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# # ANTICIPATORY GRIEF AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE FUTURE

RACHEL BATH

How might a person undergoing anticipatory grief perceive and take up their future? In order to respond to this question, I will first address literature on grief in order to contextualize my discussion of anticipatory grief and to show how a philosophical analysis of the anticipatory structure of this form of grieving addresses a gap in the literature. I will then provide a personal description of my lived experience of anticipatory grief. Following this, I will explicate Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theories of temporality and subjectivity, as well as his concepts of trauma and intentional arc, so that I can apply these theories to my descriptive example in order to reveal how the anticipatory structure of anticipatory grief can inform a subject's personal perception of their future. Ultimately I will argue that anticipatory grief is an experience that has the capacity to traumatize one's structure of personal time. Whether or not this occurs will depend upon how one accomplishes their existence in the taking up of a situation in the present moment. My interpretation of the experience of anticipatory grief reveals how one's embodied perception of the future emerges through their response to their present situation and it is directly interrelated to their bodily openness toward the world and the movement of time.

Grief is a response to loss that can manifest in complicated ways. It is conceptually distinguished from bereavement and mourning, where bereavement is the state of having lost something or someone, and mourning is the outward expression of grief.<sup>1</sup> Grief can present in a variety of unexpected ways, including expressions of anger or detachment. Additionally it cannot

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1 "Grief, mourning, and bereavement," *American Cancer Society*, date accessed March 11, 2015, [http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/emotional\\_sideeffects/griefandloss/coping-with-the-loss-of-a-loved-one-intro-to-grief-mourning-bereavement](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/emotional_sideeffects/griefandloss/coping-with-the-loss-of-a-loved-one-intro-to-grief-mourning-bereavement).

be constrained by social norms that might prescribe what an “appropriate” response to loss is. It has emotive, relational, physiological, and psychological components. While five common stages of the grief experience have been outlined by Swiss psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance,<sup>2</sup> other scholars, including Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Cohen Silver have argued that the assumption that the coping process unfolds in a particular way negatively informs how reactions to loss are evaluated.<sup>3</sup> In short, grief is a deeply idiosyncratic experience and one that cannot be predicated or controlled.

Nonetheless, most of the time when one grieves, they grieve for something or someone that has been lost. In this sense, one grieves for an absent present. One grieves in the now or in the future for a person from the past, a person whose absence haunts the present and will surely be felt in the future. For some people, grief is not experienced directly after the loss, but takes months or even years to manifest. For others, it consumes their lives. Despite common assumptions to the contrary, it fails to wrap up neatly with a clearly demarcated “end.” Generally then, we consider grief to be an experience that follows a death or loss. This assumption was reflected in the secondary literature on the topic of grief up until 1944, when the concept of anticipatory grief was introduced by Erich Lindemann.<sup>4</sup> Lindemann argued that anticipatory grief is a form of grieving that unfolds in advance of loss. This concept has remained somewhat controversial in grief literature: whether or not anticipatory grief exists, its difference from post-loss grief, the way it affects the post-loss mourning process, and whether it is considered a form of mourning or grieving are all topics that populate the literature on anticipatory grief.<sup>5</sup>

There has been a proliferation of studies and articles in the wake of Lindemann’s insight, and his concept has been redefined several times over. For our purposes, we can understand anticipatory grief as a grief experience where one becomes aware of impending loss and as a result grievously anticipates loss before the loss occurs. This is a unique temporal structure com-

2 Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Routledge, 1969).

3 Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Cohen Silver, “The Myths of Coping with Loss,” *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 57 (1989): 3 49-357, Scholars Portal Journals

4 Erich Lindemann, “Symptomatology and management of acute grief,” *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 151, no. 6 (1994): 155-160, Proquest.

5 Rachel Hibberd, Rachel Wamser, and Brian Vandenberg, “Anticipatory Grief,” in *Encyclopedia of Child Behaviour and Development*, edited by Sam Goldstein and Jack A. Naglieri, Springer, 2011.

pared to post-loss grief insofar as it is primarily a grieving in anticipation of loss – that is, it is the grieving for an event that has not yet occurred but which will occur. Yet as a grief experience it can include the experiences of grieving for multiple related losses that precede but still signify the anticipated loss.<sup>6</sup> For example, someone undergoing anticipatory grief towards the impending death of a loved one may experience grief reactions at the loved one’s loss of identity, their loss of hopes and dreams, their loss of vitality, and so forth. In this way, anticipatory grief can involve a series of grieving episodes over losses in the past, present, and future. Anticipatory grief can also present with a combination of affective responses. According to Nancy Cincotta, anticipatory grief is “a range of intensified emotional responses that may include: separation anxiety, existential aloneness, denial, sadness, disappointment, anger, resentment, guilt, exhaustion, and desperation.”<sup>7</sup> While both the person facing their death and their loved ones can experience these symptoms of anticipatory grief, this paper will focus upon the latter experience.

