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Aspasia Sparages   April 12, 2020

Die Locken Zusammengenommen

By

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2021

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An abstract of

a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences

of Emory University in partial fulfillment

of the requirements of the degree of

Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Comparative literature

2021

Abstract

Die Locken Zusammengenommen

By Aspasia Sparages

My friend died and I wrote a work of mourning. (It has theory, poetry, art, and other things.)

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Acknowledgments

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[See Fragmentation]

01.10.19

A Premonition

GWINNETT COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

REPORT DATE:	REPORT TIME:		JUVENILE INVOLVED?	CASE NUMBER:
03-04-2019	0008		○ Yes ⊗ No	190019606

INV:	NAME (FULL):	M	NATURE OF CALL:	Report Type:
PED	▇▇▇▇▇		5102	INCIDENT

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17 OTHER
18 HOURS, ILLUMINATED
19 AIR AND LIGHT
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32 THIS ACCIDENT
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35 WAS CAPTURED ON MY BODY
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CASE STATUS:		DATE CLEARED:	
AC	CASE ACTIVE		

BADGE #:	OFFICER:		Assignment/Shift:
8857	▇▇▇▇▇		CSC

REPORT DATE: 03-04-2019
REPORT TIME: 0008

JUVENILE INVOLVED? ○ Yes ⊗ No
CASE NUMBER: 190019608

INV: PED
NAME (FULL): ▓▓▓▓▓ ▓▓▓ M

NATURE OF CALL: 5102
Report Type: INCIDENT

NARRATIVE:

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PERPENDICULAR

SHE WAS

WHAT SHE HAD SEEN.

NEAR

OTHER

EVENTS

ARRIVED

AT THE END

CASE STATUS: AC CASE ACTIVE
DATE CLEARED:
BADGE #: 9657
OFFICER: ▓▓▓▓
Assignment/Shift: CSC

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4                                           HAZARD FLASHERS
5                              A MALE                              VEHICLE AIR
6            WAS DISABLED                                              OK
7     WAS MUMBLED                      WATERY.
8                                   CHECK
9
10
11                                 THAT LANE
12
13
14   THE BODY IN THE ROAD WAS A FEMALE              LOCATE
15                                                      THE NAME
16
17
18        THE BODY                     (FACE DOWN)
19              BETWEEN
20
21  THE
22          CONTACT                            AND
23
24
25
26    CONSISTENCE
27
28
29  THE VEHICLE WERE PICKED                          THEN
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31
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REPORT DATE:
03-03-2019

CASE NUMBER:
190018608

Report Type:
ARREST

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65 INDICATED   NEGATIVE PRESENCE   BREATH
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67 AND DOUBLE
68   IMPLIED
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70 A VERBAL YES.
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72
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74   SEALED   TAKEN   PLACED
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76
77 NOTHING FURTHER AT THIS TIME.

CASE STATUS:
AA   CLEARED ARREST - ADULT

DATE CLEARED:
03-03-2019

BADGE #:
B1847

OFFICER:

Assignment/Shift:
CSC

I Love You

03.08.19

mr. death

03.09.19

AT WORK

AFTER
WORK

SOMETIME
AFTER PHONE
CALL

Dear Reader,

This text has several purposes, but I do not mean to confuse anyone (especially myself) with my intention. I am writing this because my best friend died last year.

She died on March 3, 2019 while trying to help someone on the side of the highway. She was hit by another driver while she was outside of her car and her body was cremated almost immediately after it was examined. I haven't seen her body since January of 2019. The ceremony that took place after she died was cheap and thrown together. A deacon spoke at it. Nobody else was asked to speak except her boyfriend. He tried to speak for two minutes. The only semblance of an obituary for her, which was written by the Byrd and Flanigan Crematory and Funeral Home where her ceremony took place, has grammatical errors. It is only one paragraph long. These are the only eulogies and the only obituary that have been made. She died in an unusual way with very unusual circumstances surrounding her death. It has been difficult to process and hard to comprehend.

I am writing this because I do not like the way she has been remembered publicly, that I did not speak at her ceremony, and that her name is hardly brought up anymore. I also do not like that her ashes weren't scattered where she asked me to scatter them and that the will she had been writing since she was twelve was not honored.

I am writing this because I care about remembering her and the others who are no longer here. A lot of people care about what dead writers have written. She wrote but almost no one has seen her work. It was almost as hidden as her body after she died. She wrote a lot of poetry. I have spent my academic career reading prose, testimonials, essays, novels, articles, I read fiction and non-fiction, I read theory and poetry, informing each other in the same course. This is why I am a comparative literature major, why I care about what my best friend wrote, why I am writing this. I love what people do, what they make, how that shapes life and memory for them and others.

So, I approach theory, accounts of mourning, obituaries, fiction written during and about mourning, eulogies, poetry, manuals on how to write in the forms of mourning, lamentations for the dead and longed for, moving still silent loud works of visual art, rhythmic performances, music, spoken word, lectures, so on

and so forth to mark down the memory I have of her in a way that makes sense to me and that maybe she

would have liked.

I am also writing this because, as I said, the words written and spoken about her directly after the

time of her death did not do her justice. You are welcome to disagree with me. The following is her obituary,

transferred straight from the Byrd and Flanigan website:

> Kayli Michelle Guthrie age 20 of Dacula, GA passed away Sunday March 3, 2019. A 2016
> Graduate of Archer High School, She was currently a sophmore at Georgia Gwinnett
> College studying Psychology and was employed at Regal Cinema in Duluth. She is survived
> by her mother & step father Rebecca & Scott Kerr of Hoschton, father Jason Guthrie of
> Lawrenceville, brothers Alexander Kerr, Peyton Kerr both of Hoschton, Carter Guthrie of
> Lawrenceville, grandparents George & Karen McGrady of Senoia, Donna Guthrie of
> Nevada, Aunts Kari McGrady, Mona McReynolds both of Senoia, Lisa Mimbs of
> Lawrenceville, uncle Jason McGrady of Senoia, nieces Stephanie Mimbs of North Carolina,
> Hope Mimbs of Lawrenceville, Kimberly Mimbs of Atlanta. A Celebration of Life Service
> will be held at 1:00 pm Sunday March 10, 2019 in the chapel of Byrd and Flanigan Funeral
> Home with Deacon Terry Millinger serving as celebrant. The family will receive friends
> Sunday from 12:00 - 1:00 at the funeral home. Byrd and Flanigan Crematory & Funeral
> Service, Lawrenceville in charge of the arrangements. 770-962-2200.

I am writing this letter to inform you that this text is a process—a work-in-progress.

The following project contains typed, spoken, recorded, scribbled, stolen, recreated fragments of,

with, about, and for her. Throughout it you will find her writing and her voice among mine. You will also find

fragments of works from other people who have died like Jacques Derrida, Paul de Man, Gershom Scholem,

Walter Benjamin, Mikhail Bakhtin, Roland Barthes, Jacques Lacarrière, Toni Morrison, Sigmund Freud. There

are also some citations of still-living people like Hélène Cixous and Anne Carson. There has been inspiration

from but not direct citations of works by people that who died like Roberto Bolaño, Aspasia of Miletus, John

Ashbury, Nina Simone, John Cage, Stéphane Mallarme, Marvin Gaye, Cy Twombly, Franz Kline, William S.

Burroughs, to name just a few. There is inspiration from but not direct citations of works by still-living

people like Haruki Murakami, Sam Gilliam, members of the groups Cortex and Sweet Trip and Boards of

Canada, Franny Choi, Spark Master Tape, Ruben Slikk, and many others. There has also been inspiration,

attention, guidance and love from still-living people that I have had the privilege of spending time talking to

like Kristina Laygo, Nancy Sparages, Ellis Bernstein, Heather Christle, Charlita Young, Munia Bhaumik,

Portia Truitt, Angelika Bammer, Kaitlyn Metcalf, Matías Bascuñán, Geoffrey Bennington, and Nayarí Aguirre to name a few.

I am writing this text as the "academic" paper it was always going to be because the works and texts that I have and will encounter matter to me outside of the walls of the university and inside the walls of my home.

As I previously wrote, I am writing this letter the way I am writing it so that both you and I do not get confused. This is an academic project. It is a personal project. It is also a creative project. But mostly, it is an iteration of "the work of mourning."

03.03.20

Today is March third. It has been a year since she died. I feel confused. Now what? I am reading the funeral oration spoken by Pericles, recorded by Thucydides, and composed by Aspasia of Miletus following deaths of the first Athenian soldiers in the Peloponnesian War in an attempt to learn something about remembering. I want to contribute to this text more somehow, but I don't know how. I have nothing to say about the Peloponnesian War at the moment, but I am writing just this little bit here. It doesn't feel fulfilling. It has been one year and what have I done? I can hardly remember her. What does someone do when the culture they have always been a part of actively turns away from death, hides it? Hides the mourning that both precedes and follows it? I am at a loss within my loss. It is too late for me to honor her body. No one saw it, anyway. The only body left for me to honor is her body of work. I have voicemails of her speaking. I have her written poems and prose. I have not looked at any of it. I don't know if I miss her. I don't think I should include this in the end product. It is not eloquent or powerful. It's the scribblings of someone that has no clue what to say or think. I feel unworthy of remembering her publicly. I can hardly do a responsible job privately.

Questions

Am I writing these questions because I read Cixous and she writes that to write down "*I go on living, therefore losing*" would be equivocal, like a mask, yet she writes both that phrase and her problem with its inscription? Am I writing these because Derrida states in his speech, a remembrance of his late friend Paul de Man, that "this is neither the time nor the place to give in to discreet revelations or too personal memories," yet proceeds to do so? Is it because Pericles stated that "I could have wished that the reputations of many brave men were not to be imperilled in the mouth of a single individual, to stand or fall according as he spoke well or ill," and then continued to give a funeral oration for fallen Athenian soldiers? Is that why I made this section here? Because they did? To let it be known that I am aware of the given troubles of writing about someone that is no longer here? To let it be known that I know the one that I lost no longer has a voice to remark upon what I have written? That there is a responsibility presupposed here? So that I feel some sort of comfort knowing this was acknowledged somewhere in this process?

Shipwrecked

In her novel *Hyperdream*, Cixous writes of the loss of those she loved: parents, friends, and Jacques Derrida.[i] She calls it the "Last Last Interruption." In a section near the beginning of the text, she writes:

> …in a flash, it's as if you were born flung into dark, restless space utterly foreign to the Last Times. No idea where you are naturally, you are shipwrecked, you have only the word *shipwreck* as a lantern and explanation, for the rest you're in the dark. (Hyperdream 7)

Cixous compares one who instantly transitioned to a state shock after experiencing a loss to an infant born into darkness. In that darkness,

> …all is lost. This lostness - a state you knew nothing about. You are adult and biped but the species is unknown. That's what happened to me. You know nothing about being. Or saying. You don't know. (7)

From the initial "flash," Cixous' simile swallows readers up with a second-person point of view: "it's as if you were born flung into darkness." This moment in her text then rapidly flows into metaphor through constative utterances in the present: "you are shipwrecked" and "you are in the dark." Cixous projects these truths onto the reader in quick succession so that her transition from a simile to a metaphor translates into a pull and a push: a pull into the literary experience she creates and, so, a push into the shock of loss like what she had been experiencing. "You are shipwrecked." She inscribes within her text the word *naufrage* which Beverley Bie Brahic, the translator of *Hyperdream* from French into English, chose to translate as "shipwrecked." This signification hides within it the possibility of the French word's other translation: castaway. One may say that "you are shipwrecked" just as one may say that "you are castaway." One may also say, however, that "you are *a* castaway" and one cannot say that "you are *a* shipwrecked." The word *shipwrecked* in English function as a past participle, so it describes nouns. The word *castaway*, however, may itself function

as both a noun and an adjective depending on the other words surrounding it in a sentence. As a noun, this word signifies a particular state of existence for the individual who is castaway. Because it marks a particular state of experience and because states, like that of mind or matter, are unstable and quickly turn, there is a temporal element to this word as a noun that is different from the word "shipwrecked." That temporal element opens the word up to different possibilities than "shipwrecked" does. For the duration of the sentence at least, the reader is castaway and is a castaway. One who is castaway will remain a castaway until they can no longer be called a castaway. The description is of the one experiencing loss—the castaway—not the object that the castaway has lost. The word castaway describes someone who is castaway after the ship is wrecked and until they are no longer castaway. Perhaps they will remain castaway forever, maybe they won't. Either way, one doesn't exactly remain shipwrecked forever. Describing one as "shipwrecked," connotes the loss, destruction, interruption of an object—a ship. The ship is wrecked. If a ship is wrecked at sea, it will not be reconstructed, reassembled, repaired. It and its pieces are fragmented, lost. One is shipwrecked right after the ship is wrecked, but one is castaway until they are no longer castaway. The state of a castaway is indefinite. One who is castaway may at some point turn to being something other than castaway when they return home, are found by someone else, reintegrate into society, etc. There is either an interception on behalf of the castaway or someone else to change the physical consequence of being lost or the mental sensation of feeling lost. The plurality of the French word *naufrage* complicates the temporal quality of the state of loss that Cixous casts onto the reader by at once suggesting its freshness and its inevitable longevity—its indefiniteness in general as a state in which its freshness emerges and continues to re-emerge over an indefinite amount of time—as the defining characteristic(s) of lostness or being lost.

Beverely Bie Brahic, however, most likely translated *naufrage* into the word "shipwrecked" to clearly connect the French word *naufrage* with the word *naufragé* which Cixous embeds into part of

the following sentence. Brahic translates this to: "you have only the word *shipwreck* as a lantern and explanation." It is as if the two words share the same root in English, but in French *naufragé* means shipwreck, wreck, sinking. The multiplicity of its meaning and usage in French, and therefore, Cixous' intention in referencing the term, do not translate quite the same in English either. All three of those definitions serve a distinct purpose in the text. The word shipwreck connects the words *naufrage* and *naufragé* while illustrating an image Cixous projects onto the reader of a castaway lost at sea after a tragic event, wreckage, or loss of their vessel. Further, the ambiguity embedded in the definition of *naufragé* as a wreck rather than a shipwreck opens the word up further. Without the specificity of the ship, the vessel could become anything: a raft, a plane, a sane mind, a human body, a loved one. Opening up the meaning of the word and tracing its chain of signification further opens up the metaphor by pushing the reader so far into the literary device that they get pushed out the other side. Then the comparative element of the metaphor begins to blur. In marking of this French word and with a double motion, she both constructs and deconstructs a metaphor by ultimately reminding the reader that the wreckage is not a shipwreck and the loss is not a ship.

Which brings me to the last meaning: sinking. This comprehension of the word *naufragé* metastasizes that double motion into a triple motion by revealing what Cixous does—in the text and to the reader. It is an act of almost surgically attaching the text to her insides as she experiences loss. To return to the start of this movement: she abruptly introduces lostness to the reader through a simile of birth and quickly she begins to apply a deep, stern pressure. She then pushes the reader under until they sink like she does. She leaves only the word *naufrage*, shipwreck, wreck, sinking, to guide the reader as a "lantern and explanation." In this section of her text, Cixous casts her experience of loss, or losses of her mother, father, and Jacques Derrida, onto the reader by writing in the second person. After pulling the reader to the darkest place imaginable, she abandons them in the "lostness" for a moment with only her voice commanding their inability to "be" or "say." She

then reemerges in the first person and claims, "that is what happened to me." Suddenly, she merges with the reader by following the previous passage with: "We don't remember this world at all. The world we remember, where we were just last evening has become so far away suddenly you might think you'd dreamed it. It is disqualified. The horror of being zero and without memory without a hint of a link to the being one was and all one feels is that everything I feel has never before happened to me" (7). From here she proceeds to finish the paragraph in the first-person. After birthing the reader, pressing them, wrecking their vessel, casting them away, pulling them in, pushing them down, abandoning them, reemerging, binding herself to them, and ripping them out of that dark place, she introduces the reader once again to a simile but one about a train and a ticket collector.

In this simile, she writes of her "moods… which are like strangers" that "clamor for air, space." She wishes to "put a name to one of these slimy bit-parts, if [she] had an *I* to say, or if [she] could strike a bargain with one of these creatures, the way people trapped on a train they've boarded do with the ticket collector. But no ticket collector in sight" (8). The simile that surfaces anchors the "*shipwreck*" in the mundanity of life—out of the darkness and into a space filled with color and light. An image arises: a recognizable image of "having nothing to show for [your]self" when bargaining with a ticket collector on a train you accidentally boarded. She depicts her inability to bargain with all the moods and selves that fight to dominate her amidst her loss but animates it in the daylight. Like emerging from a dream and stepping into another. The bright lightness contrasts the simile in the beginning of this paragraph and transitions her lostness from a deep, isolated, sinking pit to a reality playing out in conjunction with a world of both darkness and daylight. Both iterations demonstrate a clear sense of lostness, but the color and familiarity of the train she boarded by mistake reflects a sense of displacement and of being lost more recognizably. She reminds the reader, and possibly

herself, that there is life to be lived. Life always already being lived. One marked by loss and lostness,

but also moving trains and wrecked ships.
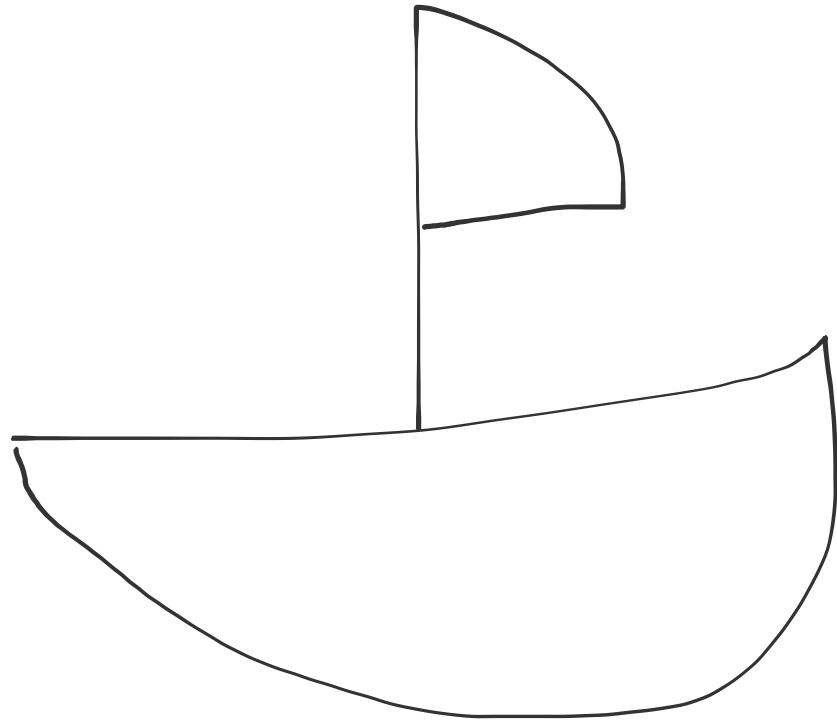
Shipwreck

(This morning's decision: upon waking, take notes on what remains of certain of my dreams, before they sink back into oblivion. Retain in particular those— they are finally rather rare—that already have a verbal consistency. This promises them an ideal identity, an autonomous existence of sorts, at the same time lighter and more solid. For me, the duration of these words is like the solitary persistence of a wreck. Its form run aground is stabilized in the sand. One might see it surge up through the morning fog in the manner of a damp ruin, jagged, covered with algae and signs. A chance as well for the deciphering to come when the thing resists. The promise of work and reading, at least for a little while. On Saturday, day of rest, distraction, or meditation, I will reassemble these remains while reflecting them a little. Filtering and ordering. We'll see what can be saved of them. But to float on the surface [surnager] does not necessarily mean to survive [survivre].

Jacques Derrida
Biodegradables: Seven Diary Fragments
(Translated by Peggy Kamuf)

You are grasping at pieces of splintered wood as great, big waves swallow you. Reaching, fingers outstretched, you try to grab and hopefully hold close the fragments of a dream—one with "an autonomous existence of sorts." It takes tremendous effort and force of will. Perhaps a couple instances before, the splinters weren't splinters but an entire infrastructure that you had not the inclination or even the wherewithal to call your own. Yet you navigated through familiar waters upon it—ones familiar but never easy to move through. Suddenly this infrastructure dissipates into something else; it no longer is what it was moments before. You resemble an infant for a moment, experiencing the shock of emerging from what-once-was to what-suddenly-is. Then you instinctually try and gather chunks of wood. In the midst of gathering, you attempt to piecemeal them into the

coherent structure you once knew. That isn't working so well. You decide that once coherent structure will from henceforth be a memory and that the pieces of it which "float on the surface" only leave you more confused, lost.

Like the memory of a beloved friend that bubbles up from somewhere hidden in your stomach. It plays out again as a projection on a thin, invisible sheet over your eyes.

As you throw your hands out in front of you to grasp that projection, you begin to lose track of all the distinguishable features of your friend. Still, what was said remains. The "verbal consistency" speckles the surface of the water like flakes of wood, gifting you with enough buoyancy to travel through it. You come upon the shoreline where you see "its form run aground is stabilized in the sand." The larger silhouette, the silhouette of a sunken ship, instills within you not a sense of relief, but a profound impression that you have work to do. "Work and reading."

Whether once a moment or always a dream, the event of dissolution, fragmentation you are now emerging from leaves everything a memory. How each memory became a memory hardly matters because you have work to do. These fragments do not need to be assembled into the coherent structure they once were because that is impossible. Rather, each needs disassembling, deciphering, decoding, deconstructing. You continue to wish for the "ruins" to revert to a whole just as suddenly as the fragmentation took place, but instead of renovating that structure, you read. You read the word "shipwrecked" freshly scrawled across the ruins in nurturing handwriting. The word radiating a sort of glow like a "lantern" that only casts light upon itself. Like those words from what-once-was that "float on the surface," you glide through the water until your feet start scraping the sandy bottom. The sky, sand, and water are nearly indiscernible in the darkness. You realize how much you resemble those fragments, realizing at once that "to float on the surface does not necessarily mean to survive."

The world in which we live is not only opaque, heavy, and given over to death, but is above all a world born of a monumental machination; a world that was not foreseen, not desired, flawed in all its parts; a world in which every thing, every being, is the result of a cosmic misunderstanding. In this whirlpool of errors, this universal shipwreck which is the history of matter and of man, we on earth are rather like survivors condemned to eternal solitude, planetary detainees who are victims of injustice on a truly cosmic scale.

Jacques Lacarrière, *The Gnostics*
(Translated by Nina Rootes)

A Dishonest Metaphor

Mystery

It has been over a year since the crime took place. The police report has been filed, the perpetrator apprehended, the court date set, and there is hardly a case to close. But something is missing that has always been missing since you got the call that morning, and you fear it always will.

You know what you need to know, and what you need to know is that she is gone. But you can't stop reassessing each and every detail in search of something secret. The pieces fit together too well. Like a puzzle that will never fit together, but from the space between its pieces erupts meaningful imagery.

So, you take the fragments you have gathered over the year and try to construct a narrative. That's the mission. These fragments have a special quality, something otherworldly and immaterial about them. It is easy to lose track of yourself amongst them.

Whether you engage with these fragments or ignore them, two questions relentlessly haunt you:

What will it take to close this case?

What is closure?

