

FROM MEMORIES TO MEMORIAL: HEALING GRIEF THROUGH MOVING IMAGE CREATION

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Abstract

Mourning is a period of our life that affects us deeply, and could be very traumatic in some cases. Art has been and still is a great way to express non-verbally our deeper feelings, finding meaning to our condition and in the case of mourning, our loss. Photography and Moving images are both medium that have a strong connection with death by embalming time, they can also be used as tools to ease the pain during mourning, and to move forward in our life. This study summarizes first some basic psychology concepts about bereavement and art therapy before focusing on the use of moving images as a healing tool for grief. This study compared the creation of moving images as a tool for healing grief both in art therapy and as a creative process by practitioners who experienced grief. The last part is a case study based on the author's own experience with dealing with grief through the making of an animation in memory of his lost partner. Through the case study, the author explores the process of making the animation and its positive effect on his grief.

Keywords: Bereavement, Moving Image Therapy, Grief Work, Animation, Video

Introduction

“How can I move on?” Confronted with the death of a loved one, this is one of the questions we asked ourselves the most. While culture and religion have a strong impact on how we perceive death and how we accept it, art, through painting or music has also been a traditional way to express and catalyze the pain of losing someone we love. The advance of psychology in the XXth century raised some questions about grief as a symptom, and its best therapy, a differentiation was made between “normal” grief and “acute” grief that required treatment.

Last year I lost my partner after a 4-month fight with cancer, she was 30 years old. This unfortunate event drained me and pushed me to consider different methods for healing my grief. Dealing with a considerable amount of photographs, messages, videos of her taken during all the years she was alive, I questioned myself if I should erase everything to move on or on the contrary trying to create a sort of monument to help me accept her death and live with it. I decided to choose the second option, by doing an animation project, dedicated to her. Teaching video, photography and motion graphics, I am used to animating photographs or another type of content. I felt that this project could help me turn the page, but later I started to question my choices, would it really help me get over her death? Am I not doing the opposite, becoming obsessed, and then prolonging the mourning period?

Art therapy, a recent branch of Psychology, is commonly used for healing patients from acute grief by letting them express themselves through art or through exposure to it. Moving images, like

animation or filmmaking, while being a perfect tool to tell stories, requires a certain level of pre-production and preparation, making it more technical than other medium to therapists who often prefer a more direct medium with their patient. On the other hand, with digital video and photography more accessible, many therapists start using moving images as a treatment for grief. Grief can also be explored by the bereaved, without the help of a therapist, as we will see by simply involving himself or herself in a moving image project on the condition that the bereaved doesn't suffer from complicated grief. For this reason, it is important to understand what is grief, and its theories through the XXth century, as well as comparing art therapy with a more individual approach to the use of moving images for healing grief.

Bereavement theory & Art Therapy

1. Bereavement theory

While death is inevitable, so is bereavement. It is a natural process observed by all mankind and it makes us realize that our own existence is fragile. The level of grief we experience depends on the relationship we have with the deceased, the way he or she left us and its age. Religion has been a motor previously to heal and give an explanation to the bereaved. But we have to wait the 20th century with the advance of psychoanalysis to tackle bereavement Therapy. As Sigmund Freud mentions it in *Mourning and Melancholia* (Freud, 1917), mourning is a natural phenomenon, it eases with time and is non-pathological. He differentiates it with melancholia, which also has the same symptom (the death of a loved one) but is more severe and requires a proper treatment. A person suffering from melancholia according to Freud is more vulnerable because he lost his self-esteem, his ego is replaced by the person he lost. Melancholia is technically a self-depreciation where the ego of the bereaved has been replaced by the “love-object” or the deceased person, whereas mourning is more a depreciation of the world, where the bereaved is still conscious of what he lost but his ego remains intact. Lack of hunger, sleeplessness, detachment are signs of melancholia which in worst cases can lead to suicide, therefore the need for treatment according to Freud.

Freud defines a period of 3 to 12 weeks (acute grief) for the bereaved to acknowledge the loss and a period of 1-2 years (mourning) where progressively the bereaved moved on to a standard state of mind (Lister, Pushkar, Connolly, 2008) similar to a pre-bereavement. One of the key ideas of Freudian theory is that the bereaved must confronts his loss and that he needs to give up all attachments of the deceased in order to become “normal” again. Freud also differentiates pathological mourning (melancholia) from normal mourning in a sense that only the pathological one needs a therapy. In his opinion, it would be counterproductive or even dangerous to treat someone who is passing through a “conventional” mourning (Freud, 1917).

