body mask has a new status. It is a status that we seek to question: is it a trophy? Is it a copy? Is it a still life? Is it a sculpture? What area of language, of understanding does it occupy?

The absence of the body from the body mask, and the mask's subsequent display, becomes an area where language seems to slip from specific understandings into a realm of heightened associations and suggestions. The mask exists as an impression of the corpse now absent. Suspended between death and living, reality and representation, the death mask resonates associations with time, memory, artefact, remains and our personal relationship to each.

Working collaboratively with the artist Daphne Wright, we have been investigating the corpse and its death cast. The movement from the flesh of the dead body to its sculptural encasement. Shifting from the unmanageable realm of creatures, and the unmanageable moment of death, a moment suspended before decomposition, into the realm of the object. An object that now has the possibility of being owned, held, collected, and possessed.

### **Catherine McGowan**

*The psychodynamics of death investigation: a case study of the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario, Canada*

Coroners, unlike police officers, emergency response workers and the majority of health professionals, are exposed to death on a frequent and ongoing basis. The types of anxiety that result from frequent and ongoing exposure to people experiencing considerable stress related to grief, shock, and anger are in many ways unique to a coroner's work. Investigating the circumstances that may have brought about the death of an individual, though clearly routine for coroners, is also a potential source of anxiety. In addition, coroners are also likely to experience anxieties typical of nearly any occupation including, but certainly not limited to, the expectations of management, timeliness of work performed and changes to procedure and policy.

One of the primary functions of an organisation is to provide the structure through which its mandate may be achieved in a manner that is optimally efficient and effective. An efficient and effective organisation is one that achieves its mandate while providing the means through which its employees may limit their experience of anxiety which may individually, or communally, be overwhelming. The evolution of any organisation involves a process through which the functioning, the culture and the mandate of that organisation are created, modified and then re-created. This process occurs continually throughout the existence of an organisation. Since people are responsible for this process, it follows that the various aspects of an organisation reflect the conscious motivations of many different people. Psychodynamic theory suggests that the unconscious motivations of individuals are also inherent to an organisation and are manifest in ways that are not nearly as apparent as the manifestations of conscious motivations. Freud postulated that most unconscious motivations are solely oriented toward the avoidance of anxiety. As such, organisations not only consciously provide for the avoidance of anxiety, but also may do so unconsciously. The paper presents qualitative research that illustrates the means through which an organisation may ensure the occupational health of its employees by limiting the amount of anxiety they experience in the workplace. The Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario is a division of the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and is responsible for investigating all sudden and unexpected deaths, as well as certain expected deaths, in Ontario. Approximately 20,000 deaths are investigated annually in the province by the 360 duty coroners employed on a fee-for-service basis.

This thesis is a case-study of the Office of the Chief Coroner for Ontario. Six coroners working in the Metropolitan Toronto Region were asked to comment on their work through unstructured qualitative interviews. Analysis of the data was conducted using principles of psychodynamics. Various themes arose during the interviews which suggest that the organisation, its policy and practice, provide multiple and often complex defences to its

employees who are responsible for carrying out duties which many would consider unimaginable and unbearable.

**Fran McInerney (La Trobe University, Australia)**

*Transitioning to palliative care: where am I now, how did I get here, and what happens next?*

Palliative care has undergone significant changes since its inception in the 1960s. From an overt rejection of an over-medicalised and depersonalised death in acute hospitals, hospice fundamentally shifted the emphasis of care to incorporate the spiritual, social, psychological and emotional dimensions of the dying person. For a variety of reasons, this original form of care has since evolved to wear a progressively medicalised face via the development of mainstreamed 'palliative medicine'. A number of commentators have expressed concern at this shift, fearing it heralds a loss of the holistic focus of hospice via a re-privileging of physical, technically focused care. Others have called for a broadening of our understanding of palliative care: requiring an expansion of the application of the palliative approach to shortly after (if not before) diagnosis with a life-threatening illness, a resituating of issues of mortality including palliative care within community contexts, as well as an integration of life-extending and other technologies within the palliative paradigm.

Whether or not one views such developments as positive or negative, the contemporary blurring of the boundaries between curative medicine and palliative care has particular implications for both those experiencing life-limiting illness and those caring for them, as enhanced access to advanced medical technology sees its increasing use and a concomitant need for clarity in its application. Drawing on case studies taken from the author's clinical nursing practice in aged and palliative care contexts, this paper will explore some of the tensions involved in the transition to the contemporary palliative milieu as life-limiting disease progresses. Strategies for enhancing the transition for both individuals and carers will be canvassed.

**David Wendell Moller (Saint Luke's Hospital of Kasas City, USA)**

*Dancing with broken bones: portraits of death and dying among inner-city poor*

This presentation will examine the experience of dying while living in urban poverty. It will focus on the intersection of race and class with the end-of-life journey, arguing that a special responsibility exists to attend to the unique needs of racial and economic minorities throughout dying. Drawing on oral and visual narratives, stories of patients and loved ones will be told and a portrait of dying-poor crafted. Salient themes that will be addressed include: the social meanings of living in poverty; the unique indignities in dying created by poverty; the suspicion, anger, and mistrust which characterise attitudes of the urban poor near the end of life; gratitude for virtuous care and how this heals the spirit during dying; the remarkably stoic sources of support that are found in family and community relations; and the role that spirituality plays in offering strength and comfort.

The portrait that will emerge from the stories told and photographs shown will illuminate people who are authentically themselves and fully alive despite living in dismal circumstances. Their suffering and anger will be exposed as well as their courage and resilience revealed.

The presentation will prompt reflection about the consequences of poverty, racism, and inept healthcare arrangements. It will also declare the power of mindful presence and virtuous service among those who are dedicated to caring for this especially vulnerable population.

**Zinat Motahari (University of Tehran, Iran)**

*Mortality in the art of Edgar Allen Poe*

With a glance at the prominent works of Edgar Allen Poe, the American fiction writer and poet, one would say with certainty that his works always bear a suggestion of fear, self-perpetuating and self-torture in close connection to death and mortality. In his most celebrated poem which is a narrative, *The Raven*, a young lover losing his beloved, encounters a raven whose reality of existence the reader can't perceive with certainty. It is vehement, or better to say in the language of literature, arabesque, in which the raven depresses the lover by ensuring him the death of his beloved. This air of vehemence, coexisting with death, is one of the elements by which the poet strengthens the implication of fear and death in the minds and hearts of the reader. This paper tries to investigate the fantastic elements, conveying that feel of death and the fear behind it, such as grotesqueness, darkness, torture, loneliness, vehemence and deadly suspense, then the combination of all in making a good narrative. Two of Poe's works are chosen for content analysis: the narrative poem, *The Raven*, and the short story, the *Tell-tale Heart*.

**Mary Murray (Massey University, New Zealand)**

*Laying Lazarus to rest: the place and the space of the dead in explanations of near death experiences*

Since the publication of Raymond Moody's book *Life after Life* in the 1970's there has been considerable lay and professional interest in near death experiences. Professional interest in near death experiences has been expressed through the discourses of western biomedicine, psychology, sociology, religion and science. In this paper I will argue that biomedical, psychological, sociological, religious and scientific arguments about near death experiences tell us something about the way in which relationships between the living and the dead have been spatialised. I will argue that professional and academic discourses that have attempted to account for the near death experience articulate an imagined geography of the living and the dead. In contemporary cosmological cartographies which attempt to place the living and the dead, the spaces that the dead occupy are usually held to be profoundly 'other' to the ones that the living generally occupy. However, near death experience testimonies, as resurrective narratives, connect the world of the living with the world of the dead in a way that both confirms and confounds the boundaries between the living and the dead. Boundaries between the living and the dead, normally held in by rituals of separation, are transgressed as they are upheld in the resurrective narrative of the near death experience. I will argue that professional and academic arguments that attempt to explain the near death experience perform the function of 'border control', situating the dead in the place of the dead and the living in the world of the living.

**Olga Nesorova (Charles University, Prague)**

*Is death the end?  
Belief in the afterlife in contemporary Czech society*

Most Czechs feel no affiliation to any of the established churches or even smaller religious societies. A mere one third of the country's population of ten million claimed to have any sort of religious belief in the 2001 census. Of that one third, most described themselves as Roman Catholics. Do Czechs, most of whom have no religious leanings, really believe that death means the complete end of existence? According to research findings, this would appear to be the case. Just over a third of Czechs believe in an afterlife; however church affiliation does not have the straightforward impact on people's beliefs that one might expect. Interestingly, as many as 40 per cent of those who consider themselves Roman Catholics do not believe in an afterlife whilst 19 per cent of those having no religious beliefs at all admitted to believing in life after death. The research compares not only believer and non-believer notions of the afterlife but also major differences in attitudes according to age. The paper is based on findings from both quantitative and qualitative research, the former representing the whole of society and the latter providing a deeper insight into ideas of the afterlife held by certain groups of middle-aged respondents. The

sample consisted primarily of people who were not affiliated to any church; however it did include a number of active religious believers.

**Hlonelwa Ngqangweni (University of Fort Hare, South Africa)**

*The gendered nature of mourning in the South African context*

This paper is on 'ukuzila' – the mourning process, amongst the AmaXhosa in South Africa, specifically, spousal mourning. The focus concerns the AmaXhosa people's perceptions of the practice, its genderedness and the way in which the practice of spousal mourning has changed over time.

African traditional practices in South Africa and elsewhere have been transforming owing to many changes. The primary reason for this change has been that of colonialism whereby settlers and missionaries brought Western culture and Christianity and eliminated some African traditional practices and rituals in the interest of 'civilization'. Furthermore, certain traditional customs and values have been abandoned through the process of acculturation. The acculturation process has also resulted in hybridised ways of doing things, whereby both the Western way of life and African customs and traditions are integrated (Dougan 2004, Goniwe, 1999, Owomoyela 2002). The transition to democracy in South Africa has resulted in further changes in African traditional practices. For example, the constitution enshrines the equality of man and woman in the Bill of Rights, thus promoting gender non-discrimination. Spousal mourning has not escaped this transformation process and the resulting tension that exists between 'indigenous' and 'western' /contemporary forms of its expression.

**Tara Nipe (University of Melbourne, Australia)**

*Talking to the brain dead – an examination of an unexplored nursing practice*

This paper examines the nursing practice of speaking to the brain dead; an aspect of nursing that has been rarely commented on and never explored, though medical anthropologists and others have noted the practice. In some cases it has been attributed to ignorance, but for the most part it is not explored at all.

