

## Part VI

# Unbounded



## 14 Death everywhere

### Dissolving commemorative boundaries in a liquid world

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Erika Doss (2010) has written that Americans live in an age of “memorial mania,” so one might find the post-WWII interest in “living memorials” a quaint, fleeting memory of a past age. Yet in the U.S. the generation after the world war hoped cities, towns, and nations would build auditoria, plant trees, name highways, fund scholarships – pretty much anything rather than erect another doughboy, obelisk, or figurative statue (Shanken 2002). When the most prominent postwar military monument, the Marine Corps War Memorial, was raised near Arlington National Cemetery in 1954, many chastised it as out-of-step with the times, even calling it “bad art” (Marling and Wetenhall 1995: 195).

This rebuke was tied to the emergence of the modernist movements in architecture and art, but it also reflected a solidification of society’s vision of dying, death, and commemoration. The dying were to be kept safely hidden from view in the hospital and the dead were shuttled quickly to the funeral home and cemetery; commemorative activities were restrained. As famed etiquette writer Amy Vanderbilt wrote in 1952, families should discuss “practical issues like wills, bank accounts, and any medical formalities” rather than the more emotionally charged ones; the “emotional mood after a death should be as light as possible” (Stearns 2007: 98). The dead should be remembered, but lives should go on as quickly as possible.

The contrast to the present is stark. A growing movement is bringing the dying back home and into homelike hospices. Emotional memorial services staged at places outside funeral homes are competing with formulaic funerals held at faith-based institutions. Many Americans are mourning along roadsides and on sidewalks. They are honoring the dead inside their homes, around their neighborhoods, and even on their bodies. Social commentators have noted the rise of “dark tourism” sites, including cemeteries and everyday memorials (Stone 2006). The shift suggests a profound reversal of previous social values, and highlights why dark tourism is more acceptable to the present generation than previous ones.

This transformation is propelled by three trends in American life and death. First, while the vast majority of deaths occur in old age (almost 70% of all deaths in 2010), “trauma [is now] the leading cause of death in individuals 46 and younger” (Rhee et al. 2014). So, even as the majority of deaths result from expected natural causes, rising rates of suicide, drug overdoses, and continuing high rates of homicide mean that traumatic deaths are a constant reality in American communities.

These traumas do not affect all communities equally. African American and Latino neighborhoods are much more likely to be the sites of roadside shrines and R.I.P. (Rest In Peace) murals (Figure 14.1), simply because their rates of traumatic deaths are higher (and their cultures reinforce public mourning more than some white cultures). However, whether for the tragic mass shootings or the child kidnappings, suicides and homicides, everyday memorials have been embraced by a wide spectrum of American society as an appropriate way to respond to a sudden death.<sup>1</sup>

Second, in 1960 less than 5% of Americans were cremated. Most people were buried or entombed in cemeteries after religious services. By 2015, a larger percentage of the dead were cremated (roughly 48%) than were buried (46%). Projections suggest this trend will only escalate; by 2030 over 70% of American dead will be cremated (NFDA 2014). Burial necessitates the use of the institutions of the American way of death (hospital, funeral home, cemetery). After a cremation, survivors only use an institution when they make an affirmative choice.

Third, these changes are symptomatic of the liquidification of modern institutions, as chronicled by sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1992; see also Jacobsen and Kørsl 2014). Bauman argues that modernism medicalized death, necessitating the institutions to oversee the “care” of the dying and death in isolated spaces (similar to those with a contagious disease). In our era, a social rejection of this medicalization and professionalization results in new approaches to death. As a result, Bauman argues, the institutions constructed to serve the dead are shaken, if not dissolving.

Thus, the worlds of the living and the dead are merging. More Americans (and people around the world) are demanding a more natural process of death, more environmentally responsive places of burial, and, my focus here, personalized commemorations as part of their regular lives (Clayden et al. 2015; Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011; Santino 2006). Together, they symbolize, as Tony Walter (1994) has written, the “revival of death” as the dead have repopulated the city.

