

On the Political Nature of Leftovers

Foellmer, S

Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

Original citation & hyperlink:

Foellmer, S 2018, 'On the Political Nature of Leftovers' *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, vol 22, no. 8, pp. 77-85

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2017.1433383>

DOI [10.1080/13528165.2017.1433383](https://doi.org/10.1080/13528165.2017.1433383)

ISSN 1352-8165

ESSN 1469-9990

Publisher: Taylor and Francis

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts on 16 April 2018, available online: <http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/13528165.2017.1433383>

Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author(s) and/ or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

This document is the author's post-print version, incorporating any revisions agreed during the peer-review process. Some differences between the published version and this version may remain and you are advised to consult the published version if you wish to cite from it.

Susanne Foellmer

On the Political Nature of Leftovers

Out of respect for the request of the people affected by the fire of Grenfell Tower no photographs are added to the text

Friday, June 30th 2017: The front page of the British weekly magazine The New European consists mainly of one large picture. It is an aerial shot of the region around Latimer Road, North Kensington, London. Red brick buildings in front, some leafy green trees at the side, a rail way cutting through the image, topped by a cloudy blue sky, and all of it labeled with a single word: 'Austerity'. The 'i' in the word is formed by a particular part of the urban landscape, a screaming accusation within an ensemble of civic 'geo-normality': It is the burnt leftover of Grenfell Tower, which succumbed to a devastating fire during the night of June, 14th 2017, killing more than eighty of its inhabitants so far.

My recent research investigates remnants and vestiges as search formulae in the field of dance and performance art in primarily two respects – so far. To begin with, leftovers can be regarded as temporal figures, 'conveyors' that emerge as traces of performances, pointing to delimitations in aesthetic spaces of experience such as museums, (performance) videos or other recording media. Thus, leftovers appear either as literal vestiges of bygone dance events or performances (like the nails of Chris Burden's performance Trans-Fixed (1974) [note]1, displayed in exhibitions afterwards), or as re-mediations in re-enactments or other medial forms. Especially the re-enactment and re-performance formats steer the gaze into a second, more figural direction, towards repetitions in the sense of aesthetic procedures. The focus here lies on practices of remaining within performances themselves, that is, in the attempts to save and reconstruct so called ephemeral stage events, or in acts of unfolding in a field of aesthetic references of dance's and performance's (recent) history, as well as practices of repetition and slowing down in the course of aesthetic strategies within a performance itself.

The double signification of remnants and vestiges explores the controversial figure of leftovers as an at first seemingly useless entity that is always already gone when one deals with that which has been left behind: the 'litter' encountered is instantly being transferred into a hermeneutic field (again), thus depriving it of its 'meaninglessness' as mere waste, dragging along traces of past events that become immediately re-

contextualised through the contemporary gaze. Following this ontological set-up, leftovers provoke questions of what is actually going to be preserved, of what is left behind unnoticed, and who or what selects and decides about it. Thus, besides the temporal and literal notion of leftovers and its figural attribute when dealing with dance and performance art, a third level comes to the fore: that of the political nature of leftovers and its (biopolitical) agency, which is then associated with questions of worth and value.

Following a political approach, we can stay with in the field of the arts, discussing questions of power relations and selection processes of archives and the like, or we can leave the area and turn towards recent social and political situations in which certain forms of leftovers play a prominent role – and this is what I will do now. Switching now from the area of the arts towards socio-political concerns seems at first, and in an academic context, to be an improper move, even more so since the particular leftover I am dealing with here, namely Grenfell Tower, certainly resists any easy, case-study-induced appropriation from a perspective directed by the arts and humanities. So, I won't do this. However – and because I am motivated by several artistic and academic contributions that place leftovers in the realm of politicality –, I believe that in the current times of political extremism and ongoing social precarisation, scholars and academics should sometimes leave the comfort zone and speak about what concerns us, what bothers us, and what I simply cannot just push aside when thinking about my particular research topic in the context of contemporary times. But how to reflect on this catastrophic event without exploiting it for the sake of an academic argument? In the following text I am approaching the event of Grenfell Tower by investigating chosen critical theories, and the voices of (former) residents and activists, in order to shed some light on the social and political implications triggered by the figure of leftovers, shifting between discursive contextualizations and personal perceptions.

