

‘After he had gone’

Jane Rendell

[this final accepted manuscript doesn't include changes made during the editorial process, copy-editing, proof-reading, and layout]

When her father dies, his daughter turns to his books for comfort. She finds 13 volumes, favourite books perhaps, that he had turned to for comfort when struggling with an unknown illness in his last months – unable to walk, to swallow, and finally to breathe. She had arrived home to visit him just as he was taken into hospital. He never returned. Now she finds herself sleeping in his bed, working in his study, reading his books – this last set of 13 positioned on a table at the doorway to his room. Each one is marked with a bookmark – some pre-made, some hand-made, and some just pieces of paper – marking time as he recorded his own life and history, marked his body breaking down. In her efforts to keep him alive, she reads and re-reads these notes inserted between pages, as fragments, passages unconnected, yet linked somehow, across the days and nights of mourning, pausing now and then ...

For the first time perhaps, she finds herself unable (or is it unwilling?) to write, not wishing to turn his death, and her mourning, into ‘literature.’ A friend tells her of Barthes’ *Mourning Diary*.¹ The diary entries are short – a phrase, one sentence, or a few, at most, and often disconnected. The first entry was made on 26 October 1977, the day after his mother died, and the last on 15 September 1979. This two year period saw Barthes writing and speaking in fragments, and developing practices for their arrangement in book and album format. While *The Mourning Diary* written in 1977-9, takes the calendar as a compositional structure,² *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, written in 1975,³ and *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*,⁴ written in 1976-7, are organised according to the alphabet. *Camera Lucida*,⁵ written in 1980, also in fragments, is ordered apparently randomly, but composed of two definite parts. The written publications of Barthes’ three College de France lecture series from this period – *How*

to Live Together (1976–77), *The Neutral*, (1977–78), and *The Preparation of the Novel* (1978–79)⁶ – compiled from notes and manuscripts, also consist of fragments, organised according to the rhythm of the academic timetable, and also, in *How to Live Together*, the “artificial sequence” of the alphabet.⁷

In *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* Barthes describes ‘these fragments of discourse’ as ‘figures,’⁸ in *How to Live Together* he discusses them as ‘traits,’ ‘a series of discontinuous units,’⁹ ‘far shorter than the figures of the Lover’s Discourse,’¹⁰ and in *The Neutral* he refers to them as ‘twinklings.’¹¹ While *A Lover’s Discourse* is composed of figures of the ‘lover at work,’¹² in *How to Live Together*, which explores the corporeal, architectural and literary spaces of co-habitation, Barthes outlines his choice of an indirect approach. Following Nietzsche, he distinguishes between method, on the one hand, as ‘a premeditated decision,’ ‘a direct means, deliberately chosen to obtain the desired result,’ a ‘fetishizing’ of ‘the goal as a privileged place, to the detriment of other possible places,’ and to culture on the other, ‘paideia’ as a training, education or non-method, as an ‘eccentric path of possibilities, stumbling among blocks of knowledge,’ ‘entailing changes of mindset, adopting the mindset of the journey, of extreme mutability (flitting, gleaning). We’re not following a path; we are presenting findings as we go along.’¹³

Here she presents her findings, fragments selected from her readings and writings, of Barthes, of her father, of the authors of the books he left behind. These are arranged both as diary entries (from the day after Barthes’ mother’s death to the day after her own father’s death), and according to the order of the 13 books (and their bookmarks) as she found them, after he had gone.

October 26, 1977 and 2020 – *A Poet's Guide to Britain*

First wedding night.
But first mourning night?¹⁴

www.abode.co.uk¹⁵

Philip Larkin, 'The Trees,' (1974).
The trees are coming into leaf
Like something almost being said;
The recent buds relax and spread,
Their greenness is a kind of grief [...]¹⁶

Writing on the first day of spring, it is my birthday, the second without you. The blossom reminds me of the fresh peonies on that hot June day when you came to stay. Summer was turning to autumn when we lost you. It was autumn again when we planted a tree and read this poem in your absence, and soon will be again.

