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“We are Asking People not to Leave Marmalade Sandwiches”: The Contested Heritage of Public Mourning

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ABSTRACT

At 6:30 pm on 8th September 2022, the death of Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom was publicly announced. Within two hours, spontaneous shrines had been created across the country, with members of the public laying commemorative deposits at sites associated with the Queen, such as Buckingham Palace and Sandringham Estate. Most of the deposits were flowers, but many mourners chose to leave different types of objects, often in connection with (public perceptions of) the Queen's likes, from handbags and pictures of corgis to Paddington Bear toys and marmalade sandwiches. Over the next few weeks, debates emerged around 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' deposits - the flowers could stay, but not the marmalade sandwiches - and around which spaces were accessible to the mourning public. The public response to Queen Elizabeth II's passing reveals much about the contested heritage of mourning. Alongside examples of spontaneous shrines created in the aftermath of tragic events, the death of celebrities and the demise of fictional characters, this case will be used as a springboard into the broader questions of who has the right to dictate how the public mourns and who has the right to be publicly mourned.

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“A wise bear always keeps a marmalade sandwich in his hat in case of emergency.”

These words were spoken by Paddington Brown, the bear immortalized by writer Michael Bond in the 1958 children's book *A Bear Called Paddington*. Sixty-four years later, this well-known assertion was repeated by Paddington Brown in animated form, as he sat having tea with Queen Elizabeth II of the United Kingdom. In a television comedy sketch created in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022, Paddington offers Elizabeth II a marmalade sandwich from his hat. The Queen responds by revealing a similar sandwich in her handbag: “I keep mine in here. For later.” The scene, which originally aired as part of the BBC's *Party At The Palace*, was only two and a half minutes long, but had a significant impact – watched over nineteen million times on *YouTube*, it also won the 2023 Memorable Moment TV Bafta award. That the popular image of the British monarch was subsequently intertwined with the talking bear and

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Figure 1. The area for the Green Park floral tributes is full, has been closed, and people are being redirected by park staff to a different area (Photograph by author).

his beloved marmalade sandwiches would be demonstrated only three months later, when on 8 September 2022, the death of Elizabeth II was publicly announced.

Within two hours of the announcement, unofficial memorials had been created across the country, with members of the public laying commemorative deposits at sites associated with the Queen, such as Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, and Sandringham Estate. Memorials spread to Hyde Park and Green Park in London, where the Royal Parks charity began managing them; when one site became full, a new site would be introduced (Figure 1). Tributes also began appearing outside British Embassies across the world. Most of the deposits were flowers with some handwritten notes, cards, and flags. However, many people chose to leave different types of objects, often in connection with (public perceptions of) the Queen's likes: black handbags (Figure 2) and hand-drawn pictures of corgis (Figure 3) (Pyman and Devereux-Evans 2022). However, most of the personalized deposits alluded to Elizabeth II's television sketch with Paddington Bear: predominantly Paddington toys and marmalade sandwiches. Over the next few weeks, debates emerged around "appropriate" and "inappropriate" deposits – the flowers were welcomed, the Paddington toys tolerated, but it was a firm "no" to the marmalade sandwiches.

The public response to Queen Elizabeth II's passing, and how this response was managed, reveals much about conflicting views over how a public figure should be mourned and how this mourning should manifest itself in the landscape. Which actions, objects, and spaces are deemed appropriate for responding to the death of a prominent figure? What happens to those considered inappropriate? Is there a hierarchy of appropriateness, of permissibility? And who has the authority to decide? Alongside examples of unofficial memorials created in the aftermath of tragic events, the death of

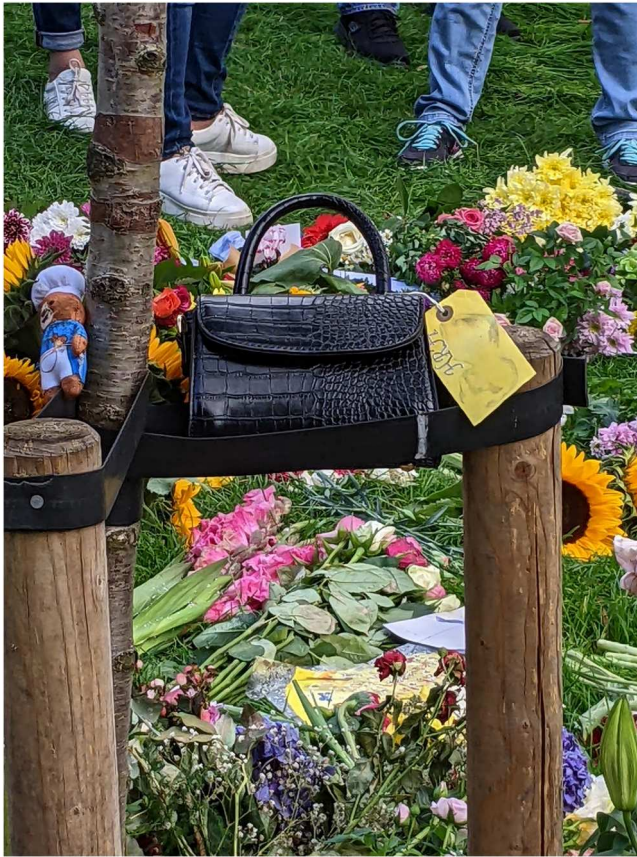


Figure 2. A black handbag with a luggage tag labeled “HRH” is perched on a tree amidst floral tributes and a McDonald’s toy Paddington Bear (Photograph by author).

celebrities, and the fictional demise of fictional characters, the case of the Queen’s passing will be used as a springboard into the broader questions of the contested heritage of public mourning.

