

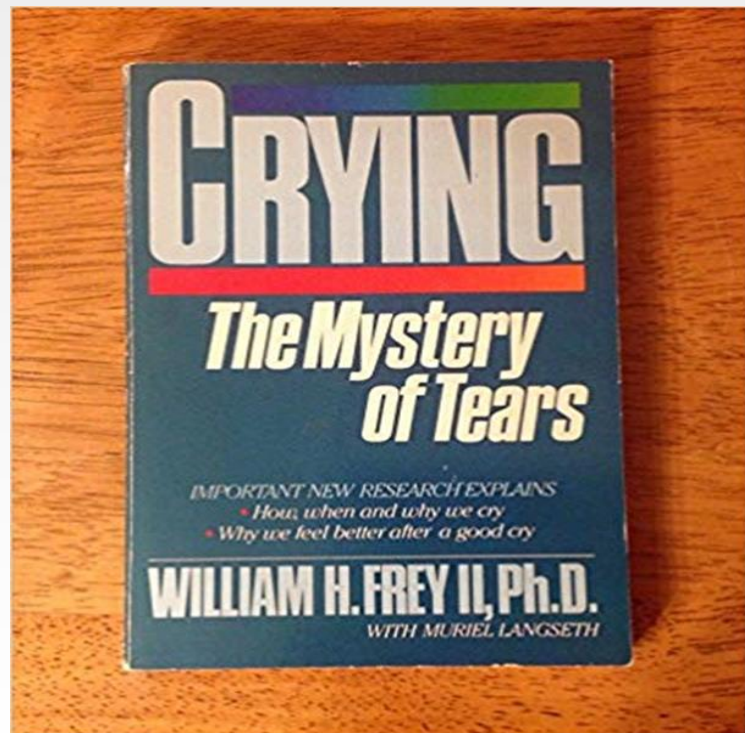
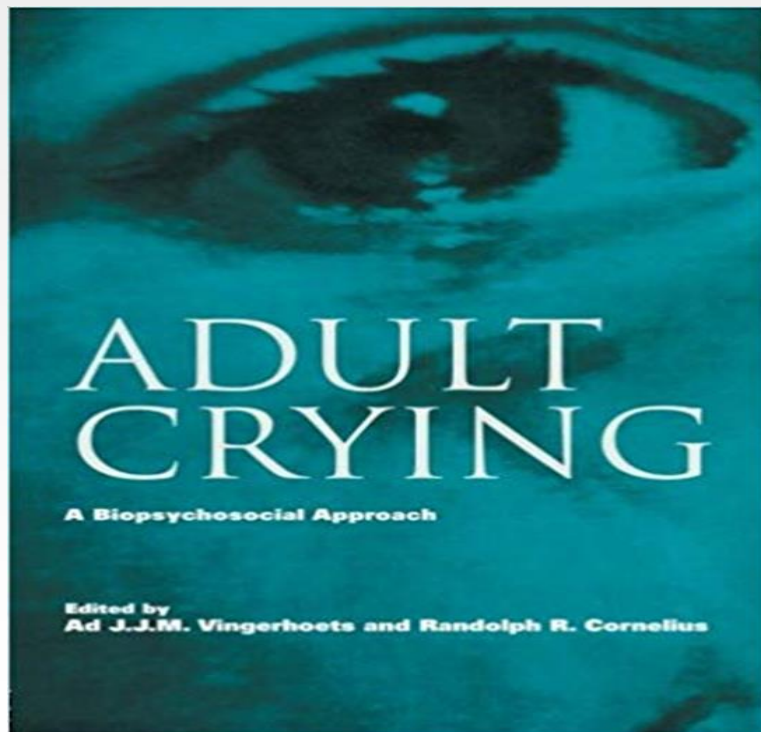


**Title: “*Gratia Lacrymarum*’?” From Trauma to Tears:
Representations and Functions of Crying in Toni
Morrison’s *Home* and *God Help the Child*”
University of Silesia in Katowice- Poland
Conference: Emotions: The Engines of History
November 2018**