Conserved at the Institut de la mémoire de l'édition contemporaine (IMEC), the archives of 'How to Live Together' are comprised of two different types of material support: the text of the lectures itself and Barthes' index cards. The largest archive is the handwritten manuscript of the lecture notes. It comprises ninety-two single-sided, numbered pages, written in a crowded hand, with a certain number of interlinear additions, some of which are numbered.¹⁷

The index cards, which are likewise conserved and numbered at the IMEC, are organised into three envelopes. The first two (running from numbers 1 to 50 and from 51 to 100) comprise a collection of pieces of paper, cut to size, in alphabetical order: comments, examples, and citations are classified by theme or by key word [...] The contents of the third envelope are not ordered in any way and comprise unclassified index cards, loose sheets of notes, and a number of pages is a list of 'books read' that appear to be marked with an asterisk in the general bibliography to this edition.¹⁸

Moreover, the writing of *A Lover's Discourse* and the preparation of the lecture course were undertaken at more or less the same time, somewhere between the summer of 1976 to the winter of 1977, providing a different link between the past and the present.¹⁹

October 27 – *Man on Earth*

Who knows? Maybe something valuable in these notes?²⁰

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- FREE books
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Divination and magic are forms of belief that seem to call upon powers beyond the capacity of human reason, and which arouse a shiver of apprehension. No one who has had a divining stick placed in their hands, and felt it pulling down over a bowl of water, can deny the power of the occasion. Perhaps it was just a trick, perhaps it really happened – whatever the case, it demonstrated a powerful capacity for belief. And some people who were children in London during the post-war years still have vivid memories of Sunday afternoons, when, after a tea of mustard-and-cess sandwiches with a plate of cockles and winkles from the cart in the street, an aunt would swirl the dregs in the bottom of the teacup, tip off the excess liquid, and then proceed to read future events from the pattern that the tea leaves had formed around the inside of the cup.²²

An intensely private person, I had no idea of the number of diaries he had kept, or what was contained within them. Boxes of diaries, and notebooks, each one packed with drawings, paintings, sketches, maps, notes, on books, films, art, places – everyday details.... He had passed the door to his study, once my own bedroom, as he headed to the ambulance, that autumn evening, still keen to walk for himself. I saw him glance in. He would never walk through its door again, sit at his desk, surrounded by his books . I was to be the next one in.

Where to begin?

To write by fragments: the fragments are then so many stones on the perimeter of a circle: I spread myself around: my whole little universe in crumbs; at the center, what?²³

Temptation of the alphabet: to adopt the success of letters in order to link fragments is to fall back on what constitutes the glory of language [...]

It does not define a word, it names a fragment; it does precisely the converse of a dictionary: the word emerges from the utterance, rather than the utterance proceeding from the word. Of the glossary, I keep only its most formal principles: the order of its units.²⁴

October 28 – *A History of the World in 100 Objects*

Bringing *maman*'s body from Paris to Urt (with JL and the undertaker): stopping for lunch in a tiny trucker's dive, at Sorigny (after Tours). The undertaker meets a colleague' there (taking a body to Haute-Vienne) and joins him for lunch. I walk a few stops with Jean-Louis on one side of the square (with its hideous monument to the dead), bare ground, the smell of rain, the sticks. And yet, something like a savour of life (because of the sweet smell of the rain), the very first discharge, like a momentary palpitation.²⁵

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It is seldom that you see ecological change recorded in stone. There is something poignant in this dialogue between the two sides of Hoa Hakananai'a, a sculpted lesson that no way of living or thinking can endure forever. His face speaks of the hope we all have of unchanging certainty; his back of the shifting expediences that have always been the reality of life. He is Everyman.²⁷

He was taken into hospital late on the evening of October 25, he died 13 days later, on 6 November. The first time I took a walk after his death, I found a bench – damp and fragile, the wood about to collapse. I sat down gently, waiting for the pain to pass. A robin fluttered

under a bush, whose leaves were starting to turn gold. On the back of the bench I noticed a dedication just visible on a dulled bronze plaque:

IN MEMORY OF
SALLY GODBY 1966–1985
AND ANN GODBY 1975–1992

The sisters both died as teenagers. The ages of my sister and I when we lived here. The dates of their deaths marked the start and end of my architectural education. What to do with this sad knowledge? I took a photograph. I went back yesterday and found the bench in pieces; the plaque nowhere in sight.

In the Photograph, the event is never transcended for the sake of something else: the Photograph always leads the corpus I need back to the body I see; it is the absolute Particular, the sovereign Contingency, matte and somehow stupid, the *This* (this photography, and not Photography), in short, what Lacan calls the *Tuché*, the Occasion, The Encounter, the Real, in its indefatigable expression.)²⁸

October 29 – *The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths*

How strange: her voice, which I knew so well, and which is said to be the very texture of memory (“the dear inflection ...”) I no longer hear. Like a localized deafness.²⁹

Why do we pick up pebbles on the beach? What is it we see in them, and who do we take them home to display on our shelves? Is it their inherent beauty, their infinite variation, or simply their associations with a happy time and place?

