PERFORMANCE
PHILOSOPHY

WITH THE DEAD: PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY, DYING, AND GRIEF AN INTRODUCTION

LAURA CULL Ó MAOILEARCA AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS AND UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM
WILL DADDARIO NOVA TRANSFORMATIONS
RAJNI SHAH AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

How to Read this Introduction

[A note for slow readers and those of us who find long texts intimidating.]

Hello. This is Rajni, one of the editors of this issue. I am a very slow reader, something I find hard to communicate to academics and people who read at what is classed as a normal or fast speed. I am also a slow thinker. My slowness has meant I have struggled to do what is traditionally known as the role of the co-editor—I have only just managed to read through this introduction, let alone contribute anything significant to it. However, it occurred to me that maybe this very slowness might be a friend to those of you who also feel unsure how to navigate large amounts of text, and especially text that takes place in academic journals. So I have made a few invitations below, to be used as feels supportive by whoever finds them. They are not so much instructional as an offering of permission: it's okay to read this way, just as you are.

PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY VOL 9, NO 2 (2024):1–28
DOI: https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2024.92553
ISSN 2057-7176

as a spiral

When I read the words in the introduction, they seemed to arrive as a spiral, returning around and around to the same points, repeating themes and thoughts with different nuance or focus. Knowing this, I was able to hold them more lightly, let them move through me, and focus my eyes less punitively. Maybe the spiral was saying:

> be ancient,
> take your time,
> wait for it to come around.

as overflowing

Perhaps so many words are needed in order for them to overflow their container. Like grief, unruly and messy and too much to be held by what was there before.

as a breaking

The words might be in the moment of something that is breaking - something that has traditionally felt fixed or inevitable. A journal introduction that needs to cover certain ground, for example. A citation practice that cannot help but invoke hierarchies of knowledge, for example. If you can feel this breaking, then you are attuning to what is happening, what needs to happen.

as a portal

Maybe there is something here, one sentence or so, that you need to hear. And that will be enough to provide the portal that transports you in the way you need right now.

This moment

It feels impossible to begin this journal issue in any other way than with Palestinian death and grief. As Jewish Voice for Peace has described it, "This has been a year of unspeakable horror, grief and outrage" (JVP 2024). Alongside JVP, the International Court of Justice (ICJ), and countless other international organizations and communities: We grieve the mass slaughter of the at least 46,000 Palestinians killed by the Israeli military, with the awareness that the real death toll is likely considerably higher. We grieve the 1,200 Israelis killed in Hamas's attacks. And we grieve the 3,000 Lebanese killed by Israeli bombings. We grieve the long and ongoing violence of settler colonialism.[1] Thinking alongside Siegmar Zacharias in this volume, we grieve multilaterally: we grieve genocide as entangled with ecocide, epistemicide, scholasticide, and domicide. We acknowledge that we are living in a time when grieving itself feels like a privilege that only some of

us are able to access. As Zacharias prompts us, we grieve "the neglect of the fundamental human right of the dead—the impossibility of preservation of the dignity of the deceased, including mutilating bodies, dumping bodies in mass graves, abducting bodies, the inability to bury those under the rubble, the desecration of graves, and the obstruction of death rituals" (Zacharias).

For many of our authors, the Palestinian genocide was a primary, pressing context of their writing and making towards this publication. They bring their shaken hearts to their contributions, collectively weaving a dense fabric of the affective textures that surround this witnessing of extreme violence—pain woven with numbness, despair woven with rage—compelling a dual urgency both "to mourn the dead and fight for the living" (Williams). Performance philosophy practices themselves emerge as ways of bearing witness to the unceasing brutality and destruction in Gaza. At the same time, we grieve the loss of the ability for those of us within institutional contexts to make unambiguous statements about these topics. We feel compelled to acknowledge that, whilst two of the editors and a number of the contributors of this issue are affiliated to the Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK), the views expressed on the current situation in Palestine are their own—assuming the right to academic and artistic freedom—and do not represent the views of the institution.[2]

As many of the contributions in this issue indicate, grief can have multiple and complex relations to action, with the capacity to increase as well as decrease the affective power to act. Being acted upon by grief can call us to action. It can put a halt to "business as usual," but it can also motivate political action and resistance, both individual and collective. As Daddario and Zerdy's article explores, grief can turn into "a goad that stimulates social action. No longer simply equated with loss, pain, and heartache, grief becomes a means of creation" (Daddario and Zerdy). Or further, they suggest that

> grief *potentiates*, that is, it creates a matrix of possibility through which any number of actions and productions are possible. Against the tendency to see these potential actions as dangerous or volatile or fueled by aimless rage, we see the vast potential made through grief space to be, at heart, positively transformative. (Daddario and Zerdy)

In this respect, when we are able to access the appropriate conditions, grief can move through our bodies, as an important and healthy "part of the rhythm of our lives" (Barton).

As Zacharias outlines:

> We are taken by so many grieves simultaneously nowadays: we are grieving for the dead, grieving because of ongoing genocides,[3] grieving because of the ongoing climate catastrophe, grieving because of social injustices, grieving the loss of the idea of a certain future. These and more accumulate as personal, collective, worldly and planetary grieves. (Zacharias)

The specific configuration of events unfolding since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic—the murder of George Floyd, increasing magnitude and visibility of devastation related to the climate

crisis, and the genocides in process in multiple countries and regions—has surely contributed to the widely shared experience of this historical moment as one in which death and grief feel particularly present. As our colleagues in the collaborative performance research project *Performing Ends* have outlined (https://performingends.com/), this is a time in which we are surrounded by "the omnipresence of narratives reflecting the ends of the human, the planet, and democracy (among others)." Further, as Dina Gachman has discussed,

> In 2024, we are hardly the first generations to channel loss into art, but coming through the last few years shaped by a pandemic and cultural and political upheaval, it does seem like something is different. It doesn't feel relevant to ask questions like, *Why don't we talk about loss?* or, *Why are we so grief avoidant?* How could we come through these last few years together and *not* talk about it, write about it, make films, shows, paintings and songs about it? There are hundreds of podcasts devoted to the topic and Instagram accounts that exist solely to share poetry about loss. The questions now, for us, are how can we talk about death in a more meaningful way? What can we create or watch or listen to that will help us engage with grief as readily and as deeply as we do with love, or joy, or beauty? (Gachman 2024, n.p.)

And indeed, certainly in the small worlds from which we write these words, it appears as though there is growing momentum and more frequently affirmed urgency around the need to dismantle dominant 'Western' paradigms surrounding cultural attitudes towards death and grief; an increasingly loud call for the production of alternative discourses, practices and professions that challenge the residual stigma, taboo, and denial surrounding dying and grieving that have historically governed social norms within colonising and colonial cultures. For instance, we might note the international growth of Death Cafés (https://deathcafe.com/) over the last fifteen years, or the emergence of events like the international *Lifting the Lid Festival of Death and Dying*, an annual online festival where palliative carers, funeral directors, grief supporters, artists, and others explore topics such as mindful grieving, death literacy, living funerals, and coffin weaving. Alongside this, we witness a (too) slow recognition that we must turn towards Indigenous and ancient practices to learn what we once knew: how to grieve collectively.

Performance, Performance Studies, Theatre

In this context, it is perhaps unsurprising that contemporary artists and scholars, performance-makers, and performance philosophers are giving heightened attention to what their practices can offer towards grief, and more broadly to questions of how we relate to the dead and to dying at this particular socio-political and ecological moment. Of course, this builds on centuries of cross-cultural concern with the relation between the arts, dying, and loss: including specific traditions and discourses that locate an intrinsic relationship between theatre, performance, and death. As Fintan Walsh discusses, "theatre's tragic roots evidence a foundational belief in the importance of ritualistic practice and communal gathering as a necessary response to suffering" (2024, 9), whilst drama's classic tragedies frequently return to the fraught issue of how to appropriately mourn the dead. Likewise, performance art has a long history of staging acts galvanized by grief like Suzanne

Lacy's counter to media narratives of femicide *In Mourning and in Rage* (1977); just as documentary theatre has an established tradition of using its form to explore the deaths of particular individuals from the murder of gay student Matthew Shepard in *The Laramie Project* (2001) to *My Name Is Rachel Corrie* (2005), the play based on the diaries of the peace activist crushed to death by an Israeli bulldozer.

Based on this history, David Harradine, the co-artistic director of UK based company Fevered Sleep—known for their *This Grief Thing*—goes as far as to say:

> From the earliest forms of performance grounded in ritual and religious worship, to the chronicles of change and murder we call the Greek tragedies; from mediaeval liturgical drama's reflection upon the moral and philosophical problems of death and life, to Shakespeare's meditations on time; from the classical aesthetics of death in French renaissance tragedy, to the personal experiences of death that run through nineteenth century realism; from the muck and ooze of death explored by the surrealists and expressionists, to the metaphor of life as a detour on the way to death poeticised by Beckett; from the reflections on the body and on mortality enacted by performance artists, to the contemporary fascination with escaping death through technology—it wouldn't be too difficult to claim that there has never been a performance that is not driven or shadowed, somewhere, by the spectre of death and dying. (Harradine 2000, n.p.)

