

Article

Nostalgia and the ‘New Visibility’ of Religion

Christopher Deacy

Division of Arts and Humanities, University of Kent, Cornwallis North West, Canterbury CT2 7NF, UK;
c.deacy@kent.ac.uk

Received: 20 April 2020; Accepted: 21 May 2020; Published: 25 May 2020



Abstract: This article examines the role that religion plays in a sample of the lives and career journeys of eight academic staff or alumni at a British university. Using the ‘Nostalgia Interviews with Chris Deacy’ podcast as source material, the aim is to look at the intersection between traditional and implicit conceptualisations of religion, that arise in the course of interviews that the author has undertaken, with a view to shedding light on what this says about the role that religion plays when people reminisce about their past, how this relates to contemporary religious experience for them, and whether this might be identified as an example of the ‘new visibility’ of religion. It will conclude that the way we understand the location and parameters of religion in the contemporary world needs to be re-orientated and re-framed, in the light of the presence of those less formal and structured forms of religion, which often overlap with formal religious practices, but are often articulated without reference to it.

Keywords: explicit religion; Implicit Religion; nostalgia; podcast; commitments; secular

1. Introduction

Nostalgia has become an especially prominent buzzword in the light of Brexit, when the yearning for a time that may no longer exist, but which it is nevertheless hoped may be rebuilt, is a common refrain. This is demonstrated by the claim made by Sir Vince Cable, former leader of the Liberal Democrats, who gave a speech on 11 April 2018 to his party’s spring conference in Southport, United Kingdom, that the Brexit vote was “driven by nostalgia” (BBC News 2018). Yet, in interdisciplinary research on nostalgia, which I am defining here as the wistful yearning in space and/or time for a home that is no longer accessible, little scope has been accorded to the impact that religion has had on the sensibilities, experiences and trajectories of individuals. The aim of this article is to examine the extent to which religion appears as a relevant or significant factor in the personal and career trajectories of a number of academics or alumni, from a wide range of disciplines—not exclusively Theology or Religious Studies—at the University of Kent, where I have been based since 2004. Drawing on a series of semi-structured interviews I have carried out since May 2018 for a podcast I run on nostalgia (Deacy 2019), in which I have sought to discern what lies behind my interviewees’ research, interests and passions, I will unpack the relationship between religion and nostalgia in the formation of their lives and career journeys, as well as in their personal and collective sense of belonging, identity and self-reflection. While acknowledging that for many people religion might be thought to assume very specific and classifiable institutional and social contours, this article will explore the extent to which Implicit Religion may be used as a more tenable framework for ascertaining and identifying the less formal dimensions and manifestations of religion, which may be more in keeping with the expressions of religiosity, spirituality and secularity that lie at the heart of my interviewees’ testimonies.

Although I work as a Reader in Theology and Religious Studies, I did not initially conceive of the podcast as anything that was directly or indirectly related to the ‘new visibility’ of religion. The podcast was created in response to the increasing use of the term ‘Impact’ in research in Higher Education and,

specifically, the extent to which research is increasingly deemed to require a ‘high visibility’ and impact if it is going to warrant, not least in an age when students are paying for their education, academic members of staff being bought out of their teaching. As the Arts and Humanities Research Council highlights, there is an “increasing emphasis on accountability and efficiency” ([Arts and Humanities Research Council 2020](#)) in funded research, and the AHRC’s own *Understanding Your Project: A Guide to Self Evaluation* document contains 45 mentions of Impact, ranging from references to “the delivery process and the impact of the project or programme on the audience(s)” (Arts and Humanities Research Council Date Unknown, p. 3) to any concomitant “changes in service, organisation or community” (p. 6), and any change of significance witnessed in terms of Reaction, Learning, Behaviour or Results (p. 16) that have taken place as a result of the researcher’s project. The AHRC acknowledges that there are “many routes and pathways through which research leads to ‘impacts’”, including the impacts that research can have on government policies, the commercialisation benefits for cultural industries, and the development of new curricula in education, the impact that leads towards “further research activities”, and the economic benefits—“direct, indirect and public” (p. 20)—to society at large. But, aside from a cursory reference to the “positive learning and skills impacts on the research team” (ibid.), there is no emphasis on the impact that research can have on the life and career journey of the individual researcher. ‘Impact’, as currently conceptualised, is too limited and quantitative in its scope, as evinced by a social audit supported by Arts Council England in 1999, which identified the impact of a project as “the sum of the outputs and outcomes, an overall analysis of its results” (in ibid: p. 21). The AHRC talks about “shaping the researchers of the future” (p. 21), but the remit here is on the different *types* of research that future researchers will be undertaking, rather than on the personality, character, beliefs, values or behaviour of the researchers themselves.

When I began the podcast, the plan was that it would no more than accompany the theoretical and conceptual nature of the research I was already carrying out on nostalgia following a period of research leave in 2017, in which my focus was on the definitions and contours of nostalgia, its origins, the personal and social manifestations and classification of nostalgia, the role of TV, film and radio in nostalgia, the dangers of nostalgia (with respect to its reactionary and commercialised nature) and the possibilities that can be generated in terms of Janelle Wilson’s claim that the very “act of recollection and reminiscence, and the experience of nostalgia can ground a person” as it “may facilitate the kind of coherence, consistency, and sense of identity that each of us so desperately needs” [quoted in ([Lizardi 2015](#), p. 16)]. My primary aim at that point was to draw on what scholars from a range of disciplines, including sociology ([Davis 1979](#)), psychology ([Routledge 2016](#)) and film studies ([Sprengler 2009](#)), were claiming about nostalgia, to adjudicate on the feasibility of their arguments and to relate them to discourse in Religious Studies, where there has been a relative paucity of research on nostalgia. An empirical foundation was never countenanced, outside of my engagement with the work carried out by Clay Routledge who has undertaken large scale survey-based research within psychology, in order to test the pervasiveness of contemporary nostalgia. For example, Routledge undertook a survey involving undergraduate students, which found that many of them were nostalgic three to four times a week, with as many as 79% reporting to be feeling nostalgic at least once a week, with just 17% saying that they experienced nostalgia only once or twice a month. Routledge concluded from this data that even among young adults “nostalgia is a common experience”, thereby refuting the stereotype that “nostalgia is an emotion confined largely to older adults” ([Routledge 2016](#), p. 23). In my own case, I was happy to draw on this research, and to evaluate Routledge’s conclusions, but without intending to conduct primary data of my own. The need for such a ‘turn to the self’ could not be more timely. Within the academy, the last decade has witnessed a cultural turn towards ‘lived’, ‘everyday’ and ‘vernacular’ religion within Religious Studies, as demonstrated by Bacon et al., who posit that subjective life experience is now prioritised over academic abstractions ([Bacon et al. 2017](#), p. 6), as well as the concomitant “eschewing of grand narratives and scholarly categories in favour of detailed attention to the stuff of everyday life” (ibid.: 5).