No matter the texts you consult, the answer never surfaces; you can't help but feel like the answers you seek hide within the fragments, scrawled across them in an indecipherable code.

Hesitation

At one point in *Hyperdream*, Cixous writes of the recurring dilemma she faces: whether to call her brother or to write. To deal with this dilemma, she manipulates the passage of time in her writing. In a doubled motion, she submits to and overcomes her more fleeting, shallow desire to call her brother and go on their routine walk. She accomplishes this by fulfilling her deepest desire to write, "by digging a tunnel through time" (Hyperdream 31).

In this section of her text, Cixous distinguishes between the two desires conflicting inside of her: (1) to write or (2) to call her brother and ask him to go on a walk to the Tower of Montaigne. She writes as if she is deliberating between which choice to make. The reader knows that she has already made up her mind to write at some point, however, because she has written this and the reader reads it. The complexity of this section does not end at that decision. Rather, that decision marks where it begins. Cixous writes of how fiercely she wants to call her brother but that doing so would be to betray another desire:

> …to put an obstacle in the way of my desire, to put off what I most desire in the whole world lately, that is to write a book. (21)

Meanwhile, a deep "argued fear" of being unable to write "simmers inside [her] like the fires of an infection." A fear that washed over her about a day or two after the death of her friend Jacques Derrida. Meanwhile, a more topical, urgent desire tugs at her. She writes, "in the end I'll call my brother, even before I have finished mulling it over, am I not called?" (22) Making the decision to call him means more than a chat on the phone: it means the commitment to an experience with him—a reliable and repetitive experience in which they visit The Tower of Montaigne together. That experience, the routine of it, brings her comfort. Every time they venture out, both of them walk the same path and her brother utters the same words. At one point in this section, after she recalls the historical diatribe that her brother never fails to repeat on their walk, she ponders,

> I don't know if we made up the alliance between the road and the tower my brother and I by digging a tunnel through time or whether it is the road that did this, because of the so rich sentence it traces in space conducting us unawares through time. (31)

Along the "tunnel through time," there is an "alliance" between the road, the tower, her brother, and her. She claims not to know if her and her brother "made up" the alliance all of these entities share or if "the road" they walk upon made it up. Here she transposes the image of a "sentence" over the road and puts it in motion as it "traces in space" and "digs a tunnel through time." She takes two nouns made by human hands, a sentence and a road, and connects them within the confines of a sentence and with that sentence, creating the road, marking it into her "book." With this marking, she performs a double motion of inscribing a pathway into the earth as it emerges on the page. What it marks, for her, is the routine walk to the Tower she and her brother take. She describes, in detail, how the actual walk plays out in almost the same exact way every time, like rereading the same passage in a book. So, she writes the road into her book, the "tunnel through time," and leaves this sentence with the traces of the walks she actually took, or the one walk taken over and over, along with her written decision to once again repeat that walk because "in the end, [she'll] call her brother" even before she finishes mulling it over.

Cixous strings together the past and inevitable future visually in her writing. Shadows of previous walks and images of future ones compress together under the trace of "the road" she carves into the page. In these sentences, she illuminates the comfort offered by the repetition in her life—the recurring action of going on this walk with her brother. Her desire to attain this comfort arises from a necessity to mitigate her fear. That fear that "simmers deep inside her," presupposed by her deeper desire to write. Or maybe it is the other way around. But in order to work through this fear, she writes of what comforts her. Of what she could be doing instead of the scary thing. She inscribes it into her book and at once fulfils both desires. She makes "the road" that she would normally walk down, or the image of it, somewhat present in her text in that it supplants a

"sentence." Before, she states that her "hypothesis is that [their] Tower is still intact" and that it always will be. That it, unlike the people she had lost, will persist through time like a sentence carved into a book, "a being unaware of the end, unaware of what time is" (32). After she carves it into her book, something about this hypothesis remains true.

> When all I can do is prepare to call my brother, at this point in the book I so ardently wish to begin to write the presentment of an intention contrary to that which I believe to be my main impulse steals over me, like an inexplicable intruder in a dream: perhaps within me the desire to put off that which I most in the world desire of late keeps watch, I mean, to write a book but a wounded book, a contentious broken book, a book not pleased to be a book, to be only a book, to be born in the absence of my friend, a book incapable of acting as if the last times were not upon us, but which at the same time cannot act as if it were only a book hence a being unaware of the end, unaware of what time is. (32)

Irony

The month following Paul de Man's death in December of 1983, Jacques Derrida delivered a speech titled "In Memoriam: On the Soul" in his honor at Yale University.[ii] As a speech, this text was written with the intent of being spoken by its writer to an audience that was not himself, his closest friends, or those who were closest to de Man. Rather, Derrida delivered this speech to colleagues and people in his and de Man's field of work. This is to say that within this specific set of circumstances, this work of mourning took a particular form with specific qualities.

In the speech, Derrida writes:

> This is neither the time nor the place to give in to discreet revelations or too personal memories. I will refrain from speaking of such memories, therefore—I have too many of them, as do many of you, and they are so overwhelming that we prefer to be alone with them. But allow me to infringe this law of privacy long enough to evoke two memories, just two among so many others. (Memoires xix)

Derrida remarked upon the impropriety in "speaking of such memories" of de Man, thereby codifying a "law of privacy." He then, however, immediately instructs his audience of how he will "infringe" upon the law he just mentioned. Derrida displays not a revision but a decision. One to, in a sentence, disrupt the decision made in the sentence prior. He engages with the speech-text as a (visible) performance of language in order to put on a show, to play out the speech for the performance it is. He does this in several ways.

First, this particular speech requires mention of the "law of privacy" perhaps because of the public, institutional setting in which it was delivered. One usually resists the divulgence of personal or private memories in that circumstance. When one injects private memories into a public setting, a communicative act may quickly turn unprofessional. However, this singular event, the event of this speech, succeeds the death of Paul de Man; therefore, Derrida speaks within two seemingly conflicting contexts: among colleagues and in a state of mourning. These contexts are, in the western world, considered public and private contexts, respectively. If Derrida were speaking to a

group of de Man's closest friends in a state of mourning, that would seem appropriate. If he were

speaking to those in his field of work specifically about the work of de Man (and it appears he was

after all), that would also seem appropriate. But because he partakes in what has become an

uncomfortably private affair—to remember, to mourn—in not just a public but professional setting,

he does so willingly, visibly, as a charade. In his performance, Derrida writes a law and breaks it, he

draws a line and crosses it, he establishes a border and floats right through it. This act simply (in a

more realized way) demonstrates what has always already taken place in every work of mourning.

(Perhaps in every work in general, but don't let me get ahead of myself.)

The line, border, separation, distinction between the public and private (and maybe

oppositions in general) fragments in the instance of another's death. Which is what Derrida

elucidates in his act. Mourning, the private, the personal, can no longer be hidden. One cannot hide

the permanent absence of another. For Derrida to speak personally of de Man—a multifaceted

human with a myriad of experiences that informed his writing, his work, his relationships, and his

experience with other scholars—in a professional setting, would mean for him to traverse the border

of private and public. To stir that border and confuse it. A spoken word of mourning always already

presupposes this uncomfortable blurring or smudging of the line between those two traditionally

opposing terms, but in this brief speech about his late friend Paul de Man, Derrida acknowledges

that. He does so not explicitly, but throughout his performance. After he mentions a "law of

privacy," he speaks of private memories about de Man in the workplace—of all public places! Doing

so does not subvert the norm but turns it inside out. Within his performance, he exposes the irony

that has always already been at play in works of mourning: the expectation of making public one's

private memories with, thoughts of, feelings for an other. The irony of this performance—which,

again, is simply another iteration of the performative act presupposed in any work of mourning—

takes on an even more self-reflexive quality, however, when one considers who Derrida mourned.

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What does Derrida know of Paul de Man? To reference Derrida's text "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep Within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," in which he quotes de Man's text "Excuses (*Confessions*)" in *Allegories of Reading:*

> The first sentence announces what "political and autobiographical texts have in common" and the conclusion explains again the relations between irony and allegory so as to render an account (without ever being able to account for it sufficiently) of this: "Just as the text can never stop apologizing for the suppression of guilt that it performs, there is never enough knowledge available to account for the delusion of knowing" (A, p. 300). (*Critical Inquiry* 638)[iii]

In this text and with this quote, Derrida confronts the allegedly fascist articles written by Paul de Man in his early twenties after Nazis invaded where he lived in Belgium. With de Man dead as these articles were being made public, Derrida decided to propose possibilities for de Man's silence on the matter. He also gave a display of the "rules" imposing themselves on him in his pursuit to "read or reread" de Man and "reconstitute this whole part of the corpus" (*Critical Inquiry* 640). As the one spearheading the move to publish and distribute these "early works," Derrida continued to speculate about the motives of de Man and his silence throughout this text, yet he refused even the possibility of either "betraying" or "protecting" him. Rather, he recognized de Man as an "irreducible" other of whom he could not claim to know everything or assume anything because "there is never enough knowledge available to account for the delusion of knowing." And so, in "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep Within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," Derrida introduces de Man's unearthed texts by both concluding that the circumstances "make responsibility *undeniable: there is some, one cannot deny it, one cannot/can only deny it [on ne peut (que) la dénier] precisely because it is impossible*" and acknowledging that any assumptions or persecutions on behalf of readers would reduce de Man. Derrida made the decision to mark down his self-imposed rules as he read the articles, published them, and wrote to readers of de Man's texts to clarify that his knowledge was and forever would be incomplete; therefore, he mentioned the "law of privacy" in his speech about de Man to reiterate that he could

never completely do de Man justice as someone tasked with the duty of publicly mourning or remembering him. Which further marks his performance as such.

Derrida codifies the "law of privacy" because (or what seems like because) of the ethical questions incited by the act of revealing a private memory about one who can no longer consent to the diffusion of that information or defend themselves. Yes, Derrida had an incomplete knowledge of his late friend, but within his decision to-reveal or to-keep-hidden resided the power to shape his audiences' conception of de Man. Any iteration of mourning expressed to the public undoubtedly carries with it an ethical dilemma: how much does one reveal? Revealing too little would diminish the complexity and multidimensional quality of a once-alive person but revealing too much puts the reputation of the dead at stake. Derrida mentions this "law of privacy" as a law that he himself declared, at once demonstrating his power to create a law and breaking that law precisely as a demonstration of this power. In exhibiting this for his audience, he calls attention to the role he himself plays as one who writes, speaks, and performs his mourning for an audience. It is a role in which Derrida's word supplants that of de Man's. Paul de Man can no longer choose to reveal or keep hidden his secrets, memories, desires that he once shared with Derrida. Derrida could have chosen to share whatever he pleased of de Man without the presence of de Man to oppose him. In turn, Derrida's breaking of his own law translates into a responsible act (or an act, play, performance of responsibility). What emerges is a responsible performance through this exposition of irony.

To be sure, Derrida expresses this irony as a conscious motion within his speech not only because of the act of mourning in general, but who he mourns. He writes:

> …Paul was irony itself and, among all the vivid thoughts he leaves with us and leaves alive in us, there is as well an enigmatic reflection on irony and even, in the words of Schlegel which he had occasion to cite, an "irony of irony." At the heart of my attachment to him, there has also always been a certain beyond-of-irony which cast on his own a softening, generous light, reflecting a smiling compassion on everything he illuminated with his tireless vigilance. His lucidity was sometimes overpowering, making no concession to weakness, but it never gave in to that negative assurance with which the ironic consciousness is sometimes too easily satisfied. (Memoires xvi)

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In "Like the Sound of the Sea Deep Within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," Derrida refers to manifestations of de Man's irony in regard to the shape of his life, his work, and his character. The reveal of de Man's Nazi-leaning articles imbued both de Man's body of work and waking life with traces of irony, hence the name of Derrida's text:

> ...my title alludes to the passage from Montherlant quoted by de Man in Le Soir in 1941. I will come back to it, but the double edge of its irony already seems cruel: "When I open the newspapers and journals of today, I hear the indifference of the future rolling over them, just as one hears the sound of the sea when one holds certain seashells up to the ear." (Critical Inquiry 591)

Paul de Man quoted Montherlant in the midst of a time in his life that would later interrupt his entire life's history for those who would discover it in the future. Along with the irony which de Man appeared to have radiated from his essence, the dramatic irony with which he marked up his own life colored it with an ironic hue that left Derrida with a memory of his friend that was undeniably conjoined with the term. This would explain Derrida's proclamation of de Man as "irony itself." In this moment, a sort of literariness erupts from Derrida's speech-text. His literariness consists of metonymy: de Man becomes not simply described as, but somewhat synthesized with, "irony itself" in the speech. And if de Man "was irony itself," then Derrida included this literary element not merely to reference de Man's deep complexity, convoluted history, body of work (including a text titled "The Concept of Irony"), or Derrida's own great responsibility, but to weave immaterial pieces of his friend into his speech. With that constative utterance, he marks the presence of de Man in his written speech despite his corporeal absence, reaching for his "most vivid desire" to "hear [de Man], himself, speaking to us." Declaring that "Paul was irony itself" while proceeding to work irony into this speech (as in moments like that of the breaking of the "law of privacy") grants all of those who heard this speech the opportunity to once again hear echoes of de Man reverberating out of Derrida's mouth. Those who encountered this speech as a text are left with

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remnants of de Man's markings, his movement, throughout Derrida's marks. Within the speech as text, irony traces the life de Man lived, his work, his character.

Derrida strategically infused irony into his speech-text in the most "softening" way, too. It lessens the hardness, potency, sovereignty of his power-to-reveal through it. His use of irony softened the border between private and public, softened the threshold between life and art, and left this speech-text riddled with the obvious trappings of a performance which it was always already going to be. It is as if the irony worked as his friend Paul—a friend who would "illuminate" Derrida's responsibility with "lucidity" and "compassion" as any good friend would. It seems that, for Derrida, de Man, "irony itself," was present in this speech about nonpresence, keeping him in check.

Mama

Constant reprisals keep mama under the weather until whispers of old friends sing through the wind , leaving a tiny gap, an opening just large enough for a mouth to creep in, slithering with a tongue, teeth filled with dental shame and baby plaque . A mouth of horses, jockey-less on a hillside of flesh and might. Underneath what use to be she sings a sad song, on top of what she looks at, now keeps my feet warm, fear rides beneath the skirt of her father's mother and the rest lies in her coffin, unburdened by stiffened desires and that creeping climate of horseshit. I lay with you so that I don't bleed out from within and the touch mitigates what she wanted me to feel. I only see her in dreams and when my eyes deceive me, I see that and them and him and her and we, most importantly, we together at last. The completion process undergone in order to fill the hole filled by a painful loss, a trust that thrusts lust into peril, pierced by a spike entangled with weeds, attached to them who only recede. Only recede. Like the absent one of mother goose tails, a story with no punchline just a smack to the kisser and a kiss on the forehead, peas stuck to a knife with honey and an allergy to bunnies. Mother living in the basement with orders filling her eyes and the only one, the only one around upstairs sits looking at the sunlight. Gleaming and gleaming her loss glides on the wind on soft days like these no one can tell, but the one who really wants to know, that seeks the mounted purpose gilded with pearl cracks open the clam to find my water, suffocating in the stiffness of clarity and reality wants less to do with that creeping tongue now. It asks for less and begs for more, silently. I do the same.

Snakes and Birds

There are many ways bodies have been taken care of. They can be burned or eaten or buried. My favorite way is one I first heard at the Guayabo National Monument in Cartago, Costa Rica. Not much remains of the people who inhabited that land except for their tombs, burial sites, and roads.

If someone died violently—and only violently—in that community, their body would be placed in large, woven baskets and pulled up to the tips of trees so that vultures could feed on their flesh. The birds would strip the dead of their meat until only bone remained. *This is how she would have been cleaned.* Once the baskets held only bones and the vultures carried the soul to the spirit realm, the people of what is now called Guayabo would lower the baskets and bury the bones in tombs next to the homes of the deceased.

This cleaning process resembles that of the Zoroastrian religion in India except that the vultures clean all of the dead, not just those that died violently. For Zoroastrians, fire, water, and earth corrupt the soul and prevent its passage to heaven. Unfortunately, due to the diffusion of diclofenac over the last 20 years, a pharmaceutical administered to buffalo and cattle in the dairy industry in India, the vulture population has quickly become endangered. A serious issue has arisen from this decrease in vultures because farmers of India depend on vultures for the disposal of cattle and buffalo much like Zoroastrians depend on vultures for the disposal of human bodies. Without larger numbers of these birds, the feral dog population has exploded. Now 30,000 people die from rabies a year in India. Zoroastrian bodies are also not receiving proper cleaning. Religious leaders have considered placing reflective surfaces on the tall tower they place bodies upon in order to harness the sun's rays and expedite the decomposition process. The pharmaceutical and agricultural industries, industries that intended on providing health and sustenance for the people of India, ultimately produced an overabundance of dead bodies without a way to dispose of them.

Snakes and Snakes

On March 26, 2019 her boyfriend, another close friend, and I all got the tattoo she had gotten the

previous year on her left forearm. The tattoo is of a snake eating its own tail, an ouroboros.

> Arguably, "the earliest known representation of the ouroboros' in funerary art is an episode on the second gilded shrine of King Tutankhamun from the fourteenth century BCE, featuring "a large mummiform figure of the king, his head and feet encircled by two serpents biting their tails. The serpent around the head is called Mehen, the Enveloper" (Piankoff 1955:121, fig. 41; Hornung 1999:78). The two images of Mehen, the encircler, and the snake surrounding the king's feet supposedly connoted the polarity of heaven and earth (Strieker 1953:7). An image on the funerary papyrus of the Chantress of Amun Henuttawy (1069-747 BCE) features a tail-biting snake. It is placed in the right hand of Geb, the personification of the earth, over whose body the star-spangled torso of the anthropomorphic sky goddess is extended (British Museum catalog number EA 10018.2; Lanzone 1881:408-10, plate CLIX. 8). Although the exact significance of the ouroboros in this image is elusive, the arrangement leaves little doubt that the Egyptians conceived of it as a prominent phenomenon in the space between heaven and earth - either as a manifestation of the journeying sun or a repetition of the pattern of the enclosing union of earth and sky (Lindsay 1970:274). (5)
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> Marinus Anthony van der Sluijs and Anthony L. Peratt
> "The Ourobóros as an Auroral Phenomenon"

A Dream in July (2019)

My waking life had spilled into my dream. This had never happened to me.

She was supposed to be dead in my dream just like she is in real life. I saw her, though. I became irate. I approached her. She had long blonde hair—my favorite way to remember her. I tried to talk to her and she was distant, disinterested, unphased, just nodding with a "yeah, yeah." I commented on this. She looked at me and kinda shrugged.

I pulled her out of the seat and started hitting her. Her body was face-up on the ground, and I proceeded to hit her in the face as hard as I could with my fists. Her face didn't change. No blood erupted from her skin, nothing became discolored, her flesh didn't respond to the impact of my fist.

Suddenly, her body becomes erect and we are looking at each other, face-to-face. I am looking at her features closely. It's incredible how vivid they are. I have never seen a face this vivid in a dream. I see her pores, her lips, her mole, her eyes. Her blonde hair. She has a strange feature to her, a glow. But it is extraordinarily subtle. She looks at me directly, for the first time. She looks present. She was there. This is her, I thought. She's actually here.

It feels like she is looking into me. She says, ***"you have something you want to say to me, say it."***

The verbal consistency startled me.

It was a very short answer.

And she disappeared. A part of her remained, a more important part feathered away, and then the rest followed.

I then woke up within my dream. And it continued.

DREAM
Ghosts

The Mark

As with anything, there are all kinds complexities in a work of mourning. These complexities reveal themselves as such more readily than in other works. There is something else occurring when one makes a mark of mourning as opposed to some other mark. It gives way to looking into the work of marking itself. Whenever someone makes any kind of mark, they are always already leaving a mark. A mark is never made without being left. It is a mark one makes at a specific instant, in a specific place. That mark-maker will cease to exist at some point, but that mark, unless it is one easily destroyed by nature (like markings in the sand) or purposely destroyed by a human (like a secret) will likely remain for some time after the mark-maker dies. Marks may remain in memories, on a page, on a wall. They are not permanent and will not remain forever but for some time after the mark-maker dies. Marks, therefore, are stained with the inevitability of death. This is no news. But a mark made during and about mourning, is self-reflexive. To make a mark about something dead that was once living, about someone you know and love who has passed, is to rip littles holes in the surface of the mark. Through these holes the mark reveals more of itself—only *more* of itself. It would be like poking a hole into an ancient machine so complex, that not one person, but all of humanity unintentionally crafted and continuously revised. And after peering into that hole, into that ancient machine's insides, one would find more of what it was already always composed of on the outside. It would just look a little different, less discreet in there. Writing about the nonpresence of someone once-living turns marks inside out a little bit. If the inevitably of death is presupposed in the mark, then a mark about death puts that presupposition, that constitutive element, into the content—back into, or onto, the mark. The form and content suddenly create a relationship that gives way to the text and, in turn, the work of mourning. Then the process of making the mark becomes the process of learning about marks in general just as much as its about mourning, loss, and the other who died.

Mystery II

Her mother asked me to unlock her laptop two weeks after she died. She had also given me her phone to unlock, so I checked her notes to find the will I knew she had been keeping there. It was not there. She had recently deleted almost everything she had written off her phone except for some poems and a document containing every password and username she had ever used. Here is the last poem she had saved on her phone (it was in a note titled "poems"):

> The white sky. Crisp clean air. It's cold again. A familiar feeling arises. It won't rain today. It won't snow either. But yet I can see the flakes falling, I can smell them as if they were truly there. I close my eyes and embrace as memories flood from behind my eyes. They break through my mind, engulfing my body. I can remember. I am a child, whose glimpse at the world turned sour too quickly. I'm falling, my back to the ground, the white surrounding me. The trees glistened. I didn't fear death because I had yet to understand it. I feared the unknown. Little did I know, they went hand in hand. I closed my eyes and embraced the moment, holding on to it as tightly as I could because it felt familiar before it happened. Like it would happen again and again. Like it would be the first and last memory I'd have. My eyes closed, my back numb to the ground, the cold surrounding me. I'm alone, even as they walk by. Looking up, the only thing I see is white. The end.

Her computer contained almost nothing other than a file titled "Aspsia Crhismas poerty." It is a compilation of her poems.

Nothing further to report.

A
more
Honest
metaphor

Answerability

In 1919, Mikhail Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher, literary theorist, and literary critic whose name became a referent for a philosophical school of thought (his system of beliefs came to be known as Bakhtinian) released his first publication: a text which was only published in fragments. This text he titled, "Art and Answerability." It is a collection of essays, one of which is a very short essay of about three pages with the same name.

In this brief but potent essay he writes: "The individual must become answerable through and through: all of [their] constituent moments must not only fit next to each other in the temporal sequence of [their] life, but must also interpenetrate each other in the unity of guilt and answerability." And so, "art and life are not one, but they must become united in myself—in the unity of my answerability."[iv] By constituent moments, Bakhtin refers to moments arising from or connected to the respective "constituent elements" of a person: science, art, and life. He describes only the relationship between art and life within the individual in this text, marking both as distinct elements that people have historically severed and distanced: "all the old arguments about the interrelationship of art and life, about the purity of art, etc.— that is, the real aspiration behind all such arguments—is nothing more than the mutual striving of both art and life to make their own tasks easier, to relieve themselves of their own answerability" (Art 2). Bakhtin designates a term for the single conduit that facilitates connection between these two elements (besides the temporal string connecting the continuous substitution of art for life and vice versa) in the individual: "answerability."