In turn, many of the foundational scholarly texts of Theatre and Performance Studies have famously posited a special relationship between theatre, performance, death and loss, for instance, in Peggy Phelan's well-known characterisation of performance as a "rehearsal for death" and her proposition that "theatre and performance have especially potent lessons for those of us interested in reassessing our relations to mourning, grief and loss" (1997, 3). From Blau's "The Eye of Prey" and Carlson's *The Haunted Stage*, to Alan Read's *The Dark Theatre* (2020) to Mischa Twitchin's *The Theatre of Death* (2016) in the Performance Philosophy book series, theatre and performance studies abounds with a rich existing literature on theatre's relation to death, dying, and loss that forms the wider contextual domain for the discussions here. Various theatre and performance festivals dedicated to the topic have been hosted over the last quarter century, such as the *Matters of Life and Death* festival staged at the Battersea Arts Centre in the UK back in 2000 including works such as *Hymns* by Frantic Assembly (1999–2005) inspired by the untimely deaths of several friends of the company and Kazuko Hohki's *Toothless* (1998–2006) about the life and death of her mother. Alternatively, in 2021, several of the contributors in this volume—and other performance philosophers like Mark Price and Eli Belgrano—participated in *Borrowed Time* (https://borrowed-time.info/): a series of events on death, dying, and change held between 2020–21 which brought an ecological, process-based perspective to the relationship between art, philosophy, and thanatology, asking: What constitutes 'a good death'? How do we know death, personally? What room do we make for the dead—within our relationships, our ways of speaking, our shared geographies? And how might the insights of end-of-life care and death practices help us to navigate the fundamental unsustainability of the dominant culture, and to better imagine what comes after it?

And yet, despite this obviously weighty historical context, it still seems valid to observe that the last five years have seen a particular growth of scholarly interest in the specific topic of theatre, performance, grief and mourning, including as a particular response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most recently, this includes works such as: Guy Cools' *Performing Mourning* (2021) and William McEvoy's *Reanimating Grief* (2024) which explores the poetics of bereavement in theatre and song, examining how dramatic works from Shakespeare and Beckett to Enda Walsh reanimate the dead to investigate the dynamics of grief and mourning. In turn, Walsh's *Performing Grief in Pandemic Theatres* (2024) addresses the key role in supporting grief played by theatre during Covid-19 "in the face of mass death" and in the context of the "widespread political denial of pandemic grief" (8). As Walsh describes, theatre artists oftentimes "stepped into the void created by the broad absence or inaccessibility of public mourning ceremonies by creating new aesthetic and dramaturgical forms and spaces for grief" (4). But whereas the framework of Walsh's book emphasises the notion of pandemic grief as a distinct phenomenon, the tendency with this issue is perhaps closer to that of the *Performing Ends* project in foregrounding the interconnectedness of differing forms of loss and the complex 'grieves' they produce. For their part, the lead researchers of *Performing Ends* project, Cervera, Iwaki, and Laine, propose that "we can now speak of a 'posthumous' tendency in the performing arts as a response to unfolding ecological, political, and technological ends" (*Performing Ends*, 2024). For them, this tendency, "implies a perspective on our time as one 'after extinction', in the literal sense of extinction of humans and more than human beings, but also of cultural and symbolic orders" (Ibid.).

In the context of Performance Philosophy

The themes of dying and grief are also by no means new in the performance philosophy context: from the Agitatsia group's (2022) research into the performativity of death in necro-performances of the collective *Party of the Dead* from Saint-Petersburg to the ongoing, in-depth investigations of the relations between song and death by Eli Belgrano and Mark Price (Borrowed Time) including through an exploration of the aesthetics of the Death-Song and the format of the vigil-performance. Back in 2015, with the journal's inaugural issue, we published "To Grieve", Will Daddario's (2015) deeply moving and revelatory text stemming from the multiple, sequential losses of his father, grandmother and his son, Finlay. Ten years ago, Will oriented himself towards these encounters with loss a "philosophical problem":

> What does it mean to identify myself as the person for whom that last statement is true and for whom life has been molded by such sorrow? Acknowledging that the work of mourning creates the only path capable of piercing the dense and viscous fog of acedia, what does it mean to grieve rightly? Might there be such a thing as an ethics of grief, a practice of turning my full attention to the specificity of each loss so as to carry such loss in me and to become, in the words of Gilles Deleuze, worthy of what has happened to me (Deleuze 1990, 149)? (Daddario 2015, 2016)

Ten years later, Will is practicing performance philosophies of dying and grief no longer as an academic in a university theatre department (though his forthcoming book *The Last Laugh: Grief,*

Death, and the Comic will appeal to academics). Rather, he now performs as a trained counsellor and therapist. Furthermore, ten years after Finlay's death, it is joyful for those of us who know them to witness the flourishing of *Inviting Abundance* (https://invitingabundance.net/)—the company he and his wife Joanne founded to share their grief knowledges with others—and the extraordinary gifting of grief wisdoms and practices that they have given to so many—particularly in relation to infant loss. This is not a story of 'overcoming' of course; or a 'happy ending' to a grief process now complete. But it is a tale that tells us something about how grief performs and what grief does in terms of eliciting our participation in new temporal worlds:

> While grieving the death of loved ones, the question will arise: how long does this take? That question, however, is not posed in a helpful way. The verb 'to take' must be placed aside and replaced with new words that conjure a different mode of time, one that commemorates the effort of building, growth, and the generative powers of the social and natural worlds. Grief neither takes nor gives. It rushes in from the outside and it inaugurates a new temporal existence that will be unique to each person or group who grieves. Another lesson of grief arises here: grief makes time, in the sense that you must now make a calendar for yourself that honors the nature of your existence. Rather than asking 'how long will it take,' you can try this: what time will grief make, and what will you make within grief's duration? (Daddario 2015, 270)

As a forthcoming issue of this journal will explore and document, the themes of dying and grief were also an integral part of the 2024 Performance Philosophy biennial in Austin, *After Tragedy*. And indeed, the performance philosophy of tragedy—for instance, how tragic performance thinks the relations between the dead and the living—has been a core line of concern since the field's inception: in the work of Freddie Rokem (2015, 2017), Kate Katafiasz (2018), Anna Street and Ramona Mosse (2016), and many others. Delving more deeply into the Performance Philosophy journal's archive, we listen in on how texts speak to each other across issues. Catalina Insignares piece on listening to the dead in this volume seems to enter into dialogue with Flavia Pinheiro's (2023) poetic decolonial consideration of choreographies in relation to the unborn, in communication with Abiku—the Yoruba word meaning "predestined to death" that refers to the spirit of a child who has died young. Whilst s†ëfΔ/\/ schäfer's article in this issue—on co-creating rituals with dying mountains—might also be productively read alongside Madeleine Collie's (2021) article on *The Ash Project* within the *Plant Performance* issue in which she proposes that "grief, when it is extended towards plant life under threat, might be a prefigurative practice for changing our relationships to place, to more than human liveliness, to ourselves" (Collie 2021, 170). Collie's words read as hauntingly prescient if we acknowledge the role of the colonially implanted eucalyptus trees that have participated, again, in the raging forest fires that devastated Southern California during the first weeks of 2025.

Grief, scholarship, and the arts

At the time of writing these words, there is the sense that 'grief is everywhere'—at least in the arts. There has been a proliferation of artistic events and activities offering space for grieving and/or

variously exploring how arts and creative practices can enable counter-hegemonic ways for grief to be experienced and shared. Among the many examples we could cite here and beyond those discussed in the journal issue itself, we might think of projects and works like the *Whale Fall* performance cycle by the New York-based choreographer mayfield brooks (https://www.improvisingwhileblack.com/whale-fall-practice) ; Milo Rau's *Grief and Beauty* (NT Gent 2021); Fevered Sleep's *This Grief Thing* (https://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/project/this-grief-thing); Ellie Harrison's *The Grief Series* (https://www.griefseries.co.uk/); Mallika Taneja's work exploring the voicing of grief, mourning and memory, *Do you Know This Song?* (Frascati Theatre 2023); and Jota Mombaça's recent installation *A Method/Grieving Time* (West Den Haag 2024) mapping and memorializing grief and resilience as they are woven into archival stories of immigrants and the lasting structures of colonial power. As Daddario and Zerdy note, beyond its dominant framing as a problem to be solved within medicalized grief territory,

> Many thinkers, artists, community activists, and healers of various stripes have drawn attention to the ways in which grief, far from constituting an undesirable state of torturous longing, frequently leads to transformation and growth, both on individual and collective levels. (Daddario and Zerdy)

Building on the long standing awareness of the need for individual and collective healing in relation to loss "beyond medicalized and medicalizing institutions" (Trejo Méndez), artists have been increasingly exploring how artistic and creative approaches might facilitate acknowledgement, attunement, understanding, care, relief and repair, praise and honouring, resistance, and responsibility in relation to widely varying experiences of loss, dying, and grieving including in the context of systemic violence and oppression. The late, celebrated curator Okwui Enwezor's collection *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America* (New Museum 2021) for instance, gathers together the work of influential Black artists from Basquiat to Ellen Gallagher and Theaster Gates whose practice has examined the relation between race, mourning, commemoration, and loss as well as their involvement in the social movements propelled by Black grief, from the Civil Rights movement to Black Lives Matter. More recently, there have been exhibitions like *How We Get Over: We Grow On* (2023) curated by artists Jasmine Williams and Sarah Jené (Mississippi Museum of Art 2023), informed by Southern mourning rituals which the curators described as "a contemplative space of rest that could would hold Black people in our grief" (Harris 2023), including installations, spoken word performance, and works such as Justin Hardiman's *Color of Grief* (2023) project which combines audio work with photography to document the affective multiplicity of grief as experience by underrepresented communities in Jackson, Mississippi.