“*The Book of Pebbles*” will be published by Random Spectacular, the publishing imprint of design collective and print gallery St Jude’s. The imprint was launched in 2011, providing the opportunity for St Jude’s to explore further collaborations in printed and audio form.

For updates, please visit our website:

A view of the Fengate Bronze Age field boundary ditches during excavation in 1974. This is part of a large field system that was in use between about 2500 and 500 BC. It is arranged around a series of parallel ditched droveways, one of which is running up the centre of the photograph.³¹

Photographs of landscapes fill the walls of his study. The window sill is covered in pebbles. Perched along the top of his computer screen, held on by blue tack, there are fragments of rock. In diaries I find watercolours of stones, and in an old notebook from his student days studying geology, exquisite coloured hand-drawings of fossils.

In *Roland Barthes* there are four regimes: “I”; “he” (I speak of myself by saying “he”); “R.B.,” my initials; and sometimes I speak of myself by saying “you.” I explained myself somewhat on this point in a fragment, but explications, being essential imaginary, do not exhaust a subject. It’s up to the reader to go beyond what I say.³²

October 30 – *Outpost: A Journey to the Wild Ends of the Earth*

At Urt: sad, gentle, *deep* (relaxed).³³

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Tara NOTES

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This is played for laughs of course, but the mystic loner is a central figure and theme in almost all of Kerouac's books: Zen bebop man-cub hobo exploring the great beyond.* But the hermit's joy he later hymned wasn't his experience on Desolation, at least not very often. He had flashes of it but his notebooks and letters of the time make plans that he suffered, pined and gnawed his way through the sixty-three days in a way reminiscent of one of Denis Johnson's addicts attempting cold turkey – fumbling at the monastic, striving for the ascetic, trying to remake himself closer to heaven – but writing a lot, albeit crazed and haunted by the void.

* This is what Charlie Parker said when he played: all is well. You had the feeling of early-in-the-morning. Like a hermit's joy – Charlie Parker (3:43) from *Poetry for the Beat Generation*, Jack Kerouac's debut album of spoken word poetry released in 1959. (Hanover LP #5000.)

Firm and dry, his hand was still able to hold mine. As our skin touched, I felt his palm. Like mine, it was slightly rough – we both suffered from skin allergies, kinds of sclerosis. Against all the other signs of collapse, his grip suggested that he would recover. After all, this was a hand that only a year before had steadied me on a mountain climb, as it had always balanced me before, over rocks, pebbles, sand ... But as Dylan sang, "It's not dark yet," his touch began to cool.

[...] in the end, I always want to defend men more than ideas. I have affectionate intellectual ties to Sollers, and I defend him as a personality and as an intellectual. You say that all criticism is affectionate. Yes, very often, and I'm glad to hear you say it. But this should be carried even further, almost in the postulation of a theory of affect as the motive force of criticism. A few years ago, criticism was still a very analytic activity, very rational, subject to a superego of impartiality and objectivity, and I wanted to react against this approach.³⁵

October 31 – *Simon Armitage: Selected Poems*

I don't want to talk about it, for fear of making literature out of it – or without being sure of not doing so – although as a matter of fact literature originates in these truths.

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“For the Record”

Ever since the very brutal extraction
of all four of my wisdom teeth,
I've found myself talking
with another man's mouth, so to speak,
and my tongue has become a mollusc
such as an oyster or clam,
broken and entered, licking
Its wounds in its shell.³⁸

When studying for my A levels, I spent my Saturdays on the lower ground floor of Heffers on Trinity Street, cataloguing and ordering books. I came to know the stock well, at least the words on the book spines. Knowing little about the subjects in my department of the bookstore when I started, I found myself walking the shelves. I would pause, select a book, and dip in briefly, until called back to duty. That's how my study of feminist philosophy and psychoanalytic theory began.

METHOD?

As I begin this new lecture course, I have a Nietzschean opposition in mind, one the Deleuze adeptly brings to light (pp. 101–4): *method/culture*.

Method

1. A manner of proceeding toward a goal, a protocol of operations with a view to achieving an end; for example, a method for decoding, explaining, describing exhaustively.
2. The idea of the straight path (that wants to head toward a goal).

