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The Art of Death of the Author/Father in Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá’s *Daytripper*

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## Abstract

This paper will be revolving around Fábio Moon and Gabriel Bá's creative endeavors to bridge the gap between life and death through employing art and writing in order to delineate and enact one's corporeal limitations. In particular, I will be reading Moon and Bá's narrative protagonist's strife to attain immortality through his art as the author and illustrator's subtle attempt to partly challenge the belief that the artistic legacy one leaves behind can somehow defy or subvert their mortal constraints. The aforementioned stance stems from "a general reluctance in our society to acknowledge the presence and inevitability of death" (Faunce & Fulton 206) rendering one's inescapable demise a taboo subject within the Western world (Gorer 49) and urging Sigmund Freud to talk about the incapability of the human subconscious to grasp the concept of mortality (qtd. in Gifford 639). Building upon the latter, I will be exploring Brás de Oliva Domingos's complex relationship with his father who is an acclaimed artistic himself and constitutes not only the most influential figure in Brás's life but also his greatest antagonist. Therefore, throughout this essay, I will be locating those instances in which Brás not only attempts to evade being compared to his father by achieving greater artistic accomplishments than he did but also to defy death by generating an artistic legacy that is too great to be forgotten and thus is able to transcend human temporality. However, I will be arguing that this vision of Brás evaporated the moment he was informed of his father's death and realized the futility of his efforts. When Brás loses his father, he simultaneously loses the driving force behind his writing. However, he does not forsake his art, but he rather employs it so as to navigate through grief and guilt, as he is not only mourning Benito de Oliva Domingos but also all those relationships he was emotionally unavailable to while trying to frantically antagonize his father. Thus, he is finally able to pursue his creative aspirations in a more authentic way by expressing who he truly is while forgiving Benito; a task the reader will later have to perform towards Brás himself. In other words, the reader will eventually lose Brás/the narrator/author in the same way Brás lost Benito/the author. Fatherhood and authorship are two inseparable notions in Moon and Bá's graphic novel; by placing the reader in the position of the son who is about to lose his author/father (a plethora of times in the case of Brás who suffers multiple deaths within the novel), Moon and Bá ascribe a Barthesian kind of autonomy to their readers who will have to learn how to assign their own meaning upon *Daytripper* rather than "decipher" the message that the authors wished to convey (Barthes 5) since "the life [and artwork they have] built with such effort ... has come to the point it no longer belongs to [them]" (Moon & Bá 247).

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## 1. Introduction

Since the publications of the first graphic novels in Europe and America, namely Rodolphe Töpffer's *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck* in 1837 and Richard Fenton Outcault's *The Yellow Kid* in 1895, a plethora of literary scholars have been preoccupied with providing a definition for this rather unconventional mode of narrative. In particular, Henry John Praat argues that comics constitute a hybrid art form which implement both literary and visual elements into their narrative space, while placing emphasis on their pictorial aspect which renders them distinctive from other modes of artistic creation (107). However, as Katherine Roeder notes, the pictorial dimension embedded in graphic novels has led a lot of critics to believe that the comic medium appeals exclusively to children and teenagers (6). On top of that, Hilary Chute remarks that graphic novels are often mistakenly perceived as a lowbrow literary genre (452). Praat also voices similar concerns to Chute's, when he associates the lack of philosophical engagement and active research upon comics with their supposedly intellectually undemanding nature. Nevertheless, recent research has been proven more fruitful not only in determining the essential nature of comics, but also in acknowledging their social and political contribution and their ability to tackle both secular and spiritual issues.

To begin with, both Robert Harvey and David Carrier shape their definitions of graphic novels around their sequential character, with Carrier also foregrounding the significance of speech balloons within the narrative. Building upon the prominence of sequential order in graphic narrative, Scott McCloud assigns comics the following definition: "juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or produce an aesthetic response to the viewer" (9).

Moreover, McCloud claims that we should not treat comics as simply the “hybrid of the graphic arts and prose fiction [since what] happens between these panels is a kind of magic only comics can create” (92). Therefore, McCloud invites us to pay close attention not only to what we see/read within a graphic novel, but also to what can be inferred from the blank, in-between spaces that separate one panel from another, since those spaces often bear a meaning of their own. Chute comments the following on the usage of those gaps:

Comics moves forward in time through the space of the page, through its progressive counter point of presence and absence: packed panels (also called frames) alternating with gutters (empty space). Highly textured in its narrative scaffolding, comics doesn't blend the visual and the verbal---or use one simply to illustrate the other---but is rather prone to present the two nonsynchronously; a reader of comics not only fills in the gaps between panels but also works with the often disjunctive back-and-forth of *reading* and *looking for* meaning (452).

As a result, Chute dismantles the claim that reading a graphic novel is equivalent to just staring at a number of pictures by rendering the former process a much more complex one. Therefore, she invites us to be mindful of the distinction between the action of looking at a visual or textual image and looking for the meaning it may try to convey. Furthermore, as Lisa Zunshine argues, human beings are addicted to observing one another and delving into each other’s mental states. In particular, Zunshine avers that we are part of “a culture of greedy mind readers” (116) who cannot help but experience the pervasive need to have constant access to the thoughts and feelings of our fellow humans. Zunshine believes that this specific type of culture gives birth to the phenomenon that she calls “sociocognitive complexity”, which she defines as “the depiction of a mental state embedded within another mental state”, an example to which would be “contemplating a mental state of one character who is

aware of the mental state of another character” (119). For Zunshine, a graphic novel constitutes a fertile ground upon which sociocognitive complexity can flourish due to the blending of the visual and the textual element that deem the characters within the comic more accessible to the readers. She concludes that:

In other words, greedy mind-readers that we are, we read both fiction and memoir for people’s mental states. Graphic narratives cater to our appetite by exploring medium-specific ways of portraying sociocognitive complexity. By medium-specific I mean that now it is the visual style or a combination of visual and verbal styles that brings in complex mental states (133).

Even if Zunshine’s ideas could initially come across as an obsessive preoccupation with what people around us are thinking, the process she is describing stems from what Jesse Bering perceives as our fundamental human incapability to just “turn off [our] mind-reading skills even if [we] want to”. He also notes that “all human actions are forevermore perceived to be the products of unobservable mental states, and every behavior, therefore, is subject to intense sociocognitive scrutiny” (qtd. in Zunshine 116). This way, Bering and Zunshine consider our yearning for mental states to decode, an intrinsic part of the state of being human. I have already mentioned that it is easier for us to satisfy our need of decoding complex messages and gaining access to the minds and psyches of literary characters within graphic novels. This occurs because graphic novels utilize both text and images and thus can contain a greater number of embedded clues and hidden messages that need deciphering within their narrative. This mode of observing discreet pieces of information that may be incorporated into the narrative can be proven useful when encountering comics that deal with the unfolding of traumatic events. As Gillian Whitlock avers, comics can create a universal vocabulary through which people across cultures and generations can process trauma. In addition, according to Edward Said, graphic novels “seemed to

say what couldn't otherwise be said, perhaps what wasn't permitted to be said or imagined, defying the ordinary processes of thought, which are policed, shaped and re-shaped by all sorts of pedagogical as well as ideological pressures. . . . I felt that comics freed me to think and imagine and see differently (ii)”.

Therefore, as both Whitlock and Said argue, comics can combine their visual and textual dimensions in order to discuss traumatic events during periods of extreme censorship. As a result, trauma can be perpetuated through inexpressibility across cultures and generations. However, the comic medium can constitute a safe space within which traumatic events can be articulated and portrayed in order for us to identify the source of our pain so as to put an end to the vicious cycle of trauma and allow ourselves to attain healing. Building upon the latter, Marianne Hirsch draws from Martha Minow’s ideas in order to advocate not for the need to look for someone to blame for the origin of our trauma, but rather to encourage us to respond to traumatic events rather than being passive witness to them and stand in solidarity when a violent act occurs (173). Therefore, us being “greedy mind readers” may prove to be beneficial when dealing with a graphic novel that tackles a traumatic incident in the sense that we will have the opportunity to delve into the source of trauma and fight so as for history not to repeat itself and this type of pain not to be inflicted again upon our fellow humans. As a result, approaching trauma through comics can assist us in visualizing the unimaginable and putting the unspeakable into words. Only by doing so, we will overcome what Hirsch has described as “[living] in times shaped by the fearful and even paranoid treatment of images” (qtd in Whitlock 970) since we do not have to witness violence for the sake of violence, but in order to reflect upon the causes of that violence and to wonder how we could prevent something similar from occurring in the future. In the case of death-related anxieties

and traumatic responses to the loss of loved ones or even to the realization that one day our lives will come to an end

For these reasons, in this paper, I will be tackling the theme of death in Fabio Moon and Gabriel Bá's *Daytripper* and its association with writing and fatherhood by focusing mostly on the relationship between Brás de Oliva Domingos, an obituary writer, and his father Benedito, a critically acclaimed author. Also, I will be examining the function of this universal vocabulary of trauma that Whitlock discussed about in order for me to observe how such a shared and collective experience such as death can have both very similar and different manifestations and translations among humans. Lastly, I will be connecting Brás' eagerness to avoid repeating past mistakes and learn how to respond to trauma, with how one can heal what Michael Diamond has called "the father wound" by not allowing the same amount of trauma stemming from Benedito's past mistakes to affect negatively the relationship with his own son. By utilizing a number of literary sources that seem to have constituted the sources of inspiration behind *Daytripper*, I will be establishing a literary genealogy both within and outside the text in order to question if there are the limits to authorship and creative expression and to what extent they reflect upon not only the literary achievements of classical authors, but also the relationship with our own parents who still constitute an authority figure within the family unit, whether they are authors similarly to Brás's father or not. In the end, I will be preoccupied with what happens when this figure of authority, inspiration and potential jealousy faces their inevitable demise and how grief operates in such a case of extreme antagonism within the family.