Freud was very influential on other theories on the second half of the XXth century, such as the “stage model” which base is that grief follows a strict pattern of stages that a bereaved person will encounter before becoming “normal” again. For instance, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross defined 5 stages for a successful grief work: shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kubler-Ross,

1969), which became a standard later for therapists to help patients suffering too much from their bereavement. However, for the last 30 years, the Freudian vision of grief and the later stage models have been challenged by scholars and therapists (Lister, Pushkar, and Connolly, 2008), revealing that grief is a much more complex process.

2. Recent Approaches on Bereavement

While the Freudian theory has been really influential on grasping how bereavement functions, new theories developed in the last 20 years shows a new way of both interpreting grief and help the patient heals from it. The Dual-Process approach, for instance, differentiates two types of stressors that affect the bereaved, “loss-orientation” and “restoration orientation”. The “loss-orientation” stressor is basically the focus of the bereaved on the deceased, on grief work, while the “restoration-orientation” is trying to avoid grief, for instance avoiding movies that talks about cancer, or places that could trigger grief, reminding the deceased. For Stroebe and Shut, bereavement is a constant oscillation between these 2 stressors rather than a linear collection of stages (Lister, Pushkar and Connolly, 2008). The “restoration-orientation” stressor is pushing the bereaved to deal with secondary losses, replacing what the deceased was doing in the relationship with the bereaved, for example cooking, or taking care of finances. According to Stroebe and Shut, a healthy grieving is when the bereaved oscillates between these 2 stressors. This oscillation allows the bereaved to find a meaning to his mourning over time. (Stroebe and Schut, 2001).

A constructivist approach developed by Neimeyer explains that why most bereaved will cope with their loss after the second year of grieving, certain people experienced complicated grief, where for instance the deceased died violently. Complicated grief can be helped following a meaning-reconstruction model, helping the bereaved find a meaning to his/her loss (Lister, Pushkar and Connolly, 2008). The bereaved, while actively participating in grieving and not being passive can rewrite/revisit his/her self-narrative by *assimilating* the loss, following a pre-mourning narrative or *accommodating* the loss by for instance trying to see the positive side of mourning, exploiting their new sensitivity (Neimeyer, Burke, Mackay and Van Dyke Stringer, 2010). In one instance, a therapist re-explores the funeral pictures of a bereaved mother who lost her child during pregnancy. This catharsis helps her revisit her trauma from an outside perspective, helping her giving a meaning to her grief. (Neimeyer, Burke, Mackay and Van Dyke Stringer, 2010).

Another form of therapy is used more and more often for helping bereaved persons, relying on a self-expression using painting, sculpture, music, drawing, performing arts and as we will see later, moving images: art therapy

3. Art Therapy for Bereavement

Art therapy has often been used as an accompaniment to psychotherapy. Compared to a classic therapy, art therapy doesn't rely on a conversation only to communicate thoughts with the patients, it uses the full spectrum of art and other creative practices as a form of treatment (Malchiodi, 2003). Drawing, for

instance, was used by Christopher, a child whose mom committed suicide, to symbolically represent her death, allowing him to release part of his grief (Rubin, 2010). Art therapy also relies also on a non-linear approach seen above to grief work through for instance balancing the loss orientation stressors with activities that emphasize joyful memories (Lister, Pushkar and Connolly, 2008).

Art therapy doesn't really rely on technical artistic skills, but more on expression. The purpose of doing the artwork is not for art's sake but for therapy, for healing the patient. This form of therapy is limited by the art technical skills of the patients or the therapist. For instance, if it is easy to draw a doodle for a patient, it requires more skills and training to direct a video or complete an animation. This is the reason why video or animation is not the first medium of choice for the therapists, but as we will see later is perhaps one of the most interesting way to reach the bereaved, as this media is designed for storytelling, giving a chance for the bereaved to be in control of his own narrative.