What happened on June 14th 2017 in one of the wealthiest boroughs in London [{{note}}]² has been extensively covered by the media. In this essay, I briefly try to reflect on why and how this appalling, overtly visible leftover provokes a re-thinking of biopolitics and agency, while shortly linking those to notions of theatre, namely tragedy, which is rhetorically used to downplay the level of destruction of sociality and, in it, the state's responsibility towards its citizens.

Neoliberalism devours its residents

These days, neoliberalism is widely discussed, in academic conferences in the fields of dance and performance studies, for instance at the conference Dialogues on Dance, Philosophy, and Performance in the Contemporary Neoliberal Moment (Coventry University, June 1st-2nd 2017), or in the context of Performance Studies international's conference Overflow (University Hamburg/Kampnagel, June 8th-11th 2017). Colleagues are investigating questions of communality within a 'crisis of solidarity' and possible choreographic counter-strategies as a 'critical practice' (Colin 2017), or are examining artistic projects that strive to react artistically to, for example, one of the consequences of neoliberal capitalist politics, namely migration (Marjani 2017). Especially since the financial crisis in 2008, the political situation and its social consequences have been increasingly reflected in the arts, and thus in the realm of academia as well – dance and performance are experiencing a heightened politisation these days, pushing both the arts and the academy towards timely and meaningful contributions to current discourses. But how to speak about Grenfell Tower? How to deal with it from an arts and humanity's perspective, thereby leaving the 'secure' ground of the arts?

September, 20th: I am visiting Lancaster West Estate, the place where Grenfell Tower is still standing, already clearly visible when you arrive by tube at Latimer Road. Having long been hesitant about my motives, a friend finally convinces me to go there ('You have to see it.'). For sure, one cannot enter the location directly, as it is secured with huge temporary metal walls – for security reasons. I am wandering through the surrounding streets. It seems to be a quite pleasant area to live in, with some newer-looking lower red brick buildings, obviously consisting of smaller flats, and quiet streets lined with trees. I am asking myself what I had expected, after the media reported about this being a residential area for people on low or no income.

The debate around welfare and especially social housing is one of the topics the media, politicians and activist groups are linking to the catastrophe, itself being the devastating result of an ongoing pressure through real estate trading in a neoliberal economy, going along with the increasing neglect of (safe) housing as a fundamental social right. Even after the "wake-up call" of the fire the government still 'does nothing to address the chronic shortage of low-cost housing', so the activist group radical housing network:

'In London, millions of people are stuck in poor housing on extortionate rents while developers game the system, while only a fraction – 13% – of new houses announced last year met even the low standard for 'affordability' set by the Conservatives.' (radical housing network 2017)

The conflation of human catastrophe and individual trauma, and the governmental failures of providing a satisfactory social welfare system are also reflected in Grenfell Tower's nearby area.

The streets surrounding the tower are covered with what seems to be a materialised discourse on the fire that happened in summer. On the one hand, the corners of the pavements, some fences, and the entrance to the nearby Notting Hill Methodist Church are full of temporary memorials: Flowers, now dry and limp, notes and yellow faded post-its mourning loved ones, words of affection and support, plush toys that heartbreakingly recall the many children killed in the flames. These slowly rotting mementos are surrounded by trees that are crocheted around with garlands of yellow woolen hearts, wet and saggy: sedimented manifestations of mourning that are now slowly becoming debris themselves. On the other hand, some house walls are full of announcements for neighbourhood meetings, at which the official examination into the catastrophe is followed and discussed, press clippings covering the (non-)reactions of the Borough Council and the politicians in charge as well as posters giving voice to enraged citizens: they speak of 'social murder', 'manslaughter' and the fact that the council, property developers and the Tenant Management Organisation were obviously rather concerned about the tower looking nice in comparison to the more wealthy neighbourhood of South Kensington (and therefore cheaply cladding the skyscraper) instead of taking care of the already often claimed (insufficient) safety of the tower's inhabitants. [note]3

