

How to Convert Sadness into An Art Form

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Abstract. This paper explores the transformative power of art in processing grief and emotional turmoil. The research hinges on the premise that art serves not only as a creative outlet but also as a profound tool for emotional healing and self-discovery. By integrating personal grief into artistic expressions, individuals can engage in personalized rituals that facilitate coping with complex grief within both personal and professional contexts. This process not only aids in managing intense emotions but also provides comfort and fosters personal growth.

Keywords: grief transformation, artistic expression, therapeutic art

1. Introduction

Integrating grief into art is a multifaceted exploration that provides insight into human emotions and the coping mechanisms employed to cope with grief and loss. At the intersection of attachment and separation, of love and loss. And for nearly as long the anguish and hope uniquely associated with the death of members of the community have found expression in art, from Paleolithic cave paintings to ritual chants, music and dances across cultures, and from religious art in innumerable spiritual traditions to secular poetry and prose. [1] The importance of these studies lies in their ability to deepen our understanding of the human condition, providing therapeutic avenues for individuals to creatively express and process emotions.

The research background lies in the concept of transforming grief into artistic expression, which is deeply rooted in the fields of psychology and therapy. In these disciplines, art is recognized as a potent tool for emotional release and self-discovery. Numerous studies have highlighted that the act of converting emotional turmoil into art can facilitate a form of emotional catharsis, leading to personal growth and improved mental health outcomes. This connection between art and psychology underscores that art transcends mere aesthetic creation; it serves as a mirror reflecting our deepest emotional struggles.

The research question of this paper is how does the process of transforming grief into art affect an individual's emotional health? And how are different art forms (such as painting, writing, or music) used as tools to express and process grief?

The significance of this paper is that it has the potential to expand our understanding of emotional resilience and therapeutic practices. By examining how individuals use art to cope with grief, this research could inform therapeutic practice, suggesting new ways for people to incorporate creative art into their treatment plans. In addition, research into grief in art can contribute to the broader field of art therapy, providing empirical support for its benefits and adding help to a more structured approach in the therapeutic setting.

2. Literature Review

This paper puts forward a new point of view to transform negative emotions into works of art after the commemorative significance and reflection. Personal grief rituals are beneficial in dealing with complicated grief. [2] Engaging in personalized grief rituals can play a pivotal role in navigating the intricate landscape of grieving within a professional context. These tailored practices serve as a valuable and constructive method for comprehensively processing and managing intense emotions, ultimately providing a deep sense of comfort and healing conducive to professional growth and well-being.

And this paper discusses the potential of transforming grief into a memento of an art form, both as a tool for personal reflection and as a way to connect with others. That a new phenomenon is emerging of the contemporary cenotaph in art, erected either as

physical manifestations or digitally on the Internet; that encapsulated within these cenotaphs is a wealth of information concerning the deceased and aspects of artists' unique grieving processes - the symptoms of loss and trauma are actualized in their work. Artists are reconfiguring religious forms of commemoration and producing secular variants. [3] It explores the various aspects of experiencing and expressing grief, the therapeutic benefits of documenting sad moments in life, and the commemorative significance of these acts. Artists express their emotional responses to loss through art, providing a therapeutic outlet and destigmatizing grief. Contemporary cenotaphs focus on universal themes of love, loss, and memory, allowing individuals from all backgrounds to find comfort and connection within these works. This trend reflects societal changes in how we approach death, memory, and the communal experience of mourning, challenging traditional paradigms of memorials.

Tracey Emin's work often delves into her personal experiences, encompassing themes of pain, trauma, and healing. Her renowned piece, "My Bed" (1998), showcases an unmade bed surrounded by a disarrayed collection of personal items. This effectively communicates her journey of transforming depression and negative emotions into art.

Louise Bourgeois is renowned for her large-scale sculptures and installations, which often explore themes of loneliness, jealousy, and betrayal while drawing inspiration from her own childhood experiences. One of her most iconic series is "Maman" (1999), a colossal spider sculpture that serves as a representation of her mother. This imposing artwork symbolizes both strength and protection, yet also evokes feelings of fear and isolation.

And in the realm of literature, many authors have explored the theme of transforming sadness into art in their works. By infusing their writing with personal experiences and emotions, authors can create deeply moving and relatable narratives that resonate with readers.

