

Call for abstracts

‘All things reimagined’: Creative and aesthetic strategies of grief

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“Grief is all things reimagined through the ever emerging wounds of the world.”
(Nick Cave, The Red Hand Files, Issue #95, May 2020)

When facing a significant loss, we are not (only) passive recipients of grief. We are also active subjects, producing strategies of grief - of commemoration and transformation; of sharing and shaping communities; and of (re)shaping our identities with and without our deceased. This academic anthology explores *creative and aesthetic strategies of grief*. Our conceptual base is Lorraine Hedtke and John Winslade’s (2017) contention that grief is a craft “that is less about following a universal pattern or performing a set of prescribed tasks and more about an artistic exercise of designing our own experience like a work of art” (p. 15).

However, unlike Hedtke & Winslade, we do not particularly address the possibility for counselors to support creative and aesthetic grief strategies. Rather, we seek to open a space to examine these creative and aesthetic grief strategies themselves.

We take a critical stance towards the oft-stated argument that, when dealing with death and grief, there exists a cultural vacuum left by the decreasing significance of church, family and tradition in which the bereaved do not know what to do (for instance Walter, 1999). Our ambition is to demonstrate that people *do* find and form all kinds of inspirations and strategies as they grieve, and that the active and creative cutting of one’s own path in grief—the reimagining of all things—can be aesthetic. This implies sociocultural inspirations and formats, and media and materiality of all sorts in the widest perspective imaginable from the life of the bereaved themselves, their communities, the deceased, popular and everyday culture, art, and professional, religious, spiritual, cultural and societal knowledges, etc. Though we may decide to undergo transformation in grief, as Judith Butler argued (2004, p. 17), we are, at the same time, also still *ourselves* when we face bereavement. As such, we draw on our cultural preferences and knowledges—and find new ones—blending, mixing and negotiating elements of cultural material in crafting individualised grief strategies.

“We are like artists adding brushstrokes to a picture we are painting, but we are provided by our cultural world with the canvas, the fine and thick brushes, and sometimes the colors we can apply, not to mention the artistic conventions we are expected to follow. As we apply paint, we shape the finer details, mix different hues, and place them on the canvas in line with our particular preferences of expression” (Hedtke and Winslade 2017, p.18).

This anthology takes as its point of departure and exemplar the grief of musician Nick Cave following the 2015 death of his son Arthur, with studio albums *Skeleton Tree* and *Ghosteen* (2016 & 2019, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds) and subsequent

tours; documentary film One More Time with Feeling (2016, dir. Andrew Dominik); Cave's audience engagement via blog The Red Hand Files; and media appearances since Arthur's death, exemplifying the possibility for imagination, engagement, connection and even beauty within profound grief: "It became clear that as human beings we have enormous capabilities that allow us to rise above our suffering - that we are hardwired for transcendence...I have found a way to write beyond the trauma, authentically, that deals with all manner of issues but does not turn its back on the issue of the death of my child" ... (The Red Hand Files, Issue #1 September 2018).

We cordially invite contributions that illuminate the possibility for people to grieve by cutting creative paths set into their lives, relationships and settings, and where the sculpting of our griefs may in itself be aesthetic. Curious about how grief *might* be, rather than confirming pre-formed ideas, and wishing to push against continued efforts to squeeze grief into templates and expectations (to follow grief stages, to grieve alone and for set times, or to continue bonds with the dead), our purpose here is to offer a meditation on grief as a ground where creative, even artful responses, beyond formula or prediction, are possible.

Though primarily an academic anthology, we invite contributions in a playful and creative spirit, and welcome in particular visual, audio and multi-media contributions representing various aesthetic grief strategies, accompanied by academic exposition or analysis. Our intention and hope is to produce an online companion to this anthology showcasing multi-media contributions.

We invite contributions on the following evocative themes:

- Aesthetic responses to death: our own and others'
- Reshaping our own and others' post-grief identities
- The interplay of fact and fiction, the real and imagined in grief
- Grief as artwork/creative practice
- Creativity, ingenuity and imagination in grieving
- Grief, materiality and media
- Beauty, joy, fulfillment, connection, peace, invigoration and connection in grief
- Crafting griefs in dialogue with others, real and imagined
- Grieving in creative defiance/deference to social, cultural and temporal norms
- Grief as communal creative activity
- Spontaneous/ad-hoc/improvised grief rituals, practices and strategies
- Pre-narrative/anti-narrative grief practices/strategies
- Exposition on/analysis of Cave's post-grief oeuvre, or that of other artist/creative/bereaved person(s)
- Creative/imagined narratives about the dead and their bereaved
- Aesthetics of death, loss and grief in art, literature, film, photography and music
- Analysis/exposition of artistic grief practices

The anthology will be organised into thematic sections around these and other topics that may emerge from abstract submissions. We are open to authors interested in pursuing related lines of inquiry. Please feel free to get in touch with the editors should you have any questions about the project. We would be thrilled if you can share our announcement with colleagues whose work aligns with the focus of this

volume. Before getting to work, please engage with Cave's art and writing, either alone or with others.

Please submit a 200-300 word abstract of your proposed chapter, plus a short CV, with affiliations, and complete contact information (preferably in a single Word file) to Dr. Dorthe Refslund Christensen (nordrc@cc.au.dk) by June 10th 2022. Abstracts submitted are accepted subject to editors' review and writers will be notified in October 2022. The first draft of 5000-6000 word chapters will be due tentatively by March 1st 2023. Peer review process of all first drafts with comments to authors by May 15th 2023. The deadline for submitting second drafts is October 15th 2023. Chapters submitted may be included in the anthology subject to peer review. Publication is estimated in 2024.

Please note: We are currently working to establish contact with a reputable academic publisher for an English language anthology. Please feel free to get in touch, should you have any queries.

Yours,

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References:

Hedtke, L., & Winslade, J. (2017). The crafting of grief: Constructing aesthetic responses to loss. London: Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/The-Crafting-of-Grief-Constructing-Aesthetic-Responses-to-Loss/Hedtke-Winslade/p/book/9781138916876>

One More Time With Feeling: <https://www.nickcave.com/films/one-more-time-with-feeling/>

The Red Hand Files: <https://www.theredhandfiles.com/>. Some relevant issues: [#1](#), [#6](#), [#95](#), [#116](#).