And I am seeing the tower itself, a black charred mass extending into the sky. The atmosphere is surprisingly quiet, but then again, what did I expect? Also, it does not seem that much work had been done on the tower so far: Only once in a while a soft 'clank' is audible, giving account that 'clean up' efforts are seemingly underway. I am thinking about what will happen to the ruin, this massive leftover, this remainder of almost unimaginable horror, harm and pain. Could it be a 'monument of social injustice', or, as Jeremy Corbyn (leader of Labour, in opposition to the Conservative Government at the time) put it in a speech during the Labour Party's conference, a

'tragic monument', demonstrating the failures of current politics? (Rodger 2017) But for whom exactly?

But before I investigate this further and re-examine the notions of biopolitics and agency, I want to briefly rewind and address situations of (academic and human) un/speakability as well as the politics of grieving in the face of such catastrophes.

How to speak about and accredit loss and grief?

In her book Precarious Life (2004), Judith Butler explores violence and mourning, stimulated by the events of 9/11. Deeply distressed by the attack on New York's Twin Towers and the government reactions and political consequences that followed (Butler 2004: 20, 28), she initially develops the problem of (linguistic) expression in the light of catastrophic events, of loss and mourning (23). However, she does not give in to an idea of the unspeakable in the face of human disaster that escapes any possibility of utterance, but points out the problem of (academic) speech when considering events that burst the frame of understanding and intelligibility, and the relation of the subject and the 'Other':

[T]he very "I" is called into question by its relation to the Other, a relation that does not precisely reduce me to speechlessness, but does nevertheless clutter my speech with signs of its undoing. I tell a story about the relations I choose, only to expose, somewhere along the way, the way I am gripped and undone by these very relations. My narrative falters, as it must.' (ibid.)

Hence, Butler also advocates an academic speech that admits and displays its limits and possible failures, and that cannot transform every event into a case or a 'subject' for intelligible argumentation (19). But even more so, such speech has to then purposefully give in to stutters and possible pitfalls in order to avoid the easy option of avoiding discourse – even if it fails to 'grasp' what it wants to speak about, especially when we want to address death, loss and mourning in the realm of human catastrophes.

Given this self-reflective account, Butler points out that even the grievability of a lost life is traversed by distinctions regarding which lives can be accounted for in a memorial. On the basis of the example of an obituary, in memory of two Palestinians killed by Israeli troops, which was rejected by the San Francisco Chronicle, she addresses a separating line that divides lives that can be mourned from those that are not 'worth being noticed', and thus fall out of the discourse of 'human intelligibility' (35):

'[I]f a life is not grievable, it is not quite a life; it does not qualify as a life and it is not worth a note. It is already unburied, if not the unburiable.' (34)

The same problem partly holds true for the victims of Grenfell Tower, where the people are angrily fighting for the council to be honest about the numbers of people killed in the fire (Jones 2017: 8). The problem is exacerbated by the fact that some of the inhabitants had (and have) problems concerning their legal status in the UK, and thus are partially undocumented: 'many people say there were just as many "unpeople" killed – illegals who were living under the radar, in sub-let flats, up to twenty at a time.' (ibid.) Surviving family members are now worried about asking what happened to their lost relatives and those who are still missing. They fear entering the spotlight of the police: 'They cannot ask vital questions about their dead, as many of them were not meant to be here.' (ibid.) Falling out of the speakable, the documentable, the discourse is thus a movement of 'dehumanization', as Butler puts it (Butler 2004: 35). What is more, Butler even attributes that those deaths are 'unmarkable' and thus cannot be accounted for as a grievable human life when it comes to the refusal of public memory of certain (ethnic) groups of people (ibid.).