And as it feels omnipresent in practice, likewise in scholarship, recent years have seen a flourishing of writing and thinking around dying and grieving across various disciplines producing philosophical, critical, social and cultural theory and criticism. From works such as *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (Butler 2009); *The Smell of Rain on Dust: Grief and Praise* (Prechtel 2015); *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Sharpe 2016); *Grief: A Philosophical Guide* (Cholbi 2021); and *Aesthetics in Grief and Mourning* (Higgins 2024), the last fifteen years has created an abundance of new literatures on grief coming from a wide range of disciplines including philosophy and specifically

philosophical aesthetics. This includes a rich collection of texts exploring the need for alternative grief discourses and practices that attend to grief as a social phenomenon (e.g., Milstein 2017; Johnson 2021; Harris and Edmonds 2022; Barton 2024) and wider ongoing studies of 'disenfranchised grief' (e.g., Turner and Stauffer 2024, building on Doka 1989) addressing grief in relation to vulnerable groups, marginalization, and stigmatized deaths. It also includes a wealth of literatures addressing the specificity of Black grief and loss: the specific ways that grief, mourning, and loss relate to Blackness and antiblackness, and how grief shows up in the felt experience of black and brown bodied people (e.g., Rankine 2015; Ife 2022; Rolston and Vernon 2024). Among this writing, and building on work that will manifest in her forthcoming book *Art in a Time of Sorrow*, the art historian and theorist Tina M. Campt has written and spoken compellingly of what she describes as the opacity of Black grief:

> We are living in a moment when we are forced to grapple with multiple frequencies of grief and grievance. They include the grief of personal loss that I and so many others have endured over the course of the pandemic, like the loss of loved ones to terminal illness or this deadly virus. But they also include the grief and the grievance of reckoning with the frequency of compounding grief at the cyclical, repetitive loss of Black genius. For we must reckon far too frequently with our compounding grief and grievance at the cyclical, repetitive, and disproportionate losses of vulnerable members of Black and Brown communities to the virus, to brutal policing, to targeted neglect, and engineered disposability. We must reckon with the frequency of the compounding grief and grievance we bear in the face of the loss of kin, community, and friends to the forces of white supremacy and antiblackness. These compounding griefs and their accompanying grievances exceed what is describable or comprehensible in human language. Their opacity is singular and unique, yet they are shared even in the distinctiveness of the unmistakable wounds they leave in their wake. (Campt 2022, n.p.)

Of course, death has always been a philosophical preoccupation, with centuries of reflection and practice across diverse global traditions devoted to the question of the nature of death and dying, the possibility of afterlife and the desirability of immortality, the relationship between death and our concepts of time, of what it means to 'die well' or what attitude we aspire to practice towards the event of dying, and the impact of death on how we understand the meaning of living. Specifically, "Grief and mourning have been a subject of interest to thinkers representing all of the world's major intellectual traditions: from Platonism to Daoism" (Slawkowski-Rode 2023, 1). Multiple source books exist that survey the Western philosophies of death and dying (e.g., Cholbi and Timmerman 2020; Bradley et al. 2013) as well as recent collections that provide overviews of Anglo-American and European philosophies of death, loss, and grief (Slawkowski-Rode 2023) and vast numbers of monographs by contemporary academic philosophers on dying and grief (e.g., Ratcliffe 2023; Cholbi 2021; May 2014), including those that address 'eco- and climate-grief' (e.g., Read 2022). Existing for around a decade, there is an International Association for the Philosophy of Death and Dying (https://www.philosophyofdeath.org/), a global organization of over 200 scholars interested in the investigation of philosophical questions surrounding death and dying, which has held a biennial conference since 2014. And individual institutions host their own research groups dedicated to collective, cross-disciplinary thanatological investigation, such as the

Death Studies Research Group at Northwestern University (deathstudies.northwestern.edu) . It is by no means the task of this introduction to conduct a survey of these activities and literatures here—and we note the limited worlds of reference that we bring as editors—but only to mark the simultaneity of a notable increase in contemporary interest in dying and grief in performance and philosophy, with the weight of its vast historical precedents.

Whilst welcome to some extent, the contemporary proliferation of philosophical and artistic engagements with grief also leaves itself open to criticism. In the philosophical context, for example, much scholarship remains woefully Eurocentric and dominated by white, male, Anglo-American perspectives (Cholbi and Timmerman 2020). This recent literature from Anglo-US and European academic philosophy also has a tendency to leave unchallenged the dominant assumption that grief is something that needs to be 'resolved' and to reinforce an anthropocentric perspective focused on human loss (Slawkowski-Rode 2023). Related to this, as Daddario and Zerdy discuss in this edition, 2022 saw the entrance of pathological grief into the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 5th edition, thereby authorizing psychologists and clinical mental health counselors to diagnose someone with abnormal, maladaptive, and problematic grief. In turn, in the arts context, the growth of interest in grief by artists can also invoke a certain wariness towards 'bandwagoning,' which can lead to care-less engagements with notions of grieving, raising questions around what skills and training artists and other facilitators might need to have before claiming to offer a space for grief and/or how the space that the arts offer for grief needs to be framed in order to share its practices responsibly.[4] That is, there are clearly complex ethical questions raised by, on the one hand, the value of art to challenge assumptions of exclusive authority in relation to dying and grief by dominant knowledge-practices, and, on the other hand, the need for artists to learn from the experiences of other lived wisdoms to understand what it means to take responsibility for their work in the context of epistemologically experimental practices, particularly when it comes to trauma and trauma-informed approaches to their potential audiences.

In this respect, there would seem to be great benefits of further cross-sector exchange and learning between artists concerned with grief and dying and professionals working in the expanding field developing alternative practices and discourses in relation to death and grief beyond dominant traditions and roles coming from the contexts of medicine, mental health, religion, communities and commercial death industries. For example, recent years have seen the growth and development of roles such as 'death doulas' (Bu Shea) and 'abortion doulas' (Williams);[5] the increasing maturity of fields such as 'holistic deathcare'; and the emergence of new concepts from 'death wellness' to 'intentional grieving' (Bu Shea). *What can artists, activists, community workers and professionals in these fields learn from each other? What can we learn from encountering the performance philosopher as a death doula; as a grief worker; as an embodied social justice facilitator or community organizer?*

> What will you learn under the banner of grief?
> (Williams)

Writing and thinking from and with our lives

In the case of many of our contributors, the move towards working with dying and grief has not been so much a matter of choice as of necessity. Or, somewhere between choice and necessity, it comes from an openness to bringing grief into research or to acknowledging grief *as* research. As Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca writes in the performance philosophy work, *An [Interrupted] Bestiary* (2022): "Rather than thinking of my grief as something that was merely stopping me from doing work or as the 'background' to work, I have come to appreciate that *this is the work* on an important level" (11). Grief was coming with us into the studio, accompanying us to the library or the classroom, whether we liked it or not, so why not acknowledge this presence and see what grief can offer as a collaborator in performative and philosophical practices? In this respect, contributions often put pressure on lingering academic conventions underpinned by disembodied notions of objectivity, including by continuing and contributing to the longstanding investigation of how academic writing and thinking can manifest in, from, and alongside **the personal**, anecdotal and (auto)biographical, spirituality and systems of belief. And indeed, in many cases, the investigation of grief here is explicitly contextualized by authors as stemming from their own 'personal' experiences of living alongside dying and/or differing forms of loss (Daddario and Zerdy; Zacharias; Achikeobi-Lewis; Hazelwood; Saleh; Osborne; Sánchez-Querubín).

Borne from this lived experience, the idea of **grief as a teacher**—as an epistemologically generative source of insight—appears repeatedly throughout this issue. As does the notion of **grief as transformation**. Siegmar Zacharias, for instance, writes of "grieving as a portal to liberation and social transformation." Likewise, other authors repeat the call to move away from the (Freudian) notion of grief as that which must be overcome, towards an emphasis on the transformative epistemological and ethico-political potential of grieving, as painful as it may be. Again, drawing from Zacharias, we see how the intensity of the disruption that grief brings into our lives

> breaks open not just our breathing patterns and social patterns, but might open up a space in which we become aware of how cultural, social, historical, and political patterns show up in and on our bodies and our ways of living and dying and grieving. Grieving can offer us the opportunity to learn how not to comply to these patterns, teaches us how to resist and disrupt and not perform according to assumed structures by refusing to "get better", to "calm down", to "get it together", to "keep going." (Zacharias)

In many cases, the articulation of new practices and discourses takes place in a context of critique of dominant cultural norms surrounding death and grief and a strong sense of the need for alternative modes of thinking and being—to which the field of performance philosophy might contribute. Contributors point toward the impoverishment of Western paradigms where "death is something that needs to be dealt with as quickly and as silently as possible" and grief is something to be merely "overcome" (Insignares). For Williams, for instance, the dominant model of Western society is one that "systemically marginalizes and individualizes loss" (Williams). Likewise, Williams also notes the problematic impact of dominant bereavement discourses—such as the

misapplication of the Küber-Ross "five stages of grief" towards a one-size-fits-all approach to grief—which fails to support the diversity and multiplicity of grief experiences.