It is by no means a universal practice – some Intensive Care Unit nurses find the practice wrong-headed, believing that it indicates a lack of understanding about brain death. However, there are also nurses who do speak to their dead patients, both somatically dead and brain dead. I expected that nurses who spoke to the brain dead would do so for a number of reasons, perhaps including confusion about brain death, or even outright disagreement with the concept. I also suspected that some would have 'superficial' or 'trivial' reasons, such as disliking spending an eight- or ten-hour shift in silence. However, I also expected to find nurses who spoke to their brain dead patients for more complicated reasons, including spiritually and ideologically based motivations. Without speaking with a nurse about her practice, it is not possible to tell which, if any, or other, of these reasons underlie her behaviour.

The research confirmed these predictions, revealing that informants spoke to their brain dead patients for a variety of reasons. In addition to these anticipated findings the research revealed that marker events, including diagnosis of brain death and the decision to donate, altered the perceived moral status of the patient. The informants' reasons for speaking to their brain dead patients did not arise from a belief that these patients were alive. It therefore seems that this cultural practice is an extension of nursing care in general, and end-of-life care in particular.

**Bill Noble, Kate Walsh and Michelle Winslow (University of Sheffield)**

*Life stories in end of life care: establishing an oral history service in a palliative care unit*

This paper discusses a project delivering an oral history service in a palliative care setting, which is enabling patients to produce audio life story recordings. We aim to provide a life story service for patients that is capable of enriching their experience whilst receiving palliative care.

We reflect on the important role of life stories amongst people with life-limiting disease. At certain life stages many people feel the need to explore their own life-story and draw meaning from it. Particularly significant is the process of remembering, which has the capacity to reinforce identity at a time when life circumstances are rapidly changing. A strong motivation for patients who record life stories can be the opportunity to do so as a record for their families. A life history interview can also help patients feel appreciated as people, and help practitioners to understand patients more fully and form closer relationships.

Development, delivery and evaluation of the service will be considered, together with issues in conducting oral history interviews within a challenging environment. A particular focus will be on the interviewer/interviewee relationship as both create an audio record that is potentially an 'end of life' story.

**Deborah O'Connor (Newcastle Mater Misericordiae Hospital, Australia)**

*Community conversations: death education within a health promotion framework*

Transforming the health promotion philosophy of death education into action poses a challenge for health professionals in palliative care. This paper will discuss strategies, some adopted from areas outside healthcare, that health professionals within the Division of Palliative Care at the Newcastle Mater Hospital have used to facilitate reflection on issues of wellness, dying and death, loss and caring within the local community.

Although dying is an inevitable part of our human condition and experience, talking about death can be a difficult and unsettling business. The concept of Café Conversations based on the World Café framework provides a structure for people to engage in reflective thought and conversation about death, what it means for us and also for our community.

In order to facilitate thought and conversation in the wider community, active engagement of media interest in these projects has been pursued. Development of positive media relationships furthers the aims of a death education program, reflecting the community's experiences of death and loss.

Future challenges are to build sustainable partnerships, sharing our experiences of death and loss and recognising the value of these experiences in our community life.

**Stephanie O'Donohoe (University of Edinburgh) and Darach Turley (Dublin City University)**

*Parting shots: memorial photographs and meaning-making in Ireland*

Contemporary theories of bereavement emphasise sense-making, meaning reconstruction and continuing bonds, and the social and cultural context in which these tasks are undertaken. In this context, research has examined the meanings of objects inherited from or associated with the dead, and those of cemeteries and roadside memorials. The role played by purchases of new goods and service however seems less well understood. Consumer culture theory may be expected to contribute to understanding in this area, given its focus on the use of goods and services as symbolic resources in constructing personal identities and negotiating social relationships. However, few studies within this area have addressed consumption symbolism in the context of bereavement.

In this paper, we draw on a broader interpretive study exploring the meanings of *In Memoriam* notices and headstones in Ireland, through personal interviews with bereaved consumers, newspaper staff and stonemasons, and an examination of *In Memoriam* notices, gravestones and stonemasons' promotional literature. Our particular focus here is on bereaved consumers' thoughts and feelings about the presence of photographs in *In Memoriam* notices, headstones or graves. The poignant, melancholy qualities of photographs in general, highlighted by writers such as Barthes (1982), are likely to be amplified in such surroundings. We found that

while both forms of photograph constitute public depictions of the deceased, they fulfilled this role in different ways and there was a wide range of private meanings for *In Memoriam* and graveside photographs amongst bereaved people. We discuss how both conventional and contested uses of these photographs relate to the Irish cultural context, and how they contribute to sense-making in relation to loss.

**Chi-Keong Ong (University of Warwick) and Pauline Smith (NHS West Midlands)**

*Death and dying in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*

In this paper we argue that the medical model is a problematic frame for defining and deciding the nature of death and dying in and for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Medicalisation has become the meta-narrative by which death and dying is now directed. It carries with it a notion that prescribes and describes a concept of the “good death” which, medicine believes, can be delivered within measurable parameters. This we suggest has created a symbiotic collusion between contemporary society and medicine to avoid dealing with the painful, dark side of our humanity and mortality, based on a set of assumptions, which:

- a) rejects the idea that there is any value in suffering;
- b) believes that we can (eventually) abrogate, control or prevent any or all suffering;
- c) assumes that anything which is unpredictable or uncontrollable is undesirable.

We suggest that these assumptions have led to the formation of a contemporary meta-narrative for containing death and dying, which leads to an existential cul-de-sac. The disappearance from public discourse of a consensus around the reality of the transcendent has led to the human desire for immortality being transferred to the temporal and material sphere. This in turn has led to the assumption that the extension of biological life is possible, mediated by technological advances. This proposition neglects to acknowledge that invulnerability is also a pre-requisite in order to prevent accidental death, which with biological immortality, would be a statistical probability within the context of the natural universe. Therefore, immortality without invulnerability actually shifts the context of death and dying from a controllable and suffering free paradigm, to a paradoxically and probabilistically unpredictable frame.

We conclude with some discussion of how some of these concepts have had a significant impact on end of life initiatives and care provision, and how these need revising in the light of our arguments, especially for the context of healthcare in the 21st century.

**Jane Österlind (Ersta Sköndal University College, Sweden)**

*Care paths in end of life care for older people – a case manager perspective*

A challenge for society is to provide dignified care, at home or in the institution, for their greying population. Since the mid 1990s the municipalities in Sweden have been responsible for assessing elderly people's needs and for making decisions about caring activities and place of care. The case manager has the formal responsibility for these decisions which are of great significance with respect to the quality of life and dignity of the unique elderly person.

*Aim:* The aim of the present study was to obtain increased knowledge of case managers' experiences and reasoning about end of life care for elderly people.

*Method:* Seven case managers from a larger city were interviewed regarding their experiences of end of life care for elderly people. A qualitative interpretive analysis was carried out.

*Results:* The case managers seemed to talk about two separate paths to death, a natural path and a medical path. In the natural path, death and dying seemed to be an unrecognised part of life, a natural on-going process, where assessment manuals were used when offering support, whereas the medical path to death was a recognised part of life characterised by situation based unexpected events, new assessments and decisions, and was closely linked to a medical diagnosis and increased need of support.

*Conclusion:* Medical events seem to pay attention to death and dying and visualise the transition from the natural path to the medical path. An integration of both paths may lead to a third path - the palliative path – where the social and medical perspectives are woven together.

**Chang-Won Park (Durham University)**

*Transforming death in South Korea: from Confucian burial to modern cremation*

This paper examines the dramatic increase of cremation in South Korea for the last decade. Historically speaking, Korean funeral had been based on burial for centuries, heavily influenced by Confucianism: Korea was once the most thoroughly Confucianised state in East Asia. Burying the dead in an auspicious site was one of the essential practices to observe 'filial obligation', the core Confucian value. Buddhist cremation almost disappeared during the Confucian dynasty and most Buddhists had since practised burial as well. As the modern form of cremation was coercively introduced during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), there had been the national sentiment of reluctance to cremate which had intensified burial as the Korean way of death. Until very recently, cremation remained something of a social taboo and was largely employed for bad deaths such as suicide or by very poor urban residents. Despite various governmental efforts to promote cremation as a way of tackling pressing social problems such as the increasing lack of burial ground, the national rate of cremation was below 20 per cent until the early 1990s. Since 1998, however, cremation has gained positive social perception and its practice has been dramatically increased, particularly in big cities like Seoul and Busan. Exceeding 50 per cent nationwide and reaching 70 percent in major cities by 2005, the cremation rates in South Korea are expected to continue increasing. The paper first provides a description of the dramatic change from Confucian burial to modern cremation at the turn of the twenty-first century; it then attempts at an analysis of various social phenomena surrounding the change with particular reference to the interface of the living and the dead, traditional and modern values, and change and continuity.

**Deborah Parker (Queensland University of Technology and Flinders University, Australia)**

*The discourses of death and dying in residential aged care facilities in Australia*

The evolution of residential aged care facilities in Australia has a complex social, political and economic history. From humble beginnings as homes for the poor, today residential aged care facilities (RACFs) have become big business as institutions where death is a common exit point. Despite this, the social experience of death and dying in these facilities is marginalised through biomedical and economic rationalist discourses which pervade care practices. This paper reports on an ethnographic study of two RACFs in Australia to explore from a symbolic interactionist perspective how the culture in RACFs impacts on the experience of people who are dying.

This paper will present findings to indicate that while the biomedical and economic rationalist discourses are dominant there is an emerging trend in RACFs to embrace the philosophy of palliative and person centred care. This provides opportunity for the promotion of care of the dying beyond technical competence to humanistic practices that embrace self identity, values, biography and relationships. This is evidenced by social processes that acknowledge death and dying within these facilities and emergence of practice to support the individual experience of death and dying.

With all developed countries experiencing demographic, social and financial pressures of population ageing the discourses that shape the experience of death and dying in the twenty first century will need to keep pace with the consumerist and individualistic trend within our society. Reorientation of residential care facilities from a biomedical to a palliative and person centred care discourse may be an acceptable part of the solution.

**Brian Parsons (Funeral Service Journal, UK)**

*New or rediscovered? Contemporary funeral performance and the past*

Change in the performance of funerals taking place in the UK over the last two decades has embraced a wide range of options and alternatives. Interments in woodland burial grounds; the use of non-wood coffins; services with participation by family and friends; the inclusion of a wide range of music along with many other personal expressions are not unusual at today's funerals. Introduced in an attempt to personalise the event, these are often considered to be 'new' by those involved in the reform of ceremonies. However, research reveals that many of these ideas can be identified in funerals that have taken place in the past.

Drawing on material from *The Undertakers' Journal*, in addition to other sources, this paper will argue that contemporary funerals are constructed from a range of expressions that are not new but merely rediscovered.