### **Transition from isolated gray to everyday colorful**

While the victory of the modernist approach to death was most evident in the shunning of the dead from society, the colorless stoneyards and featureless memorial parks embodied it visually. Memorial motifs were standardized and stripped of almost all information besides name and dates of birth and death in burial grounds of gray granite family monuments and invisible flush-to-the ground bronze markers (Sloane 1991). Compared to the nineteenth-century lyrical epitaphs and elaborately ornamented statues, the twentieth-century monuments and markers mimicked suburban subdivision houses, all lined up in a tidy row.

The flush markers were cost-effective and more egalitarian (key selling points for a generation coming out of the Depression), but death was hidden even in the sanctuaries set aside for them. Hubert Eaton, who synthesized this style in Glendale, CA at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, aspired to rid his burial place of



Figure 14.1 R.I.P. mural for Ray Jackson, Buffalo, NY, 2015.

Source: Courtesy of Bradshaw Hovey.

all signs of death, including refusing to plant deciduous trees since their falling leaves might remind visitors of death and substituting “memorial park” for “cemetery” (Sloane 1991).

Today new commemorative approaches embrace a wide range of colors and incorporate an intense personalization and informality. The brilliant whites of ghost bikes (decorated old bicycles painted white and placed at the site of a cyclist’s death), the vibrant reds and blues of the balloons, candles, and mementoes of the roadside shrines, the attention-demanding geometric designs of the R.I.P. wall murals, and the repurposed traditional imagery of memorial body tattoos (inked images that honor a loved one) and vinyl vehicle decals (small memorial stickers placed on truck and car back windows with simple commemorative motifs including the person’s birth and death dates) suggest a powerful change from the dull uniformity of previous generations.

These new approaches draw upon such transitional memorials as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. (inaugurated in 1982) and the AIDS Memorial Quilt (conceived in San Francisco in 1985).<sup>2</sup> I call these “transitional” memorials because they contrasted sharply with earlier monuments, coming to represent separate but interwoven changes in form, content, and mode of commemoration that have influenced memorial design ever since (Sturken 2007). Together, they innovatively undermined key elements of the modernist paradigm, creating space (hence their transitional nature) for a new spectrum of approaches to flourish.

Maya Lin's controversial and revolutionary design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial reinvigorated monumental design, helped launch a new environmental context for memorials, and successfully challenged the masculine (i.e., stalwart, unemotional, upright) nature of past monumental designs (Sturken 1997; Haas 1998). Even though the memorial was situated in the powerful symbolic geometry of the National Mall, it became a safe space where thousands of people could make statements of their own by leaving medals, letters, photographs, and a host of other objects (Haas 1998). By becoming a DIY memorial (Finn 2014), the Vietnam Veterans Memorial allowed survivors of that war, their families, and other Americans to publicly interact in the celebration of those who had died by incorporating private memories into a national memorial.

This national memorial and others that followed it (like many Holocaust memorials) left three legacies that influence the everyday memorials. First, they named names. The ordinary soldiers who had fought the Vietnam War were listed by the date of their death, not by their rank or "importance." The AIDS panels for the men, women, and children who had died of this sudden, devastating disease spoke eloquently about their lives, not just the way they died. The memorials (architecturally permanent in the former, mobile in the latter) demonstrated that even the stigmatized dead could/should be named, memorials could make political statements, and people could openly cry, hug, speak, and emote in public about their loss in ways previous generations resisted.

Second, each memorial contributed to the form of the everyday memorials. Each celebrated American feminine, rather than masculine, artistic traditions in their form and interactive qualities. The horizontal Vietnam Veterans Memorial contrasted sharply with the "look but don't touch" Washington Monument, by providing visitors with a journey through its increasing depth. The Quilt's panels evoked the long tradition of female support networks in America and their contributions to mourning traditions.

Finally, the memorials created the opportunity for survivors to exhibit a new informality and personalization. People began leaving items at the Wall almost as soon as it was open to the public, and quilt makers recognized quickly that they could personalize and accessorize their panels. Mourners on the Mall left heartfelt letters attacking the war's cost along with photographs of families and the soldiers as young men and women. Similarly, panel makers wove in traditional elements of LGBTQ life such as an angel as well as, evocatively, a favorite drag queen's dress. Their actions disrupted previous conceptions of public mourning, opening up the space and form of mourning, setting the stage for the dramatic changes immediately ahead.