I maintain that anticipatory grief does exist, and that it is different from post-loss grief. As a phenomenon it is different from post-loss grief in at least one significant way: anticipatory grief is a grief essentially characterized by its anticipatory structure, or in other words, it is a form of grieving for a loss not yet undergone but one which is inevitably located in the future. I would also argue that anticipatory grief carries significant existential implications. For one, this form of grieving enables a change in (living) relational dynamics between the griever and the (living) person for whom the griever grieves. For example, when a person learns of a loved one’s terminal diagnosis, they may begin grieving in anticipation, and may find that their relational dynamic shifts. One example of this type of shift concerns the tension that arises between the typical grief process of *decathexis* (separation) and a desire to remain close to the dying person while one still has the time to do so.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, I contend that the temporal structure of anticipatory grief may inform the griever’s own subjectivity, and may in turn effect the griever’s perception of their future. Generally we perceive our own futures in a hazy sort

6 Therese Rando, *Clinical Dimensions of Anticipatory Mourning* (Illinois: Research Press Company, 2000), 29.

7 Dory Hottensen, “Anticipatory Grief in Patients with Cancer,” *Clinical journal of oncology nursing* 14, no.1 (2010): 106.

8 Hibberd et al., “Anticipatory Grief,” 111.

of way; they are open to us only as a range of possibilities, many of which are not even seen by us in advance. Yet in the case of anticipatory grief, this range of possibilities narrows, and what we do perceive becomes structured by one particular possibility – our future becomes known to us in advance as a future marked by loss even though this loss has not yet actualized as the griever’s present.

With all this in mind, my contribution towards the discussion on anticipatory grief will be to philosophically justify this insight regarding its anticipatory structure by way of showing how a griever’s perception of their own future is marked by the experience of anticipatory grief. I argue that the anticipatory temporal structure of anticipatory grief shapes how the griever lives their present toward their future. This is an aspect not yet discussed at length in the literature, except for a dissertation on how future-oriented stories of hope can inform experiences of anticipatory grief undergone by dying individuals.<sup>9</sup> In the case of that study, the grieving persons were also the dying persons, but my paper will endeavor to show how grievers respond to the anticipated death of a loved one in terms of how it informs their perception of their own future as a future marked by loss.

I will now turn my attention to these concerns. In order to reveal how the unique anticipatory structure of anticipatory grief informs how grievers perceive their own future, I will describe my own experience of anticipatory grief. Following this, I will turn to Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of temporality and subjectivity from the *Phenomenology of Perception* in order to frame my experiences in light of the question this paper is concerned with. I will then analyze my experience through Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology in order to reveal how a subject’s perception of their future is affected by the anticipatory structure of pre-loss grieving.

In my case, anticipatory grief is the set of grief reactions that I have been undergoing in the face of my mother’s death and it includes each of the affective responses earlier outlined by Cincotta. Moreover, for me, the experience of anticipatory grief is ever-present in the sense that I can escape neither the inevitability of my mother’s death, nor my experience of being-towards her death. Yet there have been moments in which the grief experience has

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9 Alberto O. Magana, “Hope for Hispanic patients in the context of hospice: The impact of narratives of future oriented stories of hope in the experience of anticipatory grief for hispanic roman catholic hospice patients in the Fort Worth area” (Ph.D. diss., Texas Christian University, 2012).

gripped me most powerfully. I would describe those recurring grief episodes as coming in “waves.” It is one of these episodic “waves” of anticipatory grief that I will describe in this essay. I will describe three stages of this experience: (1) being fully seized by the experience; (2) being released by the experience; and (3) the way that I incorporate the experience and move out of it. I turn now to my personal description.