Patti Smith, "Dedication: Why I Write" reflections in her book *Dedication: Why I Write* reveal the intrinsic relationship between personal experience and creative motivation. Smith often incorporates elements of her life into her art, and she shows how personal narratives can profoundly influence artistic expression. Her emphasis on emotion, especially grief, emphasizes the cathartic effect of writing. Grief is a powerful and transformative emotion that often prompts artists to explore and express complex emotions, providing them with ways to understand and communicate their experiences. This process not only contributes to the artist's personal healing, but also resonates with the audience, who may find comfort and understanding through the shared emotional landscape.

Novel "The Bell Jar" is a poignant example of how personal turmoil and psychological distress can be channeled into art. Plath's deep exploration of mental illness and identity crisis reflects her own struggles, offering a raw and unfiltered perspective on the challenges she faces. This novel, often viewed through the lens of autobiographical fiction, illustrates the transformative power of writing as a form of coping with suffering. Plath's ability to articulate her deep depression and existential malaise not only broadens our understanding of mental health, but also demonstrates the potential of literature as a medium for transforming personal suffering into an art form with universal impact.

When we examine these works through various analytical frameworks such as thematic analysis, psychoanalytic theory, or biographical criticism, we see how profoundly personal experiences shape the clear trajectory of literary creation. Themes of despair, identity, and recovery recur, offering insights into the therapeutic potential of writing. Research methods that combine textual analysis with historical and biographical contexts can further enrich our understanding of how individual circumstances and social pressures influence artistic creation.

Together, the work of Patti Smith and Sylvia Plath demonstrates the complex relationship between an artist's emotional experience and their creative output. Their work offers not only personal catharsis, but a meaningful insight into the human condition, demonstrating the universal relevance and therapeutic value of transforming personal suffering into artistic expression. Both Patti Smith and Sylvia Plath embody the deep connection between an artist's personal experience and their creative output. Their work not only illuminates their inner world, but also contributes to a broader conversation about the nature of artistic expression and its therapeutic potential.

In addition, the article delves into the psychological aspects of dealing with loss and attachment, showing that acknowledging and expressing grief through art can help individuals accept reality and cope with pain more effectively. The article concludes by emphasizing the dual role of art in personal growth and public empathy, showing that while art is generated from negative emotions, it can also provoke thought, provide comfort, and facilitate communication between people.

3. Discussion

3.1. Transforming Sadness into Art Forms Helps to Record Our Life and Recognise, Understand, Analyse Our True Selves

First, there are multiple benefits of transforming sadness into art forms to record life. For example, most of us keep a diary. A diary is a book which has a separate space for each day of the year. You use a diary to write down things you plan to do, or to record what happens in your life day by day.

Diary or any object can be an art form. Every time we imprint memories on an object, we create a space and record a story. By reading the diary and finding some old gadgets, we can relive what happened to us at that time in that space. Whenever we encounter self-doubt and negative emotions, we will know ourselves better by recalling our memories.

Many people complain that they always do not know how to live and always feel bored. They do not understand the meaning of life and do not know how to be a better self. Also, many people say that they do not know themselves and feel disoriented about their future. Some people even hate themselves. They often forget the actions they have taken and the emotions they have experienced, whether positive or negative, significant or trivial. It is essential for our lives and personalities to undergo long-term development and documentation. When individuals neglect to acknowledge their emotions, they will struggle to introspect and evaluate their own lives.

If we document significant moments, we will be surprised to discover the numerous opportunities for self-discovery. Through recording our lives, we can gain a deeper understanding and acceptance of ourselves. This process allows us to recognize our needs at specific junctures and understand our true identity. By knowing ourselves, we are able to lead a more fulfilling life and attain what is necessary for our well-being.

Experiencing significant grief in our lives can suddenly deepen our understanding of ourselves. Grief is the response to loss, particularly to the loss of someone or some living thing that has died, to which a bond or affection was formed. Although conventionally focused on the emotional response to loss, grief also has physical, cognitive, behavioural, social, cultural, spiritual and philosophical dimensions. While the terms are often used interchangeably, bereavement refers to the state of loss, while grief is the reaction to that loss.