## **2. Review of Death-Related Literature**

As I have already mentioned, one of the main aims of this paper will be to explore how the linkage between death and artistic creation can result in rendering physical demise something inherently attached to the human condition, which, however, can yield a variety of trauma responses among humans. In order for us not to become ensnared by the hardships we face in our daily lives and the looming presence of our unavoidable deaths, we need to accept the fact that even if our lives will inevitably come to an end, we still have the opportunity of living them to the fullest extent and render them as meaningful as possible. On top of that, as King et al. remark: “[lives] may be experienced as meaningful when they are felt to have significance beyond the trivial or momentary, to have purpose, or to have a coherence that transcends chaos” (180). Eric Klinger also notes on the concept of a meaningful life as “something very subjective, a pervasive quality of a person’s inner life. It is experienced both as ideas and as emotions. It is clear, then, that when we ask about the meaningfulness of someone’s life we are asking about the qualities of his or her inner experience” (10). Finally, Joshua Hicks and Laura King draw from Paul and Fry to underscore that ascribing personal meaning onto life is of high importance as it assists in our survival and emotional and material prosperity (xvii). However, Hicks and King underscore the unexpected absence of a “consensus definition of meaning in life” (641). On top of that, I will be later arguing that meaning in life cannot only be located in the specific time period during which we are alive, but in our death as well. As a result, our death should not be perceived as an inevitable tragedy, but rather as a full stop to the last chapter of our lives after which we will be able to have our life achievements assessed by those who were either emotionally attached to us or familiar with our professional achievements. In other words, after a person’s passing, their identity

boils down to the traits that deemed them distinguishable from other humans. One's death can also convey a plethora of different meanings, as for their loved ones, they may have constituted a caring spouse, a loving parental figure or a devoted professional, whereas for some people that were not particularly close with the individual that passed away their perception of who the deceased was may be entirely antithetic. However, these perceptions could be prone to change if one died at an alternative time period in their lives than the one they actually did. Therefore, through this multiple manifestations of death, *Daytripper* aims to point out that death gives meaning to life similarly to the way life ascribes meaning to death.

Building upon the latter, I will be delving into Moon and Bá employment of the comic medium in their creative endeavor of tackling so perplexed a topic such as death, in order to deem it more accessible and visible to their readers who may struggle to come to terms with their own corporeality. As Scott McCloud avers in *Understanding Comics*, embedding pictorial elements into the narrative constitutes a way of decoding "RECEIVED information. We need no formal education to "get the message". The message is instantaneous". On the contrary, words for McCloud constitute "PERCEIVED information" which entail the use of "specialized knowledge" needed to decipher each abstract linguistic symbol (49). Therefore, the blending of "perceived" and "received" information in *Daytripper's* narrative scene aims at thoroughly conveying an extremely hard concept to grasp, such as death, through not only via forsaking the Western tendency of concealing death, but also through employing it as a leitmotif around which the story revolves. Also, these modes of perceiving and receiving information through the comic medium could be considered a manifestation of the universal vocabulary of graphic novels that Zunshine and Bering had been advocating for.

However, if we return to Edward Said's notion of censorship that can be transcended to art, we have to acknowledge the plethora of theorists that have underscored the reluctance of Western societies to acknowledge death as an integral component of life. As Sigmund Freud explains:

Our attitude [towards death] had not been a sincere one. To listen to us we were, of course, prepared to maintain that death is the necessary termination of life, that everyone of us owes nature his death and must be prepared to pay his debt, in short, that death was natural, undeniable, and inevitable. In practice we were accustomed to act as if matters were quite different. We have shown an unmistakable tendency to put death aside, to eliminate it from life. We attempted to hush it up, in fact, we have the proverb: to think of something as of death. Of course we meant our own death. *We cannot, indeed, imagine our own death*; whenever we try to do so we find that we survive ourselves as spectators. The school of psychoanalysis could thus assert that at bottom no one believes in his own death, which amounts to saying: in the unconscious every one of us is convinced of his immortality (emphasis added 20).

On top of that, Philippe Aries argues that medicalisation, commodification, technologisation, secularisation and individualization in Western societies have resulted in removing death from the public view (qtd. in Nagy 4). Hence, this constant preoccupation with sugarcoating the death process has led to it being subconsciously perceived as the ultimate Achilles' heel of humanity rather than the natural outcome of our lives; a tragedy that cannot be prevented no matter how much we struggle to defeat death. However, as Jean Baudrillard remarks, what we do not realize is that by suppressing death, we do recognize its existence to a certain extent and allow it to acquire even greater dimensions and keep haunting our lives. Building upon the latter, Tony Walter notes that "death is a very badly kept secret; such an unmentionable topic that there are over 650 books now in print asserting that we are ignoring the subject" (294).

On the other hand, Allan Kellehear perceives the process of dying as a uniting factor between humans that constitutes “a social relationship” (1534). However, he argues that “it not only dying that is a social relationship but also death. It is NOT the case that death kills identity whatever legal, financial and moral changes are prompted by these bodily change s... Both the social commitments and emotional attachments rarely evaporate at death” (1540). As a result, Kellehear may acknowledge the physical termination of a person’s presence upon the earth, yet he argues that though death, the connective bonds between the dying individual and the society they are a part of, are transformed and even reinforced after their passing. He also notes, that bereaved individuals often take part in ritualistic practices, such communicating with the dead through visions, dreams, séances, mediums or psychomanteum, in order to preserve their relationship with their dead and the interactions that occur between them are believed to be “reciprocal”. He elaborated on how this element of “reciprocity” unravels when he writes that “it is the strength of bonding, opportunities for ongoing reciprocity of the relationship, and the future sustainability of both, that are crucial for determining whether a relationship is finished and moving into a new phase, or whether it is possible and desirable to hold onto the old one”(1540).

Finally, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross tackled the topic of death by attending to the voices of dying people in hospice care. Specifically, she advocated for a more humane and less medicalized treatment of those people who are close to dying, while she emphasized the imperative of fighting their exclusion from public dialogue. She also coined the five stages of grief that a dying person undergoes after they are informed of their imminent passing. Those stages are: denial, anger, bargaining, depression (reactive or preparatory), and acceptance. She also notes that hope may be lingering throughout the whole dying process. Even though Kubler-Ross’ stage model has

questioned by many critics, such as Charles Chorr (1993), for its tendency to generalize the dying experience, it can still be employed in order to comfort dying individuals who are struggling to make sense out of their predicament. Additionally, Kubler-Ross does not dismiss the valuable insight that can be derived from the testimony of a dying person. By this token, she argues for the plethora of information that we can gather through the perspective of the dying. In particular, she writes that:

It is simply an account of a new and challenging opportunity to refocus on the patient as a human being, to include him in dialogues, to learn from him the strengths and weaknesses of our hospital management of the patient. We have asked him to be our teacher so that we may learn more about the final stages of life with all its anxieties, fears, and hopes. (xi)

In conclusion, no matter how hard we try to deduct death from our daily lives, we can never succeed in doing so, for it will eventually manifest itself as it constitutes an integral part of life. On the contrary, we can familiarize ourselves with our inevitable fate by both attending to what the dying have to say and by interacting with our loved ones that have perished through participating to rituals and continuing the bonds we once built with them beyond the grave.

### **3. 1 Writing Life & Death: Creativity & Authorship Through the Art of Obituary Writing in *Daytripper***

Taking all of the above theorists into account, we are ready to approach *Daytripper* not just as a story that we read that is preoccupied with death, but also, as a narrative piece that delineates not only our corporeal anxieties, but also the beauty of being human and the strength that lies in being mortal and vulnerable, as our latter

characteristics remind us that we need to seize every moment without being puzzled and overwhelmed by our very own nature that we cannot alter. *Daytripper* is so much more than a story about death and it is as complex as life itself. It is also a story about authorship, artistic aspirations, family life, love and friendship, while as I am going to argue in the sections below, it is predominately a story that deals with grief and loss, as we may experience grief even when we feel content and fulfilled. Similarly to grief being present even in our happiest moments, life and death are intertwined with one another and it would be a mistake to yearn for a life that would not be interrupted by any death, since this would be the equivalent of writing a book to which we on giving no end. Therefore, as *Daytripper's* narrative progresses, we come to the realization that even pain, sorrow and loss may provide us with valuable life lessons.

Taking off *Daytripper*, we are introduced to Brás de Oliva Domingos, an aspiring author who works as an obituary writer at a São Paulo newspaper while dreaming of gaining nationwide literary praise similarly to his father, Benedito. Early on in Moon and Bá's graphic novel, Brás confesses both his fixation with portraying life through his writing and the disappointment caused by his constant preoccupation with documenting death that his job entails. However, the sense of disenchantment that prevails in Brás' psyche also stems from the fact that he has not created life experiences that would be memorable enough to be narrated through his writing. In particular, as he states himself while discussing with his closest friend, Jorge: "I thought I was going to live life to its fullest, and then later I would write about it all. I wanted to write about life, Jorge, and look at me now...All I write about is death" (21). Therefore, Brás interprets his inability to write about his life rather than the death of others as a form of personal failure, since he feels responsible for the lack of

authentic individual input that would add a sense of originality to his creative endeavors.

Notwithstanding Brás' perceiving obituary writing as a reflection of his own artistic incompetence, the term 'obituary' in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* unfolds as such:

An appraisal of a life in the form of a brief biography -published in a newspaper, magazine or journal. It is important to note the appraisal factor, for it is this element which distinguished an obituary from a standard news story about a death. While the intent of the latter is to supply an account of a deceased person's life, often with information also on the circumstances of death, the obituary provides an assessment of its subject's character, achievements, and effect on society. This is frequently demonstrated through the use of anecdote.

Furthermore, Heinrich Benz distinguishes obituaries from death notices when rendering the former responsible for shedding light onto "what a person is" by delineating the deceased "in terms of their achievements, their jobs, and their position in society" as opposed to death notices which are preoccupied with "who a person is [for] they describe, in varying degrees, position in the family, friends, personality and enumerate the ways in which a person is missed" (2). Therefore, it is mostly the aforementioned notion of assessment that besieges Brás, for the exceptional deeds of the deceased people he writes about constitute a painful token of his own mediocrity. However, as the narrative progresses, we see Brás facing death multiple times at the end of nine out of the ten chapters of the graphic novel. Moreover, every time he dies, an obituary appears on the final page of each chapter in order to enumerate Brás' accomplishments and celebrate the life he had been living until the moment he perished. As a consequence, one cannot help but wonder: who is writing the obituaries of Brás de Oliva Domingos within the context of the book?