Culture

Nietzsche [...] = the *paideia* of the Greeks (they didn't speak of “method”). For me, culture as “training” (≠method) evokes the image of a kind of dispatching along an eccentric path: stumbling among snatches, between the bounds of different fields of

knowledge, flavors. Paradoxically, when understood in this way, as the registering of forces, culture is hostile to the idea of power (which is in method) [...].³⁹

November 1 – *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in the 20th-Century British Painting*

What affects me most powerfully: mourning in layers – a kind of sclerosis.
[Which means: no depth. Layers of surface – or rather, each layer: a totality. Units] ⁴⁰

BORDERS

books

music

video

cafe⁴¹

Melancholy and the Limestone Landscape

Depression, as only depressives know, can lay bare the truth of life. They see what nobody else who is, as one is supposed to say, balanced, can see “la grandeur de l’homme est grande en ce qu’il se connait miserable” (Pascal). Take, for example, the changed appearance of landscape in Graham Sutherland’s etchings in 1929, the year his baby son died. It is the same landscape before and after, but how his view of it alters! The land over which Palmers stars came out, and which hid in twilight the gentle Catholic medievalism of Griggs, the sound of his chapel bell, is abruptly transformed. In the artist’s sorrow he sees it quite differently, as a place no longer safe. The old style and the old order, once so reassuring, is broken down, cracked up, walled in.⁴²

A memory, one I wish I could not remember: My father, thin as a stick, after four months of lockdown. I bring him a book from the Waterstones in town. I can’t remember which one now. I can’t go into the house, as he is extremely clinically vulnerable, my mother too. So I lay it on the threshold, forgetting that he is too weak to be able to stand up easily, walk over and pick it up. Yet he won’t say so. This is a man who has climbed mountains, just the summer before. He says longingly – with regret, but not self-pity – “I’d love a mosey in Waterstones.”

The fragment, the *dictée*, the haiku.

Isn't this interest in *significance* linked in your work to a taste for bits and pieces, beginnings, a fondness for fragments of writing like the haiku?

I have long had a taste for discontinuous writing, a tendency reactivated in *Roland Barthes*. Rereading my books and articles, which I had never done before, I noticed that my mode of writing was never lengthy, always proceeding by fragments, miniatures, paragraphs with titles, or articles – there was an entire period of my life during which I wrote no books, only articles. It's this taste for the short form that is now becoming systematic. The implication from the point of view of an ideology or a counter-ideology of form is that the fragment breaks up what I would call the smooth finish, the composition, discourse constructed to give a final meaning to what one says, which is the general rule of all past rhetoric. In relation to the smooth finish of constructed discourse, the fragment is a spoilsport, discontinuous, establishing a kind of pulverization of sentences, images, thoughts, none of which "takes" definitively.⁴³

November 2 – *Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town*

(Evening with Marco)

I know now that my mourning will be *chaotic*.⁴⁴

Edwidge Danticat
Krik? Krak!
Editorial Lumen

Maya Angelou
Encontraos en Mi nombre
Editorial Lumen⁴⁵

12: Careworn

To work within this environment is even more character-defining. Fishermen are shaped by the sea in the same manner that every coastline across the planet, though comprised of different rocks from various ages, has felt the presence of the oceans and been reformed throughout its lifetime by that encounter. When the Scythian philosopher Anacharsis was asked: "Which were more in number, the living or the dead?" he responded: "In which category, then, do you place those who are on the seas; while out there, away from the land, some vital part of their humanity is lost, making them fundamentally unknowable to those back on the land?"⁴⁶

Dad's wishes/ashes.

On Tuesday he chose home/we scattered him

On Wednesday he chose hospice/somewhere he would blow away

On Thursday he chose hospital/the threshold between sand and sea

On Friday he chose death/sea and sky, he and I

b. Figures “The Neutral in Thirty Figures”

1. As I did last year: series (sequence) of fragments, each of which is given a title = the figures of the Neutral. Figure: rhetorical allusion (= a circled piece of discourse, identifiable since titleable) + face that has an “air,” an “expression:” fragment not on the Neutral but in which, more vaguely, there is some Neutral, a little like those rebus drawings in which one must look for the silhouette of the hunter, of the rabbit, etc.

A dictionary not of definitions but of twinklings {scintillations}.

2. Why? Why this discontinuous exposition? Perhaps inability on my part to “construct” a development, a course? Inability or disgust? (Who can distinguish between inability and the lack of taste?) Perhaps my reasons, just alibis⁴⁷

November 3 – *Imperial Mud: the Fight for the Fens*

On the one hand, she wants everything, total mourning, its absolute (but then it’s not her, it’s I who invest her with the demand for such a thing). And on the other (being then truly herself), she offers me lightness, life, as if she were still saying: “but go on, go out, have a good time ...”⁴⁸

20. 30 mins⁴⁹

Abbeys were places of emergency shelter, philanthropy and hospitality but the abbots could be hard masters and the monks a threat to the poor, particularly vulnerable women.⁵⁰

Walking in the fens,

talking of a soil,

rich enough to eat.