Performing mourning slipped into daily life through the red (AIDS), pink (breast cancer), and white (violence) ribbons, cancer quilts, and other DIY emblems. Symptomatic of a broader "everyday urbanism" (Crawford 2008), the new memorials suggested that people felt more comfortable expressing their grief in public, thereby creating spaces for mourning. Symptomatic of this shift was the worldwide fascination with the British response in 1997 to the death of Princess Diana. Instead of the buttoned-down, private, emotionless reaction anticipated

by the media, thousands of people left millions of offerings in their pilgrimage to Kensington Palace (Walter 1999; Monger and Chandler 1998). The notion of a DIY, public commemorative performance of mourning had seemingly suddenly become an international phenomenon, although, as I shall discuss below, the media's interpretation was far too narrow and self-congratulatory.

### **A new spectrum of commemorative responses**

Together, the cumulative aggregation of roadside shrines, ghost bikes, R.I.P. murals, memorial body tattoos, pavement memorials (objects embedded in sidewalks or plazas), and vinyl vehicle decals embodies a new age of commemoration. I observe seven important qualities about them. First, the memorials resituate mourning to the public realm. Second, mourners design, erect, and maintain them. Third, everyday memorials are for everyone, not just the victim in the tragic newspaper story or the celebrity. Fourth, they are informal in design and structure and immediate in response. Fifth, the everyday memorials are personalized. Sixth, whether fixed or embodied, the memorials are ephemeral, typically being made of impermanent materials and placed in precarious locations. Seventh and last, even as sometimes they are new forms that have been adopted globally, everyday memorials retain a strong connection to past traditions. I do not describe each variation in detail. Instead, I integrate them in the discussion that follows and focus on their commonalities and differences. The chart in Figure 14.2 provides basic information on each type while the chapter's illustrations (Figures 14.1, 14.3, 14.4) portray them.

### ***Resituating memorials in the public realm***

The most fundamental shift represented by everyday memorials is spatial. While some cultural traditions and individuals resisted the separation of death from life, maintaining shrines and funeral services at home, the modernists separated the dying and the dead from the healthy living. Today's resituating of commemoration from the cemetery to the roadways, sidewalks, human body, and automobiles/trucks reconnects the spatial geographies of life and death in a more holistic, less fragmented fabric that gives mourning a new legitimacy. For instance, out one night with a friend near Boston, MA, we suddenly came upon people surrounding a ghost bike. The ghost bike radiated light even at night given its bright white paint. A front basket held cards, photographs, and mementoes, while a few deflated balloons hung from the frame. A large white ribbon had been tied to the basket, and some artificial flowers were strapped to the handlebars. It was a cold winter night, but few people passed without stopping for a moment, caught up in this surprising reminder of life and death.

This memorial's site was an example of "everyday urbanism" (Crawford 2008). Everyday urbanism calls out the "lived experiences" as more important than the "physical form" of the city and argues for the need to rethink the place and importance of routine, quotidian activities; activities that are too often

Type/Focus	Location	Description	History
<b>Shrines</b> (Individual)	Roadside, sidewalks, yards	Vary from simple to elaborate displays incorporating flowers, candles, photographs, mementoes; political message of safe streets	Very old, renewal recent, pervasive nationally
<b>Ghost bikes</b> (Individual)	Roadside, sidewalks	White bicycle; often decorated with flowers, notes, photographs, mementoes; political message of safe streets	St.Louis 2003, expansion worldwide
<b>R.I.P Murals</b> (Individual + Collective)	Walls, building grates	Painted murals of mostly young people killed traumatically; motifs include roses, lilies; angels, and portraits; political messages anti-police oppression + end violence	1980s, northeast corridor urban centers
<b>Memorial Tattoos</b> (Individual)	Arms, legs, backs	Inked representations; often including portraits and flowers, angels, other religious imagery	Old practice, rapid recent expansion
<b>Memorial Vinyl Decals</b> (Individual)	Car, truck back windows,	White vinyl cut into simple, traditional images accompanied by text giving name, dates of birth and death. Motifs include angels, lilies, cross and other religious symbols, soldier, fire, police imagery, informal (i.e., Harley motorcycle)	Mostly 21st century, national

