



## **After Life**

**Beth Dawson**

The short graphic story 'After Life' narrates an intimate experience of grief and is practical research contributing to the knowledge of communicating realistic emotional accounts through illustrated fictionalised stories.

### **Research process**

The comic looks to innovate approaches within the medium by partnering a 'confessional' (M.L Rosenthal, 1959) poetic style of writing with stylised sequential imagery to explore generating original methods for sharing and visualising complex psychological states.

### **Research Insights**

It contributes to a body of contemporary comic work exploring and evolving sequential illustrative practice through unpicking and challenging its stylistic visual language. After Life is the first comic by the author to explore the appropriateness of specific aesthetics within a comic to set the mood. Through an ongoing series, the author's intention is to explore visual styles to create contemplative 'moodscapes' most appropriate for roaming a psychological terrain.

### **Dissemination**

Rigorous process has been used to validate the significance of the piece through its selection via juried panel for international exhibition and comic award. After Life was ranked joint runner-up in the Jonathan Cape/Comica/Observer graphic short story prize in 2014. The Guardian online (where the comic is hosted) describes the work as "superbly drawn [...] also witty, poignant and insightful." The comic has been published and shared widely online. Beth Dawson has also performed this work as a 'poetic comic reading' at research dissemination events, most notably at "Drawing In The Girls," as part of Leeds Beckett University's research the cluster group 'F= Presents: Festival of The Body' in March 2016 which took place during International Women's Day week and placed this piece within a broader context of exploring feminism and the female voice within contemporary art practice.



# After Life





AND SO WE ATE EGG SANDWICHES, ALL FLOPPY AND SAD - THE MOST APPROPRIATE THING IS FOR EVERYONE TO BE SAD. BUT THEN THE SUPPOSED CLOSURE AFTER THE CEREMONY...

THAT'S IT. IT'S OVER. BACK TO NORMALITY - TO SLIGHTLY TIPSY CONVERSATIONS ABOUT LOFT CONVERSIONS IN A VENUE SUITABLE FOR WEDDINGS, BAR MITZVAHS.

BUT NOT FOR ME, BECAUSE IT IS OVER NOW.

AND THE

STAIRS WERE FALLING AWAY BENEATH

MY FEET.



...LIKE A SLAMMED DOOR



FUNERALS



IT WAS OVER WITH ONE FORMAL SOUNDING KNOCK AT THE DOOR

AND THEY NEVER SAID WHAT THEY SAY ON TV ABOUT HOW YOU "PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE FELT A THING"



AND NOW I HAVE NOWHERE TO TALK TO



IT'S OK IF YOU'VE GOT A GRAVE...



SOMEWHERE YOU CAN VISIT

Loving Memory of HERBERT THE BELOVED SON OF EDWARD AND MA. AGED 39 YEARS "GONE BUT NOT

A PLACE FOR CASUAL CONVERSATION

I COULD LEAN UP AGAINST YOU ... TELL YOU ABOUT MY DAY

JOKE THAT YOU NEVER RESPONDED MUCH ANYWAY







BUT WE SCATTERED YOU



YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE EVERYWHERE NOW



BUT YOU CAN'T TALK TO EVERYWHERE



OR  
WALKING  
TO THE  
SHOPS

IT'S TOO CONSPICUOUS



YOU CAN'T BICKER  
WITH YOURSELF IN THE  
SUPERMARKET...



OVER TOO MUCH TIME SPENT  
SQUEEZING THE VEGETABLES

PEOPLE WOULD THINK YOU'RE MAD

I CAN'T CALL YOUR OLD NUMBER



CAN'T DELETE IT EITHER.



SO MANY CONVERSATIONS LEFT TO HAVE AND NOWHERE TO HAVE THEM



THE STARS ARE DEAD  
AREN'T THEY?



CAPTURE THEM ON CELLULOID



BUT THEY'RE STILL GONE

I FORM MY HAND INTO AN "OK" SIGN



AND HOLDING IT UP, I LOOK THROUGH THE  
TELESCOPE ONTO OUR LITTLE ISLAND

PEEPING THROUGH THE APERTURE



ONTO  
GLOSSY  
MOMENTS  
TOGETHER

BUT THE SCENES  
JUST REPEAT.



BECOME  
WORN



SLOWLY  
FADE



YOU ARE THE STAR



THE  
FLECK  
INSIDE  
THE  
MARBLE



ON A SHELF TOO HIGH



A WORLD TOO FAR AWAY



ALL I CAN DO IS REMEMBER YOU.





## **Evidence of dissemination**

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/ng-interactive/2014/oct/26/after-life-beth-dawsonobserver-graphic-short-story-prize-2014-runner-up>