François d’Assise Khéyane Tine



➤ “Midnight black, Sudanese black” or “crow-black” (*God Help the Child*, 3; 6)





études littéraires françaises

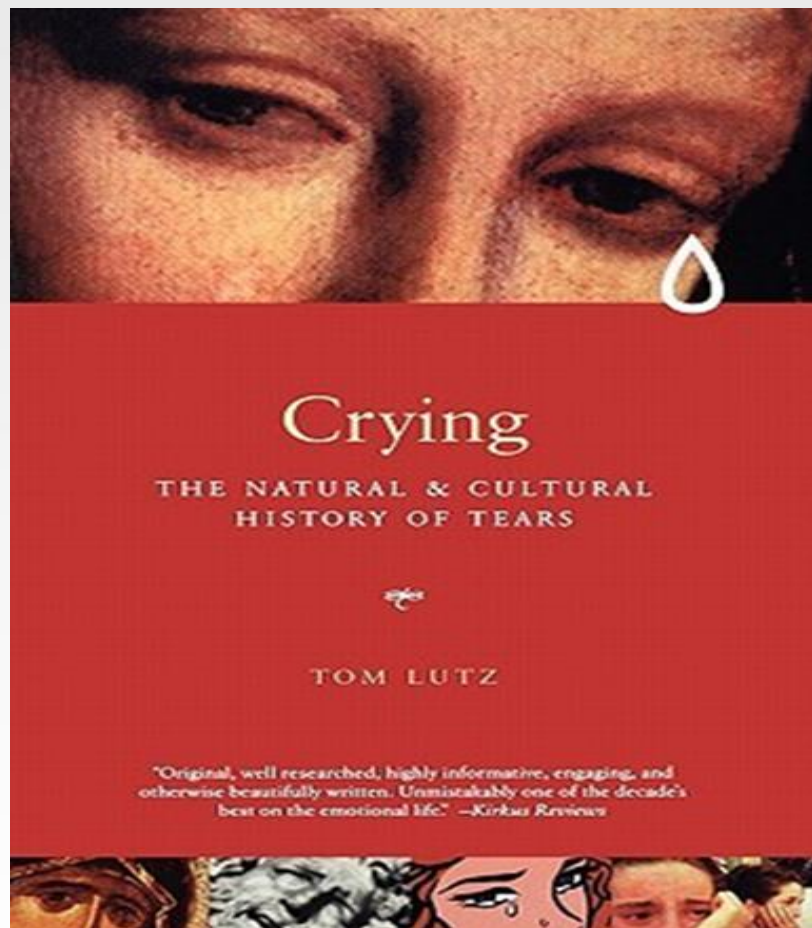
Tears and Weeping

