PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

TO GRIEVE

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> You may be planning departure, as a human soul leaves the world taking almost all its sweetness with it.
>
> Rumi, 'Your Face'

> In taking these notes, I'm trusting myself to the *banality* that is in me.
>
> Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary*

On March 5, 2013, my father, Stephen Daddario, died suddenly of a heart attack. Six days later, my last surviving grandparent, Mary Bartemeier Hurley, succumbed to the travails of dementia and old age after having recently been moved to Seattle by her daughter, my mother. Roughly six weeks later, at the start of April, my friend and colleague, Ivone Barriga, died from the flu, one month shy of the completion of her doctoral dissertation and despite the fact that she appeared to be completely healthy. In August of the same year, my animal companion, Miles the cat, jumped off the couch and suffered what appeared to be a stroke. I had lived with him for roughly thirteen years, in multiple cities and states, including New York City where we both witnessed the attacks of 9/11. By the end of 2013, after personally suffering from major bouts of depression, my wife and I were buoyed by the impending arrival of our first child. 2014, we hoped, would bring new life. My wife, Joanne, went into labor exactly on her due date on June 4, but after 23 hours of contractions and hard work on her part, and with only positive signs marked by our midwife and nurses, our baby boy's heart stopped. Doctors and medical examiners had no explanation for his death. Even with a medical explanation, the fact would remain the same. In a span of fifteen months, both my father and my son had died.

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In the present, a philosophical problem: What does it mean to identify myself as the person for whom that last statement is true and for whom life has been molded by such sorrow? Acknowledging that the work of mourning creates the only path capable of piercing the dense and viscous fog of acedia, what does it mean to grieve rightly? Might there be such a thing as an ethics of grief, a practice of turning my full attention to the specificity of each loss so as to carry such loss in me and to become, in the words of Gilles Deleuze, worthy of what has happened to me (Deleuze 1990, 149)? My father was my best teacher, truly the Ignorant Schoolmaster. Without him, I am more fully pressed into service as the inheritor of his abstruse knowledge. My grandmother was duty and gentility personified. In her wake, I contemplate the different dimensions of servitude and selflessness. From Ivone I learned the true spirit of gregariousness. I feel compelled now to mimic some aspect of her personality and, in whatever way possible, to carry on a part of her scholarship. My cat, no less a friend for being an animal, was witness to multiple stages of my life. Memories of him bring a renewed understanding of the world beyond human language and the peculiar fidelity of two beings from different species living in proximity to one another. And my son, Finlay Emilio: he who opened my eyes to Love. What will it mean to love others now that he has unfolded such wonders from my innermost being?

While grieving, I have turned to multiple sources for guidance. What follows here is my own attempt to act as guide for others who encounter such loss, though, truthfully, the primary audience is myself. It is my belief that the care of the self is the first step toward helping others. I put myself forward here, then, in an effort to grieve openly. It may be the case that this essay helps others who are like me and who have endured similar trials. More likely, however, the writing will become one of many lighthouses dotting the vast rocky shores, capable only of illuminating a tiny spit of land, usually for none other than the expanse of moonlit ocean. I hope nobody ever needs this light, but I know, nonetheless, that there are many who will.

The Space of Grief (grief does you)

Consider first that grief does not reside within you but, rather, exists outside. And further, that you habitually keep this grief at bay through a series of inventions and interventions, what we call 'blind hope,' 'keeping busy,' and the countless other pseudo-activities that contribute to the self-inflicted amnesia that you believe is necessary to 'make it through the day.' With this thought, you can begin to see that there is no readymade space for grief, no square hole into which the square peg fits snuggly. Instead, grief makes its own space and, worse, it does so with no regard for the carefully manicured interior states you've worked so hard to cultivate. The truth of this situation inheres in the word itself, 'grief,' from Latin *gravis*, meaning 'weighty.' If the weak- and strong-nuclear forces, electromagnetism, and gravity make up the forces of the physical universe, then grief surely sustains and underpins the social universe. Grief is the gravity of the social.

Faced with this, certain tactics are no longer helpful. Grief cannot be something you experience as an autonomous person. It is not a personality trait or a characteristic. And yet there is an individual quality to grief, one created by the relationship between the design and structure of your walls, on the one hand, and the totality of grief, on the other. The way grief pours in, the

routes through which it will drift out again, the crevices in which it lodges itself, and the new spaces it erects will be determined by the architecture that was in place when the storm came. The struggle cannot be to keep grief out, since it will surely find its way in. While surveying the wreckage, study the scene and deduce the architectural idiosyncrasies that allowed grief to settle upon you in precisely this way. Of what do your daily defenses consist, and when you rebuild how might you learn from your previous hubris and construct a self that communicates openly with the outside?

After Hurricane Sandy demolished the built environment on the New Jersey coast, *This Old House* filmed several episodes dedicated to the work undertaken by New Jersey contractors to renovate and restore the storm-damaged neighborhoods. Where previously houses had a walkway leading smoothly to the front door of a ground-level first-floor, the contractors installed raised, stilt-like structures that would allow floodwaters to ebb and flow through the bottom level of the houses without damaging the living spaces above. Unable to store anything fixed or permanent in those new spaces or to dwell in them, one might consider them as somehow peripheral to the houses themselves or, if part of the houses, certainly not part of the homes. But nothing is further from the truth. Without the communicating thruway, the solid structures above would surely be swamped again and again. After the renovations, the homes relied on this structural renovation, but those spaces are likely to fall into the background of daily vision without the threat of hurricane-force winds.