I was on the bus when the “wave” overcame me. Just the moment before I was sitting still by the window; suddenly I found myself arrested in my stillness and flooded with emotion. I was sitting with my hands resting upon my lap, my legs crossed, my face turned toward the world outside my window. I gazed out the window without seeing the gray blur of buildings and people passing me by. Arrested in my stillness I enclosed myself within, and while I faced the world I was not directed towards the world. Instead, I turned inwards, and the fullness of the presence of the world withdrew. All at once the emotions that were kept at bay by my active participation in worldly activities overwhelmed me: exhaustion, frustration, guilt, sorrow, fear, anxiety, anger. I retreated inwards and hid within my body, but my mind turned towards the inevitable future. I saw what was to come in a confused and hazy way, and I knew that while the truth of it was unimaginable, it was also inevitable. Indeed, it seemed in that moment as though it was the only thing in my life that was inevitable, the only certain possibility: barring my own unpredictable death, my mother would die, and I would live through it. I saw it as my only future. I enacted her death in my mind and I lived through it in a confused yet profoundly disturbing way. I imagined what it would be like, knowing that I do not know the truth of it. Nonetheless my existence was saturated with the intensity of my grief. It was almost as though I had already lost her, except I knew that she was a mere phone call away. I retreated further into my body, away from the conclusion that my mind’s eye so vividly saw. In this retreat my openness to the world was further inhibited, and the phenomena of the world around me grew dimmer.

Eventually, the tide began to ebb away and the experience loosened its grip on me. I was not fully relinquished, however. The bus arrived at my stop, and I got up from my seat and got off the bus. I walked away from the bus towards my apartment. I was still hidden inside myself, but as I walked my attention slowly turned outward. I found myself momentarily distracted by the sunlight which glanced off an ice-covered branch. I heard the motor

of a passing car. And then I actually *looked* at what I was doing, at where I was going, and I listened to the snow crunching under my feet and I smelt a clean, evergreen scent. I was progressively released from my grief as I moved towards my home, but still it haunted me. Even after I had left it behind I could still feel it in the weight of the world upon my shoulders and the hollowness in my gut. I could not escape the inevitability of my grief, nor the inevitability of my mother's death.

Thus concludes my phenomenological description. I will now analyze this description through Merleau-Ponty's theories of subjectivity and temporality, drawing also upon his concepts of "trauma" and "intentional arc." First I will explicate these theories and concepts, and then I will apply them to the example provided by my personal description of lived anticipatory grief. I turn to Merleau-Ponty here because of his unique phenomenological method and his embodied style of philosophy. Though influenced by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty's work in the *Phenomenology of Perception* is innovative and fundamentally revises some of the central concepts of phenomenology as well as phenomenology itself. As a result, Merleau-Ponty distinguishes himself from his peers and his forbearers by describing an existential phenomenology, one dedicated to rediscovering the subject's bodily relationship with the world as it is presented in – and presents – experience. For Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology is descriptive, and attempts to ascertain essences by way of revealing how those essences are discoverable in their facticity.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the phenomenological method operates as a direct description of experience, and has the goal of revealing how the world presents itself to the perception of the human being. As such it is "actually a phenomenology of the world as perceived rather than of the perceiving act."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, all philosophical insights are situated within a worldly context and should not be abstracted from that context, as is the case with scientific investigation.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, all philosophical investigations are performed by an embodied subject who describes what they perceive. Investigation begins with the subject's reflection upon their perceived world, an act supported by the perceiving body that grounds existence by way of a most "ancient pact"<sup>13</sup> es-

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10 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 2014), xx.

11 Herbert Spiegelberg, *The Phenomenological Movement* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), 545.

12 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, xxii.

13 *Ibid.*, 265.

tablished between that body and the world. Embodied perception thus “constitutes the ground level for all knowledge.”<sup>14</sup> If we take Merleau-Ponty at his word, opening up avenues of inquiry begins with reflective description at the level of perception. For this reason, I contend that my description of my lived experience of anticipatory grief provides valuable resources for analysis.