In order to delve into that question, we have to pay attention not only to the obituaries and the events taking place in Brás' life, but also to the small details that are incorporated within each chapter. Even though Brás' life does not unravel in a chronologically linear fashion, the narrative of each chapter seems to be following a cyclical order, since some elements that appear within the chapters tend to be incorporated in the obituaries that conclude them. For instance, in the first chapter of the book, Brás reflects on his complicated relationship with his father by juxtaposing it with father and son relationship portrayed in William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (26). After Brás later dies in an armed robbery in a São Paulo bar, the obituary devoted to him on the last page of the chapter revolves around his father's great literary achievements and Brás' own artistic potential which he will not be able to materialize due to his passing on his birthday; another yet similarity to Shakespeare who also died on the same day that he was born (32). As a result, the constant references to Shakespeare imply the existence of an unknown omniscient narrator/author who seems to possess several pieces of information that Brás used to have access to. Moreover, since Brás' thought process was closely tied to a particular visual stimulus (the theatre that hosted Hamlet) it is highly improbable that the allusion to Shakespeare both within the story and the obituary was accidental. This way, another question emerges: how is the writer of Brás' obituaries aware of the protagonist's thoughts and feelings?

Those queries can be answered if we take into account one of the most emblematic works of Brazilian literature, namely Machado de Assis' *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* or *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas*. As Moon and Bá have confessed themselves in an interview with A Filanctera, the name Brás "is a homage [to Brás Cubas] , a homage that makes sense because Bras's father is a very famous writer. The

kind of father that would give his children the name of novel's characters. And also because Bras dies, and Brás Cubas dies as well". Specifically, Machado de Assis' literary protagonist constitutes an upper middle-class nobleman who becomes the writer of his own autobiography shortly after his passing. Similarly to Brás de Oliva Domingos' obituary writing, Brás Cubas' narration is closely connected to the notion of death. Moreover, in *The Posthumous Memoirs*, it is the author's physical demise that initiates the process of artistic creation, since Brás Cubas had been too engrossed in satisfying his material desires and attending to his secular needs to conduct any kind of meaningful artistic endeavor while he was alive. Therefore, in Machado de Assis' text, the death of the man signifies the birth of the author. As Cubas states himself in the very first chapter of the novel: "I'm not exactly a writer who is dead but a dead man who is a writer, for whom the grave was a second cradle." Moreover, in chapter 124, Brás Cubas declares that "a short bridge" is situated in the middle of the life and death binary. Building upon the latter, he notes that the particular bridge can be crossed by the readers of his autobiography who bury themselves in his writing in order to escape from the hardships and constraints of their own everyday lives. This way, through the literary project he undertakes, Assis' narrative protagonist succeeds in blurring the boundaries that separate life and death. For this reason, Victor Mendes underscores Assis' attempt to "[represent] the unrepresentable [through bridging] the gap between the disappearance of Cubas the character and the appearance of Cubas the narrator" (339).

After Brás Cubas' transition from the sphere of the living to "an impossible netherworld ... of dead autobiographies and live dissemination" (Dixon 48), he acquires omniscient status since he has already lived his life to the fullest extent which renders him capable of giving a thorough account of his past experiences.

However, as Jorge de Sena notices, Cubas' omniscience is only partial for he has no access to the other characters' thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, even this partial omniscience has a price, since the author's own mortality is what renders him "privy to an all-encompassing, complete, and omniscient perspective, but also, due to his being dead, to a perspective that is theoretically detached from life" (qtd in Mendes 349). Therefore, even if Brás Cubas is able to reflect upon the major events of his life, he cannot interfere in his past or alter the way these events unraveled. In other words, he may be omniscient to a certain degree, but he is not omnipotent. Mendes also pays close attention to those chapters which Cubas contemplates on editing or completely removing from his text in order to showcase the biographer's inability to interact with what he has already written (345). Cubas himself comments on his unconventional autobiographical account in Chapter 71 where he writes: "this book and my style are like drunkards, they stagger left and right, they walk and stop, mumble, yell, cackle, shake their fists at the sky, stumble, and fall."

Keeping all of the aforementioned in mind, one can spot a series of resemblances not only between the storylines that unfold within Assis' and Moon and Gá's texts and by extension between the lives and deaths of Brás Cubas and Brás de Oliva Domingos, but also between the writings of Brás Cubas and the unnamed author of the obituaries that signify the end of each chapter in *Daytripper*. In other words, if we follow Brás Cubas' literary footsteps, one might argue that, in *Daytripper's* case, it is Brás de Oliva Domingos who writes the obituaries devoted to him after his passing. Thus, similarly to his namesake, the grave constitutes a locus of rebirth for Brás, or if we attend to the biblical connotations of his last name which means Sunday, a place where resurrection is feasible. As a consequence, Brás composing his own obituaries would justify the, at least partially, omniscient stance of the narrator who seems aware

of even minor events or conversations that occurred during Brás' lifetime. By the same token, it would also provide a logical explanation to the fact that the obituary writer has access to Brás' thoughts and feeling at any particular time. For instance, in chapter 3, Brás dies in a car accident after deciding to confess his love to his future wife, Ana. The obituary that emerges at the end of that chapter concludes with the following line: "he, like everyone else, was trying to find his way in the desert, looking for that oasis we like to call.... "love" (62). Had not Brás been the one writing his obituaries, how would anyone else have knowledge of his quest for love at the time of his death? Even if the particular analogy between love and an oasis in the desert belongs to a book written by Brás's father, Benedito, and hence may seem accidental, it is the conversation it sparks between father and son that encourages Brás to pursue his love interest with the latter leading to his death. As a result, the cyclical mode of narration that I previously discussed is facilitated by Brás who not only creates memories through interacting with the rest of the characters, but also employs those memories in order to produce a written synopsis of his life through his obituary art.

Therefore, by pursuing this particular line of inquiry, I am arguing for a type of literary creation that can transcend the boundaries of life and death and thus celebrate, as Dixon remarks on *The Posthumous Memoirs*, the author's own "removability" (48). Thus, for Moon and Gá's narrative protagonist, the act of conveying his own mortal limitations through writing constitutes the "short bridge" between life and death Machado de Assis advocated for almost two centuries earlier. While employing his literary talent so as to cross this bridge, Brás de Oliva Domingos adopts a more sincere approach towards the life he has lived as the latter not only delineates "what" he was in terms of his career accomplishments and material gains, but also "who" he

was and what he meant to those that loved him and were loved by him. In a way, the obituaries written by Brás somewhat challenge Heinz's distinction between obituaries and death notices (2) that I previously mentioned by proposing a rather hybrid kind of death writing which seeks to determine how the deceased individual will be remembered both by those with whom he or she had formed a close relationship and by those who may not know him or her personally but were somehow affected by the legacy he has left behind. An interesting portrayal of the blending of what Brás is and who Brás is lies in chapter 9, where we actually witness him writing his own obituary in which he associates the act of producing written discourse with dreaming as "in [his] dreams [he] is the writer of [his own] story" (223). In particular, as Brás confesses: "What my dreams really show me is *what* my life can be once I open my eyes. My dreams tell me *who* I am" (emphasis added 223). As a result, according to Sam Cannon:

In this dream chapter all of Brás' ambitions and goals are present. His progress as a writer, his economic success, his family and his accomplishments are laid out and can be read as a roadmap to 21st century Brazilian social mobility ... His self-written obituary reproduces the concept that the individual is defined by their ambitions and singularly responsible for their own fate. (3)

On top of everything, one cannot help but notice that Brás distinguishes the obituary in the end of chapter nine from the rest he has written, since the particular one we witness him composing is solely dedicated to himself (223). However, even though Brás admits to not having previously employed written discourse in order to narrate the story of his life, this confession of his refers to the writing he conducted whilst being still alive. In other words, I am arguing that the necrologies which recapitulate Brás' life from chapters one to eight do not require his corporeal presence in order to be composed. On the contrary, similarly to Brás Cubas, he may not be able to "write

with his first-life body, but [he is able to produce written discourse] either—to be gruesome—with what remains of his corpse or, alternatively, with his spirit” (Mendes 345). Christina Dokou also notes that even if death flattens whatever differences may separate living people, one’s moral values and inner spirit display a significant amount of resilience even after their passing and thus, remain the only differentiating factors among the humans who have perished (112). This way, if Brás’ spirit and values are all he has left after his physical demise, then he has to employ them as tools in order to proceed with his literary project beyond the grave. As a consequence, this spiritual approach to death writing renders Brás capable of legitimizing the originality and uniqueness of his artistic endeavors though transcending his own mortal constraints.

### **3.2 Reader Involvement in Death Writing**

Taking all of the above in mind, through dealing with Brás de Oliva Domingos’ prevailing anxiety with living and dying, Moon and Bá provide their readers with multiple visual manifestations of dying in an attempt to rationalize one’s unavoidable physical demise and to exorcise those ideologies deeply ingrained in human consciousness that revolve around concealing the processes of death and dying. Therefore, they begin their story though employing the “in medias res” technique (Trianna 44) and base their narrative on the events that occurred before Brás’ death at age 32 without disclosing much information about the life he had been previously living in order to showcase that, as Dokou argued, death makes no exceptions no matter one’s background or social position (112). On top of that, Sam Cannon notes that:

(the) death of the protagonist emerges as a motif that creates meaning within the story. While the non-linear structure of the text questions the possibility

and significance of progress as part of modernity, Brás' repetitive deaths make the process even more precarious. In this way death becomes a central concern of the text. It structures and punctuates it (2).

As a result, Moon and Bá portray Brás dying over and over again so as to expose the “general reluctance in our society to acknowledge the presence and inevitability of death” (Faunce & Fulton 206), since even if he repeatedly dies in the final pages of each chapter, we still expect him to appear alive in the next one. Moreover, the multiple deaths that Brás face can be associated with the aforementioned notion of inevitability to evade death. In other words, death's shadow is constantly looming over a person's existence and it will eventually reach them at some point in their life whether they are young or old, successful or financially struggling, alone or surrounded by people they love.