Only when we lose important things or people will we be pierced with grief. Also, only when we suffer from grief will we know what we need. Our feelings and thoughts hold particular truth when we are faced with unbearable grief. Sadness inevitably arises when our desires remain unfulfilled, causing us great pain. This experience of sadness is not unique to me; it is a shared sentiment among others as well.

This paper refers to this process as "push". In this paper opinion, it can also be considered a form of performance art. During this process, this paper expresses and releases all of their sadness. When pushing against the wall, the only thing on this paper is mind is to give their best effort, even if they may not succeed. Similarly, when feeling desperate for something, this paper will do everything possible to achieve it, even if obtaining it seems impossible. However, after exhausting all of their strength, this paper begins to reflect on themselves. They start to contemplate why things happened, what steps should be taken next, and whether there is any possibility for change. Through this introspection, this paper gains a better understanding of themselves by analyzing their true needs and reflecting on their mistakes, current situation and experiences. It is important to note that these are simply personal experiences in understanding one true self and should only serve as advice for others.

The process of creating "pushing" helps this paper to know herself. Everyone has their ways to explore their true selves, thus what we need to do is find the way we like and are comfortable with. A friend of mine, Rebecca, chose the art form of taking pictures of his crying to understand himself. He also keeps the photos so that he could recall the reason why he was sad and crying later. This paper talk this is also a good way to record.

Recording our emotions is a journey of self-discovery. Through this process, we gain a clearer understanding of our feelings and are able to avoid blindly following the opinions of others. When we transform our sadness into artwork, it serves as a reminder of the emotions we experienced during that time. This practice can be likened to meditation, providing us with an opportunity for reflection and introspection. We go back to that space again to know ourselves and discover ourselves. When we recall what we have done, we will know our personalities better. Our strengths and weaknesses, as well as our likes and dislikes, our real and false needs will also become vivid and clear. Once we know our true selves, what we need to do next is self-identification, or accept ourselves.

We need to understand ourselves first to obtain a sense of self-identification and accept our strengths and also weaknesses. Only in this way can we capitalise on our full potential and be satisfied with ourselves. The lack of self-identification will exacerbate our sadness. Our shortcomings are also a part of ourselves, we are unique because of our one-of-a-kind shortcomings. We can generously expose our shortcomings by imprinting our traits on our works of art. When we keep watching those works, we will constantly change and adjust ourselves. When our unique shortcomings become part of the works of art, they will become unique too.

3.2. This Kind of Transformation Is Significant Due to Its Memorial Meanings

Now explore the benefits of transforming sadness into art in terms of its commemorative significance. In Chinese, commemoration is defined as a sense of longing for people or things. When we experience sadness due to the loss of something or someone, we often make efforts to recover what has been lost. However, when this proves impossible, all we can do is cherish the memories, mourn the loss, and come to terms with reality. Because the lost entity holds great importance to us, it is customary for us to hold a memorial ceremony in remembrance.

When some events that cause sadness occur, especially when we cannot solve those saddening situations, we may hold some ceremonies to commemorate the lost things or express the sadness. We may make some souvenirs to place our emotions. For example, when a person we cherish dies, the sadness caused by this incident must be beyond our solution. What will we do at this time? It is common for people to hold funerals.

First, this paper believes a funeral is an occasion where people can reasonably and freely vent their sadness while being understood, forgiven, sympathised and cared for by others. In this paper opinion, it may be regarded as a memorial ceremony, an "art form", or performance art.

After we hold the memorial ceremony-"funeral", we will make some objects to continue our thoughts, which is called souvenir-"tombstone". "I believe that articles can be used as containers for our nostalgia." When we lose our cherished person, we will continue to miss him/her. But the person will not be alive again and we cannot make our thoughts disappear, so we made a container for nostalgia and the tombstone was created. "Objects are products or containers of stories." Therefore, we have given it a certain meaning to replace the lost ones and place our love and thoughts. The tombstone provides a kind of emotional protection and companionship, so that we will not feel that everything about the person has disappeared. Therefore, to some extent, tombstones are also "souvenirs" or monuments. When we are sad and helpless, we need something to stabilise and relieve our emotions. This is why we need souvenirs.