The Fabric of Temporary Memorials

The creation of unofficial or “temporary memorials” (Doss 2010) – variously and contentiously referred to as “grassroot memorials”, “makeshift memorials”, or “spontaneous shrines” (Grider 2001; Santino 2004) – is a common response to contemporary mourning. The creation of such shrines has long been a significant step in what Sylvia Grider identifies as the “grieving ritual”, giving “people a sense of purpose, making them feel less helpless and powerless ... an act as sacred and comforting as lighting a candle at a church altar” (2001, 2). Unofficial memorials can be devoted to individuals following a sudden, tragic, and often public death. A prominent example is the roadside memorial, created at the site of a fatal car accident (Clark and Franzmann 2006, 508; Dickinson and Hoffmann 2010, 154; Frisby 2019, 84; Klaasens, Groote, and Huigen 2009, 108; Milošević 2018, 56). In other cases, the individual mourned by an unofficial shrine is a public



Figure 3. A hand-drawn picture of a corgi, hanging in a plastic wallet from a tree close to the floral tributes (Photograph by author).

figure, such as a politician, actor, musician – or a monarch (Graves-Brown and Orange 2017; Orange and Graves-Brown 2019; Wojcik 2008). The shrines tend to be set up by admirers or supporters of the individual, at sites significant to their lives, their works, or their deaths.

The creation of these unofficial, temporary memorials evidence what are referred to in Psychology as parasocial relationships, formed when people feel emotionally close to somebody they do not actually know. This person could be a public figure, and the person who has formed the parasocial relationship grieves when the public figure dies. Cohen observes that “the end of parasocial relationships is a painful experience, which elicits symptoms similar to those that follow the loss of a friend” (2003, 200). Analyzing reactions to Michael Jackson’s death on social media, Sanderson and Cheong (2010) term this “parasocial loss”, a loss that is grieved through engagement in traditional mourning activities. Two such activities are creating an unofficial shrine consisting of parasocial memorial deposits, and traveling and contributing to an established one, sometimes a significant distance away.

When Diana, Princess of Wales, was fatally injured in a car crash in Paris in 1997, masses of floral tributes were left by the public at Diana’s former residence of Kensington Palace,

at St James's Palace where her body was taken, and the site of the crash in Alma Bridge tunnel – despite the impracticalities, as Kear and Steinberg, writing on the performance of mourning Diana, note: “the tunnel of an arterial road could not become a sacred grove or house a mausoleum” (Kear and Steinberg 1999, 4; Noveck 2022). So many flowers were left in commemoration of Diana that the Guinness World Records titled it the “largest floral tribute” on record, estimating that 10,000–15,000 tonnes of flowers were laid out in London alone. Some of the notes accompanying the flowers were explicitly political, critical of the press and the Royal Family, with one note left outside Kensington Palace addressed to the Queen with the words: “Why did you treat Diana so badly? You should be ashamed” (Monger and Chandler 1998, 107). Other deposits signified similar sentiments.

As Jack Santino observes, writing of the boundedness of commemoration and social activism in response to “Bloody Sunday” in Northern Ireland:

If a death is thought to have been needless – or worse, politically motivated – mourning may well take on the trappings of public protest. Along with the official rituals of church and state, we often see ... a kind of “grassroots memorialization,” in which individuals are mourned as a form of social action. (2011, 97)

Much has been written about the politics of the Diana tributes, with Susanne Greenhalgh (1999) referring to the phenomenon as the “floral revolution”, such spontaneous shrines having much “potential for political appropriation” (1999, 43). It is reported that the sheer volume of flowers pressured the royal family into bending protocol and publicly expressing (some) grief at Diana’s death, meeting mourners and allowing the flag at Buckingham Palace to fly at half-mast. This was widely covered by the media at the time, with *The Washington Post* summarizing,

The British royal family has been pushed this week into a basic reexamination of its role in a rapidly changing society, as Queen Elizabeth II surrendered to enormous public pressure over the way she and the family have handled Princess Diana’s death. (Robinson 1997)

The seas of flowers were the most visual, potent form of this “public pressure”.

It is ironic that Queen Elizabeth II would be mourned in the manner that pressured a reexamination of her role twenty-five years earlier. But it is also evidence of how public mourning changed in the intervening quarter century. Not only is it now accepted that mass tributes of flowers be made following the death of a public figure; it is expected. Indeed, public mourning following the monarch’s death was encouraged, as it has been historically. For Queen Elizabeth II, the United Kingdom observed a national mourning period of ten days. The public were invited to pay their respects at the Queen’s coffin in Edinburgh and London, and the state funeral was designated a public holiday. Public events were canceled or incorporated a minute’s silence, television programming was interrupted, and church bells rung countrywide. Contributing a memorial offering was one legitimate way for individuals to participate in this public mourning.

Such public mourning was so expected that the decision to *not* mourn the Queen was a political statement, a “form of social action” (Santino 2011, 97). “It is a peculiar sensation to live in a nation plunged into mourning when you cannot comprehend the feelings of loss,” noted Kehinde Andrews, Professor of Black Studies at Birmingham City University, in an opinion article entitled “I Don’t Mourn the Queen” (2022). To Andrews, “the Queen is

the number one symbol of white supremacy”. Many felt the same. Uju Anya, a linguistics professor at Carnegie Mellon University, described the late Queen as the monarch of a “thieving raping genocidal empire” on social media, while South African political party the Economic Freedom Fighters, released a statement explaining “We do not mourn the death of Elizabeth, because to us her death is a reminder of a very tragic period in this country and Africa’s history” (Dutton 2022). In fact, several tributes to the Queen were vandalized. One, in Glasgow, had an image of the Queen removed and the contents of a Pot Noodle thrown over it (Duffy 2022; Williamson 2022). In a park in Leicestershire, memorial trees and a plaque were destroyed (“Council Condemns Vandalism of Memorial to Queen Elizabeth II” 2022). Whether or not these were intended as “forms of social action”, they were certainly interpreted as demonstrating a lack of respect toward the late monarch. A defaced mural of the Queen provides a more overt political statement. Within 24 h of the tribute mural being painted in Taunton, it was spray-painted over with the words “pay inheritance tax” (Rogers and McPolin 2022).