Might one consider the rush of grief in a similar way? For a while after my father's death, I occasionally hallucinated that I was out at sea, bobbing in the waves. These visions would come to me throughout the days and weeks, as though an editor was splicing my waking life reality with this nightmarish scene. It would fill my mind for a while and then give way to real life, or what passes as it. Later, when I walked out of the funeral home after seeing my son for the last time before his cremation, I felt a tremendous urge to go back to his body and take it away from that place. Knowing I couldn't do that, I collapsed to the ground. For several moments, everything in the world evaporated. There was no building, no town, nobody beside me. The wall I slumped against felt like a thin panel of plywood. In both cases, the challenge remains the same: not to rebuild my reality such that the visions of oceanic emptiness and the disintegrating world disappear, but to incorporate these visions into my new understanding of reality and to live as a vulnerable being, neither entirely distinct from the froth on the waves' foam nor more substantive than the parade of fleeting images that decorate each day. While I might want to abandon the ocean for solid land and pretend that my surroundings are permanent and structurally sound, I must allow the weight of grief to shape my vision of the world and of myself in the world.

Moving from the practical arts of home renovation to the more purposeful creation of artistic expression, my thoughts turn to the perspicacity of certain theatre artists in whose work this understanding of the exterior world's power over human beings shows itself. The figure I think of repeatedly is Tadeusz Kantor. Space, he writes,

does not have an exit, or a boundary;
[space] which is receding, disappearing,
or approaching omni-directionally with changing velocity;
it is dispersed in all directions: to the sides, to the middle;
it ascends, caves in,
spins on the vertical, horizontal, diagonal axis. . . .
It is not afraid to burst into an enclosed shape,
defuse it with its sudden jerking movement,
deform its shape. . . .
Figures and objects become the function of space
and its mutability. . . .
Space is not a passive r e c e p t a c l e
in which objects and forms are posited. . . .
SPACE itself is an OBJECT [of creation]. (Kantor 1993, 50)

In his paintings and works for the stage, objects are never opaque, impenetrable masses; his characters are never volitional agents fulfilling interior desires. Umbrellas, chairs, cameras, guns, puppets, coats, coatracks, ticket booths, people: all materials formed, deformed, and reformed by space, which, itself, changes its qualities through each material encounter. For actors in this type of theatrical performance, one goal is to allow yourself to open to space, to be shaped by it, and to conduct yourself as a conduit conducts electricity. To grieve means precisely this. Never seek to act upon grief, to force its shape, or to resist its power. Let grief work upon you and observe the way it shapes you. Grief, in other words, does you, not the other way around. With this realization comes the task of rebuilding without closing down, without battening the hatches to the storm. There is no personal identity removed from grief; rather, grief, as a force of social life, always shapes one's being and actions. One lesson offered by grief is that this shaping occurs all the time and that we deceive ourselves when we treat grief as the result of tragic, singular happenings.

The Time of Grief (Prairial, Messidor, Thermidor…)

My father was born on July 14, 1948. When his birthday came around shortly after his death, I prepared for it and expected it to be difficult. To my surprise, the day passed without many tears. At times, I even felt happy as I drank port in memory of him and thought about the ways he used to make me laugh. Ten days later, however, on my birthday, the dark clouds rolled in. The man who helped make my life was now gone, and nothing could help alleviate the pain of that loss. Thinking chronologically, I was ten days further along in my journey of rebuilding, but clearly I felt no such progress. Progress as a concept seemed absurd. Time was out of joint.

The kink showed itself once more while navigating the bureaucracy of Illinois biopolitics following the death of Finlay. Since the cause of his death was unknown, the coroner required an autopsy in order to issue an official cause of death. It took six weeks to complete all the tests. The legal, documentary result of the autopsy was an official death certificate, but no such process existed for the creation of an official birth certificate. Unless we petitioned for a certificate of stillbirth

(which we would eventually do), we would never receive a birth certificate at all, and thus, according to the archive, our son will have died without ever having lived. How does a human life end without first starting? What is an end without a beginning? It seems that the gravity of grief had warped the cultural laws governing the temporal duration from birth to death.

On July 14, 1789, the Bourgeois Militia of Paris stormed the Bastille and added momentum to the events that would eventually be known as the French Revolution. Once the National Convention consolidated a balance of power and began to chart the path toward an independent French Republic, Robespierre, Saint-Just, Danton, and the rest of the leadership determined that nothing could be as it was prior to the Revolution. As Robespierre stated in his speech advocating for the execution of Louis XVI, 'the very order of nature seems to us a disorder,' a thought that blatantly rephrases the declaration made by Saint-Just that 'the present order is the disorder of the future' (Robespierre 2007, 59).[1] That is, the cultural order created under the monarchy had passed itself off as the natural given order, but the overthrow of tyranny by the people restored the balance of the universe and brought the new Republic in line with Nature's truth. To follow through on the gesture of the Revolution, however, time itself would have to change.