**Manjula Patel (Bridges, Sandwell), Pauline Smith (NHS West Midlands) and Maria Wharton (Seeing Stories)**

*Story telling methodology: providing the public voice to influence dying and death care*

Empowering the public to take ownership of their dying and death is key in the midst of the dominant medical meta narrative and container for driving the experience of dying, if we really are to address individual choice at such times and shift the balance of power. At present healthcare does not:

- have robust or systematic connections within local communities
- always know how to access and collect information about the needs that members of communities expect to be addressed and delivered during this important time in life
- use such data to significantly drive commissioning and provision of appropriate services
- support well individuals and communities to develop and express their voice about what they need.

We therefore need different and more effective methodologies to address such issues. A solution, which we propose here, is the use of stories. Stories are powerful and it is through stories, told within a context, that individuals construct understanding of what has happened or is happening to them both internally and externally. Stories shape thinking and help individuals, both the teller and the recipient, to understand complex situations. Further, stories are a vehicle in all our histories for sharing and articulating important messages about our human experiences.

NHS West Midlands in partnership with Bridges, a social care voluntary sector organisation, a professional Story Teller and an Arts Production company are undertaking a piece of work to develop, produce, share and use such stories in part to address the deficits areas identified above. To achieve this we are working with a range of ethnically diverse community groups in Sandwell and parts of Birmingham.

In this session, we will share our methodology for the work through the telling and group review of a myth. This will be used to illustrate how we can access our deepest fears, and work with obstacles and difficulties, often through the use of metaphor. We then report on our work and the outcomes so far.

**Lucy Payne (University of Hertfordshire)**

*The return of personal property to the bereaved after disaster  
(An exposition of the key issues and guidance for practitioners)*

This presentation will examine the psycho-social and also practical aspects of returning items of personal property to the bereaved after disaster.

When it comes to the specific details relating to the recovery, processing and return of personal property to survivors and the bereaved, there are varying degrees of understanding about the meaning and significance of personal property and a lack of clarity within and across the various responding organisations about protocols for dealing with such property. This project, conducted in consultation with UK Police Officers, Coroners, charities and government agencies is tackling this with the production of technical advice, guidance leaflets and a Charter of Rights.

Motivated initially by experiences in response work, with specialist responsibility for the return of 'personal effects' after a number of disasters, the researcher embarked on an analysis of available literature in this area. This was followed up by presentations, workshops and articles on this area to a variety of audiences.

The purpose of this work is to highlight key issues relating to the treatment and return of personal property and to place this in both a practical and therapeutic context for those working in a response capacity. The technical elements of the work are emphasised, such as the role of property as evidence, best practice methodologies used for identification and the critical factors for storage and sensitive process of items (which may be contaminated with fuel, chemicals and blood borne diseases)

This issue is also placed in the wider context of ongoing studies into the psycho-social requirements of those affected by disaster.

**Lynda Payne (University of Missouri-Kansas City, USA)**

*"Desiring death like a lover": The perils of being a virgin in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe*

In the nineteenth century, authors, composers, readers and audiences were aware that puberty was a dangerous, even a fatal, time for girls. This paper analyses the sickness and death from morbus virgineus, or the disease of virgins, of two fictional heroines - Lucy Ashton, from Walter Scott's popular novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) and Lucia Ashton, from Gaetano Donizetti's Romantic opera, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835).

The primary cause of the disease of virgins was lack of menstruation. In nineteenth-century medical theory, it was believed that if the menses did not start as expected at puberty, the trapped blood could ferment, thicken and rise up a girl's body. The recommended cure was to break the hymen membrane: the only socially acceptable way to do this was through marital intercourse. Long engagements like Lucy's and Lucia's to Lord Ravenswood (he is overseas for about a year in Scott's novel and in Donizetti's opera) were considered especially dangerous by Victorian parents.

If the trapped menstrual blood reached the heart, physicians stated it caused girls "to desire death like a lover." If it reached the brain, it caused sexual fury, convulsions and death. On her wedding night Lucy stabs her bridegroom, while Lucia murders hers. The following day both girls die. A close analysis of the symptoms of illness in these fictional heroines reveals much about societal fears of the fragile health of adolescent girls in nineteenth century Europe. Culturally virginity may have been desirable; medically it was dangerous.

**Janneke Peelen (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**

*Becoming human: new rites for perinatal deads*

In May 2006, a Dutch village priest, named Van Beurden, celebrated his 40-year jubilee of priesthood. His parishioners donated him a monument for the perinatal deads who had been neither named nor baptised in the past. These deceased beings were not considered fully human. They were disposed of without mortuary ritual. The remains were hidden and frequently buried in unblessed earth in the margins of a graveyard, if buried in a cemetery at all. Van Beurden accepted his present. On behalf of the local Roman Catholic Church he said sorry to the mothers who had been grieving over the years but never got any pastoral acknowledgement of the existence of their deceased children. The monuments for the perinatal deads of the past now can be found all over the country. Nowadays they are no longer stashed away and treated as

unwanted objects; they are taken home by the parents, washed, dressed, held and laid to rest in their cradle. This paper demonstrates how rituals play a decisive role in perinatal deaths becoming human. Rather than being considered matter to be done away with, they undergo a double rite of passage elevating their status to deceased infants. The parents are both ritually welcoming them in the world and saying good-bye to them. In view of the new ritualisations, the central question of this paper is: when is the body an object and when not?

**Anna Petersson (Lund University, Sweden)**  
*Offerkast and roadside memorials*

The erection of roadside memorials in Sweden is commonly considered a novel practice, appearing during the last 10-15 years. Nevertheless similar precedent practices can be found in the history of Sweden.

Stories about marking the site of an unexpected death with a cross could be said to date back to the eleventh century legend of Saint Sigfrid, telling of the first English missionary to spread Christendom in Sweden. A phenomenon more specifically related to the road is the so called *offerkast* [literally: 'victim throw' or 'sacrifice throw'], referring to the throwing of twigs, branches, and stones onto places of accidental death by the road. This practice is for instance mentioned in Carl von Linné's travels of *Västergötland* in 1746 where it is commented on as a rural custom. An early literary mentioning of the similar practice of throwing stones onto places where extraordinary things had happened can be found in the so called first Swedish humanist, Olaus Magnus, fantastic work *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus* from 1555.

Although these precursory practices may not be directly related to the recent practice of Swedish roadside memorialisation they are none the less interesting as a backdrop to the phenomenon. This since, as Jennifer Clark and Ashley Cheshire recognises in their comparative study of roadside memorials in New South Wales and Texas, spontaneous memorialisation of today often draws from the cultural and religious heritage of the locale. Another concern is that changes in our attitudes towards death may span several generations and thus go beyond collective memory. Hence, to minimise 'the risk of attributing originality to phenomena that are really much older', as Philippe Ariès states in *The Hour of Our Death*, I believe it is important to examine precursory practices in order to fully understand current Swedish roadside memorialisation.

**Maja Petrović-Šteger (University of Cambridge)**  
*Accounting for dead bodies*

The proposed paper anthropologically interrogates the consequences of specific artistic, scientific and legal ideologies of dead bodies. In particular I seek to investigate the frameworks where legal categories (especially of property law) construct and constitute the arena of accountability in regard to bodily repatriations and those who claim these materials as their property (including scientists, relatives, artists, the public). Building on material collected with Serbian, Tasmanian and Swiss informants, I investigate how people imagine their rights to possess, dispose of, consent to the use of, and identify with dead bodies as a form of 'property' in all but name.

Pressed into service as models of intelligibility, human remains allow us to conceive the relationship between representation and humanisation, a relationship which is not as straightforward as we might unreflectively think. My goal in pursuing this connection will be to gain an understanding of the 'ethical', artistic and legal criteria that inform transnational expert communities' advocacy of their methods in accounting for persons and bodies, and their treatment of the dead body as the site and a form of evidence for the 'truth'.

**Anna Poujeau (Université de Paris X-Nanterre)**

*Never forget the dead: young people's funerals in a Christian community of Syria*

Among the Christian community in Syria, young people's funerals of men as well as women unfold in a very specific way which distinguishes them from other religious communities. The funeral lasts one day and the ritual sequences are many. Those participating in the funeral say that they must give the dead a wedding feast, even if he or she was already married with children. Indeed, the funeral is successively led by young men, women and men. Firstly, the young men of the community carry the body 'making it dance' through the village or the neighbourhood. Secondly, the corpse stands among women - young and old, members of the family or not - who during several hours' lament, beat themselves and cry. Thereafter, men gather around the dead to declaim poems. And finally, several priests give a mass before leading the dead to the cemetery.

During all these ritual sequences, songs, dances, complains, lamentations, eulogies and tears come together. For the whole community, the ceremony aims at preventing forgetfulness of the dead. Analysis of the long feminine lamentations - that take a very important place in the funeral - reveals that the young dead are never forgotten. The women sing that they will never stop crying 'bloody tears' for the rest of their lives. In fact, during all subsequent funerals in which a member of the family of a young dead participates, the women will sing laments for him or her, even twenty years after the death. With this process, the community and especially the women never forget the young dead - male or female. Moreover people who died young are regarded as equivalent to saints.

In a social anthropologic perspective I aim to show how these very singular funeral rituals make the dead a saint and put him or her, symbolically, at the core of the Christian community.

**Thomas Quartier (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**

*Material memories in Christian funeral rituals in the Netherlands*

This paper deals with Christian funeral services in the Netherlands. I will reflect on the kind of material memories that can be found in these rituals, relying on the work of Jan Assmann and Louis-Marie Chauvet. Assmann offers different dimensions of ritual memory which I will explain using quantitative data from a survey I conducted among funeral-goers in the Netherlands. Chauvet develops a liturgical view on how symbols not only signify but realise ritual memory. A major question of my paper will be how traditional ritual elements of the Christian tradition rely on individual elements relating to the deceased and the bereaved. Are material memories traditional, individual or both?

**Ulla Rajala (University of Cambridge and University of Oulu, Finland)**

*The dead, the ancestors and the Italians:  
an ethno-archaeological study of the attitudes of central Italian archaeologists*

In this talk I will present some of the results stemming from a series of interviews with twenty central Italian archaeologists. My interviewees study and/or excavate tombs and cemeteries (or have done so in the past), and thus, they have actively participated in funerary archaeology. The aim of the interviews was to study the ways theory, practice and cultural attitudes affect the ways archaeologists perceive the scope of their study. I was interested in their attitudes towards the dead and how they saw their relationship with the people they are studying. I will try to formulate archaeological mentalities involved in the study of funerary archaeology in central Italy and compare these on the general level to those in Britain and elsewhere.

**Sue Read (Keel University) and Stuart Todd (Cardiff University)**

*Thinking about death and what it means: the perspectives of people with intellectual disabilities*

People with intellectual disabilities will come to a dying phase of their lives, yet care professionals may be uncertain about how to talk (and support) the person at such a sensitive time. This paper will introduce a collaborative research study in the UK – funded by the Bailey Thomas Charitable Trust – which is currently being conducted. The study aims to explore and critically examine the understandings and experiences that adults with an intellectual disability have about loss, death and dying. It will introduce the aims, objectives and rationale for the research undertaken; explore consent issues and the ethical approval process; and describe methodological approaches.