It was inevitable that the memorialization of Queen Elizabeth II, the monarch of a colonial power, would be entangled in politics. However, many people did show their support for the monarchy – or at least for a 96-year-old woman (consciously or unconsciously) conceptually detached from the contentions of institution, nation, and empire. An



Figure 4. A McDonald's toy Paddington Bear lying amidst floral tributes (Photograph by author).

estimated 250,000 people waited in line (the “Queue”) to see her coffin as she lay in state at Westminster Hall, and more than 29 million people in the UK watched the televised funeral. For those who wished to participate in public mourning, another acceptable way was through leaving memorial offerings. This was an expected, even encouraged, part of the established repertoire of public mourning. However, even this reveals conflicting views.

While flowers are by far the most common deposit at such memorials, other types of objects are also contributed. These often include items and imagery connected to the deceased, a nod to their experiences, tastes, and favorite pastimes. For Elizabeth II, these included black handbags, an iconic accessory of the Queen, and hand-drawn pictures of corgis, alluding to her favored pets. However, most of the personalized deposits referenced the Queen’s television sketch with Paddington Bear. Amongst the tributes were reproductions of artist Eleanor Tomlinson’s 2022 drawing of Elizabeth II walking hand-in-hand with Paddington, which became a viral meme following the monarch’s death (Hall and Burrell 2022). These printed reproductions of the touching scene featured such captions as “Thank you” and “Goodbye sweet lady”, but also messages demonstrating Paddington’s apparent metamorphosis into a psychopomp figure: “Paddington will guide you home” and “I’ve done my duties Paddington, please take me to my husband” (referring to Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh, who had passed away in 2021).

There was also a significant amount of Paddington Bear toys amidst the flowers and notes (Figure 4). No doubt a product of strategic marketing, the month after Elizabeth II shared tea with the bear, Paddington toys in ten different outfits – from chef to astronaut – became the gift included in McDonald’s Happy Meals across the UK and Ireland (Loveday 2022). Many of these small stuffed bears found themselves repurposed as memorial tributes for the monarch. Also amongst them were teabags and many marmalade sandwiches, accompanied by notes alluding directly to the *Party At The Palace* sketch: “For later xxx”, “Save this for later, Thank you for everything ma’am xxx”. Other messages referred to the journey the Queen was embarking on: “A Marmalade Sandwich for Your Heavenly Travels! Thank you Ma’am”, “A MARMALADE SANDWICH FOR YOUR JOURNAY MA’AM”, “For your journey to your beloved Phillip xxx”.

Personalized offerings are a common feature of spontaneous shrines. The Oregon shrine of long-distance runner Steve Prefontaine features running shoes, medals, and energy bars (Wojcik 2008), while Marvel writer and producer Stan Lee’s shrines contained comic books, and singer Amy Winehouse was remembered with cigarette packets. The people who lost their lives at the Hillsborough football stadium disaster of 1989 were commemorated with football scarves. Objects left for Princess Diana included crowns, a ballerina’s shoe, the accompanying note explaining “You were Cinderella at the ball and now you are a Sleeping Beauty” (“Princess Diana” 1997), and queen of hearts playing cards in reference to her status as “queen of people’s hearts” (Monger and Chandler 1998, 104).

Such mourning practices are also frequently adopted for fictional characters, with whom people have slightly different – but no less powerful – parasocial relationships. When an actor dies, it is not unusual for fans to create shrines in places and with objects associated with a character they played. Following the death of Alan Rickman, cast as Professor Snape in the *Harry Potter* films, fans and mourners deposited notes addressed to Snape at “Platform 9 3/4” in London’s Kings Cross train station, some

simply bearing the character's most heart-breaking line: "Always". When Robbie Coltrane, who played Hagrid in the same franchise, passed away in 2022, fans of *Harry Potter* held a wand tribute outside "Hogwarts" at Universal Orlando Resort, many holding up pink umbrellas – which Hagrid used in lieu of a wand. Following the death of Chadwick Boseman, Black Panther in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, children paid tribute to him with action figures of the superhero. While most recently, in November 2023, when actor Matthew Perry passed away, many written tributes adapted quotes from his *Friends* character Chandler Bing: "Could saying goodbye be any harder?"

In other cases, it is the fictional death of a character who inspires the creation of shrines. Following the 2009 death of character Ianto Jones from BBC science-fiction television series *Torchwood*, an assemblage of flowers, notes, and photographs formed at a site close to the fictional *Torchwood* headquarters in Mermaid Quay, Cardiff (Beattie 2014). While the sand dunes on Freshwater West beach in Pembrokeshire host a mound of painted pebbles, shells, broomsticks, and socks, in memory of the house-elf Dobby, whose death was filmed there for the 2010 movie adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (Houlbrook 2023).

Returning to Elizabeth II, why did Paddington, and by extension his signature sandwich, come to dominate the monarch's commemorative landscape? Paddington, like the Queen, is a British icon. He has been part of British culture since the 1950s, when he entered popular imagination as an immigrant, stylized as a war evacuee, seeking safe haven in London (Smith 2006). Exploring the significance of "a mere bear becoming the fetish object of people's grief", Balani, James, and Valluvan (2023) theorize that "Paddington evokes the image of a soft Commonwealth monarchy; one that the public might prefer to mourn". The bear also individualizes the Queen, emphasizing the accessible, even playful persona of the monarch presented in the Paddington television sketch – as no doubt was the design of Royal Communications, the branch responsible for Palace media relations. It is unlikely, however, that Royal Communications anticipated that this PR strategy would result in a fictional Peruvian bear becoming the "fetish object of people's grief" following the death of the monarch.