When people release their grief to the monument, they should then learn to admit that things are irreversible and that they must get back to a rational life from the immersion in sadness. Many people cannot accept the fact that they have lost something, and they have an attachment to the lost: Within attachment theory, attachment means an affectional bond or tie between an individual and an attachment figure (usually a caregiver). [4]

When we experience the loss of things to which we are emotionally attached, we often find ourselves confronted with uncomfortable negative emotions such as uneasiness, boredom, anger, anxiety, and fear. It is during these challenging times that individuals may resort to self-deception as a coping mechanism. The susceptibility of humans to self-deception has been theorized to stem from emotional attachments to beliefs, which in some cases may be irrational.

If individuals consistently engage in self-deception and irrationality, it will inevitably lead to difficulties for both themselves and others. The root cause of self-deception lies in the unwillingness of individuals to confront the negative emotions that arise from losing attachment. For instance, a person experiencing unrequited love may deceive themselves into believing that the relationship has not ended or that they are still loved. However, this form of self-deception only serves to exacerbate their suffering.

Sooner or later, we must face reality. The memorial ceremony sometimes represents a farewell event, although many people struggle to accept the departure of cherished individuals. Thus, we hold funerals, during which we acknowledge our sadness. In essence, we admit that we can no longer have our beloved ones with us. This serves as a method for us to accept the reality of loss rationally, ceasing self-deception, and preparing ourselves for the pain. When we confront the truth, we become rational and begin to contemplate how to live in the future, rather than escaping or dwelling in illusions.

When we experience sadness due to a loss, we often create souvenirs as a source of comfort. This ultimately signifies that not everything has vanished. When we long for someone or something, we find solace in looking at these souvenirs for a period of time.

3.3. A Brief Method of Transformation Will Be Illustrated

How can we turn sadness into an art form? First, we can collect our emotions and then analyse them. Sadness may cause many other negative emotions, such as uneasiness, fear, anger, jealousy, helplessness, and grievance. We can first find out which emotion occupies the dominant position, and then use it as the main creative material and choose the creative method. For example, we can first discuss how to create with pigments. If anger prevails, we can choose red to express it. To me, anger means out of control and disorder. So, I will express it in a fast-paced and powerful way in creation. I may pour red paint on the canvas. Of course, if this paper angry to the extreme, this paper will step on red and black paint with my shoes and then stamp on the picture. Then, this paper will think about any other emotions and express them in different forms. Another example is grievance, this paper will choose to express it with blue. This paper will first analyse my character and reflect on what is grievance to me. Grievance, to me, is a kind of unspeakable sadness, entanglement, and being misunderstood while being eager to be understood. After my analysis, this paper will choose to express it in an appropriate way, that is, to paint with hands with blue paint on and draw many curves.

If another art form, such as sculpture, is utilized to express anger, one can take physical action on the medium in hand to release their emotions. This method is far more constructive than engaging in arguments or directing our anger towards others or ourselves.

Certainly, individuals have the option to choose different artistic forms aside from painting or sculpture to convey various emotions. These may include music, literature, and photography.

When we turn negative emotions into works of art, we also endow negative emotions with some value. Many people believe that negative emotions are bad. However, most of the time, it is negative emotions that influence us because life itself is complex and we cannot completely eliminate negative emotions. It is unrealistic for someone to claim that they experience no negative emotions. Because they may unconsciously suppress their negative emotions, and avoiding feeling these negative emotions will cause greater harm to their physical and mental health. Therefore, when we convert negative emotions into works of art and record them, we can think and analyse our negative emotions again, and this paper believe that when certain emotions in our hearts dominate us, our eyes and brains will also guide us to find objects or scenery related to emotions. Sometimes this paper believe that our works will know us better than we do, because those works express things that have already appeared in our hearts. We create works of art to help us know ourselves better, achieve reconciliation with ourselves, and then live a better life.

3.4. Empathy and the Feeling of Being Understood Can Eliminate Loneliness

After transforming sadness into various art forms, the emotions and strength we have infused into them will resonate with others. The audience will feel reassured and understood as they can relate to the artwork. Therefore, this paper conducted interviews and research on artworks that provide assurance and relief from sadness.