The spring shoots are green,

asparagus soon,

and fresh.

A flash of green dunlap,
running the hard shoulder,
of roads highlighted in pink.

How this book is constructed [...]

1 Figures

Dis-cursus – originally the action of running here and there, comings and goings, measures taken, “plots and plans:” the lover, in fact, cannot keep his mind from racing, taking new measures and plotting against himself. His discourse exists only in outbursts of language, which occur at the whim of trivial, of aleatory circumstances.

These fragments of discourse can be called figures. The word is to be understood, not in its rhetorical sense, but rather in its gymnastic or choreographic acceptance [...]

Ultimately it is unimportant whether the text’s dispersion is rich here and poor there; there are nodes, blanks, many figures break off short; some, being hypostases of the whole of the lover’s discourse, have just the rarity – the poverty – of essences [...] all he knows is that what passes through his mind at a certain moment is *marked*, like the printout of a code (in other times, this would have been the code of courtly love, or the Carte du Tendre.)⁵¹

November 4 – *Going Home: A Walk through Fifty Years of Occupation*

Around 6 p.m.: the apartment is warm, clean, well-lit, pleasant. I make it that way, energetically, devotedly (enjoying it *bitterly*): henceforth and forever I am my own mother.⁵²

Breathlessness
Apprehensive
~~Queasy/shakey/unhappy~~
Fitful ~~she~~ sleep.
Queasy/naseous⁵³

Raja Shehadeh b 1951
Adolescence in Ramallah 1961–1971?
I was in West Bank 1960–1963
– Shehadeh was 10–13
So his memories of youth in Ramallah should be mine of the same landscape.
Etc.⁵⁴

An appointment has been arranged for you to attend The Lung Function Clinic – Clinic 2A on Tuesday 25th February 2020 at 8.30. You will be seen by a member of the clinic team.⁵⁵

In front was an ugly, bulky building in which the Arab Bank has its headquarters, built where the Ramallah bus terminal used to be. Until 1994 this was an open space in the centre of the old city, providing somewhere to breathe in the crowded area. I'm told there used to be a spring here. It is where we are instructed to gather in 1991 during the First Gulf War for the distribution of gas masks. We were certain that without these we were doomed to die of the poison gas Saddam Hussein was supposed to possess. We all enthusiastically heeded the call, but of course the Israeli military failed to provide them. A frightening time.⁵⁶

He stands out, challenging the camera – eyes framed by thick black glasses, arms crossed over his leather jacket. Behind him, brand new buildings, in one, a modern block of flats, their apartment, overlooking the creek.

2. Order

Throughout any love life, figures occur to the lover without any order, for on each occasion they depend on an (internal or external) accident. Confronting each of these incidents (what “befalls” him), the amorous subject draws on the reservoir (the thesaurus?) of figures, depending on the needs, the injunctions, or the pleasures of his image-repertoire. Each figure explodes, vibrates in and out of itself like a sound severed from any tune – or is repeated to satiety, like the motif of a hovering music. No logic links the figures, determines their contiguity: the figures are non-syntagmatic, non-narrative; they are Erinyes; they stir, collide, subside, return, vanish with no more order than the flight of mosquitoes. Amorous *dis-cursus* is not dialectical; it turns like a perpetual calendar, an encyclopedia of affective culture [...]⁵⁷

November 5 – *Living with the Gods: On Beliefs and Peoples*

Sad afternoon, Shopping. Purchase (frivolity) of a tea cake at the bakery. Taking care of the customer ahead of me, the girl behind the counter says *Voilà*. The expression I used when I brought *maman* something, when I was taking care of her. Once, toward the end, half-conscious, she repeated, faintly, *Voilà (I'm here, an expression we used to each other all our lives)*.

The word spoken by the girl at the bakery brought tears to my eyes. I kept on crying quite a while back in the silent apartment.

That's how I can grasp my mourning.