The Response to Unofficial Memorials

Beyond the placing of memorial offerings, most depositors claim or accept no obligation for maintaining these shrines. Responsibility for maintenance therefore falls to the landowners or site managers. These, then, are the individuals or collectives who have both the authority and liability of deciding how to manage the memorials. Forced to juggle the (often conflicting) views and expectations of various stakeholders, site managers can rarely please everybody. In his work on contested spontaneous shrines on the skiing mountains of Aspen, regularly removed by landowners, Cody Musselman asks who has "the right to shrine." "The independent shrine building and removal." Musselman notes, "provide a glimpse into the conflicting attitudes about who makes the rules" (2019, 335). Legally, landowners do not *have* to respect the public's "right to shrine." But whether they do or not, and to what extent, often depends on where, with what, and for whom they create these shrines.

Despite psychologists asserting that parasocial loss can be a painful experience, not unlike the loss of a friend, there is often a sense that the grief felt by the mourners is

not “legitimate” (Cohen 2003, 200; DeGroot and Leith 2018). Writing of “disenfranchised grief”, whereby a person “experiences a sense of loss but does not have a socially recognized right, role, or capacity to grieve”, Doka notes this can be following the death of an ex-spouse, a pet, or a celebrity (1989, 3). This disenfranchised grief is evident in how spontaneous shrines and parasocial memorial deposits are perceived. Many are often not given the same level of respect and protection as commemorative objects left by friends and relatives of the deceased.

There is certainly a hierarchy of grieved figures. Spontaneous shrines that form for fictional characters – such as Ianto Jones and Dobby – tend to be viewed as cultural curiosities. If they are left unremoved, it is often because they are generally inoffensive rather than because landowners and site managers respect the sentiments behind them and sympathize with the depositors. At the other end of the scale are the memorials created for the real people who have died tragically, such as in terror attacks, where much respect is shown to the offerings and much consideration given to the treatment of them – even if the depositor/mourner did not know the deceased.

There is also a hierarchy of objects, with flowers considered the most appropriate. Even when they come in such numbers as to carpet vast stretches of public space, as they did with Queen Elizabeth II and Princess Diana, flowers are often tolerated. Their permissibility no doubt stems from the flower’s long history as a token of mourning, forming, as Greenhalgh writes, “the most traditional and conventional feature of funerals and death commemoration in Western culture” (1999, 42). Shrines of flowers may also be tolerated



Figure 5. People assemble around a new area for floral tributes in Hyde Park (Photograph by author).



Figure 6. Bins placed close to the floral tributes, filled with bouquet wrappers (Photograph by author).

because of their transient nature (Figure 5). Flowers are organic and compostable and, as such, rarely offend, the negative environmental impacts of the cut flower industry not being on many people's radar (Lan et al. 2022). Much effort was taken by authorities – in this case, the charity Royal Parks – at the Queen's shrines in London to encourage (enforce) the removal of paper and cellophane bouquet wrappers. Large bins were set up close to the shrines, and members of the Royal Parks staff were stationed to ensure that all non-compostable material was disposed of before the flowers were deposited (Figure 6). Members of the public also helped with the removal of packaging, working their way through the bouquets that had already been deposited (King 2022; Lett 2022).

The intention, stated throughout the grieving period of the late Queen, was that all flower tributes would eventually be composted and used in the Royal Parks, a form of ritualized disposal first introduced following the death of Diana (Stengs 2014, 236–237). This commitment to sustainability was evident countrywide. The November 2022 village newsletter for Lower Halstow, Kent, outlines a process that proved popular in other communities across the country:

Many villagers left flowers and cards by the Jubilee Oak tree in memory of our late Queen who passed away in September. The flowers and cards are being collected and will be composted. Once decomposed the compost will be returned to the Oak tree as a mulch next year. (2022, 14)

An environmentally-conscious aesthetic was cultivated at many of the Queen's spontaneous shrines – one that any other type of offering did not fit with.



Figure 7. One of many signs placed in Hyde Park, directing people to the new area for floral tributes (Photograph by author).

The Royal Parks staff set up signs across Hyde Park and Green Park directing people to the explicitly designated “Floral Tributes”, the spontaneous shrines quickly becoming official, if impermanent, memorials. The signs also featured an appeal: “You are kindly requested not to leave tributes, candles or artefacts at this location ... Any tributes left here will be regularly removed” (Figure 7). Newspapers reported on how “People leaving tributes to the late Queen Elizabeth II have been asked not to leave Paddington Bear soft toys [and] marmalade sandwiches”, reporting on a statement issued by the Royal Parks, which stated: “We are asking people not to leave marmalade sandwiches [often wrapped in clingfilm] because of the negative impact on the park’s wildlife” (Burack 2022; Thomas 2022). Environmental responsibility is often cited as the reason for concern over other memorial deposits.

During the 2010s, Freshwater West beach in Pembrokeshire, UK, became a contested site when fans of *Harry Potter* began leaving painted pebbles, socks, and other tributes for the fictional character Dobby the house-elf. In the 2010 movie adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Dobby’s death scene and burial were filmed on this beach, making it a place of pilgrimage for fans. In 2022, the National Trust, who manage Freshwater West commissioned a report from Planning Solutions Consulting Limited to consider the sustainable future of the beach. In the report, one of the key core questions

was, “Should Dobby’s grave be removed?” (2022, 13). Although the benefits of the shrine bringing increased tourism to the area is recognized in the report, a number of environmental concerns are raised. Increased tourism means increased disturbance of the sand-dunes, while the deposition of socks and painted pebbles is potentially damaging to the dunes and local marine life (Planning Solutions Consulting Limited 2022, 54).

