Trees, Benches and Contemporary Commemoration: When the Ordinary Becomes Extraordinary

Marion Bowman

The Open University
(marion.bowman@open.ac.uk)

Introduction

I met Peggy Morgan in 1991 at my first BASR conference in Oxford. BASR conferences then were comparatively small meetings, with everyone in the same room for all the papers. It was a somewhat intimidating experience at the time, but some excellent long-term relationships resulted from that event. I subsequently served on the committee of BASR as conference organizer and President, benefitting greatly from Peggy's wisdom, attention to detail and experience.

Peggy has been tireless and feisty in her championing of Religious Studies, and she has promoted and served the field in myriad ways professionally. However, this research note has been prompted by reflections on the personal Peggy, as it were. Peggy is the compassionate correspondent who has regularly sent encouraging, hand-crafted notes throughout my recent health-related problems. Sharing a love of fritillaries, the walk she organized for us through Oxford meadows awash with them remains an outstanding memory. We are both great admirers of Andy Goldsworthy, whose breathtakingly beautiful artworks in relation to nature can be fleeting (ice sculptures, or striking combinations of berries, flowers, twigs or leaves) or more solid variations on traditional forms such as walls and sheep pens.

I have drawn attention in a number of contexts to the trope of materiality, relationality and connectivity (e.g. Bowman 2017, 2020) concerning material religion, what people do with things and what things do with, for and to people. As I considered what to write about for this Festschrift within the remit of 'ordinary experience', mundane, practical benches which are also commemorative constructions, and trees which become coopted into human dramas of love and loss seemed to fit the bill.

Commemoration expressed through and projected onto natural objects and settings, and the creation of powerful, often unexpected, material installations that others might encounter, respond to or engage with, transform the seemingly ordinary into the extraordinary. This piece examines some of the resourceful, tangible ways in which

contemporary practices and worldviews are expressed, encapsulated and enacted through the vehicle of material culture. Concentrating primarily on two contrasting examples– trees and benches – I explore briefly the interaction of people and material culture, people projecting biography onto objects and places, and the creation or shaping of object biography in these performances of loss and commemoration.

Roadside memorials have attracted considerable academic attention, especially in countries where roadside shrines to saints have not been the norm (e.g. Clark and Cheshire 2004; Klaassens, Groote and Vanclay 2013), and they have been studied from a variety of disciplines and perspectives (e.g. Churchill and Tay 2008; Klaassens, Groote and Huigen 2009; MacConville 2010). Installations at 'sites of sudden death' (Stahl and Jackson 2019), 'spontaneous shrines' (Santino 2011) and what Margry and Sanchez-Carretero (2011) refer to as 'grassroots memorials' have often been not simply expressions of loss, shock or empathy in relation to deaths, but focal points and catalysts for discontent and protest. The examples to which I draw attention here perhaps may be seen as less dramatic, but they are indicative of widespread, vernacular praxis in relation to grassroots commemoration, and not simply remembering the dead but *relocating* them and their memory in particular landscapes and materiality. The special place or the beloved place away from the site of death (whether in accident, home, hospice or care home) becomes the place where people are metaphysically and to some degree physically 'placed' by and for the survivors.

In the wake of Covid 19, many have been aware of and commented on the therapeutic power both of walking and being in nature. As living entities, trees have been and remain the foci of perceived encounters with or reminders of 'the other'. We address and dress them in calendar customs (such as wassailing and the decoration of Christmas trees), and attach religious significance to some, such as the Glastonbury Thorn. We also involve them in negotiations of human grief. Using examples of tree-related activities in the contrasting locations of former mining town Norton Radstock in Somerset and Loch Lomond in Scotland, the vernacular role of trees as part of the commemorative process can be studied as projections and expressions of conceptions of biography, relationality, connectivity and (arguably) spirituality within and beyond this world.