This way, Moon and Bá seek render death visible to their readers through the comic medium and to foreground that each time Brás dies, he dies as a different person who has gathered valuable life lessons and experiences that help him evolve into the more mature of himself. For instance, Brás has lived a short yet happy life when he dies at eleven years-old in chapter five, whereas he has accomplished a great number of his personal goals when death claims his life at age thirty-two in chapter one, such as having people who love him and care for him by his side, without however attaining the critical appraisal that he craved for. Hence, through Brás' story, Moon and Bá invite their readers to not only employ Brás' individual story in order to familiarize themselves with their very own precarious nature, but also to make them reflect upon the fact that no matter when you die, there will be some goals that you have accomplished and some other that you have left unattended. A concrete example of the previously mentioned blending of the personal narrative and the collective message that it can evoke, is evident in the constant changes of focalization that occur

within *Daytripper*'s narrative scene. For instance, when Brás shares his concerns with Jorge in chapter 1, their figures merge with the rest of the crowd that surrounds them, as they gradually turn more abstract and their facial features become bleaker. After a few panels, the visual focus returns upon them and their facial expressions become more detailed once again. If we attempt to apply Scott McCloud's comic theory upon these visual shifts, we can interpret them as following: McCloud avers that the more cartoonish the representation of a character, the higher the level of identification established between the reader and the particular character (44). Therefore, Moon and Bá deliberately create openings into the narrative space of *Daytripper* in order to urge their audience to critically engage with their text and undertake the task of filling in those gaps. In the previously mentioned exchange between Brás and Jorge, while their facial features start fading, Brás expresses his frustration on his inability to delineate life and creatively flourish to which Jorge responds in the following manner: "You know all too well that death is a part of life, my friend" (23). Therefore, one cannot help but wonder: does Jorge solely address Brás or does his advice also pertain to the reader? Taking into account Moon and Bá's fixation with reader involvement in their text, I strongly believe that both Brás and the reader can be benefited by Jorge's remark. After Jorge reminds both Brás and the reader that death constitutes an integral part of life, the visual focus returns upon the faces of the protagonists' allowing them to proceed with their conversation. Consequently, the reader steps in the story in order to both to insert their own personal anxiety related to death and dying and to preserve a sense of equilibrium within the narrative whenever Brás feels too confused or overwhelmed. This way, Moon and Bá construct a fluid space within which there are no strict lines that separate the author from the narrative protagonist and the narrative protagonist from the reader.

However, reader involvement is a rather complex phenomenon that not only alleviates Brás' emotional turmoil, but also condemns him to death in a number of occasions. Specifically, in six out of the eight deaths that Brás faces, apart from him having a heart attack in chapter four and being brutally murdered by Jorge in chapter seven, we do not actually see him dying. For example, in chapter one, we interpret the bang sound as Brás having being shot (Moon and Bá 32) or, in chapter two, we can notice the bubbles descending into the sea that imply that he has drowned (54). Nevertheless, we never witness him actually being shot or drowning. As McCloud notes ,our intrinsic need for closure leads us to become "silent accomplices" to the act of violence that unravels before our eyes (68) for it is us, as readers, that get to decide if what is threatening Brás' life will in fact terminate it. Building upon the latter, McCloud notes that: "to kill a man between the panels is to condemn him to a thousand deaths" (69) since each reader may choose to fill the narrative gaps in a different manner though the use of their imagination. For instance, each reader imagines the details surrounding Brás' death in chapter one in a distinctive way: was he shot one time or more? Where was he shot? Did the bar owner survive the attack after being also shot? How did Brás' loved ones react to the news of his murder? Each reader conceptualizes death in their own way; whether Brás was shot multiple times in the chest or just once in the heart, the outcome is the same. However, if he is really dead and we, as readers, are able to imagine the circumstances of his death that would accompany the obituary Moon and Bá provide us with in the final page of each chapter, then why do we not put the book down, but instead we keep on reading?

An answer to this query can emerge, once again, from McCloud's theory. I have previously discussed McCloud's definition of closure as what urges the reader to assume that Brás has passed away by the end of each chapter. However, our necessity

to attain closure is also what propels us to continue our reading for, according to McCloud, we collect fragments of the story or small clues scattered within the book in order to construct a complete and meaningful narrative (86-87). However, what happens when we encounter not a fragmented sequence of a just few panels towards the end of the story which we can comprehend by making use of our past experiences and imagination, but a whole story which is fragmented from its beginning to its very end? For example, in the first chapter of *Daytripper*, we do not have immediate access neither to the protagonist's childhood nor early adulthood for we only get a glimpse of Brás' life at age thirty-two; we have no knowledge on how the previous thirty-one years of his life had been like and thus, we have to generate them through our imagination. As a result, chapter one requires a higher level of the reader's involvement than the rest of the chapters, since the more we read, the more information we gather on Brás' past. Through every chapter we read, Moon and Bá offer us a piece to complete *Daytripper's* puzzle. Nonetheless, the puzzle is still not complete after we have finished reading the graphic novel, since we only have insight to specific events that occurred when Brás was ten, twenty-one, twenty-eight, thirty-two, thirty-three, thirty-eight, forty-one, forty-seven and seventy-six. However, after having arranged the pieces in our disposal in the correct order, we are able to distinguish the greater picture that is created through our puzzle. Even though some of the pieces are still missing, we now have a significant amount of information that we can build upon in order to fill in the gaps within the graphic novel with the use of our creativity.

Finally, we are invited to cooperate with Moon and Bá through actively participating into the narrative scene of *Daytripper*. On top of that, each reader may employ the snapshots of Brás' life in their own distinctive manner by coming up with a plethora

of details they can use to supplement the story with. As McCloud notes, the comic's creators "can only point the way, [but they] can't take you anywhere you don't want to go" (93). Hence, a text this malleable and open to the readers can yield a multiplicity of readings. By the same token, this multiplicity can be linked to the figure of Iemanjá that appears in a number of occasions in Moon and Bá's book. According to Paul Mason, Iemanjá constitutes the goddess/Orixá of the sea in the Candomblé religion and the archetypal figure of motherhood and fertility (80). She occupies the narrative scene of *Daytripper* twice, since she makes an appearance in the beginnings of chapters two and nine so as to map the transition from Brás' death in the final pages of chapters one and eight to his rebirth in the subsequent two chapters. Thus, her presence signifies the fertility of interpretations that the book can evoke to each one of its readers. Moon and Bá are aware of the multiple interpretations that can be unearthed from their text and they allow their readers to approach *Daytripper* in their own terms, since death, around which the book revolves, is a rather perplex concept for most people to grasp. Moreover, building upon the notions of multiplicity of interpretations, we must pay attention to the very name of the graphic novel. In particular, Moon and Bá's comic shares the same name with a song performed by the Beatles in which the lead singer expresses his love for a woman who he cannot define or tame. Specifically, this elusive figure is delineated in the following way:

She's a big teaser  
She took me half the way there  
She's a big teaser  
She took me half the way there, now

She was a day tripper  
A one-way ticket, yeah  
It took me so long to find out  
And I found out.

As a consequence, Brás constitutes a Daytripper for in a similar fashion to the woman in The Beatles song, he cannot commit to a particular interpretation or ending. It is the reader who will exercise the act of closure in order to give Brás the ending he deems fitting to his story. Therefore, through our active involvement in the unfolding of the narrative as a means to satisfy our yearning towards achieving closure, we become able to tackle the hard topic of our own mortality.

All in all, Moon and Bá work concurrently with their readers in order to move beyond the notion of the “good death” by “[contemplating] which manner of dying is the most desirable or perhaps the least tragic” (Holcombe 174). Hence, each of Brás’ deaths constitutes an alternative option offered to hospice and institutional treatment of dying; a plethora of sudden ‘bad deaths’ juxtaposed to a slow and highly medicalized ‘good death’, with the latter being rejected by Brás in the final chapter of the graphic novel, when he decides to stop receiving treatment for his brain tumors (Moon and Bá 230). Therefore, he seems ready to eventually face his demise, as the blueprint of his story has been completed. This way, the readers are offered the sense of closure they had been longing for after providing Brás with multiple opportunities to complete his narration. In a way, every time the reader chooses to move on to the next chapter of *Daytripper*, they provide the protagonist with a chance to reclaim his life and to grow out of his mistakes and his past experiences. The latter is further reinforced by the image of one of Brás’ books on page 187. Despite the fact that Brás earned nationwide literary attention after the publication of his breakthrough novel under the title *Silken Eyes*, Moon and Bá silently incorporate the book *Chances* written by Brás de Oliva Domingos into their narrative scene in an attempt both to portray another layer of Brás’ creative genius and to associate his success with the persistence of the readers who keep on providing him with chances to delineate the

story of his life. In other words, had the readers stopped engaging with Brás' story after the first time that he died, he would still have lived his life, yet without attaining neither fame nor academic recognition. It is, thus, the sense of faith that readers place upon Brás' efforts to make something great out of his life that eventually leads to the completion of the story. In a way, by being both grandiose and humane, Brás is a mirror of the readers themselves; they can identify with him as his everyday struggles and existential anxieties revolving around life and death are something that most humans share, yet process differently. As a result, it is not only Brás to whom the readers offer multiple opportunities to come to terms with his very own corporeality, but also to themselves. This way, they get the chance to comprehend the limits posed by their humanity and to shape their perception of life accordingly. *Daytripper's* aim does not lie in transcending one's humanity or attaining a divine status after their death, but rather in embracing life for what it really is: temporary.

Finally, *Daytripper* showcases the intricate relationship between author and reader and how it is impacted by the fundamental incapability of evading death. Specifically, Moon and Bá's readers are encouraged to interact with the text and immerse themselves into the death narrative in an attempt to cope with its inevitability.

Therefore, attending to *Daytripper's* voice can be both therapeutic and comforting for those who are experiencing the same existential concerns as Brás. However, what we need to look further into is how the author-reader dyad is affected when it is not only Brás-the man/protagonist that perishes, but also Brás-the author. Moreover, there is a parallel worth exploring that has been established since the graphic novel's very first chapters between the two most prominent relationships within the book: the one between reader and author and that between father and son. Therefore, through blurring the lines that separate not only life and death but also authorship and

fatherhood, *Daytripper* invites us to step outside the life and death binary in order to walk its existential road and reconsider all the assumptions we had previously made on the way life unravels. This book constitutes a gift given by the authors to their readers that can assist the latter both in tackling secular matters associated with family life, friendships and love, and alleviating their spiritual anxieties by recognizing their incapability to overcome life's final hurdle, which is death. Even if one may perceive life as sitting on a ticking bomb that is going to explode once a specific amount of time has passed and the timer, which has been automatically set the moment one is born, reaches zero, Moon and Bá do not intend to instill the feeling of powerlessness in their readers' mind. On the contrary, similarly to how a parent would advise their child, they employ the comic medium to encourage their audience to seize every second that passes through the timer before it stops counting. This constitutes an additional reason why *Daytripper* forgoes the traditional linear narrative according to which a story unfolds; it is not the exact sequence in which those moments took place that rendered them special to Brás, but rather the uniqueness and the authenticity of the moments themselves. Brás' father, Benedito, consoles his son after the end of the latter's seven year long relationship with his former lover, Olinda, by reminiscing about the first conversation he had with Brás' mother and highlighting the significance of those small moments that deem life worth living. As Moon and Bá eloquently state: "Life is made of these moments, son. Relationships are based on such moments, such choices. Such actions and that's the one moment I will carry with me after all the others fade-- the one which makes all the others worthwhile. You should look for ...moments you will never forget (63)."