4. Video, Animation and other Moving Image techniques as Art Therapy

One of the key difference between commercial moving image making (video, animation, feature film, documentary, etc..) and moving image therapy is that the latest is about healing the patient. Also as it is a therapy, it is designed to be kept private, only between the patient and the therapist, unless the patient decides otherwise. (Cohen and Johnson, 2015). While storytelling is one of the moving images of filmmaking, a moving image therapy will focus on the processes of creation as a form of therapy rather than a focus on creating a meaningful product for a large audience. The audience is the therapist and the patient the creator, who later will reflect on his own work, finding meaning with the help of the therapists. In the case of acute grief, moving image seems to be a strong medium of choice. For instance, the "play, stop and eject" method designed by B. McIntyre and J. Hogwood seems pretty efficient in the case of bereaved children who witness the death of someone really close. Their method consists of asking the children to replay the death of their loved one in their mind and then draw it on paper, like a storyboard. By revisiting the event, frame by frame, the children progressively gain control of the narrative. The drawings are then put together like a roll of film and then given to the children, leaving them the choice to do whatever they want to do with it¹ (McIntyre and Hogwood, 2006). While this method is related to moving images mostly on the preproduction stage (storyboard), it still uses video as a metaphor, calling the sequence of drawings "film" and using video tape analogy (play, stop and eject).

¹ As a final guideline for the therapists, McIntyre and Hogwood advice:
"Step 4: Then ask each child to roll their film up and place an elastic band around it. State very clearly that they have now pressed the eject button, and are now in charge of their video. They can choose to show their film to others who they want to know what happened, and their understanding of it. This film is now no longer in charge of them; they can choose when to rent it out and when to press the play button."
The final advice shows a strong connection to the idea of controlling the narrative and not the narrative controlling the patient, even in a symbolic way.

While animation or video seems quite technical from outside, it is now easier and more accessible with the advance of digital technology. For instance, with 'Re-Animation Approach'², Animation therapy, a UK company, provides training to therapists on using stop-motion technique with their patients. Their belief is that animation facilitates the expression of complex ideas and the development of stories with the use for instance of puppets, their inner world (Mason, 2011). On the other hand, this company exists because stop motion requires a minimum of training, the particularity of this company is to merge the animation industry specialists with the art therapists, to allow the patients to have more tools to control their narrative. Animation, like film making, is combining different media and techniques like storytelling, sound recording, photography, acting. Integrative Approaches to art therapy, such as animation, gives a more creative tool to the patient to communicate with his therapist (Choo, 2015). As it doesn't need to rely on reality, animation allows the patient to tap more on his imagination, using symbols, for instance, making it a medium of choice for treating children and adolescent.

In my personal case, as we will see later, I chose animation because of my desire to give life to the photographs I took from my girlfriend, also allowing me to do collage and using symbolism to represent her death.

Videotherapy is also a cathartic tool used by therapists, for instance, the Ma'aleh School of TV, Film and the Arts in Israel has a videotherapy department where they trained therapists and filmmakers to use videotherapy to help various type of traumas, including bereaved families. Focusing on storytelling, videotherapy helps the bereaved giving a meaning to their grief by re-editing the narrative, by being exposed to the trauma again, a form of catharsis. As video production often requires to work with others, it also forces the patient to open to others, to seek for help and communicate with his partners. (Siegel-Itzkovich, 2016).

While art therapy requires the service of a therapist and focus mostly on healing rather than on the final art piece, it is a very effective therapy for patients suffering from acute grief. Moving images while requiring more expertise, experience and time, has been proven to help therapists reach their patient, let them be in control of their trauma.

But is there another way to control our own trauma? Do we really need a therapist to guide us, if we do not suffer from acute grief? As we will see now, art, photography and moving images have been used as a medium by artists, filmmakers even video game maker as a catharsis for their grief, through creating a sort of monument dedicated to the one they lost.

² <http://animationtherapy.co.uk/>

From memories to memorial: Some examples of moving image creations by bereaved

1. Exhibiting grief through photography

While photography in a sense is the opposite of moving image, it is also one of its components. Photography has this ambivalence of freezing time, of preserving the moment even when it is gone already, or as Roland Barthes would say “Life / Death: the paradigm is reduced to a simple click, the one separating the initial pose from the final print” (Barthes, 2015). Noboyushi Araki, a Japanese photographer whose body of work combines sexuality and death, even compares photography with the act of murdering³(Araki, 2002). Perhaps it is going a bit too far but photography in a sense as a strong link with the concept of preservation, it mummifies time and space which painting can only represent (Bazin, 1960).