Throughout the contributions, we hear the repeated call to question normative paradigms which encourage us to distract or numb ourselves from the discomfort of grief, asking instead how we can "re-learn to identify where our bodies are holding grief, [and] to make space to be with it" (Barton) rather than approaching it as a pathology to be treated or a problem to be solved. Grief is something that we would do well to 'tend'—to attend to and care for—Barton's book *Tending Grief* suggests, and this is a place where performative embodied practices and rituals can support us.

Contexts, connections, communities

This journal issue is an outcome of *The Grief Project* (https://www.atd.ahk.nl/das-research/projects/thematic-collaboration-program/the-grief-project/): an ongoing practical research project situated at the Lectorate of the Academy of Theatre & Dance (ATD),[6] developed in collaboration with the ARIAS Network as part of the "Thematic Collaboration Program" of the Amsterdam University of the Arts.

Since 2021, the ATD Lectorate has been working with grief and loss as one of the core themes of its research program (ATD Lectorate, "Care, Grief & Loss, Lived time"). Starting in Spring 2023, this has taken the specific form of *The Grief Project* which brings together invited artists and professionals to form a research group to consider grief from a social justice perspective and explore the role of creative practices in responding to individual, collective, and ecological grief. Since it began, *The Grief Project* has conducted a wide range of different activities including *What is grief doing in the Academy?* (ATD Lectorate 2024)—a month-long collective artistic research exploration of grief and its relationship to listening curated by Rajni Shah at the ATD in January 2024. This, in turn, was a project that grew from the Performance Philosophy issue *how to think* (Shah and Cull Ó Maoilearca 2021), a podcast series of slow conversations between humans who are re-centering the work of listening, healing, justice, and love—all of which were rooted in themes of loss and grief (https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal/issue/view/how-to-think).

While much of *The Grief Project*'s work has taken place in Amsterdam—including the artist-in-residence project of Kai Hazelwood and Phoebus Osborne, *Grief-listening-time* (ATD Lectorate "Grief-listening-time", 2023–4) and the guest lectures of Camille Sapara Barton and Staci Bu Shea in December 2023[7]—it has also, from the start, been developed in close collaboration and dialogue with international partners, particularly Will Daddario and Joanne Zerdy and their US-based organization Inviting Abundance (https://invitingabundance.net/), enabling us to nurture an emerging international network of artists, scholars, and practitioners using creative methods to approach dying and grief. And indeed, we are continuing to explore how creative grief practices, which are often deeply concerned with embodiment, can be shared remotely, across distributed locations and different timezones.

In June 2024, for example, several contributors shared their practices in the context of After Tragedy: the 2024 Performance Philosophy biennial hosted at the University of Texas, Austin, and organized by Minou Arjomand and David Kornhaber (Performance Philosophy 2024). As part of the biennial, we offered two hybrid workshops hosted simultaneously in Austin (by Will Daddario and Siegmar Zacharias) and Amsterdam (by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca and Catalina Insignares) in which participants in both cities were invited to embody four creative grief practices facilitated in person and remotely. Insignares shared practices from her research *ese muerto se lo cargo yo*: listening, tuning in, sounding, moving with, attuning to the voices of the dead. Cull Ó Maoilearca did a live reading of the two stories about grief and whales that you will find in this issue. Zacharias offered a listening practice, for giving our bodies as resonance spaces for each other to be in the wild space of grief and connection through sound, proposing that somatic listening invites us to sense into our metabolic intimacies with the other, with the dead, and with the unknown. Daddario offered an exercise on the social learning of grief asking participants to answer the question, "If I could create grief lessons for myself in the present, what would those lessons be?" For Will, to reconnect with and turn-toward grief, so as to actualize the full capacities of being human, it is often beneficial, sometimes also necessary, to un-learn the lessons on grief we have encountered and silently internalized from our childhoods.

The special section of this issue on **The Politics of the Dead Body**—edited by Andrés Henao Castro and Elva Orozco Mendoza—is another very welcome instance of international collaboration that emerged unexpectedly in the process of putting the issue together. During the editing process, we encountered Andrés and Elva's work with a group of authors thinking through questions of death and social justice, understood through performance but also through political philosophy, and invited them to contribute a special section to the journal. For us, this section adds highly valuable alternative disciplinary perspectives to the topics at hand, and brought productive new resonances to the pieces we had already commissioned.

Finally, interested readers can watch back the session where contributors to both the main issue (Raoni Muzho Saleh and Paulina Trejo Méndez) and the special section (Osman Balkan) shared their research in the context of World Ends Day in October 2024 (https://performingends.com/world-ends-day). World Ends Day is an annual online symposium that "brings together artists and thinkers to consider our shared durational ends—corporeal, political, organic; and yet, intangible, capitalist, and planetary" (Performing Ends, "World Ends Day").

In this context, we hope that the publication of this special issue of the *Performance Philosophy* journal offers further strength to this emerging transcultural community of researchers working with the dead, dying, and grief through performative and philosophical practices: inviting new connections and offering up practices and conceptual tools that can be picked up and used by others in their own contexts.

Memento mortuorum[8]

Without a doubt, the tendency to ignore one of the few things that we all have in common—the fact that we will die—permits suffering to thrive in the contemporary moment. At the same time, though, the whole effort is absurd. Ignoring death is the turtle trying to shake off its shell. Absurd, but, in the case of human thanatophobia, not surprising. Cultural amnesia, seemingly unchecked in its spread through the matrix of Whiteness, seems to preclude not only actionable knowledge of the pain inflicted on Indigenous populations by colonizers, of the labor of the enslaved used to fuel the engine of capitalist production, and of the cyclical pattern of genocidal warmongering. Cultural amnesia also denies each of those inflicted with the paradoxical problem of not knowing one's self, one's body, one's entanglement with others, and of not knowing many of the arts drawn upon to tend to death, grief, and the foresight of much death and grief to come. As Raoni Muzho Saleh reminds us in this edition of *Performance Philosophy*, cultural amnesia prevents us from witnessing, from truly touching the reality of death and grief in this world:

> On the duty and dilemma of bearing witness to the mass slaughter of her people, Sarah Aziza published an online text called "The Work of the Witness" (Aziza 2024). In it she explains that the Arabic word for witnessing shares the same root as the word martyr شهيد, shahid, namely شهد. The martyr is the one whose death is marked, touched and stained by bearing witness to oppression. Aziza remarks that: "To be a witness is to make contact, to be touched, and to bear the marks of this touch."

Let us, then, begin to remember, to remember what we already know, to open eyes so as to witness and touch and, by so doing, take up the work of grieving, which is to say the work of rebellion.

The fact that we will die may be one of the few things that we all have in common; but of course the inequalities that create the conditions for radically differing deaths and correlatively divergent experiences of grief mean that dying cannot be approached as universal. Contributions to this journal issue start from the recognition of the radical inequality where only some lives are grievable and others are disposable. Variously theorised as 'necrocapitalism' (Mbembe 2003), as exclusionary concepts of what counts as a 'grievable death' (Butler 2009) and 'disenfranchised grief' (attributed originally to Doka 1989), this volume makes clear that performance philosophies of death and grief emerge from sites of fundamental geopolitical difference—"places where life can be lived by forgetting death; and places where death is never out of the conversation for more than 20 minutes" (Insignares). How can performance philosophy enact practices of thinking with death according to a careful attention to the vast differences between contexts: what it means for those who live in intimate relationship with death and for those who can forget or distance themselves from it? What modes of grief are possible for those "who live at the edge of life, or even on its outer edge—people for whom living means continually standing up to death" (Mbembe 2003, 37)?

As Derrick Johnson wrote in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, "In America, Black deaths are not a flaw in the system. They are the system" (Johnson 2020). To quote Johnson at length:

> Too many Black people in America are dying.
>
> We die driving our cars. We die playing outside. We die babysitting. We die eating ice cream. We die sleeping in our own beds. We die and die and die at the hands of the police who are sworn to serve and protect us.
>
> Even then, we are not done dying. We die giving birth. We die trying to breathe. We die when doctors under-treat our heart attacks and dismiss our calls for help. We die because we are overrepresented where it hurts, such as poverty and prisons, and underrepresented where it helps, such as higher education, elected office, and the federal judiciary. We die from many causes, but one stands out from all others: racism.
>
> The expendability of Black lives is not a flaw in the system; it is the system. We are meant to die or, at the very least, we are not meant to be protected, to be respected, to be valued, to be considered fully human. That is how racism works, and it has operated efficiently throughout American history. (Johnson 2020)

But while much new work is emerging that addresses the specificity of Black grief and loss (Rankine 2015; Ife 2022; Rolston and Vernon 2024), other authors in this issue point to how structural racial inequality continues to play out in various fields of knowledge-production. For instance, Achikeobi-Lewis notes how Western mental health counseling approaches to trauma offer 'no explanation or even recognition of the lived ancestral grief and trauma' that exist in her body as an African descendant.