For the purpose of this article, my aim is to focus on one area which is not explicitly raised by me in the interviews but which has proven to comprise quite a popular and fertile area of conversation, generating some significant findings about the role that religion plays when individuals are afforded the opportunity to reminisce about their past. I do not explicitly ask about religion and, although many of my interviewees know when I invite them to record an edition of my podcast that I teach and research in the area of Theology and Religious Studies, the question of religion very rarely, if ever, arises. I tend to be viewed first and foremost as a university educator who travels the country to interview people for a nostalgia podcast. I am very happy for my interviewees to talk about religion, but I do not explicitly ask them about it. I have never set out to get my interviewees to talk about religion any more than, as someone who lectures in Religious Studies, I will ask my students to open up about whether they are ‘religious’. It would be professionally discourteous to do so. In seminars I am used to students disclosing their religious affiliations, if they have one, and a common refrain in class is for a student to exclaim “I’m not religious but . . .”. ‘Religion’ is the elephant in the room when teaching Theology and Religious Studies. As I often comment in my podcast, I can easily spend two hours on a Friday afternoon teaching my students about the Death of God and getting caught up in quite sophisticated and nuanced debates about Barth, Bonhoeffer and Bultmann—but then I might be at the supermarket checkout a couple of hours later, where it is not uncommon to be asked what I do for a living. When I reply that I lecture in Religious Studies, I find, more often than not, that the follow up question will be: “So, are you religious?” Or, even, as has occasionally happened: “So, which church do you belong to?”.

It was all the more intriguing to me, therefore, when my interviewees tended to open up about the role and impact of religion in their lives. As my research unfolds, I aim to examine the extent to which religion contributes to the way in which my interviewees understand the past and think nostalgically, and to explore whether there are any differences between the ways in which religious and non-religious or atheist individuals apprehend the past. For the purposes of this present article, however, my goal is the more modest one of unpacking the location of religious frames of reference within the context of the lives and career journeys of a cross-section of academic staff and alumni at my university. The questions are deliberately framed in such a way as to ensure that leading questions on the explicit role that religion has played in their lives are not introduced, but that where there might be any residual, implicit or, indeed, explicit manifestations or influences of religion, these are brought out by means of indirect means of questioning (rather than by asking leading questions about whether they have a faith or not). This method of extracting ‘sacred’ answers from ‘secular’ questions corresponds with the rudiments of Implicit Religion, whereby the secular—which, as Ninian Smart noted, superficially refers to the realm of the “non-religious” (Smart 1998, p. 24)—may be found to make an important contribution to contemporary religious debate in its own right, and not simply because it stands in direct contrast to the realm of the religious. This then has important implications for understanding the contours of contemporary religious belief and expression, as religion may be functioning in a wider sense, that is not structured by or channelled through formal religious institutions. People may not self-identify as being ‘religious’, but they might share characteristics with what religion does, in line with the research undertaken in the field of Implicit Religion by Edward Bailey, which examines whether our understanding of the secular is any less religiously fertile than more conventional or traditional demarcations of religious activity. Crucially, for Bailey, Implicit Religion is concerned with understanding the way people tick, and with “understanding what being human can mean” (Bailey 2006, p. 9). For Bailey, this entails “being religious, in a secular sort of way, and being secular, in a religious sort of way” (ibid., p. 48). I interrogated these questions in *Christmas as Religion* (Deacy 2016), in which I examined the permeable nature of the distinction between religious and secular behaviour, and concluded that a ‘secular’ radio programme, such as BBC Radio 2’s *Christmas Junior Choice*, may have more impact and comprise more of a commitment on the part of the listener than allegiance or devotion to traditional religion—and is no less profound or efficacious for that see (Deacy 2016, p. 138). There is thus the paradox afoot that religion may be both *implicit* and *visible*. In talking about the

‘new visibility’ of religion, my aim is to examine whether an ‘implicit’ approach or framework might be more successful in opening up a conversation about the role and location of religion than can be established when we focus exclusively on its more traditional, explicit manifestations.

2. Methods

I have run a nostalgia-themed podcast since May 2018, in which, every nine days, I broadcast an interview with a different colleague or alumnus from a number of universities across the United Kingdom. Of the 70 that have been uploaded as of February 2020, 32 (46%) are current or retired academics at Kent, 6 (8.5%) are non-academic, professional services staff at Kent, 9 (13%) are former Kent students, 12 (17%) are present or former academic staff at other universities around the UK, 7 (10%) are alumni of the University of Wales where I was a student, 3 (4%) are current or former PhD students at other British universities, and 1 (1.5%) is a non-university-affiliated lawyer and documentary filmmaker. Within these figures there are inevitable crossovers as, for example, one of the University of Wales alumnus I interviewed is currently undertaking a Philosophy PhD at a university in the North of England, but this was only something I learned while undertaking the interview, and it was not in this capacity that the individual was invited to record an edition of the podcast with me. Likewise, other Wales alumni now have senior academic posts in other universities, and it is for that reason, rather than because of the specific Lampeter connection, that I interviewed them. Another interviewee has been based in both Lampeter and Kent over the years, but the Lampeter post was more recent, and is where the individual made the greatest contribution to his field of study, and this is reflected in the way I have classified the data, accordingly. By means of the semi-structured format, my podcast has sought to examine what has shaped my respondents, and to ascertain what has propelled them into persevering with their studies and then to want to impart that knowledge and enthusiasm to subsequent generations of students. The interviews are not, therefore, interested in the content of a researcher’s publications and outputs per se but, rather, in what influenced them vis-à-vis the music, films, sporting events, political influences, relationships and family members that brought them to where they are now. So, instead of asking “What is your first monograph about?” I would be more interested in determining the motivation and background considerations which enabled their book to be conceived in the first instance.

My sample consisted of a cross-section of eight interviews drawn from the 32 broadcast to date with academic colleagues, and the 9 with former students at my university. Not all of the staff or alumni replied to my request to use their interviews, though no one refused to let me draw on their interviews, either. However, in accordance with the conditions set by the Research Ethics Advisory Group at my university, from whom ethical approval was granted at the end of February 2020, I could only use the interviews where permission had been explicitly granted by each individual interviewee. I approached an equal number of male and female individuals and ensured that at least 20 per cent of them are BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic), in line with the national average. In the end, of the 10 individuals approached, 8 gave me their approval by the deadline I set: 5 male and 3 female. In terms of the sociodemographic characteristics of my participants, five are current full time staff members at the University of Kent, one is part time, one is an honorary member of staff and one is an alumnus who graduated in 2011. The alumnus is a white male in his late 20s, and of the four academic male interviewees, two are white and in their late 40s and early 50s respectively, and two are BAME, one of whom is part-time, in their 40s. Of the three female participants, two are white and in their 30s and early 50s respectively, and one is an honorary lecturer in her early 50s. Four of the interviewees (three male and one female) were born in the United Kingdom, two (one male, one female) were born in the United States, and two of the interviewees (one male, one female) were born in India. I wrote to each individual in the sample to say that the purpose of the project was to examine the extent to which religion is discussed and addressed in their interview, and that the objective was to extrapolate what they say about religion and then to draw findings from it about the interplay between religious and secular beliefs, values and commitments. I explained that I would in turn draw conclusions about how

this relates to contemporary religious experience, and whether this is an example of the ‘new visibility’ of religion. I made it clear that if they had spoken explicitly in their interview about religion then this was likely to appear in the article, and that it was important to stress that the article would be looking at broader trends than simply ascribing particular labels (e.g., ‘religious’, ‘secular’, ‘atheist’) to my sample of interviewees. In other words, I was keen to emphasise that I would be drawing on wider conclusions rather than offering, say, a critique of their particular ‘stance’ vis-à-vis religion. I also underscored that unless each of the individuals gave me permission to use their names, I would simply refer to the interviewees as ‘Participant A’, ‘Participant B’, etc. As one of the individuals in my sample requested anonymity, I have, accordingly, ensured that their names do not appear in this article.