*Methods:* Previous research has identified that adults with intellectual disabilities are eager to talk about sensitive topics such as death and dying when given the opportunity to do so in a supportive, comfortable and engaging environment. Focus groups are likely to provide an ideal method to explore the perceptions of death and dying among this client population. Two groups of adults with intellectual disabilities (maximum of six, plus supportive carers) in North Staffordshire and South East Wales will be invited to attend a series of three progressive focus groups. The focus groups will have identified primary foci, and will be audio-taped, transcribed and analysed using grounded theory.

*Results:* Since the research is currently being conducted, full discussion of the outcomes will not be possible, but initial feedback on data currently generated will be available. However, sharing the process of developing the research, and the challenges of conducting it, will be useful experiences for contemporary and experienced researchers alike. This study is using traditional research approaches with a sensitive population to facilitate consumer perspectives around death and dying.

**Eva Reimers (Linköping University, Sweden)**

*Public memorials as communicative tools to construct, deconstruct, and negotiate history and the present*

This paper discusses how public memorials gain meaning from references and allusions to other memorials, and how the memorials serve as resources for different readings of past as well as present events. It stresses that the meaning of a memorial, and the situation it memorialises, can never be totally fixed.

The recent appearance of alternative representations of the Arlington cemetery in public places as a means of commenting on the war in Iraq are analysed as materialised articulations that draw on and thereby articulate the official meaning of the Arlington cemetery as a national memorial, at the same time as they serve as protests against both the war in itself and the notion of a nation founded by war heroes. In this way they offer differing interpretations of the meaning of the deaths of those who were killed at war; as victims or as heroes. Examples will be taken from the 'Arlington West' in Santa Barbara and Santa Monica, and the white crosses at a hillside at Walnut Creek.

The paper will in a similar way discuss recent public memorials in Sweden that commemorate the victims of the shipwrecked M/S Estonia. The argument is partly based on the fact that Sweden is a nation where war plays a marginal role in the construction of the nation. Nevertheless, different M/S Estonia memorials – national and regional – depict traits that can be understood in how they make references to what usually signifies war memorials. The paper explores the significance of this observation in terms of how these memorials play a role in making sense of the disaster and the deaths of the victims, and addresses the question if the memorials (or at least some of them) contribute to making the catastrophe into an event that can be understood in terms of a war, and the victims into casualties of this war, and if this is the case: who is the enemy, and what values were at stake in this war?

**Naomi Richards (University of Edinburgh)**

*Public claims and private needs in the 'Right-to-Die' debate in the UK*

This paper will present the preliminary findings of an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded anthropological study of the 'good death' debate in the UK.

This paper will address the assisted dying debate as it persists at the interface between law, medicine and ethics. By following various right-to-die/life cases and the parliamentary efforts to bring about or resist legislative change, this paper seeks to grasp to what extent people interpret the regulation of death solely as a matter of legal or human rights. In particular, those who have advocated the legalisation of assisted dying now champion a 'right-to-die', as an inalienable human right. This new rights-claim poses a challenge as to how we conceive of our relationship with the state, and the uses to which the law can be put.

The paper also address the extent to which normative judgments about 'quality of life' and 'personal dignity' affect both medical and legal decision-making, and the way that individuals feel as they approach death. Doctors, the legal profession and the government of the day continually have to reassess the dividing line between personal autonomy and upholding the social good.

The increasing desire of ordinary citizens to exercise control over the manner and timing of death is becoming a politicised issue in the UK. This debate has now entered a more 'public' and contested phase, extending beyond the boundaries of medical ethics, into the courts. Clifford Geertz argued that whereas religion was once about "the individual pinch of destiny" and understood as a private, subjective experience, it has now come to be about politics and communal sensibilities. The 'right-to-die/life' debate forces us to question if death has undergone the same transition.

**Isabelle Rivoal (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, CNRS-Université, France)**

*Women are weeping as men are kept outside their houses:  
gender, honour and reincarnation in Druze funerals*

Although the gendered dimension of funerary rituals in the Middle East is generally well analysed in terms of spatial segregation and role segregation, scholars pay scant attention to the social implications of the special relationship between women and the dead regarding male honour. Relying on ethnographical data collected in a Druze village of Mount Carmel, I analyse this relationship by focusing on three dimensions:

First, I will explain how death undermines regular kinship categories (notably in the case of a young man's disappearance). Mother/son or brother/sister dichotomies are totally subverted into a codified dialogue between lovers. This dialogue stages the denial of the death. But at the same time, it transforms the standards of daily life notably in terms of kinship, then opening the door to a re-writing of the event from another point of view.

Second, I will describe and analyse what happens during the week following the burial. In short, during those days, the deceased's feminine relatives cease all housework: they stop cooking, preparing and serving coffee – all in all, they stop displaying hospitality. The women are hosts in the house of the dead, their own house, where their neighbours come in and out bringing cooked food and coffee for people visiting to offer condolences. During the whole week, men are kept outside the house and eat after their wives, daughters and sisters. Everything happens as if funerals are the exact reversal of marriage ceremonies.

Finally, I give a broader analysis of the particular work of funerals among the Druzes as they believe in reincarnation. As Bloch and Parry convincingly point out, women are at the core of social processes of biological transition: they give birth; they help passing away. In the perspective of the Druze credentials, this is equivalent because the soul is supposed to enter a new body at the very moment it leaves one. As a conclusive remark, I will set out to explain how the funerals open a specific temporal dimension, mastered by the women, where the ideological dimension of the Druze community is reasserted against the political and familial rivalries of the worldly life.

**Matra Robertson (University of Sydney, Australia)**

*Palliative care and suicide: a sensitive place of difference?*

In palliative care ethos, the dying person and their empowerment and respect for their individuality at the end of life, is a core concern for professionals. This paper draws upon my experience as a Social Worker in the community team at the Sacred Heart Palliative Care Service at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney. In my clinical work with dying patients and suicidal patients, I became aware of the complexities of the issues for those patients, who as they confront their own dying may find that together with their increasing physical decline; past traumas emerge for them which creates a hopeless, intense emotional experience for them. How realistic is it for an individual's rights of empowerment over their body to exist in a seemingly hopeless context of conflicting ethical, legal, social, and spiritual concerns?

Cared for in a medicalised environment, where the management of symptoms may be a focus for professionals rather than an exploration of meanings for the dying person, the private self and the issue of emotions' relationship to the place where end-of-life care occurs, becomes I suggest an important area of exploration. I am particularly interested in what happens to the self/identity and social context of such a person when they are cared for in a non-hospital/hospice place. It is problematic when a person who desires death and wishes to hasten their death, then has their expression of such concerns labelled as 'suicidal ideation' by professionals caring for them. This paper explores an experience of the depth of emotion for a dying person who was labelled as 'suicidal' and discusses some of the implications of the place of their care, on the therapeutic understandings and experience of such sensitive death desiring emotion.

**Denise Robinson, Mervyn Taylor and Max Watson (Irish Hospice Foundation, Ireland)**  
*Hospice Friendly Hospitals (HfH) programme in Ireland*

In the Republic of Ireland almost 30,000 people die each year. Approximately 66% of all deaths occur in hospitals and institutions of care and 40% occur in acute hospitals. A nationwide survey in 2004 indicated considerable levels of concern regarding end of life care in hospitals and that only 10% of people would want to die in hospital. Interventions by the state Ombudsman and international research have raised concerns about the quality of end-of-life care in hospitals. A consensus is emerging in Ireland that care at the end of life should become an indicator of the performance of the health services. Following on from a pilot project, a national programme to mainstream hospice principles in hospital practice is now being initiated, focusing on four key themes: Integrated Care; Communication; Dignity & Design; and Patient Autonomy. A public call for 'Expressions of Interest' brought a significant response from acute and community hospitals wishing to participate in the programme (18 acute and 20 community). The programme aims to change the overall culture of care and organisation in Irish hospitals and institutions of care regarding dying, death and bereavement. To achieve this it plans to develop a comprehensive framework of standards regarding dying, death and bereavement in partnership with the emergent Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). It also plans to develop the capacity of hospitals to introduce and sustain these standards in partnership with the new unified health structure, the Health Service Executive (HSE). Development staff will work with groups of hospitals and this national programme will be comprehensively evaluated over five years.

**Pnina Ron (University of Haifa, Israel)**

*Death and dying anxiety among the frail elderly within the community and in nursing homes in Israel*

The study examines the differences in death anxiety felt by independent and frail elderly people living in nursing homes and independent and frail elderly people living in the community. The study examines the relationship between the different variables through a model constructed on the basis of theoretical and scientific materials. The model examines the relationships between

demographic variables, interpersonal variables, intrapersonal variables and contentment with life, and their effects on death and dying anxiety.

The research assumptions are as follows: a) Death and dying anxiety among elderly women living in nursing homes will be higher than those among elderly people living within the community; b) Elderly people who subjectively claim good health will experience lower levels of death and dying anxiety; c) Elderly people with a high self-esteem and a feeling of high levels of life-control will experience lower levels of death and dying anxiety; d) A correlation will be found between high levels of life satisfaction and death and dying anxiety among the elderly.

The population of the study comprised 172 elderly respondents, of which 90 lived within the community and 82 lived in nursing homes. The study's data was collected via face-to-face questionnaires. The respondents reported their demographic status, evaluated their health status, referred to their social network and responded to questions pertaining to death and dying anxiety.

The findings of the study show significant differences between elderly people living in nursing homes and those living in the community, as far as their attitudes towards death and dying anxiety were concerned. The findings of the study sharpen the possibility that background characteristics and interpersonal variables influence death and dying anxiety and that elderly people with a high level of self-esteem and life-control will experience lower levels of death and dying anxiety.

**John P. Rosenberg and Patsy Yates (Queensland University of Technology, Australia)**

*Examining the intersection between health promotion and the end of life: an Australian case study*

*Aim:* The aim of this PhD study was to investigate the integration of health promotion principles and practices in palliative care organisations.

*Background:* Conventional palliative care services have been criticised for not adequately locating end of life care within the social contexts in which it takes place. To address this issue and its consequences, Karuna Hospice Services, a community palliative care organisation located in the Australian city of Brisbane, undertook a process of implementing a health promoting palliative care approach based upon the work of sociologist Allan Kellehear. In the current policy climate in Australia, there is an imperative to consider how end of life support services might be improved through adopting this approach.

*Method:* A mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative), instrumental case study research design was utilised to capture multiple perspectives of the implementation process. Data collection comprised examination of 127 organisational documents, 32 in-depth interviews with staff, volunteers and consumers, 5 focus groups with staff and volunteers, and 25 carer questionnaires. Qualitative data was subject to thematic analysis, with supplementary quantitative data analysed to generate descriptive statistics.