Or, rather, the way of marking time would need to change. The result came in 1793 with the installation of the French Revolutionary Calendar. To resonate with the forces of Nature so clearly speaking through the actions of the French citizenry, the new calendar linked the start of the year with the Southward equinox and contained twelve months made up of three weeks, with each week divided into ten days. Each day was further divided into ten hours, made up of 100 minutes; each minute contained 100 seconds. The names of months no longer honored a spiritualist pantheon or imperialist monarchy but drew attention to the forces of the Earth. The spans of time roughly corresponding to May, June, and July, for example, were converted to Prairial, Messidor, and Thermidor, or Pasture-time, Harvest-time, and Time-of-the-Summer-Heat. Days, too, were placed under new banners, signs in praise of the world's bounty of trees, flowers, and plants. July 14, the day that would eventually be known as Bastille Day, or Stephen's Birthday, became Sauge Messidor (Sage, Harvest-time), a span of hours commemorating the plant known for its healing properties.

If the clichéd phrase, 'one day at a time' feels unhelpful when offered up during the time of grief, it may be because grief demands a change in time itself, the way that the National Convention demanded a change of time during the French Revolution. The chronology of one day at a time only makes sense where linear progress is presumed or, indeed, hoped for. To borrow an expression from Brecht, *natura facit saltus*. Beliefs to the contrary may in fact be beholden to a conservative agenda of rebuilding everything as it was before. And while the drawbacks of embracing a new temporal schema will show themselves immediately—extreme awkwardness resulting from the dismissal of familiar habits, further alienation from the multitude who sleep at night and work during the day—the potential power of thinking time anew is revolutionary.

After Finlay died, Joanne and I set about living by a new calendar. We lit a candle every evening in Finlay's nursery and dedicated the setting of the sun to reflection. We started each morning with

tear time and lamented the rise of the sun, which, for us, merely shed light on a startling emptiness. One day, we received a package in the mail from friends of ours in Seattle who wanted to express their sorrow. We opened it to find a cooler that was carrying a giant fillet of Pacific Northwest Salmon. Now, I am a vegetarian and only rarely eat fish. Salmon especially is problematic because of the current state of overfishing, the continued neglect of and violence against Native American traditions, and the negative environmental impact of farm-raised fish. Even the package was irksome since the hyperobject cooler—it was made of Styrofoam—will outlast every living thing on the planet, a fact that angered my environmentalist self and sharpened the extreme finitude of Finlay's life. The sight of all these things on my kitchen counter sent me into a fit of crying, which I was only able to work through by pronouncing the next two days as Salmon-time.

I determined that this salmon was sent to me as a gift, and as such it had to be respected. At the same time, I could not ignore the political dimension of the fish itself, not to mention the network of conditions that brought it to me. I went to the computer and looked up videos of Native American prayers offered up to the Salmon. Out loud, I apologized to the tribes of the Northwest and I vowed to honor the salmon for its healing properties and its sacred position in their tribes' histories. Next, I looked up a recipe and the proper method for deboning the fillet. It was clear that eating the fish was the only proper way to sublate the experience. The rest of Salmon-time consisted of these highlights. I bathed the fish, using water from the faucet and from my eyes. I laid the fillet along the convex arch of an overturned bowl and removed bones with tweezers. I thanked the boneless fish profusely as I slipped it into its marinade of ginger, soy sauce, and sesame oil. After baking, Joanne and I toasted the Salmon with wine and ate it, all of it. By the time the sun went down, Salmon-time gave way to Finlay-reflection time and some healing had occurred.

While grieving the death of loved ones, the question will arise: how long does this take? That question, however, is not posed in a helpful way. The verb 'to take' must be placed aside and replaced with new words that conjure a different mode of time, one that commemorates the effort of building, growth, and the generative powers of the social and natural worlds. Grief neither takes nor gives. It rushes in from the outside and it inaugurates a new temporal existence that will be unique to each person or group who grieves. Another lesson of grief arises here: grief makes time, in the sense that you must now make a calendar for yourself that honors the nature of your existence. Rather than asking 'how long will it take,' you can try this: what time will grief make, and what will you make within grief's duration?

Solve, Resolve, Unresolved

The most frequent refrain during this time made by grief has been, 'there are no words.' I've learned to take comfort in this phrase because it indicates the limits of language and usually gives way to embodied presence, such as two people caring for each other and sitting quietly side-by-side as they share a moment of heartache. It is not the case, however, that words have no power. To the contrary, words have tremendous power. If they feel fruitless during grief-time,

it may be because the banal intercourse of daily expression can sap the richness of words. If you allow for the possibility that grief neither takes someone from you, nor takes time to surpass, then you can see your way to allowing grief to resolve. To understand this in more detail, and to determine what you might make during grief-time, consider from a fresh perspective the triad, 'Solve, Resolve, Unresolved.' These common words carry great power and lead to yet another lesson in grief.