Always more than one: throughout this issue, authors explore **the multiplicity of grief**, inviting questioning of the relationships between different forms and sources of grief from personal loss to ecological grief (schäfer); from the transmission of ancestral trauma and intergenerational grief memory (Achikeobi-Lewis) to the grief of dispossession (Saleh). Whilst the issue does give particular attention to how to practice performance philosophy with the dead and dying, we begin from the premise that "Grief is about loss—not just dying" (Doka in Turner and Stauffer 2024). As Barton notes: "Grief is not limited to the death of a loved one; we can grieve the loss of our homelands, the loss of former versions of ourselves or the pain of war and state violence" (Barton). Grief is experienced and practiced as feelings of sadness, aloneness, and "not being Home" related to diaspora and from losses of lands, homes, and cultures (Achikeobi-Lewis); grief arises from ends to relations with parents and siblings in the context of gender transitioning (Saleh); grief manifests in the experience of the loss of a body's ability after diagnosis and long illness (Hazelwood); grief can arise from so-called 'non-death losses' such as loss of access to housing, employment, autonomy, education, and certain forms of political power (Williams). Building on the work of Phyllis Windle in "The Ecology of Grief" (1995), Kriss Kevorkian (2004) on 'environmental grief,' and Glenn Albrecht on 'solastalgia' (2005), the notion of ecological grief is also becoming increasingly important to understand the affective, emotional, and psychological impacts of human-caused climate change and its associated losses (Cunsolo and Ellis 2018). As s†ëfΔ/\/ discusses, "Grief here is associated with physical, ecological loss (species, landscapes), with the loss of environmental knowledge (farmers' local seasonal knowledge) or with anticipated future losses (future culture, livelihood, way of life)."

And within this multiplicity, it is also often that grief is articulated here as irreducible to any one affect: grief tends towards joyful transformation as well as sadness (Saleh); grief is mixed with the fullness and intensity of rage as well as a sense of the loss or numbing of feeling and sensation; grief is a potential site of humour and play, not only suffering (Hazelwood); grief and relief crystallize into one another as a present/ce of loss finally catches up with its lengthy anticipation (Osborne); grief can generate feelings of togetherness as well as isolation (Trejo Méndez). As Martín Prechtel has so powerfully discussed, the relationship between grief and love, or between grief and care, brings out its multifaceted affective qualities: "Grief expressed out loud, whether in or out of character, unchoreographed and honest, for someone we have lost, or a country or home we have lost, is in itself the greatest praise we could ever give them. Grief is praise, because it is the natural way love honours what it misses" (Prechtel 2015, 31). Or as bell hooks writes in *All About Love*: "To be loving is to be open to grief, to be touched by sorrow, even sorrow that is unending. The way we grieve is informed by whether we know love" (hooks 2000, 200).

And yet, the concepts and practices of grief manifest here proliferate beyond any fixed, unified or essential definition; including Zacharias' invitation to us to move "away from a singular, universalist notion of grief towards a multilayered conception of *grieves*" (Zacharias). Amongst the many characterisations offered in this issue, we encounter grief not as an emotion "to manage and overcome," but as an "active, disruptive" process "capable of unsettling and reshaping personal and collective entrenched power structures and normative expectations" (Zacharias). In turn, for Osborne, grief is not only a multiplicity, but also inherently excessive: "Voluptuous monstrosity, alchemical overflow, contamination—excess is core to grief, even in its internal and less public mutations. Grief performs a profusion of material flamboyance, enacting a more-than-human, a more-than-one—an uncountable too much" (Osborne). And it is this excess that brings Osborne to dramatize the conceptual personae of grief as a drag performer—our Drag Mother who "turns what we think we know inside-out-outside-in."

Performance, embodiment, identity

This issue is specifically concerned with the relationships between dying, grief, performance, and philosophy. As ever, in the context of performance philosophy, **notions of performance** in this issue are broadly construed, touching on a wide range of practices both within and beyond the context of the performing arts, moving between and across private and public space: from choreography and performance art to participatory and socially-engaged art (Daddario and Zerdy) and performance on/for camera (Osborne); from the creation of personas or characters to singing and moaning as storytelling (Saleh); from one-to-one encounters (Insignares; Bu Shea) to collective practices such as Saleh's *Moaning Choir* (2020); from protest art, such as the collective weaving practice of the Mexican feminist collective *Hilos* (Trejo Méndez) to collective care and mutual aid considered as 'grieving rituals' (Zacharias); from practices working with plant medicine (Zacharias) to the act of hand poke tattooing and the design and wear of memorial T-shirts to initiate conversations around ecological grief (schäfer).

At the same time—as per its broadened understanding in performance studies, performativity theory, and performance philosophy—not all considerations of performance here relate to arts contexts, but bring the perspective of performance to contexts such as identity formation, knowledge-production, ritual, protest, and community organizing. Such an approach is also aligned within some approaches to the philosophical aesthetics of loss, grief, and mourning which look at the arts alongside aesthetic gestures as enacted in/as wider cultural practices surrounding death and loss, from funeral rituals and behaviours to memorialization practices such as shrine-construction and memorial T-shirts (Higgins 2024). In this issue, authors invite us to attend to how wisdoms related to dying and grief are performatively produced and to how death and grieving operate as sites of performative acts of the reiteration and resistance of normative values—pertaining to and intersecting with the performative production of subjectivities in relation to identity categories including race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and species. This is particularly foregrounded in contributions such as Kai Hazelwood's where the wisdom of the author's own body—her embodiment of becoming and unbecoming as constituted by processes of racialization, ableism, and interspecies kinship—is both valued in its singularity and genealogically situated. Likewise, in their article, Paulina Trejo Méndez focuses on the racialized and gendered inscription and erasure of bodies within the context of forced disappearance and feminicide in Mexico, alongside the feminist artistic practices that have emerged in resistance to it. Or again, Ash Williams' article reflects on the performative capacity of grief and mourning to gather people together, build solidarity and incite collective action.

In turn, contributors touch on how relations to the dead, dying and grief are constituted through varying forms of **social performance**, death and mourning rituals including "the global tradition of professional mourners, who in many cultures serve as choreographers of grief in times of loss"—for example, in the tradition of oppari sung in southern India and Sri Lanka (ironically itself a 'dying practice') (Saleh). Or again, in their contribution, Staci Bu Shea describes practicing the act of washing a dead body on their living partner within their training as a holistic deathcare worker as both a '*memento mori* performance' and a form of rehearsal in which a loved one is playing dead. A real fiction: "Here we were, very alive, softening a fear, playing pretend" (Bu Shea). Further, Ash Williams' article addresses how the performativity of rituals, immersions, vigils, and visioning sessions held by Black and indigenous, queer and trans, and disabled death workers create the embodied conditions for collective thinking and processing systemic forms of oppression.

Throughout, a recurring theme is the power of collective grieving as a means to resist oppression. Contributions repeatedly refuse the **individualizing paradigm** that can surround grief and foreground instead its social and collective dimensions (Daddario and Zerdy; Saleh; Trejo Méndez; Williams; Zacharias) in ways that blur conventional distinctions between grief and mourning, between supposedly 'inward' feeling and its 'outward expression.' Whether in relation to the Shi'a traditions of public lament and social mourning (Saleh) or the collective weaving practices of the Hilos collective in Mexico (Trejo Méndez), authors share the lived experience of the transformative potential of participating in collective acts of shared grieving: "to be amidst a huge mass of people whose chest and head have become a collective drum" (Saleh).

Show me that there is hope in coming together
That we can repair our wounds under the sunlight
That it can be different
That you can teach me how to stitch hope
I dream that a tapestry made of belonging covered the streets
People letting their hearts melt under the fabric
My feet could feel their heartbeat.

(Trejo Méndez)

Here, the interest of contributors in collectivity is less about seeking to homogenize or unify experiences; rather, as Saleh describes, it is more to do with creating a space where we can find "strength and guidance through the differences of our suffering" (Saleh).

This refusal of individualism resonates with the fundamentally **relational ontologies** that are introduced from different cultural perspectives, including the foregrounding of interdependence and interconnectedness in many African philosophies—as Mbiti describes (and Achikeobi-Lewis quotes in her text in this issue): In African tradition, "the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. Whatever happens to the individual is believed to happen to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual [...] The individual can only say: '*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.*' This is a cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man" (Mbiti 1990, 101).

In this issue, we have also made a particular choice to foreground the voices of **practitioners** and particularly queer, trans, and/or BIPOC practitioners: those who are deeply involved in the *practice* of how we might relate to the dead and to grief from a social justice perspective, across overlapping contexts such as the arts, education, activism, grief and death work, mental health counseling, healing practices and end-of-life care (including for more-than-human forms of life), and in varying modes of relation to academic institutions. Informed by an educational and cultural context where the epistemic value of diverse lived experiences, situated and embodied knowledges and practical know-hows still needs to be reasserted and reenacted on a daily basis, we consider this foregrounding of how performance practice thinks as part of a wider politics of knowledge. It builds on and aims to contribute to the wider efforts of performance philosophy to de-fragment academic and artistic, theoretical, and practical knowledges, in ways that are attentive to differences and inequalities between thinking-practices without reinforcing false separations, historical hierarchizations and exclusions, and outdated disciplinary distinctions which stand in the way of more equitable, holistic, transdisciplinary, and cross-sector approaches to topics such as dying and grief. In this sense, we consider the issue as joining a wider conversation and movement where researchers in other disciplines seek to foreground issues of social justice, equity, and diversity in contexts of 'death, dying, loss, and grief', including from a sociological perspective critical of the tendency of thanatology to "focus on individual experiences without taking into account the social and political contexts in which they belong" (Harris and Bordere 2016, 5).