Nor directly in solitude, empirically, etc.; I seem to have a kind of ease, of control that makes people think I am suffering less than they would have imagined. But it comes over me when you love for each other is torn apart once again. The most painful point at the most abstract moment ... ⁵⁸

Audiologist		
10	3	Sept
9	1	Sept
8	27	Aug
7	25	Aug
6	20	Aug
5	18	Aug

15th Final Asst.⁵⁹

The slaves will become the masters, the masters the slaves. This is not some radical religious or political credo, but one of the central features of the Roman festival of Saturnalia, in honour of the god Saturn. Held each year, from 17 December to around the 23rd, this was the most anticipated of Roman holidays – the poet Catullus called these “the best of days.” [...]. Slaves would expect their masters to serve them food, or even to share their dining table with them.⁶⁰

AFTER MY DAY

WILL THEY REPATRIATE

MOVE BODY AND BURY

ASHES THORNHAM

MILES DAVIS

BENCH IN BOTANICS

GIVE MONEY TO ADDENBROOKES

Here I encounter an opposition between two types of work advanced by Mallarmé (this is a theory and not simply an empirical classification): (1) *The Book*: “architectural and premeditated,” [...] (2) *The Album*: “an anthology of chance inspirations, however marvelous.”⁶¹

You're probably thinking that this opposition, this Book/Album alternative is a little rigid, a little forced. [...] And there it will emerge that if there's a conflict between the Book and the Album, ultimately it's the Album that's the stronger of the two, for the Album is *what remains*. [...] ⁶²

b. At the other end of the time-scale, the completed Book becomes an Album again: the future of the Book is the Album, just as the ruin is the future of the monument.⁶³

November 6 – *Underland: A Deep Time Journey*

The comfort of a Sunday morning. Alone. First Sunday morning without her. I undergo the week's daily cycle. I confront the long series of times without her.⁶⁴

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SI US PLAU, RETORNEU

EL VOSTRE PRESTEC ET DIA:

24 SET 2001⁶⁵

Bradley and I made a number of exploration trips together, and while planning these trips we communicated by postcard, on the grounds that this open form of correspondence – readable by anyone who cared to pick our postcards up and flip them over – was the most secure way to be in contact, given the authorities' interest in Bradley. No security agency still steams open letters or reads people's postcards; instead they watch text and WhatsApp conversations, and packet-sniff emails.⁶⁶

he says he is not in pain

he was breathless at night

is scared of being breathless

is scared of being in pain

4. Chance. In what order to put the figures, since the meaning must not gel? Ancient question, emerging on the occasion of each new work, in particular here last year, all the more vivid this year as the Neutral is the shedding of meaning: all "planning" (thematic grouping) on the Neutral would fatally lead to an opposition between the

Neutral and arrogance, that is, to reconstituting the very paradigm that the Neutral wants to baffle: the Neutral would become discursively the term of an antithesis: in displaying itself, it would consolidate the meaning it wanted to dissolve.⁶⁷

Thus arbitrary process of sequencing. Last year: the alphabet. This year, reinforcement of chance: Title -;> Alphabetical Order -;> Numbering -;> Lottery draw: table of random numbers: table no. 9 of the Statistics Institute of the University of Paris (Revue de statistique appliquée 7, no. 4 [1959]). Series of two-digit numbers in ten columns: I followed the numbers horizontally, according to the direction of reading: pure and simple chance.⁶⁸

November 7 – Kathleen Jamie: *Selected Poems*

It's the first day of my fatherless world. I turn to Barthes' *Mourning Diary*. The final entry is not made until 15 September 1979, but 7 November is missing.

Amoxicillin 500mg tablets
84 capsule, take one tablet 3 times/day as advised by Consultant Respiratory Physician.
Last issued: Monday 05 Oct 2020, Issue from previous template,
Reauthorised Next Issue Due: Mon 02 Nov 2020
Review Due On: Wed 06 Oct 2021.⁶⁹

from "Karakoram Highway"
At the sharp end of the gorge;
the bridge. Like a single written word
on vast and rumpled parchment. Bridge.
The statement of man in landscape.

And how they guard it.
Drifts of people in either bank
like brackets, knowing it can crash
to the river in a mangled scribble
and be erased.
They write it up again, single syllable
of construction
shouted over the canyon.⁷⁰

I read this poem to him in the hospital at night. He chooses it by placing his finger on the page. This is how he has "spoken" to us these past 13 days, by placing his finger, letter by letter, on a drawing I made of the alphabet – IN CAPITALS. I see it now – horizons connect

his love of mountains and deserts – Afghanistan, Sudan, the Alps, the Pyrenees, and the Fens. “We need horizons “to be able to see far,” as Elina Brotherus puts it.⁷¹ All the edges of the world I have looked out at with him. All those I haven’t shared. Is he thinking of them now? I read softly, under the emergency light, to the rhythm of beeps from the medical monitors. His bed is in the corner of a room with five other men all trying to catch their breath. I sleep for some hours folded up next to him in a chair. When I wake the patch of sky in the window is red. Dad is still here, on the other side of him the bed is now empty.