Etymologists have forced me to rethink these words I commonly use. Beginning with 'Solve':

> Solve (v).
> Late 14c., 'to disperse, dissipate, loosen,' from Latin *solvere* 'to loosen, dissolve; untie, release, detach; depart, unlock; scatter, dismiss; accomplish, fulfill; explain, remove [...]' The meaning 'explain, answer' is attested from 1530s. (Etymonline.com)

If one solves a problem, in this sense, then the problem itself is configured as a knot, a cluster of parts indistinguishable, a density. No longer can I think of 'solving' as the act of tying loose ends together. To solve my grief would mean to release it—as the Zen archer releases the arrow—or to figure out how to let it release—like one might allow a muscle clenched out of habit rather than out of duress to release. In this light, the phrase 'keep it together,' which pops in my mind occasionally as I break down crying in public, helps not at all. No. Don't keep it together. Let the crying, as well as its underlying knot, solve itself. To do this, divest yourself of the egotism that pretends to take charge of the healing process and attune yourself to the world outside, which is, after all, where grief resides.

'Resolve' opens another avenue of thought:

> Resolve (v.)
> Late 14c., 'melt, dissolve, reduce to liquid;' [...] Latin *resolvere* 'to loosen, loose, unyoke, undo; explain; relax; set free; make void, dispel,' from *re-*, perhaps intensive [...] Early 15c. as 'separate into components,' hence the use in optics (1785). Meaning 'determine, decide upon' is from 1520s, hence 'pass a resolution' (1580s) [...] (Etymonline.com)

Consider the phrase 'to resolve the octave,' which I had always understood to mean 'complete the octave by playing the final note,' and thus to install the missing piece. But in this new (old) sense, anything that one might resolve is already yoked. The octave, for example, might belong to an imagined unity into which the seven notes (and the eighth, as-yet-unplayed note) congeal. When I resolve the octave, the imagined unity "becomes void" and the actual unity of the octave reveals itself as an assemblage of component parts, at once one and many. To resolve grief, recognize it as a conglomeration of sadnesses and separate it into its component parts, much like the word 'solve' suggests. The difference here is the '*re-*,' an 'intensive' that adds urgency to the task. Resolve your grief now, or succumb to its imagined unity, which, in its hugeness, will surely swamp you.

The final word in the series presents not a verb but an adjective:

> 'Unresolved (adj.)
> 1570s, "undecided" (of questions) [...] Meaning "uncertain in opinion" is attested from 1590s' (Etymonline.com).

Considered as an adjective, the word's function is to modify. 'To unresolve' does not seem to be a concern of etymology—it is no verb. For anything to be unresolved, then, it must be modified from its natural state, named or valued as such. To name your grief as something unresolved is to leave it alone, to be uncertain of how to embrace it. Or, more dangerously, you may be tempted to hold on to your grief in this uncertain state so as to keep it present, to linger in its shadow, and thus (sub)consciously obscure the path to health. But to hold on in this way is to yoke yourself to it and to keep the grief itself bottled up. The lesson of this series of words demands the opposite course of action: actively release your grief and let it resolve, a declaration that amounts, practically speaking, to affirming your powerlessness and allowing yourself to acquire a new shape.

Ok, but how exactly do you do this? Rumi has provided a glimpse of an answer:

> One person sees a minaret, but not the bird
> perched there. A second person sees the bird,
> but not the hair it carries. A third
> sees minaret, bird, and hair.
> Until you can see the thread of the hair,
> the knot of awareness will not be loosened. (Rumi 1995, 147)

For Rumi, the body is the minaret, obedience the bird, and the hair is the secret that belongs to the bird. The poem—'New Moon, Hilal'—ends with an apostrophe to the mysterious forces of the world that make us question and ask, 'Why? How??' In his typical, enigmatic style, Rumi ends his poem with his own question that also somehow serves as an answer: '*How* is it to be free of How, / loose in howlessness?' (147). The answer tucked away here determines that we must let go of questions like how and embrace, instead, 'this is.' This is how it is.

Seeing the answer does not require a devotion to Sufi mysticism. Rather, the route to the loosening that Rumi suggests comes about through the daily practice of attentiveness. As Walter Benjamin suggests in his essay on Kafka, attentiveness is the natural (secular, material) prayer of the soul (Benjamin 1968, 134). To scrutinize grief as one observes the bird on the minaret is to locate the secret in the bird's mouth. What appears at first as a monolithic torrent of unresolvable grief will transform into an assemblage of desires and fears, which, once you acknowledged them in their multiplicity, you can accept. Acceptance is the hair that the bird carries.

I am the man whose father and son have died in a span of fifteen months, and I am actively both father and son. I am no less a son though my father has died. I am no less a father though my son has not lived. My identity in grief becomes the difference between these singular

fatherhoods and childhoods. From this difference, I must enact the truths I hold most dear in order to test their validity and to strengthen my resolve.

Therapy, or Being a Servant to Yourself

Resolving your identity will lead to anxiety and crises of identity. Nobody captures this depressive state better than David Foster Wallace in his story, 'The Depressed Person,' which places the reader inside the life of a woman so thoroughly dissolved that therapeutic acts like asking for help are rendered impossible by a ceaseless involution on the self, a spiraling inward that leads to doubt, self-hatred, and further depression. As the first sentence of the story reads, 'The depressed person was in terrible and unceasing emotional pain, and the impossibility of sharing or articulating this pain was itself a component of the pain and a contributing factor in its essential horror' (Wallace 2007, 37).