Again, following the pluralising aims of performance philosophy, we have also specifically invited and encouraged these practitioners to locate the modes of voice and **formats** of publication that best allows their practice-thinking to emerge and articulate itself: whether through fragment and associative thinking (Insignares); images, poetics, and creative writing (Saleh; Osborne; Cull Ó Maoilearca); multimedia documentation of experiments resulting from artistic research (schäfer) or the invitation to whole body listening through offerings, rituals, and exercises provided in the form of accompanying podcasts and sound works (Zacharias; Hazelwood; Barton). Here, perhaps, this is not only a matter of pluralization for its own sake; but also an acknowledgment of the limits of normative academic forms and methods in relation to grief, whether in terms of the misfit of linear temporality in conventional approaches to the page or the residual operation of norms of rationality and objectivity in the evaluation of academic research. And indeed, it is commonplace for loss and bereavement to confront people with the limits of certain modes of language and articulacy: to turn to poetry, imagery, ritual, chanting and song, movement, and other embodied practices in order to be-with, share, and respond to the intensity and complexity of affective experience and knowledge that grieving can gift.

The embodied, multisensory, and temporal nature of performance practices lend themselves particularly well to death and grief relations, including through the focus on embodiment as multiplying points of access to alternative forms of intelligence, sense-making, and awareness beyond the cognitive. Contributors articulate the role of sensation (touch, smell), imagination, somatic practices, storytelling, and (deep) listening in how we relate to the dead, and to our own and to each other's grieving. Somatics—with its emphasis on the felt —is particularly valued in this context. Embodied practices for heightening attention to relation—informed by Reiki, Zen, and other somatic and spiritual practices—are emphasised as critical tools for inhabiting alternative ways of being with grief, dying, and death.

In terms of temporality, readers will notice that contributions often access these alternative modes of relation through alternative ways of being in time—for example, in her invitation towards the embodiment of 'reptile time' as distinct from clock time, Hazelwood emphasises the specific temporal conditions necessary for accessing transformative experiences of 'play' (Hazelwood). Likewise, both s†ëfΔ/\/ and Osborne allude to the deep time of geological processes that require an expansion of our thinking of the durations of dying and grief into more-than-human timespans.

How and when might you perform this issue?
How and when might this issue perform you?

In this respect, this journal issue also asks something of you, its readers, audiences, participants; it invites ongoing reflection on and embodied experimentation with the tempos and rhythms of performance philosophy's reception and (co-)production. Readers will find an extensive offering of practices that they can pick up themselves, from Insignares and Mendonça's *Landscapes of the Dead* to s†ëfΔ/\/'s offer of his practice as a soft guideline for how to approach co-creation of rituals with (dying) mountains. In some cases, practices are described and their insights articulated; in others, practices are offered directly for readers to do through guided exercises in audio form. As

contextualization, a proliferation of other practices (from Remote Viewing to Somatic Experiencing) help the issues' contributors to collectively map the complex lineages of these new grief and death practices.

Objects, materials, technologies

The role of **objects** and other materials in supporting the enactment of relations to the dead is also widely addressed. In his discussion of vigils, for instance, Williams describes how resistance to systemic oppression is strengthened through community altar-building in which "people share food and bring photos, flowers, trinkets, sacred items, flags, candles, water, dirt, incense for burning, crystals, stones, clothing items, sign-making materials, and other things to write on and write with to put on the altar and have at the vigil." In turn, Achikeobi-Lewis discusses contemporary artist Kwame Akoto-Bamfo's reference to the 17th- and 18th-century Ghanaian practice of sculpting Memorial Heads or Nsodie which functioned as loci for prayers and offerings: a material basis for invocation (Achikeobi-Lewis). Re-making this practice for the present, Achikeobi-Lewis suggests that embodied participation in Akoto-Bamfo's sculptural installation can support the healing of intergenerational trauma for African diaspora descendents. Situated in the context of theorizations of rituals and ceremonies, objects are understood as "the vehicles through which the invisible can become manifest and the consciousness can ascend to a more exalted state than its usual mundane condition" (Scott 2021, n.p.).

From a very different perspective and context, s†ëfΔ/\/'s contribution touches on the production of objects such as memorial T-Shirts: shirts that can be designed to acknowledge and commemorate a human or more-than-human death, but also to act as conversation pieces—"to allow death to enter the conversation" (Cann 2014, cited in schäfer). Exposing the performative dimension of speculative design, s†ëfΔ/\/'s memorial shirt for the death of the Ok-glacier in Iceland has been variously activated, including through being worn by gallery staff as a means to invite discussion on climate collapse, death, and disappearing glaciers with visiting audiences.

Questions of the constitutive role of **technologies** in enacting new relations to dying and grieving are also considered, including in relation to the role that mobile phones have played in the self-documentation and witnessing of the Palestinian genocide (Zacharias; Saleh). The integration of digital media into our death and grief experiences is the particular focus of Natalia Sánchez-Querubín's contribution, which foregrounds the role of the human actors within the performative production of relations within socio-technical assemblages that enable mediated care and grief, such as in the case of the hybrid funerals. Here, the author also touches on the affective role of 'digital remains;' namely, online content on deceased people on social media platforms and mobile phones as materials through which new practices for "maintaining ties with the dead" are being invented and practiced.

(In)Disciplining grief

To what fields do we turn when faced with the 'problem' of dying? To what domains of knowledge do we reach in the midst of grief? How can performance philosophies 'know' grief and dying and what can grief teach us including as performance philosophers, when the wisdom of grief often lies precisely in the acceptance of unknowing? This issue raises myriad questions of how performance and philosophy might interact with knowledge claims relating to dying and grief originating from a diversity of other sectors and domains. Authors approach grief and dying with insights from a wide range of disciplinary fields and practices including: psychology; psychoanalysis; anthropology; sociology; theology and spirituality; trauma studies; death studies and death care; somatics and bodywork; therapy and mental health counselling; medicine and science, including the biological field of epigenetics or heritable traits.

The issue particularly opens up questions of how performance philosophy might relate to **therapeutic** frameworks and practices, mental health, and somatics not least since many of the contributors are also professionals in those domains (Daddario and Zerdy; Achikeobi-Lewis; Sapara Barton). Contributions refer to and engage with a wide range of theories and practices from these fields: from Somatic Experiencing and Generative Somatics (Barton), to mindfulness and Saketopoulou's psychoanalytic notion of "traumatophilia" (Saleh). At the same time, many contributors critically point toward the limits of Western medical and therapeutic paradigms, methods, policies and systems—for instance, calling for a decolonized approach that gives serious attention to experiences such as ancestral trauma (Achikeobi-Lewis) or calling for the affirmation of the radically social nature of grief contra its medicalization and individualization through dominant Anglo-U.S. and European psychological discourse (Daddario and Zerdy). Likewise, in relation to death and dying, Bu Shea positions their practice—and the work of holistic deathcare more broadly—in a critical relation to the medicalization of death and death-care industries in in North America and Europe in the last century, including the distancing effect of outsourcing to commercial funeral homes the act of washing and preparing the dead body.

Contributions also often put pressure on **academic conventions**, including by continuing the widely-held investigation of how academic writing and thinking can manifest in, from, and alongside the **personal**, the anecdotal and (auto)biographical, spirituality and systems of **belief**. In many cases, the investigation of grief is explicitly contextualized by authors as stemming from their own personal experiences of living alongside dying and/or differing forms of loss (Daddario and Zerdy; Zacharias; Achikeobi-Lewis; Hazelwood; Saleh; Osborne; Sánchez-Querubín).

With the [living] dead

The title of our issue foregrounds the emphasis on relationality: the shared concern of many of our contributors with the question of how we relate to the dead and dying; a shared concern with 'with-ness.' Contributors ask how to care for and take responsibility for the dead (Insignaries; Bu Shea) and how to understand an "ancestral presence that I can feel but cannot see" (Achikeobi-Lewis); as well as exploring the role of the artist as a facilitator or host who mediates relations to

the dead and dying in varying ways: activating their presence (Insignares). Indeed, this 'with-ness' presumes some kind of presence, some demand for relation albeit that the dead are also invoked as 'invisible entities' (Insignares). By no means simply 'dead and gone' or consigned to some other-worldly realm, the dead here tend to appear as vivacious presences embedded into the movement of the now: "They seep into the faces of passers-by and emerge out of trees and restaurants in dreary new forms" (Howe 2001, 175, cited in Insignares).