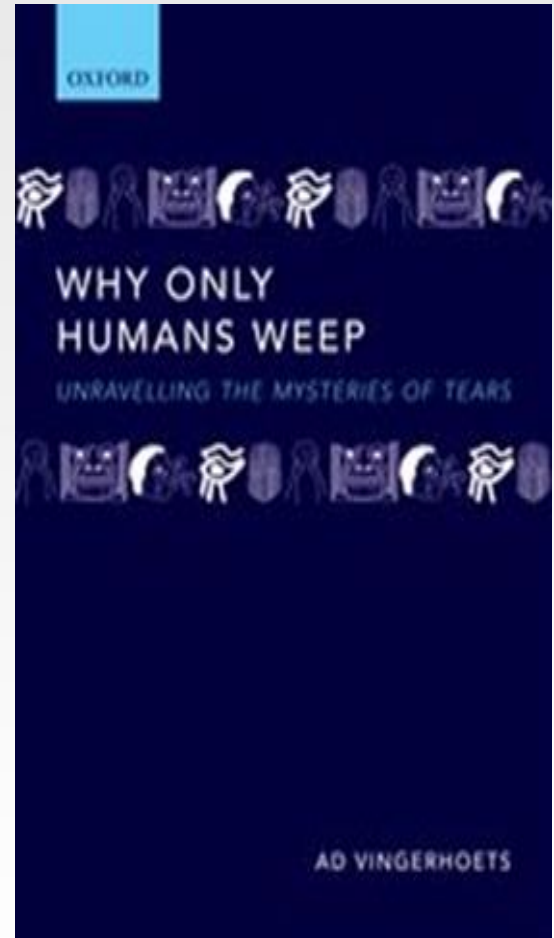
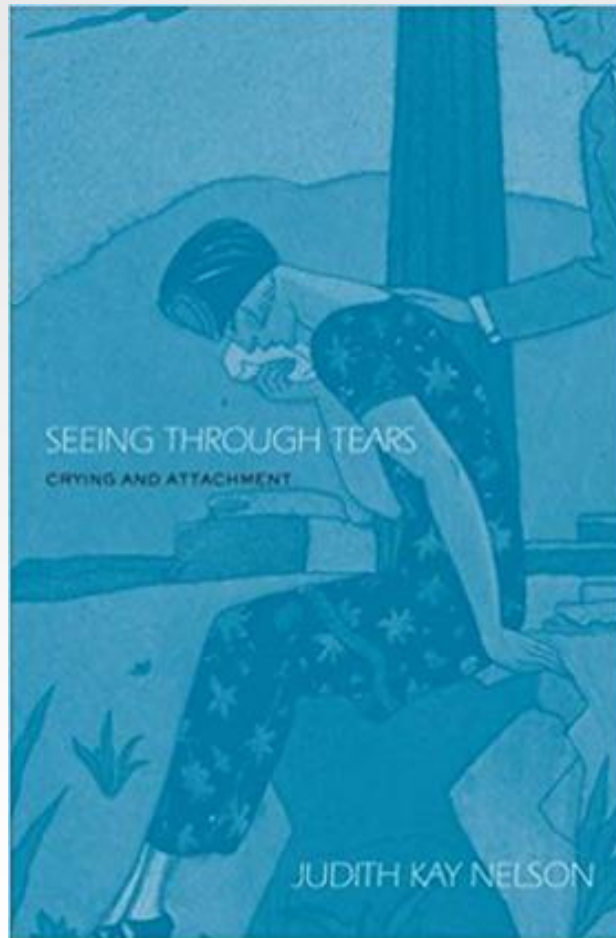
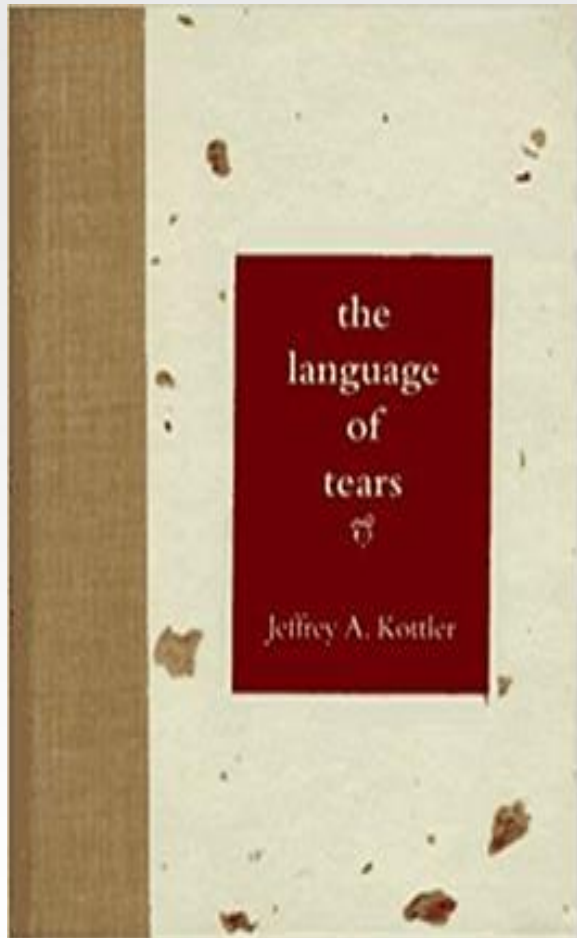
An Aspect of Emotional Climate
Reflected in
Seventeenth-Century French Literature