In 2013 I lectured at the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Jagiellonian University, Krakow on 'Mourning and Memorialisation on the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond', presenting research on issues presented by some emergent commemorative practices within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, including the attachment of memorial plaques to benches and indeed the placement of benches not approved by the park authorities. I stayed in touch with one of the postgraduate students who attended the lecture and had informed me of an imminent

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience ISSN: 2057-2301

visit to Scotland. When he contacted me upon his arrival in Edinburgh, he commented that he now understood much better my point about benches and memorialisation: 'Wherever I go here, I am sitting on dead people.' The ubiquitous memorial bench which has become such an ordinary or unremarkable feature of many townscapes and other landscapes is also part of a meaningful deathscape (cf Maddrell & Sidaway 2010), and as such a vehicle for a range of complex emotions and praxis in relation to loss in a physical form which is relatively underexplored. For over a decade, I have been observing the growth of memorial benches at a few sites in Scotland, and changing behaviour in relation to them; here I present just a couple of snapshots illustrating the extent to which these seemingly mundane and highly utilitarian objects can be employed – and indeed subverted – as powerful material expressions of relationality, place-making and place-staking.

As means of appreciating the rich and fluid interactions of humans with objects in expressions and performances of loss and worldviews in non-traditional and informal sites today, these trees and memorial benches are part of the broader context in which 'Grief, mourning and remembrance are experienced in and mapped upon . . . physical spaces, including the public and private arenas of everyday life' (Maddrell 2016: 166.)

Trees

David Morgan states that in studying material culture we study 'how people build and maintain the cultural domains that are the shape of their social lives' (Morgan 2017: 15). Death as the ultimate disrupter of the lives of those left behind gives rise to material responses of myriad types, and on varying scales. With trees, people produce and perform commemoration in how trees are perceived, addressed and interacted with as conduits of communication, connectivity and expressions of absence-presence.

The growth of woodland burial (Davies and Rumble 2012) and the popularity of various schemes which invite the sponsorship of tree planting either in celebration or commemoration attest to both the appropriateness people perceive in making connections between people and trees, and ways in which people appear to be choosing increasingly to commemorate, memorialise and mourn their dead outwith or in addition to more traditional deathscapes or explicitly religious spaces. Trees in the context of memorialisation tend to get co-opted into human narratives and performances of relationality through intention, proximity or indirect involvement; in this respect trees might be seen as either intentional or incidental. What could be described as 'incidental' trees are trees which are in effect innocent bystanders, as it were, at or near the sites of accidents, or beloved places. These become co-opted into acts of remembrance and

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

performances of relationality; their meaning, therefore, can be multivalent, very much an individual matter. 'Intentional' trees, by contrast, are deliberately planted or chosen as a focus of relationality; their biography becomes intertwined with that of the person for whom they are planted.

Roadside shrines and the incorporation of incidental trees at or near the site of accidents into commemoration and the enactment of grief have become increasingly common in the United Kingdom. As an instance of people creating, shaping and re-narrating a tree's biography in performances of connectedness, the tree known as both the Jubilee Oak and Colin Latchem's tree in Norton Radstock is exemplary. By the main road through the centre of Norton Radstock, Somerset, there used to be an oak tree, planted in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In January 1997, following the death of seventeen-year-old Colin Latchem after being hit by a car near it, the tree became a focal point for his family and friends to lay flowers, commemorate Colin and express their grief. In early 2012, however, the local Council announced its intention to remove the tree as part of alterations to reduce traffic congestion and improve road safety. The family were distraught and started a petition against the move of what became referred to as Colin Latchem's tree. As it was Jubilee year, the fact that the oak had been planted to commemorate another royal jubilee was also used as an argument for its conservation.

Figure 1. Colin Latchem's tree, 2012,Norton Radstock. Photograph Marion Bowman.

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience ISSN: 2057-2301

Figure 2. Detail of protest and ribbons on tree, Norton Radstock 2012. Photograph Marion Bowman.