I didn’t know it then, but the next time I would read this poem would be at his funeral.

What makes you continue to write?

I can only answer with grand, almost grandiloquent reasons. One must play on the simplest words. Writing is a creation, and to that extent it is also a form of procreation. Quite simply, it’s a way of struggling, of dominating the feeling of death and complete annihilation. I’m not talking about a relief that as a writer one will be eternal after death, that’s not it at all. But, despite everything, when one writes one scatters seeds, one can imagine that one disseminates a kind of seed and that, consequently, one returns to the general circulation of *semences*.⁷²

I’m in his study now, I turn to his last diary, he made final entry in early spring just before the first COVID lockdown: Saturday 14 March 2020.

¹ Roland Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, text established and annotated by Nathalie Léger, translated by Richard Howard, preface by Michael Wood (Notting Hill Editions, [1977–9] 2011).

² Barthes, *Mourning Diary*.

³ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, translated by Richard Howard, (London: Vintage, [1975] 1977).

⁴ Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, translated by Richard Howard, (Hill and Wang Editions, [1977] 1978).

⁵ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, translated by Richard Howard, (New York: Hill and Wang [1980] 1981).

⁶ Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of some Everyday Spaces: Notes for a Lecture course and seminar at the College de France (1976-7)* translated by Kate Briggs, [2002] (Columbia University Press, 2013); Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the College de France (1977–1978)* translated by Rosalind Krauss and Denis

Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), Roland Barthes, *The Preparation for the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the College de France (1978-9 and 1979-80)*, translated by Kate Briggs, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁷ Barthes, 'Session of January 19, 1977,' *How to Live Together*, p. 20.

⁸ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, p. 3.

⁹ Barthes, 'Session of January 19, 1977,' *How to Live Together*, p. 19.

¹⁰ Barthes, 'Session of January 19, 1977,' *How to Live Together*, p. 20.

¹¹ Barthes, 'Session of February 18, 1978,' *The Neutral*, p. 10.

¹² Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, p. 4.

¹³ Barthes, 'Session of May 4, 1977,' *How to Live Together*, p. 133.

¹⁴ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 256 and 257 of Owen Shears, *A Poet's Guide to Britain* (Penguin Books, 2010), p. 256.

¹⁶ Owen Shears, *A Poet's Guide to Britain* (Penguin Books, 2010), p. 256.

¹⁷ Claude Cost, 'Preface,' Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of some Everyday Spaces*, Notes for a Lecture course and seminar at the College de France (1976-7) translated by Kate Briggs, [2002] (Columbia University Press, 2013), pp. xvii-xxvi, p. xviii.

¹⁸ Cost, 'Preface,' pp. xix-xx.

¹⁹ Cost, 'Preface,' pp. xix-xx.

²⁰ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 7.

²¹ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 136 and 137 of John Reader, *Man on Earth* (Penguin Books, 1990).

²² John Reader, *Man on Earth* (Penguin Books, 1990), p. 136.

²³ 'Le cercle des fragments – the circle of fragments,' from Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 124.

²⁴ 'L'alphabet – The alphabet,' in 'Le cercle des fragments – the circle of fragments,' from Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, pp. 167-8.

²⁵ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 13.

²⁶ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 454 and 455 of Neil McGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (Allen Lane, 2011).

²⁷ Neil McGregor, *A History of the World in 100 Objects* (Allen Lane, 2011), 454.

²⁸ Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, p. 4.

²⁹ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 14.

³⁰ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 28 and 29 of Francis Pryor, *The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths* (Apollo, Head of Zeus Ltd, 2019).

³¹ Francis Pryor, *The Fens: Discovering England's Ancient Depths* (Apollo, Head of Zeus Ltd, 2019), p. 29.

³² 'Name, personal pronouns,' in 'Twenty Key Words for Roland Barthes,' from an interview conducted by Jean-Jacques Brochier, *Lire, Le Magazine littéraire*, (February 1975), in Roland Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, translated by Linda Coverdale (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, [1981] 1985), pp. 203-32, pp. 214-6, pp. 215-6.

³³ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 14.

³⁴ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 90 and 91 of Dan Richards, *Outpost: A Journey to the Wild Ends of the Earth* (Canongate, 2019).

³⁵ Roland Barthes, from an interview conducted by Pierre Boncenne, *Lire*, (April 1979), in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, pp. 321-37, p. 331.

³⁶ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 23.

