

Let me weep
by Annette Gjerde Hansen

Let me weep
my cruel fate,
and sigh for liberty.
May sorrow break these chains
of my sufferings, for pity's sake.

These are the lyrics of an aria by Handel from the second act of his opera, *Rinaldo* from 1711.

The aria is called— *Let me weep* - and is sung in the opera *Rinaldo* by the female character of Almirena. Lars von Trier used it in the prologue of his film *Antichrist* where this aria is the only sound as we watch the two characters She (played by Charlotte Gainsbourg) and He (played by Willem Defoe) having passionate sex. Their distraction means that they miss their little child getting up, pulling a chair towards the window and then falling from the window to his death.

This little family quickly goes from ecstasy to debris, as the family members are brutally reduced - from three till two.

Many will interpret the theme of the film *Antichrist* to be about grief, or maybe more specific a grief process - gone very bad. But what does grief have to do with antichrist? Why set the title *Antichrist* to a film about grief?

Before we can answer that lets try to answer where in the film *Antichrist* do we find antichrist?

this film is showing how the two charatcterts: She and He are experience grief.

She feels it physically, having anxietyattacks, becoming depressed, screaming. while He reacts to the grief by trying to control the situation. not just the situation but the woman aswell.

We see a dichotomy presents itself: physical flesh versus the mind. She reacts more physically - he is controlling, defining and limiting the situation and the female by using the mind. Through this, the male character is not allowing himself, or the woman to grief, This is why it goes so horribly wrong. And for those of you who have seen the film knows that this generates violence.

We can find a similar dichotomy – flesh versus mind - in a different antichrist; Nietzsche’s book Antichrist (1895), where is it religion who is performing the controlling project, over the natural human kind – the flesh. Just like the He is controlling She in Triers Antichrist.

So where is antichrist in the antichrist the movie? Some would argue that one can interpret that antichrist in the film antichrist is the force against nature – that which is trying to control and limit nature. Antichrist is the controlling project - trying to define – put in a box. to limit.

One of the greatest thinkers of today, Judit Butler, explains in her research and her book “Precarious Life – The Powers of Mourning and Violence”

how the absence of grief for an individual or a society – or the lack of permission to grief - makes the premises for violence and war easy. Meaning that if we do not give room for grief, and allow us to grief, it will just generate more violence, which again will just bring more loss. and greif.

In 2011 on the 22nd of July a young Norwegian man killed 77 people, most of them youngsters, leaving many individuals, families and our Norwegian society in debris and despair. In that time of shock, disbelief and anger, we experienced something unique and interesting. The language of grief is a lack thereof – the lack of words – the lack a language to articulate the situation and circumstances. What we witnessed this time in Norway was a pilgrimage to one specific church – Oslo Cathedral. The following two weeks after 22nd of July more than one million people came inside this church. Many to light a candle. Others to pray. Some to find someone to talk to. But most of them came quietly, just to stand. Next to another. To grief. This was not an event that the church had put together, but a quiet yet powerful pilgrimage of people getting out of their couches and sofas, carrying their bodies with their two feet into the church room – just like the one we are in here – now.

When an individual find her or himself in debris, or a nation or a continent finds

itself in debris, the church can embrace the reality – not as a controlling project but as a servant actor in society. By facilitating and creating a space for grief – not out of pity, but out of pure necessity so that humanity can get back on its feet, be able to turn debris to hope, and be able to - once again – choose to say - yes – to life.

Let me weep.