An Ethics of Mourning:
Gail Jones's *Black Mirror*

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There are two short passages that serve as prologues to Gail Jones's novel *Black Mirror*. The first relates the aesthetic apprehension of Anna Griffin in an inclement London street: "And later, when Victoria is dead, she [Anna] will remember how on this day of their very first meeting she was so distracted she became soaked before she recalled her umbrella" (1). The second focuses on Victoria Morrell. Victoria is a once-celebrated avant-garde artist, and from her window she simultaneously watches a woman moving through the downpour towards her front-door and thinks: "*I am waiting for this visitor so that I can tell my story and die*" (3).

Anna Griffin is the young woman who Victoria sees cross the street: it is she who has been commissioned to write a biography of Victoria's life. As such, the opening passages intimately link images of women who are presently strangers to each other, but whose lives come to entertain unlikely intersections, particularly around childhood memories of a Western Australian gold-mining town, as the narrative unfolds non-linearly. Furthermore, in their shared interest to represent the same moment from different positions, these sections of the text resemble two modern art forms on which the book repeatedly reflects: the ambitions of the early twentieth-century avant garde, and the malleable vision of the world that film makes possible. Yet, what is especially striking about these incipient passages of a novel that is conspicuously, and in many ways painfully, marked by multiple forms of loss, trauma and grief—mothers are lost and mourned; the aching presence of the colossal absence of loved ones is palpable; the traumas of colonialism bring about

a dissociation of affect and representation—is their thanatic preoccupations, their ruminations on death. In the first passage, which contorts time tellingly, Anna's future memory of her confused, damp state on that wet day centres on Victoria's death as both past *and* imminent. In the second section, death, or rather the thought of an impending, inescapable and utterly individual death, surfaces almost involuntarily and is bound with both the advent of this visitor and storytelling itself.

This article argues that *Black Mirror* operates, in part, under the sign of what might be called proleptic mourning, a struggling with the ethical knowledge that mourning necessarily begins before death proper. This idea, which stems from Jacques Derrida's ruminations on (the impossibility of) mourning and friendship, will be explored later in more detail. For now, however, it is pertinent to acknowledge that in the context of this article's insistence on the novel's musings on loss, the text has been formally recognised for its contribution to "life-writing," with its receipt in 2003 of the Nita B. Kibble Award. Less a consolidated genre than an inclusive assemblages of narratives that "challenge the limits of autobiography," life-writing sets in motion questions about what it might mean to give an account of a self (Henke xiii). It interrogates the status of the self and surveys the role of narrative in such an inventory; or, more precisely and in the words of Shoshana Felman, life-writing can be provisionally imagined as "a point of conflation between text and life" (qtd. in Henke xii). More than this, though, and as *Black Mirror* makes clear, life-writing is closely involved in a number of ethical questions.[1]

There are at least two, overlapping ethical interests that preoccupy Jones's life-writing as it manifests in *Black Mirror*. The first resonates with Martha Nussbaum's philosophical assertion that the concentrated question—how should one live?—is that which has motivated much recent and not-so-recent engagement with the ethical (36). However, *Black Mirror* considers not only how one should live, as Nussbaum suggests, but also how one ought to live (and write) in anticipation of both one's own and an other's death. From this extension of Nussbaum's primary inquiry, the novel poses a related question: what might it mean—ethically—for someone to represent or narrate an other's life? It asks: how should one live in anticipation of an other's death and in testimony to the integrity of the proximate life lived? Is the act of narrating an other's life a violation of that responsibility? Or can it be an ethical testimony to being in the world?

Most obviously, the cogitations these inquiries encourage are of immediate interest to Anna, Victoria's named biographer. And it is fair to say that biography, a genre that routinely imposes a narrative form on an otherwise chaotic, fragmented

and excessive life, is treated with some suspicion in *Black Mirror*. Early in the text, biography is referred to as a "meanly simplifying genre" (16), and this might account for why Anna, "striving against the treason of images that Victoria has presented her with," is said to "try to meet Victoria Morrell once again. Novelistically" (156). However, the novel does not disregard biography in its entirety in favour of fiction. Nor does it insist on discrete distinctions between these narrative forms. Instead, it extracts from biography the question *par excellence* that motors this genre: who are you? And what it does with this question is expose it to a critical opening in an effort to honour the subject to whom it is addressed. As the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas would have it, the text lets the question remain an extended one, without expectation of a final, definitive answer. In other words, the novel raises issues that resonate well beyond the boundaries of biography and speak to wider deliberations on ethics that, by some accounts, are enjoying a renaissance of sorts in which "literature" plays a pivotal part.