Figure 14.2 Typology of everyday memorials.

viewed as “in-between spaces,” but are in reality zones of “social transition and [possibly] . . . zones of imagination” (ibid: 6). These acts reveal “a fabric of space and time defined by a complex realm of social practices – a conjuncture of accident, desire, and habit” (ibid: 6). The ghost bike was sited in an in-between space (the sidewalk) that actually is a critical transitional place for conversation and connection, where complex social relations are enacted on a daily cycle.

Perhaps the most radical resituating of memorials occurs with memorial body tattoos and car/truck vinyl decals since they are mobile memorials. The relatively scant research on these memorials is mostly on the tattoos, and scholars focus more on the use of the body and the iconography (Govenar 1981). Yet, their mobility should not be undervalued. Carrying around your grief and displaying it wherever one goes is a powerful statement of public mourning. The movement is especially forceful given that neither the body nor motor vehicles are traditional locations for memorialization.



Figure 14.3 Compilation of everyday memorial types: top left: vinyl decal; top right: pavement memorial; bottom left: roadside shrine; bottom right: ghost bike.

Source: Photos: David Charles Sloane, except the pavement memorial, courtesy of Jacqueline Illum, 2016.

### *Mourners in control*

The key element of the everyday memorials is that they are in the public realm. They are not institutional, nor does an institutional structure them or restrict them. Instead, the mourners are in control. In keeping with the desire by a growing number of survivors to control the process of dying and death, as exemplified by natural death and burial (Clayden et al. 2015), everyday memorials allow mourners to express their grief in ways they wish. These methods may be a traditional process or it could be an alternative. Even the everyday memorials vary from the relatively conservative vinyl decal designs to the exuberant celebrations of life in the R.I.P. murals. Mourners may create everyday memorials as a complement to conventional church and cemetery services, or they can decide to use the everyday memorial as their primary site of mourning, a decision Holly Everett (2002) reported regarding roadside crosses in Texas. As she also pointed out, friends might take one approach while the family is more comfortable with something more conventional.

### *For everyone*

The widespread acceptance and utilization of everyday memorials reverses the early spin much of the media put on the phenomenon, especially roadside shrines.

Articles spoke of “media friends” (celebrities) whom regular folks were desperate to interact with emotionally (Hollander 2010). The media was viewed as the reason for these “friendships.” As the practice continued beyond Princess Diana to Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Michael Jackson, Prince, and beyond, this type of mourning was typecast as simply another artificial element of a frenzied media culture (Joshua Meyrowitz quoted in Gross 1999: WK3).

As usual, the media was being narcissistic. The phenomenon of everyday memorials is older and reaches beyond any cult media star. For instance, famed photographer Robert Frank shot a lonely cross along a western highway as early as 1956.<sup>3</sup> As historian Kenneth Foote (1997: 170) reminds us, some “particularly dangerous stretches [of western state highways] came to resemble small cemeteries, with rows of crosses marking dozens of fatalities.” Drawing on the long history of saint shrines in Europe and *descanos* and other secular shrines in Mexico and other Catholic colonies, these everyday memorials had nothing to do with stardom, and everything to do with memories and warnings.

The R.I.P. murals exemplify the dual characteristic of everyday memorials. One can find murals for Eric Garner and Michael Brown, prominent examples of police killings, but murals are also put up for “Ricky,” a young man in Baltimore, and “Jessica,” a young woman honored in New York. For their pioneering book on R.I.P. murals, Cooper and Sciorra photographed a stunning 1993 memorial by Hector “Nicer” Nazario, Bio, Brim, and B-GEE 183 for Jessica Martinez, killed by a bullet intended for her boyfriend. A single red rose with white highlights around its top bursts off the wall. Set on the wall of an auto shop, the flower and the tall, dramatic “Jessica” could not fail to capture a passer-by’s eye (Cooper and Sciorra 1994: 19). The form is used for celebrities because it is a form of the people, as much as the other way around.

