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Prospectus

For this project, I will be comparing and analyzing three different research objects that portray diverse methods of memorialization. My first Research Object (RO) is a temporary roadside shrine created by the community of Saginaw for 6-year old Alanna Ghalagher who faced a violent murder. This research object represents both typical displacement, as well as a high-maintenance way of upkeep surrounding the memorial. The Second RO being a permanent reading center outside of her elementary school in her honor, represents a middle ground of displacement being near her school, yet clear to onlookers that the structure was not initially planned as part of the elementary school's layout. This second research object also stands for a middle ground in terms of upkeep due to the structure itself being low maintenance, while the flower plot inside creates a need for human tending to keep alive. For my Third RO I will be analyzing the social media of Kaitlyn Kotzman, a young-adult who died in a car crash at 18. With this medium specifically, It represents the Low Commitment ends of the spectrum, being something that anyone can easily access, as well the platform itself not needing any human effort in terms of maintenance. I will be observing how her peers interacted with her media Post-Death. As well as comparing and contrasting the ways in which people grieve through these different mediums.

To guide my research and analysis throughout my paper I will be looking at these research objects in terms of the following questions:

- How do these different mediums of memorials contribute to symbolic expressions of grief through the placement/displacement of the physical site?

- How do these mediums reflect the priorities of those grieving/creating/maintaining the Memorial sites?

- How do the dynamics of grief change when comparing high-commitment memorials, like the street shrine of Alanna Gallagher, with lower-commitment forms such as digital expressions on social media?

Altogether I intend to use these questions to analyze the ways in which we communicate, and physicalize grief through different mediums. By analyzing symbolic expressions of grief through different mediums, I hope to encounter patterns in the ways in which we as individuals, and communities grieve, despite being held within different mediums. With the use of these research objects I hope to shed light on navigate and prioritize grief.

For the remainder of this paper, I will conduct a literature review which I have separated into three categories, "Framework and Fundamental Theories", "Grief In The Age of Digital Remembrance", and "Grieving Through Physical Memorials and Material Culture". After discussing what scholars are writing about in relation to memorials in the fields of memory studies and material studies, I will have a brief overview of my intended methodology of a critical comparative analysis for the rest of my paper.

Literature Review

For this literature review, I will be discussing works that I use as a basis for my theoretical framework such as that of Erll, and Rose. Secondly I will be discussing Grief in the age of virtual Memorials through scholarship. Lastly, I will be discussing scholarship that is centered around

Memorialization through material objects such as temporary memorials such as roadside shines, while still including more permanent memorials such as memorial museums.

Frameworks and Fundamental Theories

The majority of my framework is going to be centered around works of Erll within memory studies, as well as Rose's Visual/Material communication theories within "Visual Methodologies". I am basing most of my work around Errls theory of the three dimensions of memory. The first of these dimensions is the "Material Dimension" which is "Constituted by Mnemonic artifacts, media, and technologies of memory, ranging from symbols and landscapes to architecture and books to film and photography." Secondly the "Social Dimension", which consists of "Mnemonic practices, and the carriers of memory; Commemorative rituals; forms of storage, and recall of cultural knowledge; and the persons and social institutions involved in these processes". Lastly, the "Mental dimension" which "includes all the shared schemata, concepts, and codes which enable and shape collective remembering through symbolic mediation as well as the effects that the activity of the remembering has on the mental dispositions predominant in a community- such as the ideals about time and history, values and norms, self-perceptions and the perception of others." (Erll 103-104). Erll additionally discusses media as carriers of information stating,

> "Just like memory, media do not simply reflect reality, but instead offer constructions of
> the past. Media are not simply neutral carriers of information about the past, what they
> appear to encode- versions of past events and persons, cultural values and norms ,
> concepts of collective identity– They are in fact first creating." (Erll 114)

It is because of theories and works such as this, that I believe taking a look directly into the medium of these memorial sites will create an important point of analysis showing that the medium itself offers these constructions to deeper meaning behind why and how we choose to memorialize.

Grieving in the age of Digital Remembrance

In My research, I have found many scholarly works on grief and the newly found expressions of grief through virtual remembrance and various social media platforms. In Tony Walters "The Pervasive Dead", he discusses the grieving process seen traditionally within works such as that of Robert Hertz who discusses the dead as being "separated". Additionally claiming that the position of the body and spirit was seemingly mirroring the mourners (Hertz). This is an interesting take, but how does this idea shift when talking about memorials that take place away from the body? Walkers proposes a new way of viewing the body/spirit/mourner system that he calls the "Pervasive Dead"(Walters 389). This piece of work denotes the idea that the dead are separate from us and even assumes that the dead are something that we bring into our lives, specifically within social media. He discusses the new phenomena of those online who have died being pictured "not as souls locked up in heaven, but as angels who return to protect the living."(389). This idea goes hand and hand with ideas of Molly Hales in her "Animating relations" in which she "show[s] how the dead are brought to life as characters through constitutive relations organized around the partial, iterative, and fragmented qualities of the digital media that sustain them." Additionally we see the similar notion of "Absent presence" shown in Adrid Mardell's "Living with the deceased: absence, presence and absence-presence." Unlike others, this work is presented through the lens of private grief, as opposed to a lens of

collective or private grief. Similarly in terms of digital remembrance, we see scholars such as Priscilla in "Digital Remains Made Public" focus less on grief, and more on the cultural advances that we could create by utilizing digital platforms of the dead. Stating,

> "The 'born-digital' records of humanity may be considered as public digital mortuary landscapes, representing death, memorialization and commemoration. The potential for the analysis of digital data from these spaces could result in a phenomenon approaching immortality, whereby artificial intelligence is applied to the data of the dead" (Ulguim 153).