Bakhtin's moral understanding of the connection between art and life challenges the active separation—opposition, even—imposed upon the two elements. According to him, "it is certainly easier to create without answering for life, and easier to live without any consideration for art." This proclamation paints ease with a shade of laziness or complacency. The constituent elements of life

and art harbor inherent distinctions, as Bakhtin clarifies in the start of this text, but the act of becoming complacent with that distinction so much that the separation becomes not reinforced, but simply enforced, places a gap or a cut between the two. A deeper cut gives way not only to a separation, but an opposition between them. Although life and art "fit next to each other in the temporal sequence of life," the contiguous positioning merely reiterates the inevitable separation, and—for many who refuse to consciously approach the two with answerability—opposition between these two elements. If constituent moments occur side by side with each one preceding or succeeding the others without penetration, then one can deduce that these two moments will never occur in their entirety at the same moment. Bakhtin writes: "When a human being is in art, he is not in life, and conversely." Instead, moments of life and art take turns supplanting each other for the duration of existence. In turn, without answerability as the conduit through which one element may become present within the moment of the other, the two work in opposition to each other: a moment of art would make itself present at the expense of life while the inverse of this would also occur. From moment to moment, these oppositions would give way to momentary hierarchies in which the constituent element that becomes salient in any given constituent moment surpasses and triumphs over the other—disrupting the temporal spacing of these elements next to each other and rather creating a more multidimensional imagery of both art and life in a perpetual state of war in which the victor becomes the governing element of the given moment.

Further, the victories of one moment over the other in any given human existence depends on a multiplicity of factors, giving way to a different understanding of hierarchization in terms of art, life, and answerability. The otherness, exclusion, or oppression of an individual in the political landscape, economic status, education level, and the presence or absence of other opportunities work to determine ratios of art-to-life moments. In this sense, hierarchization arises in a less instantaneous and more broad scope. Perhaps also a more deliberate one. For example, Bakhtin

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writes, "Nor will it do to invoke 'inspiration' in order to justify want of answerability. Inspiration that ignores life and is itself ignored by life is not inspiration but a state of possession." After condemning the easiness, or laziness, of further separating art and life, and in doing so placing them in opposition to one another, Bakhtin particularly and tactfully remarks on the hierarchical consequence of injecting into the relationship of art and life components like "inspiration" which serve to isolate one from the other. Bakhtin includes "inspiration" as a word imbued with a sort of ethereal quality, one that diametrically opposes the moral, pragmatic work of answerability by further distinguishing art as something "pure" or ideal, therefore diminishing the necessity or presence of moments of life within it. He remarks on the necessity of answerability for art during moments of life also, but the former conundrum receives more of his attention. He writes:

> The artist and the human being are naively, most often mechanically, united in one person; the human being leaves "the fretful cares of everyday life" and enters for a time the realm of creative activity as another world, a world of "inspiration, sweet sounds, and prayers." And what is the result? Art is too self-confident, audaciously self-confident, and too high-flown, for it is in no way bound to answer for life. And, of course, life has no hope of ever catching up with art of this kind. "That's too exalted for us"—says life. "That's art, after all! All we've got is the humble prose of living."(Art 1)

In the perspective of Bakhtin as a Marxist Linguist, the material matters a great deal in the processes of constructing and deconstructing the immaterial; therefore, neglecting the material and refusing to live with "the unity of answerability" presupposes a bourgeois or privileged perspective that often accompanies "all the old arguments" of art (3). Ones like what he states above.

Moreover, the moral quality of Bakhtin's argument of answerability and its implications about the true connection between art and life within the human being introduces a greater weight to the creative processes of both art and life. A seriousness arises from the demand of answerability within a self in one or both of those processes. Accompanied by that seriousness is an awareness. As one engages with one of these processes, they further produce a deeper presence of one element

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within a moment of the other until they "interpenetrate" each other. Perhaps rather than produce a

presence, answerability further reveals the predestined presence of each element within the other.

Because a moment of art, for the duration of its creation or consumption, will never be fully present

as moments of life occur, that answerability, or the acceptance of such, will mark its presence as

such. If for example, someone chose to write a book with a conscious decision to approach it with

answerability to life, they would maybe consider the implications, consequences, histories, and

possibilities of the marks within it—marks that owe their potency to previous moments of life. On

the other hand, if someone decided to spend the night in the city, meeting up with people, engaging

in conversation, having sex, and enjoying music with an answerability to art in the process, they

would possibly reflect and contemplate on aspects of the night with a perspective previously

gathered from moments of art like that of irony or a visual appreciation for the color and

composition of the cityscape, for instance. This last example serves as a specific representation of

Bakhtin's argument when he writes,

> But what guarantees the inner connection of the constituent elements of a person?
> Only the unity of answerability. I have to answer with my own life for what I have
> experienced and understood in art, so that everything I have experienced and
> understood would not remain ineffectual in my life. (2)

A fuller understanding of answerability during the presence of each of these elements of art and life

in a given moment open up the possibility to reveal the presence of one within the other. These

examples depict specific moments in which art and life "become united" in the "unity of…

answerability," but Bakhtin refers to a specific ideal in the beginning of his text that I am not sure is

entirely possible. He writes that "the individual must become answerable through and through" so

that every single constituent moment "interpenetrates" the other. The individual within which such

a process would perpetually occur would be exhausted always. Perhaps this is why Bakhtin makes a

larger point to stress the importance of answerability during moments of art rather than life. As

previously quoted, Bakhtin stresses the ease with which one can live life without the interpenetration of art and immerse oneself in a moment of art without the interpenetration of life, but it seems that one may encounter different types of moments of art and life that demand differing amounts of answerability. Depending on the contexts, consequences, and communal or societal significance one faces, whether it be in a moment of life or art, the degree of presence of answerability varies. For the purposes of this analysis, I will specifically focus on the differing degrees of answerability's presence within moments of art.

So then, what are the complexities introduced to this system when art is created within specific contexts or as specific genres, forms? Particularly interesting are the intricacies that surface when engaging with the creative process of a work of mourning or with the encounter of such a work. As previously mentioned, questions of morality become more apparent within a work of mourning than they would within a poem written by someone in a nation-state without harsh regulations on free speech, for example. It seems that these questions are not *singularly* present in a work of mourning but something always present in a work of any kind. This something just appears less obscured, or rather, more revealed because of the nature of such a work. This is for several reasons.

First, the work as a moment of art directly results from a moment in life—the interruption of the life of an other—which depicts the temporal relationship between life and art that Bakhtin mentions quite explicitly. For this point, I shall focus specifically on the creation of a work of mourning rather than its consumption. As Bakhtin writes, human beings experience a chain of moments connected through time, so, inevitably, a moment of art sometimes follows a moment of life, and, assuming that the human experiencing this chain of moments has accepted answerability for these moments, that previous moment of life lingers on in the present moment of art. During a work of mourning, the previous moment of life does not linger subtly or peripherally. Rather, the

moment of art sensibly, as in a visual or aural sense, refers to the moment of life containing the death of an other as the point of origin for the work. The causal relationship is then revealed as such. Such a relationship between art and life manifests answerability visibly in a work of mourning because the cause that connects the moments of life is not proximity or victory, but the explicit presence of answerability itself. Answerability is presupposed in a work of this nature. During most moments of art, moments particularly consisting of the creation of such (in that it is a focused and isolated experience), those who were present in the previous moments of life no longer have presence in the current moment, but in the context of a work of mourning, the one, or other, about which the work is created will never again be present in any following moments of life for the creator or for anyone else. This type of art can owe its existence to the responsibility of remarking upon someone who no longer exists. Someone who is no longer present in the most permanent way possible.

Whether the creation of the work of mourning is to inform others, to provide catharsis for the creator, or to do something else less easy to put into words, the presence of answerability for others, the self, or the deceased links the moment of life to the moment of art. The interpenetration that Bakhtin describes takes on a form far less hidden than in other works because of answerability's overt presence throughout it. Supposing that the human engaging with the creation of this type of work is not Bakhtin's ideal and may try but is not always "answerable through and through," this linkage, or answerability, presents itself temporally at the instant in between the moment of the event, or the death, and the decision to create the work. Within this temporal in-between, answerability begins to come into play and comes to full fruition at the moment of the decision. That decision marks the metamorphosis of answerability from an element latent and possible to something present in the work. Almost as if the nonpresence of the one about which the work is created gives way to the extreme potency of answerability's presence. This answerability is so potent

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that the linkage of art to life, answerability itself, becomes consistently referred to by the creator of a work of mourning, as seen in the previous section about Derrida's remembrance of Paul de Man.

Consequently, in the process of creating the work of mourning, responsibility works in specific ways. First it brings the work into existence, then it brings that active awareness and seriousness to the person in the process of creating a work of mourning which then leads to sedulously referencing life more than in other works. This is not always true, however. In a piece of literature written under a strict dictatorship, for instance, the author could intentionally weave coded references to moments of life experienced in that political context and subtly reveal the consequences, intricacies, or mechanisms of that regime through their work because of an answerability to the people of their state. In a work of mourning, though, the specificity of the circumstances of the community or world surrounding the work do not matter in the same way. The circumstance that matters is the death and the effect of a singular person's (or some singular persons') now nonpresence for the creator of a work of mourning and for other lives touched by the deceased. Indeed, further contexts about who died, how they died, who may have been involved with the death, the political significance of the death, and so on absolutely contain relevance and can alter the degree of answerability demanded by the work, but the loss experienced in the moment of life preceding its creation opens this moment of work to its own genre. One in which its content and answerability define it, regardless of form. This is not to reduce a work of this kind or neglect the differing variations or subcategories of works of mourning, but to claim that the identification of it as such and with that, the answerability demanded by it, are particular to none other but itself.

As previously mentioned, the answerability of a work of this nature erupts from the nonpresence of an other. The present speaker or creator within this particular kind of moment of art must take on the answerability of speaking about an other who can no longer answer to their own answerability and, in turn, no longer decide. They cannot decide what to reveal or keep hidden, what

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to confirm or deny. The answerability once belonging to the other does not quite become displaced or absorbed into the creator of a work of mourning, but what is lost in the moment of life preceding the work does in some way become found in the following moment(s) of art. (This is not to say that an individual creates a work of mourning all in one blow during a singular moment of art that succeeds the determining moment of life, but that even if more moments of life and art supplant each other for the duration of time it takes to complete the work, the answerability within each of those collected moments of art becomes augmented. And presumably, the answerability among the interspersed moments of life as well.) Because of this nature of a work of mourning, the ease at which Bakhtin claims so many human beings enter moments of life and art without answering for one another gets abolished at the moment of the decision. The decision to create the work. Working on a work of mourning, actually working on it, cannot be easy because it is a genre so deeply interpenetrated by life already.

Further, Bakhtin states: "It is not only mutual answerability that art and life must assume, but also mutual liability to blame" (1). This line best shapes the other side of answerability. With the term answerability comes an understanding of "taking matters into your own hands," so to speak. Like the term responsibility, it remains open to success or failure and gives way to notions of will and the power to decide. It fleshes out the answerable human with a sort of agency, "ability," or strength. Liability on the other hand, encourages feelings of fear. Here, Bakhtin reveals the darker piece of his system. When deciding to take on the work of answerability, one accepts a liability to blame. In this, Bakhtin reveals that the term "answerability" has not one face, but two: "The individual must become answerable through and through: all of his constituent moments must not only fit next to each other in the temporal sequence of his life, but must also interpenetrate each other *in the unity of guilt and answerability*" (2 italics added). As the inherently distinct elements of art and life must interpenetrate each other, the sister elements of guilt and answerability must unite as

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well. From this, one can understand that when creating a work of mourning, a constant embrace of guilt must accompany answerability to the dead because they are not here to speak for themselves. Perhaps somehow one could answer for life without this guilt already always at work within them, accompanying their answerability. It seems, however, that when answering for the dead, this guilt is far less easy to neglect.

RESPONSIBILITY

Fragmentation

A loss is really hard to comprehend. It can take a long time. So far, it appears comprehensible in fragments and fragments alone. It is too much to grasp at once. There is nothing to grasp at or to hold, really. And thus, the form of this text. Texts, works, pieces came and some quickly went. Many returned. None that have been or will be worked with in this document were purposefully chosen. They arrived or were found or given or stumbled upon and parts of them ended up here.

One may respond strongly to specific or particular moments in any given text, latch onto their significations, their etymologies, their forms, their consistency, their ins and outs.

In a mental state of mourning, however, one can hope only to latch onto specific moments. Such that they are fragments of the whole of the text. The general concept of a text, like generality in general, becomes enigmatic. A work that is full and complete, fleshed out, developed, organized, successfully communicative is almost unbearable to encounter and absolutely impossible to produce.

All that makes sense is its pieces. There is no whole work or text anymore. The singularity of a loss overwhelms. It leaves everything incomplete. The first, abrupt, always-complete instant of arriving at loss lingers as a thin and sometimes thicker film over everything one does.

Or rather, everything one does is a thin, sometimes thicker, layer over the loss emanating from that single moment, that interruption.

It reemerges, surfaces. It does so sharply in shadows and dreams, a blob in your periphery, a word read somewhere, a snippet from a voice on a television program, an epiphany after waking up and remembering who and what isn't there anymore, certain songs, magazines, a fear to pick up the phone, a blue car, a name that sounds familiar, a certain type of beverage, the look in someone's eyes sometimes, nicotine in general, colors that erupt after smelling that smell, poetry, the color purple, anger, love, rocks, movies, four leaf clovers, sometimes pinks and light blue.

She reemerges, surfaces.

The moment containing the emergence and dissipation of a reminder or a memory is the only semblance of a completion one has to work with. Only fragments remain.

Especially when encountering a text. A text cannot be comprehended at once or totally, or ever. Only further understood—faintly colored, given shape perhaps. Never entirely contoured, fleshed out, filled-in, shaded, colored, arranged, expounded upon, laid out, offered, displayed, showed, illuminated, never exposed as definitely one thing. It never "is what it is." It already always has been a lot more complicated than that. Like the death of an other.

Further understanding of any of it comes as it comes, some textual moments stick better than others. Some life-moments stick better than others. They don't really provide a deeper understanding of a singular death, a singular loss, but maybe of loss in general. More of how to further understand mourning. Also, how to further understand mourning that is communicated and, in turn, how to communicate it. How to *lament*. How to mourn outside of muteness. Or maybe so far inside of muteness that something happens.

From that muteness emerges the echoes of words, signs that hollowly reference what no longer is. Those echoes float like fragments drifting upon a dark sea of silence.
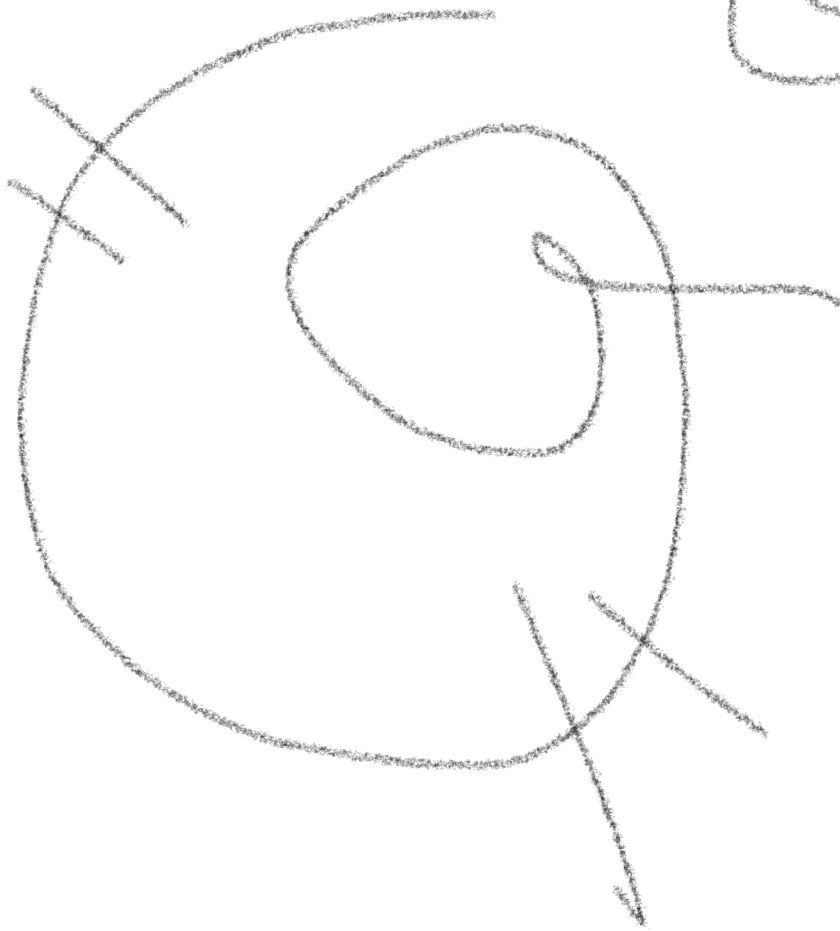
Fragmentation II: Revelation

One thing has led to another and then to another. Forms replace each other, altering slightly. Creativity becomes present in a distinct way, specific to each moment—with certain connections made within each. Then, after some temporal segment—one which contains a growth, an interruption, a damage, a repair, life lived, something or other—creativity emerges again, altered. The connections in question have also changed.

This process, repeated and layered, folded in upon itself again and again until all the little corners of the consciousness have been grazed, is the process of *revelation*—of achieving a deeper understanding, comprehension, garnering a deeper knowledge, further enlightenment, a rush of clarity that bombards the brain with murmurs, screams, images trickling through time, fading in and out, a whirlwind in the sky.

Destiny, that which entails death, becomes visible and tactile and with it, the past. Memory and something like memory but that has yet to take place hold each other inside of you. They play with each other and hold hands.

This becomes logical, the most logical answer. It makes sense. Dichotomies to marry in front of your eyes. For your soul to suddenly feel here, there, then, now.

A revelatory moment is peculiar to itself. It is made of small bits, like what stars are composed of, small star-pieces, and then swells to contain the largest processes of the universe. To movement, or perhaps a multiplicity of movements, propelling what is here, now into a direction of self-awareness. In general. There is a rip, an opening.

It arrived through language. Or communication. Talking, not talking, connecting and such. Mostly in marks made.

The writing of the world reveals itself in marks. It lasts, it moves. It lets us also last and move in a different way. It holds the material, through the rips that compose it, it reveals to us about

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more of itself. If we peer and learn how to peer into it. It tells us, shows us. And once we learn from

that peer, that instant of peering, of really seeing, of really being told, we return. We always return

back with a further understanding of some of it and less of others. Like a star poking a hole in the

sky. Like digging through fabric and finding more of a different part of the fabric. More wrapping.

So is the destiny of history. And the moments or lives of history, and I mean to say history

not the past, that move it into different positions of understanding form a swell. A swell that bursts.

And out floods what could be called truth: a bigger mystery and that is all. But a sanctity

arises through it. A deep security provoked by this amorphous mass of mystery, so potent that the

mystery ceases as one. It just is what it is. It is the journey toward truth with fragments of truth

revealing themselves as such along the way. As fragments, I mean. Because in fragments is the only

way truths may be further understood.

 But this journey has no destination because a full, complete, whole truth will not be

gathered, reached, attained, discovered.

A work of mourning, like the one being performed here, emerges in fragments. Not because

that is the nature of mourning, lamentation, revelation, the comprehension of all of these, but

because it is the nature of the pursuit of truth and knowledge. It can be understood only in

fragments, explored in fragments, communicated, made, recreated, fabricated in fragments.

It comes as it can and as one lets it. It can be welcomed, but it doesn't have to be.

But I think grief ought to be welcomed. Welcomed as fragments because it arrives as such.

Welcomed so that one sinks so far into it that they get pushed out the other side, into a

different perspective. Maybe life can erupt from that push. Within that mourning, from that lament:

a revelation, a gratefulness. Grateful to have spent time with those who no longer exist, to

remember them, to continue life after that loss. That to me is the deepest truth: that I am alive. That

life is to be lived because it will be regardless of a singular death. That life, in general, persists no

matter what space was emptied and of whom. And not "lived" by happenstance or consequence or just because but lived exactly *because*. Which is to say lived actively. With fullness, balance.

With both activity and reflection, with perspective, attentiveness, with intention, with movement, with embrace, pain, protection, with stillness, distance, closeness, with body and not-body, language and color, soul and irony and reason, with violence, with nonlanguage and mostly love. All this and more, together or in turns, at once or apart. Just as long as these *things* emerge. And are welcomed upon arrival. Maybe even invited to begin with.

This is why I want to grieve, so I do so with intention. This is why I must. Because it woke me up, has woken me up to my life. It wrecked me, cast me away, woke me up. Because she is gone. They are gone. And I am in pain, so I am alive. I am here and I want to be but when I no longer am, that is okay.

The Instability of Space

Space, imagery, and visual imaging are major motifs of "Signature Event Context" by Jacques Derrida. At one point in the text, Derrida writes that "every sign, linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be *cited,* put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely limitable."[v] It is within writing and citations of another's writing that this trait or characteristic which constitutes writing—the structural possibility of a cut from the origin, of citational grafting—reveals itself as such. This grammatical symbol visually exposes that of which takes place across all writing, all marks. It simply exaggerates it, exposes its work. This "it" refers to "possibility," according to Derrida: the necessary possibility of the absence of the sender to ever "answer" for what they have written and the characteristic of iterability opened up by this rupture with a sign's origin of production or context. Derrida therefore crafts the imagery of a sign being forced "between quotation marks," of it breaking with not only its original context, but its new context (among Derrida's words). As he references quotation marks that demarcate and separate the words of Husserl or Condillac or Austin from the rest of the text, Derrida harkens back to the third point on his list of constitutive traits of writing (the constitutive traits of all marks and communication in general). That of which is "spacing."

The concept of "spacing" most explicitly emerges in "Signature Event Context" after Derrida first lists both [1] iterable in the absence of the sender and [2] ruptured from a point of origin, production, context as the constitutive traits of writing. He writes that "this force of rupture is tied to the spacing [*espacement*] that constitutes the written sign" (SEC 9). He characterizes this spacing in that it "is not the simple negativity of a lacuna but rather the emergence of the mark" (10). One cannot help but turn this term "spacing" in a multiplicity of ways. It is an open term that

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creates its own room, or space, to play with. Regardless of how much one plays with it, however, it remains open and resists a closure. And it is that openness—its own openness—to which the term refers anyway.