The majority of the story moves back and forth between DFW's trademark high-resolution description of minute intellectual and emotional nuances, on the one hand, and the depressed person's therapeutic relationship with both a licensed psychologist and a Support Group of friends, on the other. Here's a representative excerpt:

> The excruciating feelings of shame and inadequacy which the depressed person experienced about calling supportive members of her Support System long-distance late at night and burdening them with her clumsy attempts to articulate at least the overall context of her emotional agony were an issue on which the depressed person and her therapist were currently doing a great deal of work in their time together. The depressed person confessed that when whatever empathetic friend she was sharing with finally confessed that she (i.e., the friend) was dreadfully sorry but there was no helping it she absolutely *had* to get off the telephone, and had finally detached the depressed person's needy fingers from her pantcuff and gotten off the telephone and back to her full, vibrant long-distance life, the depressed person almost always sat there listening to the empty apian drone of the dial tone and feeling even more isolated and inadequate and contemptible than she had before she'd called. [...] The depressed person admitted to the therapist that whenever she (i.e., the depressed person) reached out long-distance to a member of her Support System she almost always visualized the friend's face, on the telephone, assuming a combined expression of boredom and pity and repulsion and abstract guilt, and almost always imagined she (i.e., the depressed person) could detect, in the friend's increasingly long silences and/or tedious repetitions of encouraging clichés, the boredom and frustration people always feel when someone is clinging to them and being a burden. (Wallace 2007, 42-3)

While you might write this story off as exaggeration for exaggeration's sake, remember that DFW hanged himself in what must have been utter despair despite the fact that his friends and loved ones were equipped with many words with which to 'talk him down' and his therapists had prescribed many pills over the years intended to 'take the edge off.' For me, both this story and

DFW's life in particular mark the horizon of despair. Faced with outrageous guilt and the tedious burden of carrying on, sometimes the ship drifts that way. Attempts to steer the boat toward different shores results in greater fatigue and different anxieties that deserve another DFW story to describe them adequately.

Everything about the process of grieving feels cliché: each answer to the question 'how are you?', that question itself, the words you say to therapists to describe your feelings, the words therapists say back to you, the words printed by strangers working at Hallmark and mailed to you by friends who know that those words don't adequately address the situation, the tears that won't stop, the lack of sleep. And yet, despite DFW's convincing claims to the contrary, therapy provides a means, maybe the best means, towards a better end than the Depressed Person's own – but, again, the word therapy deserves some rethinking.

Michel Foucault lectured on the philosophical practice of θεραπεύειν (*therapeuein*):

> *Therapeuein* means in Greek three things. *Therapeuein* means, of course, to perform a medical action whose purpose is to cure or to treat. However, *therapeuein* is also the activity of the servant who obeys and serves his master. Finally, *therapeuein* is to worship (*rendre un culte*). Now, *therapeuein heauton* means at the same time to give medical care to oneself, to be one's own servant, and to devote oneself to oneself. (Foucault 2005, 98)

θεραπεύειν joins with a series of Ancient Greek terms—μελέτη (*melete,* 'exercise'), γυμνάζειν (*gumnazein*, 'to practice, to train oneself')—to describe the wider practice known as επιμέλεια εαυτού (*epimeleia heautou*), which means 'to care for oneself.' In Ancient Greece, this practice of caring for the self was expressly philosophical in the sense that it led to τέχνη του βίου (*tekhne tou biou*), the art of life, of existence. The end of philosophy was this art of life, which, dialectically, required a living into death.

DFW's depressed person, and perhaps he himself, was incapable of being a servant to herself because the clichés of clinical, as opposed to philosophical, therapy formed a script that repeated over and over inside her head, thereby making it impossible to communicate with others without assuming that they would necessarily take on the role of insensitive, more-well-off, sane people. Dismissing those scripts and fetching help for yourself, as a servant would fetch a meal for his master, becomes extremely important during the grieving process. The blank conversation on the phone with your friend is not as important as the act of engaging in that conversation. The words spoken to you repeatedly by family members and doctors are less important than the act of placing yourself in dialogue with them to begin with. Coupled with acknowledgement of the space of grief (outside), the temporal mandate of grieving, and the necessary challenge of resolving your grief, becoming a servant to yourself through these acts can help bring focus back to the blurry landscape rendered through unimaginable loss.

Roland Barthes became a servant to himself after his mother died by keeping a journal, which has subsequently been published as *Mourning Diary*. Vis-à-vis the conversation above regarding

DFW's Depressed Person, Barthes makes the following observation on 3 August 1978:

> Exploration of my (apparently vital) need of solitude: and yet I have a (no less vital) need of my friends.
>
> I must therefore: 1) force myself to "call" them from time to time, find the energy to do so, combat my telephonic (among other kinds)—apathy; 2.) ask them to understand above all that they must let me call them. If they less often, less systematically, got in touch with me, that would mean for me that I must get in touch with them. (Barthes 2009, 181)

Barthes' realizes that the act of getting in touch—both with himself and with others—constitutes the primary therapeutic path through the flood of grief. Equally astute is his observation that such therapeutic acts do not erase neurosis, but, rather, raise to the surface the innermost contradictions of being that constitute our individuality. For him, these contradictions inhere within neurosis.

