

NWRPA Newsletter July 2018

Three Words in Therapy: Grief, Rage and Memorialisation

Friday 13 July 2018

This evening was introduced and organised by Paul Melia, therapist at Therapy in Manchester and also one of the organisers of the NWRPA. Presenting a structured theme at the same time as conducting a free flowing conversation is not as easy as Paul made it look. You can visit his website at <https://therapyinmanchester.co.uk/>

His discussion of grief, rage and memorialisation was centred on two video clips. The first was by Judith Butler, an American philosopher and gender theorist, on grief and destructiveness. The second was the BBC's Newsnight's report on the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire. This programme was about creating a memorial for the bereaved.

For Judith Butler on rage and grief go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxyabzopQi8>

To watch Memorialising Grenfell Tower-BBC Newsnight go to:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4qY3eAj1Tc>

On the first anniversary of the Grenfell Tower Fire BBC Newsnight reported on proposals for a memorial to the victims. The purpose for the memorial was that victims should not be forgotten and that the bereaved are helped to bear their grief. People from Grenfell went to New York to see and discuss the memorial for 9/11 at the site of the Twin Towers.

Judith Butler anchors her thoughts about grief and rage in Sigmund Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) and his idea of the compulsion to repeat. She asks what is the relation between grief and rage and why sorrow can bring about a collapse from rage.

What am I without you? We not only grieve for the loss of a person through death. We can grieve the loss of pets, possessions, our work, divorce, loss of an ideal and so on. We are preoccupied with getting over loss and moving on. But grief is not a simple as this and we can feel we are OK and then suddenly jump back into grieving. As W.H. Auden said in his poem *Funeral Blues stop all the clocks*.

Judith Butler, following Ann Carson, believes grief is unbearable and we strike out, strike back and want to kill to obliterate loss. In fantasy rage rids us of passivity and vulnerability and we mire the world in our sense of devastation. Everything is already destroyed so you cannot feel worse through rage. Our anguish is violent until we let it collapse in to grief.

What am I without you? The loves in our life mean we are decentred; we are not the centre of our world. After loss we fear that we cannot live without our loved one. We will collapse and fall. We become enthralled with the other after we lose them.

The Newsnight report was about memorialisation. The ex-residents and neighbours of Grenfell only have to look or walk outside to see the fire blackened Tower. Some have a wish to demolish the Tower, others to turn it into a long term memorial. There is a proposal to rename the local Tube station after the Tower.

The differing views are reminiscent of the views of those bereaved in 9/11. Some families of victims love the memorial, walls and fountains. Others think it too impersonal and irreverent. It should not be a place where people eat their lunch.

In the Memorialisation process central and local government have formally agreed to be guided by survivors and the bereaved. An NHS Wellbeing Team offers support and is particularly concerned for children who will live with the consequences of the fire for longer. This process of memorialisation seems to be displacing the previous generations' formal and sober acts of public mourning epitomised by Remembrance Sunday.

Thank you to Paul Melia for this compelling and engaging seminar which was a live example of how therapists can think about important public events.