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- ³⁷ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 120 and 121 of Simon Armitage, *Selected Poems* (Faber & Faber, 2001).
- ³⁸ Simon Armitage, *Selected Poems* (Faber & Faber, 2001), p. 121
- ³⁹ Barthes, *How to Live Together*, p. 4.
- ⁴⁰ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 28.
- ⁴¹ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 136 and 137 of Christopher Neve, *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in the 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames and Hudson, 1990).
- ⁴² Christopher Neve, *Unquiet Landscape: Places and Ideas in the 20th-Century British Painting* (Thames and Hudson, 1990), pp. 136–7.
- ⁴³ ‘The fragment, the *dictée*, the haiku,’ in ‘Twenty Key Words for Roland Barthes,’ from an interview conducted by Jean-Jacques Brochier, *Lire, Le Magazine littéraire*, (February 1975), in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, pp. 209–10.
- ⁴⁴ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 31.
- ⁴⁵ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 132 and 133 of Lamorna Ash, *Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020).
- ⁴⁶ Lamorna Ash, *Dark, Salt, Clear: Life in a Cornish Fishing Town* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), p. 133.
- ⁴⁷ Barthes, ‘Session of February 18, 1978,’ *The Neutral*, pp. 10–12.
- ⁴⁸ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 32.
- ⁴⁹ Quoted from the handwriting on the back of the bookmark placed between 226 and 227 of Neil Macgregor, *Living with the Gods: On Beliefs and Peoples* (Allen Lane, 2018). It is a handmade bookmark, made out of water-colour paper, on which my father painted three water-coloured squares, in orange, yellow, and blue, arranged in a column. In each he drew the outline of flowers— one, then two, and then three.
- ⁵⁰ James Boyce, *Imperial Mud: the Fight for the Fens* (Icon Books, 2020), p. 13.
- ⁵¹ ‘How this book is constructed,’ in Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, pp. 3–4.
- ⁵² Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 36.
- ⁵³ Quoted from handwriting on a small piece of lined paper tucked into the front of Raja Shehadeh, *Going Home: A Walk through Fifty Years of Occupation* (Profile Books, 2019).
- ⁵⁴ Quoted from handwriting on a large piece of lined paper tucked into the front of Shehadeh, *Going Home*.
- ⁵⁵ Quoted from a piece of paper placed between pages 62 and 63 of Shehadeh, *Going Home*.
- ⁵⁶ Raja Shehadeh, *Going Home: A Walk through Fifty Years of Occupation* (Profile Books, 2019), p. 62.
- ⁵⁷ ‘How this book is constructed,’ in Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, pp. 6–7.
- ⁵⁸ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 37.
- ⁵⁹ Quoted from the handwriting on the back of the bookmark placed between 226 and 227 of Neil Macgregor, *Living with the Gods: On Beliefs and Peoples* (Allen Lane, 2018). It is a handmade bookmark, made out of water-colour paper, on which my father painted three water-coloured squares, in purple, green, and pink, arranged in a column. In each he drew the outline of birds – one, then two, and then three.
- ⁶⁰ Neil Macgregor, *Living with the Gods: On Beliefs and Peoples* (Allen Lane, 2018), pp. 226–7.
- ⁶¹ Barthes, ‘Session of January 5, 1980,’ *The Preparation for the Novel*, p. 182. Here Barthes is quoting from Stéphane Mallarmé, letter to Paul Verlaine (November 16, 1885) in *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, ed. and trans. Rosemary Lloyd (Chicago University Press, 1988), p. 143.
- ⁶² Barthes, ‘Session of January 12, 1980,’ *The Preparation for the Novel*, p. 190.
- ⁶³ Barthes, ‘Session of January 12, 1980,’ *The Preparation for the Novel*, p. 191.

⁶⁴ Barthes, *Mourning Diary*, p. 38.

⁶⁵ Quoted from the bookmark placed between pages 164 and 165 of Robert Macfarlane, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (Hamish Hamilton, 2019).

⁶⁶ Robert Macfarlane, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* (Hamish Hamilton, 2019), p. 165.

⁶⁷ Barthes, 'Session of February 18, 1978,' *The Neutral*, pp. 10–12.

⁶⁸ Barthes, 'Session of February 18, 1978,' *The Neutral*, pp. 10-12.

⁶⁹ Quoted from the piece of paper placed between pages 18 and 19 of Kathleen Jamie, *Selected Poems*, (Picador, 2018).

⁷⁰ Kathleen Jamie, *Selected Poems*, (Picador, 2018), p. 18

⁷¹ Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: the Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010).

⁷² 'The Crisis of Desire,' from an interview conducted by Philip Brooks, which was published almost a month after Barthes's death, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, April 20, 1980, in Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*, p. 365.