

Turning Pain, Loss and Trauma into Art: David Bowie's *BlackStar* and *Lazarus*, and Nick Cave's *Skeleton Tree* and *One More Time with Feeling*

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"Perhaps it's good for one to suffer. Can an artist do anything if he's happy?
Would he ever want to do anything?
What is art, after all, but a protest against the horrible inclemency of life?"
ALDOUS HUXLEY¹

"Memory is, achingly, the only relation we can have with the dead."
SUSAN SONTAG²

When one considers the topics of pain, loss and trauma, in terms of criticism, at least three perspectives will be encountered: one related to war, retreating, at first, to silence, which best translates the inability to find a suitable language to convey the terror, profusely analysed by George Steiner; another associated with the power of images and the return to silence, or screaming, the perspective advanced by Susan Sontag when considering whether images fulfil their role of letting us learn through seeing, even though sometimes pictures, or films, are "staged" to pass on a specific message; and the third, the psycho-analysis path which tries to fight the pain, loss, and trauma through multiple approaches, from reliving it in order to forget it, to other means, such as advising to use pain as a creative driving force.

Our lives, constantly devastated by wars, cancer, AIDS, and other multiple ailments, has undertaken a series of proactive tactics to defeat the Pain, Loss and Trauma (PLT) that afflicts our minds. The fact is that living in a problem-solving driven society makes it almost impossible to experience any of these treatments without social media. Inspirational quotes, blogs, Ted Talks,

¹ HUXLEY, Aldous. *Antic Hay*. Vintage, 2008, p. 81.

² SONTAG, Susan: *Regarding the Pain of Others*, p. 103.



EVERYTHING IS A STORY

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