I would like to further sharpen Butler's argument as the catastrophe of Grenfell Tower actually unearthed the social and legal entanglements of the (im)possibility of publicly mourning your loved ones, as some of the media coverages expounded, thus already creating a public discourse on these problems. In this respect, death is clearly marked by public media as such, also including the lost lives of so-called illegal immigrants. However, not being personally, individually able to speak and ask about your dead relatives and friends is not so much connected to an unmarkability as such, but rather to the impossibility of finding consolation in addressing them by their proper names. This un-nameability is actually highlighted by the press, other than in Butler's chosen case of the San Francisco Chronicle (and other media), which serves as pars pro toto for the media reporting on the following interventions for example in Afghanistan:

'we have to consider how the norm governing who will be a grievable human is circumscribed and produced in these acts of permissible and celebrated public grieving, [and] how they sometimes operate in tandem with a prohibition on the public grieving of others' lives' (Butler 2014: 37).

To Butler, being able to talk about your lost ones and creating a narrative 'provide[s] the [...] means by which "the human" in its grievability is established.' (38). However, one could ask why we have to wait for human catastrophes in order to reinstate the

human, which obviously does not apply for everybody. Even more so, catastrophes like the one that happened in and to Grenfell Tower show the brutality of a highly economised social system, that considers the health and safety of (some of its) citizens as a negligible resource. [note]4

From bio- to necropolitics. And agency?

The way Butler claims an ethical perspective is not lastly derived from the facticity of the physical and 'social vulnerability' of bodies (Butler 2004: 20), and thus the question of biopolitics comes into play. However, one can ask: How exactly do lives matter when they cannot even take part in the mourning of the bereaved with their proper names, and when the means to govern one's own life seems to be (partly) taken from the hands of subjects – as the enquiries into the causes of the fire revealed, when it became clear that early warnings of possible fire hazards had been repeatedly ignored by the authorities (Foster 2017).

Accordingly, Marina Gržinić and Šefik Tatlić claim a rethinking of Michel Foucault's paradigm of biopolitics in the realm of the 21st century and late capitalism, bringing the notion of 'necropolitics' to the fore: Biopolitics, they state, is a concept that is linked to a First World, capitalistic Western society that still operated under the regime of 'taking care' in the 1970s (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 23) [note]5. With Achille Mbembe, who develops an opposing concept when faced with ongoing wars in Africa, as well as Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, they highlight a paradigmatic, political change towards 'necropolitics' and the 'concept of [contemporary] necrocapitalism [...], which organizes its forms of capital accumulation around dispossession and the subjugation of life to the power of death' (ibid.). Other than 'providing a good life' by means of (biopolitical) self-governance, necropolitics – especially in the African context – purposefully deal with the 'creation of deathscapes' in which people are subjected to conditions within which they can hardly make a living (25). Moreover, Gržinić and Tatlić claim that this is not only the problem of other, so-called Third World countries, but a political and thus social condition that has already intruded and is affecting so called First World Western societies as well (26).

In his case study on the Chicago heat wave in 1995, in which more than 700 people died, sociologist Eric Klinenberg argues that death and disaster is inextricably linked to social drawbacks (2002). He takes the dead bodies into account literally, in this case revealing that most of the victims were elderly and/or black people, living in poor

housing conditions often with no access to reasonable cooling devices (ibid.). According to Klinenberg, these dead bodies ‘matter’ in giving evidence to the social conditions that were often ignored, untargeted or even neglected: ‘The bodies substantiate the danger of everyday life for hidden urban isolates and others whose mobility has been restricted by illness and fear.’ (ibid.) Regarding the gross neglect of living conditions in Chicago – and obviously at Grenfell Tower as well – one can ask to what extent Foucault’s scheme of biopolitics in the so-called First World is still applicable, as Gržinić and Tatlić point out especially when it comes to the question of political agency.

In his explanations of power relations, Foucault stresses the fact that they do not consist of a simplified system of oppressor versus oppressed, but that they exist in a balanced connection based on the prerequisite ‘that “the other” (the one over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as the subject who acts; and that [...] a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible interventions may open up.’ (Foucault 2000: 340)