*Findings:* The findings demonstrate a number of enabling and impeding factors to implementation in the case study site. This study proposes that:

- Where conceptual congruence was perceived between the elements of health promotion and palliative care, associated activities were viewed as core business and viewed favourably by stakeholders.
- When quality improvement processes were rigorously applied, the impact of the transition upon stakeholders was qualitatively less.
- Where this transition had been effectively made, consumers, staff, volunteers and members of the wider community were seen to benefit.

*Conclusions:* This study adds to the current discourse regarding the intersection between end of life support and health promotion, and provides insight into how palliative care organisations might undertake the transition from conventional models to a health promoting palliative care approach.

**Marius Rotar (Romania)**

*The 'professionals' of death in 19<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania*

The medicalisation of death nowadays implies a professionalisation of aspects that compose dying and death. Thus, a discussion on this topic related to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Transylvania brings to light other historical realities on this subject. The title 'Professional of Death' can be ascribed to various categories of that epoch, from doctors to undertakers. But at that time, we can identify the deaths inspectors as the main professionals of death. With a statutory position by the Sanitary Law from 1876, the deaths inspectors outnumbered doctors and the purpose of their job was to certify death. Similarly, without their consent, according to the law, burial was not possible. Moreover, the deaths inspectors were the connection between the raw fact of death and its registration. They periodically conveyed information to the lay authorities about the death rate and evolution of different epidemics. They had to immediately inform the authorities about possible suspect deaths or, understanding the signs of epidemic death, they took the first measures to prevent it from spreading. The deaths inspectors did not earn their living out of it but it was rather a second object of their work. At the same time, to get this position, a candidate had to undergo a test under the direct supervision of doctors, which shows that their education was in direct relation with medical discourse. Their professional techniques were based on a daily practice of identifying the signs of death rather than on scientific knowledge (for instance, they pinned the dead person's lip with a needle, they dribbled them with wax, rubbed their body with a brush). The criteria certifying death to the inspectors was heart arrest. But their existence is an answer to the lack of medical personnel in Transylvania during that time, trying to meet the needs of a rural society from multiple viewpoints. Thus, their presence in Transylvania is a particularity in Europe in that period.

**Terri Sabatos (United States Military Academy, America)**

*The 'pinch of poverty': images of the poor widow in 19<sup>th</sup> century British art.*

The widow is perhaps the most recognisable and most frequently imaged figure relating to Victorian death and mourning ritual. Like the sempstress, the governess and other icons of suffering womanhood, images of the poor widow were often intended to appeal to the sympathies of the viewer as they addressed real social problems. As historian Cynthia Curran has noted (2000), it has long been assumed that only the working-class widow had any difficulty providing for herself and her family. However, despite the ideologies of thrift and self-help, many middle-class women were also placed in dire financial circumstances at the death of their husbands. According to Curran, the problems of the middle-class widow indicate the cracks in the foundations of Victorian middle-class ideology. The widow's financial distress was clear indication that her husband had failed in his role as provider. Curran relates the widow's supposed social exile directly to these aspects of the widow, claiming that etiquette demanded that she remain in seclusion so that society did not have to confront the problems her financial difficulties might pose for the entire middle-class value system. Nonetheless, if the widows were indeed a source of societal anxiety, the Victorians did not hide her completely as the numerous images of her on the walls of the Royal Academy and in the popular press attest. I will argue that these images do indeed reveal a tension within the 'separate spheres ideology'. However, these images of the poor widow in many ways actually offer the Victorian viewer a more acceptable incarnation of female dependency, especially as legal reforms were beginning to offer women more power and opportunities outside the domestic realm in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Cyril Schafer (University of Otago, New Zealand)**

*Contested tributes, continuing bonds and living memorials at life-centred funerals*

Funeral celebrants conducting life-centred funerals have become a fundamental feature of personalised funeral practices in New Zealand. Celebrants currently conduct a majority of funerals in urban areas and frequently promote themselves as ritual specialists, fulfilling the sociological and psychological needs of an increasingly secular society. Drawing on archival

research, interviews, and participant observation, this paper specifically explores the role of funeral celebrants and life-centred funerals. One recurring theme identified during the course of this research was the importance of constructing 'relevant', 'authentic', and 'meaningful' rituals that were congruous with the lifestyle and personality of the deceased. While participants emphasised the importance of capturing the 'essence' of an individual, it also became evident that funerary tributes were often contested by mourners (and occasionally celebrants). Life-centred funerals were therefore not simply a completion of the biographical narrative, but frequently a negotiation or dialogue of memories. Another important finding that emerged from this research concerned the continuing influence of the deceased and the construction of 'living memorials'. The living memorial was a way in which mourners at a funeral integrated the influence of the deceased into their own lives and, in so doing, selectively preserved the identity of the deceased. While these memorials are clearly reminiscent of the 'continuing bonds' concept outlined by Klass and Walter, celebrant explanations of memory were also pervaded by normalising psychological interpretations of 'healthy' grief.

**Valerie M Sheach Leith (The Robert Gordon University, Scotland)**

*Searching for wholeness? An autoethnography*

Jenny Hockey argues that there is a need for researchers working in the field of death and dying to be reflexive about their engagement with what is perceived by some to be a morbid topic. Acknowledging the centrality of the researcher at every stage of the research process, by making the self visible, is now widely accepted as legitimate research practice, particularly within a qualitative and feminist framework. However, the placing of self as the main focus of the research inquiry in the form of an autoethnography remains contested. Conceptualised as both a research method and a form of writing in which the personal and the cultural are intertwined and the self is made vulnerable, autoethnography is championed by some in academia and denigrated by others. Mindful of the precarious tightrope between self-knowledge and self-indulgence, this paper presents an autoethnographic account of my personal experiences of pregnancy loss, grief, and subsequent sociological research into aspects of pregnancy loss and the organ retention scandal.

**Anna Simandiraki (University of Bath)**

*The social context of death, dying & disposal in the prehistoric Eastern Mediterranean*

Later Prehistory in the Eastern Mediterranean saw the rise of urbanisation, empires, complex socio-economic networks, an early form of globalisation, as well as several natural and man-induced disasters. The death of people, nature and artefacts played a vital role in this natural and cultural tapestry.

Tangible death (body, sacrifice, decay, adornment, structures) assumed complex significance in narratives of time, place, identity, spirituality and aesthetics. The lifeless body was the protagonist in rites of passage; the battleground of social class; a stepping-stone between this and other worlds. It was thus central in the establishment of lineage, ancestor worship and political boundaries. Freed from its predictable mortal form, the remembered body assumed eternal and supernatural properties through rituals and group imagination, either by retaining its shell (e.g. in Egypt) or by being reduced to a pile of bones swept aside to make way for fresher burials (e.g. in Crete).

Human death, dying and disposal was set against the wider background of natural or civil unrest (e.g. famine or war), the death and rebirth of nature and the sun, chthonic and celestial depictions of liminal, transcended existences. People also recognised death in inanimate objects, occasionally deliberately fragmented to sympathise with human death.

This paper provides an overview of death, dying and disposal in the Prehistoric Eastern Mediterranean. As is characteristic of archaeological discourse, it will rely on rich visual illustrations. It will demonstrate not only how people in the past dealt with death, but also how

their diverse beliefs, practices and relics may in fact highlight a common need for temporal continuity, social cohesion, coping with mortality and bereavement. The paper will also touch on how archaeological practices and interpretations reflect modern beliefs about death, dying and disposal, such as through the repatriation or storage of human remains as artefacts.

**Caroline Simone (University of Derby)**

*An ethical dilemma? Methodological reflexivity in suicide bereavement research and interviewees' experience of participation*

Ethics committees continually have to balance the risks and benefits to participants engaging in research. Concerns rightly persist that bereavement research may cause distress, even trauma to the participant. Yet surely speculation around the risks to bereaved participants should also take into account the voices of the bereaved? As a researcher having to wrestle with the ethical dilemmas of suicide bereavement research, it became apparent that the voices of the suicide-bereaved sought to be heard and listened to. This paper arises out of a work-in-progress doctoral research project, in which the author is exploring adults' memories and experiences of childhood or adult losses after parental suicide. An initial literature search of research ethics highlighted a paucity of sociological qualitative research into the ethical dilemmas encountered by suicide bereavement researchers. In an attempt to inform the researcher's practice, a follow-up study with participants asking for their opinions and experiences of research participation has been undertaken. Data from the study suggests that opportunities for the suicide-bereaved to have their grief publicly acknowledged are severely limited. Participating in the research not only allowed participants to contribute directly to the study but also, during the research process, they were able to freely display regret, sadness and pain at their loss. The interview provides a site for both the researcher and participant through the co-constructed interactive dynamics of the research process, for data to be both mutually negotiated and contextual.

**Sławomir Sikora (University of Warsaw, Poland)**

*'Memory: the space in which a thing happens for the second time.'*  
*Roland Barthes' second life*

Roland Barthes wrote his last book *Camera Lucida* (1981) in a short and odd time between the death of his mother and his own. This variously interpreted book was a meditation on both photography and the place of death in our culture. Being a homage to his mother, *Camera Lucida* was also a particular 'work of grief'. Barthes wrote a book on photography which is still a challenge in this field (as one significant title: *Writing Image After Roland Barthes* announces) which at the same time might be considered at least partly unsatisfactory in a field of his own 'work of mourning'. This becomes especially noticeable when Barthes' personal story is placed against a fictional tale narrated in *Smoke*, a feature film by Paul Auster and Wayne Wang (1995). My aim is to show that the story told in *Smoke* (and in some other texts by Auster) might be seen (and probably was conceived) as a counterpart to Barthes' life story. (NB The main character, Paul Benjamin, bears the Auster's name and the surname of Walter Benjamin, another important author in the field of photography, to whom Barthes might be indebted.) The story narrated in the film starts exactly at the point in which the life of Barthes ends – Barthes found his death on the street under the wheels of a lorry while Paul Benjamin was rescued from it by a black boy.

My comparison shows the importance of the ritual, practical and material aspects of mourning against a strictly intellectual attitude towards death and grieving. Although 'the story' I would like to present seems rather virtual it is, I believe, meaningful and potent and it says much about the place of death in today's culture.

**Robert James Smith (Southern Cross University, Australia)**

*The death that does not depart: roadside memorialisation and mourning customs*

One feature of the modern practice of roadside memorialisation is the remarkable persistence of many of its examples, leading even the most sensitive of road authorities to have disquiet over the future appearance of their thoroughfares. The increasing density of roadside crosses and flowers attests to the power of the practice - personal as well as public and, to varying degrees, transgressive in intent and effect. This paper will draw upon folklore studies to examine roadside memorialisation in the context of traditional mourning customs as well as for its distinctive modern features. The practice will be presented as initially reinforcing the long established customs, but then proceeding to take on its own particular character. By way of a case study, specific examples from Australia will be traced, their features and limits outlined. Consideration will be given to the possibility that the longer-term practice might not be as satisfying as it might appear. Finally, tentative suggestions for variations to the practice will be made - possibilities which might be seen as viable by mourners as well as by road authorities.