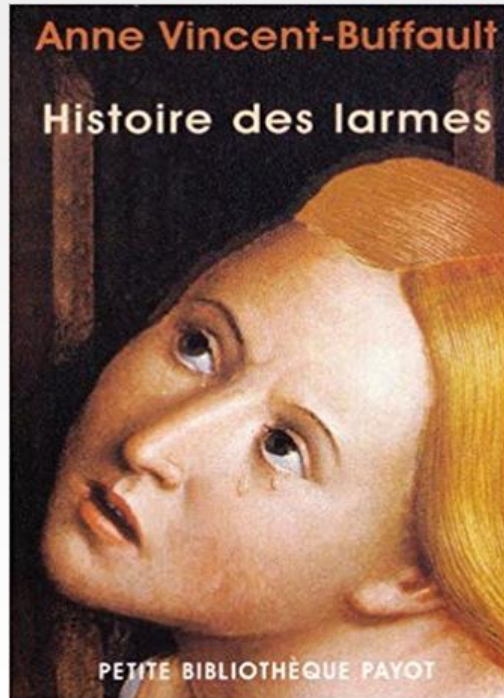
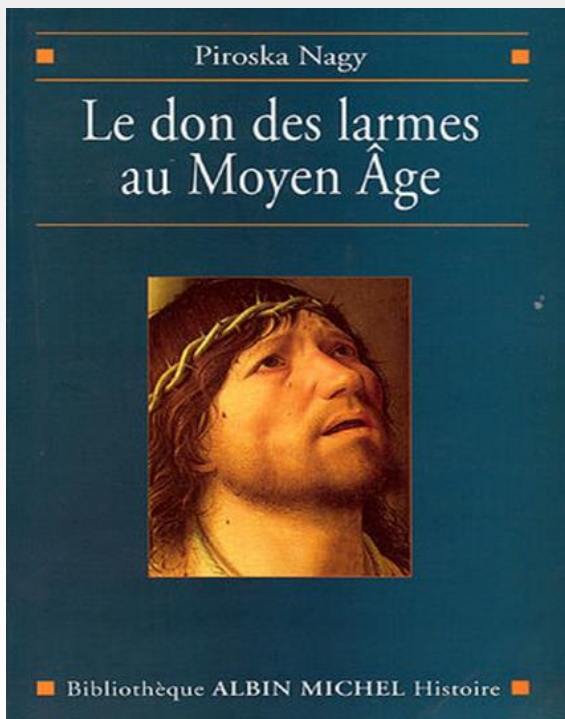
by Sheila Page Bayne

