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There is no Love of Life Without Despair of Life

“Without cafes and newspapers, it would be difficult to travel. A paper printed in our own language, a place to rub shoulders with others in the evenings enable us to imitate the familiar gestures of the man we were at home, who, seen from a distance, seems so much a stranger. For what gives value to travel is fear. It breaks down a kind of inner structure we have. One can no longer cheat — hide behind the hours spent at the office or at the plant (those hours we protest so loudly, which protect us so well from the pain of being alone). I have always wanted to write novels in which my heroes would say: “What would I do without the office?” or again: “My wife has died, but fortunately I have all these orders to fill for tomorrow.” Travel robs us of such refuge. Far from our own people, our own language, stripped of all our props, deprived of our masks (one doesn’t know the fare on the streetcars, or anything else), we are completely on the surface of ourselves. But also, soul-sick, we restore to every being and every object its miraculous value. A wom-

an dancing without a thought in her head, a bottle on a table, glimpsed behind a curtain: each image becomes a symbol. The whole of life seems reflected in it, insofar as it summarizes our own life at the moment. When we are aware of every gift, the contradictory intoxications we can enjoy (including that of lucidity) are indescribable. There lay all my love of life: a silent passion for what would perhaps escape me, a bitterness beneath a flame. Each day I would leave this cloister like a man lifted from himself, inscribed for a brief moment in the continuance of the world... There is no love of life without despair of life.”

-Rupi Kaur

The Power of Art

Olivia Laing explores sorrow, loneliness, art, and much more in her memoir, *In The Lonely City: Adventures in the Art of Being Alone*.

“There are so many things that art can’t do. It can’t bring the dead back to life, it can’t mend arguments between friends, or cure AIDS, or halt the pace of climate change. All the same, it does have some extraordinary functions, some odd negotiating ability between people, including people who never meet and yet who infiltrate and enrich each other’s lives. It does have a capacity to create intimacy;

it does have a way of
healing wounds,

and better yet of making it apparent that not
all wounds need healing

and not all scars are

ugly.

If I sound adamant it is because I am speaking from personal experience. When I came to New York I was in pieces, and though it sounds perverse, the way I recovered a sense of wholeness was not by meeting someone or by falling in love, but rather by handling the things that other people had made, slowly absorbing by way of this contact the fact that loneliness, longing, does not mean one has failed, but simply that one is alive.”

-Olivia Laing

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"It has been one of the greatest and most difficult years of my life. i learned everything is temporary. moments. feelings. people. flowers. i learned love is about giving- everything- and letting it hurt. i learned vulnerability is always the right choice because it is easy to be cold in a world that makes it so very difficult to remain soft.

I learned all things come in twos: life and death, pain and joy, sugar and salt, me and you. it is the balance of the universe. it has been the year of hurting so bad but living so good, making friends out of strangers, making strangers out of friends, learning [sweet tea] will fix just about everything and for the pains it can't, there will always be my mother's arms. We must learn to focus on warm energy, always. soak our limbs in it and become better lovers to the world, for if we can't learn to be kinder to each other how will we ever learn to be kinder to the most desperate parts of ourselves."

-Rupi Kaur