The report on Dobby’s grave raises a number of other concerns, amongst them the “unsightly” nature of the tributes, akin to littering. Memorial offerings at other sites have likewise been labeled “litter”, removed because they are esthetically offensive. Fans of singer/writer Jim Morrison frequently deposit bottles of whiskey and bags of marijuana at his grave in Père Lachaise Cemetery, Paris. These are removed by cemetery workers, who take them away “as litter” at least once a week, perceiving them as damaging to the cultural heritage of the site (Margry 2008, 170n). While spontaneous shrines set up in public spaces are often subject to complaints, deemed eyesores, especially if they are established in “upmarket” areas, with local communities putting pressure on authorities to remove them. This was the case with musicians Freddie Mercury and George Michael, whose former neighbors in upper-class areas of London took umbrage to the spontaneous shrines forming outside the celebrities’ homes following their deaths (Orange and Graves-Brown 2019). Complaints also arise over roadside memorials, constructed following motoring accidents, particularly in the US, where some states have the policy that roadside shrines should be removed if they are considered “eyesores” (Dickinson and Hoffmann 2010, 162). However, it is not always the nature of the objects in shrines that are perceived as eyesores, but the “unsightly” state they reach after time subject to weather and pollutants.

Esthetics could likewise have been behind the designation of marmalade sandwiches as inappropriate memorial offerings for the Queen. Food and its associated packaging left in the landscape can easily be interpreted as litter, especially for those unaware of the cultural connection between the Queen, Paddington Brown, and his favorite snack. The Royal Parks staff were likely aware of this connection, but their concern – conscious or not – may have been over public perceptions. Unsurprisingly, the Queen’s death garnered widespread, international media coverage. The memorials became visual symbols of a nation in mourning, as they did with Princess Diana, newspaper, television, and now social media coverage of tragic events tending to formulaically focus on the memorial offerings as snapshots of public mourning (Doss 2010, 76). So, footage of the Queen’s temporary memorials was being viewed on a global scale. For a time, the world’s gaze was focused on these spaces in the British landscape. The authorities will have been conscious of this, and perhaps eager to curate a sense of a nation united (and uniform) in mourning. The official vocabulary of flowers neatly arranged, divested of plastic packaging, would make this statement more effectively if uninterrupted by obscure and “unsightly” food items, easily interpreted as “out of place” and therefore “litter”.

Another distinction between flowers and marmalade sandwiches is cultural. It was quoted above that flowers are “the most traditional and conventional feature of funerals and death commemoration in *Western* culture” (Greenhalgh 1999, 42, italics added). However, in many cultures, food plays a significant role in memorialization. Buddhist households contain altars with tablets and photographs of deceased relatives, in front of which fruit, rice, sweets, and other food is often placed. In Mexico, the favorite dishes of the deceased are prepared for by their families on Día de los Muertos,

forming part of the ofrenda (offering altar). In rural Serbia, crockery and cutlery are often permanent features at graves, placed there by mourners for the food and drink offered to the deceased on particular saints' days. Marmalade sandwiches, therefore, are only "out of place" as memorial offerings in a Western European context.

Marmalade sandwiches, alongside McDonald's Happy Meal cuddly toys, could also be seen as kitsch, cheap, undignified, and therefore unbecoming of the monarch. This is, of course, a matter of perception. As suggested above, the Queen and Paddington televised sketch was a deliberate Palace PR curation of an accessible monarch – hence the popularity of these memorial offerings. And teddy bears have long featured as comforting "commodities of grief", to use Marita Sturken's term (2007, 6) – but from a Happy Meal? In a photograph of teddy bears propped up against a wall at Windsor Castle amidst a blanket of flowers, five of the seven bears are from a Happy Meal (Bradshaw 2022). Perhaps they were popular offerings because they were cheap/free and more readily available – Doss has pointed out that most memorial offerings are inexpensive and easily accessed (2010, 70) – while still retaining their status as comforting commodities of grief. Happy Meal trinkets were similarly left at a shrine created for Michael and Alexander Smith, two young brothers drowned by their mother in a South Carolina lake (Doss 2010, 65). McDonald's toys can easily speak to an individual child's tastes, while also symbolizing childhood innocence and the tragedy of its loss. The connection is less obvious for an elderly monarch, but the McDonald's Paddingtons do evoke the playful association between the Queen and the beloved furry British icon.

On 15 October 2022, Buckingham Palace announced "The Paddington Project", declaring that over 1000 of the Paddingtons and teddy bears left for the Queen would be donated to Barnardo's, the UK's largest children's charity. The teddy bears were all professionally cleaned, and the new Queen Consort was photographed amongst them for social media before they were delivered to the charity (Royal 2022). A video was also released on The Royal Family Youtube channel of the Paddingtons, bearing luggage tags printed with the words "This special teddy bear was left at a Royal Park or Residence in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II", being placed in vintage picnic hampers and dispatched across London by members of the Royal Guard (The Royal Family Channel, *YouTube*, 2022). It is telling that none of the Paddingtons featured in either the photograph or the video are the ones sourced from McDonald's Happy Meals – despite the prevalence of these small soft toys left as memorial offerings.