Moving images, on the other hand, are composed of series of still frames, and in the case of movies, photographs. While playing at a certain speed, the illusion of movement is (re)created, making moving image a medium closer to life than death. Film records time, while photography freezes a specific moment, a glimpse of time. In Asia, photographs of the deceased (when he/she was alive) are often used for funerals and are kept on a shelf where offerings are given (in the case of Thailand where I currently reside). The photograph is not just a representation of the deceased, it is the deceased. With a medium with death within its essence, how can photographers use it as a healing method for grief?

In 2006, Annie Leibovitz’ *A photographer’s life 1990-2015* exhibition opened in New York, mixing her commercial work with her intimate photographs, and in particular a photograph she took from Susan Sontag on her deathbed. While many reviews felt a bit uncomfortable with the juxtaposition of these celebrities pictures with more personal photographs of Leibovitz’ lover, including a photograph of her body, Leibovitz explained that this book and exhibition helped her to go through the grieving process (Wilson, 2012). One of the first processes she did was to create a small book with a selection of photographs, to be given to people during Susan’s memorial service (Leibovitz, 2006), this perhaps was the first step to the book she will publish 2 years later. By selecting, editing, arranging the photographs in a certain order, Leibovitz was giving a meaning to Susan's disappearance as well as building a form of a memorial of her relationship with her.

Noboyushi Araki is another photographer who documented the cancer, the death and funeral of his wife. In *Sentimental Journey*, Araki shows his daily life with his wife, their honeymoon, some very intimate pictures, even their sexual intercourses. When his wife has cancer in the 1990s, he continues his documenting of her treatment until her death. Every picture has an amateur feeling because of the date are printed on the photographs. Araki was not doing an art project, he was just compulsively documenting what was happening in front of him. Shooting the deceased before and after death offered the photographer some sort of shield, protected behind the lens of his camera, by creating some sort of distance with the events happening in front of him (Lim, M. 2015). In the case of Araki, photographing death is an assertion of being alive, pressing the shutter is like breathing: “You have to go on photographing the moments of life;

³ “Black and White photos represent death. To take a photo is to kill the subject.”

you have to go on living. For me, taking photos is life itself” (Araki, 2002). While being behind the camera protects from direct contact with death, it is during the editing process that Araki is doing his grief work. In 1991, he reedited *a sentimental journey* to include the picture of his wife passing (figure 1 & 2), publishing a book called *Sentimental Journey/Winter Journey*. By rewriting the narrative, to include his dead wife in his previous work, Araki was building a tribute, a memorial to her memories and how she influenced him on his later work.



Figure 1: Araki’s wife, Yōko, on her deathbed in a Sentimental Journey/Winter Journey



Figure 2: Yōko’s funeral in a Sentimental Journey/Winter Journey

In the case of Araki and Leibovitz, the “grief work” is happening during the editing, the selection and the building of the book or the exhibition, not when the pictures were taken. Putting these pictures together through editing, helps the photographers reconstructing the narrative around these silver based memories (Wilson, 2012). The exposure to the public of what our society considered to be a private matter might be an issue to some people but it helps the photographer to externalize his/her grief.

2. Video, death, and searching for meaning

While movies that deal with grief are really common⁴ (Izod and Dovalis, 2015), only a few are memorials, films representing the grief or the events lived by the director himself. The reason is mostly economic: grief is still a personal subject and not a very attractive subject for big production. Also, Filmmaking is a collaborative form of projects, compared to photography, which is more personal, it is, therefore, more difficult to create a project about the grief of the director.

In Video Art, on the other hand, death is commonly represented by the artists and sometimes explored in a very intimate fashion. For instance, Bill Viola's *The Passing : In memory of Wynne Lee Viola* (Viola, 1991), explores birth, life and death in a 54 minutes video installation. While Viola was shooting in the desert, his father told him that his mother was dying, he came back and shoot some footages of her as well as record her breathing (Rifkin, 2007). In *The Passing*, Viola mixed the narrative of his mother dying with images of a child birth. This project shows a strong illustration of an artist to give a meaning to the death of a loved one, in the case of Viola, that death and life are connected (Wilson, 2012).