Once the sample was finalised, I revisited each individual interview by transcribing the content and, using the interactive, face-to-face conversational format between me and the interviewee, drew on qualitative analysis to investigate the role that religion does or does not play in my participants’ accounts of their lives and career journeys. I chose this form of analysis because of the way it best suits the use of autobiographical-based interviews in order to understand the way in which people construct narratives of their lives, in keeping with how, for James V. Spickard, in narrative and discourse analysis, “Interviewers collect their informants’ personal narratives” by way of, for example, written texts, letters and novels, and can then “analyze the stories for indications of deeper meanings, including ones of which their tellers are perhaps not aware” (Spickard 2012, p. 131). Inevitably, for interviews that last on average an hour, a wide assortment of themes and issues are covered, ranging from specific discussions around, say, the first record that they bought, to their voting history, or the teachers who inspired them at school or university. I specifically listened out, though, to the manner and extent to which my interviewees say anything about religion, without it explicitly being raised, and how comfortable they are with it being discussed. I also took heed of the degree to which religion was spoken of in isolation or in relation to wider considerations (for example, familial, cultural, or through their political allegiances), as well as whether religion is identified as being something personal, social or institutional in terms of their particular, personal circumstances. I paid careful attention to the sort of language that my interviewees were using and what sort of trends were thereby in evidence. So as not to identify my interviewees, they will be referred to in this article as ‘Participant A’ through to ‘Participant H’. I have been keen to ensure that the interviewees’ words are not taken out of context and that labels and terminology are not inappropriately affixed to their testimony, and that ‘religion’ is not *read into* the interviews according to some pre-established criteria. Rather, I am allowing for religion to be *read from* the interviews, even if specific vocabulary relating to religion is not being utilised. To this end, this approach will buck the trend that is endemic in existing research, where the data is typically used to fit the terminology, rather than the other way around. Kim Knott has undertaken a seminal study of how religion appears in newspapers and on television in the UK, based on a 2008 to 2009 study, which uses quantitative content analysis in order to count the instances in which religion is used, but in focusing on “occurrences of words or relevant images” (Knott et al. 2013, p. 11), this approach fails to accommodate those cases whereby some of the most fertile examples of religious belief or practice can be found in and through more secular media, practices and agencies. For example, Knott based her analysis “on the number and frequency of ‘references’” to particular terms associated with religion, in the form of “a single word, phrase or image” (ibid., p. 40), using a pre-set criteria of Conventional Religion (such as Christianity and Hinduism), Common Religion (which includes fortune telling and gambling) and the Secular Sacred (which for Knott includes atheism and secularism). Yet, research has shown that beliefs, values and commitments need not be grounded in ‘religious’ vocabulary for them to be construed as ‘religious’, as I demonstrated in a recent study on the extent to which religious trends and patterns can be apprehended in Christmas radio (Deacy 2018). Accordingly, I have sought to treat religion in more of a *bottom up* rather than *top down* capacity, whereby the interviewees are allowed to speak using their own words, and the presence of religion is not restricted to ‘merely’ its conventional or institutional manifestations.

3. Results

3.1. Participant A (Male, 20s, Alumnus)

The first interview that I have included as part of my sample contains the most explicit instance of conventional religion. Participant A is a former undergraduate student at the University of Kent, who talked about how, in their three years studying Religious Studies, they did not have a faith and did not come from a religious family. Rather, literature and writing were their personal interests, yet, a few years after graduation, “I had a pretty sudden experience that changed my life . . . and that’s when I started to believe in God, and everything changed”. They felt that they were being called to give their whole life to faith, and just a few years later were ordained in the Church of England, even though they had only been a Christian for six years. What is curious about Participant A’s trajectory is that doing a degree in Religious Studies is identified as having no ostensible bearing on the decision. Rather, the academic interest and commitment shown during their degree was identified as being a “fandom”—something that they could, in their words, “pick up, enter into” and, subsequently, “put down”. Participant A referred to how they could have a debate about, say, the problem of evil in the classroom, but would then be able to “walk away” from it. The participant explained that their life took something of a downturn, and they were in a “tough place” after a relationship ended, and had planned to go into the teaching profession. For reasons that did not entirely seem obvious at the time, Participant A had the “need to go to a church to just scientifically examine what these people do”. They explained that they had previously been to a wedding and a funeral, “but had no idea what they did”. Now, in retrospect, Participant A could see that deciding to go down this path and going through “a period of suffering” were connected. They explained that “I went in and sat down and for me it was a lightning bolt moment. I looked up at Jesus on the cross and it was like he was real to me. But all of a sudden. I was crying, I was laughing.” They were “absolutely terrified” and were not able to tell anyone about the experience immediately afterwards. Indeed, Participant A recalls how, as a student, they would “take the mickey” out of this sort of experience and would “decry” what was going on. They returned the following Sunday, at which time the curate came up to them, and welcomed them, and they became increasingly involved in the life of the church by way of helping out with services and becoming confirmed.

Religion also arose in the conversation with respect to Participant A’s schooling. They reflected in the interview on how they were one of only three white children in their school, which was marked by a “huge diversity”, in which Christianity was rarely touched on—rather, the school taught Jainism and Judaism, “which was I thought really enriching”. It was this interest that accounted for their decision to study Religious Studies at university: “A factor would definitely have to be that there was lots of religion around me and of course I came from a family where you had your children baptized . . . because it’s what you do”. Reference is made to having Jewish neighbours and Hindu classmates, and going on school trips to temples, as well as remembering asking their mother at the age of 5 or 6 if they could go to Sunday School, but without either of them knowing why at the time. Participation A reflected on how there might have been something exotic about it: “For me the Christian faith certainly was on the exotic side of things. It wasn’t the everyday”. There was not, for example, a vicar who came into their school to conduct assemblies and, indeed, Participant A did not come across active Christian believers from their peer group until they arrived in university. We also talked in the interview about whether those same students were comfortable talking about their faith, or whether they would pigeonhole themselves as being agnostic (a category that they thought most students would fall into), and the issue was raised about how some students had had negative experiences of faith. Participant A reflected on how they were not themselves impressed when, while a student, Baptist, Free Churches or Christian Unions would “plant into” universities: “I saw that as very invasive and very controlling”. Participant A also reminisced on the period when they did some volunteering at Canterbury Cathedral, working as a guide, where they had “several numinous experiences” and spoke about how their academic study of theology and religion was very different to the “lived experiences

of faith” that they had seen, and that at university it was very much the “academic side” that was pushing them. We learn also that their ‘A’ level Religious Studies teacher was a retired Anglican priest, and had told them that they would be “a waste to the world” if they didn’t become ordained, but that this is not something which was subsequently pushed.