Nussbaum's work is useful for thinking further about these relations between ethics and literature as well as the issues that preoccupy *Black Mirror*. Like Anna in Jones's text, Nussbaum is interested in the potential of literature, of forms of representation that are "novelistic," to approach and interrogate the ethical. Yet, one of the things that puzzles Nussbaum and which seems primarily to motivate her interest in literature as a site for ethical thinking is the apparent refusal of literature's attendant fields—literary theory and cultural criticism—to engage with the ethical. For Nussbaum, critical theory (read here a rather reductive concept of "poststructuralism") and literary studies more generally has shied away from entering into the lively debate on ethics that characterises much contemporary philosophical thinking.[2] By centring intellectual attention on the (infinitely deferred) logic of language rather than the practicalities of how social beings might live in the world and with each other, literary criticism has sidestepped some of the most pressing questions that face us today, or so Nussbaum suggests. In the face of this apparent reluctance to engage with the ethical, in the context of the relentless and nihilistic textual free-play of poststructuralism, Nussbaum seeks to reverse radically this supposed unwillingness by proposing that literature is peerless in its ethical potential. It is in the forms as well as themes of literature, Nussbaum argues, that the world is laid out for intimate, ethical inspection regarding questions of how to live.

Notwithstanding the refusal to examine the historical and ideological forces that shape the category of literature, and despite some of the assumptions made with regard to the attitude of literary studies to ethics, Nussbaum's meditations raise a number of important issues that are directly relevant to the inquiries around which *Black Mirror* turns.[3] The mode of cultural production that Nussbaum

favours, with its imaginative possibilities, is understood to challenge current think-
ing in/of ethics, an interest shared by Jones's novel. Nussbaum privileges what
commentators have nominated as "a different sort of eye, attentive to different
sorts of things"; not a thesis, as in the case of a "straight" philosophical treatise,
but rather a "subjunctive mood" that "deals in possibilities, ifs, conditions. Its
form is *interrogative*" (Diamond 49; Adamson 103). Admittedly, and if these
interpretations are accepted, then it may be that Nussbaum has much in com-
mon with those positions of which she is somewhat dismissive or oblivious. After
all, each approach would appear to argue that ethical responsibilities lie, or are
produced, at the moment of reading, of writing, when the very possibility of
ethics is put into question. Such critiques aside, ethics in the "literary" sense that
Nussbaum propounds in response to the question of how to live is vastly different
from the foundational premises of moral philosophy, with their universal sweep
and propensity to fix moral guidelines in advance of specific events or contexts.[4]
And her conceits are suggestive for thinking about *Black Mirror* and its specific
preoccupations with the ethics of writing a life of an other in the face of loss.

At a most private and vulnerable moment in the novel, which also entails an
express element of affectionate voyeurism, Jones writes:

> Within just a month, Victoria has weakened. It is as if giving up her
> own stories depletes her of something vital. Yet she is an avid narra-
> tor, and looks forward to Anna's coming as though her life depended
> on it; this contradiction is somehow at the basis of their relationship.
> How it is possible, Anna asks herself, that Victoria wills her own
> fading, just as she comes so amply into being?

Sometimes she watches the old woman sleeping and sees the delicate blue flicker
on the process of her dreams. She persuades herself that biography is futile. Be-
neath closed eyes lies this woman's *inaccessible* complexity (108).

The novel enacts what might be termed ethical hesitancy at the very moment
that Anna's reading/watching and writing of this dying woman recognises Victo-
ria's alterity. Here, narrative gives life at the same time that it is posited as a
menace, a threat to life. It is the impending loss of life, however, which requires
both a witness to this immoderate activity of story-telling and narrating itself
that, most crucially, is recognised as partial and incomplete, and indeed remote.
Anna, the receiver of Victoria's stories (or perhaps the producer of them in the
"otobiographical" sense that without her as listener, as witness, the accounts would
not be told), suspends any demand for complete coherence of self and story that
biography might claim with its arresting desires (see Derrida's *Ear*). Creative at-
tendance, in the interrogative mode Nussbaum advocates, obviates such
appropriative aspirations and points to an ethical encounter that asserts Victoria's

unique presence, an insistence that appears, paradoxically, all the more pressing and impossible in the face of the older woman's imminent death.