Traces of this spatial trait or trait of "spacing" surface throughout this text in both Derrida's implementation of imaging and imagery which work to reveal the visual spacing already at play on the page, on every page: of sections from other sections, of indentions, of words from other words, of citations from non-citations and other citations, of letters from other letters. The shape of this text, like any other, emerges from space on the page, but as Derrida mentions, this space "is not a lacuna." It is not an emptiness or a lack. At one point, Derrida refers to quotation marks as that which separates a citation from the rest of the words on the page. Quotation marks mark a moment in which the significance of space reemerges visibly. This visual cue, cut, separation depicted by four violent slices that encapsulate a citation occur only on the space of the page. On that page, strung throughout the words, arranged in space, lies Derrida's argument. In this text one experiences an ironic acknowledgment of content and form. Rather than relying on and identifying itself as a text belonging to a sort of external genre, a sort of subcategory, subsection, or subdivision of writing, it elucidates the grammatical structures, the spacing, cuts, holes, rips throughout itself that outline and mark its form. In this way, the form is the content—writing. Those cuts, holes, rips reveal this outline and expose the relationship of its content and form through spacing. That spacing separates Derrida's arrangement of words from Husserl's and each of Husserl's arrangement of words from each other and each letter from one another and so one and so forth until spaceistheonlythingholdingthepagetogether—a space that presupposes and reinforces the distinction of one letter, one word, one thinker's arrangement of words from another, yet holds all onto one comprehensive page. At the location of this space (on the page), whether the space visibly exhibits

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the absence of a black line or a collection of such to form a letter, one discovers the "emergence of the mark," or the phantom-like substance which presupposes and ensures the function of a page.

As the text progresses to the section entitled "Parasites. Iter, of Writing: That It Perhaps Does Not Exist," Derrida further disrobes the text he writes-to-later-speak in order to later reveal its scheme. He refers to Austin's text *How To Do Things With Words* to depict how the two reach a consensus on a few points: [1] that every utterance is a *performative* utterance, [2] that this category of production communicates "an operation and the production of an effect," [3] that the performative utterance "does not have its referent," and [4] that the performative utterance ought to be free from the analysis of "the truth *value*" and to substitute it for that "the value of force, or difference of force." (13). With these four points, Derrida claims that it may appear Austin has "shattered" the traditional "concept of communication," but he failed to take into account the most telling piece of communication's structure: "that system of predicates" of which Derrida calls "*graphematic in general*" (14). He argues that the system of conventionality to which Austin assigns performative utterances and, therefore, all communication, ought to be supplanted by a model defined by its iterability instead because communication "*conform*[s] to an iterable model" (18). Derrida states this after unveiling Austin's failure in which he brands the possibility of "infelicitous" communication or communicating something other than what-was-intended as "*abnormal, parasitic*":

> For, ultimately, isn't it true that what Austin excludes as anomaly, exception, "non-serious" citation (on stage, in a poem, or a soliloquy) is the determined modification of a general citationality—or rather, a general iterability—without which there would not even be a "successful" performative? So that—a paradoxical but unavoidable conclusion—a successful performative is necessarily an "impure" performative, to adopt the word advanced later on by Austin when he acknowledges that there is no "pure" performative. (17)

Here Derrida reveals that the citation, an emphasized, written depiction of what occurs throughout all communication, the very citation that Austin disregards, composes the very functionality of the

performative utterance of which Austin attempts to define. He then argues that performative utterances, in reference to all utterances, do not emerge in a system of conventions in which all contributors participate with "conscious intention" (18). The necessary possibility of a break with context discussed here furthers Derrida's argument about communication in general through a "graphematic" critique of Austin's previous work with performative utterances. This section of the text also does the hidden work of providing the space for the last page of this text to become not successful, but possible.

Before reaching the final section, which contains the most important visual imaging—or performance—of the text, I will briefly return to the less explicitly telling citation of Derrida in which he styles an imagery of another's words "between quotation marks." This prepositional phrase disrupts the readers engagement and demands a visual perspective of the page in tandem with its content. Derrida visually describes an example of a written grammatical symbol that saturates all writing. Because the citation composes all writing, and so communication in general, it contributes largely to Derrida's work in inverting the traditional ideology associated with communication: that its properties or characteristics must be uncovered through speech. In this moment, he instead employs imagery to depict the visual mechanisms through which written texts emerge.

Such an ideological inversion also transpires in a temporal sense, but the possibility of this inversion emerges here in the visual spacing of the text. Derrida wrote this text to later speak at a conference about communication. The arrangement of timing provides an example of a written mark coming-before or preceding a spoken one—a visual structure unaccepted by history of western philosophy and Platonic thought. Also, this structure has not two parts, but three. "Signature Event Context" was cut from its point of production or its sender, its sender later returned for a brief

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moment to speak it aloud and once again departed, leaving the text as it always already remained after its initial departure. For a text about writing, its structure as a written speech works as yet another mechanism to further its own point, to further itself. What then furthers this push even more is the different possible receivals of this text (in the sense of stimuli input rather than—or possibly along with—hermeneutics). For the receivers who were present to hear Derrida speak this text aloud, they would have indulged in an auditory/visual experience from the mouth of the writer/sender, an experience deprived of the text's specific spacing and the written marks emerging from it—the signature at the bottom of the final page, in particular.

Given verbally as a speech, the signature would be unnecessary not from a rhetorical position, but a logical one. A signature marks an approval, seal, or the "signing off" of a present body, a body which leaves a name as a means of indicating their once presence in a space. In the experience of the text as a speech, it would have been delivered by its writer's mouth; in the presence of the writer's flesh, the signature would not be necessary because he was there to speak for himself. He also would not have somehow verbally communicated his signature; I hope. It is hard to imagine a graceful way to do so. He could have stated "I am now signing off." He could have stated his name. Worse yet, he could have physically gestured his signature in the air. I doubt that he did any of this, but I was not present to see it. What can be seen, what remains, however, are the two clumps of writing that Derrida includes in the space at the end of this text before the "Notes" section. The space looks something like this (with the boxes filling the width of the page after the last sentence):

But imagine that rather than a box, the left clump contains a parenthetical statement which holds a "remark." In this remark Derrida refers to the text as the "—written—text" of the "—oral—communication" of which "was to be delivered" at the conference about communication. In this brief remark captured by parentheses he writes, "that dispatch should thus have been signed. Which I do, and counterfeit, here. Where? There. J.D." (21). Derrida phrases the verbs in this remark as "was to be" and "should have been" to refer to the text's permanent departure from him—its origin—after the moment he wrote it. Derrida's play with past tense verbs implies a possibility. He claims that the text ought to have been signed, and then claims to "do" so in present tense. Such a shift in verb tense indicates a return to the text which departed from him (or he, from it). But he follows his "I do" with "and counterfeit" to even further open up the possibility of this space to deception. He then includes his own initials after this aside (one that is visually set to the left side) to create an ironic confirmation: he did in fact approve of the counterfeit signature. Now, rather than the box on the right in the diagram above, imagine a scanned handwritten signature. Directly underneath the handwritten signature sits a typed name: "J. Derrida" (21). Derrida places these two clumps at the end of the text on the same horizontal plane but with a large space in between them. This horizontal space or gap occurs nowhere else in the text.

One cannot help but watch an opening up of mystery and possibility on the left and an encoded break from the text's uniformity of typed words on the right with suspicion. Two sides both take the form of performers, *acting* as pillars to form a gateway or opening. The ending, the space from which it emerges, the space visible within it, and the words that compose it all work to visibly open the text up. It lets the receiver of the text peak inside. A function of this visible opening or perhaps the possibility of its existence emerge both from the cuts of the parentheses and spacing surrounding both the left and right clumps. These both break the ending from the text's body. The

parentheses operate as a more definitive cut, however, than the spacing which, in a double action, connects and demarcates it from the rest of the text—the text soon-to-be-spoken. Above all, this moment turns the text—turns it into a text that acknowledges itself entirely in that it acknowledges that it was, is and always will be broken from its point of production, from its origin. It has departed from Derrida which he acknowledges with three suspect inscriptions of 'his' name. Looking back at the rest of the text from this point, its game of pretend, its riveting performance becomes salient: it acted the whole time as if it was written to be spoken. After the turn however, it reveals that it was written to be written. While in the same motion obscuring the truth about the handwritten signature marking its end.

The cunning in the last act of this final performance lies in its open deception. Derrida gives the text room, lets it breathe, and plays with its power to obscure with its equally as potent power to reveal. This text continues to play after it reveals itself at the turn and up until the very end. Now, however, its performance is ironic, satirical in that it references itself as a performance, mocking the receivers. The previous eight pages set the mise-en-scene with both an engagement with Austin about performative utterance and a discussion of the signature. Then the text set forth with its final act in which it turns to look at the receiver through the reemergence of an absent sender. It breaks the fourth wall. Derrida visually depicts how the possibility of "infelicity" or deception of writing is not a parasitic but a constitutive trait. It does not occupy a live host, destroying it from the outside in or inside out. It constitutes the inside. The deception of "Signature Event Context" as a speech is precisely what composed it as a piece of writing. And this point could not have been reached without both the visual style and nature of Derrida's argument because such is the case for marks in general. The performance of this text does argue, convince, describe, but ultimately, it works to show, expose, visually demonstrate the necessary possibilities of deception, of absence—absence of

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intention, context, or an author that can speak for themselves. That which is the most hidden is the most revealed. The written mark moves among the space between these 'opposing' actions.

Further, this play, this reveal of space through the spacing of the page which both separates and holds together the marks of a page (for one small example) does not emerge with the same availability in speech. To reiterate, receivers could only receive the turning point at the end of "Signature Event Context" on the page for a full effect. I assume those present at the speech did not hear the parenthetical statement read aloud (which was a conscious decision made on behalf of the speaker). Perhaps the writer even returned to the text after delivering the speech to write the end. Regardless, someone could in fact read this portion of the text aloud to someone else now, but the consistency would change entirely, hence the play with visual elements of imagery and imaging throughout it.

As far as imaging goes, Derrida rips open the signature in order to pull out the characteristics of the rest of writing, language, communication, of marks themselves. He institutes his deconstructive process of inverting the hierarchical positions of the inside and outside, travelling so deeply into what has been traditionally constituted 'outside' that he ends up in the middle of the inside. The visual depiction of this process, of the spatial organization of an outside and an inside, cultivated by the diction Derrida chose to implement in this text and others of his, harbors a certain iterable quality in its visibility. The image it produces may be reproduced, and any seemingly separate or opposing concepts can supplant the outside and inside, leaving any receivers of this imaging to (hopefully) carry with them, to reproduce, and utilize it to further deconstruct any two traditionally opposing, conflicting, or separate terms. This is but one visual model, but it is iterable and remains open to the possibility of supplementation with "small or large units" (12), that Derrida provides within the text. I will now attempt to work with this model.

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On page ten of "Signature Event Context," Derrida furthers the argument that the absence of a referent or the "intention of actual signification" constitutes the iterability of a sign. He writes:

> This structural possibility of being weaned from the referent or from the signified (hence from communication and of its context) seems to me to make every mark, including those which are oral, a grapheme in general; which is to say, as we have seen, the nonpresent *remainder* [*restance*] of a differential mark cut off from its putative "production" or origin. And I shall even extend this law to all "experience" in general if it is conceded that there is no experience consisting of *pure* presence but only of chains of differential marks.

Here Derrida extends the force of this cut from letters and words to all marks, all of "experience" in general. An extension such as this harkens back to the "large unit" of citation to which Derrida refers. I would now like to respond to this extension with a return the discussion of the signature or the inscription of a name and pose the question: how do spacing and the visual iterability of a mark, self-evident by its rupture with context and absence of a sender, work in a written work of mourning, in particular?

In a written work of mourning, one inscribes the name of someone permanently absent. To Derrida, in order for a writing to be writing, it must function with the structural possibility of an absence of both receiver and sender. A work of mourning, therefore, turns that always possible event of absence "not," as Derrida writes, "into an empirical eventuality," but into an instance of that possibility reaching its limit. There is a turn—one much like the end of "Signature Event Context" in which Derrida's text turns from a written speech to a written text. The turn in the event of a death, though, turns the possibility of absence presupposed in the mark. This turning of possibility appears to open a text or a written work of mourning up for play. This play is unavailable in the same degree in a conversation or, even less so, in a speech about the dead. I do not mean to dilute the significance and necessity of eulogies, funeral orations, or conversations about those who have died, but to pose a possibility, so to speak, that a text of mourning, in which the name of the lost is inscribed, has a different quality to it. It plays with senders, receivers, and itself in front of

them. One can find almost ecstatic pleasure in both inscribing, receiving, and watching a mark of mourning most likely because of its self-evident, self-realized performance. It is a performance much like the signature of absence at the end of Derrida's text.

If writing is constituted by the necessary possibility of absence, and a written work of mourning is a writing about the turning of the possibility of absence of a receiver into something other than a possibility, of a possibility reaching its limit as a possibility because a possible receiver about which the text is written is no longer present on earth, then a written work of mourning is a written work of writing itself. Insofar as the structural possibility that constitutes all writing reaches its limit as a possibility in a work of mourning, the consistency of such a work is changed. It entails the reaching of a limit of possibility that cannot help but reveal itself in its performance because it is a performance in which the actor plays the role of itself. Writing betrays itself in a way when taking on this form. It reveals itself throughout the entirety of its performance as a performance. And what is a performance if not somewhat deceptive?

And so, what more does this turn of possibility have to do with space, imagery, and imaging? According to Derrida, spacing does not refer to a "lacuna," but the emergence of the mark. The space of the page doubles as a stage in which the performance takes place, but not in the sense of a holding place or emptiness. In the turn of the structural possibility of absence that constitutes a mark into a reference toward a permanent absence as the possibility reaches its limit, the consistency of the space—no longer do I refer here to the space of the page but of the space between senders and receivers, receivers and other receivers, senders and other senders, the space of experience— changes. There was once a person in or among that space that no longer is. Even if another life is born at exactly the same moment as their death, the absence of their singular, irreproducible existence changes, therefore, not the arrangement but the consistency of the space.

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As Derrida marks and I earlier cited, the structural possibility of absence, of the rupture of a mark from its origin is so inherent, internal that the ever-present possibility of nonpresence always prevents the mark from "*pure* presence." All that is left without any marks of *pure* presence is a "nonpresent remainder." Again, I will emphasize, he "extend[s] this law" to all experience in general. Suddenly, with this mark, all of experience becomes superimposed over the page. The space that separates each mark from the other, that collects them, that then facilitates interaction and the generation of meaning among them becomes a space from which every mark emerges. From those written to biological.

Now to provide some shaky imagery that somewhat furthers my point: in the event that the word "SLAM" is inscribed on a page, and the "S" is somehow removed and replaced by a "B" that is added next to the "M," the paper would then read "LAMB." In that case, the consistency of not just the mark, but the space would change. What the page brings to the table would change. It is the possibility of that removal and addition, the action of becoming absent or present that I intend to call attention to because the possibility of an absence does not exist without the possibility of an emergence—only a reemergence, to be sure. The emergence of a mark with a different signification, of a different receiver, of the inevitable reversal of a receiver to sender and vice versa. The possibilities of such reemergences refer to a space that is unstable. The instability of such a space gives way to Derrida's claim that there is no "*pure* presence." But then one must ask: is there a pure absence? If so, what does that *look* like if space is not a lacuna?

I do not mean to draw the comparison of the space of the page to the space that life emerges from and recedes into in order to imply that there is a grand author of existence or to diminish life and each life lost, but to connect the instability of the space of the page to that of all experience in general. The instability of presence and possibly the instability of absence—not an

indefinite, but a "pure" absence. An instability visibly articulated by naming and citing. And the visibility of it in a written work of mourning, in particular. One in which the written work and name can no longer and never again will be written by the hand of its owner but is, instead, inscribed by the hand of another with the intention of remembering, reminiscing, and possibly hoping for a reemergence even though that to whom it belonged can "no longer answ[er] for what [they] ha[ve] written" (8).

This instability is not so different from that of a citation in any text of any sort. What makes a written work of mourning distinct from other written works is the shape of its irony. The context of the name, or rather its rupture from origin, cannot be avoided, forgotten throughout the text's performance. It resists a *full* departure. What occurs in a work of mourning, however, is no different than what occurs in any other work, text, or any other form of communication. It may just be easier to see. Or it may not.

Reveal?

Yesterday she started to read again

and it changed the way
she saw. Since then,
her eyes recognize
soda and pink only.
In a mosaic of the
same shape (cylindrical)
with an obvious top
and bottom
(not sides).
It made for a fun visit
to the gas station.

A friend and her talked
about what she had read
yesterday.
Right away, her ears
and mouths took
the shape of peonies.
Her tongue tastes
like dogwood sap and
anything that touches it
changes her mind.
And her ears,
man alive.
Little colored beads fall out
with every step's bounce.
Listening feels like the
longest bath. And she
tends to prune
quite quickly.

Today, she reached for
what she had read
yesterday
and her hands sorta
dissolved as she touched it.
It's cute the way
catharsis takes shape
and how its pleasures will
leave you breathless.
It leads her to sit, back flush
against the wall,
waiting for more—

Something

Memories take on different forms, shades, lexicons in a state of mourning. And then an absence encourages the emergence of other losses. In a work of mourning, in pursuit of honoring a specific loss, a particular event, a lack inexplicably independent, separate, and distinct from any other lack, the loss in question or the specific loss at hand, so to speak, becomes anything but. "It's all blurry," she says. Those other losses, losses that obscured themselves as such until now, superimpose themselves over the loss-at-hand. What once was the memory of a friend's face drifts perpetually into the face of your father, your childhood dog, your great aunt, friends you've lost communication with, a love lost, an opportunity you never took. Possibilities—the loss of possibilities in your own life present themselves to you. Like branches of a tree, each one splits off into visible lines, outreaching toward a sky. The one you see yourself upon reaches toward indeterminable space. Your writing is lost, losses are lost, you are lost.

Who and what you are writing about, how and why you are writing about it, if you will write, where you write all remain indefinite. You stop writing and start again because you don't know what else to do. With time, the work's shape becomes no clearer. All that becomes clearer is necessity, possibility, and poetry.

> You read. It is helpful.

> You see yourself as a child.

It is easier to imagine both the ones you have kept and long ago lost as children. Then their habits make a little more sense.

There is a play. A play of absence and presence: they rotate in interstitial movements that imitate a circle (but not from too close or too far away). Only when set in a particular way. Now you don't

know what you are mourning, and you are at the border. Do you find silence? Or something else? You are at the edge, always at the edge. It would be ecstasy if it wasn't something that you don't know how to name. The words you look for don't make any sense to you anymore. You don't know what mourning means because you can't find the proper imagery for it. The signified is lost and too far gone.

Eyes burn—a lost cause. Small slits antagonize the closest predator. The sets of black holes meet equilaterally. They create a parallel. The terrain cracks apart and reassembles in the shape of peonies. And then time gets shaded with different hues of itself. Something like a familiarity sets in and "keeping it hidden" is top priority. Colors, shapes, the space-of-it-all feels different and looks the same. Only the four black holes see it. The owners of both pairs pretend to doubt it and questions feel like guided weights and the water beneath their feet starts to pull at the parts of them that no one has ever seen. That you could cut them open and still not see. An agreement from long ago resurfaces. Never spoken. The pain never sets in until later, and it is easy to doubt that pain is its name.

Completely unsettled and irreversibly torn, the piece that one long ago lost threatens to reemerge with eyes. But without a body, loss becomes one's closest companion. And that is easiest to accept. There is more to sort through, more to work for and against. But the eyes, the eyes that align are not where it started, but where one always assumes the end. And perhaps that is the case. It won't appear as one expects it to, anyway. Because eyes often betray their keepers. They reveal too much of them.

Something Else

Smells of purple,

cream and sugar,

and the metal wrapping of a chocolate bar.
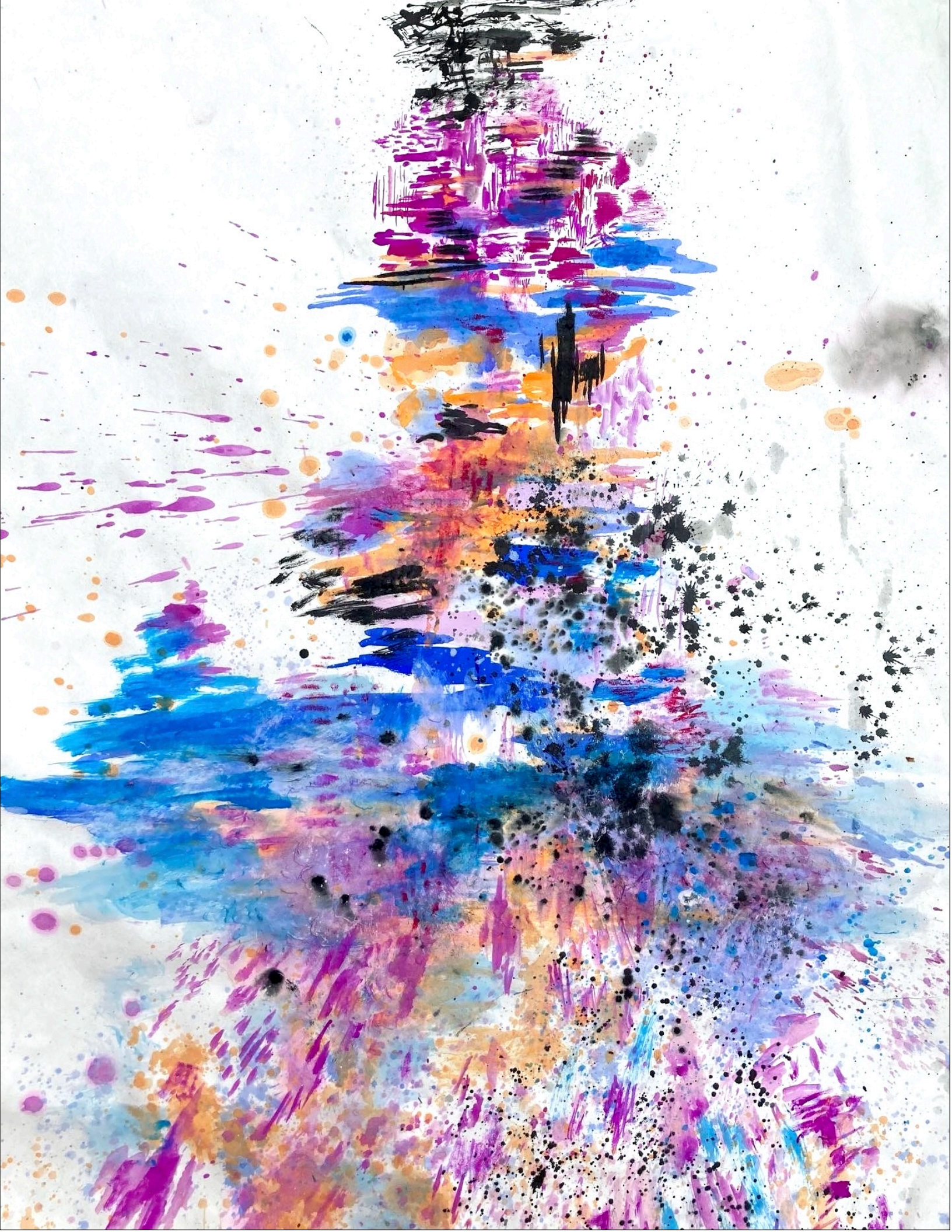
A smell of redbull and then the blue car.