**Margaret Souza (State University of New York, Empire State College, America)**

*The dying process and its effects on bereavement*

Bereavement is usually studied from a psychological perspective. In this paper I provide an analysis of the process of bereavement in relation to social arrangements surrounding the dying process. Palliative and hospice care attempt to provide a good death. What kind of a bereavement process do they facilitate? In my earlier research, data suggested that often family members and end of life care providers held different agendas and their communication process reflected their divergent beliefs, values, and goals. Health care providers at times assume that if the person who has died had what they believe to be a 'good death', survivors' emotional response to the loss and their grief is lessened.

This research project examined the relationship between the process of dying and the bereavement experiences of survivors. Open-ended interviews took place with survivors who volunteered to be interviewed and were located through informal networks. The dying experience was first explored then the respondents discussed their grieving process. This analysis explores and explicates the relationship between various social arrangements of dying and the grief that survivors experience.

Some of the issues in these social arrangements that affect grief include the decision making that the survivor made regarding the process of dying, the relationship that the professional health care providers and the deceased person and his/her survivors experienced, the communication or lack thereof that occurred during the dying process, overt conflicts regarding too much or too little intervention by the health care team, and other arrangements that interviews with survivors revealed.

This beginning research from an anthropological perspective seeks to outline and underscore areas for future development in the study of bereavement based on a social analysis of its relationship to the dying process.

**Deborah Staines (Macquarie University, Australia and Cambridge University)**

*'To have done with this work': killing and disposal of victims in Auschwitz*

The *Sonderkommando* (special work detail) were prisoner-functionaries in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp working around the machinery of mass murder. They were primarily tasked to the work of disposal of victims' bodies. For this reason, they have often been represented as collaborators, despite their armed uprising in October 1944, which resulted in the destruction of Crematorium III (IV). However, it would be erroneous to attribute the act of genocidal killing to the *Sonderkommando*. It was always, without exception, the SS who drove victims to the gas chamber at gunpoint, who closed and locked the doors between the gas chamber and the fresh air outside, and it was the SS who poured Zyklon B down the hatches. The *Sonderkommando*

were predominantly Jewish victims selected from incoming transports; entire groups were slaughtered every few months to eliminate eyewitnesses to the gas chambers. The Sonderkommando do not fit into the prevailing categorisations of victim-perpetrator-collaborator. Their ambiguous position is commonly referenced to the “gray zone”. Today, exploring the ambiguities of such grey zones is at the forefront of Holocaust research. Their location as historical subjects requires a new interpretation.

My paper explores the working life of the Auschwitz Sonderkommando and its social dimensions. The Sonderkommando’s work is central to locating and interpreting them as historical subjects. Their forced involvement in the killing machinery provoked a range of individual and collective responses. Their daily labour with death and their attitudes to it, as revealed by their secret, buried manuscripts and by survivor interviews, is the subject of my paper. I ask, What did they say to the incoming victims? What did they talk about amongst themselves? My paper thus seeks to locate the Sonderkommando as historical subjects in relation to their enslavement, work, communications with other camp members, and acts of resistance. In this, their inescapable work of disposal of victims is the primary material data.

**Nigel Starck (University of South Australia)**

*Posthumous reflections: the newspaper obituary as the first verdict of history*

The chronicling of death, in the form of obituary, is an ancient and integral element of newspaper composition. The New York Times has described it as “a first draft of history”, the assistant obituaries editor of the Guardian sees it as “the first verdict of history”, The Penguin Book of Journalism defines it as “the first stab at biography”, and The Dictionary of National Biography has acknowledged a “great debt of gratitude...to the editor of obituaries in the Times, the most important material on which to base our selection”. The newspaper obituary, therefore, has some claim to being a valid instrument of historical record.

This paper argues that the significance of the obituary is twofold: for nearly 400 years it has offered a window on society’s mores and machinations, and, in its own enactment, has demonstrated in microcosm the forces of prevailing journalism practice. The paper identifies the earliest evidence of the obituary art, in the news books of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. It discusses its subsequent realisation, from Restoration moralising to encounters with Regency intemperance, Victorian prurience, imperial omniscience, colonial impatience, composition both lurid and graceful, racism and class distinction, the trauma of war, issues of emancipation and eccentricity, and the emergence in the press of explicit character assessment.

Individual obituaries are analysed for their capacity, variously, to provide immediate archival evidence of: dislike of George III’s consort; lament at the loss of Queen Victoria’s consort; patronising attitudes to Australian Aborigines, African American slaves, and displaced Native Americans; Grace Darling’s modest heroism and Oscar Wilde’s public disgrace; popular sensations of *ars bene moriendi* (the art of dying well); and military acts of extraordinary valour. In recounting these episodes, the paper also examines detectable shifts in journalism itself, as exemplified by evolving obituary style. It addresses necrology as presented to the coffee-house clientele of Samuel Pepys’s London, moves to the censored and censorious publications of the American and Australian colonies, discusses the late 19th-century newspaper’s obsession with violent death, and reports the growing incidence of signed opinion as a facet of contemporary journalism practice.

The paper concludes with an account of the paid obituary phenomenon, a feature of the American and Canadian press which has gained remarkable momentum in the past twenty years. While the paid obituary has been of much value in terms of revenue, notably at a time of declining newspaper circulation, its historiographic validity is questionable. The obituary genre at large, therefore, offers an occasionally unreliable interpretation of lives lived.

**Irene Stengs (Meertens Institute, Amsterdam)**

*Mourning events: death of the people’s singer*

The early death of Dutch singer André Hazes (September 23, 2004) was celebrated in a sequence of extraordinary commemorative ceremonies. Colleague singers and befriended celebrities organised a free concert dedicated to André in the Amsterdam soccer stadium, four days after his death. The event, with a central role for André's body and his mourning family, was attended by 50,000 André Hazes fans. The arrival in the stadium of the hearse and the funeral cars heralded the beginning of the event. The coffin with André's body was placed at the centre point, where it remained during the entire performance. One year later, another commemorative concert (not free) was given in the Rotterdam concert hall. Also on this occasion, André's body, or more precisely his ashes, played a significant role. After the last performers had finished their song, the stage switched from the musician's platform to the large screens hanging in the concert hall, from which the audience could follow the rocketing of André's ashes (divided over ten rockets) into the North Sea in a brief ceremony on the beach. Earlier that day, a statue of André had been unveiled in the centre of Amsterdam.

All André Hazes commemorative celebrations were staged performances and widely mediated events. Although they consisted, like all commemorative ceremonies, of 're-enactments of other rituals that are prototypical' (Connerton 1989), their unusual combinations, and larger-than-life scale, made me wonder what phenomenon we had actually watched. This contribution focuses on the power of ritual performance, with special attention to the significance of André's body, not only during the ceremony but also during its lifetime. Stressing his whole physical appearance (fat, sweating and unhealthy), I will present the 'social body of André' as a counter-ideal of authenticity in opposition to the dominant social construct of the body as young, healthy and beautiful. Like André's self-destructive lifestyle culminated in his death, the mourning events were the ultimate celebrations of the excluded.

**Megan Stern (London Metropolitan University)**

*Witnessing 'bare life': representing the undead body in Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson* and Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn**

This paper will explore aesthetic and literary representations of 'undead' bodies, that is to say, bodies whose transition from life to death is in some way stalled or prevented. Suspended between these two states the body does not quite belong to either, but exists in a periphery, equivalent to the 'bare' life described by Agamben in *Homo Sacer*. Medicine has an interesting, ongoing role in producing such bodies, which begins with the use of executed criminals as anatomical subjects. Within the terms of contemporaneous Christian belief, these bodies were not allowed to 'rest in peace', but continued to suffer physical punishment. At the same time, their dissection marked the emergence of a scientific attitude toward the human corpse as object of scrutiny. Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson* and W.G. Sebald's discussion of this painting in *The Rings of Saturn* are revealing explorations of the 'undead' anatomical subject. In particular, they expose medicine's double role of producing and repressing 'undeath', thus giving potential insights into attitudes toward death and dying, the development of modern medicine and the shaping of identity within modernity. Finally, I want to consider the possibility that the undead body might also serve as a metaphor for literature itself by exploring the relationship between Sebald's reading of Rembrandt's painting and his broader literary concerns with memory, exile, loss and death.

**Richard Sharpley (University of Lincoln) and Philip R. Stone (University of Central Lancashire)**

*Making absent death present: death, dying & dark tourism*

Death is the greatest intrinsic factor of human existence. Accordingly, death becomes the point zero: nothing more or less than the moment at which human control over human existence finds an outer limit. Subsequently, death becomes a psychological and problematic issue for both the

collective and individual self. Hence, this paper offers a conceptual framework for the contemplation of mortality and examines the potential role thanatological themed popular culture can play in addressing so-called 'mortality moments'. In particular, this paper focuses upon dark tourism, the act of touristic travel to sites of death, disaster and the seemingly macabre, as a contemporary mechanism to confront the human demise. As such, the authors draw heavily from death sequestration and ontological security debates. Ultimately, the paper suggests dark tourism, within contemporary (Western) society, may be evolving into a new social institution, whereby institutionally sequestered absent death is once again made present within public space and discourse by the consumption of dark tourism experiences. Consequently, it is suggested this supports the self in maintaining and boosting ontological security requirements in a seemingly ever fractious and fragmented world. Thus, the act of consuming dark tourism may have more to do with life and living, rather than with actual death and dying.

**Ingeborg Svensson (Stockholm University, Sweden)**

*Fertile homosexuality*

In what I analyse as lifestyle funerals in the wake of AIDS among gay-identified men in Sweden during the 1980s and 1990s a salient and dominant theme is a rhetoric of love. In this paper I will examine what one does in the name of love. Understood as a negotiation with traditional meanings of homosexuality as death, the main answer is that it is through a rhetoric of love that homosexuality is made meaningful and life enhancing. In other words, it is through love that the gay transcends. The love that is articulated at lifestyle funerals has, however, several different meanings: love as care of the self, caring for others, hedonism, and as a higher meaning. With the help of a division of love into agape, eros and philia I attempt to identify the effects the different love orations have. In the different understandings of love one finds strategies which demand recognition from different sources. In addition to what I analyse as pride and shame strategies, I identify in the love orations a third strategy which I call the normality strategy. What is notable about the strategies I distinguish is that they are often expressed simultaneously and in contradiction with each other. A central and shared feature, however, of the rhetoric of love is its creation of a conception of kin that is not determined by biogenetic criteria for kinship. In the name of love one creates human relations regardless of biological sex and sexuality.