There may also be political or sensitivity issues around the growth of spontaneous shrines. In some cases of roadside memorials, for instance, many complaints stem from the sense that the sacred (often in the form of Christian crosses) is intruding on public, secular space (Dickinson and Hoffmann 2010, 156; Doss 2006, 303). In Ormeau, Queensland, New Zealand, a nineteen-year-old boy's roadside memorial was removed and a note left in its place, which read: "The community of Ormeau have endured this memorial site for one year and two months and we feel that is by far long enough" (Clark and Franzmann 2006, 588). While in 2000, the state became involved when a roadside memorial made of crosses in Colorado, USA, was removed by a local resident and the family of the deceased complained. The resident who had removed the shrine hired an attorney from the "Freedom from Religion Foundation", who successfully moved for dismissal in court by calling into question the legality of the memorial in the first place, which endorsed religion on public land (Doss 2006, 303).

Eleven days after the death of Elizabeth II, Grace Dean, a reporter for BBC News, took to Twitter (X) to share photographs of the Holocaust Memorial Garden in Hyde Park covered in flowers and pictures of the Queen. She wrote, “The Holocaust Memorial Garden in Hyde Park has now become a makeshift Queen Memorial Garden”. Reposted nearly 7000 times, responses to this post were virulent. “This is disgusting”; “Utterly disrespectful”; “Absolutely repulsive”; “England is really doing its damndest to be the most embarrassing anglo-phone country”; “this is defilement of Holocaust Remembrance”; “If people ran out of space to dump flowers they should have chucked them in a bin rather than do this weird takeover of a monument”. The mainstream media was equally vitriolic. The *London Economist* dubbed this a “mourning faux-pas”, quoting Daniel Sugarman, Director of Public Affairs for The Board of Deputies of British Jews: “This is completely inappropriate, there is no doubt in my mind that the King [Charles III] ... would be absolutely horrified to hear about this” (Head 2022). Royal Parks were quick to respond, replying to Dean’s post the same morning: “The team are carefully removing the tributes from the Holocaust Memorial and laying them with the others in the official floral tribute area”. They also stationed a steward at the Holocaust Memorial to prevent people from leaving more offerings to the Queen (Tom 2022).

The irony here is that in many places across the UK, war memorials were formally designated sites for laying tributes for the Queen, much like this “takeover of a monument”, as specified on council websites. Durham Council, for example, listed Cossett War Memorial as one of the places floral tributes could be left, while Whitby Town Council stated “The War Memorial at Dock End is allocated as a place for residents and visitors to lay flowers during the period of mourning” (BBC 2022; Whitby Town Council 2022). In Wiltshire, “There is an allocated place to leave floral tributes at the Corsham War Memorial”, and in West Yorkshire, “For those wishing to pay their respects by laying flowers, you can place floral tributes in Wakefield at: Castleford War Memorial, Ossett War Memorial, Pontefract War Memorial and Wakefield Cathedral” (Hepworth Wakefield 2022). Granted, this is not always viewed as acceptable. There was, for example, some controversy over the placement of tributes to Princess Diana at war memorials (Monger and Chandler 1998, 104). However, it was clearly viewed as appropriate for the Queen.

For a lot of communities, war memorials are, to use Andrew Shanken’s term, “calendrically activated” at certain times, such as Remembrance Day, but for the majority of the year, they are dormant, even “emotionally slack” spaces (Shanken 2022, online). They have been described by Quentin Stevens as “spatially, experientially, and semantically vague spaces, which suggest liberty of interpretation and use” (2013, 230). Many World War I memorials were repurposed as World War II memorials, for example, while victims of the 9/11 terror attack were memorialized at various war memorials around the world (12 On Your Side 2024; Australiam War Memorial 2021). War memorials have become default and fluid sites for public and ceremonial remembrance, subject to adaptive reuse, even if just temporarily (Gilman-Forlini 2018).

Given the malleability of many other memorials in the British landscape, why then were the flowers and tributes left for the Queen at the Holocaust Memorial considered a “mourning faux-pas” and quickly removed? Perhaps because the Holocaust Memorial is not vague in who it commemorates. It is stated clearly, in large letters, on the memorial. It is, to use another of Stevens’s terms, a memorial that is already “semantically full” (2013, 232). Perhaps, also, it is the unambiguously horrific events still painfully remembered by

communities around the world – it is a memorial of trauma (Doss 2010, 133–135) – that make the Holocaust Memorial particularly inappropriate for tributes to the Queen. “You don’t replace the memories of millions who died the most painful and horrific deaths in the Holocaust with [one] hereditary monarch”, one person wrote on social media, with another stating, “co-opting my people’s suffering isn’t a good look”. For similar reasons, in the US, Brown University erected a sign telling people not to climb on its Slavery Memorial, despite it being permissible on other nearby public structures (Shanken 2022, online). Some memories are simply too dark.

Another reason given by those who took to social media to protest tributes to the Queen being left on the Holocaust Memorial was the highly controversial and uncomfortable history of the Windsor family’s associations with Hitler and the Nazis. “This would be deeply disrespectful even if it *wasn’t* for the matriarch of a bunch of Nazi sympathizing aristocrats”; “Considering her family were Nazis and Nazi sympathisers this is abhorrent”; “Considering her family history, this is *incredibly* offensive”. There is clearly a scale of permissibility when it comes to the temporary repurposing of memorials, but this one is largely regulated by the public rather than by the site managers.

In the above instance, it was the repurposing of a memorial meant for an entirely different group of people, in entirely different circumstances, that was viewed as inappropriate. In other cases, it is simple proximity to a different memorial. The National Trust report on Dobby’s shrine notes, “A further concern about the “Grave” is that it is sited near to two genuine memorials to people who lost their lives, and there is a question of whether this is appropriate and sensitive” (Planning Solutions Consulting Limited 2022, 53). The insinuation here is that Dobby’s shrine is not “genuine”, and that expressions of grief toward a fictional character are not appropriate or sensitive in view of “genuine memorials”. This attitude is very much in keeping with Doka’s assertion that the “concept of disenfranchised grief recognizes that societies have sets of norms – in effect, ‘grieving rules’ – that attempt to specify who, when, where, how long, and *for whom* people should grieve” (1989, 4, italics inserted).