Childhood

4 Sum Reason

Other
Fragments

The Shape of the Text

How it Moves

Lament

From 1917 to 1918 Gershom Scholem, a philologist, historian, and specialist in Jewish mysticism,

wrote an essay titled, "On Lament and Lamentation." His text was a self-proclaimed response to

Walter Benjamin's 1916 essay "On Language as Such and On the Language of Man."[vi] Benjamin, a

German Jewish philosopher, critic, and writer of many kinds of works, wrote this essay at the time

he wrote a collection of sonnets in lament of his dear friend and poet Friedrich "Fritz" Heinle who

committed suicide. In his essay, Benjamin writes of lamentation as the speechlessness of nature:

> It is a metaphysical truth that all nature would begin to lament if it were endowed
> with language (though "to endow with language" is more than "to make able to
> speak"). This proposition has a double meaning. It means, first, that she would
> lament language itself. Speechlessness: that is the great sorrow of nature (and for the
> sake of her redemption the life and language of man-not only, as is supposed, of the
> poet-are in nature). This proposition means, second, that she would lament. Lament,
> however, is the most undifferentiated, impotent expression of language. It contains
> scarcely more than the sensuous breath; and even where there is only a rustling of
> plants, there is always a lament. Because she is mute, nature mourns. (On language as
> Such 73)

In this excerpt, Benjamin references lament as the most "undifferentiated, impotent expression of

language," which is to say that it cannot be broken into parts because it is an indistinguishable mass

that lacks potency, ability, and force. Because it "contains scarcely more than a sensuous breath," it

exists on the precipice of language. On the other side of language is mourning: a state of nature

indicated specifically by its "muteness." If nature were to "be endowed with speech" from a

previous state of muteness, or mourning, the expression of language would emerge from that

transition, according to the words of Benjamin, as a language of lamentation. A proposition such as

this endows mourning and its expression as lament with an unusual yet necessary quality for

language. This brief passage on silence, language, mourning, and lament holds the material through

which Scholem opens his own text.

As a response to this brief entry about lament, Scholem wrote the aforementioned "On Lament and Lamentation"[vii] in which he complicates lament, its placement in terms of language and nonlanguage, and proceeds to explain the allegedly "unambiguous relationship" (On Lament 315) between mourning and lament alongside both of these terms' more ambiguous relationship to revelation. To Scholem, mourning is a "mental being" which is not concrete—it "lies wholly in the realm of symbolic objects" and "denotes for each thing the first order of the symbolic" (315). To him, mourning is, as Benjamin describes, muteness. Scholem defines mourning not as the linguistic border between objects and symbols but rather as a muteness "infinitely close to the border." Yet its "derivation in language," or lamentation, is "precisely the border itself" (316).

Revelation is the other term relevant to Scholem's system. He differentiates between the language of "revelation" and "lamentation" in that revelation "means the stage at which each language is absolutely positive and expresses nothing more than the positivity of the linguistic world" whereas lamentation "is precisely the stage at which each language suffers death in a truly tragic sense, in that this language expresses nothing, absolutely nothing positive, but only the pure border" (314). Scholem depicts revelation and lament as two violently opposing species of language:

> Everything [lament] says is infinite, but just and only infinite with regard to the symbol. In lament, nothing is expressed and everything is implied. Lament is the only possible (and in a unique way, really actualized) volatile [labile] language. That is to say, each language can return to itself, can leave its sphere, enter other spheres and return, saturated with other orders. But once lament has left its line [Linie], it can never win itself back, except by annihilating the revelation that impedes it: the essence of lament is irretrievably lost once it is no longer border. Lament has no stability. (313-314)

The above passage demonstrates that lament emerges as the border itself, as that which is in between language and nonlanguage. In a violent act, lament must "annihilate the revelation that impedes it," portraying an imagery of usurpation much like that of Bahktin's in which moments of art and life violently supplant each other over and again. Lament's very existence as the border

between language and nonlanguage (or muteness, silence) relies on destroying the revelation that

attempts to interrupt it or change its course. If lament somehow becomes stable and changes course

toward a language that exists as that which is other than border, it would cease to exist as lament;

therefore, it must continue to annihilate revelation which seeks to violently disrupt it.

Later, however, Scholem writes,

> …the most powerful revolution of mourning's innermost center [Mittelpunktes] is necessary (through the restoration [Zurückführung] of the symbolic to revelation) in order to induce mourning's self-overturning, which, as a result of its own reversal, allows for the course toward language to emerge as expression" (316)

In a parenthetical statement, Scholem mentions the most pivotal moment in the process of lament's

emergence: that through "the restoration [Zurückführung] of the symbolic to revelation," the

revolution of mourning induces its self-overturning." Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel edited and

translated the version of this text published in the book *Lament in Jewish Thought*. The two chose to

translate the German word "Zurückführung" to "restoration" in English but left the original

German word in the text because one may also translate it as follows: a simplification, conversion,

reduction, derivative, retrace. The last two translations, the very last in particular, aid in illustrating

the significance of the English prefix "re-" in Scholem's model. In it there are (re)versals, (re)turns,

(re)storations, and (re)traces to (re)velation in lament. A thread of repetition or returning-to runs

throughout the perpetual process of becoming (and destroying) that constitutes its instability as the

border. In other words, revelation—"that of the revealed, expressed" (314)—must attack mourning,

bumping the symbolic from a purely silenced state into an impure one: lament. Scholem constructs

an argument very similar to Derrida's outside/inside argument in *Of Grammatology* in that he marks

each transitory moment of mourning's self-overturning, the moment of mourning's approach

toward lamentation, with revelation working in its "Mittelpunktes"—which is to say at its center or

the point farthest away from its edge. This visual cue further complicates the image of lament as a

border by contouring it, giving it dimension and depth. It is a border which works as an edge itself

with edges, but a center or point farthest from each edge in which it consistently churns. A revelatory movement presupposes the reversal, revolution of mourning which indicates that the previously depicted binary of revelation and lamentation itself becomes overturned. Revelation is precisely what gives way to the possibility of lamentation, to the revolution of mourning from a "mental being" to expression.

Lament expresses absolutely nothing "but the pure border" for Scholem; therefore, it does not express mourning in that mourning exists outside of language. Rather, it marks, solely marks, the border between nonlanguage and language. It is a type of language, to Scholem, which most closely resembles silence because it precisely expresses that border, boundary, or demarcation between nonlanguage and language. To be sure, it does not express mourning but the movement, a "self-overturning," of mourning. Insofar as lamentation marks the border and the self-overturning of mourning as its only signified, it signifies only itself. Hence Scholem's characterization of lamentation as the only "self-actualized" volatile language. The volatility to which Scholem refers composes the substance of lament and enables the very possibility of its coming-into-being.

To reiterate, lamentation emerges from the overturning of a mental being by "the restoration of the symbolic to revelation" which, as previously stated, is a positive language, one which reveals, expresses, and demands an answer. Scholem writes: "But the mental being whose language is lament is mourning, the concreteness [Gegenständlichkeit] of which is of an exclusively symbolic nature" (315). And so, "of all symbolic languages, the language of mourning contains the deepest paradox, because its concreteness annihilates itself. Even the most silent gesture, the mutest word, succumbs to this paradox" (316). After this overturning, as lamentation comes into being, Scholem claims that it annihilates the revelation which presupposed its existence. Insofar as mourning requires revelation to approach lamentation, its approach toward concreteness (even one of "an exclusively symbolic nature") turns it against itself. Lamentation acts not as a stagnant, still border between language and

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nonlanguage, but a space of high activity, revolution, self-annihilation, and emergence. It is a liminal

space (to continue with Scholem's visual metaphor of a border in that a border marks a space by

separating one space from another) of high instability because of the pressures pushing against it

from its outsides (as its insides) because those very pressures emerge from its very own emergence.

Those pressures' existence enable the very possibility of lamentation's existence, giving way to the

"infinite tension" Scholem later attributes to "each word of lament" (317). Its outsides and insides

are in constant reversal because it aims to destroy revelation—that which gives way to the

consistency of its symbolic concreteness and existence in general. Through its aim to destroy

revelation, another language like itself but that is marked by its epitomization or cementation of

positivity and concreteness, lamentation works to sabotage its own constitutive elements as an

expression or communication: "even the most silent gesture, the mutest word, succumbs to this

paradox."

> Further, Scholem writes:

>> Thus, mourning partakes in language, but only in the most tragic way, since in its
>> course toward language mourning is directed against itself – and against language.
>> What appears here is the truest anarchy, which emerges most clearly in the
>> impression made by lament, in the utter inability of other things to answer lament in
>> their language. (316)

What emerges with and through lamentation is, as he puts it, the "truest anarchy." It's perpetual

tendency toward self-annihilation aims not merely to destroy itself, but language in general. Scholem

goes on to make another large claim: "*Every* lament can be expressed as poetry, since its particular

liminality between the linguistic realms, it's tragic paradox, makes it so." And that "perhaps, indeed,

the languages of symbolic objects have no other possibility to become languages of poetry except in

the state of lament" (317). And then,

>> The infinite tension that inflames each word of lament, as if to make it cry – there is
>> hardly any other word in human languages that cries and falls silent more than the
>> Hebrew word הכיא) eikhah) [how], with which the dirges begin – the infinite force

> with which each word negates itself and sinks back into the infinity of silence, in which the word's emptiness [Leere] becomes teaching [Lehre], but above all the infinity of mourning itself, which destroys itself in lament as rhythm, proves lament to be poetry. The silent rhythm, the monotony of lament is the only thing that remains: as the only thing that is symbolic in lament – a symbol, namely, of being extinguished [Erloschensein] in the revolution of mourning, as was said above. But the very inviolability of rhythm in relation to words is what, in the most elementary sense, constitutes all poetry. (318)

Merriam-Webster's first definition of rhythm defines it as "an ordered recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound and silence in speech." Repetition and pattern constitute the "silent rhythm," or "monotony of lament." To Scholem, mourning destroys itself as it infinitely approaches the border of language, keeping it from ever reaching but always opening up the possibility of lament's existence. Although a turning or revolution must occur within mourning by way of revelation, the texture or consistency of the border consists of that which was originally mourning. This dissolution takes place, according to Scholem, by way of rhythm or "an ordered recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound and silence in speech." Rhythm supplants the "infinity of mourning" so that "silent rhythm," the "symbol of being extinguished," is all that remains of mourning in lament. That which usurps mourning does not take anything with it: all that it leaves is itself as that which arose from and later conquers mourning in its revolution toward language. The repetition or recurrence of alternations of strength and weakness in the flow of interchanging silence and sound destroys the complete silence of mourning so that only a silent rhythm remains. If lament is a form of language and mourning of silence or nonlanguage, then the silent rhythm of lamentation, the gesture, slight vibration, constant reversal of the force of silence and sound, embody lamentation itself. It is the border of silence and sound, of language and nonlanguage. In this way, revelation disrupts mourning's infinite, silent approach toward lamentation by inducing a ripple which branches off from it. The liminal space of this ripple, vibration, or constant folding in and over of silence and sound is called lamentation, but it is the remains of

mourning *as* rhythm—rhythm in general. Perhaps this is to say that, for Scholem, all rhythm (and therefore poetry) erupts from the silence, the nonlanguage, the mental being of mourning.

The triumph of the strong over the weak—be it silence or sound in each particular instance—in repetition constitutes lamentation as the border. As a border, lamentation works neither as pure nonlanguage nor language. In Scholem's model, lamentation's unceasing temporal shifts enable its existence. The space of liminality which the term lamentation marks is unstable because of inevitable reversal of itself over the course of time. It will always sometimes be silent and other times audible. It is the recurrence of the alternation between the two that allows lamentation to exist as an active, tumultuous border. One often would not refer to the instability or tumult of lamentation as loud and overbearing, however. Instability marks it, makes it what it is, but the pattern of silence and sound contiguously arranged in varying frequency and volume often emerge quietly. This instability also marks the "purity" of lamentation as a border, as the only "pure border." And lament's inevitable impurity as a language or a nonlanguage presupposes its purity as a border. It cannot be both still and moving, yield silence and sound, in the same instant. But its consistency as a border depends upon its inconsistency as language or nonlanguage. This possibility in time gives lamentation its own identity, its own terminology, its own signifier. As previously quoted, Scholem writes that the "infinite tension" that "inflames each word of lament" along with the "infinite force" of lament "with which each word negates itself" and "sinks back into the infinity of silence" both "prove lament to be poetry." The motion of emergence instantly followed with self-negation depicts the "infinite tension of lament" insofar as it resists silence and sound interchangeably. In sum, the recurring alternation, the rhythm, the repetitive quality of language, begins with revelation's disruption of mourning. That disruption induces the emergence of expression and silence in rotation—the emergence of lament as border. The repetitive nature of

rhythm marked by the constant flux, reversal, supplantation, or replacement of silence and sound with one another comprises lament as such.

As previously stated, lament derives its consistency from that of mourning. Its behavioral activity, however, more closely resembles revelation insofar as it is a communicative act. Yet, the activity of lament takes a different shape: one of overturning, revolving, being turned outside in and inside out. Also, of self-harming. Scholem marks revelation, on the other hand, as productive and "absolutely positive" so that it behaves more like an opening—one that supposedly reveals what was hidden in the closure. It even brings closure through its opening up, its reveal. A legislative closure marked by votes at a debate's end relies on revelatory language as the productive element that brings the assembly to a conclusion. Precisely what opens up the debate leads it to the possibility of its close. Although one may state the idiom "brought to a close" when referencing an end, however, one understands that there is no closure in the midst of a loss. In this instance, a life has been "brought to a close," but for those who remain, nothing has been brought to anything. There is no close. Instead, a space emptied itself of the life that previously filled it. Lamentation, therefore, opens up merely to reveal nothing more than what was already apparent before its opening: revolutions of mourning and revelation in unending war with one another, attempting to achieve impermanent victories. It reveals its tension, its force, its violence upon itself, more of itself.

Lament turns its violence toward itself in perpetuity because of both the revelation and mourning that constitute it. Lamentation wants to attack language—leave it marked as silence. It is met with "the utter inability of other things to answer lament in their language," as Scholem states. It shuts down other forms of language, revelation in particular. It does not, however, leave itself in silence because of its inherent revelatory call toward sound (or script). It wants to be seen or heard and not answered to. It wants to usurp all other languages as their sovereign—a possibility yielded specifically by its liminality or impurity.

And so that which protects lament from its own annihilation of itself, according to Scholem, is the very rhythm which disrupted its previous state as mourning. Scholem states that "the very inviolability of rhythm in relation to words is what, in the most elementary sense, constitutes all poetry" (318). Its inviolability, its sanctity from assault, attack, or trespass is what remains in lamentation as the offspring of mourning's decay because it survived, or was likely produced from, revelation's attack on mourning. That which, in lamentation, demands to be heard or seen is the very rhythm that constitutes it as a border between silence and sound because if lamentation were to destroy itself entirely, which is to say its own "silent rhythm," one would mourn only in silence and speak from a different mental being.

Rhythm in Lament

Scholem writes that lament is poetry.
So, it is assemblage, revision, cutting and pasting, collage.

        It is a dollop, a smattering,
a baby and a mother,
        a little piece of cloth stitched onto a smaller piece of cloth,
it is a lopsided smile, a cup of 2 percent,
        it is the curliest hair, a shade of purple with a shade of green,
it is a disagreeable pairing of colors,
        it is an intricate piece of lace,
it is slamming a foot on the floor,
         it is a pool of blood, a frog with light on its mouth, a cup of tea,
it is all of these things sometimes,
much less and much more others.

COLOR

In cinema, filmmakers often find creative ways to depict flashbacks, or the display of memories on screen. They incorporate visual cues like either low or high color saturation, distortion of images, superimposition, or a filter of black and white laid over a scene of the past (these techniques are also quite similar for the depiction of dreams). When experiencing a written work of mourning, one expects to find a lot of black and white. So when creating a work of mourning, one pressures themselves to create pieces of that palette so that they may be stitched together, revealing a comprehensive whole that reads as a brilliantly cohesive scene marked up with dark blacks, bright whites, and variations of greys and grays that flesh out its depth.

Then, a startling discovery: one finds that memories never form, emerge, or reemerge as black and white. They are riddled with color. Pesky colors that won't leave them alone. One can enter memories, rearrange them, string some together to form a story, paint them in black and white and rid them of their original markings. The displacement or replacement of memories comes with the territory of remembering, but the last action listed, the discoloring or the uncoloring of memories, comes with something else.

Perhaps one specifically layers a filter of black and white atop their memories. Or maybe one somehow strips them of their color and injects them with shades of black and white as if that palette constituted their original emergence. Regardless, these processes shade the actual action of remembering with blacks, whites, and mixtures of the two. This stripping dulls it down and rounds it out. This double motion of stripping and adding works not merely to rear a product that is black and white, but to disrupt the very action of remembering by instituting its force upon it. The uncoloring of remembrance, the marking of lamentation with black and white, the expectations of a genre enraptured in colorless mourning impose upon the act of remembering. The pigments of

memories weaken and textures collapse. That which was sharp rounds out and that which was soft becomes floating wisps of cloud and dust.

The uncoloring of rememberance brought about by the restriction of oneself to a presupposed type of mourning results in confusion, more loss, the superimposition of one loss over many. What is left is a mystery. A film noir enters the page: blacks and whites and greys, sexual frustration, the protagonist passes out, strange voices and faces lead and mislead the protagonist, fragments of information coalesce to close the case. And in the midst of all this drama, one writes in black in white. But none of it makes any sense when filtered with a visual performance of that genre, in that palette. The reason for this is obvious: the case can't be closed, so there will be no closure. The viewer's pleasure does not arrive from the revelation, restoration, resolution, release in the end. There is no one under the mask. No identity changes, no justice is faced, the dead do not resurrect. A work of this nature does not beckon one final outcome. A completion, a final release is never attained. Rather, it creeps up and swells, dissipating into little bits of color that give way to more of the loss and the grief to come. [See Shape of the Text]. Lament summons not just silence, but active listening. It demands not a response, but responsibility on behalf of the rememberer and listener.

Instead, pleasure erupts, in a work of mourning, from the rememberer and listener during the remembering and the marking of memories themselves. From the consistency of their marks. Their flavors and textures and smells. Their ability to emerge and reemerge as that which remains of a loved one who is gone forever. But, most specifically, from their markings. The marking up of them, the marking down.

And so, pleasure emerges with or as such.
Pleasure engorged with pinks and cobalt blue,
purples and vermilion and periwinkles,

with burnt sienna and regular orange,

an ugly green and canary yellow.

And in the marking of those memories (sometimes as dreams), nothing more is revealed but color. No matter how unreliable, deceptive, fabricated a memory, its visual excavation invites color-shapes of varying intensity and glow. The more one looks, the more vibrant they become until one's inner eyes start to tingle and one's outer eyes dribble water. With both sets of eyes, one digs and digs and looks and peers and seeks and searches and all they find is more. Like infinite prisms of light superimposed over each other, depicting varied spectrums of color. And as one tears and rips holes through them, more color emerges. And with it an ecstatic sensation of revelation. Because more of itself is what is revealed.

And in brighter tones. Or in different hues.

That is revelation's intrusion upon mourning.

The constant overturning of mourning as memories violently emerge from silence.

Marking up space with colors surrounded by colors.

It happens over and again and it doesn't last long enough each time.

Then comes lament with its vibrancy.

And it's tricky vibrations.

Mine has a lot of purple, blue, pink, orange, and yellow.

(Not in that order.)

in my home of gray and red

a white cup,
the family leaves
she's angry
because I don't
want to escape
the same way:
cinnamon
the snake coils
large picture frames
the smell of dirt and metal
mindless fashion
don't think
of what hurts
a token
of love, unprotected
in a stomach:
sugar
porches
cinnamon
and bellies round
with mindless fashion
and the smell of
a Scottish accent
and a silhouette
and her favorite broth
a harsh, violent word
the colors
stain the wall
and so bureaucrats
try and cover them
with déjà vu
and cinnamon,
a Scottish accent and
the smell of broth
Bill smiles and
a squirrel explodes
from the gas station
wall rapidly
in my little corner
of the world
the sun is hot
but fall creeps
swallowing a worm,
letting it sit

letting it coil,
for the
smell of dirt and metal
of sugar
of cinnamon and
of broth
the seasons,
cleaner than my skin
it is overwhelming
and kind
a dialogue that changes
my mind
changes every word
into cinnamon
a memory was made
opened and then closed
exploding into
and at the
dentist appointment
he was startled
by his own insight
by the hazel eyes
and the bartender
making use of clove
and cinnamon
colors of the morning
that they try and cover
gold, red, white, and brown
and the grocery carts
collect on the sidewalk
one red
the other grey
my mother's hair is gray
a token
of love, unprotected
of healing
and broth
in a white cup
and she's angry
as she reads the plates
with a Scottish accent,
a snake around her wrist
that smells of dirt and soil
no, dirt and metal
looking at the space
under the table

(where knees go)
the empty space
where pens are capped
and uncapped,
thighs rubbed,
itches scratched
spread wide like
open sesame
a bottle of thick tahini
for lunch
before afternoon tea:
boil water
check water
choose tea
make tea
(if it is chai, add honey
and cinnamon)
drink from
a white cup
go outside and
check the plants
on the porch
the dirt and soil
make sure
bellies are round
with water
with mindless fashion
then read the plates
and use them
for dinner
but for breakfast:
eggs and toast
both made
in the same pan
with olive oil
then put on the plate
(then red the plate
with hot sauce)
and eaten only with
hands
yolk runny
bread crunchy
and coffee with
cinnamon
in a white cup
gold, red, white, and brown

the colors stain
colors of mourning
black marks on his leg
"let me get on"
the kids,
they make so much
sense to me
calls and calls
frowns,
grimaces, grins,
and gritted teeth
and then
a frog appears
with light on its mouth
Bill gets excited to see him
with black marks
and big enough
feet for a shoe
like the shoes
scattered at the front door
in a position where
you can tell how
someone took them off
foot
by
foot
in the orange light
in my home of gray and red
i watch with my
white cup,
sipping broth
then tea
with cinnamon
in that order

Couches and Tables

It isn't just black at all. Not at all is it *just* black. And it isn't a dismal abyss.

It is cathartic and pleasurable and colorful. There is activity happening here at this shipwreck. It has so much color. Its lurid: it almost hurts it's so bright. It isn't empty. It isn't a black empty pit of despair. It is not a dismal abyss. Or only darkness. It is not a nothing-but-space or a lack-of-light.

There is a space, though. One left by her absence. But it is surrounded with noise and color now, forwards, and backwards in time because the stuff around that now-empty-space keeps moving as it always did. The colors and shapes from before are not like the ones now, but they kinda are. Things are just a little different for most people and very different for a few of them.

There is some understanding and a little bit of learning and a lot of adaptation and more of what makes life *life* erupting from the space she left. And it's okay that it isn't black.

Maybe it was once or will be again, but it isn't now and that is okay.

And also, there isn't really much to say about it after all.

Reading and writing and learning and drawing and this and that can feel pretty good, but there isn't really much to figure out is there?

There isn't really much to say. That's why everyone ends up saying the same things they've always said about it since people could speak or write or do whatever they do:

"I'm sorry."

"___ loved you so much."

"It's okay."

"You aren't grieving wrong."

"___ would have been so proud."

"It's gonna be okay."

My personal favorite is a "it's gonna be okay" prefaced with a really long look in the eyes.