This coverage of explicit religion took up around the first 20 min of the 45 min interview, but the material that followed was not without religious resonances or allusions, as when Participant A brought up the topic of the ‘Secret Cinema’ experience, whereby fans are afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves and participate in their favourite films via spending time at an interactive movie set, in which they are able to dress up in the costume of the characters in a movie and spend time inhabiting the re-created set of the film. Participant A agreed with my suggestion that this is akin to a “pilgrimage”. They talked about how it is not just about revisiting a film, but re-entering it, and not so much expecting something new as looking to (re-)experience what they *already* knew. This in turn led to a conversation about hierophonies and sacred encounters, with respect, for instance, to Graceland, and Participant A testified to how people are rediscovering ancient pilgrimages, such as literally following in the footsteps of how people used to walk. The second half of the interview also addressed secular analogues of religious practices, as when Participant A discussed the time when they were involved with their student radio station as a speech content presenter. We talked about the intimate and personal nature of the relationship between the radio presenter and their audience, which is identified as a “form of confessional”, and how listeners will often listen to recorded sermons on the radio rather than go to the actual ‘live’ service. Religion also appears in the final part of the interview, in which I asked Participant A whether they can be nostalgic about negative experiences, and they answered by affirming that “how we choose to remember changes us now”, which Participant A then built on with reference to hagiography and the manner in which we tend to choose to remember particular relationships (such as putting former lovers on a pedestal). They also chose to answer the question as to whether they are a looking back or a looking forward kind of person with reference to the Christian hope, and the notion of “walking backwards into the future”, and there are some compelling and erudite reflections around what “God has put me on this earth for”, which they link with “current trends in our wider culture” around self-actualisation and the narrative that “you can be anything you want to be”.

3.2. Participant B (Male, 40s, Professor)

In the case of Participant B, conventional religion is far more obliquely discussed than it was in the interview with Participant A, and is connected more with the background and heritage of the interviewee. They discussed their family identity at the beginning of the interview, in which we learn that their father is a mixture of Protestant Irish and (on their mother’s side) Russian Jew, and we discover that the trail runs out on their father’s mother’s side, because they came out of a pogrom from the Ukraine. Participant B’s Jewish roots were manifest to them as a child on account of the food they were able to eat: “In dietary terms, although we were never kosher a lot of the things we ate were not what the kids that I went to school with had”. For example, they would not understand why at school my interviewee would eat chopped herring and beetroot, as well as smoked salmon, which, they point out, was not something that tended to be eaten in the 1970s unless one was rich and/or Jewish. As a result, Participant B recollected that “The dietary differences as much as anything else showed that there was a different family culture”. The Jewish identity, and the notion of difference, surfaces also in the account they gave in the interview of their great grandmother, who used to recall living in Whitechapel as a schoolchild in the autumn of 1888 during the time of Jack the Ripper: “She remembered being bundled in from school at the end of the day not so much because they were scared that the Ripper might get them but the rumour was that he was Jewish and her father was very worried that there might be attacks on their tenement block”. Her father would, for instance, tape up the letterbox. Although the conversation beyond that point did not focus on explicit references to religion, a number of foundational and binding commitments are identified which had transformative, even

sacred, quality. Participation B referred, for instance, to the way in which, from childhood, “Education was very much revered as your ticket to do whatever you wanted in life”, and attention is paid to their experience of taking Religious Studies at ‘A’ level and being one of the few people to choose to study it at school, and how, more than three decades later, they are still in touch with their “hugely inspirational” RE teacher, whose “wry sense of humour” made it so enjoyable to learn about “every element of the Old and New Testament”. Around half of the hour-long interview is spent discussing popular culture, including the ritual when younger of listening to the sport and comedy shows on BBC Radio 2 on Saturday afternoons, and of spending wet Sunday afternoons in midwinter with a BASF cassette ready to record the Top 40 chart on BBC Radio 1. They referred also to the ritual of buying up every edition of the Christmas *Radio Times* and *TV Times* from 1978 to 1996, and how it would transport them back to every Christmas present and family argument—“At times I find it fun. At other times I do find it a little bit of a curse”. Participant B also referred to how their brother “seems to have used eBay solely to rebuild his teenage years”, and they recount how their brother recently bought a 1980s waterproof Sony Walkman: “We both almost genuflected”. What is curious is that these memories of childhood are offered as a counterpoint to the “doom and gloom” vis-à-vis “Britain in the 70s being a land that had hit rock bottom”, characterised by being “shipped out of school early because we knew power cuts were coming” during the Winter of Discontent, in which family life was good but that “out there, there’d be dragons”.

3.3. Participant C (Male, 40s, Part Time Lecturer)

The interview with Participant C is redolent in aspects relating to traditional religion, in this case concerning neither Judaism nor Christianity but, rather, Hinduism. Participant C grew up in South India, which is identified as being a “messy”, “colourful” and “multifarious” place: “Growing up in India was seeing all these juxtapositions all next to each other. We have religion, we have the variety that it brings, the kind of the aspiring to the divine. But at the same time the chaos of the street. Elephants ...”. Much of the interview consists of a discussion of the similarities and differences between life in India and the UK, not least in respect of how their chosen field of academic study, Consciousness, was outside of their “intellectual bandwidth” in India, and they referred in the interview to how they are not able to tell their family and friends in India that they study something as “amorphous” as consciousness for a living “with a straight face”—which “perhaps I feel a bit guilty about sometimes”. What stands out in the interview is the cross-disciplinary nature of the research that Participant C is undertaking, which works at the cutting edge between philosophy, computing and clinical medicine, and which is identified as enabling us to ask questions today that go beyond that of, say, the ancient Greeks. Particular reference is made to how this intersects with research in an area very close to my own work, in the field of religion and near-death experiences, with Participant C referring to how “As a neuroscientist we absolutely start from the position that people’s objective experience is correct in the sense of the fact that they have experienced it”. Crucially, “one of the most common set of memories that tend to recur and stick with me are my religious memories”, having grown up in “a very orthodox, religious ... Hindu family” in which their grandfather was a Hindu priest (who would have wanted them to follow in his footsteps). To this end, religion “was instilled into us”, though the qualification is made that “it wasn’t at all at the time problematic ... I didn’t ... ask myself ‘Do I believe in this set of religious tenets?’, because this is how life is. It’s woven into your life”. Indeed, they affirmed that their “memories are of going to temples, of being a member of that religion, not ever questioning it”. Since moving to Britain and beginning their academic life, they referred to how “these things have separated out a bit, and that is actually quite different from how people in India think of their lives”, where “these things are enmeshed together”. What stands out here is the degree to which religion is identified as not being entirely reconcilable with academic practice: “I can be Indian in one sense—I can see all these contradictions and live with them”, while as an academic they are having to “dissect and deconstruct and then reconstruct”.