Two back-to-back entries from earlier in the year, one on 18 the other on 25 May 1978, reveal this contradiction, of which he was certainly aware. Grief, after all, marries contradictory feelings into one torrent of emotion:

> [1] *Maman*'s death: perhaps it is the one thing in my life that I have not responded to neurotically. [...] And I see that the non-neurotic is not good, not the right thing at all.
>
> [2] When *maman* was living (in other words, in my whole past life) I was neurotically in fear of losing her.
> Now (this is what mourning teaches me) such mourning is so to speak the only thing in me which is not neurotic: as if *maman*, by a last gift, had taken neurosis, the worst part, away from me. (Barthes 2009,128-129)

In the first entry, Barthes seems to acknowledge his neurosis so as to let it breathe and live as a genuine expression of his suffering. In the second entry, however, neurosis, identified as his worst part, has been cured. The seeming contradiction loosens when we return to the earlier entry through the later one. Now gone, this worst part cannot breathe and serve as a conduit for his depression. Its removal is a gift, but only in the sense of gift-as-promise, something that will have to prove itself to be rewarding in the future. Without neurosis to conduct his feelings, Barthes must reach out beyond himself and speak to his friends, a realization he makes in roughly two months from the day he made these specific reflections. As grief exists without (i.e., outside of) you, so, too, does help. To be a servant to yourself means to go beyond the self and join the world as a sort of promise to yourself that eventually this membership in the world will mean something and perhaps even bring happiness.

Grief re-members

Asking others for help doesn't necessarily mean talking to living people or with people who are reachable by phone. I've turned to writers and poets in order to seek guidance and re-write the script of depression that wants to play out inside me. As of the day I write this passage, I have read the following works to help me think through Finlay's death:

1. Kenneth C. Haugk, *Rebuilding and Remembering: Journeying through Grief* (Books One, Two, and Three)
2. Lorraine Ash, *Life Touches Life: A Mother's Story of Stillbirth and Healing*
3. Elizabeth McCracken, *An Exact Replica of a Figment of My Imagination: A Memoir*
4. John Dixon Hunt, *Nature Over Again: The Garden of Art of Ian Hamilton Finlay*
5. Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary*
6. Karen Green, *Bough Down*
7. Anne Carson, *Nox*
8. *The Essential Rumi* (trans. Coleman Barks)

Books two and three in the list are memoirs written by mothers whose babies died at full-term and at the onset of labor. Each book comes from an individual experience of loss and suffering, but each one also reveals the hidden community of women living with such loss, a community much bigger than anyone wants to imagine. McCracken's memoir made the most impact with me because of its ability to juxtapose anguish and the dark humor that accompanies the aftermath of death. For example, McCracken's baby died while she and her husband were living in France. After setting the scene for the events of the story, she shared the words of a nurse who was seeking to offer pastoral care in the wake of the death: *Voulez-vous parler à une nonne* (Would you like to speak to a nun)? Due to the fact that French was not their first language, however, McCracken's husband heard, *Voulez-vous parler à un nain* (Would you like to speak to a dwarf)? The problem was clarified, but not before considerable confusion (McCracken 2008, 8).

Joanne and I have had our fair share of dark humor. After enduring the initial visit to the funeral home where we both said our final goodbyes to Finlay's body and selected an urn for his ashes from an assortment of miniature urns designed for dead babies, we received a call from the funeral director informing us that we could return to the home and collect our son's ashes. He was quick to suggest, however, that we consider buying a second urn because not all of Finlay fit into the urn we had chosen, the urn, again, that was presented to us as an appropriate object for the occasion. Fighting the analytical voice inside my head that wanted to discuss the blinding design flaw, I told him we'd have to call him back. Joanne and I, beyond puzzled, decided that we'd reserve some ashes to scatter in some as-yet-undetermined location. So I called the funeral director back and asked if he could put the remaining ashes in a box. 'Do you mean, like, a white cardboard box?' he asked. The analytical voice wanted to respond: 'are you aware how that

question is likely to instill a tremendous lack of confidence in the heart of grief-stricken people…' The voice of reason interceded: 'You know, do whatever you usually do.' No more absurdity came through the phone, and the rest of the afternoon was dotted with similarly laughable episodes amid the sobbing and gut-wrenching despair.

Humor aside, both McCracken's and Ash's memoirs helped me gain access to the mother's story. Fathers are present in both books, but they occupy a supporting position. I related to this position since I had remarked on it to myself as I played the part of comforter in the hospital during Joanne's 23 hours of labor, alongside our doula, midwife, and the on-duty nurses. I was humbled in that room and struck by the beauty of my wife who gave herself to the pain of the birth process. Following Finlay's death, I knew I had to honor the grief that had come into me, but I also knew that I needed help to understand that which I couldn't possibly understand, the experience my wife felt as the doctor told her that Finlay's heart had stopped beating, the knowledge of needing to deliver him via c-section, the need to continue living without the life she had been growing inside of her for forty weeks.