In the case of Grenfell Tower, one could ask to what extent action was and is possible. A large part of the problem seems to have been an increasing economisation of society in the last few decades – and with it, of social relations. In an interview on the current political situation in Germany – in the aftermath of the elections on September 24th 2017 – sociologist Wilhelm Heitmeyer emphasises that attributes such as utility, ‘efficiency’ and profitableness not only dominate the discourse of economy but have already intruded our overall ‘living environments’, thus leading to an ‘economic thinking’ (Heitmeyer 2017) [note]6. Socially less advantaged groups such as migrants then apparently represent a kind of ballast that society’s ‘top performers’ are not willing to drag along (Heitmeyer 2017) – and probably want to dispose of as soon as possible. In the limited framework of this essay, I cannot go into depth about how exactly such kinds of social behaviour provoke some human beings to come dangerously close to becoming waste objects that one can get rid of, and thus very close to (historical) situations of fascist propaganda and actions. Humans in this respect are actually becoming a ‘life *without* a [granted] form’ as Gržinić and Tatlić highlight (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 22; emphasis ibid.); they are thus prone to ‘social – and therefore ethnic – cleansing’ as Ed Daffarn, a former tenant and activist of the Grenfell Tower Action Group (GAG) remarks (Platt 2017: 34). Those statements explicitly or implicitly follow the idea of the ‘bare life’, that Giorgio Agamben develops, rethinking Foucault’s idea

of biopolitics, positioning life in the inclusion and exclusion of human beings into or from the political order: 'Bare life remains included in politics in the form of an exception [...] as something that is included solely through an exclusion.' (1998: 11) And this also holds true for Grenfell Tower's so-called 'unpeople': they were residents of the skyscraper, and thus involved in its social life, but became invisible in the face of a 'legal life' – and one that would be grievable. However, with Grenfell Tower, the net of social and power relations does not reveal itself that clearly in between the paradigms Foucault and Agamben unfold when it comes to agency and power.

At first sight, the catastrophe of Grenfell Tower seems to be a tragedy, a terrible disaster that caused numerous casualties. The expression 'tragedy' was often used when reporting and commenting about the fire [note]7. Yet, the theatrical notion of tragedy lends the catastrophe a certain inevitability, and links it to ideas of fate in the face of a devastating adversity that can supposedly only end with the (mournable) death of some or even many. Consequently, journalist Deborah Orr prompts a withdrawal from theatrical attributions in order to steer the focus away from the mere hard fate of the victims and to the causes of the fire itself, thus calling it by the name it deserves: being a social 'atrociousness' (Orr 2017), and hence alluding to an active (politically negligent) force behind the horrible event. However, ancient Greek theatre often rather shows the paralysis of human action. Tragedies like Aeschylus' Agamemnon not only display the thrown-ness of the subject into circumstances, or even a world beyond its own radius of control, but a powerlessness in the face of certain serendipitous events. Even more dreadful, in the case of Grenfell Tower early warnings had been delivered frequently – and remained unanswered in a gruesome Cassandra-like twist, thus lending the labelling of tragedy again its possibly only justified, and horrific reason. Because it soon became clear that the fire at Grenfell Tower precisely did not happen out of the blue, but after many years filled with complaints and warnings regarding the safety of the building. Hence, Grenfell Tower is not just an enormous mishap, leaving behind uninformed victims to their fate, but the result of an ongoing – and in this respect tragic – inertia of the responsible authorities (Platt 2017: 33-34; BBC News 2017).

Returning to Foucault and Agamben, the question of agency, involving subjects in action, versus 'bare lives' cannot be determined that easily. Grenfell Tower's victims had certainly been helpless in the middle of the catastrophe: not because no action preceded the event, but precisely in spite of activist groups that had been formed even in advance, and who were extremely active in campaigning for a safer, healthier and