In the course of the protest, the tree once again became altered materially with ribbons, a photograph of Colin, flowers, and an emotional appeal from the family not to move it (Figures 1 and 2). On one of the ribbons bearing messages from family members was written ‘Losing this tree would be like losing Col Col [sic] all over again’. What stood out in material terms was what the tree had come to represent for the family; the council was totally unprepared for the family’s reaction to its removal and the furore that it provoked. That the tree had been a site and focus of mourning associated with the boy was common knowledge. The extent of the identification of the tree with the boy, the slippage from significant site to surrogate, simply had not been appreciated. In the end, the tree was moved with great care and at considerable expense to the grounds of Writhlington School, which Colin had attended, with a memorial erected to him there. Colin’s sister was reported as saying the tree had become ‘a living tribute’ to her brother which held great significance for the family. As a tree is alive, the life (and by extension the relationships) associated with, celebrated through or focussed via a tree is perceived to have some sort of ongoing material presence. The tree becomes a ‘living memorial’, with all the ambiguity that entails.

Within the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, in 2010 one tree at the site of a road accident had a plaque attached to it, displaying the picture of a smiling 19 year old man, giving his name and dates, and including the message ‘Simply The Best . . . Miss You Day & Night’. A football scarf and tee shirts were attached to lower branch of a neighbouring tree which stuck out more prominently above a small, square wooden

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

enclosure constructed on the road verge near the tree, and there, for a while, messages and plastic wrapped bunches of flowers were left. A commemorative site on a busy road, once the enclosure and other paraphernalia disappeared, the tree could be easily missed in passing.

However, the more common and obvious tree related activity in the National Park relates to trees at accessible points on the loch shore which become incorporated into multiple processes of mourning and commemoration. The same trees are used by a number of different mourners, sometimes serially, at other places simultaneously. Duck Bay at the southern end of Loch Lomond is an attractive spot with easy parking and access to the shore, and grassy areas with picnic tables at various points across the narrow road from the beach. It attracts a broad demographic, with a range of nationalities, ethnicities and age groups enjoying the facilities there. Because of the easy accessibility to the shore at the southern end of the bay, flowers with or without messages tend to be left where a few small trees stand.

I first noticed one tree in particular because it had tied to it a miniature bottle of whiskey and two purple glass baubles (of the type used for Christmas trees) with 'Dad' written in silver glitter; a 'Dad' birthday card was attached to the tree, the message expressing how much the placer missed and loved her father (figure 3).[1] Other messages and a white ribbon with a handwritten message appeared subsequently on that tree, seemingly from the same person.

Figure 3. Duck Bay, Loch Lomond. Photograph Marion Bowman

[1] That whiskey miniature remained untouched on the tree for at least 10 weeks.

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience
ISSN: 2057-2301

From observation here and elsewhere within the National Park, this sort of private/public – public/private remembrance appears to inspire others to similar behaviour. A metal plaque has been screwed onto another tree close by, listing the names and dates of three members of the same family, who had died in 2002, 2006 and 2012, described as 'Our Rock', 'Our Rose', and 'Our Braveheart', the final line reading 'SEE YOU ON THE OTHER SIDE'. On one occasion (Figure 4), another tree in this group had tied to it a bunch of purple chrysanthemums, and a typed sheet encased in plastic with the words:

> Beloved Place
> We scatter Ritas [sic] ashes at a beloved place,
> No longer bound by this world, but a part of it.
> No longer tied to one place, one time, but free.
> Every time you feel the warm sunshine on your face,
> Every time you hear the rain softly falling outside your window.
> No matter where you are, no matter where you travel in this big wide open world,
> She will always be around you.

Figure 4. Flowers and printed sheet attached to tree. Note the previously mentioned white ribbon on tree in background. Duck Bay, Loch Lomond. Photograph Marion Bowman.