One of the most radical concepts articulated in Merleau-Ponty’s *Phenomenology* is the concept of subjectivity. Against Descartes’s *cogito* as a pure core of consciousness, Merleau-Ponty posits a perceptual consciousness that never transcends its being in the world.<sup>15</sup> This perceptual consciousness is incarnate, and the incarnated body is the source of meaning and intelligibility. Subjectivity therefore is not a pure consciousness, nor a mind, nor a mere body. Rather, subjectivity emerges from the dynamic established between the body and the world, a dynamic that is accomplished through expressive, meaningful, embodied action. Living bodies move: they take up projects, they perform routine and surprising actions, in short they respond to the world which has beckoned to them in such a way as to evoke a particular embodied response. That certain forms of movement make sense in relation to particular situations reveals how actions are founded upon the body’s fundamental relationship with the world.<sup>16</sup> According to Scott L. Marratto, subjective movement “reveals the relation between a subject and its world . . . because subjective movement manifests a subject *in* a situation . . . but it accomplishes this only by occluding ‘*itself*’ as the subjectivity *of* situations.”<sup>17</sup> In this way, that one is a subject is revealed by one’s taking up a situation through purposeful and expressive movements that are aimed toward and anticipate the world and in this way manifest a world. In other words, I pick up this pen and begin to write; in this movement the *I* that writes is both manifested as the one that picks up the pen to write and is hidden behind the picking up of the pen and putting it to work. Each time I perform an act of perception, “I” (as a subject) am invoked, and I am perpetually unfolding in the various movements and actions which accomplish my existence.

Important for our case, subjectivity is not just founded upon the sense of movement, but is also deeply interconnected with time. Strongly put, the

14 Ibid., 544.

15 Donald A. Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 167.

16 Scott L. Marratto “The intercorporeal self: Merleau-Ponty on subjectivity” (Ph.D. diss., University of Guelph, 2010), 56.

17 Ibid., 57-58.

subject and time “communicate internally.”<sup>18</sup> In the *Phenomenology*, Merleau-Ponty’s theory of temporality is deeply Husserlian, though he does additionally cite both Paul Claudel and Heidegger in order to illustrate the interconnection between time, and sense, and meaning.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Immanuel Kant, for whom temporality is the form of inner sense,<sup>20</sup> Merleau-Ponty does not see time as a product of consciousness.<sup>21</sup> For if such were the case, the subject would be a series of unified mental events bound by a temporal order. Nor is time a property of the external world, as if we as subjects were observers who stand outside the flow of time and observe its passage.<sup>22</sup> As is the case throughout the *Phenomenology*, when he explicates his theory of temporality, Merleau-Ponty discourses with two interlocutors, namely the empiricists and intellectualists. In both of these camps, time is understood in the commonsensical way as a “succession of nows,” which misrepresents the notion of a “now,” as well as the manner of time’s passage, and the uniqueness of past and future.<sup>23</sup> For Merleau-Ponty, past and future are not instances of “nows” that are linked together internally or externally. The problem with this commonsense view is that it presupposes a concept of subjectivity: for the empiricist, the subject is outside of time and observes its passage, and for the intellectualist, time is internal to the mind of a subject.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, for Merleau-Ponty, we must analyze time in order to gain access to the concrete structure of subjectivity.<sup>25</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s unique theory of temporality presents time as an ambiguous movement and a dimension of our being immediately tied to perception, subjectivity, and the body.

For Merleau-Ponty, in our field of presence time is revealed as a dimension of our being, where the field of presence is the present field of perceptions bordered by the horizons of immediate past and imminent future.<sup>26</sup> In this moment I am writing, and the horizon of my immediate past involved

18 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 432.

19 Ibid.

20 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 163.

21 Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 169.

22 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 433.

23 Ibid., 435.

24 Shahrzad Ghanooi, “The Self as Rooted in the Ambiguity of Time: Merleau-Ponty on Temporality and Subjectivity,” *Gnosis* 13, no. 1 (2014): 16.

25 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 433.

26 Ibid., 438.

other activities such as preparing the tea that sits to the right of my keyboard, or clearing my desk before I sit down to work. The horizon of my past has “gone by behind” this present, and the horizon of my future, my evening and my night, is “out in front” of this moment.<sup>27</sup> The temporal order and position of my perceptions and experiences is determined by their relation to my present insofar as they were once themselves present, or will eventually be present, experienced in my life as my life, and carried beyond my immediate field of presence. Yet my past is accessible not just as a memory, as a copy of a previous moment. Instead my past is accessible through my ability to reopen my time, where I place myself back at a moment and relive it in my field of presence. This field of presence is the originary experience in which “time and its dimensions appear *in person*,” and where future passes into present and into past.<sup>28</sup> These temporal dimensions are experienced and expressed in my body, not as mental representations, but as the exhausting weight of a long day borne by tired shoulders, or the heavy sigh expressed when I face my equally long evening and night.