3.4. Participant D (Female, 50s, Honorary Lecturer)

There is a strong Indian dimension too in the reminiscences of Participant D, who was also born in India, and who talked about how their father survived the Partition of 1947 and saw his family “get killed”, leaving him with just his elder brother. Their mother was born in Burma but had to leave for India as a result of Independence, and we learn that she (the mother of my interviewee) has just written a book on the historical aspects of Ramakrishna, an Indian mystic whom many devotees consider to be an avatar. The interview also covered the issue of arranged marriages, with the participant’s mother also having initially turned down the man who was later to become her husband after the first arranged meeting, and a fascinating conversation ensues around never having felt a sense of belonging or knowing “where is home”, not ever having found it and “still looking for it”. Concomitant with this sense of “dissatisfaction” is the interplay between “fear” and self-motivation, with Participant D reflecting on how “The word ‘fear’ is always there but not in a fear where I will not venture out ... That word ‘fear’ almost pushes me to venture out”. Without specifically being able to demarcate what the object of fear is, they are conscious that this fear, and sense of being “afraid”, is itself “the driver”. This is in turn linked with a Sanskrit maxim regarding the importance of focusing on one’s work to the best of one’s ability, to enjoy the process along the way, and to reflect on how “Nothing has been prescribed”. One other specific use of a religious term is when Participant D identified the teachers and lecturers who inspired them at university in Britain, as opposed to the time they also spent at university in India, as their “gurus”, attesting that “Today, what I am is because” of them, “... through their books, through their works ...”. The questions of identity, aspiration and self-discovery appear several times throughout the interview, with Participant D reflecting on how “Coming to university gave me an identity which I didn’t have at the time ... I started to learn about myself”. They also reminisced on how they “fantasised” in their childhood in India through Bollywood films and the music of Abba, “with all these lovely tunes of how a woman is going to conquer the world” (with respect to the lyrics of the band’s 1976 hit ‘Money, Money, Money’). The disparity with their present circumstances is highlighted, with respect to how “It’s not there anymore—life’s experience and reality has definitely taken a different direction”, which precipitates a discussion around the theme of escapism. The dream that Participant D has these days is one of overcoming their feeling of being an “imposter”, and they referred to how they have been looking all their life for a value system predicated on the importance of “peace, security and stability”, and at the end of the interview they reflect on how “I still feel I haven’t completed ... the knowledge I want to have from this life which is ‘I’m born ... for something’. What it is I don’t know. It’s a big mystery”.

3.5. Participant E (Male, 50s, Professor)

Participant E is a Professor of Genetics, and works in the field of in vitro fertilisation and the human genome, as well as, more recently, the genomic structure of dinosaurs. Religion per se plays a tangential role in the interview, which covers their media work and the musical influences from childhood, including glam rock and the post-punk era of The Jam and The Boomtown Rats, as well as their penchant for remembering song lyrics, the various skills that characterise academics, the work they undertook early in their career in a cancer institute—in which looking at chromosomes down a microscope enabled them to see a very different side to their profession—and about the need for research to have social relevance. There is a considerable amount of discussion around issues of the ethical, legal and cultural implications of Participant E’s research on pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, as well as why they are bringing their IVF work to pig embryos and how the results can feed back into the human IVF world. But this is not examined with respect to any religious considerations. Religion does, however, play a key role with respect to the question of scientific ‘fact’. It is sparked by a conversation in the interview around climate change deniers and the danger of ignoring scientific truths. According to Participant E, “Unless you are a seven day Creationist I think that you can broaden your mind to the degree that there need not to be a dichotomy between the idea of creation, intelligent design and evolution, because in evolution we’re describing a process”. They continued

that, although they do not personally view it this way, “if you chose to see the universe, the earth, as being created by some sort of Being, that is, in which we were created in their image . . . then if you were building . . . something you would start with a few bricks and you would build it up over a period of time”. With evolution, the point was made that “we are just necessarily describing that process—if you like describing the mind of God and the process by which it happened”. Participant E stressed that “I choose not to see it that way, but I really have no problem with anybody who [does], because at the end of the day you’ve got to try and rationalise it in your own mind and you won’t see every detail” or “the bigger picture.” They affirmed, therefore, that “as long as someone doesn’t bang the table and say ‘Really it was on Saturday afternoon in one week 4000 years ago’ if you just take your mind a little bit broader then I think you can have an intelligent and lively debate in which you consider each other’s point of view”. Crucially, Participant E concluded that “I’ve never seen a dichotomy between religion and science in that sense”.

3.6. Participant F (Male, 40s, Senior Lecturer)

With Participant F there are a number of fascinating insights relating to undertaking research “that addresses human flourishing”, and what stands out is the importance attached to the role of community. This interviewee grew up in the United States, and discussed the stigma involved in being an Asian American and the way that being “shaped by opposition” has defined them. One of the ways in which this was done is through validating themselves in terms of “physical prowess”, such as athletics, rock climbing and skateboarding, and Participant F identified the “really good sense of community” which has arisen through their penchant for wind surfing: “What makes the wind surfing community great is I think that every wind surfer knows how difficult it is and so there is kind of common respect”. Questions around ontology also arose through wind surfing, in the respect that “If you do any kind of sport or activity that involves relationship to nature, or even to structures . . . you just start to see things through that mode of being as it were”. They talked about having “clocked in more hours” than any other sailor in their local community, and what is accentuated is the drive that they bring to their sport—to the extent that they can be so driven by the need to accomplish what they are doing that “sometimes I forget a lot of the good things that are happening along the way”—and an intimacy with and respect for nature that arises through undertaking wind surfing, which is identified as being a “counterpoint” to their academic work. In terms of traditional religion, Participant F was quite reticent about giving away their own personal views or beliefs, taking the line that “I’ve pretty much refused to speak about religion unless someone is actually earnestly pursuing it not with respect to having an argument they want to make because I find that to actually understand what’s going on in religion is difficult . . . or to actually understand religion in any sense which is not reactive to some position”. Their argument is that “atheism is a reaction to a certain kind of theism, so whatever atheism you occupy is going to be a reaction, and so you can’t just say ‘I’m an atheist’”. Rather, in the words of Participant F, “You have to say, ‘I’m an atheist because I disagree with this conception of religion or I disagree with this conception of God.’ And to actually begin to start to see that is very difficult because everybody has a certain kind of view or platform they want to raise”. In terms of their own standpoint: “I don’t know where I fall on the spectrum between theism and atheism. I know the kinds of positions I am not comfortable with. I think that within the discipline of philosophy the majority of philosophers tend to veer towards the agnostic or atheistic side. And sometimes very strongly so. And even with philosophers sometimes it’s very difficult to say: ‘Can we approach religion for example with the understanding that religious language is non-propositional?’ And of course they might say ‘Yes, but if that’s the case then it’s nonsense anyway.’ So it becomes very difficult to sort of build bridges”.