Grief manuals, of which Haugk's books provide a sample, lay out the tried and true clichés of the mourning process, but memoires, diaries, and poetic thinkings-through of loved-one's deaths render more colorfully the work of mourning. Karen Green's *Bough Down* focuses intently on these colors. As a visual artist, it was color that left her upon finding the body of her husband, David Foster Wallace, hanging in their living room. Everything turned black and white. Though humor resides in her account, anger is the more palpable emotion, marked perhaps most potently in the title. Those words never occur in the book itself. Instead, they underscore the need of having to write the book in the first place and serve as a wry pun on the life bequeathed to her by the suicide. Bough Down under the hanging body. Bough Down before the great writer. Bough Down beneath the weight of all that is to come. The anger inflects her word play, which, in turn, reveals the measure of Green's and Wallace's closeness. Whereas his prolixity circumscribed the totality of each scene he wished to depict, her terse, clipped passages cut into the emotional core of the years after DFW's death while simultaneously paying homage to her husband's style:

> Fresh flowers may not be a good idea around the house. Lilies fester. People die in your heart. Everyone looks younger than, even the ancient Quakers at the meeting house. I am alone, but sometimes a goddess brings soup. […] The rooms unfurnish themselves. *Please don't look over there*. Everyone gathers, everyone drives off, what remains remain remains. (Green 2013, 35)

What's left, in other words, of the writer's body are only remains, and not just ashes but also linguistic signifiers ('remains') that will keep him alive, in one sense, forever. Where Green mimics, one senses another double meaning. She emulates, so as to honor, but she mocks so as to speak truthfully to the pain that her husband caused her by removing himself from his own suffering.

Anne Carson also draws on language as she attempts to construct an elegy for her brother inspired by Catullus's 101st poem. It is because of her work that I am finding it so important to dwell on individual words. More than developing a sensitivity to word choice, the act of

meaningfully engaging with her brother's death requires an act of attentive translation. In her own words: 'Because our conversations were few (he phoned me maybe 5 times in 22 years) I study his sentences the ones I remember as if I'd been asked to translate them' (Carson 2010, n.p.). The translation in *Nox* unleashes the hidden power of words, scattered here and there throughout time, by lingering over each one and then considering the shifting meaning of each as it joins up with its neighbors in the forms of sentences, phrases, and paragraphs. The task is, on the one hand, futile, and, on the other, necessary for the action of grief. There is a word for this, *Unumgängliche*, which a philosopher friend of Carson's translated as 'overtakelessness,' or 'that which cannot be got around. Cannot be avoided or seen to the back of' (n.p.). While words, of course, cannot overtake the *Unumgängliche*, they can delimit the shape of the field that cannot be got around and thus make the magnitude of the loss palpable, visceral, visible.

Immersing myself in these works, I realized that grieving presents an opportunity to re-member oneself with a community of those who seemingly have nothing in common. In effect, 'to remember' has nothing to do with recalling or recollecting but, rather, with unforgetting and entering into. Specifically, by reading these works, I unforget that grief exists all the time, that the verb 'to grieve' names a conscious and transformative turning-toward that existence, and that, despite the withering solitude felt after the death of a loved one, others' grief can establish a disjunctive togetherness into which I can and must enter in order to heal. I say to Joanne that we are grieving together alone. She says we are grieving alone together. When we acknowledge both to be true, we re-member each other to ourselves and become a plural-singularity within grief. When I read Haugk, Ash, McCracken, Hunt, Barthes, Green, Carson, and Rumi, I re-member myself to even more people, and I understand that grieving makes this re-membering possible.

Love

To grieve rightly, one must open to love. The alternative would be to close down and wither away inside oneself. Love takes many forms—from Kierkegaard to Rumi. My experience has led me to consider love as buoy, but, again, buoy in a specific sense.

> *Buoy* is of disputed origin, as to both its immediate source and its ultimate derivation. One school of thought holds that English borrowed it directly from Old French *boie* 'chain,' while another views Middle Dutch *boeye* as an intermediate stage. Again, some etymologists maintain that its beginnings were amongst the Germanic languages, and have connected it with English *beacon*, while others would trace it via Latin *boia* 'strap' to Greek *boeiai* 'ox-leather straps,' a derivative of *bous* 'ox' (which is related to English 'cow'). The meaning of Old French *boie* favors the latter explanation, the semantic link being that buoys are held in place by chains. (Ayto 1990, 87)

The chain that holds the buoy in place amid the ebb and flow of the tides represents a harmful love, one that seeks to master and control both the griever and the situation of grief. Like the ox-leather straps made from ox hide that completely dominate the ox in the field with the dead carcass of one of its kind, the loved one who seeks to hold the griever in place and tie him or her

down to one spot so as not to float away exposes a desire to exert mastery over a situation that cannot and should not be controlled. To hold the loved one in place, as the strap guides the ox and the chain holds the buoy in place, is to deny the truth of grief, love, and life. Ultimately, what is the aim of such a grip? Is the purpose to hold the griever in place or is it to reassure the comforter who, faced with the impossible task of 'being there' within the suffering, wants to find some measure of stability?