### ***Informality and immediacy***

Similarly, newspapers and other media have made everyday memorials an element of their coverage. What the *Los Angeles Times* calls “makeshift memorials” has become their standard illustration for a story related to a traumatic death. Whether the elaborate shrine for Prince in Minneapolis or any number of everyday memorials for high school students killed in motor vehicle crashes, the newspaper has found them an accessible symbol of tragedy and mourning. When *The New York Times* reported on the hit-and-run death of a bicycle advocate, they included not only a small photograph showing a photograph of him surrounded by candles from his shrine, but also a full-size shot of the ghost bike with a friend kneeling prostrate at the back wheel in grief (Jula 2016).

The immediacy of the response is a key element of the everyday memorials pervasive adoption. The day after Alton Sterling was tragically killed in 2016 by Baton Rouge police officers, protestors gathered in front of an R.I.P. mural of him painted on the front of the convenience store where he sold CDs and where he was killed (Hennessy-Fiske 2016). A shrine with balloons, photographs, flowers, candles, and mementoes was erected on a table in the parking lot in front of

the mural. His portrait and the shrine provided mourners and protestors a place to gather, to express sadness and anger. They did not, could not, would not wait for the funeral and burial to publicly express their grief.

### *Personalization*

The cultural constructs around place and informality are reinforced by the fifth characteristic, everyday memorials' personalization. Modern cemeteries require standardization, obedience to the strict rules about what memorials should look like and how graves should be cared for (Sloane 2005). Moving the memorials out of the institutional landscape opens up opportunities for localized, personalized designs, including toys, beer cans, and favorite clothing items (such as sports t-shirts). For instance, a small shrine near the California poppy reserve in Lancaster, CA, outside Los Angeles, had a teddy bear surrounded by a small sign, a cross, and flower bouquets memorializing Jessica who was killed in January 2003. The touching emotional personality that illuminates the girl's life prods the passer-by to stop and notice how death has penetrated the daily lives of those who loved this young girl.

Culture scholar Marita Sturken (2007: 6–7) has noted how the teddy bear especially has become representative of America's "comfort culture and consumerism." The teddy bear's history stretches back to Theodore Roosevelt, but only when it was used extensively to comfort people with AIDS did it become a "particular" cultural icon. Since the 1980s, thousands of bears have been distributed after the bombings in Oklahoma and the September 11 strikes in New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Formerly just a child's toy, the bear "doesn't promise to make things better; it promises to make us feel better about the way things are" (Sturken 2007: 7). For me, the bear and all the other objects of personalization represent an effort to reject standardizing mourning, asking instead to integrate it into ordinary life by embodying it in objects and performative acts that are quotidian elements of our routines.

A roadside memorial in Northern California for Kris, a young boy kidnapped and killed, demonstrates the range of items used to personalize their grief. His family appropriated a space along a busy dusty road and the back of a small billboard for their shrine. Along the road, they placed a painted blue cross with blue artificial flowers draped over it; a child's fish toy, blue teddy bear, wind chimes, and a plaster angel hanging from the sides of the cross; and various Halloween items (the holiday had just occurred) such as a candy dish, themed balloons, and orange, blue, and white candles surrounding it. Photographs of the boy were pasted to the back of the cross.

Nearby, the back of the billboard was covered with messages from the family, expressing their love, anger, and loss. The notes reflected the ambiguous positioning of mourning. While many messages left at everyday memorials reflect conventions around mourning, such as, "We will miss you," "love always" with a heart, "Never Forgotten," or "Rest in Peace," not all adhere to old formulas. Kris' memorial is near the bridge under which his body was found. On the back

of the old, almost dilapidated billboard, the family scribbled notes in large writing to him. He obviously loved to fish, and, among others, his uncle wrote, "May the Fish always 'Bite.'" Yes, they included more traditional phrases, such as "you will always be in our hearts," but also "from one frog lover [to] the next."