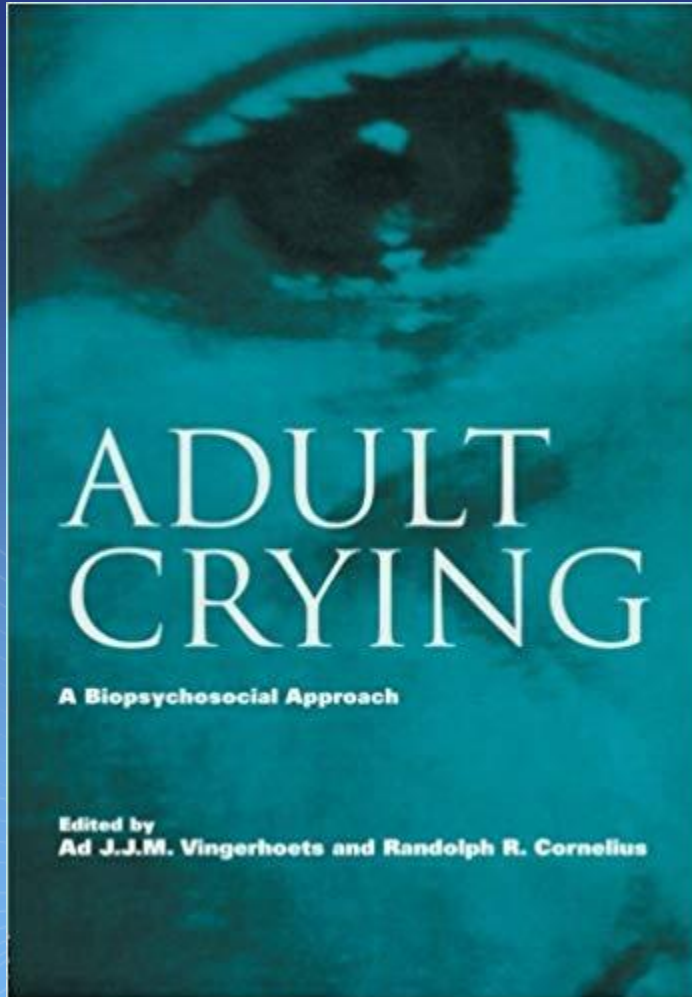
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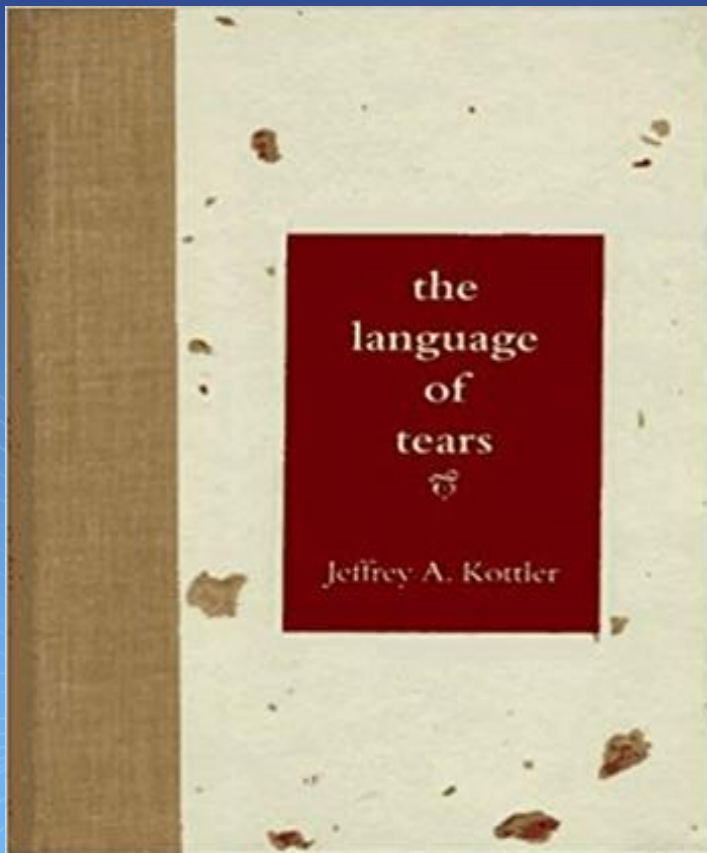


Tears as “a discharge of energy” and “helps to physically restore the biochemical conditions for emotional well-being.”

(Kottler and Montgomery 2012: 13; 7)



Tears express complex, contradictory desires, then, and we cry at least in part *because it makes us feel better*. ... By encouraging us to shift our attention from our thoughts to our bodies, *crying can wash away the psychic pain* we feel simply by diverting our attention from it. ... our tears can be *our deliverance* even as they express our *distress*. (Lutz 1999: 23; emphasis mine)