Buoy as beacon presents an entirely different scenario. Picture a great expanse of dark ocean. Throughout the landscape, lighthouses, some nearer and some farther away, cast their beacons into the night. Each light has the purpose of alerting seafarers to the shoreline so as to avert shipwreck and ruin. These lights shine nightly, even when nobody is there to benefit from the signals. When the beams do serve their purpose, they only have the power to mark the danger; they do not tell the traveler about how to navigate the water or about paths others have taken. This scenario represents love that illuminates so as to provide guidance without eliminating the work of navigation. The buoyancy made possible by this love would not be a stability capable of thwarting the pull of the water but, instead, a potential mobility motivated by knowledge of one's surroundings, of the ports nearby, and of the distant-yet-present care of others. If it is true, as Rumi says, that light enters through the wound, then it is possible that this buoyancy and this love only become possible once you have been wounded, or, if you allow for the possibility that we are always already wounded, that it becomes possible once you open your eyes to that fact.

After the doctor lifted Finlay from Joanne's womb in the operating room, a nurse bathed him and then carried his body over to us prior to laying him down in his temporary bed. Neither of us was prepared to hold him in that moment (though we later were and did), so I had only the briefest encounter with his face. In that moment, however, I had an experience similar to that of the narrator in Borges's story 'The Aleph' who peers into the Everything hidden beneath the stairs in Carlos Argentino's basement (Borges 1999, 283). In Finlay's face, I saw someone I recognized without ever meeting. I saw myself. I saw, in the distance, a lighthouse with a beam of unthinkable luminosity, which enlightened its surroundings to reveal a vast territory. The expanse of that territory made my immediate surroundings, which comprised all the places I've ever known or thought about, feel outrageously small: a walled-in garden within what turns out to be a million-acre horticultural wonderland. The light bounced off my pupils and then started to rotate away from me. To this day, it hasn't come back around, as though its circuit might require many years to complete. But I still have the afterglow burning like a sunspot in my vision, a spot precisely the size of Finlay.

Grieving, loving, living: three modes of a singular becoming. Grief enters from the outside. It makes time and encourages you to make something in its duration. Grief begs of you more grace than you thought and a more attentive way of seeing. Attentiveness leads to resolve, the loosening required for acceptance. To attend to the grieving process, to wait on it patiently, means acting as servant to yourself, gathering resources that will re-member you to a group that has always existed but has remained out of sight, bizarrely forgotten. Within that group, the beacons of love will show themselves, at which point you can determine the path you'll take from

there. Love is the non-coercive connection to the lights of others that makes possible a life consciously left open to the gravitational pull of grief.

Never Enough

Finlay Emilio Zerdy Daddario was named for Ian Hamilton Finlay, the Scottish garden artist and poet. In I. H. Finlay's Little Sparta, located outside of Edinburgh, the artist has created a work of mind-bending complexity and beauty. The gardens there, which Hunt discusses in great detail in *Nature Over Again*, houses too many treasures to name here. But by way of concluding these thoughts, I'd like to acknowledge one installation in particular.

On the shores of the small lake set within the garden's interior rests a rowboat named "Never Enough." When Joanne and I visited, the boat had taken on a considerable amount of water, thus giving the impression of a failed attempt to master the lake through the boat's technology. It wanted more—never enough—but the more-ness of the water was too much for it. In a photo in Hunt's book, however, you can see I. H. Finlay rowing the boat out on the water, en route, perhaps, to a hard-to-reach spot calling out for artistic intervention. The fusion of the boat's two states—partially sunk, a tool for artistic work—combined with its poetic name, contains the infinitive of grieving. "To grieve" is to navigate the waters of life with the knowledge that those waters are more expansive than a single human's living. Had my father, my grandmother, Ivone, Miles, or Finlay lived another hundred years, surely it would never be enough. You know this to be true, but the blind hope that keeps you marching insanely and swiftly toward death with utter disregard for death's finality only lets you in on the joke at times of great despair. To grieve rightly means to live into death at all times and to open oneself to the love, which, never enough, buoys us until the end.

Notes

[1] The quotation from Saint-Just is printed on enormous stone slabs in the heart of Ian Hamilton Finlay's garden Little Sparta. I'm not entirely sure about the origins of the statement, but the words I quote here are summoned via Finlay's inscriptions more than they are called forth from the archives of the French Revolution.

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Biography

Will Daddario is an active theatre historiographer and performance philosopher. His research on sixteenth century Venetian theatre and performance has been published in *The Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, *Ecumenica*, and several anthologies such as the forthcoming *Failure, Representation, and Negative Theatre* (eds. Dan Watt and Eve Katsouraki) and *Theatre/Performance Historiography: Time Space Matter* (eds. Rosemary Bank and Michal Kobialka). Will has co-written two articles with Joanne Zerdy. One appearing in the Spring 2015 edition of *Theatre Topics* (devoted to Performance Philosophy Pedagogy) and another in the anthology *Food and Theatre on the World Stage* (eds. Dorothy Chansky and Ann Folino White). Additionally, his work in the emerging field of Performance Philosophy has led to the compilation of two co-edited anthologies, *Manifesto Now! Instructions for Performance, Philosophy, Politics* (with Laura Cull, 2013) and *Adorno and Perfomance* (with Karoline Gritzner, 2014).