More recently, this tree became the focus of expressions of grief and commemoration for a young man, with a variety of items including photographs, messages, a tartan scarf, a kilt belt and bunches of plastic wrapped flowers being attached to it. On trees in this same group photographs and flowers for an unidentified person appeared briefly (Figure 5), while a plastic covered order of service for a funeral from early December 2019, bearing a photograph and details of a 52-year-old man, is there at time of writing (August 2020).

Figure 5. Flowers and photographs attached to tree. Duck Bay, Loch Lomond. Photograph Marion Bowman

Away from the road and public gaze, in more secluded areas, other trees might be adopted for more 'exclusive' or undisturbed longer-term use. In an area of lochside woodland off a path more familiar to locals than visitors, for example, there is a memorial tree which has developed over a number of years, with clothing nailed to the tree, a now tattered Scottish saltire flag[2], vases for flowers, a Christmas decoration and messages (Figure 6).

[2] Scottish flag with a white St.Andrew's cross on blue background.

Figure 6. Two shirts, a tattered saltire flag and a Christmas decoration are attached to this lochside tree at Loch Lomond, while at ground level there are cards, vases, solar lights and plants. (Location withheld) Photograph Marion Bowman.

Very much in keeping with the move towards memorialisation at the beloved or special place, at Loch Lomond there are ever increasing numbers of intentional trees. In the run up to 2000, the Royal Scottish Forestry Society's vision was to restore an area of native woodland on the east shore of Loch Lomond at Cashel Forest, for which it appealed for public sponsorship for the planting of trees. While tree planting might be supported with the woodland restoration as an end in itself, the Books of Dedications on display at Cashel (recording the sponsor and the location of trees sponsored, with room for optional dedications) indicate that in addition to the celebration of births and wedding anniversaries, the great majority of sponsorship has related to commemoration. On one visit to Cashel, I encountered a man in his sixties from the north of England, who told me that he comes up every Easter to visit his trees, adding 'There are seven of us up there'. Trees and lives and deaths become intertwined in a beautiful, beloved location. However, precisely because a tree is alive, it is subject to damage and decay. A Cashel volunteer told me that she likes to know in advance if people are making a special trip to see their trees, so that she can check on them; if people have sponsored a commemorative tree they tend to get very upset if it dies. (The Norton Radstock case reflects such trauma.) The tree as commemorative medium can bring distress as well comfort through (another) loss.

Across the loch, in the glebeland belonging to the Church of Scotland church of St Kessog at Luss, a popular and picturesque village on the west bank of Loch Lomond,

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

there is a memorial area in which trees could be planted in memory of loved ones.[3] Luss is rather an iconic site for many reasons, not least as a much-loved place for many Scots, and for innumerable other UK and overseas visitors. The trees planted at Luss are redolent with positive associations, as trees are used to root people and memories in a special place, somehow (re)situating them there and recapturing happy times. Typically, after giving the names and dates of birth and death of a married couple, the plaque beside one tree reads, 'Honeymooned in Luss 1946. Together forever'; another states 'Met in Luss in 1955. Together again 2011' (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Luss glebeland memorial plaque at base of specially planted tree. Photograph Marion Bowman.

In these 'snapshot' examples, we see vernacular practices of commemoration involving trees (incidental and intentional) through which people project, express, and capture life-worlds and biographies, within and beyond this world.

Benches

Memorial benches associated with significant or beloved places are increasingly common in both urban and rural landscapes. Again, they provide memorials to a people in forums away from formal sites such as cemeteries or crematoria, with an opportunity for the donor to 'place' the deceased at a personally significant site. There is an obvious logic in the association between a frequently occupied or loved spot leading to commemoration

[3] This was the initiative of a previous minister, Dane Sherrard, in relation to a pilgrimage path developed there (see Bowman 2020). While the pilgrimage path and its paraphernalia have gone, the trees and memorials remain.

of that person in material form through a bench with a plaque naming that person, and possibly some detail linking her or him to the site.