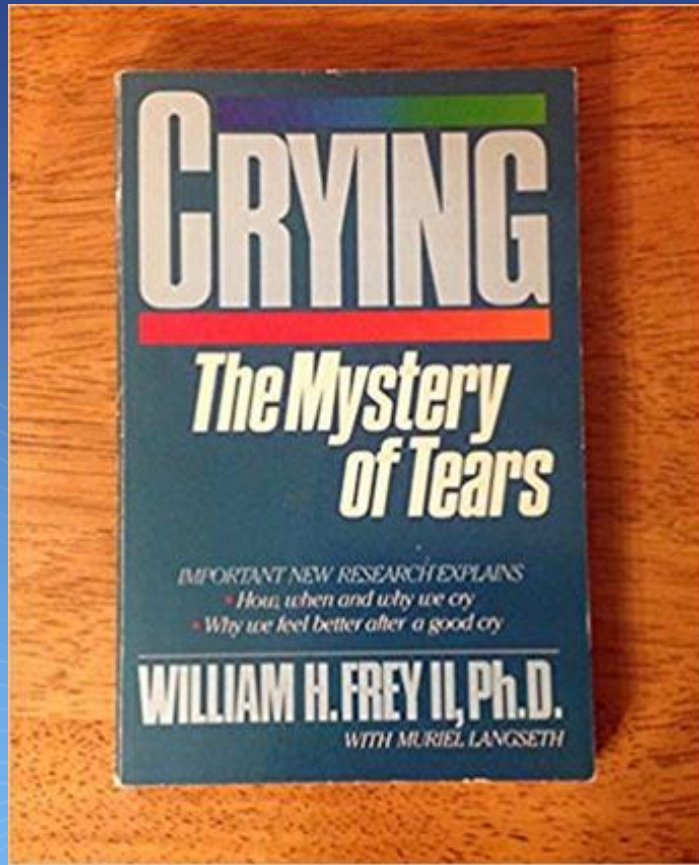


The **therapeutic value of crying** is often found in its power to leach out painful memories of the past. If there is one thing that people consistently say about the ways their tears are helpful to them, it is that they are a means of *letting go of haunting images*. Whereas the previous entry in our dictionary of tears refers to reminiscences that continue to be haunting, this type of tears includes crying that leads to some **resolutions of past conflicts** or some **relief** in present circumstances. (Kottler 1996: 33; emphasis mine)

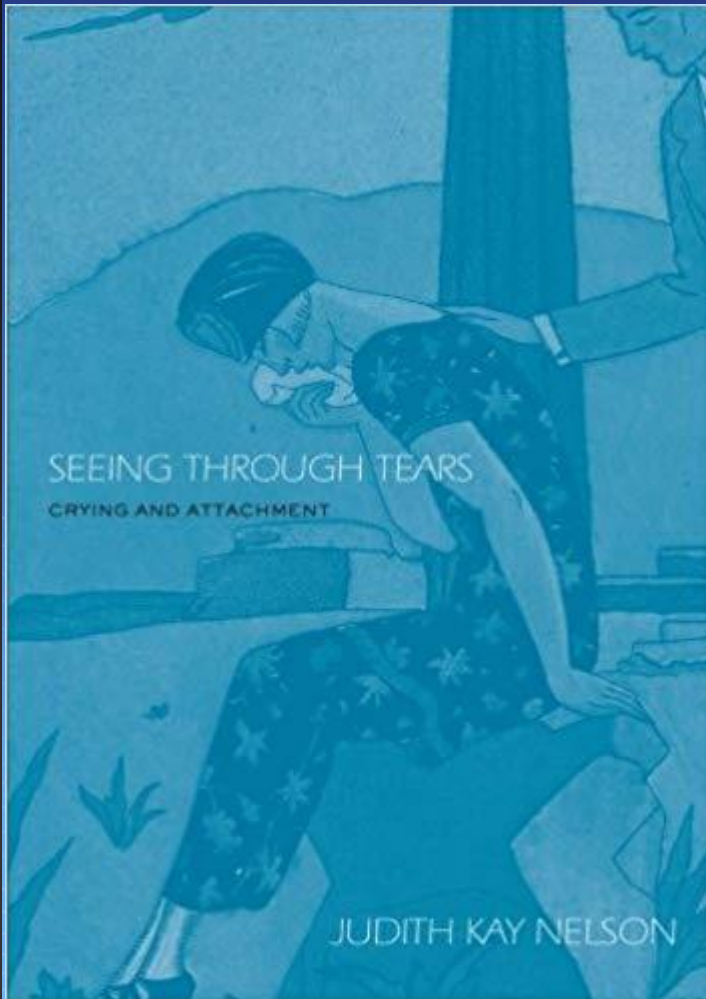


For the first time after all those years, I **cried**. **Cried** and **cried** and cried until I fell asleep. When I woke up I reminded myself that **freedom** is never free. You have to fight for it. Work for it and make sure you are able to handle it.