For some strange reason it feels the best when a stranger says it. Or not exactly a stranger, but someone that doesn't really know anything about me. It's as if I could be anybody because I am anybody and the pain that I have is a pain that everybody has at some point.

And when one of those bodies faces an-other and really sees them, sees and acknowledges that loss without having to know any specificity about any of it at all, everything feels so much more real.

And then they repeat what is always uttered in those moments, but they really mean it.

And they repeat that because there is nothing better to say, really.

And all this almost makes it feel like whatever they are saying is completely true after all.

They already know about *it* being okay, don't they?

Because they've been anybody before and they will be again.

Mourning and Melancholia

In the experience of both mourning and melancholia, according to Sigmund Freud[viii], the ego, which normally casts its libidinal energy onto the world, casts it back onto itself. The American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology defines libido: "in psychoanalytic theory, either the psychic energy of the life instinct in general or the energy of the sexual instinct in particular." The ego turns its libidinal energy inward during both mourning and melancholia because of "identification" (Melancholia 249) in which the ego identifies itself with a lost love-object. Before the love-object was lost, the libidinal energy would have been projected toward it. After loss, however, it must flow elsewhere. The process of identification takes the shape of devouring: "The ego wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it." (250) What the ego devours, however, is not the actual love-object (because it is lost), but its shadow. According to Freud, during mourning and melancholia, "the lost object is psychically prolonged" (245) as a shadow. Freud writes, "Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object" (249). After the ego devours the shadow of the lost love-object, mourning and melancholia split. In mourning, the shadow eventually makes its exit from the ego at which point "the ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (245). Mourning is a "normal" and "common" process to Freud. In melancholia, the ego itself splits after identification of the ego with the lost love-object: "the critical agency which is here split off from the ego might also show its independence" (247). The part which splits from the ego due to the ingestion of the shadow, but which is still part of the ego, becomes critical toward the rest of the ego—toward itself. It becomes so critical that the ego begins to turn in against itself.

Considering that this is a metaphor of devouring and, so, ingesting, the splitting of mourning and melancholia, the cut, the point after ingestion, is where I intend to focus. After its ingestion, the shadow of the lost-love object eventually gets digested. In mourning, the love-object metabolizes and eventually becomes completely processed through the digestive system, exiting the body as waste. In the melancholic, however, the shadow of the lost love-object never exits the body (without an impossible amount of consultations with a medical professional). Rather, that which is ingested changes the chemistry of the body as the shadow becomes completely absorbed. The body then makes an internal split: there are then the (often scattered) parts of the body that have absorbed the shadow and the parts that did not. As an autoimmunological response, the body then begins to attack itself. It continues to do so until properly treated (or even with proper treatment), marking the body with autoimmune disease or disorder.

How a shadow digests or how it would exit as waste, I am unsure. Perhaps a metaphor about breath and inhalation would be more appropriate here. But then that would connote some very controversial ideas. For instance, the necessity of oxygen for the body, the continuous inhalation of breath, would translate to the intake of shadows, of traces of lost objects. Then those inhalations or intakes would over and again follow and be followed by exhalations of carbon dioxide, a waste product. In this metaphor, the process of inhaling the shadow-breath would then presuppose a necessity of inhaling lost love-objects, much like oxygen, as an energy source. Rather than that which triggers a singular autoimmunological response, it would allude to a certain presupposition of autoimmunological responses for the body to function—constantly carrying it toward its own death in varying degrees through time. Perhaps some inhalations of stronger potency or particular consistency trigger a stronger autoimmunological response than others, but a response is always triggered, nonetheless. Maybe a particularly special loved one dies, leaving what at first feels like

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noxious gas in the now empty space of their absence, and the ones left in that space inhale. The autoimmunological response which follows the absorption of that dense, painful breath into the blood from the lungs would demand much more time for recovery, but the body would continue inhaling regardless (unless one decided to stop inhaling because it became too painful or they were to choke on that single inhalation or they hold that single breath in for far too long because they like it and die).

A metaphor such as this also leaves the difference between mourning and melancholia in question. For Freud, the melancholic knows "whom," but not "what" they have lost (245). And for one in mourning, the state of mourning eventually ends. But since one depends on the inhalation of breath over and again for the rest of their life, if we remain in a metaphor such as this, one would be in a state of mourning from the moment they took their first breath. Their life would be marked with loss upon entrance, the moment the umbilical cord was cut. And so, the pathological, long-lasting state of melancholia and the short-lived, "normal" state of mourning would be hard to differentiate between, exactly. Rather, one could see mourning and, therefore, melancholia in general as that which always occurs. Always will and always has. The consistency of singular losses may allow different iterations of mourning to emerge—ones of distinct varieties, shapes, flavors, colors, durations. But which are mourning, nonetheless.

Freud writes that at the completion of mourning, that the "ego becomes free and uninhibited again" (245). Is this possible in the metaphor proposed? I do not think so. Within a metaphor such as this, there cannot be an "again" because there was never a before. The body has always been breathing because life presupposes breath. The ego has never been free because it has been mourning since the moment of its inception.

Mourning or Melancholia Worksheet

Name:_____
Date:_____

Carefully read each passage and indicate on the blank space whether it depicts (m) mourning or (m) melancholia.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and imagine a lost love-object cleaning the room because that is what they would have done if they were here. Decide to clean the room. Let a few years pass. Habits have changed. Clean the mess every time it is made because it has become routine. The room is cleaned because it ought to be clean. Because all rooms ought to be clean.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room. One day realize that a lost love-object's deep aversion to messy rooms might have inspired the cleaning of the messy room. Maybe return to this thought, maybe don't. Keep cleaning messy rooms even though this cleanliness began only after the object was lost.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room. Become cleaner after the loss of a love-object who had a deep aversion to messy rooms. Continue to be clean and to clean messy rooms.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and refuse to clean the room. Continue to live in filth after the loss of a love-object who had a deep aversion to messy rooms. Do this because they are no longer here to clean them or tell you to.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room because that is what a lost love-object would have done. Think of them every time a room looks messy because what they hated more than anything was a messy room. They would go into other people's houses and clean their rooms. They became territorial over the rooms they made un-messy. Let a few years pass. After a mess is made, stand back and look at the messy room. Remember how much they hated a messy room. Clean the messy room because their aversion to messy rooms was annoying but charming. The trait of being so inclined to clean any and all messy rooms is a pretty good one. If the lost object is not here to clean, continue to clean in their place.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room. Do so more frequently for a little while after the loss of a love-object who had a deep aversion to messy rooms. Eventually, be messier again. Sometimes remember that they hated messy rooms and clean the mess.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room. Do so more frequently for a little while after the loss of a love-object who had a deep aversion to messy rooms. Eventually, be messier again. Remain messy and remember how much the lost object hated your messiness. Refuse to clean the room because they could never tell you what to do.

_____ Never be messy again.

_____ Be a little messy. Then look at the messy room. Look at the messy room and clean the room. Do so more frequently for a little while after the loss of a love- object who had a deep aversion to messy rooms. Eventually, be messier again. Clean sometimes, don't clean others. Never wonder why or think about it.

Melancholia: A Performance

[SEE APPENDIX]

It is sheer good fortune to miss
somebody long before they leave you.

Toni Morrison, *Sula*

Always Already Mourning

      The first time I remember mourning before a death was when I was five. I had a dream my mother died. I remember it vividly.

      There were mostly whites with a very small amount of soft blue and periwinkle. In the dream, she was young. My mother had me at thirty-five, but she looked about twenty-one. She was dead and being carried by a group of people. I observed not as a body or as myself. I experienced it from aerial view. Her hair was splayed out on the object she was being carried on. There were flowers placed throughout her hair. She had a white dress on, and she was thin. I knew that she was dead. She looked peaceful.

      That is one of the only times I have ever woke up crying. I cried to her about it, and I told her that I wish she had me at a younger age so that we could spend more life together because I knew that people grew old and died. She just held me and told me not to think that way.

      I have always remembered that dream. I have consciously dreaded my mother's death since waking from it.

March 3, 2021

Two years. Sunny. Planted purple flowers and buried a jar filled with a few items:

- one menthol Marlboro black 100

- a small package of tofu she gave me as a birthday gift a few years ago that I never ate but kept because the packaging was cute

- one small container of menthol vape juice

- a folded flier she gave me from the theater she worked at

- a locket (she used to collect those) that her mother recently found and sent me

In the jar, my best friend (who I now live with) put:

- a rock

- a blue jay feather

We wrote our names on a paper, marked the date, placed it in the jar, and buried it as we planted the flowers. Before we buried and planted, though, I asked my friend to say something (just anything, really) even though she had never met her. My friend talked about love. She cried.

Then I spoke. I didn't think I'd cry but I did. I didn't talk to her, but about her. (I only talk to her when I'm by myself). I said things I needed to say. Her death felt fresh.

My friend, her name is Kristina, planned this. When I woke up in the morning, she had placed the flowers and a note in the bathroom for me to see. She told me when she woke up later that we should plant them and maybe gather a few things. It is the most meaningful thing anyone has ever done for me. It is the most of something anyone has done since she died, and Kristina had never met her. We buried it at her favorite spot in Atlanta. I am writing this there.

Two fire ants bit me when I was digging the hole. It really hurt. I focused on it too much. All I could think about was the pain in my hand until I spoke. Even as I watched Kristina speak and cry, all I could think about were the bumps swelling up on my hands. Then, I started to talk. I spoke like

I would have at her funeral service. Her mom never asked me to speak at it. Only a deacon and her boyfriend spoke. No one there was a practicing Christian, including the deceased.

I talked and things came out that surprised me.

After I spoke today, we sat on a table and smoked and drank some boxed wine. The smells and tastes were comforting together. Then Kristina pointed out a redbird.

A good friend of ours told Kristina a few years ago that when you see a redbird, that means that someone you've lost is watching over you. The friend that told her this usually tries not to be sentimental which made it all the more meaningful when they said it.

Most of the time I see a redbird I cry. I did today, too. After I looked at it, I sat in the stillness that followed for the first time in my life, I think. I sat in it and didn't think about it and just let it be. I'm different.

Kristina just walked up after giving me a moment. It is a beautiful day. There are so many flowers. She is looking around.

She says to me as she's looking at the plants, "do you ever want to take a color? Like, I wish I could put it in my pocket and then pull it out when I want to. Like that blue." (Points to little blue flower-weeds all over the ground) "But only this specific color right now in this light. Because that color isn't always that color if it's in different light. Light matters so much."

And then I said, "yeah you're right. Color is light."

And then all of the nonsense about memory and color and the sky started to make a little more sense. Because color is light. And a change in lighting changes colors.

And so, the lighting of a particular sky on a particular day changes the colors of the day. In the shade and the sunlight. And the thing about the sky is that sometimes the same sky will return, reemerge as it did on previous days. Then that day superimposes over all the days that have ever had a sky like that.

And it does the same thing to color. And then they resurface. Memories, I mean. They resurface in the colors given by the sky's light. And they all layer atop each other until one emergence of color is indistinguishable from the rest.

Melancholia Sound Sculpture

The given video contains a few fragments of sound: a section of Anne Carson's "Lecture on the History of Skywriting," a voicemail by Kayli Guthrie singing "Happy Birthday," and Kristina Laygo's deconstructed "Happy Birthday" on a small electric organ. All of the sound and image was captured or recaptured on an iPhone SE.

There were three cakes and numerous cookies in the filming of this. The first cake was decorated with only purple, pink, two blues, some white and some orange-yellow. The décor of that cake, its dissolution, and the way it felt to take apart was the most successful. It went perfectly. The person holding the phone forgot to hit the record button, however. So, the footage of that cake was lost forever. Hence the last few minutes of the video—an attempt to recreate it with a torn apart cake. The rest of the day was spent in search of recreating the success of that first performance with various other cakes.

Performance and Flavor

In Roland Barthes' *Inaugural Lecture*[ix] he explains the forces of literature and how each of

those forces cooperatively deconstruct language's power, turn it inside out, cheat it, displace it. He

states:

> Literature does not say that it knows something, but that it knows *of* something, or
> better, that it knows *about* something—that it knows about men. What it knows
> about men is what we might call the great *mess* of language, upon which men work
> and which works upon them. Literature can reproduce the diversity of sociolects, or,
> starting from this diversity, and suffering its laceration, literature may imagine and
> seek to elaborate a limit-language which would be its zero degree. Because it *stages*
> language instead of simply using it, literature feeds knowledge into the machinery of
> infinite reflexivity. (463-464)

Within the above excerpt resides the central part of Barthes' argument which he continues to

season, color, and nurture through the rest of his lecture (a text written to be spoken by him in

person) which later culminates in a short but flavorful literary fragment at its very end.

Barthes writes that literature says it "knows *of* something, or better, that is knows *about*

something." The two prepositions that Barthes injects into the phrase "knows something," in which

the something is "man," completely alter the course of the sentence. In this instance, he plays with

language visibly and "*stages*" it, demonstrating the revision of his thought and its processing as

language. He purposefully wove this into his lecture as opposed to simply writing "literature says it

knows about something." The italics also work to emphasis the *dramatic* possibilities of a word, the

way it acts in a sentence, the different roles or significations it takes on. In this moment, Barthes

plays with the makings of language, with the makings of a sentence itself so that his point about

literature plays out before the reader's very eyes: it "feeds knowledge into the machinery of infinite

reflexivity." This "machinery of infinite reflexivity" to which Barthes refers gives way to an imagery

of that which is productive, always turned back upon itself, and which always and forever refers

back to itself. A trace of this imagery first surfaces in the "great *mess* of language" that Barthes

mentions. The "*mess*" is what is "*about*" men in that it has work being done upon it by the very thing

it does work upon (men). From this described dynamic also emerges imagery of a feedback loop, of movement back and forth through infinity, a reflexive movement, a messy movement. Literature knows "*about*" this movement, this movement of language that is already reflexive and always turned back upon itself. It feeds knowledge into this pattern of movement by playing with and displaying, placing and displacing, staging language. Literature reincorporates the makings of reflexivity which constitute language and its power (its back-and-forth movement of feeding itself) and shows it for what it is. In its displacement of language, literature reintroduces precisely that which is "*about*" men. In total, literature is a self-aware yet highly deceptive form of language for Barthes. It is a dramatic, performative form which turns language back onto itself, as it always already has been, to reintroduce it as a performance in the first place.

As if one writes a play about a play in which the play is mentioned in the play. The stage is a space in which performance is layered on top of performance until all that one sees when facing the stage is a performance. A field of actors. Which is exactly the point.

Barthes goes on to write that "writing is to be found wherever words have flavor" (464) and that it is the "taste of words which makes knowledge profound" (465). He equates words to salt as something which enhances, and even further reveals the real taste of knowledge. Barthes incorporates colors, tastes, smells, and sensory cues to display the work of literariness in a text. Just as language makes knowledge more of what it is, shows it for what it is, works with it as it is, literature then makes language more of what it is, or reveals it as such. It puts on display the imagination, the festivity, the flavor of language, casting it in the most vibrant light, the most intense tones, and playing with it, feeling it tasting it touching it, putting it on its own stage so that it may be seen more for what it is and so that everything may then be seen for what everything is: a performance.

Literature does this by "representing" what Barthes calls the "real" even though, as he later claims "without contradicting himself," (465) it is "stubbornly unrealistic." He writes, "it considers sane its desire for the impossible" (466). Literature does not, cannot, and will not usurp the power of language (for obvious reasons). Instead, it enrobes itself as a king who takes off his crown of glass and holds it out to its subjects, almost dropping it as if to demonstrate its fragility but never daring to do so. Literature works within the power of language—a power which creates, produces, confines, controls, and so on and so forth to break out of itself and depict the real. Except this will never completely happen. Its movement toward the depiction of the real through the "projections, explosions, vibrations, devices, flavors" of words (464), however, leads it to "imagine and seek to elaborate a limit-language" as Barthes earlier mentions (463). Such a limit will never be reached, but it is in the approach toward the limit, the approach toward the real, and the turning of language onto itself that literariness works.

Barthes goes on to write that the writer "must have the persistence of a watcher" this "means, in short, to maintain, over and against everything, the force of drift and of expectation" (467). Here Barthes refers to the drift of language to set discourse.

> For power seizes upon the pleasure of writing as it seizes upon all pleasure, to manipulate it and to make of it a product that is gregarious, nonperverse, in the same way that it seizes upon the genetic product of love's pleasure, to turn it into soldiers and fighters to its own advantage. (468)

This moment in Barthes' text demonstrates power's mechanisms of manipulation and goal of producing that which is expected or in-line with what has already been produced. The given shape, the sort of feedback loop that was previously mentioned, portrays a process or pattern which power conducts to remain powerful: language works to create more subjects and then those subjects create more works that do not "shift ground," as Barthes puts it (468). Barthes depicts not a reflexive self-overturning, but a back and forth of productivity and subjugation through set discourse. Within literature, however, the play, what Barthes calls the "semiotic force" then disrupts language. Such a

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force does so by *acti*ng signs rather than destroying them. It is in the performance of acting those signs made visible by literature that language's power is revealed as such.

The discourses (which Barthes remarks upon using interchangeably with language at some points) associated with particular types of knowledge reify the power of language. Barthes writes that out of the discourse of linguistics has erupted semiology: "In short, either due to excessive ascesis or excessive hunger, whether famished or replete, linguistics is deconstructing itself. It is this deconstruction of linguistics that I, for my part, call *semiology*" (469). Barthes makes many mentions toward history in this lecture as if to mark the movement of the power of language toward a deconstruction of itself due to the "semiotic force" of the literary. This part of his argument emerges through the shape of this lecture. It becomes a significant spectacle for the relationship between content and form in which the literary, the personal, the flavorful, eventually disrupts the conventional form in which it is written to reveal Barthes' entire lecture as a performance in itself.

In a short section at the lecture's end, Barthes remarks upon reading Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. The novel "deals with" tuberculosis—a disease with which Barthes had a very intimate relationship. The moments of the story, of his own disease, and of the present moment (in which the disease in him had been "vanquished" by chemotherapy) all become superimposed over one another as he describes what came over him as he read. The two most "remote" moments from his present moment, that of the story and his previous illness, split apart from the present and "were united" together (478). In that moment, Barthes wrote that he realized his body "*was historical*." Superimposition of his body over all of his past bodies come to supplant the previous superimposition of moments. He writes, "if I want to live, I must forget that my own body is historical." In this section of Barthes' lecture, the consistency of his text becomes endowed with literariness. The literariness in his own text emerges from Barthes' reference to Mann's novel. From that reference, literary language explodes out like a geyser of flavor. The piece of literature to which

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he refers brought him to a realization—one which would disrupt the very way he went about existing up until that point. The narrative jostled him into seeing the illusion of life playing out before him. It prodded him to peer into "the real" for a moment and step out of the illusion which he must "fling" himself into if he wants to live. The "unlearning" to which Barthes refers at the end of this passage—after mentioning ages at which one teaches what they know, then what they do not know (research)—marks what he calls a "new experience." He marks this experience as that in which the prior accumulation of knowledge and the language which marks it, flavors it, makes it more of what it is, is stripped away. What he has over time gathered, what has become furniture in an old home, must be torn up from its roots and then the roots must be inspected.

The sort of unlearning mentioned is, in fact, the "semiotic force" of literature: language deconstructing itself. It is deconstruction in general—which after years of learning, accumulating, and researching—emerges from literature. He read a novel, tore into "the real," became "stupefied" by a realization about the historicity of his body in relation to the young, fleeting, instantaneous existence of his *self* at each present moment, and proceeded to recognize the process he undergoes over and again—the illusion—of forgetting each of his former bodies and continuously reemerging as reborn. After peering into the machinery of this illusion, he marks it with the trappings of literature. **The flow of illusion, performance, act, play** that must continue if he "want[s] to live" becomes that which he embraces at the end of this lecture because it is necessary for the movement of life. Much as literature "feeds knowledge into the machinery of infinite reflexivity" for the growth and development of knowledge, the self-overturning of language. The illusion is "the age of another experience:" one "of yielding to the unforeseeable change which forgetting imposes on the sedimentation of knowledges, cultures, and beliefs we have traversed." It is a writer at the crossroads. An infant with a nipple in its mouth. It is an experience with "no power, a little knowledge, a little wisdom, and as much flavor as possible." It is the start of deconstruction.

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The flow of illusion, performance, act, play,

illusion, performance, act, play,

illusion, performance, act, play,

illusion, performance, act, play.

Lamentation: A Rhythmic Performance in Orange

[SEE APPENDIX]

Internal Dialogue

In the introduction to the text "Uninterrupted Dialogue: Between Two Infinities, The Poem" about his late friend Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jacques Derrida mentions a mysterious melancholy that did not wait until the moment of his friend's death to stir in him but that "invaded" him upon their first encounter.[x] It accompanied their introduction and even preceded the start of their friendship. Which is say that perhaps this melancholy had always already been stirring within Derrida.

> Such melancholy will no doubt have been changed—and infinitely aggravated—by death. It will have been sealed by it. Forever. Yet underneath the petrified immobility of this seal, in this difficult to read but in some way blessed signature, I have a hard time discerning that which dates from the death of the friend and that which will have preceded it for such a long time. The same melancholy, another one but the same also, must have invaded me as of our first encounter in Paris in 1981. (Two Infinities 4)

In this text, Derrida describes that encounter as verbally sparse, yet during it he was "sure that a strange and intense sharing had begun. A partnership perhaps" (4). He had a "premonition" that what Gadamer would have called an "interior dialogue" began forming within both of them. As Derrida clarifies in the following section, he "literally inherits" the words of Gadamer's text—a text written shortly after their first encounter and titled "Destruktion and Dekonstruktion." In his text, Gadamer references "dialogue" as that which "we pursue in our inner thought" and that seeks a "partner" everywhere in order to share itself. He defines this partner as "other"—one that "is completely different" (4). The final sentence of this excerpt from the text's conclusion—the text written after and possibly about this encounter (that Gadamer wrote and Derrida later read and reread)—seems to have teased Derrida: "Whoever wants me to take deconstruction to heart and insists upon difference stands at *the beginning of a dialogue*, and not at its end" (4). This alludes to the necessity of the other for dialogue even though it evidently begins in "inner thought." The other acts as some sort of inspiration to initiate the possibility of dialogue, so the fact that Gadamer specifically

calls out anyone who wants him to take deconstruction "to heart" and wrote this shortly after meeting Derrida for the first time, suggests that Derrida may have inhabited the space of the figure who "stands *at the beginning of a dialogue*" for Gadamer.

As Derrida states a little later in his text, "one speaks often and too easily of interior monologue" (7). Yet all the while, an "interior dialogue precedes it and makes it possible." For Derrida, his "interior dialogue with Gadamer, with Gadamer himself," the existence of him with flesh, bone, blood, and voice, "with Gadamer living still, if [he] dare say, will not have ceased since [their] Paris encounter." This type of dialogue appears to move continuously without stopping from the moment of conception—with or without the presence of the other which for Derrida is Gadamer and for Gadamer, Derrida. Whether due to the circumstances of distance or death, the interior dialogue, as opposed to a "monologue" as Derrida distinguishes, contains traces of the other within the self and flows through the self with or without the presence of the other.

