medical doctors, psychotherapists, sociologists, theologians, and thanatologists) express their views of "human" dying, using their specialist jargons. The age of effective treatments has created the psychotherapeutic encounters of the dying, but also the overarching biomedical surveillance strategies and technologized hospital death for all consumers. Controlled, sterilized and sanitized death is produced by the medical institutions as the last societal anointing and cosmetic procedure. The wild and meaningful "own death" outside this regulatory circle is barely allowed. Everybody is forced to die decently and systematically, according to the parameters of the disease and the model set forth by the medico-therapeutic organization. The care for the dying is part of institutionalized and bureaucratic-empathic treatment that deprives dying of personal intensity—and of developmental perspectives: the life-long death work, the process of having been born and died—psychologically—several times during one's life, is erased.

The "prosthetic God" that Freud (in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, 1930) already anticipated is becoming serialized in artefacts. The age-old desire to extend and transcend the body and the limited self-experience through technological and communicative tools across space and time is alive. At the core of these manifestations is the illusion of immortality, which excludes the living relation to one's "own death," the psychic task of experientially approaching the personal limit. Dying is projected onto the other scene, with endless re-enactments. Memories of the dead are filed and sealed in the archives to be revisited and replayed through the code name.

Traditionally, we saw the human predicament through a shared sense of mortality. Now, we will never have to face the loss of any objects, but only to interface their re-emerging in engineered artificial life environments. We used to have ambivalent feelings, but they will be obsolete when we get intertwined with and immersed in programmed realities and relations. The global electronic network is the space of apparition where the virtual and the real, the living and the dying, co-emerge and co-evolve.

Virtual reality, image technology, and high-speed computing are no longer only tools. Actually, they constitute our imaginal environments, our resonating fields of memories and larger consciousnesses. Technologies bear the symptoms of disorders and at the same time offer windows or portals through which onlookers or participants are invited into interaction and transformation. With the systems/matrix interface in our brain, we will have access to the designed realms of memory and memorizing. We are on the threshold of the emergence of exciting and terrifying forms of connectivity of people, places, and ideas. In this new reality, what are the dialogical positions and relations of the self? What kind of narrative identities and life transitions emerge on the World Wide Web, in the flux of life our stories?

An old motto maintained that "it is necessary to navigate, but not to live." On the Net, this motto can be restated, "it is necessary to surf, but not to die."

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All That Death

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Death is an ugly affair; there is nothing pleasant about it. It seems impossible to discuss it in a way that suggests hope, uplift, or joy. Yet, as this call for papers suggests, it is an important fact of life that warrants discourse.

My father died on September 10, 2008. He was ninety-four years old and had lived a good life. His slow dance with the Grim Reaper was symbolized by an ugly cancerous growth on his forehead which he refused to have removed the last year of his life. Instead, he wore a Mets baseball cap to hide it from us. At age eighty-seven on October

27, only six weeks later, my mother died without complaint. She had had a bad car accident about fifteen months ago and really never recovered from it. Also, I lost my son two years ago in an accident. He died more quickly and softly than my dad but his death was far more wrenching. He was thirty-five years old and well into a prosperous career in the film industry. Dead and gone at thirty-five. Dead and gone.

The psychological literature on death, from Freud to Kübler-Ross (*On Death ad Dying* [1969]), essentially says that loss must be met head on with a process of mourning so recovery can be eventuated. To prove his point Freud wrote his greatest thesis The Interpretation of Dreams the year following his father's death. What I will discuss in this piece is how artists in film, literature, and music deal with death.

Hanna Segal, in "A Psycho-Analytic Approach to Aesthetics" (see Rita Frankel, ed., *Essential Papers on Object Loss* [1994]) writes that the artists' unique gift is their willingness to experience and then to express the full horror of death by working it through with the tenderness and goodness of aesthetics. She writes that the artist has the unique ability and strength to breathe life into death by having achieved the depressive position. They bring beauty, order, and the life instinct into contact with ugliness, chaos, and the death instinct. Among the numerous examples of this is the songwriter Leonard Cohen's famous line describing death as "sinking into the masterpiece," which is both simple and exquisite, capturing death by fusing it with beauty. T.S. Elliot's opening line in *The Wasteland* reads, "April is the cruelest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land." This perfectly expresses what Segal tried to say. The artist shows us how to pull flowers from the dead; they bring art to death's door.

My favorite line on death comes from the mouth of the beautiful replicant Roy Batty played by Rutger Hauer in *Blade Runner*, a 1982 film based upon a novel by Philip Dick. At its end, Roy Batty sits among the ruins in a future Los Angeles plagued with rain, garbage, and darkness. As he slowly dies he says to Deckard, played by Harrison Ford, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion, I've watched C-Beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhauser Gates. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die." As he dies, a white dove flies out of his hand. Beauty is born from death, which is reminiscent of the first line in *The Wasteland*, where lilacs grow out of the dead earth.