Indeed, the written narrative with which Anna is charged has been commissioned in the knowledge that Victoria is dying. In other words, and in addition to the intricate ethical dilemmas that are set in motion by Anna as the would-be biographer, or more precisely, by the social contract into which she is called, Victoria's proximate death also raises questions of how to mourn. These are not separate issues. Like biography, mourning runs the risk of ventriloquising the other, of speaking on their behalf, of reducing the alterity of the subject to the same, to the self. (This is the digestive philosophy of which Levinas is sceptical and against which Derrida rallies.) In the more specific context of *Black Mirror*, Victoria's impending death is linked inextricably to her petition for her life to be recorded and narrated by Anna. Yet, the detail to stress is that her death is *anticipated* and, as such, it points to a wider concern of the novel that is obliquely referenced in its opening sections, namely that prescient grieving—proleptic mourning—lies at the (ethical) heart of friendships.

Friendships, of course, are many things to many people—voluntary allegiances, means of social support and respect, relations of intimacy (and hence all-too vulnerable to betrayals and exposures)—and it would be incautious to reduce such composite and involved social relations to any one condition.[5] Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that the various friendships and relationships represented in *Black Mirror* are relentlessly marked by (the spectres of) loss.

Not only is Victoria dying, with Anna as the immediate, adoring witness and mourner, but Victoria herself is haunted by her lover, Jules, to whom she was unfaithful and whom she suspects was killed during the holocaust: "When she was alone, Victoria thought often of Jules; over the span of absence his phantom arm still lay warmly across her breast, cupping her heart. Sometimes she resented this everyday haunting he had bequeathed her. The stories he left behind—with no body to attach them to" (112). As a child, Anna recites personal prayers to protect her father from an always-anticipated death in the depths of the dark mines in which he labours—"*Gentle Jesus kind and wise, Let my father be alive*"— and Griffo himself, her father, is imagined in life to have "the dismal appearance of a corpse" (126). This is a quality shared by Victoria's mother, Rose, who, in "the only known photograph of Victoria's whole family" looks "almost lifeless. . . . She has less than one year to live and her eyes seem to know it" (166). It is an attentiveness that her own lover, William (the chauffer who is also Victoria's father), also carries on his grieving body when he learns of her death: "he became thin and spectre-like; his skin was blue and pallid" (220). Lily-white, the Abo-

riginal woman who Victoria's mother employs as a servant and who becomes the "outline that Herbert Morrell, mine-owner, desired," suffers sexually and violently at the hands of both Herbert and his highly-disagreeable son, Henry. Her trauma is unmistakable and Victoria feels her absence keenly: "Perhaps, after all, it was Lily-white I was missing. Am. Am missing," she tells Anna (227). Anna's own intimate relationship with Winston, her married lover from Jamaica who is studying the plays of Shakespeare for their representations of slaves, is also inscribed in a casual but nevertheless telling way by the knowledge of inevitable loss:

> Anna watches as he [Winston] fumbles with a box of matches.
>   Let me, she offers. These things will kill you.
>   In the long run, as Keynes says, we're all dead.
>   Some consolation! (133)

Anna frequently engages with the everyday things—narratives, matches and cigarettes—that are imagined "to kill" the friends (Victoria and Winston respectively) for whom she develops earnest, if at times tested, affection. Yet, it is important that she finds little comfort in Winston's flippant reference to Keynes, which reduces "us" to the same in death and ostensibly serves as a solace of sorts. After all, just as Anna grapples with the ethical implications of imposing a genre on a life lived, the novel itself, characterised by shifts in narrative time, is distrustful of the elegiac mode, which conventionally works to resolve grief following the loss of a loved one by offering compensatory creativity. In *Black Mirror*, these ideas of successful mourning are called into question (not least in the sense that modes of mourning and the ethical questions they lay open seem to commence prior to the death of a friend, however counter-intuitive this may seem), and challenge any attempt to exchange sorrow for artistic consolation. Again the novel asks how to live, how to write, in anticipation of an other's death and in testimony to the integrity of the proximate life lived.

