

Marie-Therese Mäder | Alberto Saviello | Baldassare Scolari [eds.]

# Highgate Cemetery

Image Practices in Past and Present



Nomos



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© Coverpicture: Graves in the East Cemetery (Image: Daria Pezzoli-Olgiati 2018)

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## Preface

The current volume is the third publication of the interdisciplinary research network *International Exchange on Media and Religion*. The publication distinguishes itself from the previous two projects of the network insofar as we decided to focus on a single object – Highgate Cemetery in London– whilst asking questions from different perspectives. The interdisciplinary approach, which not only shapes the volume itself but also most of the single contributions, offers a diversity of insights, not only into Highgate cemetery’s past and present state but also into the general role of images in socio-religious practices. By choosing Highgate cemetery as a single focus and source we intended to bring anthropology, art history, history, literary studies, media studies, philosophy, study of religion, and theology into conversation with each other.

Besides the different theories and scholarly methods presented in each chapter, the project itself applied a specific working mode. During two workshops in London hosted by Heythrop College in 2016 and 2017 the authors extensively discussed each of the papers. In addition we visited the cemetery together, the west part in a guided tour and the east part on our own. To work together on the same object, visiting it, and experiencing this extraordinary place proved to be extremely fruitful for our thinking. The theoretical and methodical discussions left the university building and took place on site. The individual impressions that were collectively shared enriched our images/perception of the cemetery and each single contribution. By walking between the tomb stones, trees, and grave figures many conversations between the researchers from England, Germany, Italy and Switzerland evolved and personal experiences were exchanged. The aim of this working mode was to test and intertwine different approaches to analyse the multilayered and complex network of images which constitute Highgate Cemetery, both as an actual and as a medial place. The presentation of the work at the annual conference of the European Association of the Study of Religion (EASR) in Bern (CH) in 2018 was not only a wonderful reunion with colleagues but also showed the fruit of our collaboration.

The project was possible thanks to the support of various institutions and people. Heythrop College kindly hosted the group on two occasions with the help of Ann Jeffers and Sean Ryan. The Center for Religion, Economy and Politics at the University of Zurich (ZRWP), the Ludwig

Maximillian-Universität München (LMU), the research group Media and Religion, the personal funding of each researcher made this project possible, and the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), which funded this publication. And finally our special recognition goes to Sean Ryan who proofread the chapters with great attention, precision and endless patience.

The structure of the table of contents mirrors the different approaches and narratives that were developed in our workshops during which conspicuous similarities between papers led to their being clustered into grouped sections. Thematically, the book does not aim to exhaustively cover Highgate cemetery and its history, but rather the section titles open-up the particular realms and topics that our academic exchange about image practices at Highgate cemetery creatively generated. The following introduction aims to shed light on this complex phenomenon.

Zürich, Frankfurt/M, Meilen, autumn 2020

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