Ashes, Light, Blood
Thirdspace, Ethics and Representation
A journey through grief

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What cannot be told...

An ethics of care - representation and audience response

Every story has many potential tellings - a life is not singular - and cannot (and should not?) be fully known - nor fully told

Dancing between silence and (mis/over) representation - what decisions are made?

Notions of integrity/‘truth’ are slippery
At best a ‘telling’ honours both the lines and the spaces between those lines - creating an architecture by which symbolic representation and performance allows both storyteller and audience to glimpse multiple possibilities of ‘truths’
Hacceity - and Representation

• At your last breath, a blue moon rose - lighting my way down long hospital corridors

• Unbelievable - all that was you - all that constituted our shared lives for 33 years - gone in that breath…

• Your beauty, passion, brilliance, knowledge, wisdom, humour and frailties - a haecceity lost - your body empty…

• Where are you, Morgan?

• Why do I feel able to show this image of you at peace - yet not those last terrible images of your decline?
Space and time - Architects of the soul

- Disruption of past, present and future - all are broken, re-cast, unfamiliar: bereavement opens a space for new imaginings

- Wild and visceral grief - an animal experience of rage, hunger, pain - a new primitivism: I want to cover my body with your ashes, to consume them, to revivify them with blood…

- I cannot eat or sleep - my body begins to change - lighter, burning faster, I feel light as a ghost in the world

- I drive to isolated spaces to howl at the sky - to call you home

- You ‘speak back’ - a huge hawk circles above me again and again, unknown in 11 years of our walks the local park

- I begin to paint - a new work by moonlight each month: the results are a revelation - woman as warrior, earth spirit, primitive, fierce
Grief - Architect of Space

• The unadorned ‘primitive’ self speaks through the symbolic and elemental

• Ashes, blood, light - deconstructed and re-constituted

• Your body - so loved - and so damaged was not ‘you’

• “All is changed, changed utterly: a terrible beauty is born” (Yeats, 1920)
A new beginning

• As the weight of years falls away, and labour builds strength, I begin to dance again, to paint, to write...

• This shell is fragile and temporary “A little cruded milk, Fantastical puff-paste”
  (Webster, IV, ii. 124-5)

• All fear has gone - Freedom from fear removes all restraint on what can be - and what we can become

