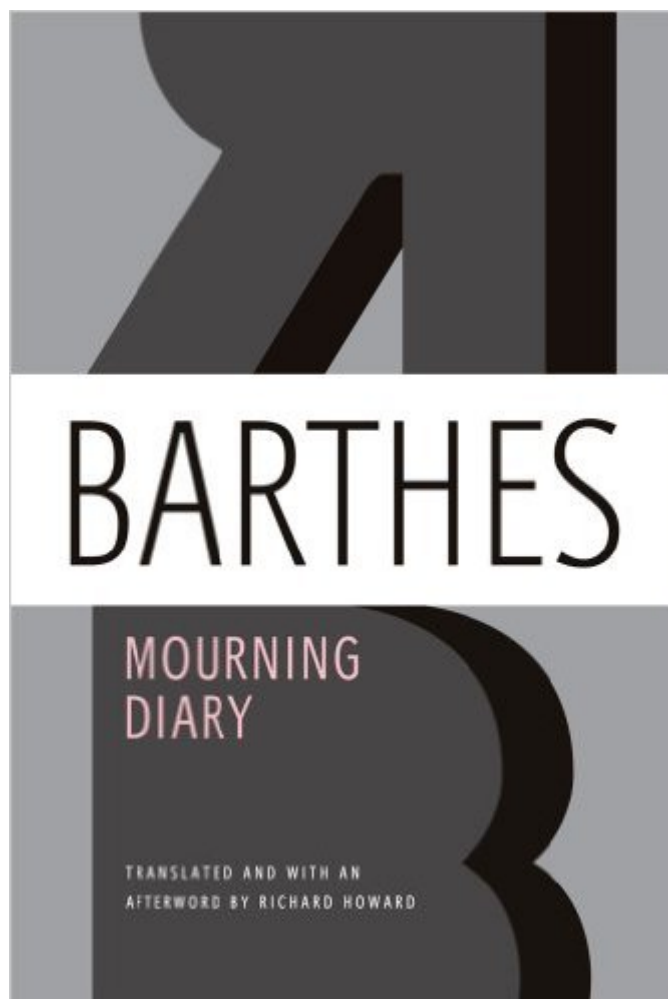


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# Mourning Diary



## Synopsis

"In the sentence 'She's no longer suffering,' to what, to whom does 'she' refer? What does that present tense mean?" • Roland Barthes, from his diary

The day after his mother's death in October 1977, Roland Barthes began a diary of mourning. For nearly two years, the legendary French theorist wrote about a solitude new to him; about the ebb and flow of sadness; about the slow pace of mourning, and life reclaimed through writing. Named a Top 10 Book of 2010 by The New York Times and one of the Best Books of 2010 by Slate and The Times Literary Supplement, *Mourning Diary* is a major discovery in Roland Barthes's work: a skeleton key to the themes he tackled throughout his life, as well as a unique study of grief—intimate, deeply moving, and universal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Roland Barthes' *Mourning Diary* is the most accurate, poignant written account of how grief is experienced. Barthes does not revert to cliché or overwrought metaphor—he does not attempt to apologize for the way he experiences mourning after his mother dies. Instead, these short fragments explore the process of living that one undergoes in the presence of absence that death most acutely is. This book is a treasured companion for any thinking mind who recognizes that "grief" is often most overwhelming when there is no feeling or emotivity involved.

Roland Barthes was French, so his view of death is slightly different from that of Americans, who view of death a sort of tremendous hindrance, an "infection" caught by the survivor, which must be cured or rid of - a sort of psychological dis-ease. Self-help books abound on death, particularly the

death of spouses and children. There are almost no books on the death of parents, but the fact is that the death of parents (particularly if one had a close, loving relationship with the parents) is a dramatic and life-changing event. Nothing will ever be the same after the death of parents. In his diary, Barthes is open about his feelings. Often his entries are one-liners, but always are clearly expressed. It explains the feelings of a survivor moving through mourning, which is something I was grateful for, after having read so many books intended to serve as self-help models on how to overcome the feelings that come with mourning. Whether religiously-based or secular, most books for mourners can't help but bash mourners on the head just a little bit about how they "must" see the person is in "a better place," and how they should start taking steps to "move on" and away from the person that passed. They dwell on this, while softening the blow by saying that one shouldn't hurry. Prodding the mourner to stop it already, as if the mourner could stop the mourning behavior, or as if mourning were some sort of self-imposed toxic behavior, is what most books about death focus on. It can make a mourner feel a bit crazy to have this subtle get-over-it encouragement. Mourning is neither self-imposed, nor is it toxic to feel what is natural to be felt upon losing a very loved person that was an integral part of one's life. This is not a book for anyone who believes living in denial about his/her emotions and feelings is preferable, and who opts to push those feelings deeply inside him or herself to a place where these emotions can reside forever, never understood or acknowledged. This book was a relief to find.

Unlike a few of the recent Barthes publications his estate is digging up, this one is a gem. I'd give it five stars but I tend to save that for complete masterpieces. It could be five though. He hits on subtle feelings that elude most writers, especially on a topic such as this one, that could so easily turn corny. If you like Barthes or poetic writing and detest self-help books this one should be a great fit.

I really liked this book. More than a critical or philosophical text, this is a window to enter into Barthes' head since the moment his mother died. However, I think that this text might shed light on other Barthes's books as *Camera Lucida*. It is a very personal book, intimate, but with a really good reflection about life and death

I can tell how special the relationship was that Barthes had with his mother. It's very touching. She truly was the most important person in his life. Barthes is able to show vulnerability and sadness in a way that isn't always present in these types of books.

An account of grief as unpredictable and scattershot as the feeling itself - captured in small memories, stray thoughts, moments where Barthes believed he couldn't go on. A great book.

Few could describe the journey of mourning as Barthes can. Beautifully written.

Had to write a paper and it came too late.

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