socially affordable neighbourhood. However, the knot of power relations necessary in Foucault's sense had been broken by one side: the state's organisations that refused to take action *left* the inhabitants *helpless* in the face of safety negligence. Now one could say that a non-action is, however, still an action: one side simply refused to act. Yet, one could go as far as to say that, in the case of Grenfell Tower, the authorities even refused to execute a certain 'governmentality', in Foucault's terms, that is, a maintenance of power relations between the state, population and 'political economy' (Foucault 2000a: 219-20). The important 'open field of possibilities' necessary in Foucault's model of power relations (Foucault 2000: 341) crumbles, as the state authorities withdrew from action by remaining mute to the enquiries, thus depriving members of the population of their ability to act – or rather: *let* their actions prove futile. Even more so, the three-fold scale seems to tilt very much to one side, given that the UK authorities are increasingly handing over their duties to private companies, as in the case of the management of the social housing in Grenfell Tower, who ignored the complaints of tenants as well (Platt 2017: 32). This seems to underline a deferral of power to the economical level, as Gržinić and Tatlić describe, diagnosing (in the case of Africa) 'a new form of relation between capital and power named "private indirect government"' (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 25). Thus, the refusal of action by the authorities and the private bodies of management disrupt the relations of power established by Foucault – while yet at the same time not just reducing the affected people to their 'bare lives', but rather leaving them in a limbo between agency as active engagement and the impossibility to force the reluctant other, that is, the state, into action.

A monument?

In his explorations into minimal art, Georges Didi-Huberman starts with reflections on a tomb, as an example of the non-illustratable. It is a 'volume', a container, that is at the same time empty and not-empty, that 'looks back' in the moment I am regarding it. He depicts the tomb as a

'cavity [un évidement] that touches on inevitability as such: namely the fate of that body that is similar to mine, but whose life, language, movements and ability to rest its eyes on me are lost [vidé de]. And that still gazes at me in a certain sense – in an inevitable sense of loss that is omnipresent here.' (Didi-Huberman 1992: 17; transl. Christopher Langer)

Is Grenfell Tower a monumental tomb, one that does not stop to remind passersby, visitors, and not least and above all the survivors of the horrible night of June, 14th? On the one hand, the charred leftover of the building evokes mixed images in my mind: of devastation and terrible grief, reinforced by the many messages of condolence that have accumulated in the surrounding streets. But it also evokes the inconceivability and incomprehensibility of that which lies behind a tomb, as Didi-Huberman states, and that strikes me here: in its void solidity, concerns about the descriptiveness of this particular 'subject' become blatantly obvious. On the other hand, this tomb is not one that quite literally blurs out that which lies below – because all the residents, the ones who remain alive, and yet are left behind, know precisely what was, and what is left, and who and what has gone. The burnt massive leftover of the tower: in this respect an impossible tomb, and as such an impossible monument? Or rather: A gravestone, abundantly demonstrating the brutal consequences of neoliberal urban planning and politics? [note]8

The friend of mine tells me that he always looks at the burnt tower when he visits his mother who lives in the neighbourhood, and he asks me: 'Why do we always have to see it?' Considering that the dilapidated building is an utterly traumatic experience for those who inhabited it and survived, one can obviously ask: who would benefit from such a monument? Surely not the inhabitants, who would be forced to remember this devastating night again and again. [note]9 Apparently not the residents of South Kensington, for whom (aware of it or not) the cladding was installed in order to let the building look more attractive and thus increase property values in the area. [note]10 So, would it be a memorial for people visiting the place, like me, in order to remind us what social negligence can cause?

Thinking about destroyed buildings serving as a memorial, two well-known ones come into mind immediately, both linked to the destructive bombing forces of World War II: The ruins of Coventry Cathedral, which I am passing almost every day, as I work in this city, and the ones of the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche, which I see quite regularly when I return to my hometown Berlin. Both monuments became powerful symbols for the horrors of war, and especially for peace and reconciliation when the authorities decided not to rebuild but leave them (more or less) as they are in order not to forget what caused its ruination. Coventry Cathedral itself hosts several other memorial statues, like the Choir of Survivors, commemorating the bombing of the city of Dresden, and the Reconciliation Sculpture, designated to the 50th anniversary of

World War II, and being also placed in locations like Berlin and Hiroshima. However, those two memorials are differing significantly from the ruin of Grenfell Tower. As churches, respectively cathedral, they have always been places where on one hand community is publicly re-presented and celebrated – and not only becoming evident rather in the aftermath of (man-made) disaster by groups and inhabitants making clear that social housing cannot be about the sole amassing of people who cannot afford living elsewhere. On the other hand, churches have always been sites of commemoration, especially when it comes to the remembrance of the deceased. Life and death, one could say, is inextricably linked to the conception of the church – which clearly is not a legitimation for its destruction. Dwellings like Grenfell Tower, on the contrary, are initially places of shelter and retreat, of neighbouring – or at least they should serve this function – and often only become famous in a moment of catastrophe. They are sometimes notoriously known for their sheer height, their supposed ugliness, or by being rendered *pars pro toto* as architectural metaphor for social problems. Other than churches, the charred mass of the tower, a terrible mark for many lives lost, does not offer a welcome for consolation, being one of the major functions of sacral places. Grenfell Tower was a place to live, and now it is dead.