3.7. Participant G (Female, 50s, Senior Lecturer)

In the case of Participant G, the word ‘religion’ is not explicitly used in the interview, aside from any reference on my part to the fact that I teach in Religious Studies, yet it is significant that many of the tropes that appear in the other interviews also emerge here. A fascination with the sea also plays

a primary role in this interview, with Participant G reminiscing about the significant role played by “going to the beach as a child”, with the “sound” and “smell” of the sea being identified as important, not least in respect of how “it always calmed me down” as “I was always rather nervous”. They also watched and used to collect sail boats as a child, and reference is made to how this proclivity has been taken up in adulthood. For, we learn in the interview, they took sailing lessons eight years ago and immediately knew “this was the sport for me ... It takes me into a different world” and “puts you in connection with nature”. In a similar way to what is attested by Participant F, we learn that the water “gets you out of that academic mindset”. The analogy with mindfulness arose as part of my conversation with Participant G, in respect of the way that sailing is “very much in the moment” and is all about “being present” and feeling “healthy”. Wider issues around health were explored in the interview, with respect to how the Romans would undertake flower arranging, as well as a “calling”, from their childhood in America, “to come over to Europe and visit exotic places”.

3.8. Participant H (Female, 30s, Reader)

Finally, with respect to Participant H, we find that religion appears in more of an oblique manner. Formal, institutional aspects of religion do appear in the interview, however, as when they reminisce about the ritual, when growing up, of listening on Good Friday to Handel’s ‘Messiah’, going to the bakery to buy hot cross buns, and then attending Mass at 3pm. Participant H also self-identifies as “a spiritual person”, and referred to how this entails having “that ... ‘something else’ going on in your life that takes you away from the mundanity and ... that existentialist angst about what’s the point of it all”, adding “that that is a solace, I guess”. What comes to the fore in the interview is the extent to which Participant H is on a journey of sorts, which entails being “a perpetual student” in which they “just have so many questions that I want to answer”. As with Participant B, the importance of education was emphasised, with Participant H reflecting on how their father’s father, who had been a Polish refugee from Warsaw during the Second World War, died when their father was 16 years of age—“So I never met him. But my father would talk about him a lot and he would talk about how important education was. And he would always say ... ‘they can take away anything from you but what they can’t take away from you is your education.’ And if you’ve got an education then you can make what you will of that”. The sense of community that is also flagged up by Participant F appears here, in the context of how, with respect to their friendships, “Everybody’s dispersed, but ... when we get together which we do maybe once or twice a year ... actually it’s like we’ve never left”. They also referred to how “Everybody’s taken really different routes in life and yet there’s something that holds us all together”. The ‘fandom’ dimension which was integral to Participant A plays an integral role here, also, in the respect that Participant H spoke with great passion about their love of *Doctor Who* in the early 1990s, at a time when to be a fan of the sci-fi programme “wasn’t cool”—they would fill their school locker and folders with pictures of Daleks and Cybermen, and they referred to the phase of falling “madly in love with Peter Davison”, who played the fifth incarnation of the Doctor in the eponymous BBC TV series. They also recounted the time when they received a handwritten birthday card from the actor on their 13th birthday. The “temporality of life” is also something that features heavily in this interview, with Participant H reflecting on how “I try to as much as possible live in the present and think about that thing of ‘the past is history, the future’s a mystery but the present is a gift’”. Although dwelling on the past “can encourage that kind of slightly morbid reflection”, my interviewee also referred in their interview to the role that keeping a diary has played in their life, acknowledging “That sense of the importance of the document and the archive and the concretising of it, so that I can look back ... in however many years’ time and just go ‘These are the nuggets of history’”.

4. Discussion

Having scrutinised the eight interviews, a number of trends can be identified. One of the most pertinent is that religion takes a number of different forms, and should not be seen as being coterminous with, or dependent on, the beliefs, structures, agencies and teachings of formal or institutional traditions,

such as Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism, even if, as this article has established, traditional religion can play a foundational role in the life journeys of many of my interviewees. The *raison d'être* of the interviews is not to discuss religion explicitly, but to talk about nostalgia and the range of influences on my interviewees' lives and career journeys. Inevitably, as we have seen in the above case studies, religion, in both explicit and implicit forms, does appear—often foundationally—in the interviews, and has and/or continues to have a role to play in the way that my interviewees reflect on and reminisce about their past. In this regard, religion is very far from 'off limits', and, as we shall see, one of the most illuminating and unexpected findings of this research is the degree to which religion is being invoked without it needing to be flagged up or even expressly referred to by the interviewees. It is thus useful to consider how a framework such as that of Implicit Religion may supply a better way of conceptualising and defining what religion is and where it can be found—which has received one of its most cogent expressions in Edward Bailey's attestation that the word 'religion' should not be "restricted to any single *kind* among the religions, such as the 'world religions'" (Bailey 1998a, p. 15). In Bailey's words, "It refers to *religiosity*, in general, rather than to its expression in any particular form of religion, or even in any particular type of religion" (ibid.). The implications of this research on the study and definition of religion are thus immense, for, on this model, we can understand the category of religion better and more fully when secular perspectives are added to the mix (and vice versa). Indeed, as Bailey puts it, "... if we could find the distinctive meaning of 'secular' in today's culture, we would at last know how to define religion" (Bailey 1998b, p. 19). Crucially, according to the tenets of Implicit Religion, although not everything *is* implicitly religious, anything *can* be, and can say something important not just about the goal or *telos* that a person or community may be striving toward, in the manner of, say, Paul Tillich's understanding of ultimate concern—whereby, for example, "Religion is the life-blood, the inner power, the ultimate meaning of all life", and the "'sacred' or the 'holy' inflames, imbues, inspires, all reality and all aspects of existence" (Brant 2012, p. 57)—but also the "mode of behaviour exhibited" (Lord 2006, p. 206). We see this in the sample of interviews included in this article, whereby religious terminology is not necessarily being invoked, but activities and rituals are being performed which take on often profound meaning, and which define and in some cases transform and give sustenance to their lives, encompassing "phenomena that at first sight do not appear to answer to the conventional description of religion" (Pärna 2004, p. 104), but which appear at the very least to be analogous to religious forms of behaviour.