All things considered, in the following sections of my paper, I will be further investigating the linkage between fatherhood and authorship in an attempt to decipher

what occurs after the son/reader has located those moments that give life its essence and after the father/author has to face his own inescapable mortality. In other words, how does the son/reader process the death of the father/author?

#### **4. 1 Father and Son Relationship & the Death of the Father**

Delving into the bond between Brás and his father, one can easily grasp the complexity of their relationship for, even though there is a plethora of traits that they share, they are fundamentally different in a lot of aspects. First and foremost, Brás and Benedito are two critically acclaimed authors that have gained the recognition of the literary community all around Brazil. In addition, they both ascribe to the Brazilian patriarchal paradigm since they constitute powerful masculine figures who are educated professionals and devoted fathers eager to attend to the needs of their families. Nonetheless, by taking a look at Brás' childhood in chapter five of *Daytripper*, the sense of detachment between father and son cannot go unnoticed. In particular, Benedito appears to be too immersed in his creative work to care for his son's emotional wellbeing. He may have cared for his family by financially supporting them and being present during his son's childhood, but he seems uninterested in actually forming an affective relationship with his son. A concrete example of this is evident in Benedito's tendency to isolate himself when his and his wife's extended family would gather for a two-day getaway at his in-law's ranch in the countryside. Moon and Bá delineate Benedito's character as someone who "loved to go to the ranch, because he had peace there and all the time in the world to write. He didn't pay any attention to anything the kids would do, or anyone, for that matter. It was like they weren't even there (115)". On the contrary, it was Brás' mother, Aurora, who worked as "a magnet" that kept the family unit intact.

This intricate relationship is shown graphically when a 10 year-old Brás is portrayed trying to approach Benedito who is sitting under the biggest tree at his family's ranch, his father dismisses his questions by emphasizing that he is in the middle of his creative process. However, the focalization within the graphic novel changes once again to display the blank page that lies in front of Benedito, a sight that evokes Brás' response as he comments: "there's nothing on the page, dad" (118). Benedito later addresses his son's observation by attributing his indifference towards the environment that surrounds him to his need of collecting his most valuable ideas while remaining undisturbed by secular distractions which would require a greater effort by him to filter out , or a larger amount of "water" wasted as he puts it. What Benedito fails to understand is that while he is striving for perfection through his art, he is actively disconnecting himself from the life that blooms around him and neglecting the people who need and admire him the most. On top of that, if we closely observe how Benedito's figure is graphically portrayed within that panel, we realize that he looks like one of the roots of the tree himself (118). In addition, if we compare Benedito's tree with the biblical tree of knowledge of good and evil, whose fruits Adam and Eve were forbidden from eating, we can argue that his access to his tree's fruits, namely to a more spiritual insight to life, may fuel his creative work but also has a significant impact upon the way he perceives and enacts his fatherly duties. Moreover, if we take a closer look to the tree he has become a part to, we can notice its harsh surface that reflects Benedito's very own unapproachable nature. This way, while striving to carry out his creative project and attain academic recognition for his artistic genius, he gradually drifts away from Eden, since the latter constitutes the home that God had created for Adam and Eve. As a consequence, Eden is associated with the notion of the family and thus, getting excluded from it results in distancing

himself both from his own family and the worldly realm. Another instance of his disengagement is illustrated when the rainy weather provides the whole family with an opportunity to get together and enjoy each other's company, while Benedito isolates himself in order to concentrate to his writing. The specific scene reads as following: "The family stayed closer during rainy times, playing and laughing while the water poured freely outside" (119). The previously mentioned line is divided into two panels; the first half of the sentence is accompanied by an image of Brás and his family gathering around the table in dim candlelight, while playing card games and telling stories. The other half of the sentence starting with "while the water" and ending in "outside" appears concurrently with Brás staring at Benedito who is sitting alone in a dark corner of the room with a blank page lying once again in his lap. It is interesting to note that Benedito does not employ the light from the same candle that his family uses in an attempt to feel close to each other. Thus, by not sharing the same candle, Benedito establishes his presence within the family unit as a prominent but yet detached and separated entity that aims at preserving the light of his own artistic genius. Also, the repetition of the element of water is intended to create a linkage between the panels that convey the conversation between father and son under the tree and the ones dedicated to the way Brás' family used to spend rainy days at his grandparents' ranch. As a result, Moon and Bá implicitly state that no matter how hard Benedito tries to minimize his use of "water" (118) which, in his mind, stands for the time and energy he devotes to his writing, he can neither control, nor benefit from the amount of water that nature intends on pouring. Therefore, while putting his personal and family life on hold in order not to disrupt his creative process, he willingly steps outside the role of the father when he assumes the role of the author. However, similarly to the way natural processes such as rain cannot be regulated by

humans, Benedito cannot prevent his family from experiencing bonding moments from which he forces himself to remain absent. Finally, it comes as no surprise that we only witness Brás' mother and sister being notified of his death by electrocution in chapter five and not Benedito. Hence, the figure of the father is absent not only from young Brás' life but also in his death.

Taking the aforementioned instances into account, Brás develops what Michael Diamond calls "the father wound" which he defines as an "internalized, unresolved conflict between father and son" (161). Ronald Levant also explores the unresolved trauma emerging from the problematic relationship between father and son when he notes that:

The difficult father-son relationship leaves a deep impression on the man...which is manifested in myriad direct and disguised forms of desperately seeking some contact, some closeness with one's father (or his surrogate), or in being furious at him for his failures. Many men are burdened with feelings that they never knew their fathers, nor how their fathers felt as men, nor if their fathers even liked them, nor if their fathers ever really approved of them. (263)

James Herzog also coins the term "father hunger" which Perrin et al. conceptualize as "the emotional and psychological longing that a person has for a father who has been physically, emotionally, or psychologically distant in the person's life" (315). While Brás struggles to earn his father's approval and satisfy his "father hunger", he takes up writing as it is more feasible for him to connect with Benedito the author, rather than Benedito the father. As Moon and Bá write upon this matter: "books were Benedito's greatest passion and, if Brás could be a part of that world, he could assure his place in his father's heart" (106). In spite of the literary linkage that is formed between Brás and Benedito, Brás is still ensnared by his father's grandiose achievements to which he constantly juxtaposes his early creative efforts which leads

to him feeling less significant in comparison with the great Benedito de Oliva Domingos. Therefore, even if he gains access to the author's sphere, he extends this comparison by viewing himself as generally inferior to the man that his father is. For example, he experiences frustration and disappointment when his birthday is overshadowed by a gala event that pays tribute to Benedito's literary career (13). On top of that, both his parents forget to wish him happy birthday which further intensifies his feelings of unworthiness that is generated through his juxtaposition with Benedito. However, Brás is acutely aware that the specter of his father keeps looming over his life in a similar fashion that death dominates his early writing. As he advises himself in the first chapter of *Daytripper*: "Just shut down from the world and write. Forget that the typewriter was a present from your father. Forget you picked up smoking from your mom, and that you smoke your father's favorite brand. Forget what day today is. Like your mother did when she forgot to congratulate you" (17).

As a consequence, Brás acknowledges his parents' contribution in what makes him who he is and seeks for alternative ways of expressing himself in an attempt to transcend his "father wound" that has been shaping his personality throughout all his life. However, as Eric Miller suggests, "a father wound can and should be viewed as just that: a wound. Physical wounds can heal though scars may remain". He also notes that wounds within the psyche can be subjected to healing as well, but just as physical wounds, they boil down to "personal losses" that generate newly-molded character traits that are a result of the individual's defense mechanisms who tries to unearth the means to minimize the pain inflicted upon themselves (203). Notwithstanding, Brás' desperate endeavors to escape from his complex family dynamics through focusing on obituary writing, he still finds himself aching as his wounds leak through his psyche into the obituaries that he composes. A concrete example of my previous claim lies

beneath the first obituaries that we see him writing in chapter one. In particular, while trying to celebrate the lives of a successful painter, a famous football player and a Brazilian ambassador, he realizes that even if those three men's excelled in their professional fields, their greatest achievement constituted the fact that they loved and were loved by their families. This way, he delineates those men as being the pinnacle of perfection in terms of fatherhood and characterizes them as "devoted" and "dedicated father[s]" who "never [put] a thing before the adoration and care of [their] children" (19). Additionally, in the case of the obituary written for the Brazilian ambassador, Rodrigo Machado, Brás highlights his love for his family by stating that no matter how many awards he had won or how many places he visited "he never forgot his son's --". As I have already discussed in the third chapter of my paper, Moon and Bá invite their readers to participate into their narrative. This way, one can easily assume that the word that could fill the gap in the sentence we encountered earlier is the word 'birthday'.

Therefore, one cannot help but notice that Brás employs the stories of those men to depict the ideal relationship he wished he could have had with his own father. In other words, he is grieving the relationship he never had with Benedito who is still alive at the moment when Brás writes the obituaries of the three men mentioned above.

Building upon the latter, in *Fatherless Sons*, Jonathan Diamond also validates the feelings of immense grief that a lot of men experience despite their fathers being still alive. This type of grief is not triggered by the father's physical demise, but rather by the realization that however hard the sons try, they are never going to attain in forming the unbreakable bond with their fathers that they have always been longing for. Even if Brás is aware that his relationship with Benedito will never mirror the ideal familial bonds he conveys through obituary writing, he still conducts an effort to

connect with Benedito and asks for his advice in how to properly seek for love (63) in an attempt to forgive to his inattentiveness during the early years of Brás' life so that his "father wound" can eventually heal. However, it is not until the day that Brás becomes a father himself that he will be finally able to forgive Benedito's past mistakes, who sadly passes away at the same day that his grandson is born. Hence, it is as Benedito's death signifies the passing of the fatherly duties to Brás who will have fight so as for the generational trauma not to be reproduced and for the cycle of neglect and inattentiveness to the children's needs to end.