This paper is based on my dissertation in ethnology *The Corpse in the Closet: sexuality, lifestyle and funerals*. It is a qualitative research based mainly on interviews and case studies of funerals.

**John Troyer (University of Minnesota, America)**

*Abuse of a corpse: a brief history of necrophilia laws in America*

In September 2006, police in the American state of Wisconsin discovered twenty-year-old twin brothers Nicholas and Alexander Grunke and their friend Dustin Radtke, also twenty, digging into the grave of a recently deceased woman. Upon questioning by police, Alexander Grunke explained that the three men wanted to exhume the body to have sex with it.

In the Wisconsin state court system, the three men were charged with attempted third-degree sexual assault and attempted theft (of a human corpse). What none of the men could be charged with was attempted necrophilia. Furthermore, had the trio succeeded in taking the corpse from the cemetery and had they had sex with the body, none of them could have been charged with committing an illegal necrophilic act. Why is this the case? The state of Wisconsin has no law making necrophilia illegal.

What the Wisconsin case helps to illustrate is a surprising gap in American jurisprudence, namely, that most American states have no laws regarding necrophilia. The states that do have necrophilia laws vary widely in their penalties. In the state of Minnesota, "Whoever carnally knows a dead body or an animal or a bird..." faces one-year of imprisonment. In the state of Nevada, "A person who commits a sexual penetration on the dead body of human being..." can face life

imprisonment in the state prison. The legal fine in Minnesota is \$3,000 and the Nevada fine is \$20,000.

In my paper on American necrophilia laws, I argue that human corpses and the laws that govern the use of dead bodies are uniquely positioned to cause precisely these legal discrepancies since the dead body is a quasi-subject before the law. The technologies of law and science which living humans use to define and produce the dead body then contribute to another legal dilemma: how should sovereign state authorities create laws to govern necrophilic behaviour? To legislate against abject behaviour means acknowledging its existence but to do nothing within the law suggests legislative negligence. Or, as Wisconsin Sheriff Keith Grovier explained, "...necrophilia is one of those things that you hear about, but you never think you'll have to deal with."

**Judith Tucker (University of Leeds)**

*Present tense: drawing close to death*

In this paper I reflect upon the uncanny disposition of my series of large-scale monochrome drawings entitled *Resort* in which I image temporary structures in relation to 'landscape' and a more recent series entitled *Tense* in which I represent lido architecture. I frame my concerns through considering a triangular relation between three types of place and temporalities: holiday photographs from my mother's pre-war family album, two contemporary resorts in Germany and a new, third place between history and memory: re-presentations of the former two through drawing. All three classes of place offer spaces for projection. I read my landscape practice against notions of 'transposition' and against Marianne Hirsch's considerations of 'postmemory'. Other questions come to light through this exploration. What is the relation between leisure and landscape, seen through the trope of the resort, both in the thirties and now? Through further consideration of that relationship another set of interrelations become apparent including the paradoxical associations of grief to leisure and mourning to visual pleasure. Mark Dorian and Gillian Rose describe tensions inherent in the word 'landscape', one of which is the tension between inside and outside. They observe that it is often evident that 'landscape' works to reinforce a clear distinction between inside and outside; my representations of 'landscape' seek to complicate this binary and I introduce the possibility of the liminal in the everyday. Finally, I deliberate on some of the different kinds of memory and forgetting that these places might invite and consider the possibility of a reparative practice.

**Christine Valentine (University of Bath)**

*Continuing bonds in contemporary Japan: a mirror to the West?*

Whilst the continuing bonds that survivors forge with dead loved ones have emerged as a new focus of study in the West, they have a long-established place in Japanese society. Ancestor rituals provide well-developed forms of legitimising and fostering the continuing attachments of bereaved people to their dead loved ones. This approach has been found to be adaptive and therapeutic in coming to terms with bereavement. Studies have highlighted how such bonds and the rituals that support them, as well as their collective nature, are also very personal and increasingly individualistic, emphasising caring for the deceased and the mutually beneficial relationship between the living and the dead.

This paper presents a proposed study of ancestor rituals to be undertaken in Japan. It discusses how this proposal arose out of findings from a bereavement study conducted in England, revealing how continuing bonds may form a central aspect of grieving, despite the absence of traditional religious or cultural structures. It draws attention to how such bonds were similarly constructed as caring and mutually beneficial, thus challenging Dennis Klass' assertion that continuing bonds in the Western context are asymmetrical, in that it is the dead who benefit the living and not the other way round.

This paper considers the potential of the proposed study for reassessing the nature of continuing bonds in the West. In relation to Japan, it considers how a Western perspective would be valuable, not only sociologically, but for health, psychology and religion, in that the implications of ancestor rituals may not have been fully unpacked by Japanese scholars who may tend to take such bonds for granted. It would shed new light on the way continuing bonds are perceived to be changing in Japanese society, which have so far been approached through studying graves and funeral customs.

**Eric R. Varner (Emory University, America)**

*Animated conversations: ancient Roman portraits, living viewers and the dead*

The Romans' collective cultural obsession with concepts of memory is well documented. Tombs, commemorative sculpture, epitaphs, and funerary ritual all combined to revivify the deceased through the perpetuation of their memory. Sculpted portraits at tomb sites throughout the Empire played a crucial role in the active process of remembering and reanimating the deceased.

Funerary portraits often elide the immediacy of recognisable individualised likeness with abstract moral qualities and they self-consciously employ a complex visual language of iconographical attributes in order to communicate specific values and aspirations of the deceased. Indeed, portraiture is often the artistic agent used to initiate interactions with the dead. Phantasia (a rhetorical term for the making of mental images) has been recognised as a crucial component of the creation and reception of Roman art. In the realm of funerary portraiture, phantasia mandated an active collaboration between the living viewer and the deceased, as the viewer engages in conversation with and contemplation of the depiction of the deceased and responds to its encoded messages. Ultimately, portraits facilitate the communion between visitors to the tomb and the deceased and, as dynamic interfaces, they permeate the porous boundaries between the living and the dead in ancient Rome.

**Joanna Wojtkowiak and Eric Venbrux (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)**

*The living and the dead: house shrines in the Netherlands*

This paper deals with the increasingly popular house shrines for the dead in the Netherlands. In a recent representative national survey we asked whether the respondents remembered their deceased inside the house or not. Around one-third of the Dutch population appears to have this kind of special place or shrine indoors. It seems to be part and parcel of a more general trend in which the focus of attention is shifting from the work of mourning of the bereaved to the fate of the immortal component of the deceased in an afterlife. The quantitative data allow us to make a number of statements with regard to the social and religious characteristics of those maintaining house shrines. We further explore the meanings attributed to the house shrines in an analysis of a series of ethnographic observations and interviews from all over the Netherlands. In this paper we also ask about the communication between the living and the dead.

**Bérange Véron (Observatoire Sociologique du Changement, France)**

*Death professionals and funeral planning in France: a sociological exploration.*

Funeral planning is one of the practices linked with death that are spreading in France, along with cremation, palliative care and personalisation of funerals. And yet, in a sociological perspective, we know next to nothing of the decision-making process, and of the real reasons why some people plan their funeral in advance. It is difficult to say whether it is these services offered that contribute to the emergence of new ways of dealing with death, or whether it is a change in mentalities that led to the appearance of these services.

Moreover, funeral advisers have an ambiguous position. They tend to present funeral prearrangement as a way of easing the emotional and financial burden on family and friends, but also as a guarantee that the wishes of the deceased will be followed. In trying to combine these various imperatives, death professionals act as 'prescribers', playing an important role in the definition of what is a 'good' prearranged funeral.

This paper will be based on empirical observation and on semi-directive interviews with 25 funeral advisers.

**Paul Voninski (State University of New York, Oswego, America)**

*Sex and death: a reconsideration of their intersection, interrelationship, and interdependence in light of evolving cultural, technical, and biological myths and realities*

Sex and death operate on many parallel and different levels, and much of our understanding has changed since Gorer (1955) first proposed that death had superseded sex as a taboo subject and one surrounded with a morbid and furtive fascination for many people. New ideas range from the idea that sex (in the form of reproduction) is an evolved method for avoiding death by producing offspring and, thereby, permitting the selfish gene to survive into the future, to a concern in the popular culture that sex or at least an excess of sexual activity is harmful to individual health and well-being, and, thereby, a factor in increased mortality risk. The recent development of the relationship between sex and death has generated a number of troublesome issues and problems. For example, the massive worldwide public health education effort in promoting the concept of safe sex heightens and reinforces the tension that there is something profoundly unsafe about sex and harmful for extended human longevity. Yet, some recent medical research has suggested a welter of examples where sex is seen to have a protective effect on human health and that sexual activity is encouraged in promoting longer life (happier prostate, weight control, increased production of endorphins and the reduction in pain from headaches to arthritis to PMS, etc.). And, further we have examples of some who consciously practice unsafe sex and engage in bug chasing to purposely become HIV positive and increase their individual mortality risk. On the technological front, we have the use and abuse of ultrasound technologies to promote parental sex selection by identifying and then aborting the foetus of the unwanted sex, which in Asia usually means aborting females. Recent technologies have also created issues related to the collection and use of sperm or eggs after the death of the donor. We even have a new vocabulary entry into our common lexicon, posthumous conceptions, to account for this development of sex after death.

Given the wide range of these and other recent trends and developments, there is the need for a reconsideration of the broad nexus between sex and death.

**Tony Walter (University of Bath)**

*Space, place and death*

No specific themes were requested in the call for papers for DDD8. Among the nearly 200 abstracts submitted, the biggest category that emerged (in 22 abstracts) was that of space and place, a category not apparent in previous DDD conferences. Twelve of the abstracts actually have the word 'space' or 'place' in the title, and in addition to the 22 there are several other abstracts that concern places of dying and mourning but do not focus on spatiality. This paper introduces what almost amounts to a sub-conference within DDD8.

The abstracts' authors come from the UK, The Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, USA, Brazil, Australia, and New Zealand; they represent the disciplines of art, geography, cultural theory, sociology, media studies, religious studies, history, politics, literature, palliative care, social work, anthropology, architecture, and landscape architecture. Their topics vary from the fixity of the grave to the fluidity of cyber memorials, from the place of death to geographies of mourning, from empirical studies of nursing homes to highly abstract theory.

The abstracts' authors identify a number of dichotomies, along with their evolving separation and/or transgression: life/death, public/private, mobility/resting place, fixity/fluidity,

cyberspace/material place, all of which have implications for the dichotomy sacred/profane. Many abstracts examine the relation between spaces/places: How do global migrants deal with dying, which entails a body slowing down and stopping, and human remains needing to be fixed in one place? How do modern nomads construct sacred space in dying and mourning? Some spaces re-insert death into life, some separate the two – how does this re-construct notions of sacred and profane, of death as sequestered? How are undesired and profane places of death – the street, the nursing home – turned into sacred space?