Proleptic mourning is the law of friendship of which Derrida writes in his works on mourning, works which are resolutely ethical in their engagement with the question of how to mourn, how to represent loss, and the impossibility of representing such loss. For Derrida, prescient grieving predates specific friendships that bring unique subjects into relations of affect and address; it is something half-articulated and already at work before particular friendships are formed and unique losses are inevitably suffered. He writes: "the anticipation of death comes so indisputably to hollow out the living present that precedes it" (*The Work of Mourning* 151). Further, Derrida's ruminations on mourning return regularly to questions of fidelity and responsibility to the friend forever lost. They are attuned to the dangers of rendering mourning a narcissistic act, which violently reduces the alterity of the

beloved friend to the same, to the self. As such, they also enact formally their ostensible subject in so far as they consist of a series of unique yet repetitive attempts to mourn, thus stressing a resolute lack of closure that is echoed in Victoria's ongoing haunting by Jules and by Lily-white. *Black Mirror* is a text that similarly does not find easy consolation in the face of particular, historical loss.

For many commentators like Eric Santner, Dominick LaCapra, Greg Forter and Gillian Rose, such a "refusal to mourn," in Sigmund Freud's now all-too-familiar and contentious phrase,[6] signals a troubling moment in contemporary critical philosophy. In brief, the apparent recuperation of mourning as a revolutionary force (by Paul de Man in particular, as well as Derrida)—firstly, by rejecting its persistent pathologisations in the domain of psychoanalysis; secondly, by distrusting the restitutions and consolations that "normal mourning" implies; and, thirdly, by investing in the trans-historical idea that any subject constituted in language is ineradicably melancholic—also carries with it a significant detachment from the crippling affect of melancholia. Furthermore, it runs the risk of overlooking the possibility that historical losses surpass those that entry into language purportedly engenders.

In other words, there is a seeming impasse in recent thinking on mourning. One position stresses the ongoing responsibilities of the surviving friend to the unique friend lost in its efforts to reframe mourning in ethical terms. Another emphasises the imperative of psychological and emotional health for the surviving friend that a refusal to mourn purportedly threatens. Whereas the latter position rehearses the critiques of the former already mentioned, the former disputes most fiercely the sense of closure to which the latter appears to aspire. This is so, not least because its own project turns around "an aporetic work of mourning that succeeds when it fails, which is to say that is cannot be resolved" (Ricciardi 12). For the former, successful mourning is mechanistic, prescriptive and forgetful, and it assumes the possibility of some triumph over the past. In short, successful mourning refuses the active critical engagement with the radical enigma of the dead, of loss, that ethical mourning demands.

Black Mirror signals a negotiation of these two positions as it works to reject the reduction of otherness to sameness that marks much moral philosophy, a reduction that Nussbaum seeks to avoid, and which is also a very real possibility in the process of mourning itself. After all, if the interiorisation of (the memory of) the beloved is indeed a component of mourning, the degree to which the lost friend comes to be animated only within the living self runs the unethical risk of reducing this friend to the self. However, the novel is also attentive to those who suffer loss and entertains not so much "healthy" closure or melancholic encryption as

the possibility of redemption, of affirmation.[7] In other words, the "answers" it offers in response to the questions it raises—how to live, how to write in anticipation of an other's death and in testimony to the integrity of the proximate life lived?—are presented in terms of an ethical unknowingness, of an ongoing negotiation with the interpretive challenge that the enigma of loss, of death, demands that addresses both the friend lost and the surviving friend. In *Black Mirror*, proleptic mourning, as an *ethical* encounter, insists on Victoria's presence, on her singular alterity, at the same time that preparations are made for this friend to be vital within Anna's living self, and within the novelistic biography she has been called on to write.

Hence, the trope of the "black mirror" that lends itself to the title of the text, to symbols in Victoria's art productions, and to the name given to a series of stories that Victoria relates to Anna. Jones writes:

> Victoria said:
>
>> I have several Black Mirror stories and I will give you three.
>> What are the Black Stories, my Anna-lytical?
>> They are myself, unrecognisable. They are myself, writing disaster.
>
> I looked into a mirror and darkness looked back. (213)