Memorial benches and their inscriptions often attract attention from those unconnected to the individual commemorated; there appears to be popular understanding, acceptance and interest in them as vernacular phenomena. In her Memorial Bench Stories blog, Carol Kubicki posts photographs of memorial benches and the commemorative plaque. As she says of the benches on her site,

> Each bench tells a story of someone loved and remembered. These are not celebrities, they are you and me. I hope to find out some of the stories of the lives of the special people who are commemorated in these benches; either through my own research or by people getting in touch. (Memorial Bench Stories blog)

As recorded in an online BBC News article 'Memorial benches: A quiet reminder of people gone, but not forgotten' (Peachey 2020), mapping site Open Benches allows people to upload pictures of benches in their area; of over 15,000 entries, 'the vast majority' are in the UK.

The removal of benches by park authorities and councils which are deemed to have been inappropriately sited or positioned without permission tends to cause considerable outrage and grief in the donors, for, like the removal of Colin Latchem's tree, it can be perceived as another 'removal' or displacement of the person commemorated. Additionally, while trees can die, benches can become damaged, and in addition to distress caused to donors if the damage is wilful, issues arise as to whose long-term responsibility memorial benches are. There was an outcry in some Scottish newspapers in January 2020 when it was revealed that 70 or more benches bearing memorial plaques had been removed from West Princes Street Gardens and destroyed by fire by council workmen as a less costly solution than repairing them ('Council probe after workers burn memorial benches in Edinburgh', BBC news website,18 January 2020)[4].

Many national parks have policies on the purchase and placement of memorial benches, but as at Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park custodians have discovered, on occasion people are unwilling to accept that a particularly popular site might only reasonably accommodate a certain number of benches, leading to their unauthorised placement. It is clearly important to place 'their' people in 'their' spot.

[4] City of Edinburgh Council was forced to explain that while it had in the past been 'maintaining benches in perpetuity', on financial grounds it had introduced a scheme involving 'a 20-year maintenance warranty' and appropriate costs for people wishing to purchase memorial benches in future.

Similarly, existing benches might have additional plaques added, something which can offend and annoy the original donors.

Figure 8. Bench positioned on hillside above Loch Lomond. Photograph Marion Bowman.

One particularly creative example of placement relates to a bench sited just below the crest of a hill popular with walkers which commands a splendid view of Loch Lomond (figure 8). The sheer effort, ingenuity, logistics and determination in positioning that bench so that it is unobtrusive from the angle from which most people approach the hill command admiration. (It is possible to be on the hill but be unaware of the bench.) There is a name but no dates or other information on the bench plaque, but it is assumed by those who have spotted it to be commemorative.

While in Britain 'sitting on dead people' (as my Polish correspondent put it) has become commonplace, at one site in the Scottish town of Dumbarton I have noted material change in the use and appearance of some benches. Below Dumbarton Castle (also known as Dumbarton Rock), there is an area of open grounds popular with many Dumbartonians, rendering the presence of memorial benches there unsurprising. However, the placement of flowers on a bench (figure 9), and indeed the transformation through the attachment of vases in relation to a couple of the benches there (e.g. figure

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

10) appear to signal visually a shift from seat to shrine which is unlikely to encourage people to sit there. The commemorative aspect has overtaken the functionality of the bench, revealing it unequivocally as a deathscape.

Figure 9 and 10. Memorial bench with temporary flowers, Dumbarton, and memorial bench beneath Dumbarton Castle, with vases and flowers. Photographs by Marion Bowman.

Conclusion

By concentrating trees and benches here, I wished to explore the interaction of people and material culture, people expressing and commemorating lives through material culture, and people's creation, shaping and possibly hijacking of object biography in their performances of love and loss.

Remembering loved ones at special or beloved places obviously is not new. Indeed, for decades the widower of my cousin who died in her 20s went to Loch Lomond once a month and scattered a bunch of red roses on the water in her memory, at a place which held happy memories. People still leave 'anonymous' flowers at the lochside or scatter them on the water.