This debate raises questions about heritage and ownership, returning to Musselman’s question of “the right to shrine” (2019). It is the landowners and site managers who have the legal right and responsibility to decide which memorials are “genuine” and which are not “appropriate and sensitive”, but do they have the *moral* right? And how do they make these decisions? In the case of the Queen, there was no doubt that the public were allowed – in a sense, were expected, even obliged – to leave memorial offerings. But the narrative around “appropriate” places and “appropriate” objects raises the questions of who has the right to dictate what is *inappropriate*, and why they designate certain memorial offerings “litter”, deeming them undesirable intrusions into a public space in need of removal and disposal. This is not how many parasocial mourners view their offerings. To the depositors, these items hold emotional value. But value is subjective and as Houlbrook writes, “A disorderly accumulation of rubbish to one person may be a sacred assemblage of ritual deposits to another, such is the plurality of meaning” (2023, 58).

The Heritage of Unofficial Memorials

Three days after Queen Elizabeth’s death, a social media video of British news presenter Daniel Wootton went viral when he appeared to be removing a memorial bouquet from

outside Buckingham Palace. Although it was quickly revealed to be an edited video of Wootton actually depositing the flowers, played in reverse, the public reaction to the prospect of someone stealing a memorial offering was striking. Online responses to the video include such comments as: “He didn’t even try to hide it. Very shady”; “Disgraceful. Has he no shame!?”; “shocking!”; “this is disgraceful. I hope he’ll be sacked.” Although note that many of those who recognized the video had been reversed were critical of Wootton publicizing his tribute. The propagandic uses of public mourning is a topic worthy of further investigation, but beyond the scope of this paper.

Returning to the vandalism of tributes, when a group of youths were witnessed damaging a floral memorial for the Queen in a park in Teesside, reactions ranged from shock to disgust. A news article describes the youths, aged 10–14, as “yobs”, and local residents are quoted as saying “I’m almost lost for words seeing this. The level of disrespect is beyond me. What kind of upbringing must you have to do this?” and “It’s absolutely disgusting behaviour ... These children should be punished”. Another “furious” resident states, “The flowers were there for a reason, not for a bit of fun” (Kirby 2022).

Why were these reactions so strong, when flowers are impermanent and local authorities were already planning their removal? Because these memorial offerings, as Irene Stengs would argue, are “sacred waste”. Through the ritual act of depositing them at a memorial, these objects – whether they are flowers, cuddly toys, or black handbags – are charged with emotional or ceremonial value and have become sacralized. As Stengs notes, “placed at a memorial site an object becomes incorporated in the memorial and shares in its set-apart, ‘sacred’ status” (2014, 236). This is why the thought of someone stealing or destroying the flowers is so repellent to many people. However, these offerings are ultimately impermanent features of the landscape; the residue of a period of mourning that will end. The flowers will decompose if they are not removed by local authorities first, along with the more durable offerings. They are therefore ambiguous items, “sacred” and “waste” simultaneously (Stengs 2014, 235). Consequently, their treatment requires careful consideration. They will be removed, but the questions of *when* and *how* are of considerable importance.

The flowers laid out for Queen Elizabeth, although removed for composting, were not simply tossed into compost bins. Their removal, following the period of public mourning, was given ceremony, with two Shire horses, who had appeared at the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, pulling them away in an open-top cart, accompanied by formal attendants (The Royal Parks 2022). While this level of ceremony is usually reserved for monarchy, we can see similar levels of consideration taken by site managers and local authorities in the handling of other memorials. Clearly, although memorials are contested spaces, politically and spiritually, increasing heritage “value” has been placed on this “sacred waste”.

In some cases where memorials are removed, efforts have been made to return the offerings to their depositors. When major repair works were planned for a 50-km stretch of road in Victoria, Australia, the state transport authority issued the following statement regarding the shrines set up following motoring accidents: “We are keen to talk with families who placed these memorials, to make arrangements for their storage, protection or relocation in accordance with family wishes” (Doss 2006, 303). Noting that “Removing unofficial markers is a sensitive issue”, Ross details how likewise in Florida, road maintenance crews remove memorials but store them while attempting to contact family members, inviting them to retrieve the material (1998, 53). In fact, of

the US states that remove memorials, 76% attempt to return the items to the family (Dickinson and Hoffmann 2010, 161).

In other cases, commemorative offerings find themselves archived. In 1999, when 12 Texas A&M University students were killed by a collapsed bonfire in the US, anthropologists and archaeologists at the university adapted the methodology of salvage archaeology and implemented the Bonfire Memorabilia Collection Project. Volunteers from throughout the community made systematic photographic records of the shrine, divided the area into numbered lots, collected and labeled each item, and placed them in boxes for storage (Grider 2001). Four Bibles deposited at the shrine were heavily damaged by inclement weather, and so were taken to the university's Archaeological Preservation and Research Laboratory, where they were carefully conserved. C. Wayne Smith and Sylvia Grider, anthropologists who worked on the project, explain the importance of such preservation: "In the future, these mementos will accurately reflect a collective expression of grief and desperation that cannot be expressed in words alone" (2001, 316).

The same year saw another tragedy in the US, in the Columbine High School shooting. The Colorado Historical Society led over a hundred volunteers in gathering up the items deposited at the memorial. In the "Columbine Memorial Recovery Strategy Meeting" memo, members of the Society were advised that "We will save everything. Everything will be collected and removed from the site. Later decisions will be made as to how the mementoes will be handled. There will be no dumpsters. We need to be sensitive" (Cited in Doss 2008, 16–17). Flowers were either composted or converted to potpourri for the victims' families, while non-organic items were archived into collections maintained by the Society and the Littleton Historical Museum.