This work in particular is very interesting compared to that of similar scholars, because it creates a working plan for those that have passed to be used in terms of research. Next we have Ellen Lapper's "Does Social Media Change The Way we grieve?" In this Text, the author talks not only about what we can do with social media of the now-deceased. She also discusses how with the age of virtual grieving, we find a new issue of learning of someone's passing through said platforms. With this, we can shift the way we combat the grieving process. This also means and reaffirms my thought process that mediums of grief have the power to shift the grieving process. Lastly we have Candi Cann in "Virtual Afterlives: Grieving the dead in the 21st Century" where she discusses multiple different subsections of virtual memorial media such as "memorial websites, and saved voicemails that can be accessed at any time" claiming that "This dramatic cultural shift has made the physical presence of death secondary to the psychological experience of mourning." (Cann).

Most of the scholarship within this category of digital remembrance deals with cultural implications through these mediums, yet doesn't focus on the implications within the self. Although a large part or mourning is dealt within the cultural and collective realm. There is not a

lot of work on the individuality of grief in terms of memorials and memory studies as well as communications studies. This is where I would like to carve and start to make my own assumption apart from other works. Although I would like to talk about collective grief within my analysis, I would also like to have a primary focus on individual grief.

Grieving Through Physical Memorials and Material Culture

Similarly to works surrounded around virtual memorials, many works centered through grieving and material culture deal with larger cultural implications as to that of the individual experience. However, these works of literature are still important to consider within the world of grieving. By looking at the larger picture, we can slowly dissect and break down these theories and works into smaller sections until we are able to magnify the individual experience.

First we have "Death, art and memory in the public sphere: the visual and material culture of grief in contemporary America", in which she discusses collective memorialization by analyzing the Oklahoma City memorial As well as memorials created to commemorate Columbine highschool. She ultimately asks–

"How and why such commemoration is organized—by whom and for whom? What do these practices and rituals—both seemingly spontaneous public practices and those managed by specific institutions—reveal about American attitudes toward death and grief? What do they tell us about who (and what) is deemed memorable in their absence, in US history, and in terms of an imagined national future?" (Doss 63).

Similarly to analyzing memorials centered around wide-scale and popularized tragic events is Sorado's "THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM: The Creation of a 'Living Memorial'." She discusses less topics of American attitudes, and more discussions of

process when creating a large-scale living memorial of a traumatic event, carving ways in which to commemorate and preserve tragedy. Although of course my content will be on a much smaller scale in terms of tragedy, this follows similar ideas that I plan to touch on when dealing with more traumatic young deaths. Bringing it back to the physicality of memorials, Madrell states that "Cemeteries and memorials are sites of identity markers and places of representation, and as such are socially, culturally, economically and politically embedded" (174). With identity also comes theories of identity, memory, and the homeplace as portrayed in works from Ratnam's "Creating Home: Intersections of Memory and Identity".

On the opposing side of permanent memorials, we have temporary memorials such as roadside shrines and makeshift memorials. We see conversations in Durbin's "Expressions of Mass grief and Mourning " where they discuss both the correlation between violent/tragic deaths, as well as a stronger urge to memorialize. As well as Makeshift memorials themselves being an "Expression of sorrow" that can come from of course family members, but also strangers. (Durbin 22). We see additional scholarship through authors such as Robert M. Bednar in works such as "Materializing memory: The Public Lives of Roadside Crash Shrines" as well as "Roadside Media: Roadside Crash Shrines as Platforms for Communicating across Time, Space, and Mortality in the early 2000's". The Author speaks of memorials specifically in the medium of roadside memorials. He claims that roadside memorials are not only a way to speak to the dead, but also "for communicating with other platform users about the dead." (Bednar 1). He additionally argues within "Materializing Memory", that "these shrines transfer the life lost in an automobile crash to the life lived by the memory objects and spaces contained within them" (Bednar 1). Although the memorialization of Kaitlyn is not a physical memorial, we can tie this similarly to the car crash that took her life. Lastly we have Peter Jan Margry, and Cristina

Sänchez-Carretero's "Memorializing Traumatic Death." Which offers the new outlook of public memorials inherently inviting the rebuke of the public. (1).

All together, these works discuss means of memorials and memorial culture apart from the digital age. I think within my work it's very important to distinguish the two as different, but with virtual memorials evolving more and more to become our most accessible source of relieving and maintaining grief. The medium in itself portrays how we view grief, and to what level of effort we are willing to go to to express such grief through levels of commitment to the memorial.

Methodology

For my Methodology I will be using a comparative analysis of my research objects through the lens of both memory studies and visual/material culture. To do this I will be basing a large sum of my argument around Erll's theories of dimensions of memory, I will also be pulling from Erll's theories of collective and individual identity (82-94). Specifically through these lenses I would like to analyze the commitment level of the memorial along with the physical nature of it, trying to tie the individual experience of grief along with the collective grief that allowed the memorial to come to fruition in the first place. I believe that unlike others, this connections the body of the mourner to that of the medium, consequently bringing it back around to that of the dead. I hope that this comparative analysis will add to conversations of both memory studies as well as material studies. My hope is that by looking closer at individual experience as opposed to common scholarship on wide scale tragedy, that I can bring a new light and new thoughts on the connections between grief and the way that they are expressed for the individual. As stated previously, "Just like memory, media do not simply reflect reality, but

instead offer constructions of the past [...] what they appear to encode- versions of past events and persons, cultural values and norms , concepts of collective identity– They are in fact first creating"(Erll). Memory and Identity are not interchangeable, but they do go hand and hand. What we remember is our identity. Therefore, what we remember, who we remember, and how we remember it all weaves it's own narrative in the landscape of individual, cultural, and collective memory.

"I have acted with honesty and integrity in producing this work and am unaware of anyone who has not."- Lauren Wise

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