An obvious limitation to my research is that the sample is relatively small in size, and a larger sample would be needed to more fully establish the extent to which the 'new visibility' of religion is in evidence via the testimony of my interviewees. It is also the case that, as the interviews took place up to a year before this article was conceived, I was not in a position to ask my interviewees whether they would be prepared to categorise such practices as religious or not. They will each receive a copy of this article and I am looking forward to meeting with them again—possibly in the form of a future edition or editions of my podcast—to discuss their thoughts on how I have drawn on their data, and how comfortable they are with my conclusions. Based on my findings to date, though, a strong case can be made that Implicit Religion is an appropriate term to use in those situations in which, to quote Pärna, "established (religious) grand narratives are not applicable" (ibid., p. 105). The crucial thing is that this is not a matter of imposing definitions and paradigms on data which may, or may not, warrant them, in a *top down*, normative model. The starting point is necessarily *bottom up*, and arises from looking at the data, first and foremost. This was very different research to anything I had undertaken before, where I was always drawing on conceptual models and categories—what Bailey would call "the (idealised) systems of ideas" (Bailey 1998a, p. 19)—and then applying particular data to them. In this respect, there is an obvious crossover with work that has taken place to date in the field of nostalgia studies, in accordance with how, for Fred Davis, in his seminal monograph on the topic, "the past which is the object of nostalgia must in some fashion be a personally experienced past rather than one drawn solely ... from chronicles, almanacs, history books, memorial tablets, or ... legend" (Davis 1979, p. 8). Research undertaken on nostalgia necessarily entails an empirical frame of reference in order to be

fully efficacious, and the qualitative analysis that lies at the heart of this article dovetails well with how, in the case of Implicit Religion, there is a marked enterprise not of “defining certain features of religion and setting out to reveal them in secular contexts”, but searching “the context empirically and only then, in a bottom-up process”, formulating “emerging contents and world-views” (Schneil 2000, p. 115). Instead of using an existing lens in order to discern parallels—with the concomitant risk that we will “miss the heart of what we are seeking” (Bailey 1998a, p. 22)—Implicit Religion is a useful way of understanding the extent to which ostensibly secular practices and proclivities can be deemed no less elementary, transformative, or even salvific, than the sorts of things that are easier to quantify, such as membership of a church or temple, professing “belief in god or doctrinal matters, frequency of prayer and attendance at religious services, or financial contributions to religious organizations” (Gollnick 2002, p. 83). The problem with the latter is that, though easier to observe, they do not per se “reflect the strongest motivations and commitments around which people organize their mental and spiritual lives” (ibid.). In marked contrast, Implicit Religion is better at exhibiting, through the kind of empirical data used here, people’s commitments, values, worldviews, meaning systems and sense of identity; in other words, “the less obvious and less conventional aspects of religion” (ibid., p. 83).

We see this in the interviews in the way that Participant A reflects on growing up in an environment where they were surrounded by people who paid plenty of lip service to religion—“there was lots of religion around me and of course I came from a family where you had your children baptized . . . because it’s what you do”—*but without the commitment*. Although Participant A went on to become a priest in the Church of England, their childhood was spent in a family that they designated as being non-religious, and there were other ostensibly ‘secular’ pursuits, including academic study, which are identified as being their “fandom”. We see this also with Participant H’s obsession with *Doctor Who* and the way in which Participant B has a proclivity for listening to and collecting radio and TV-related artefacts, such as jingles and Christmas editions of the *Radio Times*, from their childhood. In these cases, we can see elements of how ‘secular’ fandoms, including fan communities, “can be implicitly religious for some fans” (Porter 2009, p. 271). The reason for this is simple: it can be “a statement about what truly matters . . . as filtered through and symbolized by pop culture” (ibid.). Although my interviewees did not speak about being part of a wider fan community as such, we see here, as with the role played by sailing communities in the case of Participant F, the expression of places, whether geographical or virtual, “that embody a person’s and/or a community’s expression of what it means to be human, to be in community, to be in space and time, to be moral or immoral, to be finite or eternal, to simply be” (ibid.). For all of my interviewees, indeed, there is a profound sense in which their passions and motivations say so much about what they stand for, the causes they believe in, why they might devote a whole lifetime to a particular project, and why they are always hungry to continue to learn and uncover the great mysteries of existence. Sometimes this can be done through traditional forms of religion, as is most prominent in the case of Participant A, but it can also be undertaken through less conventional practices and structures. So, although Hills and Argyle are correct that the concept of Implicit Religion “implies the existence of explicit religion”—by way of a counterpoint, indeed—they are also right to ask whether “implicit and explicit religion mark the opposite ends of a single (bipolar) continuum or instead represent two separate ways (dimensions) of being religious” (Hills and Argyle 2002, p. 70).

The lines between the two are inevitably porous, as when Participant A discusses the “confessional” nature of the relationship between the radio presenter and their audience. Karen Pärna sums up the permeable nature of the debate in her attestation that, “To a certain extent implicit religion feeds on metaphors and concepts derived from older, explicit religious expression . . . Meanwhile much of what is considered explicit religion is dependent on more undecided and unvoiced religious feelings” (Pärna 2004, p. 106). This arises, for example, in the case of prayer rooms or quiet spaces in airports and motorway service stations, where some form of religiosity is having to be established “in a location that has no tradition of the sacred and they have to cater for all religious denominations” (ibid.). We see similar dynamics in other interviews, also, as when Participants B and H highlight the important role

of education. For Participant B, when growing up, “Education was very much revered as your ticket to do whatever you wanted in life”, and we can see how this intersects with the role of religion by looking at how, for Clive Marsh, “When education functions as the primary way in which people discover more about themselves, and develop their sense of self-worth, skills, and self-confidence, it plays a similar role to religion” (Marsh 2004, p. 5). For Participant C, too, although traditional religion has played a seminal role in their life—with their grandfather wanting them to become a Hindu priest—they reveal that “the main undercurrent of my life has been [BBC] Radio 6 . . . It’s on in our house every morning, every day”. This accords with my own work on radio in which, as I have argued previously, radio is able to go further than other media in terms of shedding light on the communal and ritualistic dimensions of religion, and of being such a significant medium with respect to the articulation, dissemination and ongoing creation of religious experiences and values, as well as being a tradition-supplying resource (Deacy 2018, pp. 6–7). Participant D speaks about the role of fantasising with respect to Bollywood movies, and this too intersects with a significant body of work that has been undertaken on escapism in film, as when in 2005 I undertook an investigation into whether there is more to movies than the opportunity afforded to escape for a couple of hours into a fantasy world, and, to quote Steve Lansingh, the manner in which escapist films comprise “a fantasy world that sucks us in and entices us, satisfying our desires to see stories about the unusual, extraordinary and fantastic” (Deacy 2005, p. 25). Sport, too, which is intrinsic to the life of Participants F and G—“It takes me into a different world”, in the words of the latter—plays a key role in many of the debates swirling and fomenting across the study of religion and popular culture, with Joseph L. Price arguing that “For tens of millions of devoted fans throughout [America], sports constitute a popular form of religion by shaping their world and sustaining their ways of engaging it. Indeed, for many, sports are elevated to a kind of divine status, in what I would call an American apotheosis” (Price 2005, p. 196). Crucially, vis-à-vis Implicit Religion, Price contributes to a question at the heart of this present research in his attestation that “Even though sports does not have all characteristics of a religion, neither does any particular religious tradition, because such comprehensive definitions of ‘religion’ are simply ideal norms against which actual religions are measured” (ibid., p. 198).