Not all the everyday memorials incorporate this level of personalization. The vinyl decals especially come primarily in traditional motifs. They honor the mother, father, the grandparents, or a child by using standard symbols, like an angel, lily, or cross. Alternatively, they show the weapons of a soldier, the badge of a fireman. In some cases, the motifs are more informal, such as a Harley Davidson. Around these motifs they spell out the name of the deceased, often adding at least a birth date. They seem in many ways more conservative than the other types of everyday memorials. Yet, as I noted above, their placement on the back window of a car or truck is a radical shift from the privatization of memory and commemoration in the twentieth century.

### *Ephemerality*

I have not been back to see if the memorial in Northern California is still there, but I doubt it, given the perilous nature of its location along a regional highway with a great deal of truck traffic. The temporariness of the new memorials is, thus, a critical aspect of their emergence. The shrines, ghost bikes, and R.I.P. murals especially are immediate, urgent, non-institutional responses to a death, and they are often transitory. For instance, one morning in 2006 I drove by a large memorial shrine to a young man named Deion at the front of a small commercial shop in South Los Angeles. Mourners had set up a shrine in the street with candles, flowers, a photograph, and a couple of liquor bottles, and spray-painted "WE WILL MISS YOU FOREVER AND EVER" with a heart across the store (Figure 14.4). A few hours later, all evidence of the memorial was gone.

Still, many of these everyday memorials are not as ephemeral as one might expect. I live in a mixed neighborhood with many Latinos and Asians. Several Latino houses have saint shrines, mostly to the Virgin Mary. So, when my dog and I came across a small shrine in the parkway (the space between a sidewalk and a street) with a cross embedded into a carved-out space in a tree, fronted with flowers and mementoes laid out much like a grave, I was not surprised. However, parkway memorials are vulnerable to people stepping on them, cars jumping curbs, and vandalism. Yet this child's shrine has never been disturbed over the last four years. The family maintains it, putting new flowers and mementoes out on major holidays and the child's birthday. Will it last beyond their stay in the apartment building that stands near the tree? Probably not, but clearly that day is not coming soon.

The ephemerality varies depending on the form of the everyday memorials. Roadside shrines and ghost bikes are quite vulnerable, while R.I.P. murals, memorial tattoos, and vinyl decals are part of a private space that allows them potentially longer existence. Even these, though, can be endangered – trucks and buildings get sold – while some seeming ephemeral forms, such as roadside shrines, such as the



Figure 14.4 Ephemeral everyday memorial, Deion, Los Angeles, 2006.

Source: Photo: David Charles Sloane.

one described below in Buenos Aires, can be institutionalized, allowing them to become sites of dark tourism (Stone 2006).

### *Connections to the past*

Finally, even as they are innovative approaches to public mourning, everyday memorials retain a strong connection to past cross-cultural mourning traditions. Traditional images, such as angels and roses, are popular, just as they were on late nineteenth-century cemetery memorials. Angels are particularly common. Obviously popular in cemeteries, the image adapts well to the murals, decals, and tattoos; and, as we saw with Kris' roadside shrine, they can be included there as well. The iconography in the memorial tattoos sometimes mimics famous angel sculptures; others are more informal. One tattoo portrays a naked pixie from the side, her hair cascading gently over her tearful face. She holds dogtags in her hand and a pair of combat boots sits at her feet. The tattoo combines the older sense of the tattoo as a cultural perversion with a traditional figure to create an accessible image of love and memory.<sup>4</sup>

### **Conclusions**

While I have provided only examples from the United States, the phenomenon of everyday memorials is global. In many ways, the American examples draw

upon the heritage of older European and colonial practices, while sometimes they establish new forms that have been adopted worldwide – popular culture generating a new heritage practice (Robinson and Silverman 2015). The resituating reflects both the renewed publicness of everyday urbanism and the speed of cultural shifts in a networked world.

The rapid acceptance of ghost bikes is perhaps the best example of the worldwide nature of the change. Within a few years after the first ghost bike was placed along a roadway in St. Louis, Missouri in 2003, they could be found in twenty-eight countries in Europe, South America, and Asia.<sup>5</sup> The adoption reflects the easy way the white bike can stand by itself as a powerful symbol that translates across cultures, yet represents everywhere a space of mourning. As a worldwide recognized icon within the cyclist community, it can also signify a political space as survivors use the ghost bike to advocate for safer streets and against lax enforcement of traffic laws that contribute to cyclists' deaths.