Or perhaps it is better to say that the contributors to this volume call upon us to remain open to an expansive, non-binary ontology of the "both-and" where false dichotomies of absence/presence and real/imaginary are set in motion in multiple ways. As Daddario and Zerdy put it in their article, the grief that emerges with the severing of an attachment has the capacity to produce: "A reshaping of binary paradigms such that 'absent' and 'present' no longer function oppositionally but, rather, mix and swirl to create new combinations like 'absent-presence' and 'present-absence'" (Daddario and Zerdy). Likewise, in her text, Omi Achikeobi-Lewis thinks alongside John Mbiti's articulation of ancestors as the 'Living Dead' (Mbiti 1975): those who "are considered part of the family still, and will often show up in dreams, and visions with messages to aid the family or individuals' lives" (Achikeobi-Lewis). In the African tradition, she explains, kinship does not end with death; rather, "ancestors retain a role in human affairs" and are "tied to the welfare of the living" in ways that can be experienced as the explanation for both good and bad fortune, blessings and curses (Achikeobi-Lewis). This resonates in discordant ways with the notion of the living dead that we find in Achille Mbembe's account of necropolitics: the regime that subjects racialized groups "to living conditions that confer upon them the status of the living dead" (Mbembe 2003, 40). How do the 'alive whilst dead' and the 'dead whilst alive' encounter each other?

In the case of Bu Shea's contribution, caring for the dead specifically concerns the practice of washing a dead body: a ritual that, they note, holds "great significance across cultures and histories as a dignified rite connecting the living and the dead in support of the journeys ahead for both." While reference is made here to the death of 'loved ones' and to how we care for the dead whom we have loved, this is by no means assumed to be universal or uncomplicated, which would be to simplify and romanticize the oftentimes multivalent relations we have to that which is dying and entangled in our grieving, as Osborne's contribution points toward.

Memory is key here: its ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics, whether in terms of its role in perception or collective memory or its practice through acts of commemoration and memorialization. In a number of contributions, the discussion of memory leads to an emphasis on the aliveness, reality and presence of the past; as Christina Sharpe puts it: "the past that is not past reappears, always, to rupture the present" (Sharpe 2016, 15). For Omi Achikeobi-Lewis, for instance, "Ancestors and their memory are real, passed on from generation to generation" (Achikeobi-Lewis). In turn, in their discussion of commemoration practices surrounding forced disappearance and feminicide in Mexico, Trejo Méndez draws attention to the resistance toward official forms of state-sanctioned memory in the material production of collective, living, subaltern memories through practices of ephemeral 'anti-monuments' in public space. In Trejo Méndez's, Williams', and Daddario and Zerdy's articles, the politics of memorializing events such as vigils,

protests, and 'alchemical rituals' comes to the fore to emphasise the importance of performative gatherings that allow for the creation and publication of alternative narratives in the context of state-sanctioned violence, deaths at the hands of the state and gun violence, to support communities to process the emotions caused by systemic injustice and to galvanise resistance.

More-than-human dying and grief

In this issue, questions of dying and grief are not only considered in relation to the human, but also from a more-than-human perspective, including the question of how nonhuman beings themselves grieve (Cull Ó Maoilearca), the role of nonhuman entities in human-centred death practices (Sánchez-Querubín), and at how humans mourn the loss of nonhuman life (schäfer). From the circling of the vultures or *chulos* in Colombia in Insignares' piece, to the endangered southern resident orca population that centre in Cull Ó Maoilearca's whale grief stories, to the snake-inspired shedding of Hazelwood's offering, more-than-human lives and nonhuman agency figures strongly throughout the contributions: animals, plants, land and earth beings, technologies, and other vital material entities.

In Sánchez-Querubín's article for example, enacting Latour's actor network theory enables her to map the relational production of the event of her grandfather's funeral as constituted by "an assemblage of various (living and dead) human and non-human actors, including communication devices, data, and architectural elements, all acting in different ways and exerting influence on each other."

The more-than-human perspective is also particularly central in s†ëfΔ/\/ schäfer's contribution, where he asks what mountains and glaciers might want to tell us about life and death, within the context of (future) ecological grief. Noting the recent transnational phenomenon of funerals being held for dead glaciers—ostensibly as practices enabling humans to process ecological grief but also to raise awareness regarding anthropogenic climate change—s†ëfΔ/\/'s piece emerges from research seeking to explore what new performative rituals might emerge if dying mountains and glaciers were treated as collaborators in the creative process rather than the mere screens of anthropocentric projection. Here, we see how concepts of what counts as death and dying are performatively produced in relation to nonhuman beings—as a site of dynamic power relations between different forces, discourses, and agents, each contributing to the determination of when and why a mountain or glacier can be declared 'dead' and what this tells us about differing cultural conceptions of and relations to nonhuman life, agency, and personhood.

More-than-human lives and deaths also figure in Kai Hazelwood's exploration of what she can learn about how to practice liberation and transformation without fear and resistance through the lessons borne of companionship with her snake, Bisoux. For Hazelwood: "Liberation is a technique; I'm learning mine from snakes. Their capacity to move in any direction at every moment, the slowness they remind me to play with, their capacity to be in a constant state of transformation, and yet be fully themselves at any moment. Their shedding, constantly becoming and unbecoming, living peacefully in perpetual apocalypse."

In addressing more-than-human dying and grief, there is nevertheless a need to remain attentive to the relation between dismantling anthropocentrism and the urgency of ongoing dehumanization. For instance, in Saleh's contribution, we find the call to listen to nonhuman forms of moaning and wailing, but also to consider how vocal practices might be understood as a mode of witnessing and solidarity in which we "join with our voices the wailing calls of those deemed 'less than human' or simply as 'human-animals'" (Saleh), particularly Palestinians. Likewise, Trejo Méndez's article calls on us to consider how to situate more-than-human approaches in relation to the systemic dehumanization of racialized, feminized, and gendered bodies implied by the violence of feminicide in Mexico. In turn, in Daddario and Zerdy's discussion, the work of the Bakiné collective provides an example of how an intersectional Black eco-feminist perspective manifests the interconnections between resistance to racist, colonial, and anthropocentric oppressions and violence. As the collective describes: "We are committed to restoring rituals and practices that give room for black folks to grieve and connect with the land so that we can receive co-respite, widen our collective imaginations, prophesy & orient towards a black eco-feminist politic of liberation in the midst of climate collapse" (Bakiné n.d., cited in Daddario and Zerdy).

The Work

Suffice it to say, there is an abundance of thought to encounter in this edition of the *Performance Philosophy* journal. The editors would like to acknowledge the work of all the contributors and note that, due to the nature of this collection of articles and practices, 'the work' here refers to more than creating pieces for publication. Here, 'the work' refers equally to the work of grief with which each contributor has tarried. Pointing this out actually encourages us to think about the possibility that grief factors into the conditions that make possible all articles for publications and artistic expressions shared with audiences and spectators. We zoom into the materiality of the creation of scholarly and/or validated professional artistic practice and we find grief sprouting all around, like flowers and volunteer fruits and vegetables that have been thriving secretly in the tilth of daily life. We pluck a flower to learn from, and we find ourselves compelled to zoom in even further, at which point we find ourselves immersed in the irreducible complexity of grief's fractility. Even the structure of this edition hints to these fractal patterns that expose the everywhere-all-the-time-ness of grief's mycelial-like activity. You will encounter a second introduction as you read, one from Andrés Fabián Henao Castro and Elva Orozco Mendoza that introduces the nested section entitled "The Politics of the Dead Body." For now, however, we'll leave you to the work.

Notes

[1] This issue is being published at the moment when a ceasefire has been agreed. We find it important to recognise the ongoing effects of settler colonialism and genocide, even while we acknowledge the significance of this moment.

[2] For institutional statements on Palestine by the AHK, see https://www.ahk.nl/en/news-and-events/news/2024/05/let-us-use-the-space-provided-by-art-and-education-to-prevent-polarisation/.

[3] At the time of writing the Lemkin Institute issues active genocide alerts for Palestine, Sudan, Congo, Yemen, Armenia, and Ethiopia (Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention).

[4] Camille Sapara Barton's practice provides a useful example here: where invitations to grief gatherings are always offered accompanied by clear and transparent statements regarding for whom these sessions may or may not be suitable, and what they can and cannot provide in terms of grief support.

[5] As Williams describes in his article for this volume: "With the consent of abortion seekers, abortion doulas provide informational, physical, and emotional support before, during, and after abortion."

[6] A 'Lectorate' is a Dutch term for a research unit, research group or professorship within a university of applied sciences. The professor who leads a lectorate is called a 'Lector.'

[7] The contributions of Camille Sapara Barton and Staci Bu Shea to this journal issue emerge from guest lectures provided by both practitioners in the context of the *Participation in Arts and Education* series co-curated by Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, with colleagues Emiel Heijnen and Melissa Bremmer for Amsterdam University of the Arts. You can watch a recording of this session here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKXSFo4niQI.

[8] Translation: be mindful of the dead.

Works Cited

Agitatsia. 2022. "Performativity of Death in Post-Soviet Russia: The Party of the Dead's Growing Membership." Performance Philosophy 7 (2): 22–31. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2022.72405.

ATD Lectorate, Amsterdam University of the Arts. *The Grief Project*. https://www.atd.ahk.nl/das-research/projects/thematic-collaboration-program/the-grief-project/.

———. "Care, Grief & Loss, Lived time." https://www.atd.ahk.nl/en/das-research/themes/care-grief-loss-lived-time/.

———. 2024. "What is grief doing in the Academy?" https://www.atd.ahk.nl/das-research/projects/atd-research-month-2024/what-is-grief-doing-in-the-academy/.

———. 2023–4. "*Grief-listening-time*: ATD Artist in Residence: Kai Hazelwood and Phoebe Osborne." https://www.atd.ahk.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/11/atd-artist-in-residence-kai-hazelwood-and-phoebe-osborne-grief-listening-time/.