Another video installation tackles grief in a frontal way, Sophie Calle's *Pas pu saisir la mort* (Couldn't capture Death). Like Bill Viola, Sophie Calle shot video of her mom being aware that she had only one month to live. Her mother was aware of what her daughter was doing and actively participated and supported her daughter in this process. *Pas Pu saisir la mort* was exhibited first at the Venice Biennale 2007. The installation was using 2 different rooms, the first room contains a painting of her mom and some texts that explain her project, talks about her conversation with her mom about the installation. The second room contains a 11 minutes long video of her mom on her deathbed, her last moments recorded, from living to dying. On the wall, texts and articles describe the last days of her life. The process of making this video installation distracted Sophie Calle so much, creating distance with the grief that it was only after she installed the work that she realized that it was all about her mother and that the tears came (Wilson, 2012). *Pas pu saisir la mort* is really in a sense a monument dedicated to her mother, offering the artist a meaning to her loss, and a better understanding of the deceased, as well as sharing her experience with the audience, easing her pain in the process.

3. Controlling the narrative, relieving grief through video game creation

Another powerful medium in term of audience participation is video games. Incorporating techniques from moving images, such as the use of sound design, animation, video, video game is an interactive medium leaving the audience a bit of control on the narrative, leaving them choices and decision. Similar to filmmaking, making video games requires a strong collaboration between the game designer, the coders, the artists, making it difficult to be an individual project. Indie Games using fewer resources and staff are showing more personality, and in some case could be very personal, based on the life of one of its

⁴ Many of these films are also used as filmtherapy, reliving the death and the grieving on the characters in the movies can be lived as a form of catharsis.

creator. This is the case of *That Dragon, Cancer* (Numinous Games, 2016): “A journey of hope in the shadow of death. An immersive narrative videogame that retells Joel Green’s 4-year fight against cancer through about two hours of poetic, imaginative gameplay that explores faith, hope and love.”⁵ While the creators of the games, Ryan Green and his wife Amy, designed this game in the beginning to support their child who was diagnosed with a terminal brain cancer. They wanted to show the emotional experience of dealing with a child who has little chance of surviving, but their kid died while the game was still in production, giving *That Dragon, Cancer* a darker tone. For Instance, scenes showing the decisions parents have to do in the hospital are mixed with more surreal scenes of Joel flying with balloons avoiding cancer cells (figure 3).



Figure 3: A frame from *That Dragon, Cancer* where Joel is trying to escape cancer cells

The process to make this game was very intense for everyone involved on the project, financially and emotionally as the authors had to represent what they have been through, also using voice recordings of Joel and later as he passed away, the voice of one of his brother. Ryan and Amy use they own voice and are major characters in the game. All the characters are very minimal in term of design, using a low polygon look (the characters have no mouth or no eyes), the emotion comes more from the voice and the situation the characters are facing (figure 4). Ryan Green describes the process of making the game as “a labor of love”, an emotional process where “the hard work of memorializing him well was a very satisfying endeavor” (Aki, 2016). In the beginning, the couple were thinking to do a movie about their child or an installation but decided to choose video game instead, despite the amount of work and investment it requires, because of its impacts on the players, making them more involved with the narrative.

⁵ Description of the game on the game’s website: www.cancerthisdragon.com



Figure 4: A frame from *That Dragon, Cancer* where Ryan the father is trying to stop his child to cry

But the gameplay of *That Dragon, Cancer*, doesn't leave many choices to the audience, cancer kills Joel little by little, and at the end of the game, the only choice the gamer has, is to decide when to leave Joel alone, on a little island. When the player leaves, he moves on with the memories of Joel.

Case study: Remembering Act

1. Introduction, why animation

When Supaporn Kongkrajong (Act), my partner, was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer, I was more focus on her chances of survival than her chance of dying from cancer. While she was trying a new treatment, and her conditions seem stable, the doctor announced us that she had less than a week to live. The shock of the announcement cut me away from any potential creative work similar to Sophie Calle, Bill Viola or *That Dragon, Cancer*. It is a few months later that I felt that the need to create a creative project both as a memorial for her as much as a therapy for me, to learn to live with her loss.