5. Conclusions

We can therefore see that, despite its ostensibly secular provenance, Implicit Religion is a very fitting lens through which we can understand the extent to which religion plays a prominent role in the lives and career journeys of academic staff and alumni at the University of Kent. Although explicit religion also plays a prominent function, the passions and commitments of each of the participants in this case study warrant being seen through a *religious* framework, even if the use of the term ‘religion’ tends to be reserved for specifically institutional and traditional patterns of belief and practice which appear in their reminiscences. Whether we are talking about the pivotal role played by science in the case of Participant E and the social relevance that it generates, or about the role played by music, sport and education across my interviewees, Implicit Religion strikes me as an especially germane framework to use, because it is “concerned with understanding people, from the point of view of their intentionality, at any and every level of consciousness” (Bailey 1998a, p. 78). Indeed, as Grainger succinctly posits, just because people’s faith may not be explicit does not mean that they do not have one: “All it may mean is that the main force of their commitment is directed elsewhere. Whatever it may be for them that gives meaning to life is not to be found in church belonging and worship *but somewhere else*” (Grainger 2003, p. 56). The difference is to be found, rather, in the *location* and in the way that “the phenomenon is defined”, and the central paradox here is that even though “it has to borrow the language of explicit religion in order to express itself” (ibid.), it is not *dependent* on explicit forms and manifestations of religion in order to be efficacious. What comes to the fore in my Nostalgia Interviews is that, despite not explicitly being about religion, religion is not peripheral to the way in which, in tandem with the key tenets of Implicit Religion, we learn about that which “a person is committed to” and which, moreover, transcends “the narrow confines of specific experiences to affect

the entirety of a person's life" (Porter 2009, p. 277). It is that peripheral, even liminal, space where we are afforded the opportunity, not least through a series of very personal, authentic and illuminating reflections on their lives, and the influences and goals which have brought them to where they are now, to discover those less formal and structured forms of religion, which often overlap with formal religious practices but are also worthy of being deemed to be religious *in their own right*. The goal of this article has been to demonstrate where and how this is the case, using my Nostalgia Interviews podcast as source material, and in so doing, transforming and re-orientating the way in which we look at the location and dimensions—indeed, the 'new visibility'—of religion in contemporary society, and, as Lord puts it, in a manner which "envision[s] the arbitrary, shifting boundaries of the set defined as 'religion' within the larger set of human commitments called 'implicit religion'" (Lord 2006, p. 218).

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Arts and Humanities Research Council. 2020. 'Impact'. Available online: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/research/impact/> (accessed on 15 March 2020).
- Arts and Humanities Research Council. 2020. *Understanding Your Project: A Guide to Self Evaluation*. Available online: <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/guides/understanding-your-project-a-guide-to-self-evaluation/> (accessed on 15 March 2020).
- Bacon, Hannah, Dossett Wendy, and Knowles Steve. 2017. 'Introduction'. In *Alternative Salvations: Engaging the Sacred and the Secular*. Edited by Hannah Bacon, Wendy Dossett and Steve Knowles. London and New York: Bloomsbury, pp. 1–7.
- Bailey, Edward. 1998a. *Implicit Religion: An Introduction*. London: Middlesex University Press.
- Bailey, Edward. 1998b. "Implicit Religion": What Might That Be? *Implicit Religion* 1: 9–22.
- Bailey, Edward. 2006. *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society*. Leuven, Paris and Dudley: Peeters.
- BBC News. 2018. 'Brexit: Too Many Older Leave Voters Nostalgic for "White" Britain, Says Cable'. 11 March. Available online: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-43364331> (accessed on 15 March 2020).
- Brant, Jonathan. 2012. *Paul Tillich and the Possibility of Revelation through Film: A Theoretical Account Grounded by Empirical Research into the Experiences of Filmgoers*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, Fred. 1979. *Yearning for Yesterday: A Sociology of Nostalgia*. New York and London: The Free Press and Collier Macmillan.
- Deacy, Christopher. 2005. *Faith in Film: Religious Themes in Contemporary Cinema*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Deacy, Christopher. 2016. *Christmas as Religion: Rethinking Santa, the Secular, and the Sacred*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deacy, Christopher. 2018. Religion on the Radio: Using Christmas Religious Broadcasting to Reframe the Sacred-Secular Interface. *Implicit Religion* 21: 1–43. [CrossRef]
- Deacy, Christopher. 2019. Nostalgia Interviews with Chris Deacy. Available online: <https://audioboom.com/channels/4956567> (accessed on 15 March 2020).
- Gollnick, James. 2002. Implicit Religion in the Psychology of Religion. *Implicit Religion* 5: 81–92. [CrossRef]
- Grainger, Roger. 2003. Believing and Belonging: A Psychological Comment on a Paper Given by E.I. Bailey at Windsor, 1990. *Implicit Religion* 6: 53–7. [CrossRef]
- Hills, Peter, and Michael Argyle. 2002. A Psychological Dimension to Implicit Religion. *Implicit Religion* 5: 69–80. [CrossRef]
- Knott, Kim, Poole Elizabeth, and Taira Teemu. 2013. *Media Portrayals of Religion and the Secular Sacred: Representation and Change*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lizardi, Ryan. 2015. *Mediated Nostalgia: Individual Memory and Contemporary Mass Media*. Lanham, Boulder, New York and London: Lexington.
- Lord, Karen. 2006. Implicit Religion: Definition and Application. *Implicit Religion* 9: 205–19.
- Marsh, Clive. 2004. *Cinema and Sentiment: Film's Challenge to Theology*. Carlisle: Paternoster Press.
- Pärna, Karen. 2004. Why Study Implicit Religion? An Account of the 27th Denton Conference on Implicit Religion, 7–9 May 2004. *Implicit Religion* 7: 101–107.

- Porter, Jennifer. 2009. Implicit Religion in Popular Culture: The Religious Dimensions of Fan Communities. *Implicit Religion* 12: 271–80. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Price, Joseph L. 2005. An American Apotheosis: Sports as Popular Religion. In *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, 2nd ed. Edited by Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan. London: University of California Press, pp. 195–212.
- Routledge, Clay. 2016. *On Nostalgia: A Psychological Resource*. New York and Abingdon: Routledge.
- Schnell, Tatjana. 2000. I Believe In Love. *Implicit Religion* 3: 111–22. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Smart, Ninian. 1998. Implicit religion across culture. *Implicit Religion* 1: 23–6. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Spickard, James V. 2012. Micro Qualitative Approaches to the Sociology of Religion: Phenomenologies, Interviews, Narratives, and Ethnographies. In *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Edited by James A. Beckford and N. Jay Demerath. London: SAGE Publications, pp. 121–43.
- Sprengler, Christine. 2009. *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.



© 2020 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).