Barton, Camille Sapara. 2024. *Tending Grief: Embodied Rituals for Holding Our Sorrows and Growing Cultures of Care in Community*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Borrowed Time. "Borrowed Time: on death, dying & change." https://borrowed-time.info/.

brooks, mayfield. "Whale Fall." https://www.improvisingwhileblack.com/whale-fall-practice.

Butler, Judith. 2009. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* London: Verso.

Campt, Tina M. 2022. "The Opacity of Grief." *Bomb Magazine*. https://bombmagazine.org/articles/2022/01/26/the-opacity-of-grief/.

Cholbi, Michael. 2021. *Grief: A Philosophical Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9780691211213.

Cholbi, Michael, and Travis Timmerman. 2020. *Exploring the Philosophy of Death and Dying Classical and Contemporary Perspectives*. New York and London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003106050.

Collie, Madeleine. 2021. "Ash Stories: A Spell against Forgetting." *Performance Philosophy* 6 (2): 156–173. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2021.62320.

Cull O Maoilearca, Laura. 2022. *An [Interrupted] Bestiary*. https://arias.amsterdam/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Bestiary-combined.pdf.

Daddario, Will. 2015. "To Grieve." *Performance Philosophy* 1: 265–281. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2015.1110.

Death Cafe. "Welcome to Death Café." https://deathcafe.com/.

Fevered Sleep. 2018. *This Grief Thing*. https://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/project/this-grief-thing.

Frascati Theatre and Mallika Taneja. 2023. *Do you Know This Song?* https://www.frascatitheater.nl/en/agenda/1998/mallika-taneja-in-in-coproductie-met-frascati-producties/do-you-know-this-song

Gachman, Dina. 2024. "10 Artists on Working, Living and Creating through Loss." *New York Times*, 25 May. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/25/arts/grief-loss-jesmyn-ward-richard-grant.html.

Hardiman, Justin. 2023. "The Color of Grief." *Scalawag*, 22 September. https://scalawagmagazine.org/2023/09/the-color-of-grief/.

Harradine, David. 2000. "The Art of Dying." *Total Theatre Magazine* 12 (3). http://totaltheatre.org.uk/archive/features/art-dying.

Harris. 2023. "*Schistostega pennata*: grief & the luminous land." *Scalawag*, 1 August. https://scalawagmagazine.org/2023/08/we-grow-on-jackson-ms/.

Harris, Darcy L., and Tashel C. Bordere. 2016. *Handbook of Social Justice in Loss and Grief. Exploring Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.* New York and London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315659756.

Harris, Jane, and Jimmy Edmonds. 2022. *When Words Are Not Enough: Creative Responses to Grief*. Stroud, UK: Quickthorn.

Harrison, Ellie. *The Grief Series*. https://www.griefseries.co.uk/.

Higgins, Kathleen Marie. 2024. *Aesthetics in Grief and Mourning*: *Philosophical reflections on coping with loss*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226831053.001.0001.

hooks, bell. 2000. *All About Love: New Visions*. New York: HarperCollins.

Ife, Fahmia. 2022. "Grief Aesthetics." *liquid blackness* 6 (1): 86–95. https://doi.org/10.1215/26923874-9546572.

International Association for the Philosophy of Death and Dying. https://www.philosophyofdeath.org/.

Inviting Abundance. https://invitingabundance.net/.

Johnson, Derrick. 2020. "In America, Black deaths are not a flaw in the system. They are the system." *The Guardian*, 3 June. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jun/03/america-black-deaths-racism.

Johnson, Michelle Cassandra. 2021. *Finding Refuge: Heart Work for Healing Collective Grief*. Boulder, CO: Shambhala Publications.

Katafiasz, Kate. 2018. "Being in Crisis: Scenes of Blindness and Insight in Tragedy." *Performance Philosophy* 4 (1): 53–65. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2018.41199.

Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention. "Active Genocide Alerts." Accessed 24 June 2024. https://www.lemkininstitute.com/active-genocide-alert.

McEvoy, William. 2024. *Reanimating Grief: Waking the Dead in Literature, Theatre and Performance*. Manchester: Manchester University Press. https://doi.org/10.7765/9781526176707.

Milstein, Cindy, ed. 2017. *Rebellious Mourning: The Collective Work of Grief*. Chico, CA: AK Press.

Mississippi Museum of Art. 2023. *How We Get Over: We Grow On*. https://www.msmuseumart.org/exhibition/how-we-get-over-we-grow-on.

Mosse, Ramona, and Anna Street. 2016. "Thinking Through Tragedy and Comedy: Some Provocations on Genre Matters." *Performance Philosophy* 2 (1): 130–40. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2016.21101.

New Museum. 2021. *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*. https://www.newmuseum.org/exhibition/grief-and-grievance-art-and-mourning-in-america/.

Northwestern University. Death Studies Research Group. http://deathstudies.northwestern.edu/.

NTGent and Milo Rau. 2021. *Grief & Beauty*. https://www.ntgent.be/en/productions/grief-beauty.

Performance Philosophy. 2024. *After Tragedy*, Austin, Texas, 16-20 May. https://www.performancephilosophy.org/events/austin-2024/.

Performing Ends. https://performingends.com/.

———. *World Ends Day*. https://performingends.com/world-ends-day.

Phelan, Peggy. 1997. *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*. New York and London: Routledge.

Pinheiro, Flavia. 2023. "7 Abiku Solos for 11 Bacteria Falling Through." *Performance Philosophy* 8 (1): 46–61. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2023.81400.

Prechtel, Martín. 2015. *The Smell of Rain on Dust: Grief and Praise*. Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books.

Rankine, Claudia. 2015. "The Condition of Black Life Is One of Mourning." *New York Times*, 22 June. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/magazine/the-condition-of-black-life-is-one-of-mourning.html.

Ratcliffe, Matthew. 2023. *Grief Worlds: A Study of Emotional Experience*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/13987.001.0001.

Read, Alan. 2020. *The Dark Theatre: A Book about Loss*. New York and London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003004776.

Read, Rupert. 2022. *Why Climate Breakdown Matters*. London: Bloomsbury. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350212053.

Rokem, Freddie. 2017. "Theatrical Immanence: The *Deus Ex Machina* after the Death of God." *Performance Philosophy* 3 (3): 781–93. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2017.33142.

———. 2015. "The Processes of Eavesdropping: Where Tragedy, Comedy and Philosophy Converge." *Performance Philosophy* 1:109–18. https://doi.org/10.21476/PP.2015.1120.

Rolston, Yansie, and Patrick Vernon. 2024. *Black Grief and Healing*: *Why We Need to Talk about Health Inequality, Trauma and Loss*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Shah, Rajni, and Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca, eds. 2021. *Performance Philosophy* 6 (1): *how to think*. https://www.performancephilosophy.org/journal/issue/view/how-to-think.

Slawkowski-Rode, Mikolaj. 2023. *The Meaning of Mourning: Perspectives on Death, Loss, and Grief*. Idaho Falls, ID: Lexington Books. https://doi.org/10.5771/9781666908930.

Turner, Renee Blocker, and Sarah D. Stauffer. 2024. *Disenfranchised Grief: Examining Social, Cultural and Relational Impacts*. New York and London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003292890.

Walsh, Fintan. 2024. *Performing Grief in Pandemic Theatres.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009464826.

West Den Haag. 2024. *Jota Mombaça: A Method/Grieving Time*. https://www.westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/24_09_Jota_Mombaca.

Biographies

Laura Cull Ó Maoilearca is an artist, writer and researcher based in Amsterdam, Netherlands. She holds a joint appointment as Lector (the Dutch title for professors at applied universities) of the Academy of Theatre and Dance at Amsterdam University of the Arts, and as special Professor of Performance Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. Her latest publications are *Interspecies Performance* (2024) co-edited with Florence Fitzgerald-Allsopp for Performance Research Books and the expanded publication project, *An [Interrupted] Bestiary* (2022). Laura is a founding core convener of the Performance Philosophy network and an editor of its journal and book series.

Will Daddario is a performance philosopher, clinical mental health counselor, and clinical addictions specialist at Nova Transformations in Matthews, North Carolina. His forthcoming book is *The Last Laugh: Grief, Death, and The Comic* (Ethics Press, 2026). Previous publications include, with Matthew Goulish, *Pitch and Revelation* (Punctum) and numerous edited anthologies. He is one of the founding members of the Performance Philosophy network.

Rajni Shah has been making performance since 1999. From 2005–2012 they worked with other artists under the names 'Rajni Shah Theatre' and 'Rajni Shah Projects' to create a trilogy of works exploring moments of cultural identity and alienation (*Mr Quiver*, *Dinner with America*, and *Glorious*) and alongside this a series of public interventions exploring gift economies between strangers, entitled *small gifts*. From 2018–2020, after completing a practice-based PhD at Lancaster University, they accepted a Horizon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Concordia University, working with Luis Carlos Sotelo Castro to set up the *Acts of Listening Lab*, a physical location where artists and community members gather to research listening in post-conflict societies. In 2021, Rajni published their first monograph, *Experiments in Listening*, as part of the Performance Philosophy series with Rowman & Littlefield. They are currently a Researcher and Head-Heart of the THIRD programme at DAS Graduate School within the Academy of Theatre and Dance, University of the Arts Amsterdam (AHK).