Therefore, the tower itself cannot serve as a monument, I would argue, as it is unclear to whom it would speak or what exactly it would conduce to – and for whom it could provide solace. In this respect, it is an *un-monument*, and at the same time a symbolic image, a compressed, though fragile mark: a *char* of social injustice and neoliberal politics, e.g. in the way The New European condenses it when placing the burnt tower at the front of its magazine. Via media distribution, on site, in print and online, Grenfell Tower serves as a powerful icon of the depravations in an economically driven political system.

Questions are now being posed about what should replace the tower. Voices are being raised that claim that the residents should be given a say in the decision (Neate 2017). One idea of an ‘appropriate’ monument that is currently circulating would actually erase the physical leftover, get rid of the impossible tomb – and leave its memory up to media images, narrations and other documents. It would be an *after-life* that could regenerate and strengthen the idea of communality. Letting the former inhabitants decide would at least restore some of the power relations in Foucault’s model of mutual agency, and hopefully lead to the acknowledgement of citizens as equal social actors. Or as Joe Delaney, a resident of Lancaster West Estate, puts it:

'The only way to commemorate the victims is to build another tower in its place [...] Build social housing there. It's the only fitting memorial.' (Platt 2017: 34)

Endnotes:

[[note]]1 In Trans-Fixed Burden let himself being "crucified" to a Volkswagen beetle by having two nails driven into the palms of his hands. Thus, the nails could be seen as some kind of artistic relic when being on display later in the Chris Burden Retrospective at Newport Harbor Art Museum 1988, convened by Paul Schimmel.

[[note]]2 However, there is a significant imbalance between high and low earners, especially when comparing the wealthy district of Chelsea and the poorer area of North Kensington where Grenfell Tower and other social housing is located.

[[note]]3 Residents experienced a decline in services provided for development when North Kensington increasingly entered into the focus of property developers in recent years: 'There is a direct relationship between gentrification and the level of services the council provides to social housing tenants, [...] [w]hat one resident called "the Goldman Sachsland", where the wealthy have houses, lies a few hundred meters east, towards Ladbrooke Grove. To the north, the 19-century "Potteries and Piggeries" slum that produced the bricks for London's suburban expansion has become equally exclusive.' (Platt 2017: 32)

[[note]]4 A fire safety expert indicated when asked by BBC News: 'If they'd had a sprinkler system the fire would have been deluged before it got to the cladding.' (Davey 2017).

[[note]]5 Gržinić and Tatlić follow Giorgio Agamben's revision of the biopolitical paradigm, drawing a line between 'the management of life' (biopolitics) and a 'mode-of-life', thus 'distinguishing between life *with* a form and a *bare* or *naked* life, that is a life *without* a mode or a form'. (Gržinić and Tatlić 2014: 22; emphasis *ibid.*)

[[note]]6 Heitmeyer reflects on the entry of the right-wing party AfD (Alternative for Germany) into German parliament, and the question why so many people voted for them even though a large portion of the electorate belongs to the well-off so-called middle class. (Heitmeyer 2017)

[[note]]7 See, for example, the headlines in The Guardian, June 19th 2017 (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/19/tragedy-grenfell-tower-disaster>, accessed 21 November 2017), The Independent, June 30th 2017

(<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/grenfell-fire-tower-fire-safety-scandal-kensington-death-toll-camden-council-a7867266.html>, accessed 21 November 2017) or The Mirror, June 15th 2017 (<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/10-questions-need-answers-after-10625223>, accessed 21 November 2017).