What can we learn from death? What is the epiphany that it tries to bring to us when we lose a parent or a child, and spend our evenings rolling around the living room floor in tears? The way I managed to overcome the loss of my son was to write about it in a series of articles, which proved cathartic. I did the same after 9/11 when I found myself writing about that trauma for ten weeks running. Articulating grief is a very healthy way to mourn and to process the loss. I think to do so publicly is even more beneficial. Isn't that what funerals are—a public display of tears and words?

The thought of those I have lost gets me to look back at my own life in an effort to find some solace there as well. Like the character Roy Batty, I could say, "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Like coming up out of the subway into the daylight in central Paris to see the Left Bank. Or sitting on a boat as it meanders down the Grand Canal in Venice at midnight."

One day when I was sitting with my friend Spalding Gray in a Manhattan restaurant, he told me about how he always liked to play with death. A month prior, he was finishing up a film where he played a man who had attempted suicide. He was made up to look like he had just slashed his wrists. Spalding had a strong compulsion to play a trick on someone, so he excused himself from the set and went to a hotel pharmacy. He went up to a nice old lady behind the counter, raised his bloody wrists, smiled, and said, "Got any Band-aids?" Never have I heard a funnier story. The poor lady in the pharmacy nearly died of shock. Throughout this entire story, I was hysterically laughing. I had a growing fear I could easily drown by inhaling the soup as I laughed so I put the soupspoon down and survived the story. Five years later, Spalding, whose mother had also killed herself, committed suicide by throwing himself into the East River. Always playing with death, and writing about it as well, had an effect on him.

So how did I come to terms with my son's early death? I do not know. Death demands an

epiphany and an answer. As my mother got close to death, she told me she had many chats with the Grim Reaper herself. If I asked, she would tell me what they speak of. "Oh Tommy, don't you know we sometimes talk about you. He asks me why you haven't gone to Yosemite Park, or Barcelona or the South of France yet. He asks, exactly what are you waiting for?" Perhaps she will give me a gift from him. I am sure it would be a wristwatch which I ought to wear every day and think about time—and how it is always running out.

Artists and writers do not deny the cruel fact that life will end someday. They have the courage to realize the ugliness of death and dying, and to weave something around it to make it more beautiful. They have the good fortune to be able to write about it or act it out in public. The Oscar-winning film *All That Jazz* is about the death wish of Bob Fosse (written and directed by Fosse), a womanizing, workaholic choreographer. It made the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross famous. A young Jessica Lange played Death and wore a see-though white silk gown and veil. Fosse, played by Roy Scheider, flirted with her the entire film until in the end she won. Death always wins. *All That Jazz* is another reminder that we will all face the Grim Reaper some day, so take some time to live life, feel joy, and create something beautiful for yourself. Death instincts will win in the end, but the life instincts can win while we are alive to feel them. This is the simple and yet vital role of the all the arts, be that architecture, film, music, literature, or painting. They give us the life instincts to marvel at and to revel in.

If you are not an artist, and do not have an outlet in which to express your grief, you must rely on the opportunity to craft a eulogy at the funeral. Make it long and heartfelt; and bring your tissues up to the podium. This is always cleansing. We can fight death by creating beauty, by witnessing beauty, or by traveling to see beauty. Either way, we are all in a battle of life against death. So I say live in beauty until the end, where finally the Grim Reaper smiles on us and wins the very last match. So win every day, feel joy every day, watch beauty every day. If you do that, it is a life well-lived, and you will be ready to finally sink into the masterpiece.

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Death, Psyche, and Evil

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There is an intrinsic relationship between the fear of mortality, our invention of the sacred, and the nightmarish history of human violence. The apprehension that we cease to exist has spawned myriad visions of afterlives, paradises, reincarnation, and divine transcendence of the flesh. Death has been denied, forgotten, and transformed from fear, despair, and horror into joyous mirages and dreams of soothing repose. Disintegration of the body, the loathing of decay, putrefaction, and defeat by death have been transmuted into divine beatification and cathartic triumph. Death has been a seduction, an erotic longing for oblivion, rebirth, and merger with God, even a satiating absorption of fear into sadistic violence.

There is no paucity of research on what people believe about death. Yet, there is a dearth of psychological study that illumines the immense intricacies of our unconscious fantasies of death and the impact of unconscious dread on our propensities for war, atrocity, and extermination of evil. We may read countless explanations of what sacred doctrine or perverse terrorist misreading inspires some to imagine that apocalyptic martyrdom leads to Paradise, but barely any psychological adumbrations of why someone might feel that he must kill and die to be loved.

We still require deeper explanations for why death can be purification, rebirth, or orgasm. It is not enough to speak literally of death, purity, or evil. When Hindus purify themselves in the fetid waters of the Ganges, one of the most polluted rivers in the world, we must understand that the act is not literal cleansing. Nor is liberation from the corpse when consumed by fire. In this case, the living body in all its functions is an impure prison of the soul, and the holocaust is release