It follows that my body, as the origin of multiple intentionalities, including perceptual, temporal, spatial, sexual, and motile intentionalities, sketches out my temporality, providing my body’s actions with meanings and tying me to my surroundings, thus giving rise to the sense that constitutes my subjectivity. My living body moves, it acts, and these expressive actions have meaning for us within the world. These actions occur in a present, and they emerge from a bodily history that provides the sense of our lives. The cohesion of these meaningful expressive actions as they constitute a person’s history and identity forms a subjectivity that establishes its unity through taking up its past experiences into its present. It is because I am always already geared into the world that a certain sense is given to my experiences as they occur in time. And as everything given in my experience has a phenomenal sense, all of my experiences are knitted together through the transition from one present to another.<sup>29</sup> Subjectivity is thus understood *as* time because temporality is the “power that holds [events] together by separating them from each other.”<sup>30</sup>

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., 439.

29 Landes, *The Merleau-Ponty Dictionary*, 171.

30 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 445-446.

The structure of temporality is hence the structure of the subject.<sup>31</sup> Each moment of time offers the totality of all time to the subject. Each present moment holds on the edge of its horizon the immediate past which preceded the moment. This immediate past has its own horizon of immanence, in which it holds its immediate past, and so forth. In this way, the present retains, takes up, and is sustained by all past moments. The same structures hold true for the immediate future. Merleau-Ponty writes:

But along with my immediate past, I also have the horizon of the future that surrounded it; that is, I have my actual present seen as the future of that past. Along with the imminent future, I also have the horizon of the past that will surround it; that is, I have my actual present as the past of that future.<sup>32</sup>

This view of temporality follows from Merleau-Ponty's theory of perception. Just as to perceive is to be entirely in the world and to grasp the whole of the world before the parts, to be in time is to grasp the totality of all time in a present moment. Time is a single phenomenon that unfolds through the consciousness of the subject who is its time. Moreover, for Merleau-Ponty, though we live in the present, we experience this present as a falling-into-the-past that once belonged to the future. The present is, essentially, the passage from future to present to past in a moment. All of time belongs to this passage, and it is all held within the unfolding movement of temporality. Moreover this all belongs to one moment, a moment experienced in the field of presence as a passage that knits together one's experiences as one's own. Hence, the worldly experiences one has are taken up into this and in this movement they are knitted together, constituting the fabric of one's subjectivity.

There are two additional concepts from Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology* that relate to temporality and subjectivity, and which I will make use of in my analysis. The first is the concept of "trauma," and the second is the concept of "intentional arc." I will describe each of these in turn. For Merleau-Ponty, trauma is related to temporality. Indeed a trauma is a present moment that stands out in contrast to others, and which does not fade into the generalizable past.<sup>33</sup> As a present moment, trauma restructures each sub-

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31 Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 445.

32 Ibid., 72.

33 Ibid., 85.

sequent moment. Consequently, when traumatized we experience a loss of our authentic encounter with time.<sup>34</sup> More plainly put, there are events which occur in a person's life and traumatize them. Take, for example, the loss of a limb. If the loss of a limb traumatizes the person who has lost their limb, this person remains trapped in this loss. The perception of the event of the loss may move into the past and be replaced by new perceptions, but this is only the case with regard to the *content* of these perceptions. The form of the perception of the event of loss remains and structures subsequent perceptions.<sup>35</sup> In this way impersonal time continues to pass and we experience the passage of time insofar as we age and we have new perceptions, but *personally* we remain locked up in a traumatized temporal structure, and this structure creates a particular style of being in the world. This traumatized style narrows our power of giving ourselves worlds, and instead we privilege one world: in this case, the world of loss. This world is sustained by the memory of the experience of loss, which is sustained by the memory of having had the memory of loss, and so forth.<sup>36</sup> Thus all new content of experience is experienced within this traumatized structure of personal time, and I no longer live in my authentic time but rather remain locked up in my trauma.