With its insistence on opacity, the trope of the black mirror warns against any romanticised notion of reciprocal recognition, or indeed misrecognition, whereby one subject simply mirrors an other. It also cautions against the assumption that one might be easily recognisable to one's self, that the subject might be effortlessly self-grounded in an unquestioned humanist sense. As Victoria again recognises with her last breaths, the self is not easily or readily transparent: "*I looked into the mirror and darkness looked back*" (272). Further, the trope of the black mirror is linked with traumatic losses and memories—the writing of the disaster distinctly echoes Maurice Blanchot's unconsoling insistence on the unrepresentable, the erasure, that the catastrophe brings into being—which Anna is called upon to witness. These moments turn around the absent mother figures, Rose and Lily-white, and a long-lost sister, Ruby, a murdered lover, a miscarried baby conceived by rape. Clearly, such losses and traumatic memories are not the "major historical events" that Dominick LaCapra privileges for "elucidating trauma and its aftereffects" (ix). Rather, these are local, personal experiences. Yet, they are nevertheless resolutely specific and historical, and their ongoing impact is registered in Victoria's search for a sympathetic listener. Indeed, a sympathetic listener is what Victoria seeks rather than a biographer *per se*. It is with Anna that she reconstructs her life stories, however incomplete, and as she tells her stories, Anna too begins to relate partial accounts of herself, of memory, of shame, of possibility. In so doing, both women enter into what the novel proposes as ethical forms of understanding and responsibility.

Indeed, much trauma theory, such as the work of Cathy Caruth, suggests that for traumatic memory to be assimilable and "worked through" by the traumatised subject, communication must be achieved through an encounter with a sympathetic listener. The novel attends to this affective imperative. Yet, it also refuses in its ethical stance to intimate that this sympathetic recognition is absolute in a way that might suggest that the listener reduces or assimilates the other, and their stories, to the self. Thus, it is significant that Victoria withholds from Anna her other black mirror stories. It suggests that her life exceeds any account that she or Anna may give to it. Further, it signals a reflexive activity that is both a re-construction of the self and a "rhetorical context for responsibility" (Butler 31). For Anna's part, in asking the question—who are you?—but by letting it remain open (rather than demanding a closed circuit), there is a recognition of Victoria's trauma *and* alterity. Indeed, it is a recognition based less on totalising knowledge than a perspicacity and acceptance of the limits of knowledge which implicate the women ethically in each other's lives, as well as deaths, as the penultimate scene in the novel suggests. Having returned home to the gold-mining town with Victoria's ashes, Anna re-encounters her father and experiences the inexact yet palpable affect of loss:

> Grief was this strange folding in, Anna reflected, this recursion of
> something dark tucking under like a wave. Already Victoria's face
> was vanishing. Already silence was easier than words. Anna took her
> dark fold, this irrevocable reshaping, this crypt inside and walked
> past her father, out into the noisy night. (294)

Anna is then immediately represented amongst the bones of the dead in the Parisian catacombs. She moves "through the ancient tunnels as though in another body, and not in a grave" (300). The spatial limits of interiorisation—of inside and outside—that the metaphor of the crypt makes clear in both passages, and that mourning conventionally entails, are complicated here. In this domain of the dead through which the living move (the inverse of prevailing understandings of mourning that imagine the living as a vault for the dead), the most important and pressing of ethical bonds is forwarded: a recognition of the reciprocal responsibilities of the living and the dead. With an obligation to let live the alterity of the lost friend, that friend is carried hesitantly, rather than cannibalistically, in the living friend as memory (which itself runs the "risk" of loss, of vanishing), while the dead, as an inspired body, envelop the living—a haunting, unsettling and persistent presence.

Further, it is this experience of grief, of mourning, that seems ultimately to reanimate rather than paralyse Anna as she "marches past waste and elimination and follows in the breezy wake of the young people ahead of her" (301). Mourning is by no means neatly resolved in *Black Mirror*; it is ongoing and aching, and the

dead continue to issue ethical challenges to the living. However, this "refusal to mourn" that the novel takes seriously is not an incapacitating melancholia; it is affirmative, redemptive, a hard-to-describe folding out (as well as folding in) that allows Anna to begin to see the world intensely and anew. With respect to her once spectre-like father, Anna notes that: "Without his cloak of dirt . . . and with his beloved Lola [her father's wife], my father is like Lazarus, returned from the grave" (283). At her loss of Winston, who returns inevitably to his family in Jamaica, Anna is now said to face "the night without imagining loss and deficiency" (292).

