

# **Grief Support Network Book Review March 6, 2009**

## **Community Grief**

- **Publically grieving:** “On September 11, 2001 ..., New York was filled with such overwhelming sorrow...Feelings of loss were inscribed on the City itself. People used every medium at their disposal to express themselves; some even scrawled messages in the dust from the explosions that coated vehicles and windows in the area. Public parks, fire stations, traffic islands, building stoops, and even curbsides throughout the City became the sites of continually evolving shrines of ritual objects, candles, flowers, poems, and artworks. The city was awash in a creative expression of grief that was of a magnitude that approached the enormity of loss” (Harlow, 2005).

**The media shapes public responses to tragedy** (Dolan, 2003)

**Increased vicarious trauma** (Schlenger, et al., 2002; Silver, Holman, McIntosh, Poulin, & Gil-Rivas, 2002)

**Shattered community assumptions** (Chochinov, 2005; Rando, 1995)

## **Identifying with the victim**

- “After 9/11, vicarious victims were described as those who perceived real or imagined similarity to actual victims; they identified with victim experiences, despite being physically removed from the scene of the falling towers, or having no direct connection with any of the victims. This sense of identification appears to be connected to the disaster setting itself. It is easy to imagine being in an office tower, aeroplane, or on a beach; it is perhaps the ordinariness or imaginability of these predisaster settings that heightens identification with actual victims” (Nolan, 2005).

**Giving Support** (Shuster et al., 2001)

## **Birds in Fall** **Brad Kessler**

### **The Theme of Birds:**

- Challenges of survival during migration

### **The airplane crash:**

- Get a glimpse of each passenger before begin to understand their loved ones in detail.
- Each individual passenger becomes interconnected in tragedy
- Comfort of strangers in tragedy

### **Grief through each character:**

- **Ana Gathreaux**- “Struggling with Acceptance”
- **Kevin**- “Well Meaning Caregiver”
- **Douglas**- “Vicarious Volunteer”
- **Mrs. McIntyre**- “The Grief Organizer”
- **Pars Mansoor**- “Emotional Connector”
- **Mrs. and Mr. Liang**- “Inconsolable Grievers”
- **Diana Olmstead**- “Comforted by Faith Griever”
- **Claartija deJong & brother**- “Seeking Guidance” & “Angry Griever”
- **The Bulgarian: Orfeo Raskolov**: “Artistic Griever”

### **Going to the crash site**

- “It is almost offensive....how pretty this place is” (63).
- “How ordinary, how insignificant it seemed, the spot itself, out there, two, three miles offshore. Even as late as the day before, Ana had held out the smallest titer of irrational hope, but now, seeing the spot on the ocean, the rescue boats, the helicopters, the rows of naval officers saluting her (as if *she’d* done something heroic), the teddy bears and bouquets of flowers, Ana felt something crack inside of her, something she hadn’t even known was still there: a last holdout of hope. A tiny twig, a bird bone, toothpick-thin; and it was as if just then, standing on the boulders, she heard it snap” (66).

### **Sharing with each other**

- “You tell your storey enough times, and you leave a bit of it behind, some of the misery rubs off with each telling” (160).

### **Grieving through art:**

- “And the others listened and wept too, openly or to themselves, for even though the Bulgarian hadn’t spoken to any of them the entire time on the island, it seemed that he was the most articulate, the

most expressive of them all that heretofore, his silence had meant more than all their accumulated words combined” (108).

### The publicity of it all:

- “Why all this fuss for people who died so publically- so spectacularly- in a flash, when there was nothing for the thousands who died agonizingly slow, alone, shunned inside their rooms?...All the friends in New York City he’d watched die *and no one cared?*” (179).
- “...how-ironically- it took death to make one feel momentarily alive, truly present, minute to minute. And there was another thing: the outpouring of love that had surrounded her since she’d arrived in Nova Scotia. *That* was real, undeniable, just as the grief was real too. They were simply opposite sides of the same coin” (69).

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