Similarly, R.I.P. murals, which remain largely restricted to Latino and African American neighborhoods in selected large American cities, allude to the political murals of Belfast and Derry in Northern Ireland and other spots around the world. Indeed, the muralists' techniques seem directly related to the global street art movement. Cooper and Sciorra (1994) detail how many of the muralists started in subway graffiti and other forms of street art. They simply adapted their street art techniques to the urgent need for families and communities to memorialize their dead. The colors and forms of such murals mirror street art projects that could be found anywhere from Spain to Argentina, England to Africa as street artists learn from each other through the web.

The bikes and murals are only two examples of the dynamic global nature of everyday memorials. Margry and Sanchez-Carretero (2011) provide examples from Italy, Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland, Venezuela, and other places around the world. Santino (2006) brought together essays that demonstrate the use of photographs and other elements of everyday memorials as protests of past state executions and devastating terrorist acts.

The global embrace is exemplified by an extensive memorial I visited to a 2004 nightclub fire in Buenos Aires that took 194 lives, mostly teens and young adults (McCleary 2012). The main shrine is a shed titled "El Santuario De Nuestros Angeles Del Rock 30-12-04 Nunca Mas Cromañón." In it are dozens and dozens of smaller shrines to the individuals killed in the fire. The shrine is physically layered: first sneakers are hung along a rope, then there are religious/ethnic symbols, followed by photographs hung on a line; finally, under the roof, there are detailed shrines to the individuals. The combination of sorrow and anger – driven even further by findings that past political corruption meant the club was not prepared for a fire – are palpable. One stands dazed.

As we stood there, three young women walked by, drawn as we were by the memorial photographs on the walls, the sneakers and shoes hanging from a rope, and the other daily items of our lives. They stopped and looked, took photographs (not selfies), then moved on to their next tourist site. Their visit to the shrine was a dark tourism, specifically having targeted it as a stop on their itinerary, punctuating that day's activities.

Everyday memorials have become a vital part of mourning and commemoration in our era. They represent the desire for immediate action, the gradual turn away from reliance on institutions to guide death rituals, and a return to an urbanism of the streets after a period of mallification and gated communities. They are not by themselves permanent enough or organized enough to support the collective memory of a society, but they do represent an urgent need by a wide variety of people in a remarkably diverse range of settings to “speak out” publicly about death and the need to articulate their anger and sorrow at the loss of those they love. They are not a national heritage of death, as with Ground Zero, or an international heritage of death, as with Holocaust memorials. Rather, they are a new vernacular performance and heritage of death, creating new landscapes of memory and emotion.

## Notes

- 1 Various scholars have proposed different names for the variations discussed here: early on, wayside or roadside shrines (Monger and Chandler 1998); among the news media, “makeshift memorials”; and more recently, “grassroots memorials” (Margry and Sanchez-Carretero 2011). I don’t find any term satisfying, so I offer everyday memorials as reflective of their ordinariness and quotidian nature as part of everyday urbanism.
- 2 In 1985, San Francisco gay activist Cleve Jones attended a rally where protestors hung signs from the federal building demanding federal action around AIDS (Sturken 1997). Jones noted the signs looked like a quilt. The resulting NAMES Project organized the AIDS Memorial Quilt, which produced joyous, tragic artifacts that summarized specific lives and evoked LGBTQ culture, the politics of marginalization, and advocacy against the tyranny of science and medicine.
- 3 For Frank’s photograph, see “Crosses on scene of highway accident – U.S. 91, Idaho, 1956,” [www.squarecylinder.com/2009/07/robert-frank-sfmoma](http://www.squarecylinder.com/2009/07/robert-frank-sfmoma) (accessed 8 November 2014).
- 4 For an image of the tattoo, see <https://101tattoos.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/southerner4ever1.jpg> (accessed 8 July 2016).
- 5 For a summary of the ghost bike movement, see <http://ghostbikes.org>.

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