Panel Title: Grief: What is it good for?

Panel description: Absolutely everything. While many view grief only as tragedy, these four writers dive in to find connection, community, love, and joy. An exploration of their writing shows the value of investigating grief and specific ways of doing so on the page. In this moderated Q&A, panelists showcase how they approach grief, the importance of doing so, the ethics of including those gone, and the various craft techniques used to find value in mourning.

Event Category: Nonfiction Craft & Criticism

Event Moderator/Organizer
Maddie Norris: Maddie Norris is the author of The Wet Wound: An Elegy in Essays (UGA Press, March 2024). Her work can be found in Guernica, Fourth Genre, and Territory, among others. She is currently the Kenan Visiting Writer at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Event Participants
Ross Gay: Ross Gay is the author of the poetry collections, Against Which, Bringing the Shovel Down, and Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude, and the essay collection, The Book of Delights. He teaches at Indiana University.

Thomas Mira Y Lopez: Thomas Mira y Lopez is the author of The Book of Resting Places (Counterpoint Press) and a translator from Portuguese. He is a Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Iowa.

Thirii Myo Kyaw Myint: Thirii Myo Kyaw Myint is the author of the novel The End of Peril, the End of Enmity, the End of Strife, A Haven (Noemi Press, 2018), which won an Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature, and Names for Light: A Family History (Graywolf Press, 2021), which won the Graywolf Press Nonfiction Prize.

Kathryn Savage: Kathryn Savage's debut essay Groundglass was published last year by Coffee House Press. Other writing has recently appeared in BOMB, Ecotone, Guernica, and VQR. She is an assistant professor of creative writing at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.
Opening Remarks
Thank you all for being here today. And thank you to the wonderful panelists for sharing your thoughts on grief. While many view grief only as tragedy, these four writers dive in to find connection, community, love, and joy. Today we'll address the value of investigating grief and specific ways of doing so on the page. In this moderated Q&A, panelists will showcase how they approach grief, the importance of doing so, the ethics of including those gone, and the various craft techniques used to find value in mourning.

-identify speakers in order they are sitting and read bios

First we’ll hear them read an excerpt where they engage with grief, then we’ll have a Q&A session and leave some time at the end for audience questions.

Participant Initial Remarks (5-7 min each)

Ross Gay:

Thomas Mira Y Lopez:

Thirii Myo Kyaw Myint:

Kathryn Savage:

Moderator Questions (30 min)

● Joshua Whitehead, in Making Love with the Land, writes, “I constantly ask myself if all writing is a form of mourning.” How does this framework relate to your writing?

● What surprised you in writing grief?

● How did your relationship to grief change while writing through it?

● Grief writing can sometimes be called “navel-gazing.” What is the political value of writing grief?

● How did you find the form to fit the content of grief?

● How do you approach the inclusion of others in your grief narrative?

● What was the most difficult aspect of the grief writing experience and how did you approach it?
• How did you take care of yourself while writing through pain?

• What advice do you have for someone writing grief?