I have focused on more public, often more materially lingering modes of commemoration, highlighting some examples of the creative, tangible ways in which contemporary practices and worldviews are expressed and enacted as part of a broader 'trend to more personal forms of memorial and associated ritual' (Maddrell 2009: 690). What such performances allow is the opportunity for people to do something *tangible* in

© 2021 Journal for the Study of Religious Experience

ISSN: 2057-2301

the 'private/ public – public/ private' act of remembrance, away from formal deathscapes such as the crematorium or the cemetery, situating loved ones in a beloved or special place. Erika Brady talks of the 'Beau Geste' in relation to 'personalized symbolic gestures in the form of burial inclusions, specifically composed graveside rituals, and other similar actions.' (Brady 1988: 26). However, precisely because they are perceived as meaningful and personal actions, perhaps unsurprisingly their impact on others, the object and the site itself are not always considered. One National Park ranger (while empathising with people's desire to commemorate) characterised some acts, such as inappropriate positioning of benches in sites of natural beauty, attaching objects to trees whether potentially damaging metal plaques or bunches of flowers in plastic wrappings that become pollutants, as 'Guerrilla' acts of commemoration (personal communication).[5]

Maddrell (2009: 690) comments that 'Negotiating absence–presence is increasingly recognised as part of the experience of bereavement that creates liminal emotional, intellectual and spiritual spaces, where boundaries shift and are breached.' Trees and benches in special places can become significant objects (or, in Latour's phraseology, actants) in such liminal spaces, aiding the production of contact and comfort, participating in the negotiation of absence-presence. Maddrell further argues that '[c]ontemporary examples of individualised micro-memorials . . . likewise suggest that expressions of absence–presence might offer insight to the blurry middle ground of belief– unbelief in the contemporary UK' (Maddrell 2009:690).

In studying 'how people build and maintain the cultural domains that are the shape of their social lives' (Morgan 2017: 15) through the medium of material culture, we learn to look for and appreciate the raw emotion, creativity and pragmatism of those finding ways to come to terms with death, to 'place' the irreplaceably lost, to celebrate and commemorate love and loss. The tendency, as Santino puts it, 'to commemorate a deceased individual in front of an undifferentiated public' (2011: 6) - that is not simply among fellow mourners, those familiar with the deceased, or in places associated with the dead – can lead to unexpected encounters. People looking up at the Cashel Forest on the hillside above Loch Lomond or seeing in the distance the fringe of trees at one edge of the glebeland at Luss cannot know what stories, emotions, memories, biographies, metaphysical relocations and creativity are embodied in those trees. People wandering onto the beach at Duck Bay or elsewhere at Loch Lomond are suddenly confronted by other people's grief and commemorative installations, an uneasy conjunction of beauty spot and deathscape. Visitors to the open ground at the foot of Dumbarton Castle might encounter a bench that is clearly not simply a place to sit.

[5] Similar issues are raised in relation to mountainside memorials (cf Maddrell 2010).

Through familiar and mundane objects, people project, express and capture relationality and connectivity, love and loss, within and beyond this world. In such objects, actions and encounters, the ordinary can indeed become the extraordinary.

I arrived at the subject of this research note for Peggy Morgan's festschrift by considering the personal qualities I have come to know and appreciate over the past thirty years: Peggy's creative talents, her aesthetic preferences, her love of nature and walking, her compassion and her instincts and ability to *do* something tangible – often quietly and unobtrusively, but nevertheless effectively. As we celebrate and explore the ordinary in this volume, we do so in honour of an extraordinary person.

References

Bowman, M. 2017. From production to performance: Candles, creativity and connectivity. In T. Hutchings and J. McKenzie, eds. *Materiality and the Study of Religion: The Stuff of the Sacred*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 35-52.