My friend Max said, "At that time, I listened to a lot of songs about breaking up. I also watched many struggling and painful works of art." Another friend Li said, "When I am sad, I will talk with people who also suffer from sadness, as chatting with happy people can only make me more painful." This paper tried to analyse their thoughts and find out the reason why they want to look for works that have a similar vibe and people who share similar feelings?

Oftentimes we think that no one understands us, and no one can share our pain. Ourselves are the only ones to bear it. When we are sad and painful, we prefer to believe that others are no able to relate. We need someone who has the same experience as us so that they can understand us. Otherwise, we hope that they can try to understand by assuming that they have been through the same thing. When we are inflicted by sadness, we need to be understood and know that we are not the only ones struggling with pain.

"Loneliness is an unpleasant emotional response to perceived isolation. It is also described as social pain—a psychological mechanism that motivates individuals to seek social connections. Loneliness is often associated with an unwanted lack of connection and intimacy." When we are in pain, we want to vent our emotions. However, there are always all kinds of worries, fears preventing us from doing so. It is been tacitly agreed that it is inappropriate to shout, to express anger, and to smoke and drink. Many people only see our behaviour, while they do not know the reason why we did that. Their criticism will only make us more irritated and rebellious, as they didn't even try to understand why we did it. Therefore, our sense of loneliness largely arises from the absence of close relationships, effective communication, and mutual understanding.

This paper inquired of Li and Max why they do not engage in communication with others. They explained that they feel misunderstood by many people, making it challenging for them to gather the strength to interact with others when they are feeling down. However, they are willing to converse with individuals who share their emotions or turn to artistic expressions that convey similar feelings. Thus, everyone needs to be understood. When we are understood, our inappropriate behaviour can also be explained. People will see that our inappropriate behaviour comes from nowhere. Everyone could be negative sometimes. They may shout, get angry, or not behave. When others tell us that it is wrong to do so, artists imprint these suppressed emotions in their works. As we see those works of art, we seem to understand that negative emotions are universal and everyone may go through them. It is not this paper vulnerable, or this paper only one who sometimes loses control, loses temper, and quarrel. Knowing that will calm our mood. Thus, human beings need to be understood. That is also why Max wants to listen to songs about a breakup, and why Li wants to chat with sad people. They were understood and not alone at that moment.

And we need to communicate. Without communication, we will feel lonely and depressed. People is pain needs to be answered and cared about. Most of the time those pains cannot be solved, all we can do is express those pains and expect others to comfort us. When someone has the same experience as you, they will know how to solace and enlighten you. They will understand your pain and help you better, or they will share their experiences with you to give you reasonable advice.

Therefore, after we convert sadness into works of art, we can help others and communicate with them through those works. We become emotionally stable when we see people experiencing similar negative emotions in movies, as we realize they also lose their temper or cry when facing such situations. This similarity makes us feel understood and facilitates spiritual communication. Communication plays a crucial role in properly releasing negative emotions, as it has a cathartic effect. When we encounter works of art that resonate with our emotions, we feel a sense of being understood. Similarly, when we channel our sadness into artistic expression, it allows others to feel understood when they engage with these works. Consequently, this can help alleviate feelings of loneliness.

If we collect our negative emotions and turn them into art forms, such as songs, movies, and stories, we can help more people and spiritually communicate with them. Also, they will feel understood and know that their pains are not wrong. After all, we all experience pains that we cannot solve.

The thing is comfort and supports those stuck in negativity.

3.5. The Reasons for the Attractiveness of Works of Art Laced with Sadness Will Be Explored

The works of art born in sadness, to some extent, will be more attractive than other types of works of art. Why is tragic art more attractive?

“Tragedy will bring the pleasure of sublimity and magnificence. When we witness tragic events, we will realise, more clearly than ever, that life is a nightmare. We need to wake up from it. We will never be ultimately satisfied with the world in our life. It is not worth being obsessed with the material world. The essence of tragedy leads us to be desperate and eliminate our desire. The goal of tragedy is always killing our desires and hopes for survival.” [5]

The most fundamental physiological and psychological need of human beings is survival. Individuals are primarily concerned with their own survival, striving to live a better life while avoiding potential threats to their existence. Topics related to life garner significant attention from people, as nearly all tragedies are linked to the preservation of human life. The greatest tragedy is the suffering and death of an individual, making issues surrounding human existence central to public focus.