I couldn't go back in time like Araki or Annie Leibovitz and shoot more picture of my girlfriend's ordeal. I took some photographs of her during her living and funeral, but not enough to make a significant book. I also had a few videos from her, from other projects I did, but nothing really usable for a short film. Therefore the idea of using animation technique came to my mind, rather than animating from scratch, I thought that recycling all the visual memories I had from her (photographs, video, her handwriting, some of her possessions) would be an effective way to create a storyline about her and what she went through. By recreating our narrative, my belief was that it will help me to move on.

2. Reorganizing the past, working with memories as material

I bought a sketchbook and started to print all the photographs I could find from her, from the hospital and from various moments together. I then reorganized them in different categories, a few pages of her time at the hospital (Figure 1), another one on her funeral, another page on her selfies she used to communicate her emotions with me on facebook messenger (Figure 2). This process, quite engaging emotionally, felt like a necessity for me, and a part of the grief work, despite all the complications and the traumas it involves. Indeed, by reorganizing the photographs, I was already brainstorming on the narrative I wanted to tell, it also helped me to spread the materials needed for my animation, without having to open a multitude of folders. One other element that is now accessible to artists are the social media activities of the deceased. While I didn't have access to her Facebook account, I manage to download 1000 pages of facebook messenger conversation, containing confidences, and back in context, early signs of her sickness.



Figure 5: Sketchbook, hospital pictures

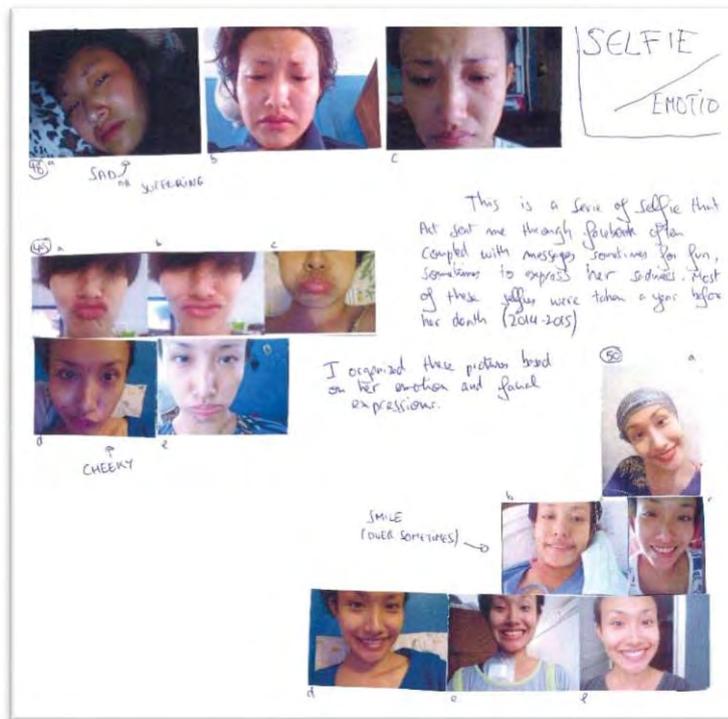


Figure 6: Sketchbook Act's Selfies

3. Finding the narrative

Going through the sketchbook, I came up with a first animation concept: tell Act's story backward, starting with spreading her remains in Japan to the first time we met. The idea was to avoid a classic drama where the person died at the end, by doing the opposite, focusing on her rather than on her death. The animation concept was to show her struggle, her personality, and our relationship as well. I went through most of the life we shared together, identifying key moments that I wanted to tell, also connecting dots on insignificant events that make more sense after her passing. Story elements such as her death and the hospital which is the drive in the beginning of the story, progressively fade away while going back in time to our first encounter.

Just the act of writing this narrative on paper, to be able to rethink chronologically of the events, helped me achieving a control of the narrative. The photographs and the sketchbook, helped me to re-visualize some scenes I forgot, details that my memory repressed. Storyboarding in my head the storyline, also became a form of therapy, and I will learn later, a form of assimilation of the loss. This introspection, biographical work wouldn't have been possible if I didn't have in mind to actually create a memorial out of it.