The "*unheimlich*" quality which Derrida insists remains in the memory of their first encounter left traces in Gadamer's text. Traces that Derrida attempts to both illuminate and weave into his own text. He writes:

> I have not French equivalent to describe in one word this affect: in the course of a single and therefore irreplaceable encounter, a peculiar strangeness came in to mingle indissociably with a familiarity at once intimate and misleading sometimes disquieting, vaguely spectral. (5)

I am unaware of when Derrida first read this text, but if he had read it around the time Gadamer wrote it, it would have almost immediately followed their first encounter. Perhaps Gadamer also sensed the strange quality and potential partnership in what Derrida supplements his own terminology to call a "missed encounter" and, once it occurred, marked his text up with the "active and provocative trace" it left (5). Regardless, the traces left in both the corporeal moment and Gadamer's text following the moment hold a peculiar essence. According to Derrida, the corporeal moment was "sometimes disquieting, vaguely spectral" (5). Spectral: of or like a ghost. Derrida's

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marking of the word "spectral" creates a visual cue for the encounter: the vibrant potential for partnership transposed over the fragmented connection they experienced due to linguistic barriers and probably other elements that carry past that moment. The deep ache for what could-have-been had left Derrida with a "provocative trace" as he wrote; this verbally sparse or fragmented moment marked both the rest of their friendship and the continuation of Derrida's relationship to Gadamer after his death—his internal dialogue. At the time Derrida wrote this piece, he was left with the remnants—the remains still talking, something like that of a ghost—reiterating that vacuous and bittersweet feeling marked by their first encounter: "such melancholy." He inscribes the word "spectral" to emphasize the ghostly quality of their interaction which persisted through their friendship and after Gadamer's death. The odd, continuous aura emanating from their union before, during, and after its end becomes apparent as Derrida references this "trace." It reifies the melancholy mentioned at the beginning of his text—a feeling that far preceded the death of the other, remained active for the duration of their friendship, and resided alongside them as a spectre, haunting their union's inevitable end.

Derrida writes:

> No doubt the dialogue continues, pursuing its wake with the survivor. The latter believes he guards the other in himself—he did so already while the other was alive—hence-forth, the survivor lets the other speak inside himself. (7)

In this quotation, two perpetuities occur in tandem with one another. Upon the first encounter, at the initiation of dialogue, a melancholy emerges that persists throughout the friendship and, as Derrida states in the beginning of his text, becomes "changed—and infinitely aggravated—by death." Even "sealed by it." At that same moment, another perpetual flow begins which is what has here been referred to as an interior dialogue. Within each friend, a dialogue with each other constantly plays out, one that is spectral, almost otherworldly. It is this continuous flow which gets "infinitely aggravated" by death:

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> … the survivor lets the other speak inside himself. He does so perhaps better than ever, and that is a terrifying hypothesis. (7)

The last sentence alludes to the mitigation of one's imagination for the duration of the other's corporeal presence on earth regardless of a hidden melancholy and or an inevitable end. During a friend's life, one can ponder on what a friend would think and possibly channel the gathered data from all previous interactions into a list of probabilities for what a dialogue with that friend would look and sound like. Further, the persistent and recurrent cognitive dissonance one faces emotionally, ideologically, socially, etc. day after day may even owe its origin to the counterargument posed in a potential dialogue, or constant internal dialogue, between one and the other, one friend and another. These internal dialogues, however, look different before and after a death. After the event, the final event of death, they who then become the "survivor" suddenly flesh out this dialogue with elaborate, colorful imagery, embedding the now-deceased friend's piece of dialogue with more body, more life. The survivor pays more attention to the other's voice in this dialogue, hanging on to every word or, if there are no words, hanging on to every sensation birthed by the other's reaction. It seems in these ways, Derrida's hypothesis could be correct.

The spectral quality of the other, the existence of an other who enables a dialogue that one would cherish so much as to put forth the effort to develop a friendship with in particular, emerges upon the first encounter, yet somewhat enhances with the other's absence. What already existed of the other, the friend, within the survivor becomes so potent that it almost takes form within the survivor. "The survivor lets the other speak inside [them]self." This speaking inside or through was already going to occur throughout Derrida's text, but at certain moments, he elucidates it: "By specifying above all '*interior* dialogue,' I am delighted to have already let Gadamer speak in me" (4).

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Obituary

Her obituary consists of approximately two sentences about her life (which seems as though it either could have been three because "She" was accidentally capitalized after a comma in the second sentence or that someone decided to capitalize her pronouns along with her proper name for a reason that I couldn't possibly imagine), one enormous sentence containing names of those she "is survived by," and three smaller sentences (but still longer than those containing information about her life) about the funeral home and the "Celebration of Life" that would be taking place on March 10, 2019—as if this piece of writing was written for an occasion or a procession rather than for the death or previous life of the dead which ultimately gave way to the possibility of the occasion. The obituary ends with a phone number.

The two sentences about her life reference her age, where she had lived when she attended high school, the date she died, the year she graduated high school (with the proper name of the high school given), her current standing in college as a "sophmore," the proper name of the college she attended, her major there, and the proper name of her workplace as well as the city in which it was located were given.

The names of those she "is survived by" are then listed in the order that follows: her mother, her stepfather, her biological father, her stepbrother, her half-brother, her full brother, her maternal grandfather, her maternal grandmother, her paternal grandmother, her aunt and her aunt's lover, another aunt, her uncle, and three of her nieces. The only three people named that are not bound to her by blood were her stepfather, her stepbrother, and her aunt's lover.

Mnemosyne

On March 26, 1984 Jacques Derrida first began a series of three lectures (given over the course of three days) in the Bingham Hall Library (Department of Comparative Literature) at Yale University following both Paul de Man's death in December of 1983 and the speech "In Memoriam: On the Soul" [See Irony] which Derrida delivered within the month following his death. These three lectures were delivered in French. Their title translates to "Memoires for Paul de Man" in English with the word "memoires" remaining in French because of the plurality of meanings lent by the plural French word. The written lectures from which I am reading were translated by various people. The first one, the one titled "Mnemosyne," the one from which I will open this text, was translated by Cecile Lindsay.[xi]

In the first lecture, Derrida spoke of many things: deconstruction, deconstruction in America, America, allegory, autobiography, genre, totalization, performance, mourning, the possibility of mourning, metonymy, the impossibility of mourning, memory, memoires, law, being, loss, poetry, affirmations, epitaphs, love, death, friendship, the other, Paul de Man, and throughout all of this, the entire time, he was always already referring to the other—which in this case, "the "naked name" will be Paul de Man" (Memoires 39). At the end of the lecture, he writes:

> Our "own" mortality is not dissociated from, but rather also conditions this rhetoric of faithful memory, all of which serves to seal an alliance and to recall us to an affirmation of the other. (39)

And before this, he writes about the figure of "bereaved memory" and how it becomes both an impossible and possible metonymy or, how he puts it, an "allegorical metonymy" (37). About this allegorical metonymy, he writes:

> It speaks the other and makes the other speak, but it does so in order to let the other speak, for the other will have spoken first. It has no choice but to let the other speak, since it cannot make the other speak without the other having *already* spoke, without this *trace* of speech which comes from the other and which directs us to writing as much as rhetoric. This trace results in speech always saying something other than

that which it says: it says the other who speaks "before" and "outside" it; it lets the other speak in allegory. (37)

In order to flesh out how Derrida further elucidates the shape or motion of both this text and "In Memoriam: On the Soul" in the above quotes, other pieces of this text must be inspected. Like, for example, when Derrida explains de Man's definition of allegory:

> In [Paul's] eyes, allegory is not simply one form of figurative language among others; it represents one of language's essential possibilities: the possibility that permits language to say the other and to speak of itself while speaking of something else; the possibility of always saying something other than what it gives to be read, including the scene of reading itself. (11)

Among these quotations, several things occur. Derrida explains both how Paul de Man understood allegory and how allegory was playing out in this very speech about de Man, doing what de Man had "*already*" said it was doing. The presence of irony in "In Memoriam: On the Soul," and the way in which it became metonymic with de Man falls in line with this sort of "allegorical metonymy" Derrida describes in which what was being said was both filled with possibility and impossibility—it spoke of itself while speaking precisely of something else, of the other, the entire time. In that speech, Derrida spoke about de Man, but in the way that he brought up irony, incorporated irony, referred to de Man as "irony itself," he spoke with de Man. He spoke for and about de Man, but he was speaking about the other with the other—the language and terminology and signification of the other. Of course, speaking with the other is impossible when the other is dead, but he spoke *with* the work of the other, the findings of the other, the discourse of the other. And in the particular context of both that speech and the three lectures, the "naked name" of the other is Paul de Man (39).

Through this allegorical metonymy and by referring to it throughout his own text as such, Derrida writes of de Man, of his otherness, and so of the other in general. Such is that the work, findings, discourse of the other was always already going to be present in a speech about the other (which in this case is de Man), so Derrida references de Man's work and the way that work is at play in his own written speech to simply reveal what was already always going to be at play within it. He

does so with self-reflexive gestures such as these that turn the lecture back onto itself, back onto language in general, and expose his loss for exactly more of what it was: the loss of Paul de Man, an other, the other—one that made Derrida more of who or what he was:

> If death comes to the other, and comes to us through the other, then the friend no longer exists except *in* us, *between* us. In himself, by himself, of himself, he is no more, nothing more. He lives only in us. But *we* are never *ourselves*, and between us, identical to us, a "self" is never in itself or identical to itself. (28)

Derrida refers here to the other, the friend, existing only "*in* us, *between* us" after their death. He describes the "*we*" and the "self" in or between which the other exists after their death not as that in which the other enters after they die, but that in which the other always already has been existing. This moment harkens back to what Derrida wrote about his melancholy for Gadamer: "such melancholy will no doubt have been changed—and infinitely aggravated—by death. It will have been sealed by it. Forever" (Two Infinities 4). [See Internal Dialogue]. The other's death pushes this melancholy about the necessary possibility [See Instability of Space] of the other's loss (mourning which is always already at play within a friendship) to its limit. Which is to say that "such melancholy" has already been there. Much like the other, since before their death, has already been "*in* us, *between* us," constituting "us." Their death simply sealed this fact, "infinitely aggravated" it. Just as it sealed the melancholy it accompanies.

Epidictic Speech: Dialogue

This text cites many lectures. There is one lecture by Barthes and a few by Derrida. I would like to include another by someone else. In 1993, Toni Morrison gave a speech after accepting the Nobel Peace Prize.[xii] This speech is bursting with language. The entire lecture is a narrative of an old, blind woman to whom some young people come to challenge because she is known for her wisdom. To challenge her, the young people ask her if the bird in their hands is dead or alive. She is blind so her response is, "I don't know" and that "it is in your hands." Morrison goes on to inscribe the interior dialogue taking place within the old, wise woman. Further in the narrative she writes:

> It is the deference that moves her, that recognition that language can never live up to life once and for all. Nor should it.

And….

> Word-work is sublime, she thinks, because it is generative; it makes meaning that secures our difference, our human difference – the way in which we are like no other life.

And then…

> We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.

After pulling out of the old, wise, blind woman's mind, Morrison turns the narrative back into an exterior dialogue by inscribing the young people's response to her. The young people start their response with frustration and end with a call to justice for the future along with a remembrance of the past. It is after a long response from the young people that Morrison closes her lecture with words spoken by the old woman:

> "Finally", she says, "I trust you now. I trust you with the bird that is not in your hands because you have truly caught it. Look. How lovely it is, this thing we have done – together.

The Mark II: Aspsia Crhismas poerty

   After two years, I finally read "Aspsia Crhismas poerty." [See Mystery]. (She was dyslexic, and it has always been hard for me to appreciate grammar, so the misspelling, rearranging, combining, omitting and misplacing of letters was a game we shared and a way to save time.) The document contains many fragments of writing: larger, smaller, personal, philosophical, autobiographical, ones about longing, loss, many about death, love, friendship, citations from others, poems about the sky and mythology, feeling sad, holding hands, making dinner and cleaning the house, recollections, a section titled "Memories for Aspasia" that consists of little fragments inscribed about moments in her childhood like learning to ride a bike, the sky on a summer day, memories about her dad. The last sentence of each memory is "the end."

   She was going to give this to me on Christmas but never got the chance. No one has seen these writings but me, and I did not see them until now. This is a moment where one is faced with certain questions. Ones that emerged in other parts of this text: how much or how little does one share, reveal of an other and their work after they die? Maybe I can start with the end of her text— open up mine where she intended to close hers. The following was copied and pasted from the final page. The ugly font, its size, the spacing, the alignment, punctuation, all of this remains how she left it except for the proper name I replaced with a line of dashes:

I made a collection of all the writings and poems I had. They are all from different times. All from different moments. They are in no particular order. You'll find that the only overlap is of you and ------. I have deleted all my writings from my computer/phone. I will be starting over.
You have them now.
I love you, Valentine. Thank you, for being the one person who has never passed judgment on me. For being the one person who loves and accepts me for who I am, despite it all. Thank you for sharing experiences with me and understanding me, no matter the delusion.
You are the greatest friend anybody could ask for. You're family- forever.

This is a mark left for someone else. All marks always leave. They depart from their origin and so are left as a remainder. But this mark was specifically left for another, an other, which in this case is me. Any mark made for an other may, after the full departure of the one who left it (which is to say after they die), reads a little differently than it does when they are alive. If I had read this document when she was alive, I would have assumed she was indeed "starting over." I would see this mark as the close to a chapter rather than the end of it all.

After she wrote this, she probably wrote things at work, sent texts, signed some documents, wrote a note to her lover, but this is all I have to show for it. As far as I know, nothing else followed. If I had read this while she was alive and then again after her death, it would have probably read differently, too. It could be read so many ways, of course, but I and anyone who reads this ended up actually reading this a little while after she died. She left this mark, the mark left her at the moment of its inscription, and then she left everything else—the world as we know it. But this mark here was not just left before she died. Again, it was left *for* someone. This intention is evident not from the name of the document, but the statement: "you have them now." I do have them now and she no longer does. And I no longer have her, so this is what is left—that which was already no longer hers. Maybe it stopped being hers once she inscribed it or maybe once she died. But it really became mine when she wrote "you have them now." She didn't hand these to me and tell me "you have them now." She didn't write that these were to be given to me or that once she gave them to me, they would be mine. She wrote in the middle of this little fragment "you have them now." As if I had them before she finished writing or as if I was always already going to have them whether I had been given them or found them or did neither of the two.

The Possibility of Mourning

At one moment in "Mnemosyne," Derrida writes:

> Everything remains "in me" or "in us," "between us," upon the death of the other. Everything is entrusted to *me*; everything is bequeathed or given to *us*, and first of all *to* what I call memory—*to the memory*, the place of this strange dative. (Memoires 33)

Derrida claims that upon the death of the other, everything of the other is entrusted not just to those who remain, but "*to*" what he calls "*the memory*." He goes on to write that "all we seem to have left is memory" as if that which was already left is what everything of the other returns to. The way in which he claims that everything is entrusted to "*me*" and then "*us*" and then "first of all" to "*the memory*" leads one to believe that, indeed, all have distinctions, but each seem to be allegorically metonymic with one another. He goes on to write:

> The *possibility* of death "happens," so to speak, "before" these different instances, and makes them possible. Or, more precisely, the possibility of the death of the other *as* mine or ours in-forms any relation to the other and the finitude of memory. (33)

When writing "different instances" Derrida refers to "that relationship to self" known as "me," "us," "between us," "subjectivity," "intersubjectivity," "memory" (33). Here he writes that the possibility of the death of the other is precisely what gives way to an understanding of the self, of the self's experience and memory in general. Derrida then clarifies that "*we remember*" that this self is "constituted out of the possibility of mourning" even before the loved one dies because this is a "knowledge that is older than ourselves" (34). And so, he writes that "we come to ourselves" by "*recalling* this." We come to ourselves "through this memory of possible mourning" (34). Insofar as the possibility of the other dying first is a truth far older than anyone, it is one that was always already delineating one from an other— "you" from "me." Which is to say: that which "we" must "recall" has always already been known because it is accessible through "*the memory*." Derrida writes at the end of Mnemosyne that he has called this "the Psyche" which is the "proper name of an allegory," "the common name for the soul," and "in French, the name of a revolving mirror" (39).

Autobiography

In "Mnemosyne," Derrida also writes:

> Funerary speech and writing do not follow upon death; they work upon life in what we call autobiography. (Memoires 22)

After this moment in his lecture, Derrida includes a long quotation from a particular text of de Man's in which "a discussion takes place on the undecidable distinction between fiction and autobiography" (22). He goes on to write that "the problem of autobiography *seems* to elicit several concerns: that of *genre*, of *totalization*, and of the *performative* function" (*Memoires for Paul de Man* 23).

Genre [See Dear Reader; Color]

Totalization [See Something; Melancholia]

Performative [See Lamentation: A Rhythmic Performance in Orange; Melancholia: A Performance]

Relationships

What was always one of the most important things to her was relationships and all of their varieties, colors, shapes, all the things that relationships meant: love, friendship, romance, passion, possessiveness, freedom, loyalty, betrayal, manipulation, honesty, tension, power, so on and so forth. Relationships to eating and music. To death and loss and money. One's relationship to themselves. Relationships with people that are cool and with ones that aren't so cool. Spiritual relationships, relationships to animals and plants, to technology, to art, relationships to relationships, the way each kind of love is shaped. She talked a lot about death but also about love and all the different kinds of love. And a lot about the different kinds of relationships, their consistencies.

Friendship, romance, the possibility of creating a family—these were the kinds or possibilities of relationships she talked about caring for the most. She knew my relationship to learning and knowledge was important for the way I wanted my life to be shaped. We spent most of our most formative years together, learning together. She taught me a lot. I think we learned about friendship together.

When I got to college, I was seventeen, so we had been close for about five years. I had no idea what to do in college, what to study or anything. My freshman advisor just so happened to be someone in the comparative literature department. She told me that I should take a class with one of the graduate students, so I did. I had never read theory or anything like it before. After a few weeks, the professor assigned presentations for each student to give on specific days. He assigned me an essay in *Rogue* by Jacques Derrida. I had never read Derrida before.

I had absolutely no idea how to read what was written on the pages of that essay. It is a short essay, but I spent about 15 hours straight trying to read this text. Only reading. I felt like I was learning another language. I put time and energy into reading that text, a text that felt impossible to read, because I felt like I had to or that I should—not because I picked it up and decided to one day.

That's just how some relationships start, though. It is not dissimilar to how hers and mine started: a mutual friend introduced us, and we spent time with each other because of them. I don't remember if the presentation was any good, but I think it went okay. Ever since that assignment, I felt like a relationship had begun. It was always nice to be greeted with his work in other classes. Eventually, I started seeking it out myself.

I feel like I have a relationship with all of the texts referenced here and they all have relationships with each other in various ways, some more hidden than others. Some of the people who wrote these texts had relationships in life, some of the writers had read some work by the other writers, some just wrote about similar things.

About two-and-a-half years after that class, I returned from a short hiatus and decided not to be a comparative literature major because learning another language scared me. I was going to do interdisciplinary studies instead and write a capstone. Then she died.

And then I was lost. I drove around looking for her a lot.

All that I had was her writing that I couldn't bring myself to look at and the few words spoken and written about her by others after her death.

Needless to say, the interdisciplinary department was not for me. I went back to comparative literature; I returned to school only because I knew that I could make something for her, about her. That something is this text I am writing here.

My relationship to her has drastically changed over the course of time after her death. We still have one. A relationship, I mean. Just like people have relationships to any dead writers and the marks they left.

Melancholia Again

In "Mnemosyne" Derrida writes of the "the aporia of mourning":

> …the aporia of mourning and of prosopopeia, where the possible remains impossible. Where *success fails*. And where faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead. It makes the other a *part* of us, between us—and then the other no longer quite seems to be the other, because we grieve for [them] and bear [them] *in us*, like an unborn child, like a future. And inversely, the *failure succeeds:* an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in [their] death, outside of us. (Memoires 35)

If one was to return to the metaphor of breath for the mourning of a lost love-object [See Melancholia] while considering this quotation, then the inhalation of breath would signify the "faithful interiorization" of which Derrida describes—it would entail the interiorization, the pulling in, the inserting of oxygen, the taking of a breath in order for the body or the "self" to function. Further, the aborted interiorization to which Derrida refers would not signify the cutting, slicing, abrupt end to this interiorization, this inhalation of breath, but rather an exhale, a release, a push, a separation. Not only would this process of pulling close and pushing away, of inhaling and exhaling, of incorporating and separating be a process that was already always taking place for human life (among many others) to function, but one necessary in order for them to write it down as such. It would occur out of a "respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection" of the air that was being inhaled. To acknowledge the air inside the body as it is inside and then to let it separate is a responsible, reasonable act because that which was inhaled was never really a part of the body to begin with. It was always already something else. It, however, has been giving way to the function of the body, the self.

Further, the impossibility of capturing a breath and holding it in, making it exist only *in* us, opens up the body up to the necessary possibility of inhaling it again, pulling it closer once more. That is only possible because of its separation, its otherness. One cannot inhale that which would

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remain inside of them forever. Instead, the pulling in of oxygen, the pushing out of carbon dioxide, and the pulling and pushing of what we call *air* in general allow the body to be alive because one cannot inhale and exhale at the same time. Instead, inhalation and exhalation occur one after the other. In a sort of pattern or rhythm.

ACTUAL

SHAPE of the text

Pattern: The Shape of the Text II

Mourning may have been always already taking place, but this text has not. The decision to write this text, however successful or unsuccessful it may be, was made after and because of the death of a close friend. It came from a sense of responsibility, one could say. So this text and its shape do in fact have a beginning. I do not mean to define this text or the way it is read by creating a shape for it. I am simply trying to understand it myself.

I will even leave an empty space for you to draw something in the page that follows this section if you would like. Maybe you can come up with a better shape than me.

Anyway, there is a certain rhythm to this text and the way it moves. A rhythm is a pattern, and there are many possibilities for patterns. [See Lamentation]. What makes a pattern a pattern and not a random procession of sounds, silences, shapes, colors, numbers, motions is its repetitive nature. Something is always returned to. Merriam Webster defines a pattern (in its form as a noun) in eleven ways with two of those eleven ways branching off into two definitions themselves. The first definition, however, is "a form or model proposed for imitation." The following are some more of the eleven definitions that followed and are here listed with their corresponding number in the dictionary's list (please bear with me):

> 3 : an artistic, musical, literary, or mechanical design or form
> 4 : a natural or chance configuration
> 7 : a reliable sample of traits, acts, tendencies, or other observable characteristics
> 10 : a discernible coherent system based on the intended interrelationship of component parts
> 11: frequent or widespread incidence.

The most puzzling of these for me to understand is definition 3. Perhaps this definition is supposed to refer to specific outlines, blueprints. Perhaps it is supposed to equate to the word *genre.* And perhaps that is why the French word *genre* remains in French when used throughout or among or within the English language by English speakers and writers. Or perhaps it means something entirely different that I have failed to understand. All of the definitions before the

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very first in that list, however, contain the following words: "design," "form," "configuration," "reliable sample," "discernable coherent system," "frequent," "widespread." Through these words runs a thread connecting each definition (in various ways that I do not have time to elaborate on in depth) to the first: "a form or model proposed for imitation." This definition refers to the iterable quality of a pattern that has already been made, but not the iterable quality of the components of a pattern. [See Instability of Space]. Which is to say the movement of such components of the pattern. I aim to propose that that movement of those individual components of a pattern is not just an emergence which is in the pattern, composing the pattern, but always already a reemergence.