The final concept relevant for my analysis is the concept of the intentional arc. The intentional arc unifies all intentionalities, and creates the reciprocal bond between a subject and world. Merleau-Ponty suggests that the way we perceive, move into, take up, and make sense of the world is grounded affectively upon the way the subject is toward the world. When I take up a situation in my present milieu, I do so by virtue of the "intentional arc" which accomplishes my embodied existence. This intentional arc is therefore a feedback loop between the subject and the world.<sup>37</sup> It is a unified collection of original intentionalities that creates the unity of subjectivity. These original intentionalities are the intentional threads of subjectivity and include perception, motricity, sexuality, and representation.<sup>38</sup> It is the intentional arc that "projects around us our past, our future, our human milieu . . ." <sup>39</sup> by way of creating subjectivity through "the unity of the senses, unity of the senses

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34 Ibid.  
 35 Ibid.  
 36 Ibid.  
 37 Ibid., 137, 160.  
 38 Ibid., 160.  
 39 Ibid., 137.

with intelligence, [and the] unity of sensitivity and motricity.”<sup>40</sup> Our affectivity grounds perception, motricity, and representation upon the arc by orienting us toward the world. Hence it is by virtue of my body’s reciprocal and responsive relationship with the world that I can take up the situation of my present milieu. My existence is thus an accomplishment, one which occurs in each present moment. Indeed, all of existence is re-accomplished with each subsequent moment that takes up its immediate past as a towards-the-future. This is how I make my appearance in the world and take my stance in it.

Having now recognized not only how the structure of temporality informs subjectivity, but also the way that the intentional arc accomplishes individual existence, and the arresting nature of trauma, I am now prepared to examine how the anticipatory structure of anticipatory grief interacts with the griever’s perception of their future as it emerges from their grief-stricken field of presence. There are a number of elements in my description which can be more deeply understood if interpreted through Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology. There is the traumatizing grievable moment that is my mother’s pending demise. There is I, myself, a subject who is my time. There is a futural world anticipated and constituted as the only possible future, and there is the resolving movement that opens up the possibility for incorporating the event of anticipatory grief. I will now analyze each element with relation to the description provided, in order to bring to light the way that this grieving subject perceives their future through the experience of anticipatory grief.

In my experience of anticipatory grief, there is a grievable moment that has the potential to traumatize my experience of the present moment. This grievable moment is my mother’s death. Her death had not yet occurred when I experienced this anticipatory grief. Yet as a moment anticipated, it structured my experience almost as though it had happened. All existence became existence towards this event. The passage of time did not carry me away from it, but rather, towards it. It structured my present as an anticipation of a futural event not-yet-had, but one which will inevitably occur. I knew it would happen, I had known it would happen, and I anticipated and moved into its happening. My awareness of my mother’s death as an event that would eventually transpire, at an ungiven yet certain point in time, traumatically restructured my living experience of each present moment in just this way. All novel content of experience was experienced within this trauma. When I

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40 Ibid.

was gripped by the intense grief episode, I no longer lived in and through my first-person experience of the world. I withdrew from the world, I hid within my body, and I became arrested by the grief which signified my mother's impending death. I enacted in my imagination this death, and I lived through this projected possibility rather than living in the present moment which was originally supported by my body's pact with the world. I turned inwards and faced towards a particular possibility, one privileged possibility: the possibility that I would outlive my mother.

In lieu of a world of possibilities opening up by virtue of my bodily openness toward it, my traumatized structure of personal time privileged a certain world of loss. Accordingly, my style of being became being-towards this loss by virtue of being in a world of loss. My anticipatory grief had "[preserved] through time one of the momentary worlds that I [had] passed through and that I [made] into the form of my entire life."<sup>41</sup> This is a world not yet encountered but one anticipated. It is one where my mother is dead, and it had become real to me the day I learned her prognosis. In the grief episode I found myself abandoned in this world. I was stuck there. I anticipated this world, and in the anticipation it became arrested in my flow of personal time and I with it. There was a narrowing down of possible actions, and other possible worlds were cut off from me. I intended this futural loss and in this way I lived it, even if in a confused sense. I enacted the futural loss in my mind as though I were living it. Yet, at the time of the grief episode, this world was one not yet past – it was yet-to-come.