I will be discussing the new cycle of grief to which Brás enters after the sudden passing of his father and his determination to form a close and healthy relation with his own son, Miguel, in my next chapter. However, I strongly believe that both Brás' and Benedito's deaths should be examined under the lens of Roland Barthes' critical theory on the "death of the author" inside the graphic novel. This way, we would not only delve into Brás' pain, who knew more about Benedito the author than Benedito the man/father until some point in his life, but we will also get the chance to explore our own feelings towards the Brás' passing whose life story we have been closely following since the first chapter of the graphic novel.

#### **4.2 The Death of the Author/Father in *Daytripper***

As we have already discussed, both Brás and his father constitute a pair of two highly praised authors whose literary contribution has been recognized all over their country. Moreover, as I have previously argued, there is a parallel that is established between the author/father and the son/reader. Similarly to the way a father takes his son by the hand and teaches him everything he needs to know about life, the author(s)

in the graphic novel guide(s) their readers through *Daytripper's* narrative in order to inculcate their message to their audience. However, as Roland Barthes avers in his 1977 essay under the title "The Death of the Author":

It will always be impossible to know, for the good reason that all writing is itself this special voice, consisting of several indiscernible voices, and that literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes (1).

Barthes notes that "the image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions" (1-2). However, the author stops existing once somebody immerses themselves reading, as "the voice [of the author] loses its origin, the author enters his own death, writing begins" (1). Finally, Barthes highlights the imperative of each reader to produce their own interpretation of the text they have read as "[once] the Author is gone, the claim to "decipher" a text becomes quite useless. To give an Author to a text is to impose upon that text a stop clause, to furnish it with a final signification, to close the writing" (5).

Therefore, if we wish to apply Barthes' theory upon the complex relation between author and reader in Moon and Bá, we should shift our focus upon the letter that Benedito writes to Brás on the day that his grandson, Miguel, is born. The letter unravels in the following lines:

Dear Son: You're holding this letter now because this is the most important day of your life. You're about to have your first child. That means the life you've built with such effort, that you've conquered, that you've earned, has finally reached the point where it no longer belongs to you. This baby is the new master of your life. He is the sole reason for your existence. You'll surrender your life to him, give him your heart and soul because you want him to be strong...to be brave enough to make all his decisions without you.

So when he finally grows older, he won't need you. That's because you know one day you won't be there for him anymore. Only when you accept that one day you'll die can you let go...and make the best out of life. And that's the big secret. That's the miracle.... Your life is out of your hands now...just like mine has been since the day you were born. I'm writing this letter to congratulate you...and admit that you don't need me anymore" (242-248).

As a result, it is the first time that we see another version of the successful author and family man named Benedito de Oliva Domingos. In his letter, Brás' father openly admits to being defeated as he cannot teach his son anything that he does not already know. Also, by underscoring the emotional significance that his child will bear in Brás' heart, he allures to the love and admiration Benedito himself had been feeling towards his son even if he had not found the means to express those emotions in a concrete way that would render them visible to Brás. Thus, Benedito is eager to admit his shortcomings and urges his son to seize every opportunity that life has to offer him.

On top of that, father and son remain connected even in death through writing as Brás has a heart attack after entering his father's creative workspace and realizing that that Benedito is truly gone. In the final pages of chapter four, the focalization shifts to Brás' breakthrough novel that lies on Benedito's desk. The book is surrounded by pictures of Aurora and their family (102). Therefore, even if Benedito spent many years of his life seeking commercial and academic recognition for his creative efforts, he has eventually understood that his biggest achievements were his wife and children. Moreover, what we also need to take a closer look to in order to establish the linkage between life and death through authorship is the fact that the letter that Benedito addresses to Brás, once the latter has become a father, is what encourages him reach the hardest decision he has ever had to take: to stop fighting his health issues and embrace his final moments upon earth without concealing his demise

though medicalisation, but rather perceiving it as something natural and as a form of closure. In addition, it is no accident that the letter written by Benedito is placed inside the pages of his copy of Brás' book which had been lying for years upon his desk. Hence, the book functions as a vessel for Benedito's message and further unites the father and the son in death and after death. As a result, writing facilitates the "reciprocal relations" between the dead and the bereaved that Kellehear argued about.

Finally, if we take a closer look into Brás' appearance in the final chapter of the graphic novel, we will come to the realization that his totally ghost-like presence denotes that he is eventually free of signification and ready to seek closure in this final chapter of his life. Furthermore, after having narrated the story of his life, he can finally function as a blank canvas to which the readers will ascribe their personal interpretations of *Daytripper's* message. The final pages that accompany Benedito's letter indicate that Brás will probably allow his life to end by returning to Iemanjá through the sea. Moon and Bá employ the final panel to talk to whoever reads the comic through Brás in order both to confess that their readers "do not need [them] anymore" (248) and encourage them not to forsake the message they tried to instill within them about human temporality. As I have previously drawn from McCloud's theory, the readers are not forced to accept or agree with Moon and Bá's illustration of life and death, but they are welcomed to manipulate the textual and visual stimuli provided to them to reach their own distinctive conclusions about how they wish to live their lives. After all, the author dies but the reader survives, or as Barthes puts it: "the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author" (6).

In addition, in his 1997 essay, under the title "The Anxiety of Influence", Harold Bloom underscores the initial anxiety that a son of a great artist faces, when he finds himself and his artistic endeavors constantly been juxtaposed to those of his father.

According to Bloom, “it may be that one strong poet's work expiates for the work of a precursor. It seems more likely that later visions cleanse themselves at the expense of earlier ones. But the strong dead return, in poems as in our lives (139).” Therefore, in *Daytripper*'s case, Benedito's literary legacy constantly haunts Brás and dooms him into maintaining a “revisionary relationship to the dead” (140). As a result, Brás struggles to break free of his father's shadow and to acquire his own distinctive voice in order to avoid what Bloom describes as the return of the dead and their already established discursive methods. He also notes that “the apophrades, the dismal or unlucky days upon which the dead return to inhabit their former houses, come to the strongest poets” (141), a claim which asserts Brás' own literary potential. The solution that Bloom provides those young and inexperienced writers with, is to remain resilient and to acknowledge that no greater work can be written than those already considered the pinnacles of artistic perfection. It is no accident that Moon and Bá portray Brás admiring the theatre where famous plays written by William Shakespeare were performed (26). Furthermore, another return of the dead can be noted when we are introduced to Brás' dog who is called Dante. As a result, if we wish to comprehend the reason why Brás' dog is named after one of the greatest authors in history, we need to remind ourselves that even Dante himself had to ask for Virgil's help in order to pass through Inferno in his *Divine Comedy*, while at the same time, Machado de Assis had written a novel named *Quincas Borba* which is translated in English as *Philosopher or Dog?*

Consequently, it may be true that the spirits of dead great authors keep emerging through *Daytripper*'s narrative space, in order to showcase not only Brás' anxiety of not being able to be as influential and literary important as his father, but also to reflect upon Moon and Bá's very same concern which Bloom calls “the anxiety of

influence, [namely] each poet's fear that no proper work remains for him to perform (148). Nevertheless, Bloom insists that the dead do not have to haunt the literary present, since they can return, but “in our colors, and speaking in our voices, at least in part, at least in moments, moments that testify to our persistence, and not to their own (141).” He concludes that “Apophrades, when managed by the capable imagination, by the strong poet who has persisted in his strength, becomes not so much a return of the dead as a celebration of the return of the early self-exaltation that first made poetry possible” (147). Therefore, Bloom invites young writers to relinquish their need to constantly prove their narrative worth and to employ the classic works of art as a source of inspiration that will propel them to acquire their own distinctive narrative voice. As a result, we can observe a number of literary pairs within the graphic novel that consist of the great/dead and the emerging/alive authors such as Brás and Benedito, with the latter’s name meaning ‘blessed’ and the one who has achieved everything a man could, while Moon and Bá utilize Machado de Assis’ assistance in acquiring their literary identity, in the same way that Dante employed Virgil’s help to get through Inferno.

## **5. Grief, Guilt & Dealing with the Loss**

As I have already noted in the preceding chapters of my research paper, Brás experiences two types of grief in relation to his father. The first type occurs when Benedito is still alive, but Brás is unable to approach him in the way that he has been yearning for and hence, finds himself mourning for the bond that he never had with him. The second type is closer to what the majority of us consider standard grief to be like and it is triggered by Benedito’s sudden death on the same time that was

supposed to be the happiest day of Brás' life. Trianna quotes Hakola and Kivistö in order to treat grief as 'a "psychological death" that accompanies "physical death," usually being more painful' (53). He also assumes that grief constitutes a recurrent pattern throughout *Daytripper* as "[the] changes in coloring in certain scenes, varying from bland faded colors to vivid bright tones, accompanies the different stages of grief as it evolves through time" (57), rendering it not only a kind of death writing, but also a form of grief writing. This way, there are two main questions that keep presenting themselves to the reader. First of all, how does one grieve for somebody they might hardly know? And secondly, is it possible to truly overcome grief or is it something that we will have to deal with for the rest of our lives?

In order to answer the first query, we need to bear in mind that a great number of researchers have been preoccupied with the social imperative set upon children to identify with the parent of the same sex. As John Nash argues, "the girl is in the happy position of continuing her early-formed relationship with her mother, whereas the boy is in the more difficult position of needing to relinquish these early ties and transferring them to the father (290)". Moreover, Nash emphasizes as well that the patriarchal culture in which we exist "requires the individual to act in manners considered appropriate to his biological sex. In the case of males, in particular, there are strong social and legal sanctions against feminized psychosexuality (290). If accept the validity of the aforementioned scenario, then, it comes as no surprise that Brás gradually grows out of being his mother's "little miracle" (Moon and Bá 15) and eventually aspires to be as great as his father. However, when Miller turns to Joseph Pleck in order to explore how the family dynamics and modes of identification are affected by the father wound, he comes to the conclusion that the latter "is synonymous with 'profound distance, pain, and sadness about [men's] relationship to

their own fathers' and reflects a sense of wounding, grief and loss amongst fathers and sons [while the] traditional expectations of the 'father as psychologically absent and distant breadwinner' have allowed for the destructive pattern of alienation and angst that can be experienced between father and son" (197). As a consequence, Brás' fundamental inability to be seen by his father and establish a close connection with him, results in him grieving for something that he knows he cannot fully acquire.

