

On the evening of June 15<sup>th</sup> 2017 I followed a compulsion to cycle 5 miles to London W11. I'd experienced similar inexplicable compulsions before and acted upon them. These were almost always decisions to travel based on a uniqueness perceived taking place elsewhere. One time in Biarritz I visited the bullfights in Bayonne, another I saw Nelson Mandela because he was down the road in Brixton.

When I got to Grenfell the blaze was still visible on the upper floors. The tower had been burning for 18 hours. A diminishing light in a flat above was a life. The building resembled a molar inflamed by infection on one side. The extinguished floors looked like a photographic negative, blank window edges framed by the sky. Similes aside the tower was a locked out home to the many wandering pavements baffled, still in pyjamas.

Having accounted for family, most were so relieved they hadn't thought of what to do next. Fleeing without basic amenities it was neighbours who provided. There was a souk set up behind the sports centre. Laid upon the ground were mostly toiletries, clothes and bedding. House doors were open. Men together knelt in prayer. Scarfed headed women weaved the crowds holding saucepans aloft. I was offered food I declined. Familiar objects revealed their worth, batteries, toothbrush, mugs, a toy.

I'd seen similar street markets before. Living and working in mainland Europe throughout the summers of 2015 and 16 I travelled back often to London by train. Dull flat lands of Pas-De-Calais signalled the approach to the tunnel. The triple barbed fencing meant the tunnel itself. The impression I had from numerous visits was of fortune. I was on the inside of a designated land to which many aspired to come. In Athens, Pisa, Paris as well as Calais ad hoc blanket market stalls showed up in a way fox crying appeared in Westminster. Not long ago, it never happened and then it did.

When I worked in clubs there was a phenomenon whereby a night suddenly becomes "the place". Sparse attendance is overtaken by clamber for entry. Queues and impatience mixing outside is by far the best marketing. Arrival at this status is spurious, a mixture of luck, work, timing and misdirection. In Northern Europe during those two summers London was the place.

In history luck and timing can be blank but action cannot. London as epicentre muscled its way to desirable destination. The ER high up on the British Museum says everything robbed. The crowbars marks around the marbled backs leave a corresponding void elsewhere. It is done and in the past but the residue of loss permeates down generations. Loss will stay until it is understood, a bit like Shakespeare tragedies, which when fully comprehended will doubtless cease to be performed.

There are types of loss. One comes from enforced description. Language responds to landscape as a music, cadence and rhythm replicating surroundings. To alter this relationship is barbaric and the consequence is displacement. Displaced and in the country of the displacer, loss is sublimated in the way causal racism is expected to be.

Irish labour coming to England defined the relationship for immigrants and former colonists. It is hardly ironic that language usage was the shtick with which British comedians used to beat. Micro aggressions at counter or bar subsumed into a muscle of outrage relaxed only in safe company if such could ever be found or even trusted.

In 1969, during a break from the American war, Don McCullin took photographs around Spitalfield market. "Homeless Irishman" is a powerful image of a fellow whose darkened face was the result of sleeping before pallet fires of the fruit and veg market alongside. The work is well intentioned but is problematic due to the lack of identification of the man in the

photograph. The postcolonial loss experienced by immigrants to former colonists is compounded here by absence of biographical detail.

The impression I had under Grenfell was that there exists also a private loss amongst immigrants. This loss prompts much greater acts of defiance and illegality and does so because the motivation is love. Not alone is the motivation love but it is the meaning of what it is to love. To love here means to choose to love in knowledge of the eventual disappearance of the object. It means taking the risk.

Ad hoc street markets without licence regardless of whether goods are sold or given away is illegal. Yet the community under Grenfell, the poorest by far in the borough, ignored any embargo and shared goods they could ill afford. Grief as the product of loving was understood. No immediate blame is apportioned. This loss is yours.

I came away later than intended. Walking the bike up hill toward Holland Park I passed the legacy of slave inheritance now dictating property prices. No more than a few streets from the burning tower, I saw on large wall mounted screens within white columned buildings, the same images of Grenfell I saw two hours before. I wondered what if the camp in Calais was in Hyde Park or Kensington Gardens; what if three line barbed wire fences ran along Park Lane and the Bayswater Road? But unlike recompense what if does not exist.

A day less than one year later I was back in West 11, walking in silence behind former residents under the now covered tower. The fire and public response was symptomatic of a careless time and the abbreviation Grenfell joined Trump and Bexit as symbolic triumvirate. In that year it became known that immigrants arriving to the UK on Windrush were denied citizenship. In rightful defence it was said how these immigrants rebuilt London in the immediate post war era. They weren't alone. The Irish, along with immigrants from other former colonies did. What is shared is greater than what is different. Immigrants compound loss every day leaving the front door. What is never taken is the choice to love until love disappears.