As each passing present moment moved into the past, the layer of time between the moments when I was seized by my anticipatory grief thickened. During my walk home, I found that my movement "thawed" my arrested personal time. I returned to my active and purposeful body, leaving behind my internal hiding place and turning my awareness out toward the world. This outward turn enabled my reconnection with my authentic time, despite my knowledge that this authentic time would inevitably carry me forth toward the anticipated loss. The world had lost its beckoning power in the moment of anticipatory grief, yet the moment, as all moments must, passed into the past. However the anticipatory structure of the grief did not allow it to fade into the generalizable past. It could not be forgotten. As an immediate past, the experience of my grief lingered on the horizon of my present. The

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41 Ibid., 86.

grief-world still existed in this sense, but it had receded from my intentional awareness. Nevertheless, my present experience was still colored by it. In this way it remained, and it restructured each subsequent moment. All temporal movement became movement towards the death of the beloved other. Even if it could fade away, the structure of temporality denied this possibility: each present grasps after the totality of possible time such that my past always in a sense remains my present.<sup>42</sup> I can never transcend my past. I could not transcend the experience of anticipatory grief. I could not transcend the grief to be anticipated. I could only look back on the anticipatory grief and take it up. I could take it up in this moment and move forward into the natural flow of existence, re-immersing myself in my authentic encounter with time. Yet to do so was to move again towards the actual manifestation of the content of the grief anticipated. There was no escaping it.

When I was gripped by the experience of anticipatory grief, and my existence was saturated with it, I experienced my future as a particular enactment of a world imagined and preserved. I foresaw a world of loss through the affective experience of being-towards my mother's death, and the representational reiteration of this grievable moment. This can be traumatizing – but it needn't be so. After all, asking how I perceive my future through the experience of anticipatory grief is asking how I take up and accomplish my existence in a present-passing-into-future. It is in this way alone that I can perceive and then “take up” my future. Only by living in the present and maintaining contact with the authentic experience of time can I truly take up my future. To do so requires remaining engaged with the world, which in turn requires activity in my relationships with others, expressive actions, and an awareness of the passing of time. If I remain self-enclosed, drawn up within myself, and allow the light of the world to be extinguished, my perceived field of possibilities remains closed down. If this traumatic experience of anticipatory grief solidifies and becomes permanent, I will remain frozen, and my perceptions will remain structured by this trauma. Yet this same body that can allow me to withdraw from the world is what enables me to enter into it once more. This I know from my walk home, the walk that released me from the suffocating clutch of my grief.

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42 Ibid., 87.

Through my bodily movement the phenomenal experience of anticipatory grief must loosen its grip on me. When it does, I can move back out into the world. My body opens up to the authentic experience of time, and I again encounter things, persons, and projects. I can reflect meaningfully upon past experiences of anticipatory grief and take these up in such a way that they direct present actions. My perceived future, once narrowed down and stripped of possibilities, begins to open up anew. As the experience moves out of the immediate past, time thickens between it and my present moment. The trauma has not solidified and I am turned once more towards the world. Despite this, I am aware that I am moving toward the inevitability of my mother's death. Nonetheless, I now see my future as one that cannot be assumed by virtue of past circumstances, nor projected into by virtue of the direct contents of my consciousness. There is no substitute for the actual witnessing of my future. I cannot predict the mark my future will make on me until I live it. In other words, I can only live in direct contact with this present.

The temporal structure of anticipatory grief is essentially anticipatory. It shapes how I, the griever, experience the present moment by positing an inevitable future event that will evoke grief. By virtue of being towards that future, I experience the anticipated grief *in* the now. As a grief pre-loss, anticipatory grief is markedly different from post-loss grief. While a variety of examples were given in this paper which demonstrated this, the primary focus has been on the way that anticipatory grief affected how I have experienced my sense of time, particularly my sense of my future. Because I as the griever am a subject who is my time, and because I am embodied and cannot escape my world, I experience my being-towards this futural loss in the form of a suffering that can be traumatizing. The grievable loss, despite its not-yet character, structures the way that the present moment is experienced, due to each present moment being a present-passing-into-future. As such, I always know that I am moving towards the grievable event, and I know that it could happen at any time; a particular future thus dominates the present in its inevitable certainty.

This particular future is one radically stripped of possibilities, such that the only apparent possibility is the possibility of loss. It is in this way that the anticipatory structure of anticipatory grief informs my perception of my future. Nonetheless, despite the trauma of this experience, I needn't remain trapped by this future. Thanks to my body, I have a reciprocal and responsive

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relationship with the world, and the movement of time and expressive action are the dynamics that accomplish this relationship. If I open myself up to the world through expressive action and movement, this may in turn open up other futural possibilities. This, in turn, may help prevent the solidification of the trauma of the grievable moment. By living in direct contact with the present, I have found that my future can be neither assumed, nor projected into.