4. Animate = Resuscitate, animation techniques

Being a poor painter or illustrator myself, with more skills in photography, editing or motion graphics, I decided to use an approach based on painting over photographs, this method close to rotoscoping is one of the easiest approaches to teach animation to children for instance. Using photographs as a

guideline is easier than drawing from scratch. When drawing over the same photographs several times and creating a loop animation out of it, the animator instills life in something that is still. The animation while based on photographs and not on a video gives some movement to a person that is not present on its reference. I felt that using this technique was a form of “reanimation”, resuscitation giving life back to something that is gone. While photography is supposed to be a frozen moment or what Roland Barthes calls “Flat Death”⁶ and video or film a recorded moment, then what is animation based on any of these 2 mediums? An alteration?

I started a few experiments using rotoscoping techniques such as tracing her photographs (figure 3) and rotopainting techniques, digital painting over photographs with the software Studio Artist 4.



Figure 7: Some pencil tracing experiment I did, the painting is done using Rotopainting with Studio Artist

One of the bases for my animation experiments were photographs I shot with my phone. In some rare occasions, I had sometimes 20 pictures of her in the same location doing similar action as I rarely delete the rejects (figure 4). Similar to stop motion technique, when these photographs are played one after the other, they become alive. I did a small experiment (figure 5), where I painted over a series of 4 pictures that are animated, I also used photographs of paper cuts, her ID card, her death certificate and some other documents as texture. I found the result satisfactory and while it is a time-consuming technique, I intend later to use it for my final animation.

⁶ (Barthes, 1982). p.92

Another technique I explored is collage and motion graphics. On the first version of my animatic, a rough animation (figure 6), I used several pictures of her in the hospital, my trip to Japan, her funeral urn, that I deep-etch and placed into 3D space using Adobe After Effects. The animation here is from camera movement, in a similar fashion to motion graphics. I also used some of her MRI scans and animated them, resembling a Rorschach test, I incorporate them into the animatic.

While I am currently working on my animation, I completed a short memorial video for her 1st year anniversary (figure 7) using similar techniques (rotopainting and motion graphics) than my main project.



Figure 8: An example of series of photos used as stop motion technique



Figure 9: An Animation experiment using rotopaint technique on a series of portraits I took of her



Figure 10: Still frames for the first version of my animatic: "Catharsis"



Figure 11: Still frames from her memorial video I did for her 1 year anniversary

5. Lesson learned

I had several issues for this project, I felt that I focus too much on the technique rather than the narrative, I am currently rewriting the animation to include dialogues and voice-over rather than simply animated text. The new script includes an imaginary conversation, to comment our memories and to trigger the narrative. I will then illustrate the conversation, by animating the photographs and other records I have from her. In a certain way, creating an imaginary conversation is definitely a form of rewriting the narrative, taking control of it. As Judith Butler mentions about mourning Derrida: “The act of mourning thus a continued way of “speaking to” the other who is gone, even though the other is gone, precisely because that other is gone” (Butler, cited in Wilson 2012).

Conclusion

While mourning is an individual process, which is lived in very different ways depending on our relation to the departed and how he/she left our world, it can be eased through therapy or by our own. Severe grief might require the help of a therapist, but in most cases, grief work can be achieved alone. What helps the mourner is to find a meaning in the death, the absence of the deceased. Art and in particular moving images and photography have been useful to protect the bereaved during the death of their loved one due to the buffer the camera apparatus creates between the subject and the operator. Later, after the funeral, by reorganizing the memories and doing a work of editing, the bereaved avoids repressing his memories, making him in charge of the narrative. Video and animation are powerful tools to give a meaning to memories, remodeling the narrative to fit with what the bereaved want to communicate to others, to himself and to one he lost. Once the bereaved complete his creation, a part of grief work is already done.

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Appendix

Figure 1 & 2: Araki, N. (1991). *Sentimental Journey/Winter Journey*. Tokyo: Shinchosha

Figure 3: Tanz, J. (2016). *A Father, a Dying Son, and the Quest to Make the Most Profound Videogame Ever*. [online] Wired. Available at: <https://www.wired.com/2016/01/that-dragon-cancer/> [Accessed 16 May 2017].

Figure 4: That Dragon, Cancer. 2016. *That Dragon, Cancer*. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.thatdragoncancer.com/>. [Accessed 8 August 2017].

Figure 5-11: Illustration, Collage, Photographs by Gabriel Camelin.