Bowman, M. 2020. 'Rehabilitating' Pilgrimage in Scotland: Heritage, Protestant Pilgrimage and Caledonian Caminos. *Reframing Pilgrimage in Northern Europe*, Special Issue, M. Bowman, D. Johanssen and A. Ohrvik, eds. *NUMEN* 67: 453-482.

Bowman, M. with J. Jenkins. 2020. Leaving and Taking Away: Cathedrals and Material Culture. In D. Dyas and J. Jenkins, eds. *Pilgrimage and England's Cathedrals: Past, Present, and Future*. London: Palgrave MacMillan, pp. 215-233.

Brady, E. 1988. The Beau Geste: Shaping Private Rituals of Grief. In A. Jabbour and J. Hardin, eds. *Folklife Annual 1987.* Washington, D.C.: American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, pp. 24-33.

Clark, J. and A. Cheshire. 2004. RIP by the roadside: A comparative study of roadside memorials in New South Wales, Australia, and Texas, United States. *Omega: The Journal of Death and Dying* 48(3): 203–222.

Churchill, A. and R. Tay. 2008. An Assessment of Roadside Memorial Policy and Road Safety. *Canadian Journal of Transportation* 2(1): 1–12.

Council probe after workers burn memorial benches in Edinburgh 2020, January 18. BBC News website. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-51160417 (accessed 23 September 2020)

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

Klaassens, M., P. D. Groote, and F.M. Vanclay. 2013. Expressions of private mourning in public space: The evolving structure of spontaneous and permanent roadside memorials in the Netherlands. *Death Studies* 37(2): 145–171.

Klaassens, M., P. D. Groote, and P. P. P. Huigen. 2009. Roadside memorials from a geographical perspective. *Mortality*, 14(2): 187–201.

Kubicki, Carol. Memorial Bench Stories blog https://memorialbenchstories.wordpress.com/about/ (Accessed 16 August 2020).

MacConville, U. 2010. Roadside memorials: making grief visible. *Bereavement Care*, *29*(3): 34-36.

Maddrell, A. 2009. A place for grief and belief: the Witness Cairn, Isle of Whithorn, Galloway, Scotland. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10(6): 675-693.

Maddrell, A. 2010. Memory, mourning and landscape in the Scottish mountains: Discourses of wilderness, gender and entitlement in online debates on mountainside memorials. In E. Anderson, A. Maddrell, K. McLoughlin, & E. Vincent, eds. *Memory, mourning and landscape.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 124–145.

Maddrell, A. 2009. 'A place for grief and belief: the Witness Cairn, Isle of Whithorn, Galloway, Scotland,' *Social & Cultural Geography*, 10:6, 675-693.

Maddrell, A. 2016. Mapping grief. A conceptual framework for understanding the spatial dimensions of bereavement, mourning and remembrance. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 17(2): 166-188.

Maddrell, A., & Sidaway, J., eds. 2010. *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance.* Farnham: Ashgate.

Margry, J. P., & Sanchez-Carretero C. 2011. Rethinking memorialization. The concept of grassroots memorials. In J. P. Margry and C. Sanchez-Carretero, eds. *Grassroots memorials. The politics of memorializing traumatic death* Oxford: Berghahn, pp. 1–48.

Morgan, D. 2017. Material analysis and the study of religion. In T.Hutchings and J. McKenzie, eds. *Materiality and the Study of Religion: The Stuff of the Sacred.* London and New York: Routledge, pp. 14-32.

Open Benches, https://openbenches.org/ (Accessed 20 August 2020).

Peachey, K. 2020, January 26. Memorial benches: A quiet reminder of people gone, but not forgotten. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-50646467 (Accessed 16 August 2020).

Santino, J. 2011. Performative Commemoratives: Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death. In J.Santino, ed. *Spontaneous Shrines and the Public Memorialization of Death.* London: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 5-15.

Stahl, I. and B. L. Jackson. 2019. Sudden death memorials in Bucharest: Distribution in time and space. *Yearbook of Balkan and Baltic Studies* 2: 37–56.