Public institutions were called upon to collect and preserve the unofficial memorials blanketing New York City following the events of September 11, 2001. \$5 million of federal funding was issued to the Smithsonian "to collect and preserve items of historic significance" directly related to 9/11, which included many memorial offerings (Doss 2008, 17). And in October 2001, a meeting entitled "The Role of the History Museum in a Time of Crisis" was held at the Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), attended by representatives from over thirty institutions. With the recognition that museums "had an important place in the process of civic healing" (Gardner and Henry 2002, 49), a steering committee was convened, and an agreement made to avoid competitive collecting amongst the various institutions.

Such collection projects posed many challenges and raised many questions. Some were practical. Whose jurisdiction did these unofficial memorials fall under? Who has the right or responsibility to assume the role of "memory entrepreneurs" in this context, to use Milošević's term (2018, 57)? How should such memorial offerings be organized, recorded, stored, and displayed? When only some materials can be preserved, what takes priority? It is often acknowledged that, pragmatically, not all deposits can be retained, especially the organic items. Photographic documentation is recommended as the best solution to this, with Grider advising that photographs should be taken of memorials before they are dismantled and periodically to record changes (2001, 6). As recounted by Schwartz et al. (2018), a team of collections and exhibitions professionals from Orange County Regional History Center, when they were tasked with the removal of the memorial offerings for the 2016 Pulse Nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida, 11 days

after the shooting, all deposits were photographed to form an online memorial, akin to one created in Paris following the 2015 attacks (Collins et al. 2020), but only some were salvaged. These were selected based on “their unique nature, apparent significance, condition, and vulnerability to the elements” (2018, 107–108).

When staff and students from the University of Manchester worked with Manchester Art Gallery to gather the masses of memorial offerings following the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack, the initial plan had been to collect only some. However, as museologist Kostas Arvanitis explains, “Very quickly ... it became clear that the group did not have any strong selection criteria to distinguish the objects that should be kept and sent for conservation from those to be disposed of” (2019, 512). In the end, it was decided that everything would be kept, to capture the scale of the shrine (2019, 519). Some of the deposits were creatively re-purposed. An estimated 2000 soft toys were cleaned and then donated to charities; some of the candles were recrafted into new candles to be used in a church mass and then offered to relatives of the deceased; potted plants were replanted around the city; and flowers were used for compost to plant “Trees for Hope” (Arvanitis 2019, 519; 527n). Similar actions have been taken with the offerings left for Queen Elizabeth II, such as the Paddingtons and teddy bears donated to Barnardo’s. Local archives accessioned many other memorial offerings into their collections for posterity and potential future exhibition.

However, collecting and archiving such offerings can be restrictively expensive. Digitization is a far cheaper, more inclusive alternative to preservation. One good example of this is the Urban Art Mapping George Floyd & Anti-racist Street Art database at the University of St Thomas, which has archived over 500 digital images and continues to crowdsource (Urban Art Mapping, n.d.). While in 2018, a £99,700 grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund contributed to the documentation and digitization of more than 10,000 Manchester Arena memorial offerings (Manchester Together Archive n.d.). At the time of writing this paper, about half have been cataloged on Manchester Museum’s collection management system, Emu (personal communication with Kostas Arvanitis, University of Manchester). Similar digitization projects are underway with memorials for Elizabeth II. North Hertfordshire Museum, for example, collected and digitized objects ranging from written cards to drawings of corgis and Paddington Brown, which were deposited throughout Hertfordshire, such as in Hitchin Market Place (For example, North Hertfordshire Museum 2023: 2023.211.2; 2023.211.34; 2023.211.36; 2023.211.51; 2023.211.17). Other local archives, such as Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum, have accessioned similar collections, and are due to digitize them. What will become of the thousands of deposited tribute notes and cards written for the Queen, separated from the flowers and sent to the Royal Family, remain to be seen, and may well be the focus of further research.

Concluding Remarks

The public response to Queen Elizabeth II’s passing reveals much about the material culture of parasocial mourning. It demonstrates how people use a wide variety of objects to express grief and commemoration for a person they probably never met. While the traditional flower bouquet was by far the most popular offering, other items

evidence the prominent role played by popular culture and commercialization in people's selections of deposit, such as the Peruvian bear included in a McDonald's Happy Meal. Social media was also a significant influencer, with countless recreations of Eleanor Tomlinson's drawing of the Queen walking hand-in-hand with Paddington left as offerings. It tells us a lot about contemporary British culture that a TV sketch, a viral meme, and a fast-food chain had the biggest impact on how Queen Elizabeth II was publicly mourned.

As has been demonstrated, there is a hierarchy of permissibility when it comes to commemorative offerings, largely dictated by issues of environmental responsibility and aesthetics. Unwrap your traditional flowers from their cellophane and lay them in neat rows – they'll be composted once the official grieving period has ended. Leave your teddy bears if you must – at least they can go to a children's charity. But *do not leave marmalade sandwiches*. While environmental responsibility must be a priority, the requirement for homogeneity – "Please follow signs to the floral tribute", instructed the signs across London – demonstrates a clear lack of allowance for individual methods of mourning. But it is not only site managers, such as Royal Parks staff, who are the regulators, the gatekeepers of mourning. Public opinion, most prolifically voiced on social media, determines the scale of permissibility over the locations of these memorials. Palaces, townhalls, churches, and parks are appropriate. War memorials acceptable. But the Holocaust Memorial is not to be co-opted. How the public response to the Queen's death was negotiated by the many different stakeholders, therefore, is deeply entrenched in broader contentious issues around conflicting etiquette, rules, and gatekeepers of mourning. In short, it is messy. Just like grief.

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