On top of that, Tony Walker, drawing from a variety of literary theorists, advocates for the existence of a goal within grief. Specifically, in his essay "Modern Grief, Postmodern Grief", he notes that:

The message has been that grief has a goal, and the goal is for the mourner to detach from the painful emotions of loss so that she can once again become an autonomous individual, free to contract new relationships with other autonomous individuals. Through sexual union, birth and parenting, humans become attached to one another, and grief is the pain of those attachments being sundered; in modernist grief psychology, the pain has to be worked through so that the mourner can be once again reconstituted as a free individual (126).

We see the pattern in the graphic novel when, after Brás is confronted by both his father's and his very own mortality, he is struck with enormous amounts of both grief and guilt stemming from the fact that he perceived his father as his professional nemesis whom he had to surpass in order for his success to actually mean something to him. This way, as Brandon Joa and Andrew Newberg remark while being influenced by Mia Silfver-Kuhalampi's ideas upon the emergence of guilt patterns alongside grief:

the individual can lose motivation via unresolved shame from a fixed perception of worthlessness in a social hierarchy causing self-directed anger, or the individual may feel guiltily overwhelmed by accumulated duties that he or she may not be able to meet, leading to negative self-attributions that contribute to pathologies such as anxiety disorder and depression (5).

Consequently, grief appears concurrently with a plethora of other emotions. In Brás' case, grief is followed by guilt that further triggers anger and depression. Moreover, Joa and Newberg distinguish between two types of guilt: the maladaptive and the adaptive types. When someone is tormented by maladaptive guilt they undergo “[reduced levels of] motivation to engage in constructive behavior and ... problems like mood disorders, avoidant behavior, and excessive fixation on the guilty action” (5). Maladaptive guilt is also closely linked to the individual experiencing feelings of shame. In particular, “unresolved shame” can result in the lack of individual motivation, as the person affected is characterized by “a fixed perception of worthlessness in a social hierarchy causing self-directed anger, or the individual may feel guiltily overwhelmed by accumulated duties that he or she may not be able to meet, leading to negative self-attributions that contribute to pathologies such as anxiety disorder and depression (5).”

On the other hand, adaptive guilt “refers to guilt that promotes positive outcomes, motivating a person to avoid transgressive actions such as that which contributed to the guilt in the first place” (4). Even if Brás did not commit any transgressive deeds, his guilt stems from his tendency of academically antagonizing Benedito instead of pursuing an actually meaningful relation with him. However, since Brás had spent such a long period of his life antagonizing Benedito, he had based his identity and his perception of himself upon his father in an attempt to become greater than he ever was. As a result, Brás experiences a tremendous shock after Benedito dies not only due to the loss of the emotional bonds between father and son, but also because without Benedito, Brás has no way of defining himself. This occurs as an outcome of years of juxtaposing himself upon all those elements that his father's identity composed of, such as being an acclaimed author, a loving husband and a family man.

Thus, Brás is not only grieving for his father but also for himself, or at least the self that he had constructed in order to fit the mold of a great man that Benedito had shaped first. This way, Brás finds himself mourning both his father and himself. As Sigmund Freud notes, “mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction which has taken the place of one, such as one's country, liberty, an ideal, and so on” (243). Building upon the latter, we witness Brás mourning the loss of his father throughout chapter four, since the first few pages of the chapter are painted in bright and joyful colors that signify the upcoming birth of his son, but as the narrative progresses, the coloring becomes darker and the atmosphere gloomier, thus reflecting the mourning occurring in Brás’ psyche. In that point, Brás seems pretty vulnerable and his mourning could easily evolve into what Freud has called “melancholia.” Specifically:

The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment. (244)

However, what safeguards Brás from the effect of melancholia is his sense of responsibility towards those people who are important in his life. A symbolic image that incorporates both his grief and his win over melancholia lies within Benedito’s funeral scene in which Brás assumes the role that Benedito previously hold as the head of his family, while we see him in the middle of the panel, holding the family unit together and also leading the goodbye prayer for Benedito (89). Fatherhood also plays a central role in Christian religion, as God constitutes the Holy Father of humanity. In the funeral scene, Brás is the one who delivers the prayer and is thus the one who is in immediate contact with God and who, by extension, will be the new head of his family similarly to the way God is the head of the Holy Trinity.

In other words, as Freud explains, Brás realizes that “the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object” (244). As a result, he fills the gap that Benedito’s absence has generated, with his newly-acquired parental responsibilities and the immense love that he feels for his son, Miguel. In order for Brás to cope with his loss in a healthy manner, he needs both to allow himself to heal his “father wound” that I have previously delineated through utilizing his grief in order to create a closer relationship with his own son than the one he and his father ever had. We actually witness Miguel craving for his father’s love and attention in chapter eight of the graphic novel in which Brás remains physically yet not emotionally absent. Some instances of his emotional presence in the lives of his wife and son are the written proclamations of love that he leaves behind in various forms, such as through letters, emails and postnotes (177-181), each time he has to travel for work. Therefore, Brás succeeds in preserving healthy family relations through exercising his writing. Furthermore, both Ana and Miguel feel closer to him through reading his works and attending to his narrative voice. Specifically, Brás’ words constitute both a vessel that carries his love to them and an emotional shield that Miguel carries in order to protect himself from everyday hardships, such as dealing with school bullies (183). Subsequently, a very intimate bond is formed between Brás’ creative and actual offspring. In addition, it is Miguel who unites Brás with Benedito for the first time in the graphic novel, after the latter’s passing, when he enters his grandfather’s creative workspace for Benedito’s former office represents the subconscious urge to produce a work of art which had been the main connecting point between Brás and his father. In the particular panels we read the following: “[Brás’ cigarette blend] really doesn’t go unnoticed. Perfect for both father and son. And when he visits me and lights up a continental...it’s like

Benedito is right there in front of me. It's been six years. I still miss him every day.” (185). We can detect traces by both Brás and Benedito within those panels, as Brás' book lies upon his father's desk and Benedito's own photograph functions as a token that documents both of his absence and presence in the lives of those who loved him. On top of that, when Miguel is portrayed looking at his grandfather's photograph, the world bubble accompanying the picture underscores the time that has passed since Miguel's birth and Benedito's death and thus marks the evolution of Brás' grief journey and the shifts that have been occurring in his life for the past six years that he has been living without his father. Moreover, in the panels mentioned above, the figure of the son and the traces of the father and grandfather may spatially coexist, but do not interact with one another. However, this type of interaction is going to take place in chapter nine, when Brás brings those three figures together in his dream.

In the specific chapter mentioned above, Brás resorts to the dream sphere in order to allow himself, his son and his father to physically occupy the same space for the first time within the graphic novel. In the panels delineated above, Brás encounters Miguel and Benedito sitting under the latter's tree, while Benedito reads to his grandson a passage from *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* which “belongs to [the book's] eighth chapter and it describes the protagonist's hallucination as he is dying. It depicts an argument between reason and madness happening inside his head, alluding to Brás' own subconscious taking charge of him” (Triana 49). This way, Moon and Bá not only accomplish in linearly depicting the de Oliva Domingos pedigree through visually portraying the three generations of men being born into Brás' family, but also succeed in creating a genealogy between their own novel and its literary predecessor. There are several elements within the tree scene that signify the passing from one generation to the other and the bridging of the gap that previously existed between

Brás and Benedito through Miguel. One instance is located on pages 216-217 in which Brás is illustrated as a young child holding a kite similar to the one he was holding in chapter five during his visit at his grandparents' ranch (216), and as the adult version of himself still holding onto the kite (217). The lines of the kite thread on pages 216 and 217 seem like they are about to meet and form an angle, thus symbolizing continuity and futurity. Furthermore, Brás offers the kite thread to Miguel that is symbolically linked to the thread of the narrative. Therefore, by extension, Brás realizes, shortly before his passing in chapter ten, that his own son does not need him anymore and gifts him with the means to delineate his own life story in the future. Finally, another image that maps the transition from the one generation to the other is the tree itself whose surface looks much softer in this chapter than it did in chapter four, hence rendering it more approachable to other people apart from Benedito. In the particular chapter, the tree does not solely belong to Benedito, but it is rather shared by him, Brás and Miguel. By that token, we can argue that the tree which previously represented Benedito's Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, now constitutes Brás' very own Tree of Life, which, according to the Genesis, was given to Man by his heavenly father after the fall from Eden as a sign of reconciliation and forgiveness. However, in this case, it is the son who has to forgive the father for his wrongdoings through forming the type of relationship with his child that he wish he had with his own father.

Building upon the latter, Pleck (1995) suggests that becoming a father allows men to "see that you cannot heal your father, but you can let your child help you to heal yourself" (qtd. in Miller 197). Moreover, Miller draws on Steve Biddulph's *Manhood* in order to state that "it is critical for men to understand and come to terms with their own fathers' limitations and foibles; likewise, today's fathers may want to strike a

different tone with their own children (and sons, in particular) because their own earlier wounds are still quite pervasive in the male experience” (198). Furthermore, Miller is confident that “many of today’s sons will not grow up reporting a father wound” (199), as fathers are more actively involved into their sons’ lives. He further explains that the fathers’ past wounds can be treated through the formation of healthy relationships with their sons in an attempt not to cease generational trauma from reoccurring (200).