Now I think of it, that black girl did do me a **favor**. Not the foolish one she had in mind, not the money she offered, but the **gift** that neither of us planned: **the release of tears unshed for fifteen years**. No more bottling up. No more filth. *Now* I am **clean** and **able**.
(*God Help the Child*, 70)



Randolph Cornelius suggests, “weeping appears to function as a signal, that bonds of attachments are in danger of being broken or have been broken and effectively reestablishes attachment because it is perceived to be involuntary and uncontrollable.” (Cornelius qt in Frey 1985: 123)



Crying is above all a relationship behavior, a way to help us get close and not simply a vehicle for emotional expression or release. We do not cry because we need to get rid of pain, but we need connection with our caregivers—literal, internal, fantasized, or symbolic—in order to accept and heal from our pain and grief. Crying is not about what we let out but about whom we let in.

(Nelson 2005 : 6 ; italics in original)

[T]ears have a life of their own. They come unbidden or, conversely, elude us even though all the requisite emotions are present along with a strong desire to weep. As a spontaneous behavior operating outside exclusive conscious control, crying is of a different order than other expressions of emotion, verbal as well as nonverbal. (Nelson 2005: 11)



As Nelson remarks, crying has a “restorative, creative, and cleansing power” and it can help to “recover from the hard things that happen to us” (Nelson 2005: 104).



“Come on girl, Don’t cry,” whispered Frank

“Why not? I can be miserable if I want to. You don’t need to try and make it go away. It shouldn’t go away. It’s just as sad as it ought to be and I’m not going to hide from what’s true just because it hurts”. Cee wasn’t sobbing anymore, but the tears were still running down her cheeks.

Frank sat down, clasped his hands and leaned his forehead on them. (Home, 131) (Home, 131)



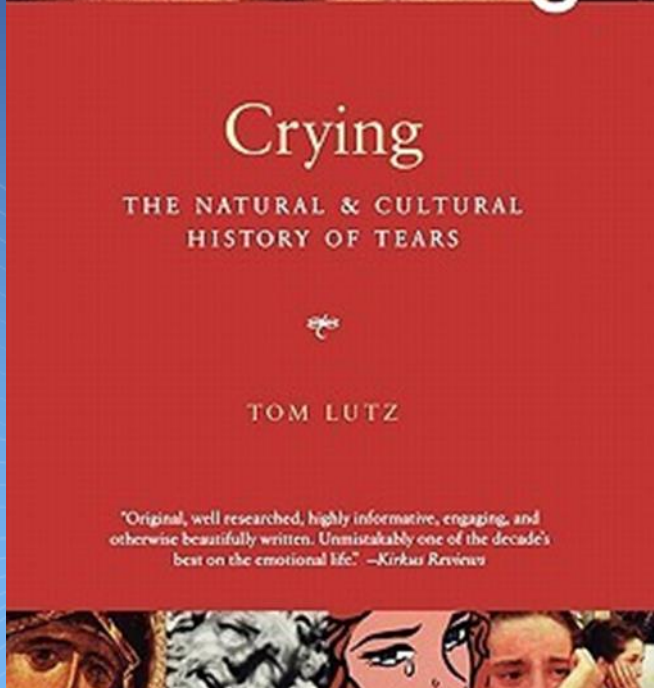
Frank stepped outside. Walking back and forth in the front yard, he felt a fluttering in his chest. Who would do that a young girl? And a doctor? What the hell for? His eyes burned and he blinked rapidly to forestall what could have become the crying he had not done since he was a toddler. Not even with Mike in his arms or whispering to Stuff had his eyes burned that way. True, hos version was occasionally deceitful, but he had not cried. Not once. (*Home*, 132)



“fresh and ancient, safe and demanding” (*Home*, 132)



“Open crying can be childish, or tragic, or peevish, or hysterical, but hidden tears are heroic.” (Lutz 1999: 293).





THANKS