[[note]]8 My thanks go to Katharina Schmidt for this conclusion.

[[note]]9 In his essay on Grenfell Tower, Edward Platt notes: 'You can tell the locals, people said, because they don't look up at the tower. They don't want to see it anymore.' (Platt 2017: 33)

[[note]]10 The cladding of the tower's façade was part of a so-called 'regeneration' scheme in the area. (Platt 2017 33)

References:

Agamben, Giorgio (1998) Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life [1995], eds Werner Hamacher and David E. Wellbery, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

BBC News (2017) 'Four ministers were warned about tower block fire risks', 21 June 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-40330789>, accessed 11 October 2017.

Butler, Judith (2004) Precarious Life. The Powers of Mourning and Violence, London/New York: Verso.

Colin, Noyale (2017) 'The Politics of Togetherness in Dance: Practising Collectivity in Social Choreography', paper presentation at the conference Dialogues on Dance, Philosophy, and Performance in the Contemporary Neoliberal Moment, Coventry University, 1 June 2017.

Davey, Ed (2017) 'Grenfell contractor: Sprinklers would have saved tower', BBC News, 27 September 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-41230521>, accessed 20 November 2017.

Didi-Huberman, Georges (1992) Ce que nous voyons, ce qui nous regarde, Paris: Les Editions de Minuit.

Foster, Dawn (2017) 'People died thinking 'they didn't listen', says ex-Grenfell residents' group chair', The Guardian, 15 June 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jun/15/former-grenfell-tower-resident-demands-independent-inquiry-into-fire>, accessed 11 October 2017.

Foucault, Michel (2000) 'The Subject and Power' [1982], in Michel Foucault Power, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., P. Rabinow (ed.) Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 3, New York: The New Press, pp. 326--348.

Foucault, Michel (2000a) 'Governmentality' [1978], in Michel Foucault Power, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., P. Rabinow (ed.) Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Vol. 3, New York: The New Press pp. 201--222.

Gržinić, Marina and Tatlić, Šefik (2014) Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism. Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art and Life, Lanham, Maryland/Plymouth: Lexington Books.

Heitmeyer, Wilhelm (2017) 'Erwachen aus wutgetränkter Apathie', interview with Markus C. Schulte von Drach, Süddeutsche Zeitung, 4 October 2017, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/soziologe-zur-afd-erwachen-aus-wutgetraenker-apathie-1.3687762>, accessed 11 October 2017.

Jones, Emma (2017) 'Grenfell's Unpeople and the Search for Truth', The New European, 30 June-6 July 2017, 8-9.

Klinenberg, Eric (2002) 'Bodies that Don't Matter: Death and Dereliction in Chicago' in N. Scheper-Hughes and L. Wacquant (eds) Commodifying Bodies, SAGE Publications, ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/coventry/detail.action?docID=456749>.

Marjani, Suzana (2017) 'The Refugee/ Humanitarian Crisis: Performing Documents-Fragments', paper presentation at the conference OverFlow, Performance Studies international #23, Universität Hamburg, Kampnagel Hamburg, 10 June 2017.

Neate, Polly (2017), 'What should replace Grenfell Tower? The families must be the ones to decide. Living under the shadow of the tower', NewStatesman, 26 September 2017, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/09/what-should-replace-grenfell-tower-families-must-be-ones-decide> , accessed 11 October 2017.

Orr, Deborah (2017) 'Years of apathy make Grenfell not a tragedy, but an atrocity', The Guardian, 30 June 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/30/grenfell-tower-not-a-tragedy-an-atrocity-poverty-moral-failures>, accessed 11 October 2017.

Platt, Edward (2017) 'The Looming Tower', NewStatesman 6-12 October: 30--34.

radical housing network (2017), press release, no date, <http://radicalhousingnetwork.org>, accesses 10 November 2017.

Rodger, James (2017) 'Grenfell Tower fire tragedy product of 'brutal' system of inequality, says Jeremy Corbyn', Birmingham Mail, 27 September 2017, <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/uk-news/grenfell-tower-fire-tragedy-product-13679739>, accessed 11 October 2017.