As I have previously stated, *Daytripper* is not only a story about life, but also about loss and grief. Apart from gaining insight into life’s secrets, Brás also loses both people and more abstract notions and ideas that were once of vital importance to him. For instance, he loses Olinda in chapter two, which allows him to meet the love of his life, Ana (74). By the same token, he loses his innocence after being kissed for the first time during a family gateway to his grandfathers’ ranch (123). However, the two losses that marked Brás’ life were the one of his father that we have already discussed, and the other of his best friend Jorge, who abandoned the city after almost boarding a plane whose crash claimed the lives to all of its passengers (138). It is no accident that Brás started gaining literary praise for composing the obituaries of the victims of the plane crash, as following the already established mode that is perpetuated throughout the graphic novel, in order for Brás to gain something, he has to lose or relinquish something else first. However, the loss of Jorge falls tremendously hard upon Brás who feels guilty not only of gaining the literary recognition he had been longing for, but also since he pours his emotions revolving Jorge’s disappearance into the obituaries of the plane crash victims, which, in his mind, renders him “a fraud” (145). On top of that, we notice that chapter six in which Jorge abandons Brás is painted with those familiar shades of blue and purple that we

encountered in the funeral scene in chapter four. Therefore, Brás is reliving his father's funeral the moment Jorge disappears.

We have already discussed how Brás overcomes his melancholic tendencies and engages into healthy mourning after the death of his father. On the other hand, Jorge, Brás' best friend, seems unable to suppress his guilt of surviving such a traumatic event. This way, he experiences a type of guilt that is provoked through death inflicted grief which we call survivor's guilt. Particularly, a number of studies, such as those conducted by Robert Lifton in 1967 and by June Tangney and Ronda Dearing in 2003, conclude that survivor's guilt can affect people who had been exposed to any life-threatening situation, but were successful in remaining alive. In those instances, survivors feel accountable for the death of those who did not manage to evade death, even if in the striking majority of cases, there was nothing they could really do to prevent other people's passing.

Thus, survivor's guilt blends with melancholia and renders Jorge unable to perform those everyday functions that he did before. Instead, he moves far away from everything that still renders a token of the tragedy that he had witnessed (165-166). However, his bond with Brás is so strong that it remains the only thing he refuses to relinquish. On the contrary, he grows obsessed with his former best friends and keeps sending him postcards (164) so that Brás could visit him. In other words, Jorge displays "a turning away from reality ... and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis" (Freud 244). When Brás decides to actually look for Jorge in the place depicted upon the postcard he sent him, he does not expect to encounter a man who looks and acts nothing like his former best friend. Particularly, he exhibits some of the core symptoms of melancholia that Freud wrote about, such as

an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself... The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy. (246)

Jorge vocalizes this feeling of unworthiness as he apologizes to Brás for leaving him and for not being a good friend to him (173), while he had also expressed his frustration with the lack of meaning in his life in the previous chapter (149). Freud also notes that: “[the melancholic individual] declares that he was never any better. This picture of a delusion of (mainly moral) inferiority is completed by sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment, and ... by an overcoming of the instinct which compels every living thing cling to life” (246). Therefore, we can argue that in the case of Jorge:

The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification. (Freud 249)

On the contrary, when Brás himself underwent the traumatic and sudden loss of his father, he readjusted his free libido to a new object of love and affection which was his child. This does not mean, however, that Brás remained unaffected by the loss of Benedito, which as we have already signified the loss of a part of himself as well. On top of that, even if Brás struggled with his guilt that stemmed from mostly as his father’s rival instead of his son, he was still able to collect himself, not only in order to fulfill his paternal duty and take care of his family, but also since he was able to

separate his ego from his lost object of love which prevented, what Freud calls, the “identification” between Brás’ ego and the lost object (Freud 249). On the other hand, Jorge undergoes “a loss of a more ideal kind [for the] object has not perhaps actually died, but has been lost as an object of love” (245). Moreover, Jorge is aware that his relationship with Brás has deteriorated, but he cannot logically process this realization as “he knows whom he has lost but not what he has lost in him. This would suggest that melancholia is in some way related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness (245).”

In other words, Jorge had consciously decided upon leaving his old life behind. Notwithstanding this decision, he remained unable to erase Brás completely out of his consciousness and since he could not rationalize his decision to leave everything behind, he clings into the only thing from his old life that still fills him with a sense of content and safety. This way:

Each single one of the memories and situations of expectancy which demonstrate the libido's attachment to the lost object is met by the verdict of reality that the object no longer exists; and the ego, confronted as it were with the question whether it shall share its fate, is persuaded by the sum of the narcissistic satisfactions it derives from being alive to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished. (Freud 255)

After all, he confessed to Brás that he had read his book (172) which constituted a token of Brás’ ability to move on unlike Jorge. The implicit realization that Brás employed the narrative form to continue with his life and fulfill his career ambition, creates too much of a weight for Jorge to handle. This way, Jorge could be feeling somewhat betrayed by Brás who managed to creatively flourish as Jorge was gone. As Freud notes, “[people who suffer from melancholia] are not ashamed and do not hide themselves, since everything derogatory that they say about themselves is at bottom said about someone else” (248). As a result, Jorge’s claim that he had not been a good friend to Brás, could possibly refer to how Jorge feels about being forgotten by his former best friend. As Freud notes: “In melancholia, the occasions which give rise to the illness extend for the most part beyond the clear case of a loss by death, and include all those situations of being slighted, neglected or disappointed, which can

import opposed feelings of love and hate into the relationship or reinforce an already existing ambivalence.” (251)

Finally, Jorge can no longer bear his inner identification with Brás and attacks him viciously with a knife (174-175). We must note that among all of Brás’ potential death, this particular one had been the most brutal, even if it was the result of violence inflicted by someone he considered his friend. After taking Brás’ life, Jorge proceeds into killing himself (175-176) which further implies the extent of his inner identification with Brás; even if he left his former life behind, he was unable to forsake his best friend who rendered the last token of Jorge’s former self. Therefore, by killing Brás, Jorge kills his alter ego, or in other words, he kills himself two times for he wishes to erase himself so badly that he cannot allow Brás to remain alive as this would mean that a part of Jorge would also remain alive through Brás’ memories. Both Jorge and Brás experienced a highly traumatic event which evoked grief responses during their lifetimes. However, Brás overcame normal mourning through gaining emotional support from his family, whereas Jorge descended into melancholia after completely detaching himself from his thoughts and feelings, which later evolved into mania (Freud 253).

Lastly, by examining a different manifestation of grief than that are articulated through the process of healthy mourning, we encounter the case of extreme melancholia which is based on “an attachment of the libido to a particular person, [that had] at one time, existed” (Freud 249), but with the sudden loss of that object led to “the dissatisfaction with the [melancholic’s] ego on moral grounds” (248), since the melancholic individual blames himself for losing what he once loved (251). Freud concludes that “the complex of melancholia behaves like an open wound, drawing to itself cathectic energies--'anticathexes'!...and emptying the ego until it is totally impoverished” (253). Mourning and melancholia are both portrayed within the graphic novel’s narrative, in order to showcase both facets of bereavement. As a consequence, the comic medium attempts to illustrate both the mundane element of loss, since as Brás notes: “people die every day” (11), while providing also the space for the inexpressible to unravel, as *our* people do not die every day and we should not put pressure upon ourselves to conform to the socially acceptable modes of mourning, as it may have the exact opposite effect, namely melancholia.

## 6. Conclusion

All things considered, *Daytripper*'s aim revolves around shedding light upon the taboo of death by placing it in the heart of the narrative and rendering it visible to the readers in an attempt to underscore our own very powerlessness when death comes to claim our lives. However, Moon and Bá do not view or wish to depict life in a pessimist light; they are rather interested in realistically portraying it in order to showcase to their audience that death makes no exceptions and waits for no one. As a result, they urge their readers to seek for "moments [they] will never forget" that will deem their lives worth living (63). This way, they assume a fatherly-like role to their readers/sons. As I have previously discussed, the father and son relationship may be depicted as problematic at times within the graphic novel, but it can be salvaged even after death.

In other words, fathers and sons can form a closer bond after the father's passing, which is facilitated through ritualistic public and private manifestations of grief. Moon and Bá also propose another mode of communicating with our dead loved ones which is no other than through writing. One of the most prominent instances of processing grief through writing constitutes Benedito's letter to Brás. Moreover, if we return to the "short bridge" that Machado de Assis located between life and death in *The Posthumous Memoirs of Bras Cubas*, we can think of the written creation/letter as that bridge that connects Brás' life with his father's death. By the same token, if we are interested in thinking of that bridge in terms of the creation of something new, we could also relate it to Brás' son, Miguel. After all, it is Miguel's birth that urges Benedito to compose his letter to Brás in which he confesses his own removability.

Also, we need to note that Brás adopts a different approach towards writing if we compare his method to the one of Benedito. For instance, Benedito states that real-life events can function as a source of inspiration for him that could fuel his creative process, such as meeting Aurora and her challenging him to pursue a great romance with her (63). On the contrary, Brás considers it necessary to dream before being in a position to write, since we have already mentioned elsewhere that his dreams offer him enough freedom so that he can be "the writer of his own story" (223).

Interestingly enough, Sigmund Freud points out that daydreaming and creative narrative are two very similar processes that often collapse, as they both revolve around fantasies. In particular, he argues that "the motive forces of phantasies are

unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfillment of a wish, a correlation of unsatisfying reality (423)”. In particular, Freud foregrounds the importance of the element of fantasy to child development, as young children often employ daydreaming in order to interact with their peers or simply entertain themselves (422). However, as we grow older, we tend to be ashamed of our fantasies and we keep them to ourselves. Freud also mentions that even if we had to share our fantasies and daydreams with other people, we would attain no pleasure in doing so (427). On the contrary, though engaging in creative writing, we are finally able to disclose our dreams and fantasies to the rest of the world without the fear of being judged looming over us. Freud believes that one needs to be able to exercise great artistic mastery in order to delineate his personal daydreams and fantasies as he often merges them with the material he had derived from a plethora of other sources. Freud believes that “[the way] the writer accomplishes this is his innermost secret; the essential *ars poetica* lies in the technique of overcoming the feeling of repulsion in us which is undoubtedly connected with the barriers that rise between each single ego and the others (428).” Therefore, Brás follows a more complex creative pathway than the majority of creative writers, as he prefers trusting his dreams and aspirations rather than focusing on what one could call, traditional sources of inspiration.

All in all, *Daytripper* constitutes both a story of life that cannot escape death and loss, and a story of death(s) and losses that cannot occur if the beauty of mundane everyday experiences and interactions with our loved ones would not exist. Thus, Moon and Bá do not employ the comic medium in order to separate life from death and vice versa, but rather in order to underscore that without the one, the other cannot exist meaningfully.

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