Love plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals, contributing to their strength and happiness. Furthermore, love is essential for the proliferation of human beings and is closely linked to their survival and development. Consequently, the instinctive desire for love cannot be controlled or suppressed.

Many tragic works are inspired by love stories, giving rise to a series of narratives. People innate inclination towards love draws their attention to such stories, especially those infused with sorrowful emotions that are more likely to evoke feelings of regret, sympathy, and resonance. Consequently, when we transform the sadness stemming from love into artistic creations, we attract greater attention from others and unconsciously compel them to contemplate the significance of the works. These characteristics of works steeped in sadness have the ability to captivate a larger audience.

People tend to anticipate a happy ending, yet they are also deeply drawn to tragedy. When experiencing tragedy, driven by perfectionism, individuals often struggle to accept its unresolved and sorrowful conclusion. At times, our fixation on a happy ending causes the tragedy to linger in our minds for an extended period, which explains why tragedy can be impactful. Some individuals define tragedy as the portrayal of the destruction of beautiful things. Through the trials and tribulations of characters in tragedy, people develop feelings of sympathy and compassion towards them, prompting reflection on how to prevent such tragedies from occurring.

Art is thought-provoking. The appeal of Shakespeare tragic works lies in his adept exploration of human nature, stimulating critical thinking and integrating emotions and reason within the context of tragedy. All of Shakespeare renowned tragic works share a common theme: the protagonists are courtiers or powerful figures within feudal dynasties, and their pursuit of power and desire for the throne ultimately leads to tragedy. However, it is important to recognize that desire, greed, and ambition are inherent aspects of human nature. It is our response to these instincts that determines the outcome. I particularly admire the thought-provoking nature of Shakespeare works. In his tragic works, those dead people are not the most pathetic or poor characters, but those who are alive and full of loneliness are the most miserable ones. They live in this world with sin and loneliness. This is the essence of tragedy, which makes us think when we feel sad.

When creating tragedy, we can capitalise on audience sympathy to transform our emotions into tragedy art. We must skillfully incorporate our negative emotions into our work in order to evoke similar feelings in the audience. It is also important to heighten these negative emotions to elicit sympathy and understanding from the audience. This process involves delving into the characters' negativity and establishing a connection with the audience to create a sense of tragedy. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that the death of characters does not necessarily mark the end of a tragedy, and not all instances of destruction are inherently tragic. A truly impactful tragic artwork should be emotionally stirring and garner empathy from its viewers.

4. Conclusion

We have developed a new interpretation of the relationship between sadness and art, offering a fresh perspective on how to express and find artistic value in the process of venting it. As an enthusiast of art, I often contemplate ways to enhance its appeal. I believe that impactful artworks should evoke emotions and provoke thoughts. Most of the time, I see art as inseparable from life. We are not creating art; rather, we are expressing our emotions and thoughts through it.

When exploring sadness, I realized that negative emotions can have a powerful impact. When people experience trauma, they may retreat into self-protection and isolate themselves from the world. However, individuals often find renewal in times of destruction, discovering a new sense of self and harnessing their inner strength to emerge stronger – much like a phoenix rising from ashes.

Creating artworks is a form of self-healing – it allows us to slow down amidst the fast pace of life, connect with our emotions, introspect, enter our own world, and heal ourselves. Expressing sadness through art is also a process of contemplation. Even when we are caught up in busyness or avoidance towards grief, it is important to set aside time for ourselves – carefully acknowledging our sorrow, confronting it head-on, and embracing our complete selves.

Sadness may feel overwhelming at times like a destructive hurricane; however, we can always rediscover our true selves within the calm center of the storm."

The truth and method this paper mentioned are superficial. This paper not a supporter of sadness or sad artworks. This paper just hope that people can find an outlet when they encounter confusion and troubles, and do not indulge themselves and be defeated by sadness. Many philosophers believe that only after experiencing sadness can we know what true happiness is. The best individuals and nations in history have experienced their sad moments before they become great and complete. It is those negative emotions that make them complete.

Therefore, in general, we do not appreciate the occurrence of sadness. We attach importance to our own feelings and how to deal with them if sadness occurs. Sadness is worthless, but we admit that it gives us some strength, which makes us self-examine the process and bring value to the art forms that can be created.

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