Such questions may be summarised as: a) How do dying people, carers and mourners create sacred (and profane) space today? b) Why this sudden trans-disciplinary interest in death, space and place? c) What intellectual issues or fashions are driving research in this area?

**Andrew Warstat (University of Leeds)**

*John Stezaker and the afterlife of images*

This paper argues that modern concepts of death, dying and the persistence of life *beyond* these states can be understood through the work of the artist John Stezaker and his use of Maurice Blanchot's idea of the image.

The artist John Stezaker makes photomontages out of the afterlife of images. By using found imagery collected from charity stores, Stezaker re-animates discarded photographs with moments of life through inversion, cutting and montaging. This process is a paradoxical form of invention, premised on the possibility that images can die.

Stezaker seeks to create works of art that feel "like a shiver, a shadow passing over one's grave". But what does it mean for an image to die?

Maurice Blanchot suggests that an image is structured like a cadaver. When mourners see a dead body, they see both the person they loved and something material and foreign. Blanchot suggested that the "...cadaver's strangeness is perhaps also that of the image [...] Something is there before us which is not really the living person, nor is it any reality at all. It is neither the same as the person who was alive, nor is it another person, nor is it anything else."

The corpse is simultaneously someone and something, and it is this moment of simultaneity that mirrors the strange afterlife of the image in modern society. Imagery lives on through a moment of misrecognition – it looks familiar to us, but is also unutterably strange and past. Modernity is conditioned by 'now-ness' and presence. However, being 'modern' also determines 'past-ness' and antiquity, and hence the image's afterlife is actually a way of seeing how we, as modern subjects, persist in a spectral half-life, confirming John Stezaker's belief that the image is "on equal terms with our own subjectivity".

**Anna Whitaker (Ersta Sköndal University College, Sweden)**

*The ageing and dying body of the oldest old*

The presentation is based on data obtained from ethnographic fieldwork carried out at a nursing home ward, and its focus will be on the link between body, ageing and death. The body and various experiences of the body were found to be central themes in the conversations with the old residents as well as in the interviews with the family members. The analysis of the 'body theme' revealed three overall patterns: i) The body is *the cause* of the nursing home placement and the current situation. ii) The body has *failed* the old person and has become an alienated 'thing' that needs to be taken care of. iii) At the same time the body is the corporeal and *central entity* through which the old residents experience their daily life, through pain, through the care work, through diminished physical and cognitive functions. It became clear that the body is central in the spatial and temporal order of the nursing home and as such it constitutes the existential midpoint of the lives of the old residents. The presentation discusses how these experiences elucidate the way in which aged dying, with its bodily unboundedness and disintegration, not only constitutes a threat against the personal identity and dignity of the old resident, but also an

obstacle in the relationship between the old person and the family, and for the family's possibility to contribute to care.

**Stephen White (University of Wales)**

*Cremation Acts and funeral pyres in the British Commonwealth*

In July 2006 a cremation on a funeral pyre was arranged by the Anglo-Asian Friendship Society in Northumberland. Questions were asked about its legality and, in particular, about whether the Cremation Act prohibits such cremations absolutely. Legal proceedings to determine the legality of the pyre are pending. Strong views have been expressed about the acceptability of such pyres in the UK. In the controversy no one has mentioned British legislators' experience in bringing funeral pyres within the purview of Cremation Acts similar to that presently in force in the UK. This paper will look at once such experience in particular - the legalisation of pyres in the British West Indies in the 1950s - as an example of a pattern of events that may be repeated in the UK.

**Carola Wingren (Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden)**

*Designing places for memory and meaning in contemporary urban landscapes*

This paper will describe the project of four researchers - sociologists, designer, and landscape architect - searching for knowledge about new ways of dealing with memory, meaning, and loss in the fast changing urban landscape. People feel loss when relatives die, but also when a loved landscape is changed or destroyed by a road, or a wind mill park. Together with this the people may also feel loss as moving around, away from the place where their relatives are buried or spread, away from the landscape that they feel as their own.

The project's starting point is the already gained knowledge from former projects of the participants together with literature studies about memorials and landscape ideals related to spatial planning and design. One former project tells about young people's private ideas about how they want to be buried, another about spontaneous and private ways of memorising traffic victims. The landscape design projects tell instead about a public way of dealing with common lost values.

The project's interdisciplinary approach will be developed in seminars and workshops in collaboration with professionals as theologians, ethnologists, designers, and architects. Interviews will be held with users of memorial sites. Different dialogue techniques, sketching procedures and visualisation will be part of the methodology used to find out about design expressions, spontaneous and planned.

An expected outcome is to find out about the tools, artefacts, materials, and methods that can be used to integrate memorial places in the urban structure, and to explore how they can enrich human environment and create increased value for inhabitants. The project will contribute to a theoretical development of the field of research, and also help us understand what a memorial or a place of ritual can be, look like, and which role it can take in the future cityscape.

**Charlotte Woodhead (University of Derby)**

*A predilection for the status quo? The legal treatment of human remains*

This paper will consider two different approaches to the treatment of the dead in the UK.

Where requests are made to exhume human remains from consecrated ground, the starting point for determination of the issues is a presumption against disturbance. A decision to exhume will only be made where there are special circumstances warranting disturbance of the remains. Unsuccessful petitions have been made to exhume bodies to determine the final resting place of King Harold as well as to prove or disprove a family's long held belief that they were

related to one of Queen Victoria's daughters. The final resting places of the bodies were respected in both instances and the status quo was retained.

Trustees of national museums have a duty to maintain their collections, including any human remains, for the benefit of the nation. Many indigenous human remains were collected during colonial times and placed in Western museum collections. Recent legislation has provided the trustees of a number of national museums with the power to return human remains to claimants. The trustees' broad power to return is exercised in accordance with policy established by the museums in line with guidance which was published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005. In light of their duties as trustees, how far should their starting point be a presumption against return and the maintenance of the status quo?

The focus of discussion will be on the considerations taken into account when determining whether to return remains to their final resting place, or to remove them from what was otherwise their final place of rest.

**Kate Woodthorpe (University of Sheffield)**

*Bodies in the cemetery: is taboo still relevant in 21<sup>st</sup> century Britain?*

This paper explores the status of the bodies interred in the contemporary British cemetery related to wider debates of death as 'taboo'. This stems from an argument that theoretical discussions of denial and taboo in death have not been sufficiently grounded in the material social world. In the cemetery I argue that the known/unknown status of the decomposing corpse is intimately connected to much of the tension that arises in terms of ownership and the memorialisation of grave plots, yet its existence remains unspoken and metaphorically concealed through this friction above ground. For this reason I suggest it can be considered to be 'taboo'. Data supporting this argument comes from an ethnographic study of the contemporary cemetery.

Taboo has been a frequent component of discussion on death and dying in academic literature, with a current popular sentiment being that the concept of death 'denial' is more appropriate (Howarth, 2007). I question whether this is the case, arguing that this discussion has not been sufficiently empirically grounded – that is, supported by research evidence – and therefore that 'taboo' cannot be rejected as a way of understanding contemporary death. I suggest that 'death' needs to be unpacked and explored in the material social world as a varied and heterogeneous concept that is specific to the context within which it is situated. In the cemetery, the corpse – its simultaneous presence and absence - is a particularly good example of how the discussion of death as taboo/denial can proceed.

**Amina Wright (The Holburne Museum of Art, Bath)**

*"I yet live!": child mortality and parental bereavement in the visual arts of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Those who have lost an infant are never, as it were, without an infant child. ...The other children grow up...and suffer all the changes of mortality. This one alone is rendered an immortal child. Death has ... blessed it into an eternal image of youth and innocence.*

Leigh Hunt, c. 1820.

During my research for the 2005 exhibition 'Pictures of Innocence: Children in Portraits from Hogarth to Lawrence', I came across a number of portraits, some posthumous, of children who died before adulthood. This paper will show how important these images were in the parents' response to their loss, both in social mourning and private grieving.

William Hogarth's *Graham Children* (1742) is packed with symbols of mortality, but it has only recently emerged that the youngest of the children was dead when Hogarth sketched his portrait. Allan Ramsay made a study of his own baby son when he died; he does not seem to have regarded it as a substitute for his lost child, but used the act of painting as a way of working through his grief. When Barbara Barrett-Lennard died suddenly in 1749, her parents left home to travel. In Rome, they sat for Pompeo Batoni, who painted them sitting with their daughter, her

portrait based on a miniature from life that her father had carried with him. When Prince Octavius, one of the youngest children of George III, died in 1783, the King commissioned Benjamin West to paint an Apotheosis, which he kept in his own dressing room. Modelled on a Baroque altarpiece, it shows Octavius being received into heaven by the little brother who pre-deceased him.

Perhaps the most famous case is that of Sir Brooke Boothby and his only daughter Penelope. When she died aged five, he spent what little fortune he had commissioning a marble tomb by Thomas Banks, an Apotheosis by Henry Fuseli, and publishing a volume of elegiac sonnets written in her memory. A recent biography has shed light on this explosion of Romantic grief.

### **James Yeates**

#### *Saving and killing: animal euthanasia and veterinary practitioners*

There is a dichotomy within the veterinary mindset which is interesting in both its phenomenology and its analysis. The veterinary profession is perhaps unique in legally being partly defined by its role in actively killing sentient beings for their own good. Vets not only believe that they *can* kill the animal for its own good but often feel they legally and morally *must* kill the animal. Indeed, many veterinary surgeons think ill of owners who refuse to have their animals killed and others suffer significant guilt for previously letting their patients live. This is in contrast to another aspect of veterinary work: extending and enhancing animals' lives and delaying death. Here, veterinarians feel guilt for letting other patients die.

This paper analyses this dichotomy in veterinary work through four real, anonymous cases. These reveal a number of conflicts within the veterinarian's unique relationship with the dying process: attraction and resignation; potency and impotency; distance and involvement and cyclicity and finality. The official morality of the veterinary profession – 'welfare science' – solves such conflicts by claiming that only concrete experiential states of the animals count morally. An animal cannot be harmed by death, since it subsequently does not exist. This mimics the controversial Epicurean position on fear of death. The paper details how its extension to the argument that killing is not harmful is illegitimate. There is an alternative view that allows us to see animals' deaths as harmful or beneficial to them without subordinating quality of life to sanctity. This position is compatible with animal welfare considerations and allows vets to remain potent to perform legitimate euthanasia. Such a view, it is contested, is more in line with veterinarians' actual mindset.

MORTALITY – ICIA advert

CDAS advert (to come)