The reemergence of something in a pattern will not be the exact same as its first emergence. And when I say first emergence, I mean the first identifiable emergence in a marked or demarcated pattern. So really, its first reemergence. Regardless, no matter what, the component reemerges in a different space or at a different time. If a pattern is visual, then it will occur in space, on a page perhaps, and the recurrence of one sign would never be exactly the same as the one before it because it would be in a different space on the page, in a slightly different context. If a pattern occurs audibly, if it emerges as a certain procession of sound, then one sound will not be the exact same sound as the one that preceded it and the silence between them. Even if they sounded exactly alike, they would emerge at different moments. This is also to say, once again, that even the first emergence of a component in a pattern is in fact a reemergence in a larger context (but only in the larger context because the first emergence would really be the first emergence within the framing of a recognizable pattern).

So, a pattern is recognizable as a pattern because of returns. What the pattern consists of is returned to over some measurement of time and/or space, so the return is slightly different each

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time. In fact, it is this slight difference in the return—in time and in space—that gives way to the pattern as such.

In this iteration of the shape of the text, the shape demonstrates the motion of this text through its form. Memories, topics, motifs, words, colors, gestures, names, signs resurface but there is never a return to the origin. The text originated from the death of a friend and that moment will never be returned to. Yes, more friends will die, but not that friend. The circle will never be closed. It does, however, move through space in the unravelling of a spiral. There are (re)versals, (re)turns, (re)storations, and (re)traces to (re)velation in lament. [See Lamentation]. But each return happens at a different time, in a different space, and with a different consistency (shape, size, color, etc).

This pattern is not a stable pattern, but in its unravelling, its motions become smaller and smaller. Or rather, less and less far apart. The returns, if this text were to continue, may get infinitely closer together without touching. The shape becomes smaller as it moves from left to right (in this particular iteration) but that is just because the interchanging of one thing to the next, the silent rhythm, must get smaller, quieter, to occur closer together.

Really, the movements, the returns of the fragments become more and more fragmented, they get quicker, closer together until they seem like a unified whole. They dissipate like droplets of water. But to make this text a text, to frame it recognizably as such, the little droplets of water fall together and form nothing but a puddle—one droplet becomes completely indistinguishable from the next. The droplets continue to fall but they fall closer to the puddle, causing less of a disturbance or disruption as they meet its surface over time. They keep falling, though. The puddle is in a state of perpetual disturbance from their fall. They are always falling. Leaving the surface of the puddle— or the cluster of droplets—always with a slight ripple. One subtle, silent vibration.

One of the last things

Sure, everyone dies alone, but if you help someone or love someone, if even a single person or a community remembers you, then maybe you never really die at all. Maybe *this* isn't the end at all.

-KMG

Friendship: Relationships

The following are excerpts from a poem about friendship on pages 12 and 13 in the document "Aspsia Crhismas poerty" by Kayli Guthrie. She opens the poem with directions:

(Listen to Boards of Canada: Everything you do is a balloon -while reading.)

And then she proceeds to describe the remnants of the other once the other is absent:

That one day the sand beneath my toes will be more than a memory.
And the loneliness without you,
will be a feeling I've never felt.
Some days I feel your presence.
We may not talk,
but you're always there.
Some days I know you feel the same.

Further, she writes about the consistency of the relationship to, the friendship with, the other:

We are not opposites,
but you make me feel complete.
And if I succeed at nothing,
I'll be okay. It was you I had next to me.
If life has no meaning,
I'll be okay. At least it meant nothing with you.
If I never get to make it,
I'll be okay. I know you'll go there for me.

Later, she closes the poem with a reference to the singularity of the other:

You are the feelings inside me, not the voice,
because you're the only one who hears me.
You've grown in my spine,
the imprint of your hand on my shoulder remains.
I meet someone new and I'm looking for you,
but no one can be the same.
No one can be you-er than you.

Juxtaposition

As previously mentioned, Merriam-Webster defines rhythm as "an ordered recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements in the flow of sound and silence in speech." [See Lamentation.] This pattern or "recurrent alternation of strong and weak elements" depends on the *relationship* between its elements to be recognizable as a pattern, as a rhythm. Other than the repetition of rhythm as a pattern (insofar as it is an "ordered recurrent alternation" of elements), that which allows rhythm to be identified as such is the difference between the elements which compose it—a difference that is detectable, recognizable by the contrast of one element from the next. It is this contrast given by the difference between elements that allow for the rhythm to exist as such, as an alternation of strong and weak elements. Within the given definition of rhythm, difference is acknowledged in terms of strength and weakness which may be interpreted in a variety of ways. Within the specific context of the alternation of silence and sound, however, a detectable presence of one rather than the other give way to the possibility of identifying one element as stronger or weaker. (To be sure, this is not identified by more of one than the other because more sound will always be some sound which will mean that some sound means nonsilence and vice-versa.)

This recognizable differentiation gives way to the possibility—or necessity—of alternation, but relationship gives way to its pattern (much like silence and sound, mourning and revelation give way to lamentation). It is not just difference, but recognizable differentiation given by contrast which is evident specifically by juxtaposition that opens up this possibility. Juxtaposition is defined by Merriam Webster as "the act or an instance of placing two or more things side by side often to compare or contrast or to create an interesting effect" *or* "the state of being so placed." Placement, closeness, contiguousness gives way to the evidence of contrast, the recognizable differentiation, of one element or component and another which makes rhythm *rhythm*. The relationship, the pattern is only possible precisely because that which is different *is different*. For Gadamer, that which "is

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completely different" is "other." [See Internal Dialogue]. With this said, however, it is the relationship between one recognizably differentiated other and an other—between each other—which also gives way to the possibility of the pattern, and so, rhythm. To Scholem, rhythm is the remnants of revelation bumping against mourning, that which remains in lament which is really all that remains. It is that which gives way to the possibility of lament, the remains of an encounter between two completely different others, their relationship (be it violent, amicable, or something else), which also gives way to rhythm. And it is the "inviolability of rhythm" this pattern, this relationship, this "ordered recurrent alternation" in time and/or space between two others that "constitutes all poetry," according to Scholem. As previously referenced, Scholem writes that lament is poetry. Which may possibly be inversed to read that poetry is lament. [See Lamentation].

If such is the case, then rhythm's inviolability, its sanctity from assault, attack, or trespass is what remains in lamentation as the offspring of mourning's decay because it survived, or likely emerged (reemerged) from, revelation's attack on mourning. Insofar as this attack was an interception—a rub, bump, hit, a possible violation or intrusion, so on and so forth—the moment of attack, the movement of such at the instant it occurs may be framed as the juxtaposition of two recognizably differentiated languages—mourning and revelation. This juxtaposition, that which is the "act or instance of placing" (and so it is defined as both the act *and* instance of placing) side by side, this movement of closeness and contiguousness open up the possibility of lamentation because it frames, situates, marks the emergence (or reemergence) of a recognizable rhythm—"a silent rhythm"—which is all that "remains" in lament of the disruption of mourning. The rhythm that remains from revelation's attack on mourning, that which survives in lament because of what Scholem calls its "inviolability" is perhaps what gives way to the possibility of two or more others juxtaposing, having an instance of closeness, having a relationship in the first place. It is perhaps what constitutes dialogue.

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Dialogue
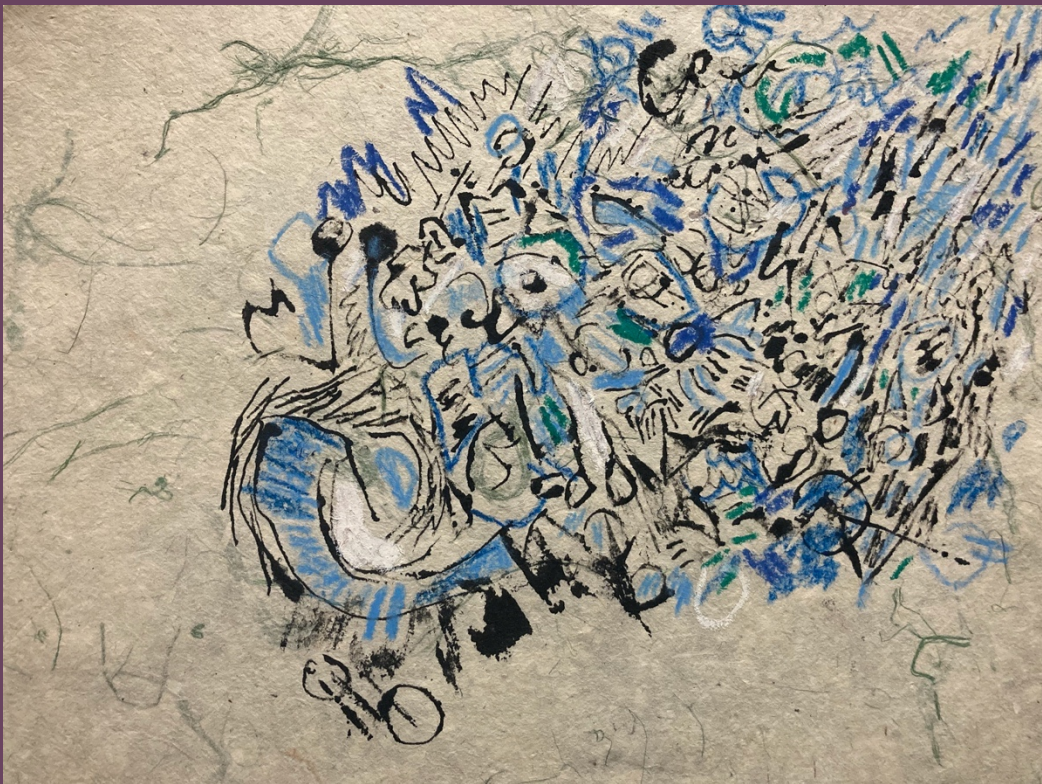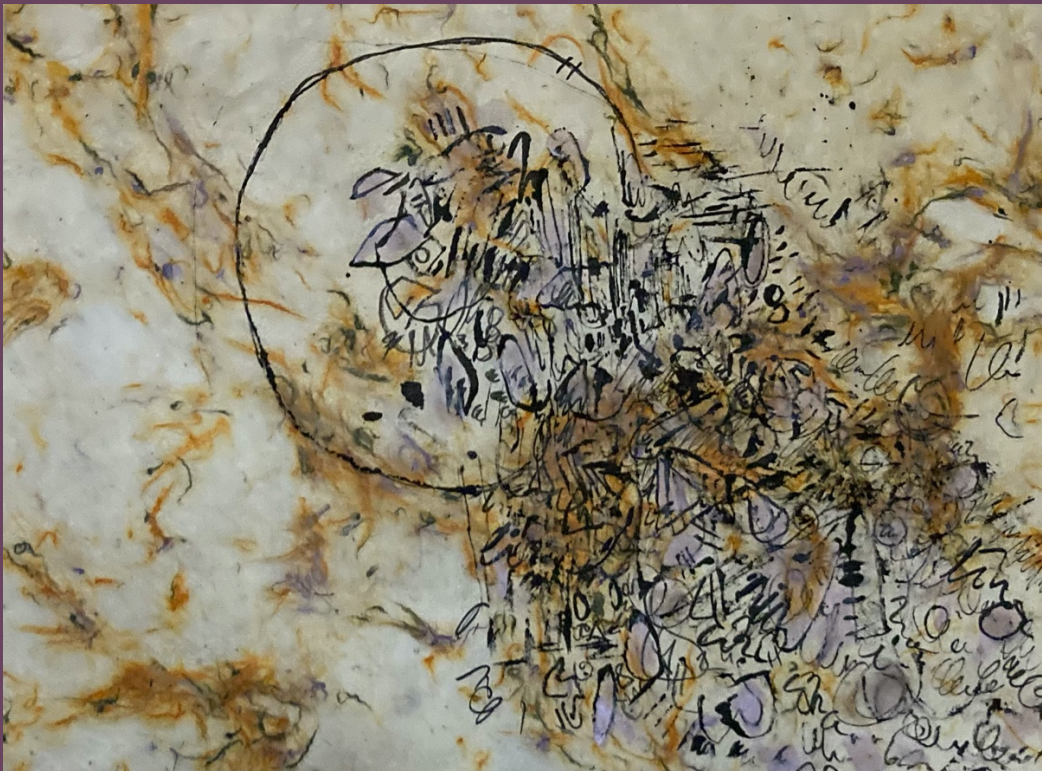
the coiled serpent

the grass at soccer practice
the grass in front of me
somewhere else
the car and the
highway
the
the very same
sky
over and over
the suburbs
but today
with my
with my dad
with my dad
with my roommate
but the sky was always
the same
gooseflesh speckles me
my fate
my fate
i was
i am alive
again,
before and over
i could feel it in
the sky
clouds and blue
and more days arrived
all at once

she's gone
and her favorite sky
arrives
that same day
the same sky
she was there,
waiting
and so, death

all the supermarkets
late and early
ever visited

sky
when we were in the
city
when we were in
over and over
i was in the city
dead friend
with my former friends
no
i was with my roommate
it was the same sky
the light
the cold
becomes
past becomes present
present
i will not be
again

sunny
without rays
then the rays came
i saw them
the faces, the grass

i saw them
see them

and the sky followed
overcast

the sky
approaches

and i am grounded   from the ground
that same ground   i am alone
                                elsewhere
it's ecstasy   i panic

a hand touches my
and holds it   back
there
it is too
still   i am here
here   but here
with this sky
on this ground
under this hand
this is now and not   now
                                then or when

Since man, in [the Gnostic's] view, is a fragment of the universe, and since the body of the one and the space of the other proceed from a simple material, both must obey the same laws. Man is a mirror in which one can discover the reduced and condensed image of the sky, a living universe carrying within him, in his body and in his psyche, fires and dark shores, zones of shadow and of light. Are these lights and shadows simply forms split off from a single material, or two materials of opposing nature? All our existence, all our choices as thinking hominids are vitally implicated in this simple question. Thus, the Gnostics searched the splendours and terrors of the sky to find an answer to our own duality.

Jacques Lacarrière, *The Gnostics*
(Translated by Nina Rootes)

Snakes Again

At one moment in *Hyperdream*, Cixous writes:

> I have my words and signs. It is essential to have exchanged the invisible ring for all that we call survival, survive, survivor. All these words go on living today in the numerous public, private, secret texts and scrolls my friend devoted to them. When I say invisible ring, this is a metaphor. Each of us substitutes for the ring whatever his or her civilization suggest (*Hyperdream* 20-21)

Gnostics

Lacarrière writes of the primordial serpent:

> 'If a person has eyes that know how to see, [they] will look upward to the heavens and [they] will see the beautiful image of the Serpent coiled there, at the place where the great sky begins. Then [they] will understand that no being in heaven or on earth or in hell was formed without the Serpent.' (*The Gnostics* 17)

March 26: A Tattoo

In "Aspsia Crhismas poerty," Kayli Guthrie writes:

> I tattooed it on my wrist- immortality…

Ouroboros

Van der Sluijs and Peratt[xiii] cite a text to depict that the serpent "was also firmly embedded in the creation mythology cycle" (13):

> Something had to be done to keep the earth from falling into the sea, and so Aido Hwedo, the male serpent, was asked to coil himself, tail in mouth, and lie below the earth like a carrying pad that men and women use to support burdens which they carry on their heads. But because Aido Hwedo does not like heat, the Creator gave him the sea to live in. (Herskovits 1938:248-49; cf. Mercier 1954:220) (13)

Serpent

In "Plato's Pharmacy" (which I encountered in the book *Dissimenation* translated by Barbara Johnshon)[xiv], footnote 42 contains a narrative about where to find the book of knowledge written by Thoth, the god of writing. The book is allegedly in the sea of Coptos encased within a golden casket which is encased in many other caskets made of different materials:

> …and there is an immortal serpent coiled around the casket in question. (94)

Own Utterance

In "The Ourobórous as an Aural Phenomenon," van der Sluijs and Peratt also cite the Coffin Texts:

> I bent right around myself, I was encircled in my coils, one who made a place for himself in the midst of his coils. His utterance was what came forth from his own mouth. (Coffin Texts-,321 [IV. 147] translated by Clark 1959:5) (7)

Mythology

In "Plato's Pharmacy," Derrida writes:

> …this meshing of the mythological and the philosophical points to some more deeply buried necessity. (*Dissemination* 86)
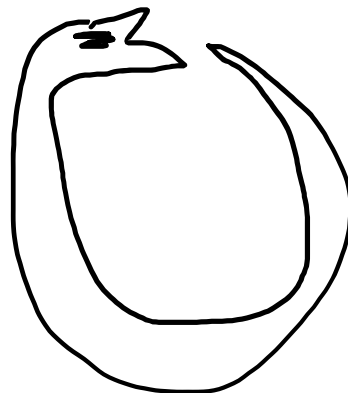
Irony II

Near the end of "The Concept of Irony," Paul de Man claims that irony disrupts reflexivity.[xv] He then cites Walter Benjamin and proceeds to write about the "ironization of form" as a "radical, complete deconstruction of the form" (Concept of Irony 182):

> "Formal irony… represents the paradoxical attempt still to construct the edifice by de-constructing it [*am Gebilde noch durch ab-bruch zu* bauen], and so to demonstrate the relationship of the work to the idea within the work itself [p.87]. The idea is the infinite project (as we had it in Fichte), the infinite absolute toward which the work is under way. The irony is the radical negation, which, however, reveals as such, by the undoing of the work, the absolute toward which the work is under way. (183)

And so it appears that the "paradoxical work" of constructing an "edifice," like a work of mourning or lament for example, while deconstructing it gives way to what de Man refers to as an "infinite project." The juxtaposition of the two motions, of constructing and deconstructing, "demonstrate[s] the relationship of the work to the idea within the work itself." Which is to say that the rhythm induced by this repeated juxtaposition of construction and deconstruction, this "formal irony," is what constitutes the infinite project as such—as that which always approaches, never reaches, but reveals its own path on its infinitely doomed approach. The imagery of instability, of constructing and deconstructing, is precisely what gives stability to the work in question. Shortly after this moment in the text, de Man quotes Schlegel to bring this point home about nonunderstanding and stability "...[the edifice] would lose its stability at once if this power were to be dissolved by means of understanding. Truly, you would be quite horrified if your request were answered, and the world would all of a sudden become, in all seriousness, comprehensible" (183).

It appears that formal irony fits right into Scholem's model of lamentation (who opened his text "On Lament and Lamentation" from a moment in Benjamin's work). What formal irony "represents" is precisely the disruption of mourning's infinite approach toward the border language of lamentation. And then that disruption gives way to the border itself. An impure, unstable border that is constituted by the rhythm rippling from revelation's intrusion on or juxtaposition with

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mourning—the formation of a relationship or dialogue between them. "Irony is the radical negation," according to de Man. This utterance harkens back to Scholem's text: in lament, "each word negates itself and sinks back into the infinity of silence." [See Lamentation]. To de Man, the "infinite toward" to which the work approaches becomes apparent precisely by the "undoing of the work" (183). Irony both gives way to and situates the constant undoing and the infinite approach of **the work of lamentation** while demonstrating the double motion as such—as a double motion, a motion that cannot be consolidated because the two motions contrast, juxtapose one another. Much like the evident contrast from juxtaposition unleashes the power of rhythm, the dialogue between two recognizably differentiated figures in a binary. This rhythmic dialogue, that which is impure, unstable, always being undone while always approaching, what de Man calls the infinite project, is lamentation. And it is irony, "the radical negation," that opens up the possibility of its existence.

How It Moves

The poetry within this text does the best job of communicating its movement. The movement originally seemed like that of the primordial serpent, of the ouroboros. In "The Ourobórous as an Aural Phenomenon," van der Sluijs and Peratt specifically mention that the snake does not sit still with its tail in its mouth. Rather, it always moves, always swallows itself. It is self-reflexive.

The movement of this text, however, does not resemble a circle. But rather, the unravelling of a circle. It is an ironic movement—one in which the circle always unravels ("the undoing of the work"), revealing its coils as it approaches the "infinite toward" (183). It would be infinite if this text did not have to end.

Impossible Mourning

Now to return to the quotation by Schlegel that de Man embedded in his own text:

> ...[the edifice] would lose its stability at once if this power were to be dissolved by means of understanding. Truly, you would be quite horrified if your request were answered, and the world would all of a sudden become, in all seriousness, comprehensible. (Concept of Irony 183)

The power to which Schlegel refers is that of "nonunderstanding." Of nonunderstanding, Schlegel writes that "no restless intelligence dares to come close to its holy borderline" (Concept of Irony 183). [See Lamentation]. Why would anyone want to approach the borderline of nonunderstanding? Approach a state of nonunderstanding? Or approach that which can never be understood? Is this conceptualization of borderline, one that is "holy," possible in a model like Scholem's? To Scholem, precisely what makes lamentation a pure border is its impurity as language or nonlanguage. So, what would constitute a holy borderline considering that a borderline is neither *pure* understanding nor nonunderstanding? I would like to propose that the holy borderline, the ironic edifice to which Schlegel refers is, in fact, lamentation. It would "lose its stability," that which is composed of its instability afforded by irony's movements of undoing and revealing, if the power of nonunderstanding were dissolved by understanding. Much like it would if language were to destroy nonlanguage. And vice versa. The rhythm would cease as such. Because of this, and for the edifice to remain stable in its instability, language and nonlanguage, understanding and nonunderstanding, must remain in perpetual dialogue with one another.

Incomprehension

In Mnemosyne, Derrida describes that true "mourning" is impossible. It appears only "to dictate a tendency: the tendency to accept incomprehension, to leave a place for it" (Memoires 31). Possibly because, as Schelgel puts it, "you would be quite horrified" if it all became comprehensible at some point.

True Mourning

In Mnemosyne, Derrida poses the question, "what then is true mourning?" He then writes:

> This experience is mournful in its very essence; it gathers itself together, it assembles itself to contract alliance with itself, only in the impossible affirmation of mourning. But this impossible affirmation must be possible: this singular affirmative affirmation *must* affirm the impossible, without which it is only a report, a technics, a recording. The impossible here is the other, such as he comes to us as a mortal, to us mortals. And whom we love as such, affirming this to be good. (Memoires 32)

When the other (the other in general) approaches "us" singularly as a mortal whom "we" love, and then they die, it affirms that it is good that mourning is impossible—that mourning is mourning. That it is incomprehensible. That it is a state of silence, nonlanguage. And that lament is ironic in its attempt to make the impossible possible.

I have continued to wonder what would possibly bring revelation to juxtapose mourning. What would provoke two "opposing," or rather, two recognizably differentiated things to create a relationship, bring forth a reemergence of rhythm. Lamentation, this rhythm (and perhaps rhythm in general), has been given a negative connotation much like "the other": mysterious, unstable, impure, liminal, violent and, therefore, born out of something bad. But perhaps it isn't. Perhaps every time, every single time, it is born out of something like love.

In memory of Kayli Michelle Guthrie.
I will always love you.

Appendix

Melancholia: A Performance

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygymtB6sCI8

Lamentation: A Rhythmic Performance in Orange

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BIoI342BlyM

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