Affirmation and hope are made possible not by exorcising ghosts of the dead, of the lost, but by entertaining them, however unsettling, painful and confronting this may prove to be. And this approach to loss is particularly important in relation to the text's concern with ethical responses to the claims of the past. In its formal and thematic preoccupations with memory, the novel is highly responsive to Australia's colonial past in the contemporary present. Hence, it is significant that the novel "concludes," albeit inconclusively, with the image of the site at which Lily-white buried in quiet ceremony not a body—this is not a grave—but rather the life-sustaining placenta "she gave birth to with her daughter, Ruby" (301). It is Ruby, Victoria's sister, to whom Anna gives the older woman's ashes on return to the gold-mining town. In turn, Ruby offers Anna, the wary biographer, a gift of narrative that both sets in motion other ghosts of the past that have been hitherto suppressed and confirms the interwoven lives of Victoria, Anna and Ruby. And the imagining of this special site is one of redemption—a recovery of the land—in the face of "all the mine-work and despoliation that is everywhere around" (301). The scars of settler capitalism are perceptible on the land and the wounds its agents inflict are appallingly and traumatically apparent with the partial blinding of Lily-white by Henry Morrell: "Her wounding had fixed her forever in a moment of distress, and left her there, marooned" (193). Yet, this site, and the positioning of its image at the end of the novel, is significant. It determines that the (effects of these) acts and contested histories will not be laid to rest and recognises that there are additional narratives still to be told, or indeed withheld, in so far as the site is "both the unregarded and persisting monument of countless other stories" (301). Unlike Herbert Morrell, the inveterate collector-colonial-capitalist who obsessively seeks to possess, in the form of private property, objects, cultures and people from across the globe, the novel deliberately acknowledges the limits of its knowledge and reach.

The loss, trauma and grief that mark *Black Mirror* are palpable. There is a profound sense, however, that the recurrent processes of mourning that keep alive those who are lost are imperative, ethically and politically, and do not necessarily

deaden the survivors. Rather, each unique occasion of mourning demands an ongoing interrogation of ethics itself and solicits active, critical responses and representations that leave open the question of how one should live and represent others in the face of (multiple, impending) losses.

ENDNOTES

1   For texts that address in detail the ethics of life-writing see Eakin and Onley.
2   Nussbaum's assertions fail to address why it might be that literary scholars and theorists have declined to engage with ethics, to the extent that her suppositions can be provisionally considered in the spirit of philosophical speculation. Casting an eye across the field of philosophy—the self-proclaimed "home" for the study of ethics—it is clear that for many scholars who conceive of ethics as a field of philosophical interest, it is not ethics itself that should be the subject of scrutiny. Instead, human actions that are possible in answer to that fundamental question—how should one live?—must be interrogated. In short, ethical thought and understanding is imagined to begin with normative, rational universal principles that are removed from any political, historical, affective and social contexts or determinants.
3   Nussbaum's overview of the current state of literary theory is somewhat limited. It omits the possibility that an ethical strain, or strains, might already run through much literary theory, albeit in a guise—feminism, post-colonialism, Marxism—that is not easily recognisable as such by the dominant frameworks through which philosophies might conceive of ethics. It also declines to admit the possibility that the very practices that are chastised for their abandonment of the ethical might themselves be implicated in the apparent revived interest in ethics. Simon Critchley is not alone when he suggests, for instance, that "deconstruction should be understood as an ethical demand," (1) not least on the basis of its efforts to call into question, among other things, ethics itself.
4   These universalist claims of moral philosophy have troubled theorists and critics trained to privilege pragmatism (here Lyotard's work is especially influential) as well as difference, pluralism, particularity and anti-foundationalism (Lyotard and Thebaud). For these scholars, the absolute criteria that underpin ethics, which lie beyond question, are not indisputable truths that sensibly ground systems of thought, wisely guide our moral judgements and generally maintain social order. Rather, they are the deeply troubling means by which relations of power are organised ideologically.
5   For some (very different) philosophical accounts of friendship, see Friedman's *What Are Friends For*?, Blanchot's *Friendship*, and Derrida's *Politics*.
6   For Freud, in "Mourning and Melancholia," the successful work of mourn-

ing involves the painful but necessary severing of libidinal ties to a deceased beloved, with the result that the freed ego may then attach itself to a new object of desire (Freud, *Standard* Vol 14). Melancholia is a symptom of "failed mourning": the ego libidinally identifies with the lost object to the degree that the loss of the other is experienced as a loss of the self, and the mourner enters a state of stasis, wherein grief is unresolved. Freud would later return to the issues of mourning and melancholia in his 1923 study, "The Ego and the Id," conceding that the hierarchical binary he had originally conceived of as the relation between mourning and melancholia was inadequate to account for the complexities of grief (Freud *Standard* Vol 19).

7   In a recent interview, Jones commented: "I do think grief is one of the most tenacious emotions. It does not go away easily and it does wreak damage, and I've thought a lot about what it is that gets people through, what does it mean to move from grief into affirmation" ("Artistic Light" 7).

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